



Prabha प्रभा

The Prabha Khaitan Foundation Chronicle

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ARTWORK BY SUDIPTA KUNDU

The colourfulness of India blooms in a myriad hues during Holi. In this issue of *Prabha*, 10 individuals from across the country write about their experience, understanding and memories of the Festival of Colours

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Prabha
જાન

MANISHA JAIN
Communications & Branding Chief,
Prabha Khaitan Foundation



Colours of Hope

The country is currently being battered by the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Almost all of us are back in the confines of our homes and this year the air is grim. It is disheartening and utterly baffling. In such unprecedented times, we all need to seek refuge in some form of art or activity that give us joy. In this issue of *Prabha*, we try to bring some colour to the lives of our patrons with our cover story — a collection of articles on Holi. We also take you through our celebrations of the festival in Kolkata. Designed as a festival of hope, inspiration and revolution, the event showcased the diverse cultural repertoire of India's performing artistes.

This issue also introduces a special column — Passing Through — that gives our readers an up-close-and-personal look at some of the Foundation's regular guests who visit the City of Joy. Our first interview is with a lyricist, poet, screenwriter and author who we have hosted at **Kalam** events in nearly 25 cities — Manoj Muntashir.

Feel free to convey your thoughts and write to us newsletter@pkfoundation.org. Don't forget to click on the red play buttons to view the sessions.

The waves of uncertainty might try to dampen our spirits, but we must fight with all our strength. Let us all mask up and continue social distancing with the hope of better times soon!

Wishing good health to all our readers. Take care, stay safe.

Manisha Jain

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors. They do not reflect the opinions or views of the Foundation or its members.

[SNAPSHOT OF THE MONTH]



▲
Artwork by Jayasri Burman



Artwork by Kanchan Chander

Artworks by Jayasri Burman and Kanchan Chander, done at the request of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, along with the masthead was carried by *Dainik Bhaskar* on International Women's Day to celebrate women's empowerment.

The masthead, which is in the form of a currency note with the Father of the Nation, Gandhiji, and Mother of the Nation, Bhikaji Cama, aims to convey to the readers the idea that we, as a nation, should work on the thoughts of women's empowerment and gender equality in every segment. The idea is that when we talk of an all-inclusive and gender-sensitive economy, we must first reflect it in our currency by including more than one gender and personality.

Happy Birthday

Prabha WISHES **EHSAA** WOMEN BORN IN APRIL

16th April



Nilisha Agarwal

18th April



Dipali Bhasin

25th April



Sangeeta Datta

27th April



Shelja Singh

A Special Greeting for Holi

Prabha Khaitan Foundation added a little colour to the lives of its patrons across the world in this trying time with a special greeting card for Holi. The card, designed by Malini Awasthi with a handscript by Paresh Maity, was sent out to nearly 5,000 patrons throughout the country and overseas. This is the Foundation's second such step to promote cross-cultural exposure, the first being the Diwali card painted by Pandit Birju Maharaj.

Holi Card



The handscript by Paresh Maity





नई दिल्ली
चैत्र 23, शक संवत् 1943
13 अप्रैल, 2021

श्री संदीप जी,

होली के पावन पर्व पर मिली आपकी शुभकामनाओं के लिए धन्यवाद। आपको भी होली की हार्दिक शुभकामनाएं। देशवासियों से मिले खेतिव्य संदेश मुझे देश की सेवा में जी-जाग से जुटे रहने की तब ऊर्जा से भर देने हैं।

विविधता में एकता का सार लिए होली के रंग आपसी सौहार्द व मद्द्भावना को और मजबूत करने की प्रेरणा देते हैं। होली का त्योहार एक दूसरे से जुड़ने और साथ मिलकर आगे बढ़ने का भी अवसर है। यत एक वर्ष में एकजुटता की इसी भावना के साथ, अभूतपूर्व चुनौतियों का सामना करते हुए हम आगे बढ़े हैं।

रघों और उल्लाह के इस त्योहार के अवसर पर यही कामना है कि आपका जीवन भी रंग, उमंग और उल्लास से भरा हो।

आपके और आपके परिवार के उत्तम स्वास्थ्य व समृद्धि की कामना के साथ।

आपका

(नरेंद्र मोदी)

Thank you letter from Prime Minister Narendra Modi

लोकतत्व के बिना फाग कैसा ?

सांवरे के रंग में रची सखियां,

घूंघट ओढ़े नवोद्गाएं,

अबीर गुलाल में रंगे भए भाई, बंधु, इष्ट मित्र

बांसुरी की जादुई धुन में खिलते कमल...

मैं भी हैरान हुई कि यह चित्र मुझसे कैसे बन गया।

जी, यह मैंने बनाई है। शायद आप भी हैरान हो गए होंगे।

इसका श्रेय **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** के संदीप भूतोड़िया जी को है। वे हमेशा कुछ न कुछ नया करते हैं। कुछ समय पहले उन्होंने मुझसे आग्रह किया कि मैं **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** के लिए इस बार पेंटिंग बनाऊं जिसे वे होली के कार्ड के रूप में परिवर्तित कर सकें। मुझे याद था कि गत वर्ष दीपावली में आदरणीय पंडित बिरजू महाराज जी के हाथों से बना दीपक कार्ड के रूप में साकार हुआ था। मैं उत्साहित थी लेकिन होली का विषय स्वरूप इतना विशाल है कि मैंने उनसे कहा कि मैं नहीं बना सकूंगी। लेकिन वे न माने— उनके हठ के आगे मैं हार गई, परिणाम आपके समक्ष है। चित्र को देख आदरणीय शारदा सिन्हा, आदरणीय चित्रा मुद्रल, मनोज मुंतशिर जैसे आत्मीयों की स्नेहिल बधाई पा मगन हूं।

लगता है, कूची फिर पकड़नी पड़ेगी।



— मालिनी अवस्थी

Taken from Malini Awasthi's Facebook page

Hues of Happiness



Holi is not just a festival of colours, it is a festival of the senses. The sight of pure joy on the faces of kids as they flip a bucket full of mischief to drench an indulgent adult. The sound of the *dholak* in tandem with classic Bollywood songs that creates a one-of-a-kind ambience. The smell of the rejuvenated soil and freshly cut grass as spring announces its arrival. The taste of *gujiyas* blending on the palate with the intoxication of bhang. Holi truly consumes the senses.

At the same time, Holi is also about memories and legends, about bygone times spent chasing unadulterated fun with friends, about present days of more tempered festivities with family; about the destiny of Prahlad and the destruction of Holika.

The celebration of Holi is a celebration of what makes us human, a tribute to our most enduring instincts for intermingling, sharing and enjoying in unison.

The articles featured in this edition encapsulate this collective spirit of Holi, through a multitude of approaches. Some recount the minutest details about how their writers spent their most memorable Holis, some analyse Holi from a sociological and cultural perspective, some wax lyrical about the many pleasures of Holi, while some register their scepticism towards this great occasion. The goal is to produce a multi-pronged and a multi-hued conversation on Holi.





Memories of Holi

Pramod Kapoor



music was banned while he was home and all women, including my mother, would have their heads covered in his presence. These traditions were not of his making but handed down for generations. He was a gentle soul who never lost his temper but his facial expression and body language were enough to convey his feelings or disapproval.

Holi was a very special day because my father was born on *Purnima* — the day of the full moon — of the Phalgun month, according to the Hindu lunar calendar. This is when *Holika dahan* takes place in the evening. Holi was played the next day, but solely with organic colours. Being the only son born after two generations, Pitaji's birthday turned Holi into a significant occasion in the family. From a special puja to garlanding my father and then feeding the underprivileged, many rituals made this a unique festival. All family members had the freedom to apply dry colour on my father's face first thing on Holi morning — the memory of this brings a lump to my throat. I still do that to his photograph to this day. I remember vividly, Pitaji emerging from his room, after sunrise on Holi day, in a spotless white kurta and loose pajamas, to sit on his favourite chair. One by one, holding dry colours in our palms, we would apply it gently on his face. He would greet each of us with a smile that expressed special blessings. Some of us would offer him homemade *gujia* and he, in turn, would put one in our mouths. I always wanted an extra one but could only have it by sneaking into the kitchen. Pitaji's friends and neighbours would arrive later, to wish him a long life and exchange sweets and hugs. Holi at the Kapoors' was a very emotional occasion.

I was told that my parents loved me the most, perhaps because I was the second youngest. My younger sibling was a disabled person and needed more care. By default, that made me the youngest, with all the

The first time I dared to touch my father's cheek was on Holi. Even after so many decades, this was the one physical contact I still recall with affection and awe, although there were many others over the years. Holi was always a special day in our family because it coincided with my father's birthday. We were a large family of five brothers and a sister. We were very close to our neighbours, who could walk in and out of our home like it was theirs. The entire *mohalla* was like an extended family and my father — Pitaji as we all called him — was acknowledged as the highly respected patriarch. Holi was always a special day in our house and in the neighbourhood. For us all, Holi was not just a festival of colours but a day to meet others, play and laugh, forget and forgive, and repair broken relationships. That was entirely due to my father and the respect and affection he commanded.

We had a large home, comprising four courtyards, to accommodate a family of 14 along with a Guruji who had his independent space. This allowed us to live comfortably without intruding on the privacy of others. There would be occasional spats among us but only after Pitaji had left for work. While he was at home, we would speak in hushed tones or move to another room to argue. We had strict traditions to be followed. Film

love and affection that came as a result. My older siblings and the maternal side of my family dubbed me the 'spoilt' one. I was told I had a short fuse and could be rude to most people, other than my parents, particularly Pitaji. The communication between him and his children was so different from the relationship I have with my son and daughter. I remember once when I ranked below 300 out of several lakhs in the UP state high school exams, I received a letter from the board informing me that I would be given a scholarship of around Rs 60 a year. Pitaji was both proud and disapproving when he read that letter. But none of this was conveyed to me directly. That was not my father's way. That evening, one of his closest friends, Thakur Saheb, came over to our house. He took me aside, put his arm across my shoulders and said, "Kapoor Saheb (my father) was so happy reading your scholarship letter. We were all treated to special *mithai* from his favourite Raj Bandhu. All afternoon he was talking about you." Pitaji's sense of pride in any of us was invariably conveyed through his friends. Traditionally, my father would never place his arms around me, but the feel of his friend's arm across my shoulders on occasions such as this, was as if it was his love and happiness flowing straight into my heart. Later, I found that Pitaji had mixed feelings about the scholarship. He didn't want me to accept it, believing that if I refused, it would go to a student who needed it more. At the same time, he did not want me to feel discouraged. Soon after dinner that night, my mother came to my room and conveyed my father's feelings. I had no choice. Decisions were made by the elders, especially Pitaji. Despite the disappointment, I nodded my agreement. I never saw that letter again. In narrating this episode, I am merely trying to convey that while Pitaji's pride and happiness was conveyed through his friends, the unpleasant news was invariably conveyed by our mother. As far as Pitaji was concerned, we had a relationship of love and awe and apparently, unexpressed affection. Holi, however, was different. We were allowed to take liberties, such as smearing his face with colours.

My father passed away suddenly on Christmas Eve,

1978. The Holi following his death was a very subdued affair. By now, we brothers and sister had all started to live separately, though each one of us had a garlanded photo of our father in the temples in our homes. I got one of my favourite photos of him framed and hung it in my puja room. We didn't celebrate Holi the year after his death, putting instead a red tilak on his photo.

“

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That became a tradition in my home in Delhi. My daughter was hardly 12 weeks old and my son was not even born when Pitaji passed away. They have grown up seeing Holi begin with the red tilak placed reverently on my father's photo. Nowadays, we add a generous splash of colour to it.

The grandsons, now seven and five, with sharper memories, never fail to anoint their great-grandfather's photo with colour before turning their attention to us. I am their favourite target and they smear colour all over my face and hair with gay abandon. In the year before last, we were deeply grieved by the sudden death of a dear friend who had always been like a brother. No one was in a mood to play Holi, though we all got together to reminisce about the last Holi we had celebrated with him. We somehow gathered ourselves and started to walk towards the temple. Our grandsons walked faster, in fact they ran with fists full of colour and splashed it all over my father's photo.

The gloomy blue atmosphere had turned into a riot of colour. Holi had begun.

Pramod Kapoor is the founder of and publisher at Roli Books, and author of the critically acclaimed *Gandhi: An Illustrated Biography*. He has extensively researched, created and conceptualised many books on urban history and historical events, such as, *Calcutta Then Kolkata Now*, *Witness to Life and Freedom*, *The Unforgettable Maharajas*, to name a few. As a Life Member of Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), he has always been interested in art and has curated many exhibitions which received international praise. He developed co-publishing relationships with French publishers from 1982. In March 2016, he was awarded the rank of Chevalier de l'Ordre national de la Legion d'honneur (Knight in the National Order of the Legion of Honour)



Sada Basant Rahat Vrindavan

Aastha Goswami



Vasant Panchami marks the beginning of Holi celebration in the temples of Vrindavan. Slowly, colours start adorning the *darshans*. As you step into one of the *sapta-devalayas* in Vrindavan, Sri Radharaman Laal Ji is all set in his beautiful yellow attire watching his bhakts gently sprinkling *gulal* on one another, some filling the centre parting of hair, their *maang*, with the *prasadi gulal* and some putting a small bindi on their forehead as a blessing from Thakurji.

In the temples of Braj, it is time now to sing the soulful *Braj ki Holi* in a *samaaj* setting, a traditional gathering where there is a lead singer and a group of *duhaariyas* (accompanying singers) relishing the collective experience.

Chir jivo Holi ke rasiya , Dhap bajo re or Hori ki dhoom machaai Kanhaai... the uninterrupted string of *Holi ki Dhamar* and *Holi ke Rasiya* with the

In Vrindavan, Vasant *ritu* is an eternal season of ecstatic devotion in the hearts of Brajwasis. Bhakti blooms in their hearts forever. The feeling transcends the boundaries of time. This may be the reason why Holi songs can be sung anytime during the year and not necessarily during Holi!

During the last 13 years of my living in Braj, I have been drenched in the innumerable nuances of the Braj culture. Holi to me means much more than a mere exchange of colours and warm hugs. It is like sitting peacefully on the banks of Yamuna, observing Vasant or spring all around . Sometimes the swaying mustard flowers appear like the dancing bhakts singing *hari bol* in the highest possible pitch. While at other times it is the divine embrace of Krishna and Yamuna Rani as the yellow mustard fields or Krishna's Peetambar gently surrounds Yamunaji.

My emotions deepen and I feel exhilarated as I experience the rhythmic movement of the deep dark overlapping waves of Yamunaji and start to hum *Shree Yamuna maiya tiharo daras mohey bhavey*.

The peaceful realisation that ensues is much more than I can describe. It can only be felt and cannot be expressed in words.



Holi Samaaj

commanding presence of the *dhap*, *khol*, *manjira*, *pakhawaj*, etc set the perfect mood. The devotees get completely soaked in the divine music and the temple vibrates with high energy. This Holi Samaaj continues until Holi Poornima.

During this entire period of 40 blissful days, one can feel the celebrations reverberating in each and every particle of Braj, be it the colourful tattoos of the grazing cattle, the kirtan *mandalis* dancing and singing Holi songs in praise of Radha Krishna on the *kachcha raastas* of Braj, the *gulal*-clad ghats of Yamuna, the trees or the *mithai* shops offering



Holi Leela

special *bhag ki thandai*. The sacred Holi *bhav* continues to grow!

The most exciting part of this Holi celebration is Holi Leela and the *phoolon ki Holi* played during *Raasleela* (traditional musical dance drama) depicting *gop*, *gopis*, Radha and Krishna playing Holi. I have had the good fortune of witnessing several such Holi *leelas*; so for me, Holi is complete only with this divine presentation of soul-enriching *padas* (poetry) set to the melodious tunes of traditional folk and Indian classical music.

The devotional, soulful and zestful rendition of Holi, Rasiyas, and the playful *gaalis* (abuses) between the *gwal* and *gopis* of *Raasleela* form an important and interesting part of the Holi *leela*.

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The sweet fragrance and the continuous showering of rose, jasmine and marigold petals, surrounded by the most soulful and zestful Holi songs with Radha Krishna dancing in the centre, gradually getting covered with the soft flower petals, is indeed a visual and spiritual delight.

