

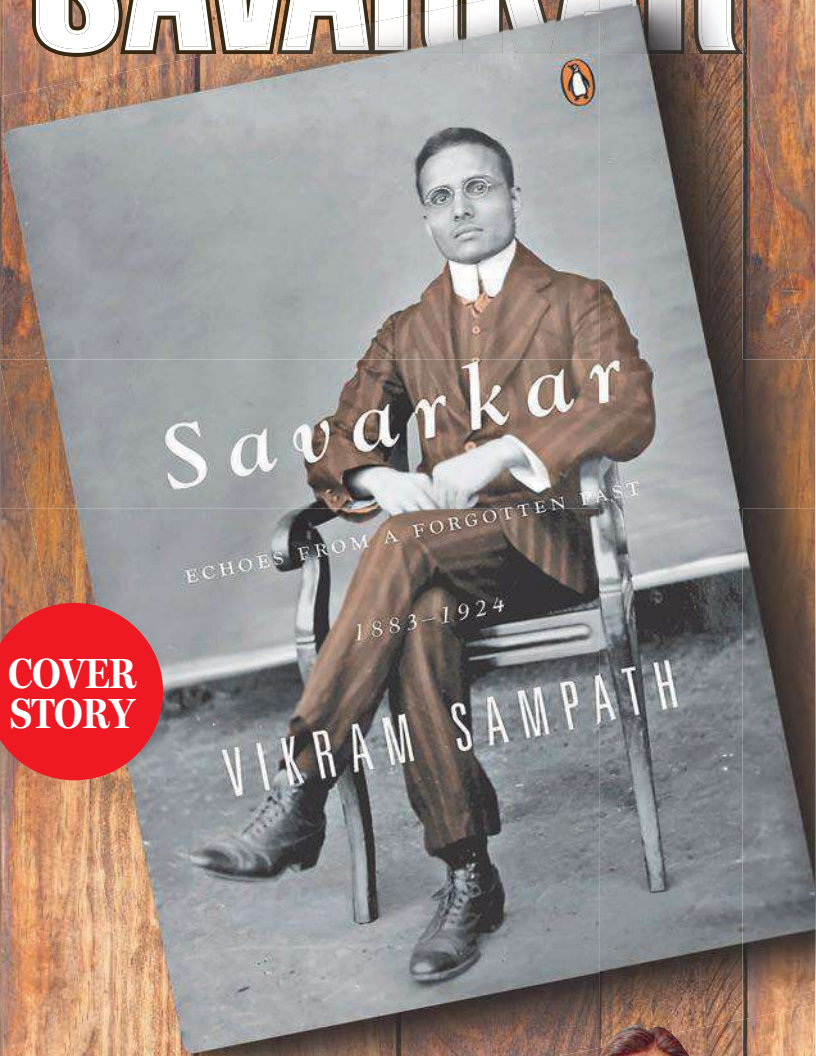


Prabha प्रभा

The Prabha Khaitan Foundation Chronicle

Rediscovering SAVARKAR

COVER
STORY



The Foundation will be hosting multi-city launch for Vikram Sampath's latest - *Savarkar: Echoes from a Forgotten Past*

As intellectual fountainhead of the ideology of Hindutva, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883-1966), popularly known as *Swatantrya Veer Savarkar*, is undoubtedly one of the most contentious and hotly debated political thinkers of the 20th Century. Accounts of his stormy life have oscillated between eulogising hagiographies and disparaging demonisation. The truth, as always, lies somewhere in between and has unfortunately never been told to the people of this country. Savarkar and his ideology stood as one of the tallest and most virulent opponents of Gandhi, his philosophy of pacifism and non-violence, and to the Indian National Congress. Savarkar is a bundle of contradictions and means many things to many people. An alleged atheist, Savarkar strove to dismantle orthodox Hindu beliefs, while emerging as the most vocal political voice for the community during the Indian freedom struggle.

Vikram Sampath uncovers Savarkar, the enigma, in his book, which is being unveiled by the Prabha Khaitan Foundation in cities across India. In Kolkata, Tatagatha Roy, the Governor of Meghalaya, shall be launching the book. In Bengaluru, former Infosys director and educationist, TV Mohandas, shall be doing the honours. Read the exclusive feature on the Hindu patriarch, poet and patriot on

Page 4-5

INSIDE



10

'URDU IS MY MOTHER, PUNJABI MY BELOVED'



EHSAAS WOMAN OF THE MONTH 18

22 **A SEASON OF FIRSTS**

THROWBACK TO KITAAB LAUNCH



34-35

SNAPSHOT OF THE MONTH

Starting with this edition, Prabha will feature snapshots from across social media where the Foundation's activities have found mention in the posts of our guests, associates or authors. In future editions, readers will get to see more such posts referring to our latest initiatives. Yours could be here too, so keep reading and keep posting!



vir sanghvi
@virsanghvi

Strange to find hoardings of some one I know on the streets of Calcutta
@seemagoswami



Best of both worlds: Prabha is now bilingual

Here's presenting the much awaited third edition of Prabha, your constructive responses always infuse us with enthusiasm to come up with something new. The pouring feedback has charged us to stick to our legacy and make our newsletter bilingual. We have updated the name in Hindi as well, and it gives us so much happiness to welcome articles written in Hindi too.

With this edition we have made an attempt to make our chronicle more content-based and we look forward to your contributions to develop the chronicle holistically. Please send in your articles and enrich our issues with your precious thoughts.

It's your gracious words that fills the pages of this chronicle.

Your feedback is as prized as your praises. This will help us improve the chronicle and keep us focussed on our work at hand while enabling us to deliver you a content-rich read every month.

Please write to us at newsletter@pkfoundation.org. Hope you have an enjoyable read.



MANISHA JAIN
Communications & Branding chief,
Prabha Khaitan Foundation

PRABHA WISHES EHSAAAS WOMEN BORN IN JULY A VERY **HAPPY B'DAY!**



2nd

Sheetal Khanna



14th

Anshu Mehra



14th

Vinnie Kakkar



14th

Aanchal Garcha

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE



AN ARTICLE BY
SONAL MANSINGH
ON GURU PURNIMA

'It was an instant connect'



Mini Nanda in conversation with Adam Burakowski



Another connection with India: Poland is the first European country to adopt a constitution. Constitution of India was written in what is now the Polish Residence

Prabha Khaitan Foundation hosted the Polish ambassador Adam Burakowski in its Ek Mulakat series in Jaipur on June 11. The event started with opening remarks by Aakriti Periwal from Jayshree Periwal Foundation, who is also Honorary Convenor of Prabha Khaitan Foundation Activities Overseas Affairs. Shekhar Sawant, General Manager, ITC Rajputana delivered the welcome note. Mini Nanda began the insightful conversation with Burakowski, thereafter.

The Polish diplomat and author shared about his initial days in India. He came to India in 1997 as a tourist, freshly out of his teens. The heart of a young adult made an instant connect with the Indian culture. "I liked the language so much, that I started to practice Hindi and also started learning Urdu," he said. He read a lot of Hindi and Urdu Literature and translated Manto from Urdu to English, Russian and French. Sharing his interest in Hindi cinema, he said, "I



Sudhir Kasliwal presenting a memento to Mini Nanda

Maharaja Digvijay Singh ji wanted nothing in return for his helpfulness towards the Polish refugees. We now have a school after him, of which I am a proud alumnus

—Adam Burakowski

Ek Mulakat Jaipur is presented by Shree Cement Ltd in association with ITC Rajputana Jaipur and Jayshree Periwal Foundation

have watched around 400 movies and my personal favourite is *Amar Akhbar Anthony*. We have many Bollywood movies shot in Poland like *Fanaa* and *Kick*".

He shared that the strong bond between the two countries goes back to the World War II when Maharaja Jam Saheb Digvijay Singh ji set up camps for Polish refugees. He also delved into the resolution passed by the Polish parliament honouring him for the laudable act. The event ended with vote of thanks by Aakriti Periwal. Sudhir Kasliwal gave away the mementos.



Welcome address by Shekhar Sawant, General Manager of ITC Rajputana



Aakriti Periwal delivers the opening remarks

VIKRAM SAMPATH

Savarkar was born in a Chitpawan Brahmin household of Bhagur village in Maharashtra's Nasik district of Maharashtra on May 28, 1883. He was the second of

three brothers - elder brother Ganesh Damodar or Babarao and younger brother Naraynrao - and a sister. When he was barely 9, he lost his mother Radhabai to cholera. It was left to his father Damodarant to raise all the 4 children single-handedly.

Right from his childhood, Savarkar found the caste system that plagued Hindu society reprehensible. In his own little way, he broke these barriers. His affiliation with the philosophy of armed rebellion began after the explosive event of the execution of the Chapekar Brothers of Poona - Damodar Hari Chapekar and Balakrishna Hari Chapekar for assassinating British plague official Walter Rand and his Lieutenant Charles Ayerst. The assassination and the subsequent execution of the Chapekars caused a sensation all over Bombay

Hindu patriarch, poet and a patriot

Presidency. The seed of revolutionary thought was firmly sown in his mind when in a moment of intense emotion, young Savarkar rushed to the family deity, Goddess Ashta Bhuj Bhawani, and vowed to commit his life to free the motherland through armed struggle.

Shortly afterwards, Damodarant too passed away due to plague. Savarkar was barely 16 then. The family migrated to Nasik. In the narrow lanes of Tilbhandeshwar the first modern, organised secret society of young revolutionaries took shape under Savarkar's leadership. The *Rashtrabhakta Samuha* or The Society of Patriots was formed by him towards the end of November 1899 with an oath to liberate India through armed struggle and sacrifice lives for the cause, if needed. A front-end entity called *Mitra Mela* or the Group of Friends was created in January 1900.

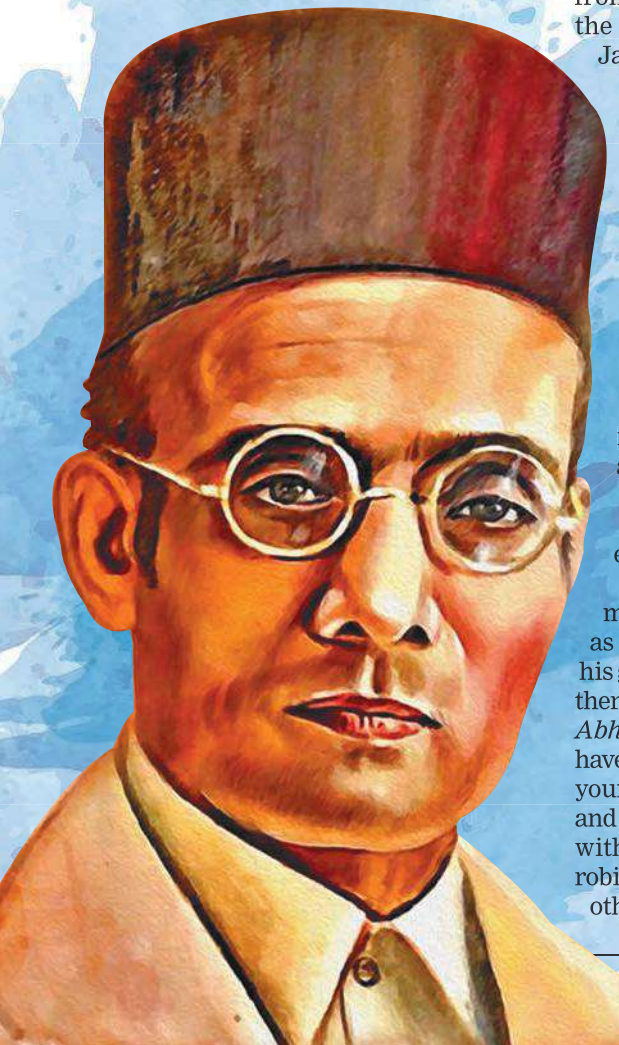
Savarkar believed in turning history and historical words into a political weapon. He insisted that members of the *Mitra Mela* read works dealing with major historical figures, biographies of Mazzini, Garibaldi, Napoleon Bonaparte and others. His dream was to produce an Indian nationalist, even among the villagers, who had a historical and revolutionary consciousness that was educated and inspired by these global revolutionary leaders. Revolution was not a mindless activity, but had to have a background of strategy and knowledge.

The activities of *Mitra Mela* grew manifold over the next few years, even as Savarkar moved to Poona to pursue his graduation at the Fergusson College there. The organisation was renamed as *Abhinav Bharat* in 1904 and came to have an enlisted membership of over 200 young men from across Maharashtra and outside. They were in regular touch with revolutionaries from Bengal - Aurobindo Ghose, Barindranath Ghose and others from the *Anushilan Samiti* and

Swadin Bharat to create a pan-Indian armed uprising. As a student in Poona, Savarkar was the first in the country under Bal Gangadhar Tilak's guidance, to organise a mass bonfire of foreign clothes to protest against the Partition of Bengal and press for total and complete freedom from the British.

In 1906, Savarkar moved to London on a scholarship offered by the great nationalist Shyamaji Krishnavarma, to become a Barrister. The India House in London's Highgate that Shyamaji had established as a hostel for Indian students became a hotbed of revolutionary activities under Savarkar's youthful leadership. Stalwarts of the revolutionary movement who worked with Savarkar in London included Bhai Paramananda, Lala Hardayal, Virendranath Chattopadhyay, VVS Aiyar, Gyanchand Varma, Madame Bhikaji Cama, Pandurang Mahadev (Senapati) Bapat, MPT Acharya, WV Phadke, Madanlal Dhingra, Dr Rajan, KVR Swami, Sukhsagar Dutta, Sikandar Hyat Khan, Asaf Ali Khan of Nabha among others. They held weekly meetings and celebrated anniversaries of great Indian heroes. The Scotland Yard tracked their every movement within and outside London and placed these young students under intense surveillance.

In London, Savarkar created a vast intellectual corpus for freedom with Marathi translations of Italian revolutionary Joseph Mazzini's works and a monumental and meticulously researched work on the 1857 uprising. In fact, he was the first to coin the term "First War of Indian Independence" for what was otherwise called the Sepoy Mutiny by the British. The British banned the book even before it was published but it was secretly smuggled into India and served as a veritable Bible for revolutionaries for decades, thereafter. Savarkar also coordinated the unfurling of the first flag of independent India in 1907 at the International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart by Madame Bhikaji Cama and Sardar



Singh Rana. He dispatched Senapati Bapat and Hemchandra Das Kanungo to procure the Bomb Manuals from Paris and these were sent to India too. They found their way to revolutionaries in India and led to the famous Alipore or Maniktola Bomb Case in Bengal and the Nasik Murder and Conspiracy case.