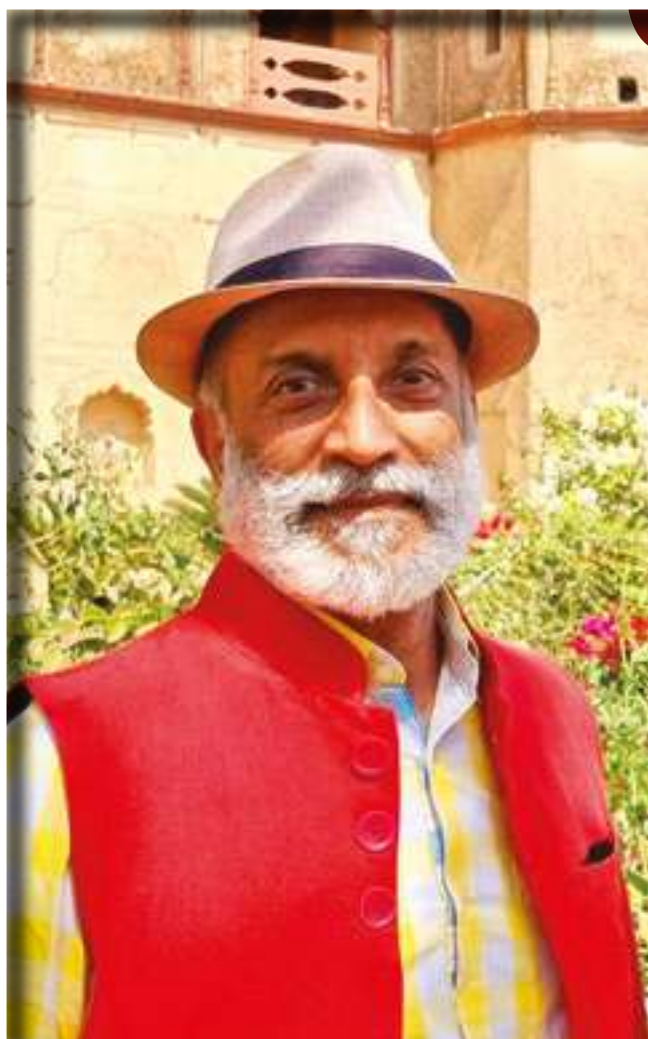
Festival cuisine in Braj is very elaborate, but I quench my thirst with the *kesariya thandai* and give in to the sumptuous courses of jalebis and kachoris. It becomes even more interesting when the *boondi ladoos* are also used to punch one's face while playing Holi!

The festival ends but the spirit of Holi lives on in the hearts of the Rasik bhakts.

As it has been rightly said

Jag Hori Braj hora!

Aastha Goswami, based in Vrindavan, has been performing as a singer of classical Hindustani music and devotional music for more than two decades. She received her music training from the prestigious ITC Sangeet Research Academy in Kolkata, where she trained under the tutelage of Pt Arun Bhaduri and the legendary Padma Vibhushan Smt Girija Devi Ji. Over the years, Goswami has evolved her unique style of Padavali Gaayan, which imbibes the subtleties of Khayal Gayaki and suffuses it with even deeper emotions



Primal Colour Orgy

Aman Nath



Holi was more mischief and mud baths and colour was the only cosmetic when we were children. *Abir-gulal* ran out but never the *keechar*, a word not appropriately translated as slush alone.

We were well-brought-up good kids. Our clothes were almost always clean. Gymnastics, athletics, cricket — but never wrestling.

Holi was about wrestling oneself free of others. I seldom attacked anyone with colours unless it was for avenging a back-door prank like splashing indelible ink. In that case, I fought fearlessly till the other's face was dark as the night.

While in college, I had moved in to study with those who were more serious than myself, and just then, Holi had arrived. That was the most raucous Holi of all. Mud baths were the ultimate goal. The less nimble

ones got flung in first. I gave quite a slip till I realised that the real victory was to be one with Mother Earth! St. Stephen's was a gentleman's college. But this was one occasion when the gangs of all those who had been bullied finally took it out, ten to one. The tough ones were pushed in the mud bath and sat upon till they begged for mercy. The eyes and mouths really had it bad while the skin emerged beauteous. Or so they said.

During my first years in advertising, I also went to Vrindavan. There, Holi took on another tint altogether. The powdered colours filled the air like rain from the sandstorm filling the balconies, and it was all about Krishna. Strangers turned your yellow face to pink, or green to purple, but it was rather civilised. En route, I saw pilgrims measuring their holy circumambulation path with their bodies — *lotpaliyan* they called it. The pilgrim did a yogic pranam, lying flat on the road, then raised his arms forward, folding his hands, joining the hands in a namaste, where a small stick was placed. Then he brought the hands on the side of his chest and did a push up to stand up and take a few steps to the stick. It was laborious and very tiring. But masochism is often the measure of self-sacrifice for one's god, festival or sins — however it was interpreted. There were degrees of escalation. You could do an 8km pilgrimage or a 24km one, depending on your volition or the time.

A stray conversation, while I stopped to photograph them, led to the village near Kosi, on the Delhi-Agra road. A few hundred thousand people gathered to watch a drugged and crazed man dressed in a loincloth

run through a gigantesque bonfire. Straw and hay were gathered in a heap of some five cubic metres, set ablaze and an unsuspecting lean man leapt and ran through it, like the ghost of a sati escaping from the past. The thousands cheered from rooftops, or tractors and trailers, while an equal number squatted on their haunches in the front rows.

It was a very ancient rite, performed, according to the locals, since the days of the burning of Holika that involves the myth of Prahalad. Little discs of cow dung were flung into the fire and then taken home to hang on the doorways for a year of auspicious entries.

The demoness Holika had tried to kill her nephew Prahlad but failed. Villagers in most of North and West India gather during Holi, each bringing a log for a bonfire, that symbolically immolates her.

During the writing of my books on Shekhawati, Jaipur, arts and crafts of Rajasthan, Jodhpur and Pushkar, I fell upon, or consciously participated in, many memorable Holis in the villages and cities of Rajasthan and Haryana. Visions of medieval revelries around fires can be immediately evoked because there remains something raw and untouched about them. Farmers in white dhoti-kurtas dance around the fires holding hands as the flames crackle. Late one night in Mukundgarh, Shekhawati, the stronghold of the Kanorias, I drove out to witness how they celebrate their Holi with much more flourish; how they circle a temple in a square to evoke Vishnu and his devotee Prahlad. They moved in concentric circles as the full moon shone above. The whole cyclic cosmos seemed to have descended on earth. At the seed of this ritual, all the ancient civilisations seemed to lie — Greek, Roman, Mesopotamian, Celtic, Tribal — for the elemental emotions which Holi evokes through all the barriers of time maybe as pagan as the Christians can imagine, but it's also just as primal.



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Aman Nath is a writer, painter, poet, hotelier and architectural restorer. He is the co-founder and co-chairman of the Neemrana hotels chain and has authored 14 books, two of which have won National Awards. A winner of the Lifetime Achievement Award from *Outlook Traveller* and *Conde Nast Traveller*, he has received the Legion of Honour for his outstanding achievements towards heritage conservation and personal affection to France



A Festival of Fear

Saikat Majumdar

- There was a childhood where Holi was a thing of fear.
- A happy fear it was. Holi and Diwali held the year in a warm, tropical parenthesis, an extended holiday season on either end, cool months in a hot country.
- Both child-frightening, attacking with the elements, water and fire. Coloured water in the spring, coloured fire in the autumn.
- Once I hid in a bathroom for two hours to escape friends who wanted to smear me with Holi colours.
- In the end, my mother gave me an all-clear — they were gone. I stepped out, relieved, and five boys pounced on me, drenching me in colour.
- Ma had ganged up on me. "How can you be so scared of colours?"
- I wasn't scared of colours, but of something else. It was easier to pretend that it was the colours. It was impossible to speak of the other thing.
- It still is. Holi holds a secret for me.
- Many, many Holi festivals passed un-festive, colourless. White in a snowy terrain, then bright and California-yellow, but no reds, no green, nothing else, no *mithai*.
- Desi-diasporic Holi and Puja held in suburban American high schools caused me pain, scorched my mouth. I stayed away. I went a couple of times, with white and black friends in obligatory kurtas in the brown sea. There was fun and goodwill. It was a pleasant charade.
- Diasporic Hinduism did not agree with my stomach. Or eyes or ears. The sound of *dhak* played on a timid boombox in a New Jersey Durga Puja still rankles in my ears. Easily, Holi got lost.

- It came swirling back in a sabbatical semester spent at JNU, afloat in a sea of students, drinking diluted bhang from their bottles. I remember some of them in a colleague's flat, smeared drowsy ghosts. I did not think that they might be under the shadow of bhang.
- I had smoked pot in grad school in America and had felt the freezing of time. But I did not know the joke bhang could play on you. That would take a few more years.
- I gained a life in Delhi. Indian festivals spoke to my senses again. Even Puja in Chittaranjan Park and Hauz Khas was hell of a lot better than the sterile desi dance in Ontario and Silicon Valley. Muharram in Chandni Chowk was beautifully chaotic. Even Christmas in Park Street, Kolkata, was festive in a way it was never public in North America, lit up malls notwithstanding. Where the charm of Christmas was always homebound.
- Once in suburban Toronto, I stole a Christmas tree with a few colonial cousins and planted it by the fireside in a North York home. It was amazing.
- But the streets never sang the way they sang in India, in Delhi, Kolkata — and once, trapped in Bombay, during the Ganpati festival.
- But middle age craves safe home parties, so with small children in tow we all gathered on a terrace in Vasant Kunj. Holi was an amazing Bihari meal, loud Bollywood music — and the deadliest of all — over-spiked bhang.
- What college and grad school couldn't do with all the booze and pot, (ir)responsible parenthood achieved in the blink of an eye, in that last big gathering before the pandemic.
- Bhang makes you laugh that much? And how do you tell the one sober friend behind the wheels that you're passing your lane and that you should take a turn? Seven times the car

went around Vasant Vihar, and seven times I failed to give directions.

- You had to run from the colours. You had to run from the streets.
- Holi was frightening again. This time, an adult kind of frightening. The time for Hindu rituals in India to evoke fear. The bloody colours threw up something else. Who knew what they could be, those colours?
- The amber alert of dharma brings back childhood terrors.

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Saikat Majumdar is a novelist, critic and academic. A professor of English and Creative Writing at Ashoka University, Majumdar has authored three novels: *Silverfish*, *The Firebird* and *The Scent of God*. Besides his novels, Majumdar has also penned a considerable amount of non-fiction, including his two highly acclaimed books, *Prose of the World: Modernism and the Banality of Empire* and *College: Pathways of Possibility*



Holi Through the Years

Shakun Batra

You are in your tiny room window and there is a fire burning in the distance. You are five years old, so you run across the hallway and scamper into your parents' room with a look that can only induce panic in them. They come running to the balcony with you, and as the panic evaporates from their face, you learn about the story of Holika and Prahlad. The mystery of the fire burning in the distance has an explanation.

Holika, Prahlad, and their story was never important to me. As I was growing up, my assortment of *pichkari* and water balloons were, and they always needed new drawers. Mum would empty out our clothes to pick out one disheveled item of clothing that we were to put on on the day of Holi as the second or third layer of skin after being drenched in 38 litres of oil! Scrubbing ourselves after we had been mauled by a palette of colours from every colour palette was the most challenging event of the day. And then the next day we did not have an option but to look like Hiranyakashyap — the irony!

The day of Holi in Delhi (where I grew up) has a different mise-en-scène of its own. Kids, in their most annoying prime time of life, will inevitably be the reason you wake up because they are all too excited at 10 in the morning (on a school holiday) to splash colour on people and play till the sun sets.

When I turned 15, this did not seem ideal. What I was looking forward to was my constant group of friends I had grown up with. The rumour that year was that Monku's mother had apparently purchased bhang and was now making about ten litres of it for our group of eight boys and girls. Of course, Monku was older than the rest of us. He was just going to pass out of school, and aunty being the liberal Punjabi mother, would not have her kid's future spoiled at the hands of strangers she had not met.

When my bunch of friends and I finally stepped out at 3pm with shades on to avoid the blazing sun and swirling questions about intoxication, a water balloon came and hit me smack in the while I was busy watching an egg flying across the sky. It was Monku versus an old couple on a balcony. Aunties came racing towards us to stuff colours down every opening they saw on our shirts. Among them, Sapna's mother had no idea that 13-year-old Rahul had taken her daughter on a nice long drive on his father's bike, the one he had just learned to drive sneakily. At 5pm, all the commotion came to an end as the uncles had finally managed to finish cooking the mutton and the jalebis. Everyone ate out of one gigantic vessel. The mutton turned from solid golden brown into a yellowish semi-solid state (courtesy the heat), before ultimately reaching our bellies. It did not occur to anyone

in the colony to buy extra plates or wash their hands. Intoxication was in the air.

As the years passed, Monku's mother's bhang or the colourful mutton curry did not cut it. Endless bottles of Bombay Sapphire and Johnnie Walker had replaced them, sprawled across the well-decorated lawns at the *TOI* parties in Delhi Cantt. It was a vibe of its own, you know — no pressure, more chill, more organic. There were better colours that did not burn the skin or pollute the environment, and more importantly, lesser aunties and uncles trying to shove all kinds of colours down the front and the back of my shirt. The music was always good, and dancing with my then girlfriend while the sprinklers drenched us all, made for a very good day. The kind of day I often sought. No more ugly and oiled hair, burnt skin or completely tarnished clothes. Just a good white shirt, bottomless beer, and unevenly smeared herbal colours that would come off easily.

Few years back, I was pushed back into reminiscing about what Holi used to be as a child. My best friend from college had forced me to come to Agra for Holi. Her new husband had arranged for an entire afternoon of celebration. A mix of bhang, a spread of alcohol, and *gujiyas* were generously distributed. The music played while we got into the makeshift pool and got everybody more drunk than they already were. As the sun was setting I saw two dazzling golden faces that looked like statues. I saw another face in all-silver. A fraction of a second later, Diya came from behind and rubbed something all over my face so hard that I almost felt my skin had been scratched off. Oh dear, that was some bad quality of glitter, golden and silver in colour! But there we stood, a group of eight adults with golden and silver faces, each holding one pichkari we had picked out for the day, unable to stay balanced for a picture because of the toll the alcohol and adulthood had taken on us, and not thinking of looking like the red Hanuman as we dreaded facing our mundane

“Scrubbing ourselves after we had been mauled by a palette of colours from every colour palette was the most challenging event of the day. And then the next day we did not have an option but to look like *Hiranyakashyap* — the irony!”

office lives the next day.

Nowadays, Holi is much calmer and less eventful, but obscenely self-satisfying. My standard statement for Holi nowadays is "I'm too old for this". My new girlfriend has tried many times to make plans, with rebellious me playing spoilsport. You will instead find me sprawling on my bed with a nice glass of G&T — a slice of lime is a must — while Manoj (my cook) comes in to call me for the extraordinary aloo puri lunch, a feast that promises extreme love and satisfaction, energy, and unrecoverable calories. 2021 shall mark a year among many others where festivals are akin to self-love days. Excuse me, I'm not to be judged for this. I'm extremely confident that if you find only one off day between a gargantuan shoot schedule, you'll be opting for this very same luxury.

Shakun Batra is a film director and screenwriter. After debuting with the romantic comedy *Ek Main Aur Ekk Tu*, Batra co-wrote and directed *Kapoor & Sons*, which went on to win five Filmfare Awards, including for best screenplay and best story for Batra. A graduate from the Vancouver Film School, Batra has directed commercials for brands like Google, Philips and VW, besides working with celebrities like Shah Rukh Khan, Priyanka Chopra and Rosie Huntington-Whiteley. A virtual reality enthusiast, Batra is also the founder and curator of the VR vertical at the Mumbai International Film Festival



Holi with Bal Gopal

Shan Bhatnagar



Holi for me and my family has memories mostly connected to food and family get-togethers, fun times with cousins and friends. It is a time for *kanji vadas*, pulao, *gujiyas*, and *besan ke samose*. The garden is always at its best at this time. Sweetpeas, flocks, cineraria are all my favourite springtime flowers and they are at their best during Holi.

At our house, Holi celebrations start rather early. Basant Panchami is when *gulal* is introduced in our *seva* of *Laadle Laal*, the baby Krishna shrine at home. The *pichwai* is white and so is all the *saaaj*, and each day a new pattern is drawn on the *pichwai* using *gulal* made at home. *Haveli sangeet* is sung in praise of the Lord playing Holi with Radha and the *gopis* of Braj. From Basant Panchami to Holi, Krishna plays Holi for 40 days.

At the shrine of Shrinathji at Nathdwara, the deity's feet are covered so that the devotees or friends of Shrinathji can swear and abuse playfully like they would with a close friend. The feet are covered so that the *bhav* of a servant of Krishna does not take precedence over that of a *sakha* (friend). Shrinathji loves the exchange of playful curse words.