Savarkar's elder brother Babarao was arrested, tried, and sent to 25 years of life transportation at the Cellular Jail in the Andamans. Savarkar was arrested in London, unfairly tried and deported to India for waging war against the Emperor. He was given the harshest punishment of two life terms, accounting to 50 long years, in 1910 and sent away to the Cellular Jail. Here the brothers, along with other revolutionaries from Bengal and Punjab, suffered the most inhuman tortures for over a decade. Fettered in chains, flogged and condemned to six months of solitary confinement, made to extract oil all day while tied to the mill like a bullock, standing handcuffed for days on end, lack of the basic human needs such as toilets or water and fed with foul food that had pieces of insects and reptiles - it was truly a devil's island.



In London, Savarkar created a vast intellectual corpus for freedom with Marathi translations of Italian revolutionary Joseph Mazzini's works and a meticulously researched work on the 1857 uprising. He was the first to coin the term "First War of Indian Independence" for what was otherwise called the Sepoy Mutiny by the British

It was only in 1924 that Savarkar was released conditionally from prison but kept under strict surveillance within the frontiers of Ratnagiri District and debarred from political activity. He spent the next 13 years of his life this way. From 1924 to 1937, Savarkar engaged himself in massive social reforms in Ratnagiri. He strove hard for unity in the Hindu society advocating a complete eradication of the caste system, *varna* tradition and untouchability, championed inter-caste dining, inter-caste and inter-regional marriages, widow remarriage, female education and temple entry for all castes.

Following his release in 1937, Savarkar became the President of the *All-India Hindu Mahasabha* pitting himself directly against Gandhi's Congress and Jinnah's Muslim League. He opposed what he considered foolhardy jail-filling agitations like the Quit India and instead actively supported and helped Rash Behari Bose and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and their INA in recruiting troops for the army. It was the Naval Mutiny of 1946 in Bombay that eventually got us freedom is something our history books have cleverly concealed.

Following the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi in 1948 by Nathuram Godse who was a former acolyte of Savarkar, he faced trial on account of his implication by association. He was later acquitted for want of substantial evidence, but the taint of the assassination somehow stuck on. The two decades following Gandhi's assassination were spent by Savarkar in near isolation before he ended his own life by refusing food, water and medication in 1966.

In this month of August, when we are celebrating our freedom, it is only appropriate that we recall with gratitude the role of Savarkar and other revolutionaries who toiled hard for the cause and whose stories of sacrifice have somehow been wiped away from the popular narrative of Indian historiography.

(The author is a historian and Senior Fellow at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. His upcoming biography Savarkar: Echoes from a Forgotten Past is out in August 2019)

The views expressed in the write-up are the author's own and do not reflect the outlook of the Foundation



Vikram Sampath



Ehsaas Woman of Amritsar, Preeti Gill in conversation with Pratyaksha Sinha

Author **Pratyaksha Sinha** talks about women's complex emotions and the need to celebrate regional languages at the opening session of Kalam Amritsar

AN ODE TO WOMANHOOD

The inaugural session of Kalam Amritsar opened on June 7 with Pratyaksha Sinha, who is a well-known name in Indian women's writing. Known to explore the complex and intense emotions of women through her poetry and fiction, Sinha discussed her latest book, *Barish Gar* (Rainmaker) in a lively conversation with Preeti Gill, Ehsaas Woman of Amritsar, and a literary agent and writer herself.

The Prabha Khaitan Foundation launched its flagship Hindi programme at the Taj Swarna, the Foundation's partner in the Holy City.



Ehsaas Woman of Amritsar, Ramanjit Grover giving the vote of thanks



Pratyaksha Sinha



Things seem to be getting better for regional languages as blogs, social media platforms for independent writers have opened up. Every regional language has to be nurtured and it has to reach the people. We need to celebrate our native languages.

—Pratyaksha Sinha



Ehsaas Women of Amritsar - Preeti Gill, Sheetal Khanna and Praneet Bubber with Pratyaksha Sinha



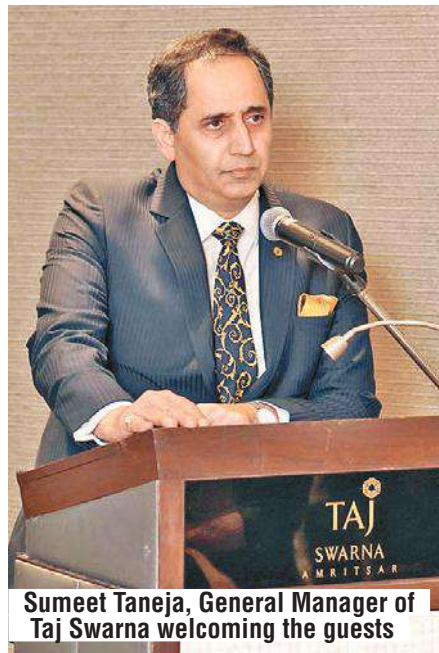
Kalam Amritsar is a new experience — a new city, new people and new feelings. Many thanks to Prabha Khaitan Foundation for introducing a writer to her world. As always, an intimate and warm world. I'm grateful to the Foundation, Ehsaas Women of Amritsar and Taj Swarna

—Pratyaksha Sinha

Sinha, who works as a manager with the Power Grid Corporation, calls herself a 'weekend writer' and said that she pens down her experiences and thoughts to find a break from professional monotony. The conversation touched upon many aspects, ranging from Pratyaksha's style of writing, body of work, her new book, to the importance of translation, her relationship with her publishers and the critical role of a literary agent.

Talking about *Barish Gar*, which revolves around the lives of three women, Sinha told the audience, "We, as individuals, are isolated in a way, even when we are trying to merge exterior selves with the on-goings of life. It is about the challenges of life and how we get back to it with hope and positivity."

Sinha said that she took her time while writing *Barish Gar*. "I wrote it over a period of ten days and left writing the book for almost six months. At one point, I did feel that such a long interval in writing a single book is not good," she said. "It is the story of three women, and revolves around a house. The book has many characters, a home, its walls and the women - the widow Iravati and her two daughters, Saran and Deeva. Then, there is also a tenant, who is one of the key characters in the story," Sinha told the audience in Amritsar, throwing light upon



Sumeet Taneja, General Manager of Taj Swarna welcoming the guests

Pratyaksha Sinha, with two collections of short stories to her credit, is one of the few Indian writers whose work has been translated into Norwegian

the novel.

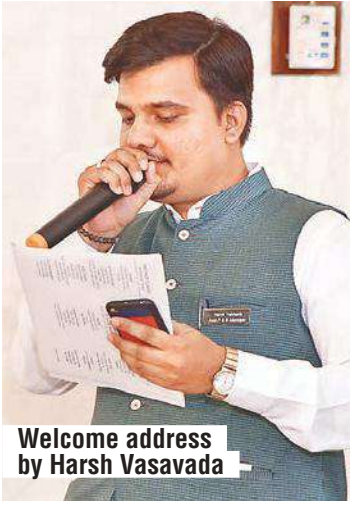
On the use of Hindi language, Sinha said, "With the emergence of English as the language of economy and market, regional languages have got overshadowed. English is labelled elite while other languages of the land struggle. But things seem to be getting better for regional languages as blogs, social media platforms for independent writers have opened up. Every regional language has to be nurtured and it has to reach to people. We need to celebrate our native languages," she added.

Recipient of the Sonbhadra Katha Samman in 2011, Sinha has two published works, both compilation of short stories - *Jungle Ka Jadoo Til Til* and *Pahar Dopahar Thumri*.

Her works have also been translated in Norwegian, one among very few writers in India who has such works to her credit. She is also working towards making her readers familiar with several variations in Hindi, which she says is the essence of any language.

The author was felicitated by Shivdullar Singh Dhillon (DC, Amritsar).

Kalam Amritsar is in association with Dainik Jagran, Taj Swarna and Ehsaas Women of Amritsar - Jasmit Nayyar, Praneet Bubber, Preeti Gill, Ramanjit Grover, Sheetal Khanna and Sonakshi Kundra



Welcome address
by Harsh Vasavada



Bhargavi Pandya

An evening with 'Kalam ke Baahubali'



Paras Jha in conversation
with Manoj Muntashir

P

oet, dialogue writer and lyricist, Manoj Muntashir has been regaling audiences of Kalam in cities across India. Muntashir was in conversation with Paras Jha at the Kalam Ahmedabad session on June 8, where he spoke about his work and writing dialogues for *Baahubali*.

The Amethi-born writer took on the pen name Muntashir as he started writing. His first collection of poems, *Meri Fitrat Hai Mastana*, was being picked up by literature lovers in large numbers soon after it was put up on Amazon.

To his credit as a lyricist, Munta-

shir has songs like *Teri Galiyan, Tere Sang Yara, Kaun Tujhe, Main Phir Bhi Tumko Chahunga, Mere Rashke Qamar, Dekhte Dekhte*, etc. His young fans have lent him the title of '*Kalam Ke Baahubali*' (Baahubali of the pen).

Kalam Ahmedabad is in association with The House of MG, Karma Foundation and Ehsaas Woman of Ahmedabad - Priyanshi Patel



Whenever I've spent an evening with Kalam, I've felt proud of being a writer. Congratulations to Sundeeep Bhutoria ji and Prabha Khaitan Foundation and best wishes for your continuous progress

—Manoj Muntashir



Ehsaas Woman of
Ahmedabad, Priyanshi Patel



Ajit Pradhan in conversation with Farhat Shahzad

OF LOVE AND POETRY

It was a session sprinkled with a dose of Urdu poetry, talks of love and literature, when poet Farhat Shahzad addressed the audience of Kalam Patna on June 8. The *shayar*, best known for his 1983 album *Kehna Usey*, was in conversation with Ajit Pradhan and read out his shayari to the delight of the audience. The ghazals from his famous album have been sung by great singers like Jagjeet Singh, Ghulam Ali, Abida Parveen, Hariharan and others.

The author drew parallels between nurturing a plant and love, as well as between love and poetry. "Love is like a plant. If you stop watering, or feeding it with sun and manure, the plant dies. But it does not die instantly. It gives us



Jab aap mulq se door hain tab andaaz hota hai ki akelepan aur tanhaai mein kya fark hai (When you're away from your country, you know the difference between solitude and loneliness)

— Farhat Shahzad

a message first. If you pay attention to what it's saying, you can save the plant from dying. The same goes for love as well," he said.

On the changing scape of Urdu shayari, Shahzad said that the appear-



Welcome note by Anvita Pradhan, Ehsaas Woman of Patna

ance of poets on social media has affected real poets. "Nobody wishes to listen to Mir or Ghalib nowadays. There's crowd in mushairas, since people consider these only as a form of entertainment. Popular poets demand expensive hotels, flights to attend events. Things have definitely changed in the past few decades," he said.

The most popular among his published Urdu books include *Mat Socha Kar*, *Aadi Tirchi Chand Lakeeren*, *Aaina Jhootha Hai*, *Gulrat* and *Sun Pao Agar*.

Kalam Patna is presented by Shree Cement Ltd, in association with Dainik Jagran, Hotel Chanakya and Navras School of Performing Arts



Padmashree Recipients Usha Kiran Khan and Alok Dhanva with Tripurari Sharan

'URDU IS MY MOTHER, PUNJABI MY BELOVED'



Ehsaas Woman of Jodhpur, Shelja Singh, in conversation with Irshad Kamil



Opening remarks by Ehsaas Woman of Jodhpur, Sushma Niraj Sethia



Devendra Ratnawat, General Manager of Taj Hari Mahal

A mesmerising session of Kalam with the acclaimed poet and lyricist, Irshad Kamil, was held in Jodhpur on June 13.

The lyricist, who has added soul to Bollywood songs with his meaningful words, is fluent in English, Hindi and Punjabi. But he feels that thorough language is a prerequisite for any writing.

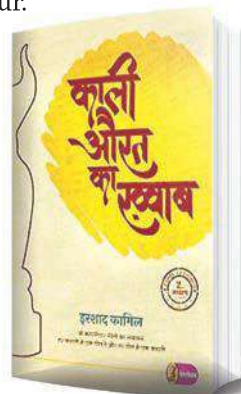
"You can express well in any language only if you're well-versed with it. I may be fluent in Punjabi, Hindi or Urdu, but that is not what differentiates me. It is my feeling and expressions that set my writing apart," Kamil said, addressing the audience at Taj Hari Mahal in Jodhpur.

Kamil, who was born in Punjab, said that the language of the land is like his beloved. "Urdu is my language at home, so it is like my mother. Punjabi is my beloved since I grew up there and I incorporate the touch of Punjab in many of my songs," he shared, while in con-

versation with Shelja Singh, Ehsaas Woman of Jodhpur.

Kamil shared experiences of his early days. He shared about his struggle to reach Mumbai thereafter. He explained why he chose the title *Kaali Aurat Ka Khwaab* for his new book. He also shared about his new venture, *The Ink Band*, which is the first poetry band of India. Kamil's lyrics have adorned the songs of films like *Zero*, *Tiger Zinda Hai*, *Jab Harry Met Sejal*, *Sultan*, *Highway*, *Raanjhana*, *Rockstar* and *Jab We Met*, among others. He has, to his credit, three Filmfare awards and four books.

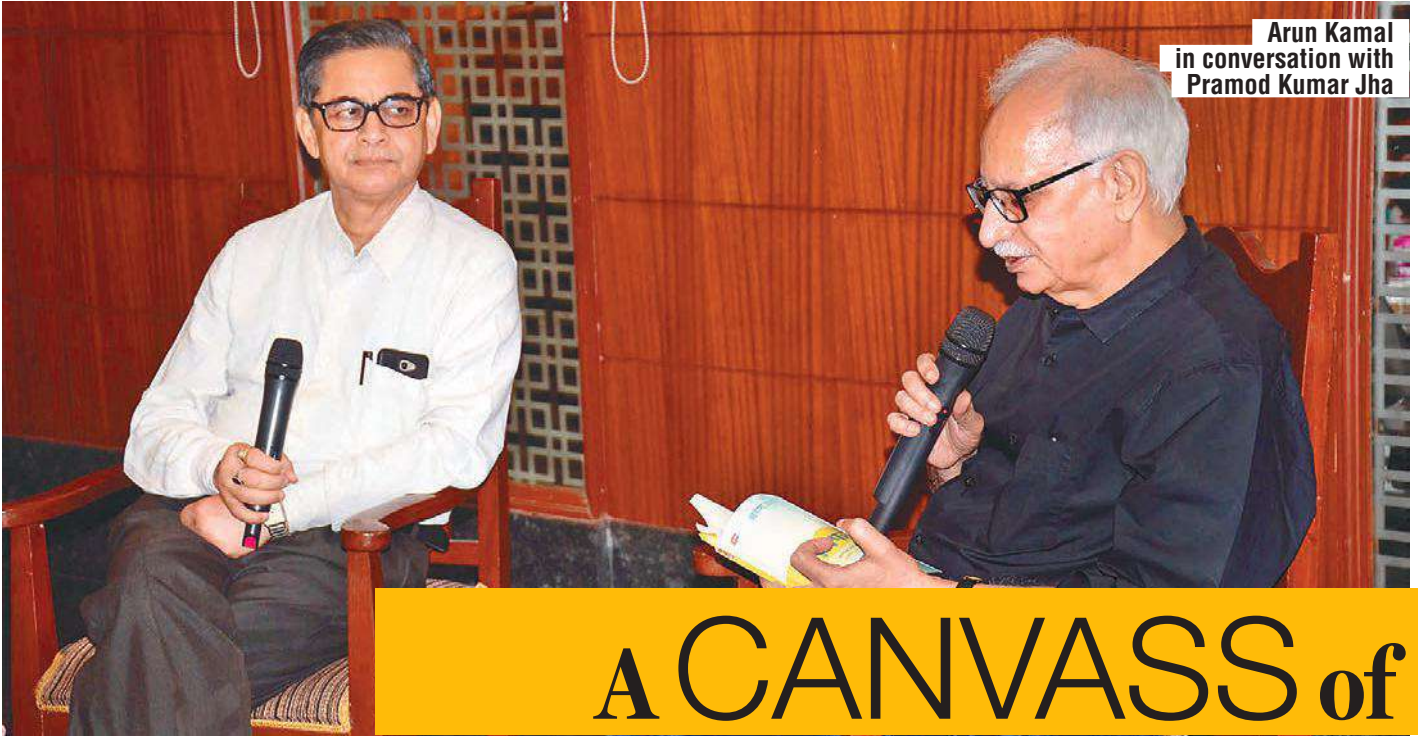
The event started with welcome address by Ehsaas Woman of Jodhpur, Sushma Sethia, who also delivered the vote of thanks. ACP Seema Hingonia gave away the mementos.