Such a casual atmosphere is only possible during *khel* days or the 40 days leading up to Holi. Post-Holi the temple is thoroughly cleaned, not a speck of *gulal* can be seen in the *haveli* of Shrinathji and for some time after Holi, no pink or red is offered because Shrinathji is fed up of that colour and has had enough of it.

Such beautiful *bhav* or emotions are connected to the service of the Lord at home throughout the year, but Holi or spring is the epitome of all celebrations for the entire year.



Shrinathji's shrine

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Shan Bhatnagar is a painter whose artworks are an adaptation of the traditional temple art of Pichwai. Alongside organising regular exhibitions of his paintings, Bhatnagar holds a business degree and runs a successful company involved in interior designing. As a painter, Bhatnagar is inspired by Lord Shrinathji, whom he has depicted in various moods and seasons. He also shares a deep bond with Jaipur, the place he lives and works, and the charms of the Pink City are often manifested in his paintings



Mad About Bhang

Shylashri Shankar



"About three *tola* of hemp seeds are washed well with cold water, then rubbed to powder, mixed with black pepper, cucumber and melon seeds, sugar, half a pint of milk and an equal quantity of water. This is considered sufficient to intoxicate an habituated person. Half the quantity is enough for a novice."

And a recipe for majoon (Emperor Jahangir's favourite sweet) involves infusing the milk sweet with cannabis butter. "Take two pounds of sugar and when the sugar dissolves and froths, two ounces of milk are added; a thick scum rises and is removed. Then the cannabis butter is added, and the mixture is poured on a pan to cool, and then cut in small slabs."

Even more fascinating is his description of how the resin from the hemp plant is collected. "Men clad in leather dresses run through the hemp fields brushing through the plant with all possible violence; the soft resin adheres to the leather, is subsequently scraped off, and kneaded into balls."

Today, this hangover from the colonial fear of cannabis remains cheek by jowl with the free and easy way of the traditional attitude towards it. Cannabis smoking (the buds and resin) is mostly banned but eating the leaves in sweets and drink is not prohibited. *Bhang ki patti ka peda* is still eaten during Holi.

Bhang, as Shaughnessy notes, produces an intoxication of the most cheerful kind, causing the person to sing and dance, and to eat food with great relish. After devouring all the dishes in our search for bhang, we kids danced to drums and the *dholak*. If that's madness, then I'm mad for bhang.

Shylashri Shankar is a senior fellow at the Centre for Policy Research. Her intellectual and research interests include constitutionalism and religious freedom, "activism" and policy making by the judiciary and impact of anti-terror law on civil liberties. She has an MSc from the London School of Economics and Political Science and holds a PhD from Columbia University. A frequent columnist for *Open Magazine*, she has authored several books, such as *Turmeric Nation: A Passage Through India's Tastes, A Secular Age Beyond the West, Scaling Justice*, etc

Pink cheeks, green hair, a hunter's delight in aiming the *pichkari* at those who fled, wolfing down *kachoris*, *gujiya*, puri-aloo, *chaat*, *malpua*, lassi and the grand highlight of it all, bhang. Then collapsing into a deep, dreamless sleep. These are my childhood memories of playing Holi in Secunderabad.

Though Holi wasn't celebrated by Tamilians like me, I lived among Sindhis for whom Holi was a very important festival. The grown-ups had glasses of bhang *thandai*, but we kids weren't allowed to. Each year, a kindly soul would take pity on us and spike a dish with bhang. The highlight for us kids was figuring out which dish it was. Was it in the rasgullas, or in the *malpua*, or in the spiced water of the pani puri, or were the watermelon pieces soaked in bhang? Sometimes it was in all of them! Each Holi, I slept for two or three hours in the afternoon after the revelry, and woke up with a pleasant sensation of having relaxed completely.

The British were bewildered at the free and easy way the natives dealt with cannabis. Alexander Macaulay Markham writes in 1874 in his report on Bijnor and the North Western provinces that the wild Indian hemp plant is produced in great quantities all over the forests and in the open countryside and is largely used in native medicine as a narcotic, anodyne and an antispasmodic. "The dried leaves are also pounded and mixed with spices and water, and make a popular intoxicating drink, which the lower classes chiefly used during the Holi festival."

Before him came a Scottish chemist William Brooke O'Shaughnessy in 1842, who undertook a study of how Indians used cannabis, since the British feared that cannabis would cause madness. O'Shaughnessy interviewed his Indian colleagues on the subject and reported it in *The Bengal Dispensatory*, which also had interesting bhang recipes. Here is one for bhang *thandai*:



Celebrating Dol – A Moment of Joy

Sanjeev Sanyal



I have always marked the annual cycle through two festivals — one in autumn and one in spring. As a practising Bengali Hindu of the Shakta tradition, the first, not surprisingly, is Durga Puja. The four days of the festival constitute the highlight of the year — the drumming of the *dhak*, the feasting, the evening *aarti*, the morning *anjali*, the *dhunuchi* dance. The other festival is Holi, or "Dol", to call it by its name in Bengal, Odisha and Assam.

As in most parts of the country, the Dol festival is associated with Lord Krishna. Therefore, while it is celebrated by all Bengali Hindus, it is of special significance to those of the Vaishnava tradition. Some groups also celebrate it as the birthday of the great Vaishnava saint Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. In many old temples, the idols of Lord Krishna and Radha are taken on a palanquin tour of the neighborhood to the accompaniment of drums and cymbals. This is called "Dol Jatra" or the "tour of the palanquin" — hence the name of the festival.

As a child growing up in Kolkata, Dol would begin with a great deal of excitement. At least an hour would be spent after breakfast filling water-balloons and storing them in buckets. A few of the neighborhood boys would come in to help, add colour to the water, or run out to a nearby shop to buy more balloons (we always underestimated how many would burst while filling them with water). Before going out, we would touch the feet of the elders with *abir* (Bengali for *gula*). After that it was a free-for-all in the local park. All the neighborhood kids would descend on the park by mid-morning and a water-balloon fight would rage till all the ammunition was exhausted.

At some point, the older members of the community would emerge and join the fun. It would always begin on

a civil note with everyone applying colours on each other. However, it was only a matter of time before someone turned up with a bucket of cold water. Once emptied on some unsuspecting soul, the bucket would be put to good use as an impromptu drum. Someone would sing, others would dance, trays of sweets and drinks would appear. And this would go on till everyone returned home late into the afternoon, tired but happy.

Over the decades, I have celebrated Holi in many cities around the world. In my college room in Oxford — thankfully, minus the water, given the cold. On a friend's boat in Mumbai. On the beach in Singapore, which allowed for dunking my teenage kids in the Malacca Straits. And back in Delhi with my extended family. No matter where it was, Holi has always retained a sense of magic. In India, it is a time to celebrate life one last time before the blistering Indian summer. When outside India, it is an opportunity to connect with fellow Hindus from across India and the world — Nepalese, Bangladeshi, Singaporean Tamil or those who have embraced the Sanatan Dharma. No matter where they come from, there is an instant connection, a moment of joy. There are few better ways to break the ice than plastering the face of an acquaintance or even a stranger with bright colours.

So, from the water-balloon fights of my childhood to pretending to run away from my three-year old nephew armed with a water-pistol, the cycle of life continues.

Sanjeev Sanyal, an alumnus of Shri Ram College of Commerce, Delhi University and St. John's College, Oxford University, is a writer, economist, urban theorist and environmentalist. Currently serving as the Principal Economic Adviser to the Government of India as well as the Chair of the G20's Framework Working Group, he has been a Rhodes Scholar and an Eisenhower Fellow. He has authored several bestselling books, including *Land of the Seven Rivers*, *The Ocean of Churn*, *Life over Two Beers*, and *India in the Age of Ideas*



Rediscovering the Festival of Colours as a Bakhtinian Carnival

Trisha Gupta



I've been a believer in Holi for as long as I can remember. Actually, no, I do have one hazy six-year-old memory that would count as anti-Holi: a couple of Defence Colony uncles perched in and on a car, their deep purple and shiny green avatars just slightly less benign than their regular selves. But even then, I don't remember being terrified; only guarded. After that, I spent several Holis in Kolkata. Family formed the core of the celebrations, with close friends of either my parents or my aunt and uncle often being added to the mix.

At 10, I was already the bespectacled child with my nose buried in a book. But Holi seemed to bring out all my latent energy: I remember running up and down pretty much all day, armed with one of the grandparental household's old brass *pichkaris* — a solid, effective weapon, and heavy, too: not one of these childish plastic playthings that get trashed each year. Once I played Holi at my best friends' house, with her cousins and aunts and uncles, and the faux-family ties cemented that day still feel like something, even if the friend and I are no longer close.

The festive flirtation could be conducted openly, in front of family and friends, and yet remain unseen. Holi offered other unusual liberties: if you had a colony/building gang, you could roam from house to house all day without parental censure — not something girls often did.

Back in Delhi as an adolescent, I discovered the delicious frisson that only Holi offered — water made everyone frisky, and putting colour on people involved actually touching them. I remember crushing on a classmate's elder brother with the perfect *filmi* Holi persona — colour-spattered white kurta, stubble and beautiful singing voice. His colours, I decided, were reserved for me. The secret love I nursed for a boy could be publicly expressed with *gulal*.

It was years later, reading about carnival in a cultural anthropology class, that I began to recognise Holi in it. A ritual feature of pre-modern European popular culture, carnival at its widest involved feasting and communal drinking, dancing and music and open-air amusements, comic verbal

competitions and farces that often enshrined the low forms of folk humour. The Soviet-era theorist Mikhail Bakhtin used the Renaissance writings of François Rabelais to think about carnival as an analytic. The excesses of carnival offered liberation from the utilitarian norms that governed agricultural society. Humdrum and everyday time were suspended, everyday hierarchies reversed. Joining the carnival throng, often with the anonymity of masquerade, allowed people freedom from the strictures of being themselves. The profane self, released from work, social rules, or moral boundaries, was given free rein — eating and drinking and sex and laughter — and all this as part of a collective body.

I had to wait many years to experience the adult equivalent of that childhood sense of collectivity, of licensed upheaval, of owning a neighbourhood — and it came via the JNU Holi. Delhi University, where I studied, never gave its women a campus that felt truly free, overrun as it is by the male-dominated street culture of Delhi. In JNU, on the other hand, the practices of Holi, like most things, manage to feel entirely rooted (dare I say "traditional") while actually being quite particular to this unique post-independence campus. So bhang-filled *thandai*, an unmatched intoxicant traditionally drunk on Holi across North India, features crucially in the JNU festivities too. But here each hostel mess actually produces a batch, and the re-filled mineral water bottles that circulate across campus often come with the implicit suggestion of which hostel's *thandai* is better. The night before Holi is devoted to a weird and wonderful contest for the title of "Chaat Samrat". "Chaat" (lit: "to lick") is slang for someone who talks on and on, until you're bored to tears. He who is crowned the Emperor of Chaat is placed on a donkey and led on a procession around campus.

Last week, I read a 1966 essay about Holi in Braj, the only anthropological treatment of Holi I've read.

McKim Marriott spends his first Holi in Kishangarh befuddled — both by bhang and by what seems like pandemonium. By his second Holi, everything seems to fall into "an extraordinarily regular social ordering. But this was an order precisely inverse to the social and ritual principles of routine life." The women beat up the men. Lower caste women are the most avid beaters, and the wealthier Brahmin and Jat farmers their chosen targets. A "burlesque dirge" is sung for an unpopular "very much alive moneylender"; the "King of the Holi" put backwards on the donkey is a famous high-caste bully (the implications for

Chaat Samrat are interesting!). Holi functions, in brief, as a carnivalesque rite of reversal.

A very preliminary speculation, but it seems to me that whether Holi works or doesn't work depends on whether it enables a reversal of hierarchies, or simply reinforces the dominant power equations. In the North Indian city, it is certainly not men who need ritual licence — and if Holi seems to give them that, it will feel wrong. My Holis, from childhood onwards, have always enabled rather than

My Holis, from childhood onwards, have always enabled rather than disabled, letting me embrace the bodily excesses of carnival; do things I might not have done otherwise. Of course, there is no reason why you should need a festival to free you — but for all the other creatures of ritual out there, Holi is waiting for you to claim it for yourself

disabled, letting me embrace the bodily excesses of carnival; do things I might not have done otherwise. Of course, there is no reason why you should need a festival to free you — but for all the other creatures of ritual out there, Holi is waiting for you to claim it for yourself.

Trisha Gupta is an independent columnist and critic who has written for publications such as *Scroll*, *The Sunday Guardian* and *The Caravan*. Whether writing about literature, cinema and the visual arts, nature or social life in South Asia, her interests lie at the intersection of culture with history and politics. She holds a BA in history from Delhi University, an MA in anthropology from the University of Cambridge and an MPhil in anthropology from Columbia University. Her published writing since 2008 is archived on her blog *Chhotahazri*



Holi As I Love it *Rang Daarungi Nand Ke Laalan Pe...*

Yatindra Mishra



Holi is here again! The much-awaited festival of colours, catharsis and unfettered joy is around the corner. For me, the significance of this festival lies in the fact that of all the festivals of India, this is the one where music has a very central presence, lending a sense of sublime euphoria.

Traditionally Holi begins with the *basant raga*, moves on to *chautaal*, *desh taal*, *dhamar*, *phag*, *dhaf kee holi*, *hori*, *rasiya*, *holi ki thumri* and finally, *ulara*. Within the sufi tradition, the qawwali celebrating Holi is called 'rang'. The syncretic tradition within South Asia celebrates the human soul's quest for union with the divine through music and dance.

I remember Girija Devi of the Banaras and Senia

gharanas imparting a uniquely Benarasi flavour to Holi's playfulness, singing *Rang daarungi nand ke lalan pe*. Her *Saanvre rang lal kari darihaun/ mali gulal dou galan pe rang daroongee*, sung in her eighties, transports one to a unique space of union. Songs of Holi are both exhilarating and liberating; they liberate from pain, inhibition, and everyday pettiness. *Daf*, *manjeera*, *dholak*, *khartal*, *tabla*, *sarangi* and *bansuri* are instruments which are typically associated with the wide range of Holi songs, both folk and classical. *Keherwa*, *dadra*, *jat* and *deepchandi* modes burst with the abundance of jubilation, like *abir-gulal*-filled lacquer balls.

I remember the beautiful Holi *bandishes* which heralded Holi at home through my childhood

and adolescence. I have grown up listening to my grandmother's soulful rendition of the tender Sahana lament, *O rasiya na mane ri mori ankhiyan mein dale gulal*, and it is still the cornerstone of my fondness and affection for this festival. This soft complaint in the *kafi* raga is unique; though it runs through the gamut of feelings — love-plaint-surrender — associated with Radha and Krishna, it has no hint of coquetry. I remember Girija Devi too has sung a similar *bandish* — *Ankhin bharat gulal, rasiya na mane re*. Much later, grandmother informed me she had learnt the song from a 1954 film, *Rajyogi Bharthari*, where the music was by Shankarrao Vyas. It was a pleasant surprise that a film song had imparted a Holi song such rare tenderness, steering clear of the ubiquitous flirtatious eroticism synonymous with Holi. She also sang sweet songs of love related to Ram and Sita. Her favourite was *Ae ri donon rajdulara holi khelat sarju teer/ ae ri donon mahlon se nikle leke abeer.... Ram ke hath kanak pichkari, Lachiman hath abeer*.

Begum Akhtar Sahiba presents a different aspect of love in *Kaisee yeh dhoom machai*, and singing *dhaph ki hori, Dhaph kahe ko bajae main to avat rahi, dhaph kahe ko*, she carries you to delight and a festive mood. Following the tradition of her mother, the great Menakabai Shirodkar, Shobha Gurtu saucily belts out *Main to khelungi unheen se holi guiyen* and moves on to unabashed invitation of intimacy in *Kesariya angia rang daro ji*. Holi is a many-splendoured jewel for me, with gems such as Dr Anita Sen's sedate rendition of *Barsat rang gokul mein*, Shubha Mudgal's sweetly playful *Kanhaiya*

ghar chalo mori guiyen aj khelen holi, Shruti Sadolikar's ecstatic *Jamuna tat Shyam khelen holi*, Sunanda Sharma's melodious Holi in raga *peelu* — *Holi khelan kaise jaun*, Vidya Shah's achingly sonorous *Phir kabon na maili hoye aisi rang rang de chunariya*, Savita Devi's splendorous *Hori khelan aaye Shyam, aaje yahe rang mein boro ri*, the list is a long one.