Kalam Jodhpur is presented by Shree Cement Ltd, in association with Taj Hari Mahal and Ehsaas women of Jodhpur - Preeti Mehta, Shelja Singh, Sushma Sethia.



I cannot point to a particular thing that inspires me. I am only fond of writing, and a writer always seeks to fill the void within. Writers also seek to complete the missing aspects in society around them, through their writing. *Main raasta ban gaya toh thehra raha wahin par, tere pair ban gaya hoon toh chalta raha hoon.* (If I become the road, I will stay there; if I am your feet, I keep walking)
—Irshad Kamil



Arun Kamal
in conversation with
Pramod Kumar Jha

A CANVASS of HINDI LANGUAGE



Anvita Pradhan

A

s part of its eighth edition in Ranchi, *Kalam* hosted seasoned author Arun Kamal on June 15. The author, who was in conversation with Pramod Kumar Jha, spoke about his new poetry collection, *Yogphal*. An English professor who writes solely in Hindi, Kamal feels that Hindi owns more shades of expression than any other language. His first-ever book was in Bhojpuri, but he chose to study English to get acquainted with world literature.

Responding to a query on youth and literature, Kamal said that youngsters these days are reading far more books than the older generation. "The way they read has changed. We go about with books in our *jhola* (bag), while they read books on their mobile phones. I

came across youngsters waiting in queues when I was in Kolkata and Bengaluru for workshops," he said.

A professor of English at Patna University, Arun Kamal is a multi-faceted writer. He has four poetry collections to his credit, including *Apni Keval Dhar*, *Saboot*, *Naye Ilaake Mein*, *Pulti Mein Sansaar* and *Main Woh Shankh Mahashankh*. He has also authored books as critic (*Kavita aur Samay*, *Golmez*) and a book of essays on contemporary poets, among others. He has received the Bharatbhushan Agrawal Memorial Award, Soviet Land Nehru Award, Sri-ant Verma Memorial Award and many more.

Kalam Ranchi is presented by Shree Cement Ltd, in association with Dainik Jagran, Navras School of Performing Arts and Ehsaas Women of Ranchi



Hindi ke kavi rajnaitik vishayon mein prabuddh hain (Hindi poets are well-acquainted with political subjects)

Hindi Urdu ki tarah khadi bhasha hai (Hindi, like Urdu, is a Khadi language)

—Arun Kamal



Audience in rapt attention
during the session



Yatindra Mishra in conversation with Bhagwandas Morwal

THE person behind THE PERSONALITY

Yatindra Mishra, poet, editor, and a lover of music and cinema, was in conversation with Bhagwandas Morwal at the Kalam Gurugram session that was held on June 17. The prolific writer, who was born in Ayodhya, engaged the audience with stories of Akhtari Bai, who went on to become the legendary singer and composer Begum Akhtar.

Mishra was talking about his latest book, *Akhtari: Soz Aur Saaz Ka Af-sana*, which is based on the life, times and music of Akhtari Bai Faizabadi aka Begum Akhtar. The book, which delves into the life of the classical singer beyond her musical journey, is already a

“Numerous people like me will exhaust themselves writing about the history of Indian culture, and yet not be able to even touch the tip of the iceberg **—Yatindra Mishra**

talking point in literary circles across the country.

Sharing his journey as an author, Mishra told the audience that he had been a student of microbiology but faced no trouble working in the fields of Hindi literature and music. He was replying to Morwal who had asked Mishra how he went about balancing his literary work with that in the fields of music and arts. “I don’t have a mantra. I look at each subject from a different perspective. I try to bring out the real character of the personality I am writing about. While there are many myths prevalent, I focus on the facts,” he said.

Mishra has penned poetry collections like *Dyorhi par Aalap*, *Yadakada*, *Ayodhya* and other poems, and *Vibhas*. He has also penned biographies on Thum-



Aditi Maheshwari

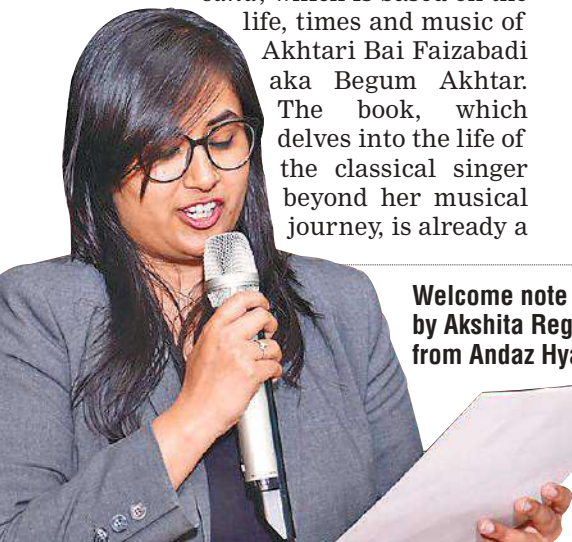


Ina Puri

ri singer Girija Devi and danseuse Sonal Mansingh, as well a book on the life of Shehnai maestro Bismillah Khan. He is also the recipient of many reputed awards.

Kalam Gurugram is in association with Dainik Jagran, Andaz Delhi Aerocity and Ehsaas women of NCR

Welcome note by Akshita Rege from Andaz Hyatt





Naveen Choudhary

OF POLITICS & STUDENT LIFE

Naveen Choudhary, author of the book *Janta Store*, told the audience at Kalam Ajmer about his tryst with student politics and how the equations have changed over the past few decades



Bakshish Singh presenting a memento to Anant Bhatnagar

The Kalam Ajmer session held on June 19 saw discussions on student politics, changing political scenario, student body polls and university life in general. Author Naveen Choudhary was in conversation with Anant Bhatnagar at the session.

Choudhary spoke about his childhood in Bihar and education in Jaipur. Speaking about his literary journey, he told the audience that it was his grandmother who inspired him to write. This was when Choudhary was still a school-going young lad, and his father's first book has just been published. Discussing his book *Janta Store*, which is based on student politics at the Rajasthan University, Choudhary said, "There used to be caste-based politics at the university then, which is still prevalent. But the dynamics have all changed now."

Born in Madhubani, Bihar and brought up in Jaipur, Choudhary wrote the popular

political novel, *Janta Store* inspired by his days at Rajasthan University. The story of the novel revolves around the link between student politics and state's political equation. Choudhary, also known as a photographer and satirist, was himself active in student politics during his days at the university.

Kalam Ajmer is presented by Shree Cement Ltd, in association with WeCare and Ehsaas women of Ajmer.



There was caste-based politics at the university... the dynamics have changed now
—Naveen Choudhary



Naveen Choudhary signing books for the audience

TALES OF MUSIC AND AN ACHING HEART



Yatindra Mishra in conversation with Poonam Devdutt

AYODHYA-BORN
YATINDRA MISHRA
SHARED THE STORY
OF BEGUM AKHTAR'S
LIFE AT THE
INAUGURAL SESSION
OF KALAM MEERUT

Prabha Khaitan Foundation's initiative Kalam stepped into Meerut with author Yatindra Mishra, who captivated the audience with stories of Akhtari Begum. His presence suited Kalam's Meerut debut well, since the author himself was born in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh.

Mishra's latest book, *Akhtari: Soz Aur Saaz Ka Afsana*, is based on the life, times and music of Akhtari Bai Faizabadi aka Begum Akhtar. He shared different aspects from the life of Begum Akhtar, while in conversation with Poonam Devdutt at the session held on

June 18. "The world could not understand begum, who led a starry life in regal style but had a heart full of pain," he said, adding that even great singers like Lata Mangeshkar held immense respect for Begum Akhtar.

Mishra spoke about the singer's journey from Akhtari Bai to Begum Akhtar, who went on to gain vast experience -- from the gatherings of Faizabad nawaabs to the sparkling tinseltown in Mumbai.

Talking about his journey as an author, Mishra said that after going through several ups and downs, a writer reaches a stage when the vast horizon of writing emerges on its own. He also laid emphasis on



Yatindra Mishra



Anindita Chatterjee, Executive Trustee of Prabha Khaitan Foundation, with Ehsaas Women of Meerut, Garima Mithal and Anshu Mehra



It's important for me to be an authentic chronicler

It was a pleasant experience to attend Kalam Meerut. I hope Kalam continues to carry forward its journey and garners more praise

—Yatindra Mishra

the importance of introspection and hard work when it comes to the intricacies of writing. Mishra also spoke of his evolution as an author. He said that given his family's financial security, he could take up writing professionally, since he didn't have to bother about food and shelter.

"At a time when the culture of reading and studying literature is almost extinct, writers like Yatindra Mishra restore faith in the same, and bring in a new perspective. I came to the session to get to know interesting aspects of Begum Akhtar's life, but at the same time, Yatindra Mishra gave us an insight into personalities like Lata Mangeshkar, Madan and Ustad Bismillah Khan," Shilpa Agrawal, who was there to attend the inaugural session of Kalam Meerut, spoke of the author.

Mishra is an acclaimed poet, editor and writer. He is known for poetry col-

lections like *Dyorhi par Aalap*, *Yadakada*, *Ayodhya and other poems*, and *Vibhas*, that have received critical acclaim. As an author he has wide repertoire of work. He has penned biographies on Thumri singer Girija Devi and renowned danseuse Sonal Mansingh Mishra has also written a book on the life of Shehnai maestro Bismillah Khan.

Mishra's book *Lata: Sur-Gatha* won six awards in 2017, including the prestigious 64th National Film Award for Best Writing on Cinema (*Swarna Kamal*) and the MAMI Mumbai Film Festival Award for Best Writing on Cinema, 2016-17. Mishra is currently working on a book on eminent lyricist, poet and filmmaker Gulzar Saheb.

Kalam Meerut is in association with Dainik Jagran, Crystal Palace and Ehsaas Women of Meerut - Anshu Mehra and Garima Mithal



Audience at the opening session of Kalam Meerut

Recipient of the *Sahitya Akademi Award*, **Kundan Mali** credits his success as a writer to his days of hardship

Having been through a tough time during the formative years, Rajasthanian author and critic Kundan Mali, found his true calling in writing. Mali, who has been the recipient of the prestigious Sahitya Academy award, twice, credits his success as a writer to his phase of struggle and days of unemployment early on. The celebrated author of Rajasthanian origin delved into his love of books, his craft as an author, and his life journey in the event held as a part of Akhar series in Jaipur. Mali was in conversation with story writer Gaurikant Sharma.

Akhar is a platform provided by the Prabha Khaitan Foundation to showcase indigenous writers from across the country who are known in their regions for their exceptional work. The event in Jaipur was held on June 8.

Mali told the audience that he was born to a family of farmers in Udaipur. He was a student of literature and in his own words couldn't find gainful employment. His heart was in learning and writing. His professional journey in writing began with translations. Mali says, it started in 1988, when his friends sensing his inclination towards writing, suggested he should take it up professionally. "I began translating Italian poems in English to Hindi back in



Gaurikant Sharma in conversation with Kundan Mali

WRITING SHAPED BY A LIFE OF STRUGGLE

1988. For four years till up to 1991, I would be toiling 16 hours a day, translating and writing," he told the audience.

Mali turned an author after he completed and published his first book in Rajasthanian language *Jagg Ro Lekho*, the same year, in 1991. His body of work includes awarded books such as *Sagar Pankhi*, *Anjal Paani* and *Aalochna Ri Aankh Su*. He was awarded the Kendriya Sahitya Academy award in 2004 and in 2007.

Aakhar Jaipur is presented by Shree Cement Ltd, in association with ITC Rajputana and Grassroot Media Foundation.

“I began translating Italian poems in English to Hindi back in 1988. For four years till up to 1991, I would be toiling 16 hours a day, translating and writing

—Kundan Mali



Pramod Sharma



Audience at the event



Debashish Panigrahi felicitating conversationalist Surendra Nath



Nidhi Garg, Ehsaas Woman of Bhubaneswar



Welcome note by Ehsaas Woman of Bhubaneswar, Vedula Ramalakshmi

Celebrated Odia poet is an epitome of simplicity

It was a double treat for the literature lovers of Bhubaneswar who got a chance to listen to two of the most imaginative minds in the field of writing. Sambalpuri poet and Padmashree Recipient Haldar Nag who's known for his simplicity and ascetic lifestyle was in conversation with Surendra Nath, a writer of repute.

The two literary personalities were brought together on one stage at the Aakhar Bhubaneswar event, which was also the first programme under the banner of Aakhar where an Odia litterateur attended as a guest.

Nag who walks barefoot arrived in a *dhoti* and a vest. He pens his creations in Sambalpuri or Koshali and is famed for his collection of poems *Kavyanjali*. In his inimitable style peppered with infectious wit, he spoke of his early days as a writer, and how he developed an interest in this field. He rued that important mythological characters such as Urmila, Mandodari and Putana in the epic Ramayana have been forgotten down the generations.

The author who has been featured in a BBC documentary was introduced to guests at high tea. The conversation started with Vedula Ramalakshmi, Ehsaas Woman of Bhubaneswar, giving the welcome speech. The conversation be-

tween Nag and Nath revolved around his books and personal life. Ehsaas Woman of Bhubaneswar, Nidhi Garg gave the vote of thanks. The session was opened to the audience for questions where Nag answered queries about his love of writing and inspiration behind this creations. Debashish Panigrahi felicitated the author and the moderator with Pattachitra.