When it comes to the folk tradition, one is spoilt silly for choice, from the esoteric *nirguns* to the

double entendre of *kabeers*, the naughty Holi songs from the Braj region, to domestic songs of joy and celebration... there is a world of emotions. I remember Vandana Telang's fizzy lightness of *Mope jabran, han han mope jabran rang dio dar jasoda tere lala ne* and Malini Awasthi's evergreen playfulness in *Sakhi solah hazaar, sakhi solah hajar, inmen Kanhaiya akele hain* from the recent past. And last but not least, Baleshwar Yadav's *Kauno mahinva barse na barse, phagunva ma rang rasi-rasi barse* aptly sums up the overarching spirit of Holi — both the festival and the musical tradition.

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Yatindra Mishra is a Hindi poet and music and cinema scholar. He has written four collections of Hindi poetry, several books on Indian classical music and cinema, as well as translations. His book *Lata: Sur-Gatha* won six awards. His latest book, *Akhtari: Soz Aur Saaz Ka Afsana*, is based on the life, times and music of Akhtari Bai Faizabadi, aka Begum Akhtar. He is currently working on a book on eminent lyricist, poet and filmmaker Gulzar saab

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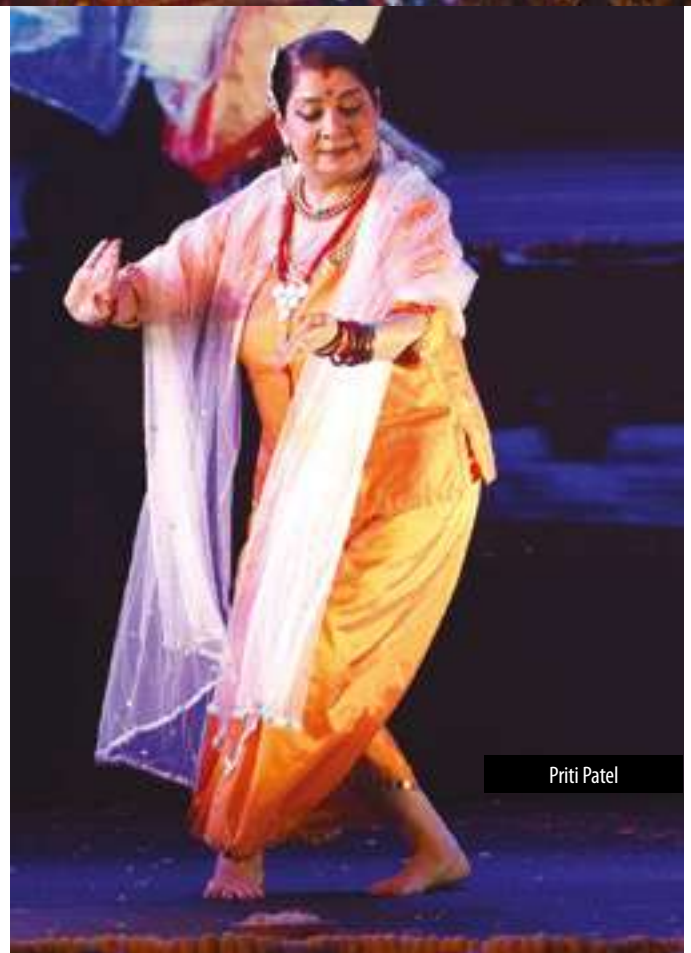


Dona Ganguly's troupe Dikshamanjari

A cultural evening was organised on the occasion of Holi by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, curated by film-maker and **Ehsaas** Woman of London Sangeeta Datta. Titled "Laglo Je Dol", the programme was held at the ITC Sonar lawns, Kolkata, following social distancing and other Covid-19 protocols.

Designed as a festival of hope, inspiration and revolution, the event showcased the diverse cultural repertoire of India's performing artistes.

Welcoming the audience, Datta said that it is imperative to pass on India's rich traditions of music and dance and our cultural ethos from one generation to the next. Given the times that we are living through, she realised the importance of such evenings in everyone's lives and expressed her gratitude to **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** for making this cultural evening possible.



Priti Patel



Dona Ganguly as Radha

"Holi brings in a mood of joy and exuberance and I sincerely hope this evening is able to emulate that for the audience," she smiled, before handing over the stage to celebrated Bengali poet Srijato.

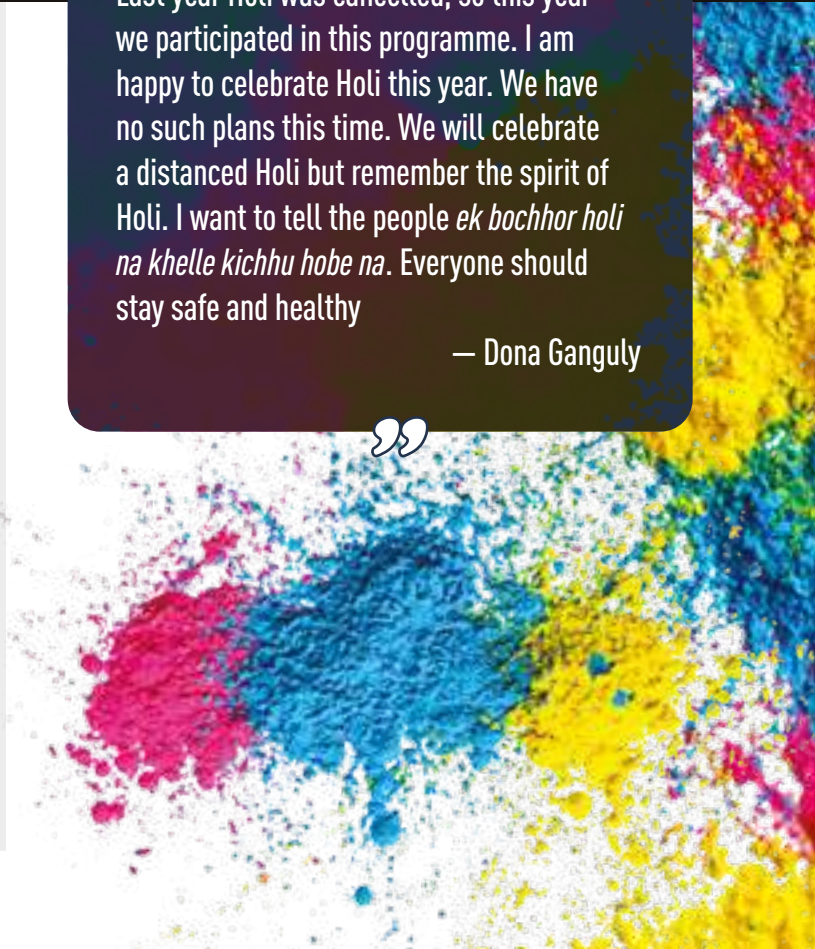
"Happiness has been so fleeting for the past year now, that it has been reduced to a handful. However that handful of joy translates to a handful of *abir*, which when shared with everyone present will definitely yield higher joy," Srijato said.

He started off by reading some compositions of Rabindranath Tagore, as without his works, every Dol event stands incomplete, he said. He followed it up with a string of beautiful poetry recitations, including *Eibar Brishti Hobe* by Shakti Chattopadhyay, *Shukno Patar Daal-e* by Joy Goswami and the self-composed *Basanter Notun Calendar*.

When one starts with Tagore, it is quite impossible to not end with the Bard, and Srijato ended his presentation with the famous song, *Akash Aamay Bhorlo Aloye*.

Last year Holi was cancelled, so this year we participated in this programme. I am happy to celebrate Holi this year. We have no such plans this time. We will celebrate a distanced Holi but remember the spirit of Holi. I want to tell the people *ek bochor holi na khelle kichhu hobe na*. Everyone should stay safe and healthy

— Dona Ganguly





Performance by Baithak



Srijato

Srijato concluded by remarking that the biggest difference in Holi this year was the lack of 'touch'. But he drew solace from the fact that while such an evening may not afford us a sense of touch, it definitely gives us a sense of closeness.

Next up, leading Odissi dancer Dona Ganguly and her globally renowned dance troupe Dikshamanjari performed a recital to a medley of songs. The performance captured the beautiful diversity in the celebration of Holi across India. They also incorporated the story of Radha-Krishna and how Holi was integral to their relationship. The dancers effortlessly explored the various moods of the festival and its different manifestations through festive songs from across the country. Ganguly, portraying Radha, stole the show with her grace.

After her performance, Dona reminisced that last year her Holi show was cancelled because of the eminent pandemic and thus being able to



Nadam dance troupe from Sonarpur perform Kathak



Tejinder Singh

participate in Laglo Je Dol this year made her very happy.

The audience was then captivated by another round of poetry readings, by theatre personality Soumitra Mitra and poet Sandeep. Next on stage came Baithak, an arts company that performs dance with live music. The performers brought alive the magic of the full moon of Dol Purnima and the riot of colours as seen in Nature with their expressive dance movements in the *Rabindrik* style. They also danced to a Hindi translation of Tagore's *Kon Alo Te Praan er Pradip* by Javed Akhtar, signifying the unifying spirit of this festival.

Priti Patel and Anjika dance company performed a Manipuri dance. Patel said, "The Manipuri style is a very soft and lyrical form of classical dance that is slowly getting lost. So, I bring native North-easterns with me to come and train in Kolkata in an effort to keep this form alive." Manipuri dance is mainly based on stories of Radha and Krishna and thus was perfect for this occasion.



Priti Patel's troupe Anjika

“

It is a very beautiful event because anything to do with Holi is very special, but more so because Prabha Khaitan Foundation got us all together. In this pandemic we were all isolated and we never met for any celebration. So this is really my first celebration and the first time I am meeting with all my dancers and musician friends. I am really, really happy to be here. So thank you very much **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, for arranging this

— Priti Patel

”

The troupe danced to Manipuri songs and even put up 'dhol dance', which is traditionally performed by men. The gracefulness of the female dancers teamed beautifully with the energy of the male dancers to cast a spell over the audience, which responded with resounding applause.

The penultimate performance of the evening was by Nadam troupe from Sonarpur, who showcased Kathak. They performed their piece on Basant raga and folk songs depicting the joys of the season. They too depicted the love of Radha and Krishna, to the tunes of *Vrindavan Mei Raas Rachavat*.

Next, Tanushree Shankar Dance Academy took the stage to depict the joys of celebrating Holi with friends and family in the Uday Shankar style of dance.

The evening ended on a note of hope, with the joyful hues of Holi brightening up the lives of everyone present.



A performance by Tanushree Shankar Dance Academy



Dona Ganguly's troupe Dikshamanjari

It was a delight and privilege to witness such a great gathering of performers, of entertainment, of colour, of cheer. This is much-needed in these very hard times. And what a wonderful audience. Everybody came together to support and to be present and that's a big thing. To get Dona, Priti, Tanushree Shankar, Srijato all together on the same stage and the same platform, I think that's an achievement in itself. So, keep up the good work, Prabha Khaitan Foundation

— Esha Dutta



Esha Dutta



Audience



Shefali Rawat Agarwal



Priti Patel's troupe Anjika



Sangeeta Datta

I think we've all had a delightful evening celebrating Holi. A very special programme, where we had so much talent from the city come together. It's been delightful curating this and I am really, really thankful to **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** for picking up this idea, for bringing it here to the ITC Sonar and making it a special evening with so many people

— Sangeeta Datta



Diplomats

We, at **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, are feeling extremely accomplished that after almost 1.5 years, despite a pandemic, we have been able to organise this event. We give our hearty thanks to **Ehsaas Woman of London Sangeeta Dutta** for helping us organise this programme. I want to extend my thanks to the various performers, especially **Dona Ganguly, Priti Patel, Tanushree Shankar, Nadam dance group, Srijato and Baithak UK** for giving us such wonderful performances and starting Holi on such a beautiful note in Bengal and worldwide

— Anindita Chatterjee



Holi Hai! Laglo je Dhol was presented by Shree Cement Ltd in association with YFLO Kolkata and ITC Sonar

Colourful Memories

This year on Holi some **Ehsaas** Women dug out memories from past Holi celebrations and shared them with us.



Anshu Mehra



Anubha Arya



Apra Kuchhal



Archana Dalmia



Arundeeplaha



Deepa Mishra



Dipali Bhasin



Garima Tiwari



Neelima Dalmia Adhar



Nidhi Garg



Praneet Bubber



Priyanka Kothari

यहां क्राइम को सस्ता और फूहड़ बना दिया गया है: संजीव पालीवाल



Sanjeev Paliwal



Rekha Verma



Apra Kuchhal



Rishi Mattu

मैं भले ही उत्तर प्रदेश में पला बढ़ा, पर राजस्थान मेरे पुरखों की धरती है। यहां से एक अलग लगाव है। हम आज भी अपने को इसी धरती का मानते हैं। उपन्यास नैना के एक अंश की सारी पृष्ठभूमि, परिवेश, किरदार, यहीं इसी होटल की एक पार्टी से उपजे थे, और वह आयोजन प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन का ही था।" यह कहना है अपने पहले ही अपराध कथा उपन्यास नैना से लोकप्रिय हो जाने वाले वरिष्ठ पत्रकार संजीव पालीवाल का। वे कोरोना काल के वैक्सिनेशन ड्राइव वाले दौर में प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन द्वारा आयोजित कलम राजस्थान के पहले जमीनी कार्यक्रम में शिरकत कर रहे थे। फाउंडेशन और अहसास वूमेन की ओर से अपरा कुच्छल ने पालीवाल और संवादकर्ता रेखा वर्मा के परिचय के साथ ही कोरोनाकाल में भी कलम की वर्चुअल गतिविधियां जारी रहने की विस्तार से जानकारी दी। उन्होंने बताया कि कला, साहित्य, संस्कृति को आगे बढ़ाने के उद्देश्य से फाउंडेशन अब तक 550 ऑन लाइन इवेंट और 1500 से अधिक इवेंट करा चुका है।

वर्मा ने बातचीत की शुरुआत यह कहते हुए की कि नैना रहस्य-रोमांच का ऐसा मिलाजुला रूप है कि पाठक एक बार पढ़ना शुरू करने के बाद उसे बिना पूरा खत्म किए छोड़ ही नहीं सकता। उन्होंने पालीवाल से एक पत्रकार से उपन्यासकार तक के सफर के बारे में पूछा? पालीवाल का उत्तर था, "मुझे पढ़ने का बहुत शौक है। खासकर अपराध कथाएं। बचपन में सत्यकथा और मनोहर कहानियां पढ़ने के चलते मुझे बहुत मार पड़ती थी। मां साप्ताहिक हिंदुस्तान, धर्मयुग, माधुरी पढ़ती थीं। पर मेरा क्राइम पढ़ने का सिलसिला चाचा के यहां लगातार चलता रहा। कहते हैं कि ज्यादा पढ़ो तो आइडिया ओवरफ्लो होने लगता है। जब मैं टीवी चैनल में चला आया तब भी लिखता था। पर उपन्यास लिखूंगा यह सोचा नहीं था। बड़े-बड़ों ने कहा है कि हर किताब की अपनी किस्मत होती है। हो सकता है कि कोई रचना ज्यादा अच्छी हो, पर शोहरत उस लेखक की किसी और रचना को मिले। जितनी रहस्यमयी शख्सियत होगी उतनी ही लोग उसे जानने की कोशिश करेंगे। नैना हरेक औरत में छिपी होती है।"

सूत्रधार वर्मा ने नैना से एक पंक्ति को उठाया कि 'आपने लिखा है कि हर प्यार करने वाले से शादी हो यह जरूरी नहीं, न ही यह जरूरी है कि जिससे शादी हो, उससे प्यार हो ही जाए,' इसका क्या मतलब है? पालीवाल का उत्तर था कि मेरा पहला प्यार शादी में नहीं बदला। बाद में प्यार और शादी भी हुई। मेरा मानना है कि प्यार वक्त के साथ होता है। आज फोन की सहूलियत है। हमारे जमाने में फोन की सुविधा भी नहीं थी। अब जमाना बदल गया है। आज के बच्चे शादी करेंगे या नहीं, पता नहीं। कहते हैं, लेखक समाज का दर्पण होता है। नैना में आपके सारे किरदार अपने जीवन में अतृप्त और असंतुष्ट हैं? क्या हमारा आज का समाज ऐसा ही है? इस सवाल पर पालीवाल का उत्तर था, "यह महानगर की कहानी है, एक बड़े न्यूज चैनल की कहानी है। चैनल का जॉब बहुत प्रेशर का काम होता है। आदमी पंद्रह घंटे तक ऑफिस में होता है। उस दबाव में प्यार होना स्वाभाविक है।" पालीवाल ने नैना किरदार की बात करते हुए बताया कि वह एक छोटे शहर की लड़की थी। उसका सिर्फ एक सपना था अपने पति के साथ खुश रहना। उसकी शादी उस व्यक्ति से होती है, जिससे उसने प्यार किया था। वह काम करे यह उसके पति की इच्छा थी। दिक्रत तब शुरू हुई जब उसे अपने पति से ज्यादा शोहरत मिल गई।

क्या यह सारी स्त्रियों की कहानी है? पालीवाल का उत्तर था, "महिलाओं के साथ हमारे समाज में दिक्रते तो हैं। उसे घर का काम करना पड़ता है और ऑफिस में भी उसे महिला होने के चलते कोई लाभ नहीं मिलता। मैं जब आया था, तब छोटे शहरों में महिलाएं तो जॉब में थी ही नहीं। शहरों में जहां महिलाएं काम करती थीं, वहां भी मर्दों की सोच महिलाओं को लेकर बदली नहीं थी। यहां तक कि उन्हें छुट्टी को लेकर भी सवाल का सामना करना पड़ता है।" नैना की कहानी से जुड़े सवाल पर पालीवाल का कहना था कि नैना में आप नैना के किरदार को पुरुषों की नजर से देखते हैं। नैना की नजर से इस उपन्यास में देखा ही नहीं गया है। जयपुर के राजा साहब के चित्रण की क्या वजह थी? पालीवाल ने अपने राजस्थानी मूल की बात बताई।

हमारा समाज एक औरत की कामयाबी को सामान्य रूप से क्यों नहीं देखता? के जवाब में पालीवाल का उत्तर था, "इस देश में आदमी बदलने के लिए तैयार नहीं है। किसी को समझने के लिए यह जरूरी है कि उसके साथ काम करने वालों से उसके बारे में पूछ लिया जाए। हर कोई परदे पर आना चाहता है। एंकर बनना चाहता है। उसी माहौल में अच्छे भी लोग हैं, बदमाश लोग भी हैं। हालांकि अब समय बदल गया है। बदल रहा है, पर आज नहीं तो कल आपको बदलना होगा।" उन्होंने प्रेम के चलते एक पिता द्वारा बेटी की हत्या की हालिया घटना का जिक्र करते हुए कहा कि यह एक शर्मिंदगी की बात है कि महिलाओं और बच्चों के प्रति अपराध परदे के पीछे ही हो रहे हैं। मैंने नैना के माध्यम से एक समस्या को लोगों तक पहुंचाने की कोशिश की है। देश में लेखकों और पाठकों के बीच दूरी बढ़ती जा रही है, के सवाल पर पालीवाल का कहना था कि साहित्यकार विद्वानों के लिए लिखने लगे। मैंने नैना के माध्यम से इस दूरी को कम करने की कोशिश की है। जिस देश में हर अखबार का पन्ना अपराध समाचार से भरा हो, वहां लोग क्राइम लिखने से कतराते क्यों हैं? यहां क्राइम को सस्ता और फूहड़ बना दिया गया है।

सवाल-जवाब के सत्र में लिव इन रिलेशन पर पालीवाल ने कहा कि सिर फोड़ने से अच्छा है कि एक-दूसरे को पहले ही समझ लें। उन्होंने कहा कि पितृवादी सत्ता, बाजारवाद और क्राइम अगेंस्ट वूमेन के बीच मैं हमेशा लड़कियों का पक्षधर हूं। अलका बत्रा ने पूछा कॉरपोरेट में काम कर रही लड़कियों की स्थिति में सुधार कैसे हो? पालीवाल का उत्तर था कि मीटू आंदोलन से हालात बहुत बदले हैं। ऑफिस में भी बदल रहे हैं। ह्युमन रिसोर्सेज में ज्यादातर महिलाएं हैं। लड़ना तो उनसे उन्हीं के अंदाज में पड़ेगा। कुच्छल के अनुरोध पर पालीवाल ने नैना का एक अंश भी सुनाया।

आरंभ में स्वागत वक्तव्य आईटीसी राजपूताना के महाप्रबंधक ऋषि मट्टू ने दिया। अंत में धन्यवाद अपरा कुच्छल ने दिया। लाड कुमारी जैन ने अतिथि वक्ता संजीव पालीवाल और संवादकर्ता रेखा वर्मा को स्मृति चिन्ह स्वरूप हथकरघा निर्मित शाल प्रदान कर अभिनंदन किया।

कलम राजस्थान के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट, हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर आईटीसी राजपूताना, मीडिया पार्टनर दैनिक भास्कर, वी केयर जयपुर और अहसास वूमेन जयपुर का सहयोग मिला



Manoj Muntashir's *Mastana Fitrat*

From writing words for on-screen heroes like Amitabh Bachchan to scripting Hindi versions for superheroes like *Baahubali* and *Black Panther* to penning lyrics of popular songs like *Galliyan*, *Tere sang yara* and *Kaun tujhe*, Manoj Muntashir has many feathers in his cap. The lyricist, poet and scriptwriter gave *Prabha* a peek into his life and work through this interview while he was "Passing Through" Kolkata.

Passing Through, a new column in *Prabha*, will give the readers an up close and personal look at some of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation's** regular guests who visit the City of Joy.

A six-year-old to a Korean artist is churning out soulful renditions of *Teri mitti*. Which cover has caught your attention the most?

Teri mitti is a song that is owned more by the listeners than the creators. The love and emotions that I have received through this song are enormous and that's the reason I become very uncomfortable when I have to judge anything about *Teri mitti*. I have seen thousands of covers and all have one thing in common, respect towards the motherland. I will refrain from judging if one's respect is higher than another's.

Patience is the key. Talent is important but it's just one brick in the castle of success. If talent is not supported by patience, the castle will eventually collapse

Let's rewind. You left for Bombay with Rs 700 in your pocket. The first film you signed, *Rang Rasiya*, was delayed by a decade. What were some of life's lessons from those days of struggle?

Patience is the key. Talent is important but it's just one brick in the castle of success. If talent is not supported by patience, the castle will eventually collapse. I wrote all the songs of *Rang Rasiya* way back in 2005. It took 10 years for the film to release and those were the toughest days of my life. Every morning I used to open the newspaper with the hope of seeing some good news about the film's release. I was dying to get recognised, not because I needed fame, but because the recognition would bring more work, more opportunities to showcase my talent. At times I used to feel hopeless, but a shloka from *Shrimad Bhagwat Gita* kept me going, '*Karmanye Vadhikaraste, Ma phaleshou kada chana*', which loosely means, you have a right to perform your prescribed duty, but you are not entitled to the fruits of action. Understanding this theory needed patience. I knew if I could somehow stay in the game, scoring singles, eventually I will get a ball to hit out of the park.

A book that inspired you to write poems for the very first time?

It was not a book, but my first heartbreak. I started writing when I was seven years old, but let's say it was more of scribbling than writing. I was very passionate about reading and would read anything I got my hands on, from novels to non-fiction and from *Ramcharitmanas* to the manual of making sweater designs, absolutely anything. So in a way, nature was subconsciously preparing to mould me into a writer. When I experienced the pain of losing my love, I was

ready to scream out that pain with my poetry. That particular *nazm* '*Main tere khat lauta doonga, tu meri jawani wapas de*' is included in my first collection of poetries, *Meri Fitrat Hai Mastana*, which became a bestseller soon after its launch.

Prior to your Bollywood break, you were making waves in the television circuit with scripts for major shows such as *India's Got Talent* and *Kaun Banega Crorepati*. How much of the KBC script was done in collaboration with Amitabh Bachchan and what stood out for you in your interactions with him?

Mr Bachchan has zillions of qualities but if I am asked to choose one, it will be his respect for the written word. I was a newbie when I got to write for him but I never felt the lack of respect for my scripts. He would pay complete attention to every word as if I was as big as Salim-Javed. His suggestions added great value to the scripts and let's also admit, only 20 percent of *KBC* was scripted, the rest of it was his wit and smartness.



Amitabh Bachchan in *Kaun Banega Crorepati*

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Baahubali 2

How challenging was the shift from scriptwriting to songwriting?

It was never a shift in the real sense. I was always a songwriter. Scripting was my means to stay afloat in Mumbai till I got to write songs. Once *Galliyan* happened, I took to songwriting full time and it was a joy to shift my gears to my original passion.

Who inspires you in the realm of songwriting and in scriptwriting?

Oh, the list is endless. I am heavily inspired by Sahir Ludhianvi, Kaifi Azmi, Shailendra and Anand Bakshi. At times, Raja Mehdi Ali Khan, Rajendra Kirishan and Prem Dhawan also influence and inspire me. These are all the greatest songwriters of all time but poets like Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Ahmad Faraz, Mahadevi Verma and most of all Dinkar have shaped my style of writing.

Who is your closest friend in the industry now?

I wish I had a fancy answer to this question but don't. Industry is a family. A group of people I enjoy working with. When it comes to friends, I still have the same set of people I used to have in my school days. Deepak from Amethi is the closest, we have been sticking together for more than 25 years now.

The lyrics for *Phir bhi tumko chahunga* was a nazm

written for your wife while you sat near the Dal Lake in Kashmir. Where and for whom would you write your next nazm?

My subjects for writing are more surreal than before. I may get inspired more by an idea than an actual person. When I wrote *Phir bhi tumko chahunga* for Neelam, I was too young. Life was all about a girl. Now my relationships have matured and by that, I don't mean my passion for romance has extinguished. Now I can dive even deeper where romance becomes a dance of the universe.

Baahubali and Black Panther: Your biggest takeaway from each of these prized projects?

If you refrain from lazy translations, dubbed films are the future.

What is your message for listeners of your latest patriotic song, Watan?

Nothing in the world is more important than mother and motherland. Don't be afraid to die for them.

In an age where fast-paced, upbeat party tracks are dominating the music charts with modernised lyrics, what advice would you give budding lyricists who are inspired by you?

You can dance for an hour or two but listen to soft music all through the day. That's why *Chaar botal vodka* may die with the next tide, but *Lag ja gale* will live on. However, it's completely a person's choice what he wants to write. I can only suggest that in our country, meaningful lyrics are weighed in gold.

If you could use social media to champion a good cause, what would it be?

One of the biggest pains I go through every single day of my life is seeing children selling flowers at the signals.



Teri mitti from Kesari



Galliyan from Ek Villain

They should be in school. That's where they belong. I am planning to bring some change to the scenario.

If you didn't call yourself Manoj 'Muntashir', what name would you choose and why?

Atal Bihari, for some reason I have always loved this name. Of course I am a huge admirer of Vajpayeeji and that could be one of the reasons his name heavily resonates with me.

When you think of Kolkata, what are the images and sounds that come to mind?

I have grown up watching *Byomkesh Bakshi* on Doordarshan. That show is technically my first introduction to the City of Joy, decades before I visited the city. So when I think of Kolkata, I think of Byomkesh Bakshi first, followed by the incredible Kolkata food and Durga Puja celebrations.

Any films, any songs with a Kolkata connection that have left a mark on you?

A *nazm* 'Qahte-bengal' by Jigar Moradabadi, which I heard in Jagjit Singh's album, *Kahkashan*. 'Bengal ki main shamo-sahar dekh raha hoon'. This *nazm* is a painful sketch of the infamous famine of Bengal that was perhaps one of its kind in history.

What, according to you, sets Kolkata as a city and the people of Kolkata apart?

The unparalleled culture of music, dance and art. Rabindranath Tagore alone is enough to put Kolkata on top of the world map.

Tamil, Telugu... any Bengali film on the horizon?

I wish I knew these magnificent languages. The limitations of my vocabulary deny me the pleasure of writing in languages other than Hindi.

How did you get associated with Prabha Khaitan Foundation and what have been some of the highlights of this association?

The publisher of *Meri Fitrat Hai Mastana*, Aditi Maheshwari Goyal from Vani Prakashan, introduced me to PKF. I had already heard a lot about Sundeep Bhutoria and I was well-versed with his massive contributions to society and literature both. So, the moment I was offered to do my book tour with PKF, I was overjoyed. I visited more than 20 cities with them, in India and abroad, and



Ehsaas Women is a group of like-minded and most amazing ladies on the planet who organise **Kalam**. Frankly, when I did my first **Kalam** in Bangalore and met the amazing women there, I thought it must be a fluke, my experience will not be the same in another city. But city after city, I was proved wrong



everywhere I saw a uniformity in the passion of people associated with PKF.

My London tour was a major highlight as I was introduced to some of the finest literary minds residing outside the borders of India and yet adding so much value to Hindi. Padmesh Gupta is one such proud son of Hindi who is relentlessly spreading the magic of the language across nations.

What has been your experience of attending Kalam programmes across different cities?

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The Bard with a Bengali Twist

The tale of the "dead butcher and his fiend-like queen" is a well-known one. Wrought with violent ambition, betrayal, bloody retribution and an element of the supernatural, *Macbeth* or "The Scottish Play" is often considered William Shakespeare's masterpiece. It is also an actor, director or theatre-watcher's dream.

From numerous stage productions to critically acclaimed screen adaptations, *Macbeth* has come alive time and again in the hands of the likes of Peter Goold,



Girish Mondal



Sangeeta Datta

Orson Welles and Akira Kurosawa. The play has managed to defy the ravages of time and remains relevant even today — be it delivered in Lawrence Olivier's crisp British English, Toshiro Mifune's Japanese or Irrfan Khan's nuanced *Mumbaiya* Hindi. It is no surprise then that *Macbeth* was adapted in Bengali and staged at a time when political ambitions are soaring and all hands are being scrubbed clean.

However, what was unique about this most recent Bengali production of *Macbeth*, staged at Alka Jalan Foundation's Daga Nikunj in Ballygunge, was the skilful mingling of the Bard and the Baul.

Organised by the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** as part of its **Sur aur Saaz** initiative, the event was curated by writer-filmmaker and **Ehsaas** Woman of London, Sangeeta Datta. It was an attempt by Datta to forge a bridge between the heritage of the land she calls home now (England) and the land she hails from (West Bengal). Datta directed a successful adaptation of Shakespeare's *King Lear*, set against the backdrop of the Indian diaspora,



in her film *Life Goes On*. She was, therefore, the perfect candidate to shed light on the universality and versatility of Shakespeare's works — even when set in rural Bengal.

The repertory "Ebong Amra" from Tepantar — a theatre village in Satkahania, in the Paschim Bardhaman district — staged this adaptation of the Shakespearean tragedy under the direction of Kallol Bhattacharya, a reputed playwright, actor and director. The play was interspersed with soulful Baul *gaan*, which added a local anchor to the otherwise universal themes of the play. The evening started with baul Girish Mondal taking the stage to woo the audience with renditions of songs like *Tomay hrid majharey rakhbo* and *Khachar bhor achin pakhi* before — a sort of choral ensemble that merged into the play.

Speaking about this unique initiative, Datta, who is a member of the British Shakespeare Association and is always searching for interesting adaptations, was all praise for Bhattacharya's initiative and vision. "I was at Tepantar in late December when a mini theatre festival was happening. It was an absolute discovery for me to see a community of artistes staying in an eco-sustainable environment. Kallol has brought in a lot of people from the community into theatre," she said.

Tepantar, where mostly local tribals and people from the economically weaker sections stay, was set up by Bhattacharya in 1994 to train residents to take part in the various productions staged in the village, while sustaining themselves through poultry and fruit farming.

Why did Datta, who works ceaselessly to promote the arts through her non-profit organisation Baithak,

feel that Kolkata needs to get a taste of Tepantar and its brand of dramatics? "Performance, art and culture is a way of living in Tepantar. This is social transformation through theatre.... I told Kallol that I wanted to bring him to Kolkata. I thought it was important for the urban audience to get an idea of what kind of work was happening in rural theatre," explained Datta, who believes that art and culture have to become more egalitarian and the gap between rural and urban culture needs to narrow now.

The play was interspersed with soulful Baul *gaan*, which added a local anchor to the otherwise universal themes of the play

And what better way to celebrate the evening's powerhouse rustic production than by melding folk music into it! It was deliberate then, that without the addition of elaborate sets or costumes, the focus of the evening's entertainment was purely on the performance of the actors and musicians — something that was much appreciated by the audience.

Bhattacharya himself acknowledged that the universal themes and political overtones of *Macbeth*, still so relevant in today's world, made him choose this particular play for adaptation. Moreover, he also admitted that since so many film and theatre directors have successfully adapted *Macbeth*, he too was inspired to try and transpose the story to rural Bengal and set it to the soulful strains of Baul music.

And pull it off he did... if the rounds of applause from the audience was any indication!