Aakhar Bhubaneswar is presented by Shree Cement Ltd in association with Mayfair Hotels & resorts, and Ehsaas Women of Bhubaneswar - Nidhi Garg and Vedula Ramalakshmi

Aakhar is a celebration of Indian literature. It is an honour to host Haldar ji in the first Aakhar event at Bhubaneswar

—Vedula Ramalakshmi



Haldhar Nag

A WRITER & AN ENTREPRENEUR

This month's Prabha introduces readers to **Swati Agarwal**, an Ehsaas Woman



The owner of Rockwood Hotels and Resorts, Swati Agarwal thrives in the world of hospitality and runs a 245-room hotel in Udaipur under the name of Radisson Blu Palace Resort and Spa. She divides her time as an Ehsaas lady, between Udaipur and Mumbai. As an Ehsaas

Woman, Swati has been actively involved with Prabha Khaitan Foundation's literary activities. Given her penchant for literature and writing, Swati has also penned various articles for journals and newspapers.

Swati's new ventures include opening of large size luxury MICE hotels in India. Parallely, she also runs an event management company and decor house that goes by the name of Event Entourage. She is also a director at the Jayshree Periwai Group of Schools and a passionate educationist. Her social initiative, 'Do Muthi ka dum' works towards emancipation of women and children. In association with the Foundation and as part of Ehsaas Women, she organises Kalam, Write Circle and Ek Mulakat sessions in Mumbai and Udaipur.

SPOTTED



Ehsaas Woman of London, Sangeeta Datta spotted with Ehsaas Woman of Kolkata, Esha Dutta at Baker Street on the hottest day in London.



Neelima Dalmia Adhar in conversation with Titiksha Shah

A NEW MILESTONE FOR THE FOUNDATION AND AUTHOR **NEELIMA DALMIA ADHAR**, OXFORD HOSTS THE FIRST-EVER WRITE CIRCLE SESSION IN JUNE

WRITE CIRCLE DEBUTS IN OXFORD

After attending several Kalam events in cities across India, author Neelima Dalmia Adhar was thrilled to be addressing the audience at Oxford. The excitement was evident from her note to Prabha Khaitan Foundation. “The realisation of my ultimate dream - talking to some of the world’s finest minds in the mecca of learning - Oxford. Thank you Prabha Khaitan Foundation, Write Circle,” she wrote.

Dalmia was in conversation with Titiksha Shah at the inaugural session of Write Circle Oxford that took place on June 24 at the Oxford Business College, UK. The programme started with a welcome note from Padmesh Gupta from Oxford Business College. He introduced Dalmia, who then opened up about her life and books.

“Treating a woman as a second-class citizen in the social order is different from mistreating or ill-treating your spouse —Neelima Dalmia Adhar

The conversation also revealed many aspects of Gandhi’s personal and family life. “Kasturba’s life is a mirror image of my mother’s life and my father,” said Dalmia, who is the author of *The Secret Diary of Kasturba*.

At the end of the session, a memento was presented to the author by Gerry Takamura, Principal of Oxford Business College.

Dalmia grew up in an atypical Marwari home with six siblings in New Delhi. She draws the passion for both the spoken and written word from her mother; and divides her time between writing and pursuing her interest in poetry, philosophy and the paranormal. A passionate ‘people-watcher’, she is drawn to oddities and thrives on writing about personalities and human behaviour.

The Write Circle Oxford is in association with Oxford Business College and British Council

If I were to live my life again I’d still choose my parents. I’m proud of my parents

—Neelima Dalmia Adhar while discussing her family



Gerry Takamura



Padmesh Gupta

Restoring old-world charm

Padmashree Recipient **Sunita Kohli**, renowned for mastery over historical interior architectural restoration, takes a detour and co-authors a cookbook with her mother **Chand Sur**

An amalgamation of different cultures, her work brings alive corners of the world Sunita Kohli has visited during her lifetime. Having inherited the passion for cooking from her mother, Chand Sur, Sunita still enjoys trying new recipes. Though interior designing is her calling, she has co-authored a book of recipes, *The Lucknow Cookbook*. The book celebrates the city as the melting pot of cultures — the Ganga-Jamuni *tehzeeb* — that it is known for.

On June 19, Kohli shared about her work and life with the audience at The Write Circle event held at Taj Krishna Hyderabad, where she was in conversation with Swati Sucharita. Sunita is a reputed leader in historical interior architectural restoration and, since 1972, a manufacturer of fine contemporary and classical furniture. Widely travelled, she is also the first interior designer to be conferred the Padma Shri in 1992. Sunita, who specialises in historical architectural restoration, has helped restore some of the most prominent heritage buildings, forts and palaces in India, Pakistan, Bhutan and Sri Lanka that are vital links to the history and culture of South Asia.

She has worked on some of the grandest of the architectural marvels of our times. She has worked on the Parliament House, Prime Minister's Office, the expansive Rashtrapati Bhavan, and the Hyderabad House in New Delhi. Her work has taken her to several countries where she has helped restore the buildings of historical and



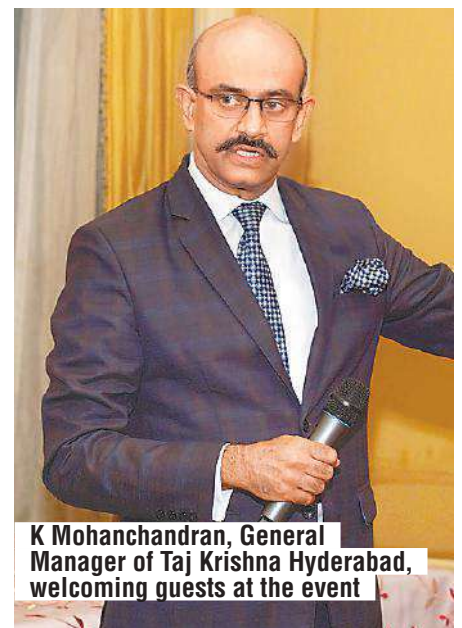
Sunita Kohli in conversation with Swati Sucharita



Audience at the event

architectural significance that thread our ties to the past.

The Write Circle Hyderabad is held in association with Taj Krishna Hyderabad and Ehsaas women of Hyderabad



K Mohanchandran, General Manager of Taj Krishna Hyderabad, welcoming guests at the event



She learnt recipes from her friends as also from books and magazines but recipes received or read, prompted her to create new dishes that are an interpretation of her personality and a reflection of her taste — **Sunita Kohli in The Lucknow Cookbook**



Namita Gupta in conversation with Bhaavna Arora

RECREATING A GRIPPING TALE

Author **Bhaavna Arora** narrates her experience while penning her latest book, *Undaunted*, which is hinged around the life and death of Lieutenant Ummer Fayaz who was killed by terrorists

Coming from a military family, Bhaavna Arora recreates a gripping tale in her narrative on Lt Ummer Fayaz's life and death. That, and her own journey, were the subject of the author's talk during the Write Circle event held in Bengaluru on June 13.

Bhaavna spoke about her book, *Undaunted* and her journey into strife-ridden interiors of Kashmir during the conversation held at Taj West End. Speaking about her two-year-long research for the book and her meeting with Lt Fayaz's family, Bhaavna brought the story alive as she recounted her stay in the border areas. The

“I had a lovely time interacting with the amazing and engaging audience. It's not every time that an author gets such beautiful people to interact with

—Bhaavna Arora

event also witnessed lighter moments as she was asked to reply in one-word answers to questions by the moderator. The author was in conversation with Namita Gupta.

Before becoming a full-time writer, Bhaavna headed a business school. Her passion for writing has already

got three books to her credit — *The Deliberate Sinner*, *Mistress of Honour and Love Bi the Way*. A contemporary author, her books and genres are versatile. The strength of her writing is in her robust research that flows through as realistic narrative. The painstaking research for *Undaunted* included six months of travel to the Kashmir Valley, the IMA, the NDA, MHOW, Devlali and Akhnoor, which helped her weave an authentic account of Lt Ummer's life.

The Write Circle Bengaluru is in association with Taj West End Bengaluru and Ehsaas Women of Bengaluru - Babita Kathotia, Shruti Mittal and Surekha Prahlad



Ehsaas Women of Bengaluru — Surekha Prahlad, Babita Kathotia and Shruti Mittal, along with guests



Anil Kathotia with Rajesh Nath



Neelima Dalmia Adhar in conversation with Titiksha Shah from Kriti UK

A SEASON OF FIRSTS

Author **Neelima Dalmia Adhar** marks Write Circle's international debut with a session in Birmingham

It was a month of many firsts for Prabha Khaitan Foundation, especially The Write Circle. Author Neelima Dalmia Adhar opened the Birmingham chapter of Write Circle on June 23, as she spoke about her books, personal journey and Gandhi's life, having penned a book on the life of Kasturba Gandhi.

The inaugural session was held at the Midlands Arts Centre in Birmingham, UK. The programme started with a welcome note from Piali Ray, Sampad South Asian Arts & Heritage, who introduced Dalmia. The author, in conversation with Titiksha Shah from Kriti UK, shed light on Gandhi's personal and family life.

"I didn't choose Kasturba, Kasturba

chose me and Gandhi would have not been Gandhi if Kasturba was not there," Dalmia, the author of *The Secret Diary of Kasturba*, told the packed audience. Her book promises a fly-on-the-wall peep into the life of Gandhi's wife, who she believes is an integral part of his journey towards being the Mahatma.

Dalmia grew up in New Delhi with six siblings. She inherits her love of literature from her mother, and is very fond of poetry and philosophy. The author has nurtured a passionate interest in the paranormal. She delves into human psyche, observes people around her and attempts to learn from their behaviour.

The Write Circle Birmingham is in association with British Council, Kriti UK and Sampad Arts



Piali Ray of Sampad Arts



Padmesh Gupta



I truly believe that if my father had been given an opportunity and not marginalised, he would have been able to stop the Partition

—Neelima Dalmia Adhar
(while discussing the book on Kasturba Gandhi and her father)

“ Ansuna karne se pehle soch lo tum ek baar, khamoshi ka shor hai ye, bezubani ka nahin (Before turning a deaf ear, think again. This isn't the sound of speechlessness, this is the silence screaming) —Madan Mohan Danish

'If you're in love, don't hide, tell it to the world'

Poet and author Madan Mohan Danish wowed the audience with his engaging shayari on love and longing. He got the guests in raptures with this couplet. *Khud par ye ehsaan kyon nahin karte, ishq kiya hai to elaan kyon nahin karte* (Why don't you do yourself this favour? If you're in love, why don't you announce it to the world?)

Danish, an eternal romantic, exemplified Meera Bai as the epitome of true love and reminded the audience her greatness lay in her open heart with which she went public (about her love for Lord Krishna). Danish was speaking at the latest session of Lafz Jaipur, at the Hilton Hotel. His works have found release in leading channels in India, besides books, which have found a fan following across the country and beyond.

Danish, who was in conversation with poet Lokesh Kumar Sahil, said he was brought up in a small village in Balia (Uttar Pradesh) where he was first introduced to the term *shayari*. He said his grandfather would be reading the Ramcharitamanas and shlokas from Hindu scriptures under the dim halo of the lantern, “when my family would be assured I



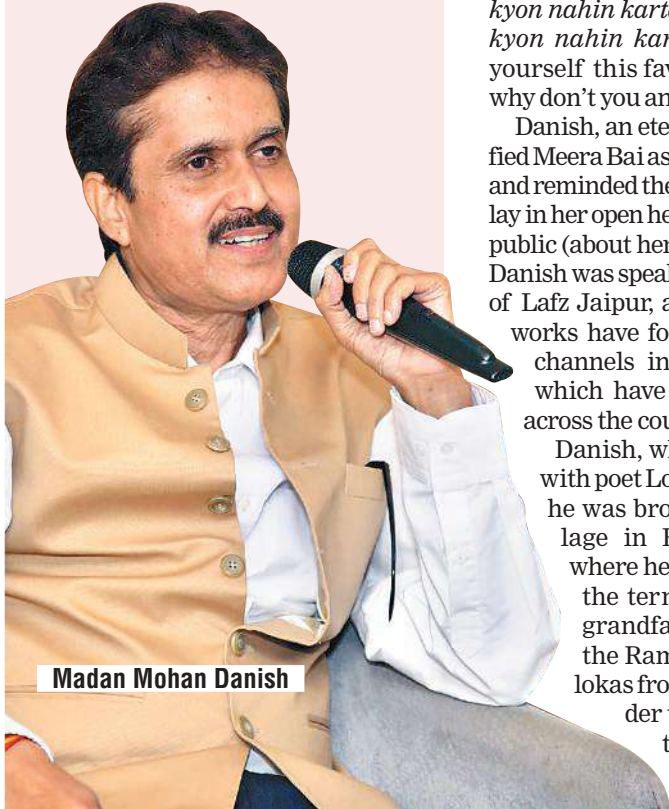
Opening and closing remarks by Apra Kuchhal, Ehsaas Woman of Jaipur



Vishal Gupta, General Manager of Hilton Jaipur welcoming guests

must be at Shamshudeen's place if I turned up late at home.” As a young man, he said, he absorbed the best of both worlds by drinking in from the confluence of two different cultures.

Lafz Jaipur is presented by Shree Cement, in association with Hilton Hotel, Rekhta, Sudhir Mathur Sansthan and Ehsaas women of Jaipur- Apra Kuchhal, Kulsum Malik and Sunita Shekhawat



Madan Mohan Danish



Jayshree Perival presenting a memento to Lokesh Kumar Sahil



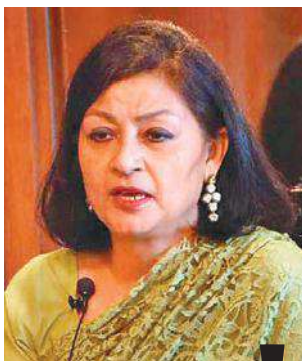
Rajneesh Singhvi



SAVE THE

LILY CHILDREN

THE UNITED NATIONS OBSERVES JULY 30 AS WORLD DAY AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS. **LADY MOHINI KENT NOON** WRITES FOR US



**LADY MOHINI
KENT NOON**
Global Chairperson
LILY Against Human Trafficking

*This is her photo from a session of
An Author's Afternoon in Kolkata*

I am delighted to contribute to a magazine celebrating the life of an inspirational woman, Dr Prabha Khaitan. She charted an exceptional path for herself despite the milieu into which she was born when Kolkata was still Calcutta and women stayed at home. She would have approved of **LILY Against Human Trafficking**, our charity that works to empower women and the girl-child.

We are named LILY after a 4-year old girl who was sold to a pimp for Rs 5,000. Our team rescued her from Delhi's notorious GB Road brothels and she grew up in a sheltered home that we supported. Such children have nowhere to go back to. She is now about 24 years old, has completed her education and sings well too. Her life's ambition is to teach mothers to love their children. Why? Because her own mother had sold her,

being a prostitute and a drug addict.

I am always shocked by how little it costs to buy a human being; a buffalo costs more. I am also astounded by how easy it is to ignore the whole issue. It seems possible to be shocked and bored at the same time.