This session of Sur aur Saaz is presented in association with Alka Jalan Foundation, EZCC and Ministry of Culture, Government of India



Rashmi Sharma

Geet Chaturvedi

हिंदी व विश्व साहित्य 'गुलाब व मोगरे' जैसे, दोनों की अपनी खुशबू: गीत चतुर्वेदी

आपकी कविताएं सूक्तियों जैसी हैं, आप ऐसा विंब कैसे गढ़ते हैं? के जवाब में चतुर्वेदी ने कहा, "मैंने ज़िद में आकर विश्व साहित्य पढ़ा। सत्रह से बीस साल की उम्र तक बहुत सारा कुछ लिख लेने के बाद मुझे लगा कि मैंने अबतक जो भी लिखा वह सब कचरा है। निराला के *राम की शक्तिपूजा* में एक पंक्ति है – छोड़ दो समर जब तक न सिद्धि हो, रघुनन्दन! इसलिए मैं लिखना छोड़कर सिद्धि की तरफ मुड़ा। जापान से अमेरिका तक और नॉर्वे से दक्षिण अफ्रीका तक जितने भी महान लेखक हैं, सबको पढ़ा।" चतुर्वेदी का तंज था, "सिर्फ हिंदी ऐसी भाषा है, जहां कहा जाता है कि तुम सुंदर उक्ति लिखोगे तो तुम्हारा साहित्य कमजोर होगा।" विदेशी

साहित्य के मुकाबले भारतीय साहित्य में क्या अंतर है? अलगाव व समानता दोनों के बारे में बताएं? गीत का उत्तर था, "किशोरावस्था में मैं विश्व साहित्य से बहुत आकर्षित था। जैसे-जैसे मैं मैच्योर हुआ, मुझे लगा यह तुलना बेमानी है। यह गुलाब व मोगरे जैसा है। दोनों की अपनी खासियत है। दोनों की अपनी खुशबू है। अपनी जगह पर दोनों अच्छे हैं। फिर भी कुछ छोटी-मोटी चीज और आब्जर्वेशन है, वह यह कि हिंदी साहित्य के लेखक कुछ नया करने से घबराते हैं। लेकिन बाहर का साहित्यकार नए-नए जोखिम उठाता है। हिंदी साहित्य अनुसरण करता है।"



Poonam Anand

सवाल-जवाब के सत्र में चतुर्वेदी ने कहा कि हमें हिंदी साहित्य के स्थानीय पूर्वाग्रहों को तोड़ना होगा। रस और अलंकार को लेकर परंपरा और प्राचीनता के साथ हमें आधुनिकता की ओर बढ़ना होगा। जब हम आधुनिकता की ओर बढ़ते हैं, तो अपनी परंपरा को भूल जाते हैं। इसलिए हिंदी साहित्य लिखते समय हमें भारतीय *कथा सरित्सागर*, *महाभारत*, *रामायण* सहित अन्य साहित्यों से उद्धरण लेना चाहिए। प्राचीन विरासत से नया कुछ उत्पन्न हो सके इसकी कोशिश होनी चाहिए। चतुर्वेदी ने कहा कि हमारे यहां सबका अनुवाद हुआ है, पर हिंदी साहित्य को विदेशों में प्रोत्साहन नहीं मिला है। अनुवाद की अपनी एक राजनीति है। प्रेमचंद के गोबर, धनिया को अमेरिका का आदमी कैसे समझ सकता है?

चतुर्वेदी का कहना था कि कई अमेरिकियों को लगता है कि भारत की भाषा ही अंग्रेजी है। हमारे द्विभाषी लोगों ने हमारी बात बाहर रखी ही नहीं। पश्चिम के लोग हमारी संस्कृति और साहित्य को समझ नहीं पाते हैं। इसके चलते वे भारतीय अंग्रेजी लेखकों के लिखे को ही भारतीय साहित्य मानते हैं। अमेरिका में बैठे अमेरिकी के लिए निर्मल वर्मा, रेणु उपलब्ध ही नहीं हैं। वह सलमान रुश्दी और अरुंधती राय को पढ़कर भारत को समझता है, जबकि रुश्दी के लिए मंटो के अलावा कोई भारतीय साहित्यकार पढ़ने योग्य है ही नहीं। हमें पश्चिमी साहित्य का मुकाबला करना होगा। मैं चाहता हूँ कि हिंदी का लेखक अमेरिका पहुंचे और वहां पुरस्कार जीते। यह आसान काम नहीं है, लेकिन हमें करना ही होगा। दर्शकों के अनुरोध पर चतुर्वेदी ने अपनी कविता की 'जब मुश्किल समय आए, सबकुछ बेकाबू हो जाए, उससे थोड़ा और प्रेम करना है, जिससे अब तक तुम करते आए,' पंक्ति भी सुनाई। बचपन में रॉक स्टार बनने की ख्वाहिश रखने वाले चतुर्वेदी मौका मिलने पर बॉलीवुड के लिए गीत लिखने को भी तैयार हैं। सीमा सिंह ने धन्यवाद ज्ञापित करते हुए अतिथि वक्ता को और मुक्ति ने संवादकर्ता को स्मृति चिन्ह प्रदान किया। इस दौरान आमंत्रित साहित्यप्रेमी और छात्र भी मौजूद थे।

कलम रांची के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट। हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर चाणक्य बीएनआर, मीडिया पार्टनर दैनिक जागरण और अहसास वूमेन का भी सहयोग मिला।

"हिंदी में आलोचकों का ऐसा एक गैंग सक्रिय है, जो सूक्ति को बहुत बुरा मानता है। वे ऐसी कृतियों की आलोचना करते हैं। मैं उन्हें यह स्पष्ट करना चाहता हूँ कि सूक्ति का अर्थ है, सुंदर उक्ति, एक सुंदर वाक्य। दुनिया का सारा साहित्य दरअसल एक सुंदर वाक्य है।" प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की ओर से आयोजित कलम रांची में अतिथि वक्ता के रूप में यह बात कही लेखक, कवि, अनुवादक, कथाकार गीत चतुर्वेदी ने। कार्यक्रम के आरंभ में फाउंडेशन और अहसास वूमेन की ओर से चतुर्वेदी का स्वागत करते हुए पूनम आनंद ने उनका विस्तार से परिचय दिया और आगे के संवाद का दायित्व रश्मि को सौंप दिया।

रश्मि का पहला सवाल था, कवि, कथाकार, अनुवादक में कौन सा रूप आपको पसंद है? चतुर्वेदी ने बेहद मजाकिया अंदाज में उत्तर दिया, "एक बार मैंने खुद से पूछा, क्या तुम सच में गीत चतुर्वेदी हो, मेरे मन ने जवाब दिया- हां हूँ तो गीत चतुर्वेदी ही, पर कभी-कभी। बाकी टाइम तो मैं एक आवारा हूँ, बंजारा हूँ, घुमकड़ हूँ, चाणक्य हूँ। खुद को नहीं पता कि मैं क्या हूँ। केवल कुछ ही समय मैं वो हूँ, जिसे आप लोग प्यार करते हैं। मैं वही रहना भी चाहता हूँ। कवि हूँ कि कहानीकार हूँ, अनुवादक हूँ कि चित्रकार हूँ, कई बार मुझे भी नहीं पता चलता हूँ कि कौन हूँ। एक बिल्डिंग है, उसमें दो फ्लैट हैं। एक गद्य का, एक कविता का। मैंने गद्य से शुरुआत की, फिर कविता में आया। गद्य मेरा मायका है, मैं शादी करके कविता के क्षेत्र में आया। मैं दोनों तरफ आवाजाही करता रहता हूँ। विचार भी मेरे पास इसी तरह आते हैं। मैं पहले से कभी यह तय नहीं करता कि क्या लिखूंगा। इसीलिए बहुत गड़बड़ करता हूँ।"

चतुर्वेदी ने सिंधु लाइब्रेरी कविता के सिमसिम कहानी बनने और इस साल के अंत तक उपन्यास रूप में आने की बात बताई और कहा, "मेरे लिए कोई एक विभाजन और अंतराल नहीं है। यह बहता हुआ प्रवाह है। यह आत्मा का जल है, जो मेरे भीतर बहता रहता है।" बहुत जोर देने पर उन्होंने कहा, "शायद मुझे कवि वाला रूप पसंद है।" उन्होंने बताया कि सोलह साल की उम्र में ही पहली कहानी छप गई थी। तब से कवि के रूप में स्थापित होने के लिए मैंने बहुत अध्ययन किया। लंबी कहानियां लिखने से जुड़े सवाल पर चतुर्वेदी ने कहा, "अगर कम शब्दों में बात कहनी है, तो मैं कविता का शिल्प चुनता हूँ। पर जो बात कविता में नहीं कह पाता उसके लिए कहानी चुनता हूँ, तो वह नेचुरली बड़ी हो जाती है। अगर आप हिमालय की कोई ग्लेशियर हैं, तो आपकी किस्मत है कि आप गल-गल के बहेगें और समंदर में जाकर गिरेगें। इसी तरह मेरे अंदर का ग्लेशियर गलेगा, बहेगा और उपन्यास के समंदर में गिर जाएगा। मेरे भीतर की सारी काव्यमयता हमेशा एक औपन्यासिकता को छूने के लिए सन्नद्ध, प्रतिबद्ध और आशान्वित है।"



Seema Singh

The Principles of Penning Thoughts



To pen a meaningful and memorable short story is akin to pirouetting across a tightrope — achieving that fine balance of brevity, skill and a magic touch. It is a difficult genre to tackle at the best of times: creativity calibrated by conciseness. But this tough medium is exactly what Mumbai-born author Anushka Jasraj chose as her tool of creative expression and triumphed.

"This was something that I really wanted to do and was maybe better at than anything else I did. So it seemed like a natural path from there," said the two-time winner of the Asia Regional Commonwealth Short Story Prize about her story-writing to educator Pankhuri Agarwal during a recent virtual session of **The Write Circle**, Raipur. The chat was initiated by Kalpana Choudhary, an **Ehsaas** Woman of Raipur who welcomed and introduced the guest speaker.

Jasraj attributed her love of writing to a sixth-grade teacher who encouraged her to pen down her thoughts. She also admitted that being a single child — "the quiet kid who liked to read a lot" — definitely taught her to keep herself engaged by creating her own world. She believes that her inclination to tell stories also stems from another family tradition. "When my family gets together, they like to tell funny stories.... It is part of the bonding experience. Maybe that's part of the impulse that drove me to write," she mused. She then moved on to discuss her recently released book, *Principles of Prediction*. Comprising 13 short stories across several genres — historical to detective to science fiction — the collection received positive reviews.

"I have reached this place where I look at my own work as an outsider because some of it was written so long ago that I am a stranger to myself," she said, pointing out that failure to communicate is one of the themes that keep getting repeated in her works.

When asked whether Jasraj wants to rethink what she has called the lack of "mass appeal" in her works, she said,

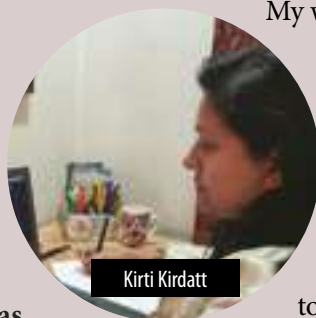


Pankhuri Agarwal



Anushka Jasraj

"I have been thinking about it differently now with the book out in the world.... If you'd ask me a few years ago, I would have said I am going to write whatever I want.... My writing is if not weird, then unconventional."



Kirti Kirdatt

Choosing to walk the fine line between the commercial and critical, she has now devised a vision for her next projects. "I was doing my Masters in gender studies while I wrote some of the stories. That's a world where people write and speak in a more academic way and that's definitely something I want to be more conscious of avoiding in future.

I want to be accessible but that does not mean I want everyone to like my work. Thematically, I would still choose to write about things of interest to me. So, it is still about following my own curiosity rather than what other people are interested in."

Talking about her writing process, Jasraj revealed that her ideas often come from just a single word or sentence, which she then fleshes out. She revealed that writing every day in her diary — "putting pen on paper" — helped her be more disciplined about her craft.

Jasraj also touched upon topics such as learning to take criticism impersonally, the challenge of teaching creative writing to students, her favourite authors and future projects. She even read out a few lines from her short story, *Luminous*.

The session concluded with Shrishti Trivedi, **Ehsaas** Woman of Raipur, thanking Jasraj and Agarwal for keeping everyone interested and entertained.

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



Giving Form to Fading Worlds



Nidhi Dugar Kundalia

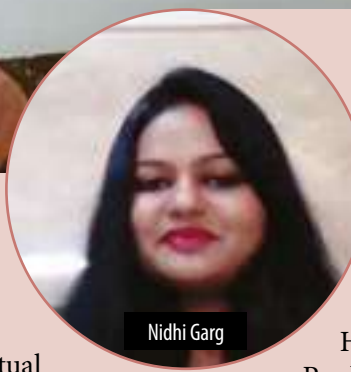
I don't think a writer can be born. If you have something to tell and you are writing it honestly enough, that works," was the candid confession of journalist-turned-author Nidhi Dugar Kundalia at a recent virtual session of **The Write Circle** Ajmer and Udaipur where she was the guest speaker.

The hour-long conversation was opened by **Ehsaas** Woman of Udaipur, Swati Agarwal. **Ehsaas** Woman of Bhubaneswar, Nidhi Garg, moderated the session.

Kundalia started the conversation saying that despite being a student of commerce, she realised her calling was elsewhere. This realisation made her get an internship with a leading national daily while she completed her graduation. "That's when I realised that perhaps journalism, things to do with people and discovering their stories, is my calling," said the young mother of two.

It so happened that a publishing house eventually expressed interest in compiling Kundalia's magazine columns into a book and *The Lost Generation: Chronicling India's Dying Professions* was born. Speaking about the book, Kundalia revealed that growing up in her grandmother's ancestral house with its cupboard full of obscure yet intriguing knick-knacks stoked her imagination. "Every time she would open that Godrej almirah, treasures would just spill out.... Amongst all these treasures was this little ice cream scooper thing and my grandmother said 'It was used to clean my children's ears!' She would then tell me a story about this street ear-cleaner whom she bought it from," she recalled. From lamplighters and rat catchers to telephone operators, Kundalia got glimpses of a life that used to be thanks to her grandmother.

It was only when she moved to Kolkata in 2011 that she realised that a lot of that India still exists. "Kolkata is a city which is stuck in time... everything that happens in the city is before your eyes. There is no cosmetic layer that distinguishes the old and redundant from the new



Nidhi Garg

and modern.... I could see the *bhishtiwalla* (water bearers) and the ear-cleaner.... I realised this needs to be documented," she said. Her publishers, however, asked her to broaden her horizons from Bengal to pan-India. This led her to explore the Rudaalis of Rajasthan, the genealogists of Haridwar, the BurraKatha artistes of Andhra Pradesh, the street dentists, the letter writers and

more.

But can these dying professions be revived? Kundalia thinks not. "It is very difficult to revive cassettes in times of iPhones," she quipped. Moreover, she wanted the readers to understand that while preserving our heritage is necessary, most of these professions are intrinsically linked to a rigid caste system. "If you want the caste system to go away, this is, unfortunately, the natural consequence," said Kundalia.

The author also spoke about her latest book, *White As Milk and Rice: Stories of India's Isolated Tribes*, which documents bits of Adivasi history via stories told by natives from six tribes. "All the accounts available about the tribes were either of decorated dance, drama, jewellery and costumes or the dismal conditions of their lives. There was nothing about who they are at a human level.... I was very curious about how things have changed for them. I wanted to know the stories of their lives. That's when I decided to write."

During the chat, Kundalia also answered questions about juggling the personal and the professional, and confessed to several scary encounters — thakurs with guns and Naxals in forests — while researching. Wrapping up, she summed up her motivation behind undertaking such projects. "What was exciting for me was to document a part of history, put it on paper and make it relevant... something of use to other students, scholars and researchers. That gives me the biggest thrill," concluded Kundalia.