There are millions of Lilys out there desperately waiting for our help. Haima was the third daughter born to a poor Muslim family of Banaras. The unwanted girl was married off at 11 to a 40-year-old man. She gave birth to a son at 12 and

was widowed at 13. The family threw her out, with the baby, her parents didn't want her back. Instead she was picked up by traffickers,

brought to Delhi and sold to GB Road. They sold her baby separately to a childless couple. Haima was rescued and lived at our Delhi sheltered home.

Rescued victims of human trafficking need special psychological and medical care, having survived the brutal world of human slavery. We place special em-

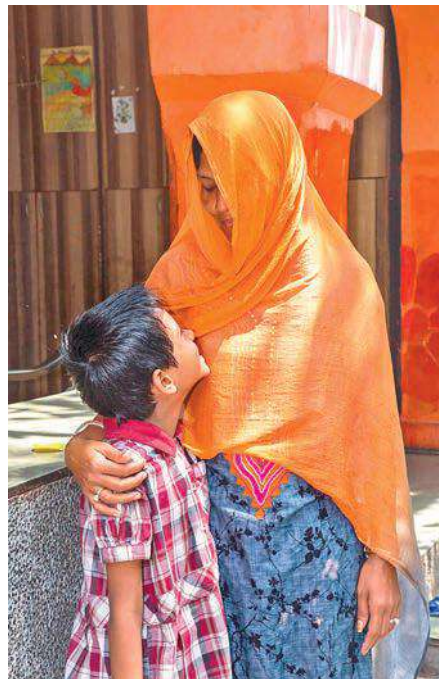
**AGAINST
Human Trafficking**

phasis on children in brothels, of which there are an estimated 2.5 million in India alone. We ensure they get an education, nutritious food and a caring environment. They grow up to become productive members of society: teachers, carpenters, taxi drivers, social workers, tailors, beauticians, and others. The charity has touched over 200,000 lives so far, including victims, their families, villages and communities.

According to a recent report commissioned by our partner organisation, iPartner India, a child goes missing every 8 minutes in India. Now that we know, are we just going to turn away and carry on with our safe and privileged lives? No one is free until everyone is free because we are all part of the same human energy.

The evil trade in human beings is an industry worth an estimated \$100 billion worldwide. It is the cause of millions of human tragedies. LILY Against Human Trafficking supports projects in Delhi, in Mumbai, Rajasthan (Jaipur and Bharatpur), in Bihar, Assam and Uttar Pradesh. We work closely with the police and armed forces too. Victims are uneducated and vulnerable. 92% of them are forced into prostitution; 40% are under 18 years old; 12% are sold by their own fathers and mothers.

We form one long chain of human contact, from our patrons such as Lord Parekh, Mr GP Hinduja, Lord Verjee, Baroness McDonagh, Sunita Arora, and Ambassadors such as Sharmila Tagore to the 4-year old child at the end of the chain who is given a chance to live. As Mahatma Gandhi said, never



forget the face of that child.

I am writing a book for our LILY charity on the theme: Mother is the First Guru. Many eminent people have contributed, including PM Narendrabhai Modi and HH The Dalai Lama. So many of the stories of the children we work for are closely linked to their mothers.

Take the case of Manju. She was born into a brothel in Bihar, but her mother Indrani came from Bharatpur. Indrani didn't want Manju to follow her into the trade so she sent her back to Bharatpur to be educated at the school that LILY supports. Manju became a successful businesswoman, became a teacher, built a house for her

Haima was the third daughter born into a poor Muslim family of Banaras. The unwanted girl was married off at 11 to a 40-year-old man. She gave birth to a son at 12 and was widowed at 13. The family threw her out, with the baby. Her parents didn't want her back

family, took a loan to set up her husband in business and repaid that. Then she took a second loan and set up shop in the village. The moving bit is that she even rescued her mother Indrani from the brothel and brought her home to live out her old age in peace.

As Martin Luther King said: "We refuse to believe the bank of justice is bankrupt."

Lady Mohini Kent Noon has attended the sessions of An Author's Afternoon, Ek Mulakat and The Write Circle

The views expressed in the write-up are the author's own and do not reflect the outlook of the Foundation



When literature **ECHOES** IN **MOUNTAINS**

This month, *Prabha* shares the journey of its associate **Siyahi** that introduces gifted storytellers to the literary world



Her Majesty, the Royal Queen Mother of Bhutan, Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck

After supporting her friends who had taken to writing with her honest feedback for several years, CEO Mita Kapur founded Siyahi in April 2007 to help new voices be heard. From being one of the very first literary agencies in India, Siyahi has grown to become the most

trusted name in the industry. Always on the lookout for gifted storytellers who can ruffle our beings with the power of their written words, Siyahi works with authors, right from the beginning – from editing the manuscript to finding the right publisher, and promoting the book after publication.

Their network of publishers includes leading Indian and international names. Siyahi manages authors' writing careers, not just for their entire portfolio of books, but also helps catalyse vernacular and international translations of their books. It has sub-agents in USA, UK, Spain, France, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Korea, Brazil, and Germany, and also works directly with publishers worldwide.

Siyahi's range of work extends

beyond that of a regular literary agency. They help forge extremely holistic, wholesome and grounded relationships with authors. Siyahi engages with the audience with a view to inculcate a healthy reading habit, spreading love and awareness for and appreciation of literature, art and culture. Siyahi also works towards the dramatisation, film rights for their authors' works. Siyahi works with film agents to pitch for creative film and television adaptations, and is also in direct touch with leading independent and mainstream production houses. The organisation helps production companies source authors and books that fit the genres they are looking to work in.

Siyahi is the only agency in India that offers active marketing and pro-

Mita Kapur,
Founder &
CEO of Siyahi





Festival Directors - Namita Gokhale, Pramod Kumar, Siok Sian Dorji (Former Director) and Tshering Tashi

motion support and services to authors. It also organises literary events of a scale ranging from intimate readings and listening sessions to international festivals.

Their flagship event — *Mountain Echoes* festival of art, literature and culture — is in its tenth year. Mountain Echoes brings together writers, biographers, historians, environmentalists, scholars, photographers, poets, musicians, artists, film-makers to engage in cultural dialogue, share stories, create memories and spend three blissful days in the mountains. Mountain Echoes enjoys the patronage of Her Majesty the Royal Queen Mother of Bhutan, Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck.

Woman Up! Summit is another initiative of Siyahi since 2017 where the focus is on celebrating success stories of women business leaders, entrepreneurs,



Kelly Dorji, Festival Director

Siyahi is the only agency in India that offers active marketing and promotion support and services to authors, and also organises literary events ranging from intimate readings to international fests

neers, path breakers and innovators in all fields. The summit is held in Jaipur every year.

Yet another initiative by Siyahi is *Soul Connect Experiences*, wherein Siyahi creates bespoke cultural experiences that involve music, food, art, textiles and offbeat travel, centred around India's rich folk and classical traditions.

Based in Jaipur, Siyahi's forte lies in the varied tapestry of Rajasthan's traditional lifestyle. As a consultancy, the organisation helps clients from the hospitality, travel, media, among others, with tailor-made authentic experiences for discerning audiences.

Soul Connect is involved in various archiving and conservancy projects that help revive these traditions and sustain their artistes and practitioners.



at Mountain ECHOES

Kalam is hosting a special session at this year's edition of Mountain Echoes called — *Hindinama*



Pavan K Varma (Top) and **Vani Tripathi Tikoo** (Centre) will be in conversation with **Rahul Mahajan** (in pic, above) at the session. They will talk about shared inspirations, insights, poetry and prose and an exploration of shared stories.

आज़मी ने अख़्तरी को देखा और कहा “आप तो मल्लिका हैं” और उनके हाथ से उसकी वो नोटबुक ले ली जिसमें अख़्तरी ने सारे गज़लें लिखी थी

जब बेग़म अख़्तरी ने कैफ़ी आज़मी को शराब दे कर कमरे में बन्द कर दिया था

शा



AJIT PRADHAN

यरों का तख़्त्युल... बेग़म अख़्तरी की जुबानी...

“किस का ख्याल कौन सी मंजिल नजर में है, सदियाँ गुज़र गई की ज़माना सफ़र में है”।

एक ऐसी हस्ती जिसका ज़िक्र किए बग़ैर गज़ल का सफ़र मुक़मल नहीं। एक ऐसी मखमली, जादुई और सेहरगेंज आवाज़ की मालिक रही बेग़म अख़्तरी।

बीबी से, अख़्तरी बाई फैजाबादी, फिर बेग़म इस्तियाक अहमद अब्बासी से बेग़म अख़्तरी का सफ़र फैजाबाद से शुरू हो कर, गया, पटना, भोपाल, रामपुर, मुंबई, होता हुआ वापस लखनऊ पहुँचा। उनका बचपन दुःखों में बीता। उनकी ज़िन्दगी में दुःख बेपनाह रहे और ये दुःख उनकी आवाज़ का हिस्सा बन गये। वो अक्सर कहा करती थीं...

“रंज से ख़ूबर हुआ इंसो तो मिट जाता है रंज, मुश्किलें मुझ पर पड़ी इतना की आसों हो गईं”।

बचपन से ही मौसकी से बहुत शौक रहा, और बड़े बड़े उस्तादों से तालीम भी ली। इसलिए उनकी गायकी में ग्वालियर घराना की जादुई तानें, किराना घराना की बढ़त, पटियाला घराना की रूमनियत और पूरब अंग की खुशबू थी उनके लखनऊ की।

मौसकी पर उनकी पकड़ इतनी मज़बूत थी कि ज़्यादातर वो शायरी को संगीत में खुद पिराना पसंद करती थीं। वो वक्त था जब शायरी का, गज़ल का, अलग अन्दाज़ था और महफ़िल का रंग निराला और बेग़म अख़्तरी उस सुरीले सफ़र की दिलकश मुसाफ़िर थीं।

बेग़म अख़्तरी ने जहाँ ग़ालिब, द्राग और मोमिन को गाया वहीं हम असर शायरों को भी गाया। उस ज़माने में शायर हज़रत में होड़ लगी रहती थी, कि कैसे बेग़म अख़्तरी उनकी गज़ल गायेँ, क्योंकि जिस शायर को भी बेग़म ने गाया वो बहुत मक़बूल हो गये। कुछ शायर तो सिर्फ़ बेग़म अख़्तरी को ख्याल में रखकर ही गज़ल लिखते थे और सिर्फ़ बेग़म के लिए ही लिखते थे।

बेग़म अख़्तरी उस वक्त अख़्तरी बाई फैजाबादी के नाम से जानी जाती थीं। उनकी ज़िन्दगी में शायराना तहज़ीब को अपनी कलम से रंग देने वाले जो पहले शायर आये, वो

“

यूँ दिल के तड़पने का कुछ तो है शबब आखिर ।

या दर्द ने करवट ली,
या तुमने इधर देखा ॥

दुनिया के सितम याद न
अपनी ही वफ़ा याद ।

अब मुझको नहीं कुछ भी
मोहब्बत के सिवा याद ॥

थे सरदार अहमद खाँ, याने बहज़ाद लखनवी। बहज़ाद साहब की मक़बूलियत में अख़्तरी का भी हिस्सा था।

बात उस वक्त की है, जब अख़्तरी 11 साल की थीं, उनकी अम्मी मुस्तरी बेग़म, उनके मुस्तकबिल को ले कर, उनके आने वाले कल को लेकर काफी परेशान रहा करती थीं इसलिए वो अख़्तरी को लेकर बरेली के पीर अजीज़ मियां के यहाँ गयीं। पीर अजीज़ मियां ने अख़्तरी को देखा और कहा “आप तो मल्लिका हैं” और अख़्तरी के हाथ से उसकी वो नोटबुक ले ली जिसमें अख़्तरी ने सारे गज़लें लिखी थीं। पीर साहब ने नोटबुक को खोला और जिस पन्ने पर उन्होंने हाथ रखा उस पन्ने पर बहज़ाद लखनवी की गज़ल लिखी थी—

“दीवाना बनाना है तो दीवाना बना दे,
वरना कहीं तक्रदीर तमाशा न बना दे”।

पीर साहब ने अख्तरी से कहा.....

“अगले रिकॉर्डिंग में ये गाना सबसे पहले गाना, शोहरत तुम्हारे कदम चूमेंगी दौलत तुम्हारी बान्दी हो कर घूमेंगी”। फिर कलकत्ता में दुर्गा पूजा के दौरान अख्तरी ने ये गजल गायी, सारंगी पर साथ थे उस्ताद बड़े गुलाम अली खाँ। पूरे बंगाल में तहलका सा मच गया, और ये तहलका जल्द ही सारे देश में फैल गया।

पीर मियाँ की बात सच निकली। अख्तरी की गजल, “दीवाना बनाना है तो.....” न जाने कितने को ही दीवाना बना दिया, पंडित जसराज ने ये गजल छः साल की उम्र में जब सुनी तो इस तरह दीवाने हो गये कि उन्होंने गायक बनने की ठान ली। इस रिकॉर्ड की मांग इतनी थी कि मेगाफोन कंपनी को खास इस रिकॉर्ड के लिए कलकत्ते में रिकॉर्ड प्रेसिंग प्लांट बनवाना पड़ा। इस गजल ने बेगम अख्तर और बहजाद लखनवी दोनों को मशहूर कर दिया।

बहुत सालों बाद बेगम अख्तर ने पीर मियाँ की बात को याद करते हुए कहा “काश! पीर साहब शोहरत और दौलत के बदले थोड़ी मुझे चैन और सुकून की दुआ दिये होते, तो थोड़ी खुशियाँ मेरे भी दामन में होती”...

बात 1944-45 की है। इस्तियाक अहमद अब्बासी साहब से शादी के बाद बेगम ने सालों तक गाना छोड़ दिया। ये बात जब बहजाद लखनवी साहब तक पहुँची तब बहजाद ने लिखना ही छोड़ दिया। एक मुशायरे के दौरान बहजाद लखनवी से उनके एक दोस्त ने पूछा.... ‘जनाब, क्या हाल बना रहा है, कहीं इश्क-विशक तो नहीं कर बैठे हो’। इस पर मुस्कराते हुए बहजाद ने कहा.....