The Write Circle Ajmer and Udaipur is presented by Shree Cement Ltd, in association with WeCare, Radisson Blu Udaipur and Ehsaas Women of Ajmer and Udaipur

राजनीति में हमें निजी हमले से बचना चाहिए: नवीन चौधरी



Naveen Choudhary

कलम नागपुर के इस सत्र में अतिथि वक्ता थे लेखक नवीन चौधरी। प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन और अहसास वूमेन

नागपुर की ओर से प्रवीण तुली ने चौधरी का स्वागत करते हुए उनका परिचय दिया और आगे के संवाद के लिए प्रियंका कोठारी को आमंत्रित किया। कोठारी ने पहला सवाल चौधरी की पुस्तक *जनता स्टोर* के नाम को लेकर पूछा? चौधरी ने बताया कि जयपुर में जनता स्टोर एक दुकान का नाम था। यह सत्तर के दशक की बात है जब वह दुकान खुली थी और बाद में बंद हो गई। फिर भी लोग आज उस जगह का नाम जनता स्टोर के रूप में लेते हैं। मतलब जो दिख रहा है वह दिख नहीं रहा। हमारे लोकतंत्र की भी हालत आज ऐसी ही है। इसमें भी केवल तंत्र ही हाबी है, लोक गायब है। मेरी पुस्तक का कवर भी ऐसा ही है। बच्चे उसके अंदर जा रहे हैं या बाहर निकल रहे हैं, आप अपने हिसाब से समझिए। यह पिक सिटी की कहानी है।

पुस्तक लेखक बनने के बैकग्राउंड का जिक्र होने पर चौधरी ने बताया कि मेरी लेखकीय क्षमता के बारे में भी किसी ने मुझे बताया। पांच-छः साल मुझे यही समझने में लगा कि लिखने की स्टाइल, भाषा सरल रखूं। मेरे दिमाग में कभी उपन्यास की बात नहीं थी। आप को याद होगा कि छात्र राजनीति को लेकर 2016 में एक बहस छिड़ी थी। लोग उसके पक्ष में थे या विपक्ष में। जेएनयू में, डीयू पर मैंने ब्लॉगिंग में जो लिखा, लोग पढ़ रहे थे। किताब लिखते समय क्या आपको पता था कि आपकी किताब छप जाएगी? चौधरी का जवाब था कि मुझे पता था कि मैं प्रकाशक को इस तरह पिच करूंगा तो मेरी किताब छप जाएगी। बतौर लेखक हमारी इच्छा कुछ और होती है, हम करते कुछ और हैं। मेरी बुक हिट हो गई तो लोग जान गए। मार्केटिंग और राइटिंग दोनों बेहद अलग चीजें हैं। मार्केटिंग आपको टिका नहीं सकता। कंटेंट ही आपको जिंदा रखता है। मेरी किताब को पढ़ कर दो तरह की प्रतिक्रिया आई। एक लोगों ने कहा कि अरे मैंने इसको जीया है। दूसरा लोगों ने कहा कि अरे ऐसा होता है, मुझे पता नहीं है।

चौधरी ने स्वीकारा कि *जनता स्टोर* के लिखने के दौरान मेरी यह इच्छा थी कि इस पर फिल्म बने। इस पर वेब सीरीज बन रही है। राजनीति में जातिवाद पर उनका मत था कि यूपी, बिहार से अलग तरह का जातिवाद राजस्थान में है। यहां जाट और राजपूतों के बीच में एक स्ट्रांग दुश्मनी है। उन्होंने वसुंधरा राजे का उदाहरण दिया कि उन्होंने अपने को राजपूत, जाट और गूजरों से कैसे जोड़ा। स्टुडेंट युनियनों पर मनी और राजनीति हाबी है। जेएनयू को छोड़कर बाकी जगह अलग तरह की पॉलिटिक्स होती है। *जनता स्टोर* में लड़की से रेप, एग्न्याम पेपर लीक के मुद्दे हैं। छात्र राजनीति के लिए संदेश पर चौधरी का उत्तर था कि इलाहाबाद की तुलना में राजस्थान में छात्र राजनीति में हिंसा का असर कम है। राजनीति को अगर हम बेहतर करना चाहते हैं

तो आपको अच्छे लड़कों को राजनीति के लिए मौका देना होगा। आलम यह है कि डंडे चलाने वाला आदमी गांधी स्टडीज में एडमिशन ले लेता है, ताकि वह चुनाव लड़ सके। छात्र राजनीति में पैसे की भी बड़ी भूमिका है। पोस्टर पूरे शहर में दिखाई देते हैं। बड़ी गाड़ियों का जुलूस कैसे निकलता है। जेएनयू की चुनाव प्रक्रिया को पूरे देश में अपनाया जाना चाहिए। वहां धनबल की जगह विचार ही आगे बढ़ते हैं।

कोठारी के इस सवाल पर कि अगर छात्र राजनीति में इतना करप्शन व निगेटिविटी है, तो क्या राजनीति का माहौल बदल सकता है? चौधरी ने यह माना, "यह अभी संभव नहीं लगता। पॉवर करप्ट करता है। यह ह्यूमन नेचर है। जब आपको लगता है कि सच्चाई आपकी मदद नहीं कर सकती तो आप बेईमानी का साथ दे देते हैं। यहां तक कि हम जब वोट देने जाते हैं तो ईमानदार की जगह उसे वोट दे देते हैं जो जीत रहा है।" बिहार के चुनावों के दो बेहद पढ़े-लिखे और ईमानदार, मेहनती लोगों की हार का जिक्र करते हुए चौधरी ने कहा कि अलग राजनीति के लिए रेडी फॉर चेंज के लिए तैयार होना पड़ेगा।

आपकी किताब में वूमेन कहां हैं? के सवाल पर चौधरी ने पूछा कि राजनीति में भी वूमेन कहां हैं? देश में अब तक केवल एक महिला प्रधानमंत्री, एक राष्ट्रपति बन सकीं, उसी पर हम ताली बजाते हैं। राजस्थान में भी कितनी महिला मुख्यमंत्री बनीं? छात्र राजनीति में भी महिला प्रेसिडेंट नहीं बनती। नीचे की पोस्ट पर आती हैं। *जनता स्टोर* आपबीती है, तो आपने इसे फिक्शन क्यों बना दिया? के उत्तर में चौधरी ने कहा कि इसकी घटनाएं अलग-अलग जगह घटीं। फिर भी इतने सालों में मेजर चेंज नहीं आया था। पेजर की जगह मोबाइल आ गया। लोग पहले सीधे संपर्क कर लेते थे। राजस्थान युनिवर्सिटी में शेड्यूल कास्ट के कितने लड़के प्रेसिडेंट बने? नीचे की सीट पर जरूर उसे मौका मिल जाता है। आरक्षण के बावजूद राजनीति में बिना धनबल के नीचे के लोग अपनी कैटेगरी में भी दब जाते हैं।

सवाल-जवाब के सत्र में अक्षत पुरी का उत्तर देते हुए चौधरी ने कहा लोग यह सोच रहे थे कि मैं किस विचारधारा का हूं? मेरा मानना है कि राजनीति ऐसी ही है। लोगों ने साइड पकड़ लिया है। आपको राइट या लेफ्ट से अलग 'सही और गलत' के पक्ष में खड़ा होना चाहिए। कोई भी सरकार जनता के लिए काम नहीं करती। सभी अपने लिए काम करते हैं। उनसे हमें काम कराना आना चाहिए। राजनीति में हमें निजी हमले से बचना चाहिए। कोई मुझे संघी मानता है तो कोई लेफ्टिस्ट। एक आदमी दोनों कैसे हो सकता है। हमें बातचीत के लिए जगह देनी चाहिए। संवाद तभी हो सकता है।

निधि यादव के सवाल कि जातिवाद का प्रभाव कैसे बदले? चौधरी ने कहा कि केंद्रीय विश्वविद्यालयों को छोड़कर हर युनिवर्सिटी में जाति हाबी है। जब तक गांव में कास्ट कल्चर चेंज नहीं होगा, तब तक यह स्थिति बदल नहीं सकती। विभा विलास के सवाल के उत्तर में चौधरी ने कहा कि अच्छा उम्मीदवार वह है जो आपके इलाके को जानता है। लोगों से, आपकी समस्या से जुड़ा है। अगर कोई पढ़ा लिखा आदमी राजनीति से जुड़ता है तो वह अच्छा कर सकता है। कास्ट और जेंडर डिस्क्रिमिनेशन में जेंडर डिस्क्रिमिनेशन ज्यादा है। जाँब में भी जेंडर डिस्क्रिमिनेशन है। टीचिंग में फीमेल हैं, इंजीनियरिंग में भी हैं, पर फीमेल साफ्टवेयर इंजीनियर बने, सिविल इंजीनियर नहीं। हमने ऐसा बना दिया है कि सड़क पर निकलने वाला काम लड़कों का है।

कलम नागपुर के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट। हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर रेडिसन ब्लू, मीडिया पार्टनर लोकमत और अहसास वूमेन नागपुर का सहयोग मिला



Sonal Mansingh

Ehsaas at the Click of a Button



Prabha Khaitan Foundation has been working for the emancipation of women since its inception. To this end, the Foundation, a Kolkata-based registered charitable trust founded by Late Dr Prabha Khaitan, formed **Ehsaas** – a collective of women from all walks of life across India.

Ehsaas is an initiative which brings different women together who all have one goal – betterment of society. It is in tune with the Foundation's belief that "the women of today are the catalysts for change tomorrow."

The **Ehsaas** website was recently launched by Indian classical dancer Sonal Mansingh, who is also a Member of Parliament in the Rajya Sabha. She was welcomed to the launch by **Ehsaas** Woman of Jaipur, Apra Kuchhal. Also an Honorary Convener of Rajasthan and Central India Affairs of the Foundation, Kuchhal said, "The Foundation's women's initiative, **Ehsaas** Women, is a conglomeration of women from all walks of life who act as galvanising agents. We feel that culture is at the heart of development policy and it constitutes an essential investment in the world's future. Late Dr Prabha Khaitan's vision guides us."

Manisha Jain, Branding and Communication Chief of the Foundation, provided an in-depth description of the Foundation and the women who make up **Ehsaas** Woman. "The **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** website highlights our efforts to uphold the cultural capital of the country and promote Indian culture and literature in India and overseas. Literature, culture and heritage, basic education, women's empowerment and social welfare are the five pillars of inspiration for the Foundation," said Jain.

She also thanked the **Ehsaas** Women for their unprecedented support towards the Foundation, especially in these difficult times. Addressing the audience, Mansingh said that India has always been



Apra Kuchhal

a "Devi worshipping" country, however it is an irony that neither are the women respected nor treated well in this country. She quoted Prime Minister Narendra Modi to assert that where there is female power, there is divinity.

Mansingh said that in the holy books of India, it is shown that the women win over everything and nothing and nobody can win over her. This symbolism of freedom of choice is what is needed for women today. She addressed the issue of orthodox mentality and how the country needs to have strict laws to address rape, abuse and harassment.

She also said that women must be respected in the workforce and given the same pay as men. "Equality should not be the goal of women, equity should be the goal," Mansingh added.

She also said that "Ehsaas" was a beautiful and strong word as it meant that one was aware of the strength that one had, before experiencing it. Women should be able to create a space of their own to have the "ehsaas" of not just themselves but also their strengths. Emphasising on the importance of a digital medium, she hoped that the website would be able to reach several people and help them.

"One should not be a socialite, they should be a social worker and think how they have had an impact on other people's lives."

The launch ended with Kuchhal thanking Mansingh for her beautiful and inspiring words for the women of today and tomorrow. **Ehsaas** is just one of the ventures the Foundation is involved with. Over the past few decades, the Foundation has built a strong network of talented individuals for socio-cultural causes across the globe and has organised various events such as **An Author's Afternoon, Kitaab, Kalam, Tete-a-Tea**, and more, in over 35 cities.



Santosh Choudhary

"राजस्थानी मेरी मायड भाषा है और इसमे सृजन का सुख बिल्कुल अलग है। राजस्थानी में लिखना अपनी मां के घर का काम करना है, जो हर बेटे का फर्ज होता है। मेरे लिए गर्व की बात है कि मेरी दूसरी राजस्थानी पोथी *काया री कळझळ* का लोकार्पण यहां हो रहा है।" लेखिका संतोष चौधरी ने यह बात **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** और ग्रासरूट मीडिया फाउंडेशन की ओर से आयोजित **आखर** पोथी के दौरान कही। चौधरी ने अपनी लेखकीय यात्रा से जुड़े सवाल पर बताया कि मुझे स्कूल से ही पढ़ने का शौक रहा है। 2015 में सोशल मीडिया पर आना मेरा टर्निंग पाइंट रहा। आत्मीय शुभचिंतकों ने व्याकरण और वर्तनी सुधार का परामर्श दिया। मेरी पहली पुस्तक हिंदी कविताओं का संग्रह था जो साहित्य अकादमी उदयपुर के आर्थिक सहयोग से प्रकाशित हुआ। दूसरी पोथी राजस्थानी उपन्यास *रात पछे परभात* रही। वरिष्ठ साहित्यकार राकेश मूंथा ने काफी प्रोत्साहित किया। *काया री कळझळ* में 11 कहानियां हैं। इसमें समाज में हाशिए पर रहने वाले पात्र, स्त्री और स्त्री मन रखने वाले पुरुषों की भी बात है, जिन्हें अगर लेखक मन नहीं होता तो मैं पहचान नहीं पाती। उन्होंने कहा कि इन कहानियों में वर्तमान यथार्थ को ही लिखा है। मैं संस्कृति-परंपरा को मानती हूं। मेरा मानना है कि आम बोलचाल की भाषा लेखनी में आए तो बढ़िया है। जब मेरा पहला उपन्यास आया तो पाठकों को भाषा क्लिष्ट लगी। बाद की पुस्तकों में मेरी सिर्फ इतनी सी कोशिश रही है कि हिंदी और अंग्रेजी माध्यम से पढ़े-लिखे बच्चे भी राजस्थानी से जुड़ सकें।

रेखा लोढ़ा 'स्मिता' ने कहा कि वर्तमान की राजस्थानी कहानी नई बनावट, भाषा और यथार्थ के साथ आ रही है। अब किसान, मजदूर, आम आदमी-औरतें, उपेक्षित जन, किन्नर कहानियों के पात्र होने लगे हैं। चौधरी की कहानियां भी इसी भाव बोध की कहानियां हैं। लेखिका जितने अधिकार से गांव-ढाणी, लोक, गंवई जीवन को जानती है उतने ही अधिकार से शहरी जीवन को भी जानती और पहचानती है। उनकी भाषा में नए प्रचलित शब्दों की दखल है, तो आंचलिक बोली की मीठी सुगंध भी है। इन कहानियों में संवेदनशीलता, सतत प्रवाह, जिज्ञासा और पाठक को बांधकर रखने की क्षमता है। टूट्ट्या जैसी परंपरा पर कहानियां लिखना और घरेलू महिलाओं के मन को अभिव्यक्त करना

राजस्थानी कहानियों में वर्तमान का यथार्थ: आखर पोथी में काया री कळझळ का लोकार्पण

लेखिका की सफलता है। हालांकि इन कहानियों में आए अंग्रेजी शब्द ऐसे लगते हैं जैसे हलवा खाते समय बीच में आया कंकड़ मुंह का स्वाद बिगाड़ दे। इस बात को संजय पुरोहित और छैलू चारण छैलू ने भी इंगित किया है। फिर भी इन कहानियों में जरूरत के अनुसार कहावतों और मुहावरों का प्रयोग कहानियों की बनावट और सुंदरता को दोगुना कर देता है। यह कहानियां राजस्थानी साहित्य में नई पहचान बनाएंगी।



Pramod Sharma

कवयित्री, सामाजिक कार्यकर्ता और सलिला साहित्य संस्था सलूंबर की संस्थापिका विमला भंडारी ने कार्यक्रम की अध्यक्षता करते हुए कहा कि हमारे यहां कथा कहने की प्राचीन परंपरा रही है। यह पुस्तक स्त्री-केंद्रित है, जिसमें स्त्री का व्यक्तित्व मुखर होकर सामने आया है। इन कहानियों में मुझे सबसे अधिक अच्छी कहानी *दूजवर* लगी है। भारतीय संस्कृति में स्त्री जितनी कोमल है, उतनी ही कठोर भी है। वहां परिस्थितियां अनुकूल नहीं होते हुए भी भंवर की बधियों को देख उसके मन में पीड़ा उठती है कि इनको मैं वापस चिरमी नहीं बनने दूंगी। बालपन में अपनी कुमाता से मैंने जो तकलीफ पाई वह इन बधियों को नहीं मिले। यह राजस्थान का उदात्त चरित्र है। *बड़ी मां* कहानी में स्त्री का मौन रहना बहुत खलता है, लेकिन जब जरूरत पड़ती है, तो वो सबके सामने सच्चाई को अभिव्यक्त भी कर देती है। यह पोथी एक नया कीर्तिमान स्थापित करेगी। **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन**, ग्रासरूट फाउंडेशन और राष्ट्रभाषा प्रचार समिति श्रीदुर्गराढ़ का आभार, जो राजस्थानी को बढ़ावा दे रहे हैं।