**“ऐ देखने वाले, मुझे हँस हँस के न देखो,
तुमको भी मोहब्बत कहीं मुझसा न बना दे”**

बहजाद उम्र में बेगम से काफी बड़े थे।

बंटवारे के बाद बहजाद साहब पाकिस्तान जा बसे। वहाँ एक मुशायरे में किसी ने बहजाद साहब से एक कलाम पढ़ने की फरमाईश की। पर बहजाद साहब बस चुपचाप ही बैठे रहे। तब किसी ने छेड़ते हुए उनसे कहा “आपको दीवाना तो बना ही दिया है बेगम अख्तर ने, अब सम्भल भी जाओ, अब तो ये दो मुल्कों की बात है”... इस पर बहजाद साहब ने चुप्पी तोड़ी और कहा “मियाँ बात दिलों की है ये मुल्क को बीच में क्यों लाया” और फिर अपना एक शेर सुनाया।

**“दुनिया को इल्म क्या है, जमाने को क्या खबर,
दुनिया भुला चुका हूँ, तुम्हारे ख्याल में”।**

कुछ अरसे बाद बेगम अख्तर से किसी ने यही सवाल पूछा, “क्या आप बहजाद लखनवी से प्यार करती हैं”? बेगम ने बिना किसी झिझक के जवाब दिया, “हाँ मैं बहजाद से प्यार करती हूँ, और क्यों न करूँ... जिसने मेरे गाना छोड़ने पर लिखना ही छोड़ दिया, उसे प्यार न करूँ तो किसे करूँ”।

एक बार बेगम अख्तर मंच पर जिगर मुरादाबादी की गजल गा रही थीं।

**“तबीयत इन दिनों बेगना-ए-गम होती जाती है,
मिरे हिस्से की गोया हर खुशी कम होती जाती है”।**

बेगम ने बड़ी खूबसूरती से इसे काफी ठाठ की राग सिंधूरा में सजाया था, और इस गजल का मक्ता, फरमाईश पर जब तीसरी बार पेश कर रही थीं, तब एक पंजाब का शायर मंच पर जा पहुँचा और बेगम साहिबा से गुजारिश की – “आप एक बार मेरी गजल गा दें तो



**इतना तो जिन्दगी में किसी
के खलल पड़े ।
हँसने से हो सुकून न रोने से
कल पड़े ॥
मुहत के बाद उसने जो की
लुत्फ की निगाह ।
जी खुश तो हो गया मगार
आँसू निकल पड़े ॥**

मेरी जिन्दगी बन जायेगी”। और बस वहीं अपनी लिखी हुई गजल, बेगम साहिबा को दे दी। बेगम अख्तर ने उसी वक्त मंच पर उस शायर की गजल को संगीत से सजा कर सुर दिया और कहा, “बड़े अच्छे शायर हो, बड़े अच्छे ख्याल हैं... और जुबान, माशाअल्लाह”। वो शायर कोई और नहीं सुदर्शन फ़ाकिर थे जो बेगम के कारण ही मुशायरों के शान बन गये।

सुदर्शन फ़ाकिर भी उन्ही शायरों में थे जो बेगम अख्तर के लिए ही लिखते थे, और बेगम अख्तर के कारण ही वो मशहूर हुए।

अगर कोई गजल बेगम अख्तर की कहानी सचमुच बताती है, तो वो गजल है सुदर्शन फ़ाकिर की ये गजल, जो उन्होंने बेगम के लिए ही लिखी.....

**“कुछ तो दुनिया की इनायात ने दिल तोड़ दिया,
और कुछ तिलख-ए-हायात ने दिल तोड़ दिया।
दिल तो रोता रहा और आँख से आसूँ न बहे,
इश्क की ऐसी रिवायत ने दिल तोड़ दिया”।**

और इस गजल के दो शेर... कहते हैं बेगम के कहने पर ही फ़ाकिर ने लिखा था। बेगम अख्तर की तख्त्युलात की तर्जुमानी बहुत ही खूबसूरत लफ्जों में फ़ाकिर ने की...

**“हम तो समझे थे कि बरसात में बरसेगी शराब,
आयी बरसात तो बरसात ने दिल तोड़ दिया।
आपको प्यार है मुझसे कि नहीं है मुझसे,
जाने क्यों ऐसे सवालता ने दिल तोड़ दिया”।**

और बेगम अख्तर ने क्लासिक अन्दाज़ में राग भूप-कल्याण में इसे गाया। ये गजल बेगम अख्तर के मशहूर गजलों में से एक है। और इस खूबी से बेगम अख्तर इस गजल की ‘रादिफ’ “दिल तोड़ दिया” को पेश करती थी कि हर महफिल में “दिल तोड़ दिया” की फरमाईश होती थी।

सुदर्शन फ़ाकिर को इस बात का एहसास था, कि उनके मकबूलियत के पीछे बेगम अख्तर का हाथ है, इसलिए वो उनके लिए अकसर ही लिखते थे। जब दूसरी बार फ़ाकिर साहब की मुलाकात हुई बेगम अख्तर से, तब फ़ाकिर साहब ने अपनी एक खूबसूरत गजल

उन्हें भेंट में दी।

**“अपनो के सितम हम से बताए नहीं जाते,
ये हादसे वो हैं जो सुनाए नहीं जाते,
कुछ कम ही ताल्लुक है मोहब्बत का जुनूँ से,
दीवाने तो होते हैं बनाए नहीं जाते,
इक उम्र की कोशिश से भुला दी है तेरी याद,
लेकिन अभी तक याद के साये नहीं जाते”।**

बेगम ने इसे राग जोगिया में कम्पोज़ किया। राग जोगिया को ही बेगम ने इस गजल के लिए इसलिए चुना, क्योंकि राग जोगिया के सुर इस गजल के मिजाज़ की तर्जुमानी करते हैं।

शमीम जयपुरी जिनकी गजलों में जिगर मुरादाबादी की क्लासिक थी, और तस्कीन कुरैशी का अन्दाज़, उस जमाने में मुशायरों के बहुत लोकप्रिय शायर माने जाते थे, और खुद ही तरनुम में अपनी गजल पढ़ते थे। शमीम जाने माने शायर तो थे, लेकिन आवाम तक इनका नाम पहुँचने में बेगम अख्तर की गायकी का बहुत बड़ा दखल रहा।

**“काबे से बुतकदे से कभी बज्म-ए-जाम से,
आवाज़ दे रहा हूँ तुझे हर मकाम से,
दिल में फरेब, लब पे तब्बसुम, नज़र में प्यार,
लुट गए शमीम बड़े ऐहतमाम से”।**

इस गजल का मक्ता कहते हैं बेगम अख्तर के लिए ही शमीम जयपुरी ने लिखा और बेगम ने इस गजल को राग शुद्ध कल्याण में गाकर इसे मशहूर-मारुफ कर दिया।

इस गजल को सुन कर शमीम जयपुरी का कहना रहा - ‘गजल गायकी में बेगम अख्तर का कोई मिसाल नहीं, रूह से उठती हुई एक आवाज़ है वो, जो रूह को छू कर गुजर जाती है’।

उसी दौरान शकील बदायुनी काफी सालों बाद बेगम अख्तर को फिर से अपनी गजल भेजना शुरू कि थी। लेकिन बेगम को शमीम जयपुरी का भेजा हुआ वो गजल इतना पंसद आया की शकील की गजलों पर ध्यान ही नहीं दिया और वो जो गजल थी शमीम की वो कुछ इस तरह है -

**“सुना है लूट लिया है किसी को रहबर ने,
ये वाकिआ तो मिरि दास्ताँ से मिलता है,
दर-ए-हबीब भी है, बुत-कदा भी, काबा भी,
ये देखना है, सुकूँ अब कहाँ से मिलता है”।**

बहुत ही खूबसूरती से राग देश में बेगम ने इसे सजा कर गाया, और शमीम और भी मशहूर हो गये।

लेकिन जिस शायर से बेगम अख्तर ने बेपनाह प्यार किया, जिसके दिवान को अपने तकिये के नीचे रख कर सोती थी, जिसके दिवान को दिल से लगा कर रखा था, वो थे जिगर मुरादाबादी। वो इस कदर से उनकी गजलों पर फिदा थी एक वक्त था जब महफिलों में वो सिर्फ जिगर की ही गजलें गाती थीं।

ये उस वक्त की बात है जब बहुत लोग ‘जिगर’ को जानते भी नहीं थे। जिगर को सही मायने में हर दिल अजीज़ बनाने में बेगम का बहुत बड़ा हाथ रहा।

**“यूँ दिल के तड़पने का कुछ तो है शबब आखिर,
या दर्द ने करवट ली, या तुमने इधर देखा”।
“दुनिया के सितम याद न अपनी ही वफा याद
अब मुझको नहीं कुछ भी मोहब्बत के सिवा याद”।**

या

“कोई ये कह दे गुलशन गुलशन,
लाख बलाए, एक नशेमन
कातिल रहबर कातिल रहजन
दिल सा दोस्त न दिल सा दुशमन
आज ना जाने राज ये क्या है,
हिज्र की रात और इतनी रौशन”

जब ये सारे ‘जिगर’ मुरादाबादी के गजलों को गाने के बाद भी ‘जिगर’ उनके तरफ ध्यान नहीं दिया तो बेगम से नहीं रहा गया और उन्होंने ‘जिगर’ को एक खत लिखा।

“आप शायर हैं, और मैं एक गायिका, हम दोनों शादी क्यों नहीं कर लेते”...

‘जिगर’ के जवाब ने बेगम का दिल तोड़ दिया...

‘जिगर’ ने लिखा...“आप मेरा दिवान पढ़ती हैं, गाती हैं, सब सही है, लेकिन मुझसे मिलने की कोशिश ना करें।

ये बात ‘जिगर’ ने इसलिए लिखी क्योंकि जिगर देखने में किसी एंगल से अच्छे नहीं थे और उनको इस बात का पूरा एहसास था।

‘जिगर’ के जवाब ने बेगम को बहुत ही दुखी कर दिया, और उस शाम की महफिल में बेगम अख्तर ने जिगर को नहीं गाया... गालिब को गाया...

“ये न थी हमारी किस्मत की विसाल-ए-यार होता,
अगर और जीते रहते, यही इन्तजार होता”।

कुछ दिन बाद, जब एक पार्टी में ‘जिगर’ की मुलाकत बेगम साहिबा से हुई, तो बड़ी मजेदार बात ‘जिगर’ ने कही, “जी आपका खत मिला, तो कुछ घबरा सा गया, सोचा अगर हमारे बच्चे हुए और उनकी सूरत हम पर गई और लिखने की काबिलियत आप पर, तो पता नहीं क्या होगा”।

लेकिन उसी वक्त flirt करते हुए ‘जिगर’ ने बेगम साहिबा की तरफ इशारा करते हुए कहा-

मेरा कमाल-ए-शेर बस इतना ही है ‘जिगर’,
आप हम पे छा गये, और हम जमाने पे छा गये है”।

बेगम अख्तर shared a very close relationship with Firaq Gorakhpuri

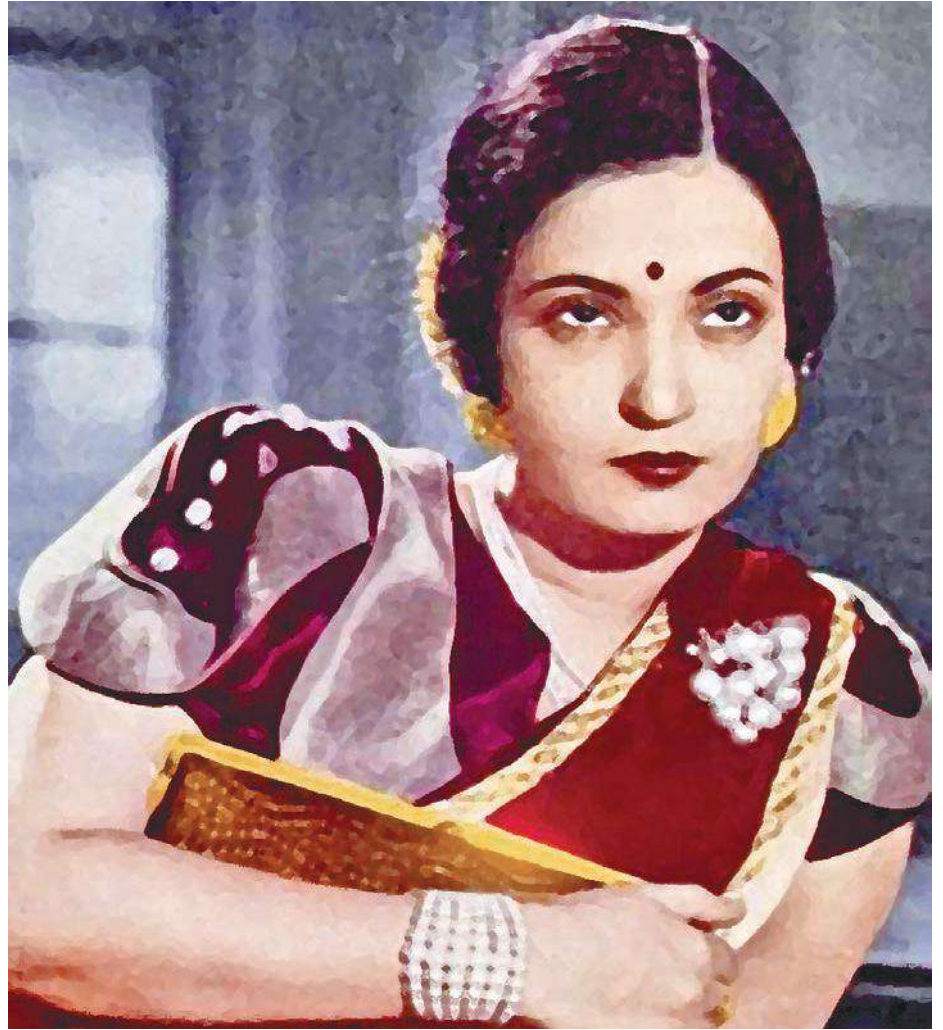
ये उस वक्त की बात है जब फिराक दिल्ली में थे - पहाड़गंज में... और उनकी तबीयत बहुत नासाज थी। वो रह रह कर बेगम को याद कर रहे थे,-

“बुला दो उसे, कुछ उससे कहना है, एक गजल कहनी है उसे”।

बेगम को खबर भेजी गयी, “फिराक की तबीयत नासाज है, याद फरमाया है”। बेगम परेशान भागते भागते, फिराक के पास जा पहुँची। फिराक गहरी गहरी साँस ले रहे थे, आवाज भी ठीक से नहीं निकल पा रही थी, लेकिन बेगम अख्तर को देखते ही उनका चेहरा खिल सा उठा और बेगम से कहा, “मेरा हाल-चाल मत पूछो... ये जो चन्द लम्हें हैं न, चलो कुछ और ही बात करते हैं”।

और फिराक ने अपनी नज्म सुनाई।

“शाम-ए-गम कुछ उस निगाह-ए-नाज की बातें करो,
बेखुदी बढ़ती चली है राज की बातें करो,
निकहत-ए-जुल्फ-ए-परेशाँ दास्ताँ-ए-शाम-ए-गम,
सुबह होने तक इसी अन्दाज की बातें करो”।



ये नज्म फिराक ने बेगम साहिबा को तोहफे में दी और बेगम से इसरार किया कि वो इसी वक्त इसे गा कर सुनाएँ। बेगम अख्तर ने बस उसी वक्त इस गजल को राग शिवरंजनी मे तरतीब किया, और इतनी खूबसूरती से गाया की फिराक के आँख से आसूँ बह निकले।

शायरों में सबसे करीब अगर उनसे कोई था, तो वो थे कैफ़ी आज़मी। कैफ़ी आज़मी का कहना रहा बेगम के बारे में... “गजल सिर्फ सुनने को नहीं बल्कि देखने को भी मिलती है”।

एक बार बेगम कैफ़ी से मिलना चाहती थी तो कैफ़ी को झूठी खबर भिजवाई की उनकी तबीयत बहुत नासाज है। पता नहीं फिर मिल पायेंगे या नहीं। कैफ़ी भागते-भागते आये तो देखा बेगम cigarette का धुँआ उड़ा रही है।

“एक गजल पूरी करनी है - उसका मक्ता नहीं है, इसलिए बुलाया है तुम्हें, और कैफ़ी साहब को एक बोलत शराब के साथ कमरे में बन्द कर दिया और कहा लिखो, फिर दरवाजा खोलनी”।

कैफ़ी ने तब वो मक्ता लिखा...

“हुआ है हुक्म की कैफ़ी को संगसार करो,
मसीह बैठे है छुप के कहाँ खुदा जाने”।

और शेर का मतला है...

“सुना करो मेरी जान, इनसे उनसे अफसाने,

सब अजनबी हैं यहाँ किसको कौन पहचाने”। मक्ता पूरा होने पर जब दरवाजा खुला और कैफ़ी आज़मी जाने लगे तो बेगम ने जिस अन्दाज में उनकी एक नज्म सुनाई...

“पाया भी उनको, खो भी दिया, चुप भी हो रहे,
इक मुख्तसर सी रात में सदियाँ गुज़र गयी”। तो कैफ़ी मानो रो ही बैठे... बेगम ने जब रोने की वजह पूछी तो कैफ़ी ने अपनी वो पहली गजल जो सिर्फ 11 साल के उम्र में लिखी थी, उसे पेश किया...

“इतना तो ज़िन्दगी में किसी के खलल पड़े,
हंसने से हो सुकून न रोने से कल पड़े,
मुद्दत के बाद उसने जो की लुत्फ की निगाह,
जी खुश तो हो गया मगर आसूँ निकल पड़े”।

खैर, बेगम ने कैफ़ी को मक्ता पूरा करने पर रिहा तो किया और शुक़्रिया अदा करते हुए उनकी वो गजल के चन्द शेर और मक्ता बहुत देर तक गुन गुनाते रहीं, और फिर राग मिश्र काफ़ी में उसे गाया

“सुना कर मेरी जाँ इनसे उनसे अपसाने,
सब अजनबी है यहाँ कौन किसको पहचाने,
मिरे जुनून-ए-परस्तिश से तंग आ गये लोग,
सुना है बन्द किए जा रहे है बुतखाने,
बहार आये तो मेरा सलाम कह देना,

मुझे तो आज तलब कर लिया है सहारा ने,
हुआ है हुक्म कि कैफ़ी को संगसार करो,
मसीह बैठे हैं छुप के कहाँ खुदा जानें”।

कैफ़ी बहुत शुक़रगुजार थे, की मक्ता पूरा करने के बहाने से उन्हें इतनी सुन्दर गज़ल सुनने को मिली, देखने को मिली, और फिर दोनों ने साथ ही इसे National Channel पर पेश किया राग मिश्र काफ़ी में।

बात 1951-1952 की होगी, Bombay Central Railway Station Platform से लखनऊ जाने वाली Train के फ़र्स्ट क्लास कूपे में मल्लिका-ए-गज़ल, हिन्दुस्तान की मायनाज़ गायिका बेगम अख़्तर मौजूद थीं। अभी ट्रेन खुलने ही वाली थी की एक काली शेरवानी और उजला पायजामा पहना हुआ शख्स दौड़ता हुआ उस डिब्बे में दाखिल हुआ और उसने कागज़ का एक पर्जा बेगम को दिया, साथ ही मिन्नत भी की, बराय मेहरबानी इसे ट्रेन खुलने पर ही पढ़ेंगी। वो शख्स कोई और नहीं जाने माने शायर शकील बदायूनी थे। बेगम ने शकील की बात मान ली और उस कागज़ को तक्रिए के नीचे दबा दिया। रात जब गहराने लगी तो बेगम को उस कागज़ के टुकड़े की याद आई। कागज़ में लिखी इबारात कुछ इस तरह थी...

“ऐ मोहब्बत तेरे अन्जाम पे रोना आया,
जाने क्यों आज तेरे नाम पे रोना आया,
यूँ तो हर शाम उम्मीदों मे गुज़र जाती थी,
आज कुछ बात है जो शाम पे रोना आया”।

चलती ट्रेन में बेगम ने अपना हारमोनियम निकाला और रात भर इस गज़ल पर काम करती रही। 4-5 बज रहे थे सुबह के, जब ट्रेन भोपाल पहुँची, राग भैरवी का वक्त था और ये गज़ल राग भैरवी में तैयार हो चुकी थी।

एक हफ्ते के अन्दर ये गज़ल बेगम ने लखनऊ रेडियो स्टेशन से पेश की, और पूरे हिन्दुस्तान ने इस गज़ल को हाथों हाथ ले लिया।

इतनी मशहूर गज़ल, शायद ही कोई हो। कहते हैं, गज़ल का मतलब ‘ऐ मोहब्बत’ और ‘ऐ मोहब्बत’ का मतलब बेगम अख़्तर। बेगम की ‘ऐ मोहब्बत’ सुनकर ऐसा लगता है मानो आधी रात को दूर किसी वीराने से आहिस्ता-आहिस्ता उनींदी सी कोई आवाज़ उठ रही हो। बेगम अख़्तर तो celebrity थीं ही, but this ghazal made her a legend in her life time और उन्हें बुलन्दी की आख़री मंजिल तक पहुँचा दिया।

अगर “दीवाना बनाना है तो दीवाना बना दे” से उनकी पहचान हुई तो ‘ऐ मोहब्बत’ ने उन्हें उस मुकाम पर ला कर खड़ा किया जहाँ तक आज भी कोई नहीं पहुँच पाया है। हर महफ़िल में इस गज़ल की फरमाईश हुआ करती थी, और कभी-कभी एक ही महफ़िल में 3-4 बार इस गज़ल को गाने की फरमाईश होती थी, और बेगम हर बार इसे दूसरे अन्दाज़ में गा कर सुनाती थीं।

इस गज़ल ने शकील को भी celebrity बना दिया। शकील की शख्सियत मोहताज़-ए-तारूफ नहीं थी, इस गज़ल ने शकील बदायूनी को बहुत ऊँचे मुकाम तक पहुँचा दिया, जिसके वजह से वो अदबी दुनिया में काफ़ी शोहरत हासिल किए और फिल्मी दुनिया में उनकी मकबूलियत और भी बढ़ गयी। उस ज़माने के सबसे बड़े गीतकार माने जाने लगे शकील।

“ऐ मोहब्बत तेरे अन्जाम पे” बेगम का signature



शाम-ए-ग़म कुछ उस निगाह-
ए-नाज़ की बातें करो ।
बेखुदी बढ़ती चली है
राज़ की बातें करो ॥
निकहत-ए-जुल्फ-ए-परेशाँ
दास्ताँ-ए-शाम-ए-ग़म ।
सुबह होने तक इसी अन्दाज़ की
बातें करो ॥

tune हो गया। लेकिन कुछ differences के कारण बेगम ने इसके बाद शकील को गाना छोड़ दिया और काफ़ी अरसे तक उन्होंने शकील को नहीं गाया।

पर जब दुबारा शकील की गज़ल गायी तो उसका कोई जवाब न था...

“मेरे हम-नफस मेरे हम-नवा,
मुझे दोस्त बना के दगा न दे।
मैं हूँ दर्द-ए-इश्क से जाँ-ब-लब,
मुझे ज़िन्दगी की दुआ न दे”।

अगर बेगम की दो सबसे मशहूर गज़लें हैं, तो वो है शकील की लिखी ये दोनों गज़लें।

बेगम अख़्तर को कुछ समय से ये अहसास होने लगा था की वो अब चंद दिनों की ही मेहमान है।

वो बेगम अख़्तर के ज़िन्दगी कि आख़री recording थी। बेगम के साथ थे कैफ़ी आजमी। Recording के दौरान जब कैफ़ी से पूछा गया की उन्होंने गज़लें किस लिए लिखना शुरू किया तो उनका जवाब आया “मैंने गज़लें इसलिए लिखना शुरू किया जिस लिए ग़ालिब मुस्सवरी सीखना चाहते थे... सोचा अगर मैं गज़ल कहींगा तो मैं गज़ल के करीब हो जाऊँगा और सिर्फ इसलिए ही लिखना शुरू किया।” और बेगम अख़्तर के तरफ इशारा करते हुए कहा, “बेगम साहिबा के सामने आकर सिर्फ गज़ल सुनने को नहीं, गज़ल देखने को मिलती है”।

जब प्रोग्राम एंकर बेगम अख़्तर की तरफ मुखातिब हुए, तब बेगम ने कहा “अब मुझसे मत पूछ बैठना, की मैंने गाना क्यों शुरू किया... अब तो गाना अन्त करने का समय आ गया है”... और कैफ़ी से कहा, “अब मेरे जाने का समय आ गया है, शायद ये मेरे ज़िन्दगी कि आख़री recording हो” और कैफ़ी की लिखी गज़ल जो राग भैरवी और कोमल असावरी में बेगम ने तरतीब की थी, उसे पेश किया।

“मैं दूढ़ता हूँ जिसे, वो जहाँ नहीं मिलता,
जो इक़ खुदा नहीं मिलता तो इतना मातम क्यों,
यहाँ तो कोई मिरा हम-जबाँ नहीं मिलता”।

और हम-जबाँ को खोजते-खोजते बेगम चल बसीं... ये सच में बेगम की आख़री recording थी। उसी दौरान की बात है, बहुत कहने पर बेगम साहिबा

एक private concert मे गाने को तैयार हुई, पर गाना शुरू करने के पहले stage पर उन्होंने ऐलान किया कि इसके बाद वो कोई private concert में नहीं गायेंगी,

“चलो आज इस महफ़िल में, अपने दिल की बात कहती हूँ,” और अपने हम उम्र शायर हफीज़ होशयारपुरी की एक खुबसूरत गज़ल सुनायी...

“मोहब्बत करने वाले कम न होंगे
तेरी महफ़िल में लेकिन हम न होंगे”।

और ये इनके ज़िन्दगी कि आख़री private महफ़िल थी। कहते हैं हर महफ़िल भैरवी से अन्त करते हैं। बेगम अख़्तर ने कभी कहा था कि मेरी पहचान हुई है stage पर और चाहती हूँ कि दम भी वहीं निकले। अहमदाबाद में अपनी ज़िन्दगी का उन्होंने last public concert किया... जहाँ उन्हें heart attack आया। उन्होंने राग भैरवी “ऐ मोहब्बत तेरे अन्जाम पे रोना आया, जाने क्यों आज तेरे नाम पे रोना आया” से ही अपनी सांस छोड़ी।

Agha Sahid Ali अंग्रेज़ी के बहुत ही काबिल poet माने जाते थे, and was considered one of the greatest modern poets, much ahead of his times. Agha Sahid Ali बेगम के दीवाने थे, बेपनाह मोहब्बत करते थे उनसे, और जब भी मौका मिलता तब बेगम के इर्द गिर्द ही रहते थे। वो बेगम के बहुत करीब थे। Agha Sahid Ali को गज़ल से पहचान कराई बेगम अख़्तर ने, और Agha Sahid Ali अंग्रेज़ी में गज़ल लिखना शुरू कर दिए।

बेगम अख़्तर का इन्तकाल, shattered Agha Sahid Ali and immediately after Agha Sahid Ali returned from Begum’s funeral he wrote a tribute to her...

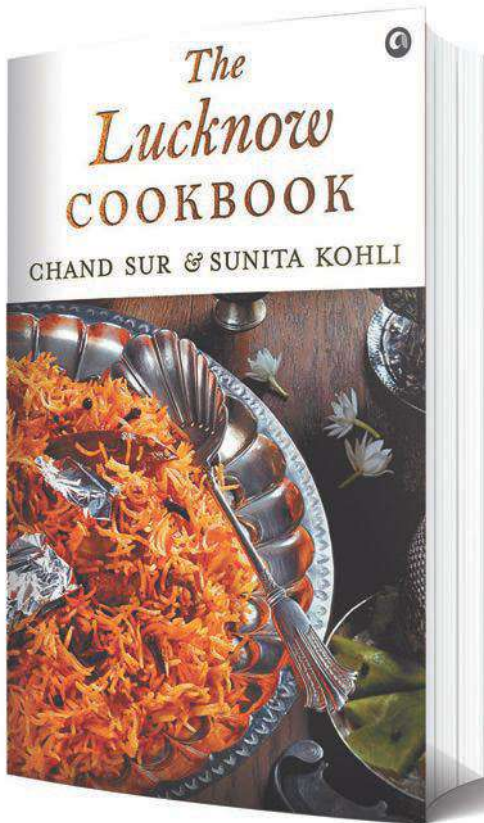
“In memory of Begum Akhtar”.

“Do your fingers still scale the hungry
Bhairavi, or simply the muddy shroud?
Ghazal, that death-sustaining widow,
sobs in dingy archives, hooked to you.
She wears her grief, a moon-soaked white,
corners the sky into disbelief.
You’ve finally polished catastrophe,
the note you seasoned with decades
of Ghalib, Mir, Faiz:
I innovate on a note-less raga.”

And later in another fleeting moment-in other verses, Agha Sahid Ali wrote... “A night of ghazals has come to an end. The singer departs through her chosen mirror; her one diamond cut on her countless necks. I, as ever linger.”

The author is a Cardiac Surgeon and the founder of Navras School of Performing Arts, the Foundation’s associate for Kalam and The Write Circle in Patna and Ranchi

The views expressed in the write-up are the author’s own and do not reflect the outlook of the Foundation



In addition to being launched in every premier literary festival of India, *The Lucknow Cookbook*, co-authored by **Sunita Kohli** with her mother **Chand Sur** debuts at Kitaab Book Launch in Bengaluru

A TRIBUTE TO TRADITIONAL LUCKNOW

Kitchens

Author Sunita Kohli's book, *The Lucknow Cookbook*, was introduced to readers at the **Kitaab Book Launch** held in Bengaluru on June 22. The author was in conversation with Sai Kothai, and shared the stories behind the recipes put to-



Subodh Sankar and Lakshmi Sankar



Padmashree Recipient
Sunita Kohli

gether for the book. Kohli is a globally recognised national award-winning interior designer, furniture manufacturer and architectural restorer since 1971. The author, who is also a Padmashree Recipient, recently co-authored *The Lucknow Cookbook* with her mother, Chand Sur. *The Lucknow Cookbook* has been launched in almost every

premier literary festival in India. The book celebrates the city of *nawabs* as the melting pot of cultures and brings together some of the best recipes from its kitchens.

Its most recent launch, which took place end of April, 2019, was at the Singapore, Festival of Indian Arts and Ideas, where Sunita Kohli also delivered an illustrated lecture on 'The Syncretic Culture of India's Tangible & Intangible Heritage'

The Kitaab Book Launch at Bengaluru was in association with Atta Galatta

A GEM IN THE PINK CITY

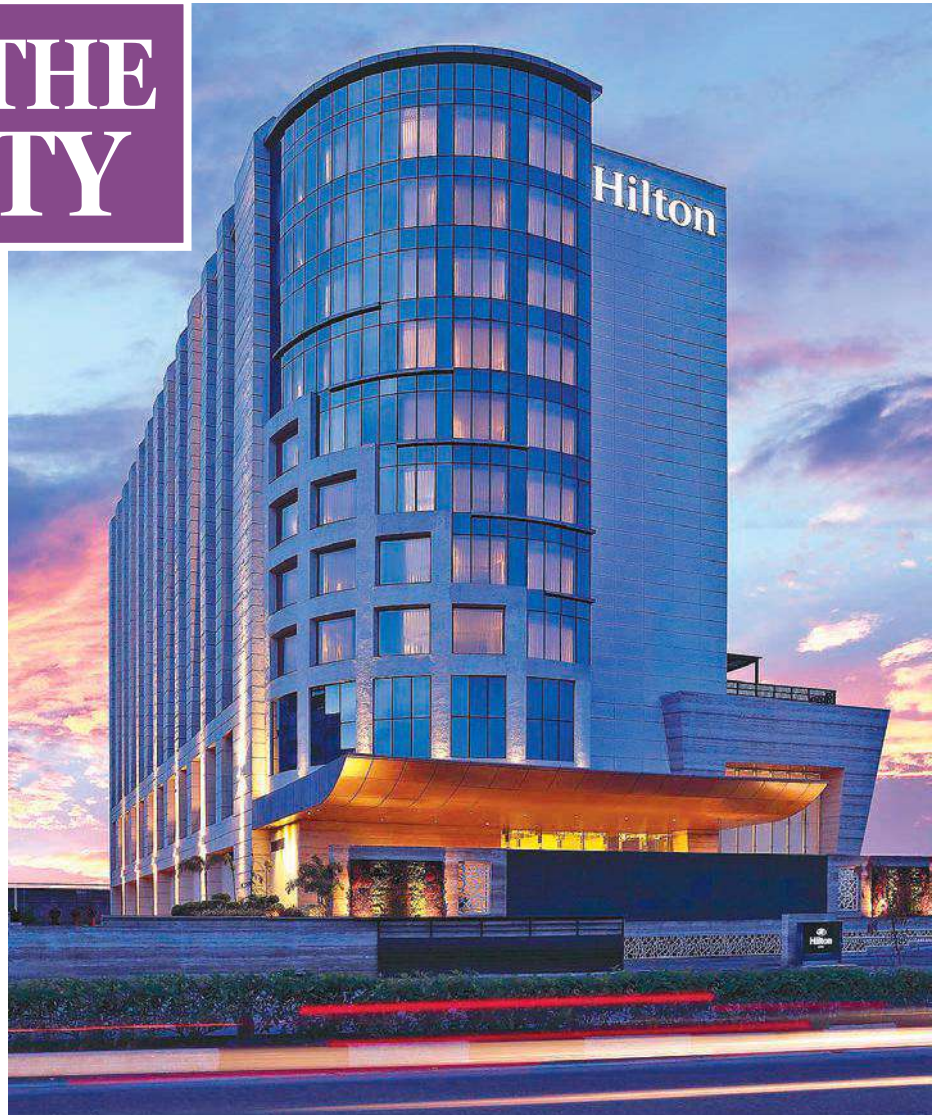
Hilton Jaipur is the perfect property for business and family events with its world-class menu, spaces with eclectic interiors and facilities that will help you unwind

Located in the heart of the Pink City, Hilton Jaipur is a short drive away from major attractions of the city, as well as its commercial areas, making it ideal for both leisure and business travellers. With an experienced and skilled team that is complemented by spacious accommodation and a full range of facilities and services, the hotel serves as a perfect venue for exclusive intimate and mid-sized business events and social gatherings. **The hotel has been an associate for Prabha Khaitan Foundation's Lafz, getting the best of Urdu writers to interact with the audience in the city.**

The hotel offers an extensive selection of upscale rooms and suites (a total of 179). One can stay in an executive room or suite to enjoy exclusive access to the Executive Lounge and the various benefits it offers. Its award-winning dining venues like Aurum and Chaandi offer guests an elaborate menu, beautiful décor and a service style. One can also relax with their preferred drinks in the Krystal Lounge Bar.

Hilton Jaipur offers a range of event spaces, spread over 10,000 sq. ft, to suit the business needs of guests — the pillar-less Turquoise Grand Ballroom, The Lavender room, The Boardroom, and Meeting Rooms I and II. The al fresco Rooftop area, offering spectacular views of the Aravalli Range and the city, is perfect for intimate lunch and dinner gatherings in a tranquil atmosphere.

'Eau de Vie' by ZIVAYA, Hilton Jaipur



**Vishal Gupta, General Manager
of Hilton Jaipur**

Spa heals, relaxes and energises with a careful blend of Indian and international traditions and techniques. Located on Level 1, the outdoor pool is ideal for a morning swim or an evening dip. Featuring the latest generation of cardio and strength training equipment, the

CELEBRATING THE PINK CITY

- 179 UPSCALE ROOMS AND SUITES
- AWARD-WINNING DINING VENUES WITH ELABORATE MENU
- OVER 10,000 SQ. FT OF EVENT SPACES
- SPA, SWIMMING POOL & FITNESS CENTRE FOR REJUVENATION

Fitness Centre takes a personalised approach to help guests feel their best.

As a wedding venue, the property offers modern-day architecture, chic interiors, generous amenities, stylish design, exceptional hospitality and a variety of delectable cuisines.

Revisiting the **Kitaab Book Launch** with **Shashi Tharoor** that introduced readers to *The Paradoxical Prime Minister*

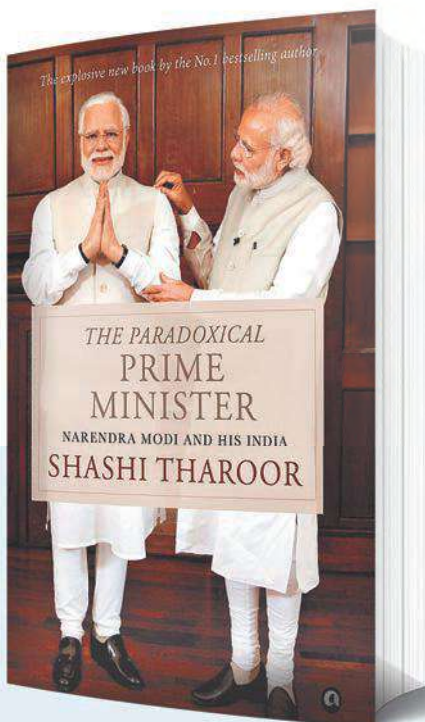
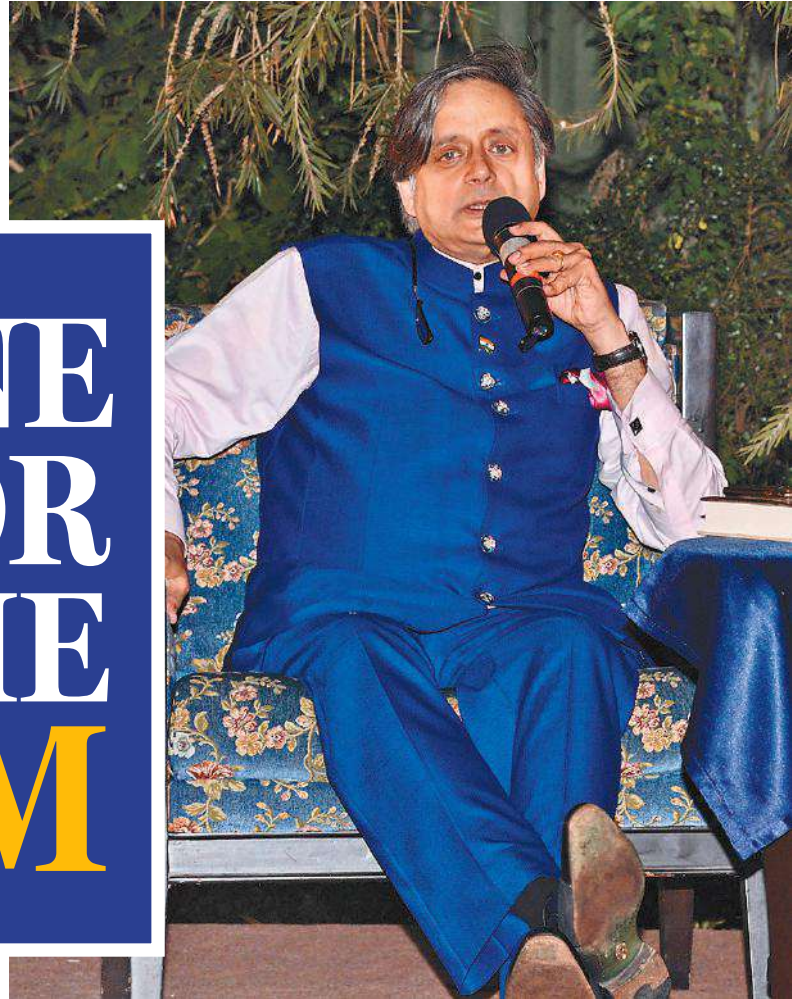
Book lovers, students, industrialists and well-known faces from Kolkata had turned up to hear Shashi Tharoor, when he launched his book *The Paradoxical Prime Minister* as part of the **Kitaab Book Launch** in November last year. The event, held in collaboration with The Bengal Rowing Club, was presented by Shree Cement Ltd.

The author and politician was in conversation with Sandip Roy, while the book was launched by actress and former MP Moon Moon Sen.

During the conversation, Tharoor mentioned that the launch of this book came close to his last one because he wanted *The Paradoxical Prime Minister* to hit the stands before the general elections in 2019.

“What happened was that I had no plans to write another book quite so fast. The best I’ve usually been able to manage is a year and a half interval between books. More often, it tends to be two. But in this particular case, the urgency came from the imminence of

ONE
FOR
THE
PM



the general elections. And there was even a rumour that the BJP government might call early elections by December. We didn’t want to take a chance because the whole point about this book is to convey with some substance and some depth my concerns about what’s happened in the country in the past four and a half years and why it was important that before the next elections, thinking-reading people should reconsider what they feel about this particular book,” he said, explaining how he missed nights of sleep over the book.

The conversationalist, Sandip Roy asked him about the reason for choosing that particular title of the book, “What was the paradox that you really wanted to explore through this book?” Tharoor replied, “When Mr Modi came to power in 2014, I was in the process of putting together an essay collection for my publisher, which was published at the end of the year under the title *India Shastra: Reflection on the Nation in our Time* and while I was doing that, Mr Modi’s first few months began to open out in front of me as it were. When I wrote the introductory essay to this col-



The launch of this book came close to my last book because I wanted *The Paradoxical Prime Minister* to hit the stands before the general elections in 2019. With the possibility of the polls being held in December 2018, I did not want to take any chances. The book is a substantiated analysis of how things are in Prime Minister’s (Narendra Modi’s) regime —**Shashi Tharoor**



Shashi Tharoor in conversation with Sandip Roy



Ranu Bangur



The arrival of Modi on the national scene has seen his government pushing Hindi with more enthusiasm than judgement. I got caught up in the undertow of the new zeal for Hindi when in reply to a question on Twitter, in all innocence, I asserted that Hindi was not our natural language.

—Shashi Tharoor, in *The Paradoxical Prime Minister*

lection in December 2014, I wrote that there is a central contradiction at the heart of Mr Modi’s rule, which is that he says all these very liberal pronouncements, but that he rests for political support and for his own survival on the most illiberal elements in Indian society... in this contradiction may lie the seeds of his future failure.” He added, “Four years later when I wrote the Paradoxical Prime Minister, I was able to begin with the words, ‘I told you so’.”

Though he accepted the fact that PM Narendra Modi is a tireless worker with single-pointed focus and is also a fantastic orator, Tharoor also felt that his policies had failed in crucial areas like foreign policy, freedom of the press, demonetisation, implementation of GST, etc. The 500-page book sums up the Modi regime’s shortcomings as a huge gap between – rhetoric and reality, aspiration and delivery, intent and execution.

The audience in Kolkata also had many questions for the author. While the book talks about failed execution of the PM’s policies, an audience member asked him about his greatest achievement. To this, Tharoor responded, “Putting the Swachh Bharat campaign on India’s consciousness.”

Kitaab, an initiative of the Prabha Khaitan Foundation has presence across many cities in India, and has launched books featuring some of the biggest names from the country.



Shashi Tharoor, Moon Moon Sen, Raghu Mohta and Sandip Roy

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

GUEST	EVENT
Manisha Kulshreshtha	Kalam Bengaluru
Shubha Vilas	The Write Circle Jaipur
Manoj Muntashir	Kalam Nagpur
Vijay Trivedi	Kalam Faridabad & Bhubaneswar
Deepak Ramola	Kalam Kolkata
Sunita Kohli	The Write Circle Raipur
Naveen Choudhary	Kalam Udaipur
Lalit Kumar	Kalam Bilaspur and Raipur
Praveen Kumar Jha	Kalam Patna
Rashmi Bansal	An Author's Afternoon Kolkata
Reshma Qureshi & Tania Singh	The Write Circle Agra
Himanshu Bajpai	Kalam Jaipur
Mamta Kalia	Kalam London
Gaurav Solanki	Ek Mulakat Bhubaneswar
Daulat Singh Shaktawat	Ek Mulakat Kolkata
Amish Tripathi	The Write Circle Mumbai
Malini Awasthi	Ek Mulakat Jaipur
Salman Khurshid	Kitaab Book Launch Jaipur



Manisha
Kulshreshtha



Shubha Vilas



Manoj Muntashir



Vijay Trivedi



Deepak Ramola



Sunita Kohli



Naveen Choudhary



Lalit Kumar



Praveen Kumar Jha



Rashmi Bansal



Reshma Qureshi & Tania Singh



Himanshu Bajpai



Mamta Kalia



Gaurav Solanki



Daulat S Shaktawat



Amish Tripathi



Malini Awasthi



Salman Khurshid

REACH US AT

Address: 1A Camac Court 25B Camac Street Kolkata - 700 016 West Bengal India

✉ newsletter@pkfoundation.org 🌐 FoundationPK 📘 PrabhaKhaitanFoundation

📄 View the digital version of the newsletter at: pkfoundation.org/newsletter.php

For private circulation only