Monika Gour

संचालिका मोनिका गौड़ ने कहा कि साहित्य समाज की आरती है। इस आरती को चमकाकर रखना, इसको उजला रखना हर साहित्यकार का फर्ज, कर्म और धर्म है। राजस्थानी कहानी आज राजा-रानी और अन्य विषयों से होते हुए आधुनिक दौर में पहुंच चुकी है। नए लेखक नवाचार कर रहे हैं। राजस्थानी साहित्य का इतिहास स्वर्णिम रहा है तो वर्तमान भी श्रेष्ठ है। **आखर** ने कोरोना की आपदा को अवसर बना दिया है। इसके लिए **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन**, ग्रासरूट मीडिया फाउंडेशन और प्रमोद शर्मा का आभार। कार्यक्रम के अंत में ग्रासरूट मीडिया फाउंडेशन के प्रमोद शर्मा **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** का आभार व्यक्त करते हुए कहा कि 5 साल पहले क्षेत्रीय भाषाओं के लिए **आखर** शुरू हुआ। राजस्थान के लेखकों को जोड़ते समय हमेशा यह सवाल आता है कि राजस्थानी कौन सी है? इसका जवाब यही है कि आज राजस्थान के चारों कोनों से लेखक बैठे हैं, बात कर रहे हैं। ऐसे में जब भी शासकीय मान्यता मिलेगी, मानकीकरण अपने आप ही हो जाएगा। उन्होंने बताया कि राजस्थानी में **आखर** शुरू होने के बाद आज भोजपुरी, मैथिली, ओड़िया, कन्नड़, तमिल, मलयालम, मराठी, गुजराती, पंजाबी और छत्तीसगढ़ी में भी **आखर** हो रहा है।



Rekha Lodha



Vimla Bhandari

प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन और ग्रासरूट फाउंडेशन की ओर से आयोजित आखर पोथी राजस्थान के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट, हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर हैं आईटीसी राजपूताना।

पाठक को कथा-प्रवाह में बांधना ही रचनाकार की सफलता: सुजीत कुमार पंडा



Sujit Kumar Panda

मन के भाव एवं विचारों की अभिव्यक्ति के लिए कविता की अपेक्षा कहानी एक बड़ा फलक देती है, जहां आप संपूर्णता में अपने को अभिव्यक्त कर सकते हैं। लेकिन आज भी भावनाओं के आवेग में मेरी कलम कविता को ही खोजती है।" यह कहना है चर्चित ओडिशा रचनाकार सुजीत कुमार पंडा का। वह प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन द्वारा आयोजित आखर भुवनेश्वर के एक सत्र में संवाद कर रहे थे। कार्यक्रम का आरंभ अहसास वुमेन भुवनेश्वर से जुड़ी डॉ वेदुला रामलक्ष्मी द्वारा अतिथियों के स्वागत व परिचय से हुआ। अर्थशास्त्र से स्नातकोत्तर पंडा ओडिशा सरकार के वित्त विभाग से जुड़े सिविल सेवक हैं। उनकी पहली कविता हेंतला 2003 में छपी। कहानियों के पहले संग्रह फरुआ की पांडुलिपि को राज्य युवा कल्याण परिषद, खेल और युवा मामलों के मंत्रालय ने 'स्टेट यूथ अवार्ड' से सम्मानित किया, जिसे 2007 में ओडिशा साहित्य अकादमी ने प्रकाशित किया। कहानियों के दूसरे संग्रह मानसांक को केंद्रीय साहित्य अकादमी ने 'युवा साहित्यकार पुरस्कार' से सम्मानित किया। आपको भारतीय भाषा परिषद कोलकाता का युवा पुरस्कार भी मिल चुका है। आगे का संवाद युवा आलोचक चंद्रशेखर होता ने किया।

होता ने पंडा से सवाल किया कि आपने कहानियां, कविताएं एवं लघु कथा लिखी हैं। प्रेम, सामाजिक सरोकार, राजनीति, जाति, वर्ग भेद एवं साइंस फिक्शन जैसे विषय भी उठाए हैं। आप ऐसी कहानियों को लिखने की प्रेरणा, आधार या साधन कहां से जुटाते हैं? पंडा का उत्तर था, "हमारे पास रामायण एवं महाभारत की परंपरा है, जिसमें जीवन और जगत से संबंधित सब कुछ है। हम जितनी भी कहानियां लिखते हैं, कहीं न कहीं उसके बीच रामायण और महाभारत में मिलेंगे ही। हम बस अपनी रुचि, मत एवं भावना अनुसार उसे नया चोला पहना देते हैं।" अपनी बात को स्पष्ट करते हुए पंडा ने बताया कि सफल कहानीकार वह है जो पाठकों को अपने साथ कहानी के आदि से अंत तक ले जा सके। भले ही कहानी में बहुत ही अच्छी बात कही गई हो, कोई बड़ा मुद्दा उठाया गया हो, लेकिन पाठक कहानी को आधे में ही छोड़ देता है तो ये कहानीकार की असफलता मानी जाएगी।

पंडा का कहना था कि कहानी के लिए कथावस्तु, शैली, शब्द, भाव उसी तरह महत्वपूर्ण है जैसे एक गाड़ी में मोटर, चक्के, स्टेरिंग, ब्रेक आदि जरूरी होते हैं। दरअसल सभी तत्वों को लेकर ही एक सफल कहानी बन सकती है। 'देवता', 'नागफनी' जैसी कहानियों में एक घटना से अचानक आप दूसरी घटना पर चले जाते हैं, इसके पीछे कोई खास उद्देश्य है? के सवाल पर पंडा का उत्तर था, "एक

घटना को छोड़कर, दूसरे विचार और दूसरी घटना को जब भी मैं अपनाता और व्यक्त करता हूं, तो इसका मतलब है कि मैं उन घटनाओं को रोचक बनाने एवं उनकी समझ को सरल बनाने की कोशिश कर रहा हूं। अक्सर मैंने अपनी बात को स्पष्ट करने के लिये ये तकनीक अपनाई है।" अपनी कहानियों में दलित चेतना, वर्ग चेतना आदि के विषय में पंडा का स्पष्ट मानना था कि हम सब सामाजिक प्राणी हैं। समाज में वर्ग, स्तर, जाति के बीच ही हम जीवन यापन कर रहे हैं। ऐसे में कहानियों में उनका आना स्वाभाविक है। सामाजिक व्यवस्था को समझने और समझाने का अच्छा प्रयास कहानी के माध्यम से हो सकता है।

होता के इस सवाल पर कि आप प्रयोगधर्मी कहानीकार हैं। आगे और किस प्रकार के प्रयोग करेंगे? पंडा का उत्तर था, "मैं जानबूझकर प्रयोग नहीं करता। आवश्यकतानुसार प्रयोग स्वतः ही हो जाते हैं। जैसे यदि हम प्रेम कथाओं को ही लें तो, सामान्यतः सारी की सारी प्रेम कथाएं चाहे वह किसी के भी द्वारा लिखी गई क्यों ना हो, संस्मरण प्रधान होती हैं। लेकिन मैंने अपनी लिखी प्रेम कथा में बाकी सभी पात्रों, घटनाओं और परिवेश को स्तंभित कर केवल दो प्रमुख पात्रों को चलायमान रखा है। जिसके माध्यम से प्रेम तत्व स्पष्ट रूप से उभर कर आता



Chandra Shekhar Hota



Nidhi Garg



Vedula Ramalakshmi

है। यदि यह प्रयोग धर्मिता है, तो मैं प्रयोगधर्मी हूं।" अपनी कहानियों में शामिल सूत्र-वाक्य जैसे 'दुःख ज्यादा हो तो इंसान रोता नहीं', 'यह कहानी कितनी छोटी है और धरती कितनी बड़ी' के प्रयोग पर पंडा का मत था कि ये मस्तिष्क की उपज और दूसरे साहित्यकारों, बुद्धिजीवियों के विचारों से प्रसंगानुसार कहानियों में आ जाते हैं। ऐसे वाक्य उस धागे के समान हैं, जो फूलों को पिरो कर सुंदर माला बनाते हैं, और कहानी में शामिल हो उसे एक सुंदर कहानी का रूप दे देते हैं। श्रेय, देवता, नागफनी जैसी कहानियां पंडा की विलक्षण लेखकीय कौशल तथा कविताएं भावप्रवणता का परिचय देती हैं। विभिन्न भारतीय भाषाओं में अनूदित हो कर उनकी रचनाएं देश भर के पाठकों तक पहुंच रही हैं। सत्र के अंत में अहसास वुमेन भुवनेश्वर की निधी गर्ग ने धन्यवाद ज्ञापन किया।

आखर भुवनेश्वर के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट, हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर मेफेयर होटल भुवनेश्वर, मीडिया पार्टनर भुवनेश्वर टाइम्स और अहसास वुमेन भुवनेश्वर का सहयोग मिला।



Rakshanda Jalil

अगर अनुवाद न होता तो हमारी साहित्यिक जिंदगी कितनी सीमित होती: डॉ रक्षंदा जलील



Deepa Mishra

प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की ओर से आयोजित कलम पुणे के वर्चुअल सत्र में इस बार अतिथि वक्ता के रूप में चर्चित अनुवादक, लेखक और साहित्यिक इतिहासकार डॉ रक्षंदा जलील ने शिरकत की। फाउंडेशन की ओर से उनका स्वागत, धन्यवाद और परिचय दिया अहसास वूमेन पुणे की सहयोगी अमिता मुनोत ने। उन्होंने बताया कि फाउंडेशन अब तक 550 से अधिक ऑनलाइन इवेंट और 1500 से अधिक जमीनी इवेंट आयोजित कर चुका है। डॉ रक्षंदा का विस्तार से परिचय देते हुए मुनोत ने कहा कि आपकी 25 से अधिक पुस्तकें और 50 से अधिक अकादमिक पत्र और निबंध प्रकाशित हैं। अहसास वूमेन लखनऊ से जुड़ी संवादकर्ता दीपा मिश्रा का परिचय देते हुए मुनोत ने बताया कि आप सिंबायोसिस से एमबीए हैं, युवा लड़कियों के कल्याण कार्यक्रमों व वन्य संरक्षण में रुचि रखती हैं।

संवाद की शुरुआत करते हुए मिश्रा ने रक्षंदा से पहला सवाल किया कि आपको लिखने की प्रेरणा कहां से मिली और आपने कब, कैसे और किस तरह लिखना शुरू किया? रक्षंदा ने उत्तर दिया, "जिन घरों में पढ़ाई का माहौल होता है, वहां लिखना जरा आसान हो जाता है। हालांकि देश के दूसरे प्रधानमंत्री लाल बहादुर शास्त्री ने लालटेन की रौशनी में भी पढ़ाई कर यह दिखा दिया कि इंसान चाहे तो किसी भी स्थिति में वह कर सकता है, जो वह चाहता है। मेरा सौभाग्य रहा कि मेरे माता-पिता दोनों को पढ़ने का शौक था। मेरी माता दिल्ली पब्लिक स्कूल की लाइब्रेरियन थीं। किताबें हमें बतौर बर्थ डे गिफ्ट्स मिलती थीं। अगर मां-बाप किताबें देंगे और पढ़ने के लिए इनकरेज करेंगे, आपकी लिखित शब्दों में रुचि होगी, तो आप खुद ही आगे बढ़ जाएंगे। पढ़ने की आदत तो ऐसे बनी और लिखना बहुत नेचुरल तरीके से शुरू हुआ। मैं पब्लिशिंग कंपनी में काम कर रही थी। कॉपी एडिटर का काम होता है दूसरों को सुधारना। नॉक-पलक दुरुस्त करना। कॉपी क्लिन करना, उससे भी मदद मिली। जो लिखना चाहते हैं, उन्हें मेरा सुझाव है कि जो लिखावट का तानाबाना है, नट्स और बोल्ट्स हैं, उन्हें भी तरजीह दीजिए।"

साहित्यिक इतिहासकार क्या होता है? के उत्तर में डॉ रक्षंदा ने बताया, "मैंने लिटरेरी हिस्ट्री में पीएचडी की है। सरल भाषा में कहें तो यहां हिस्ट्री और लिटरेचर का मेल है। लिटरेचर के स्टूडेंट को केवल टेक्स्ट में इंटरैक्ट होता है। हम केवल टेक्स्ट को नहीं देखते, उसके संदर्भ को भी देखते हैं। इसी तरह कल्चरल हिस्टोरियन वे हैं, जो ट्रेंड्स की स्टडी करते हैं। दिल्ली को ही देखें तो हमने इस शहर के लैंड स्केप को बदलते देखा है। भवन निर्माण, खाना, पहनावा, रहन-सहन, शहरीकरण आदि से भी हम इसे समझते हैं।" इतिहास और फिक्शन दो अलग विधाओं के बीच आपने सृजन क्षमता कैसे हासिल की? के जवाब में रक्षंदा ने बताया कि मैंने बायोग्राफी भी लिखी है। उसमें मुझे मजा आता है। फिक्शन की केवल एक किताब लिखी है। मैंने पीएचडी फोर्टीज में की। मैं अपने घर में दो बच्चों को छोड़कर, पति को छोड़ कर एक लाइब्रेरी में क्यूबिकल लेकर रहती थी। वहां पीएचडी के नोट्स बनाती थी और घर पहुंचकर कहानी लिखती थी। उस समय मुझमें नशा सा था।

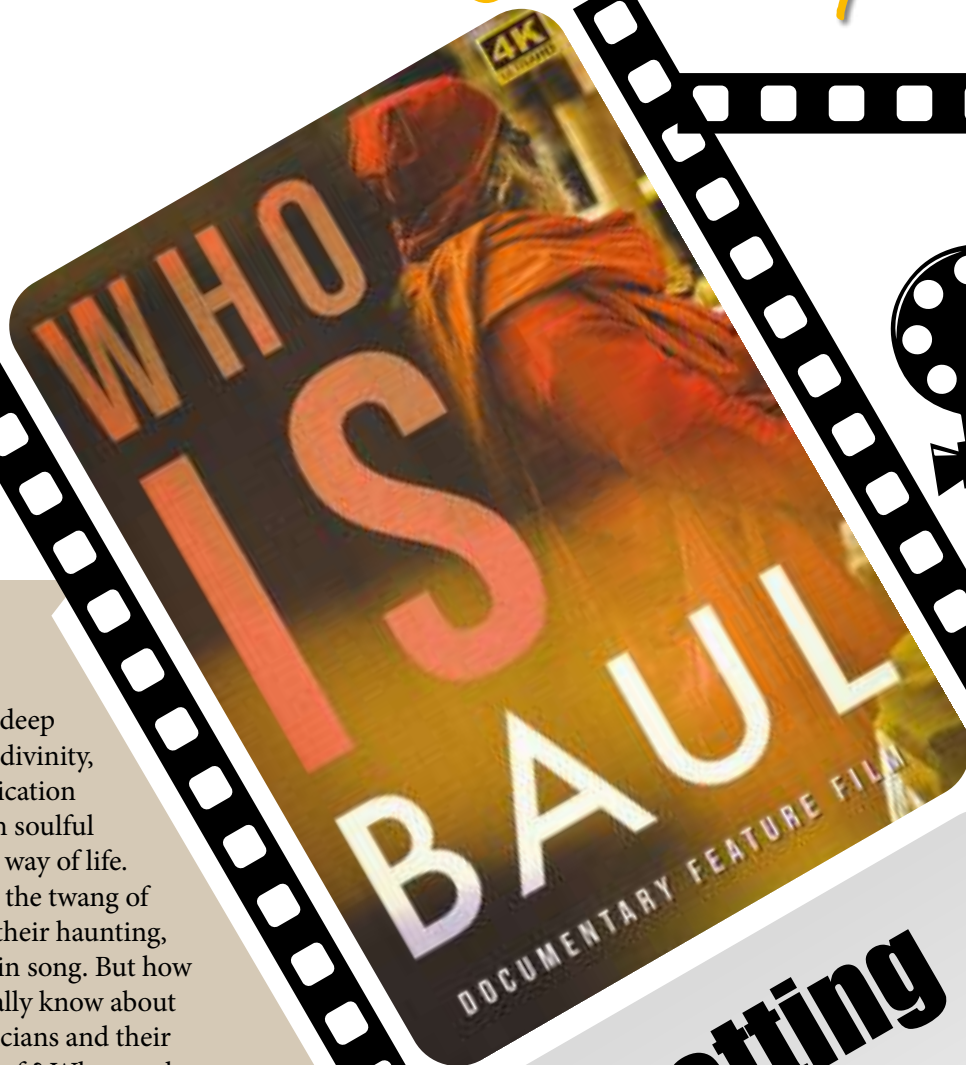
अपनी कृतियों से जुड़े सवालों पर रक्षंदा ने काफी विस्तार से अपनी बात रखी। यू डॉट लुक लाइक अ मुस्लिम के बारे में उन्होंने बताया कि इसमें चालीस निबंध हैं। उन्होंने कहा कि हम जिस दुनिया में रहते हैं, उसका असर हम पर पड़ता ही है। हमारे आसपास जो कुछ हो रहा है। हम अपनी जिंदगी में जो महसूस करते हैं, उस निजी बात

को एक बड़े कॉज से जोड़िए। जलियांवाला बाग: लिटरेरी रिसर्सेज इन प्रोजेक्ट & पोएट्री पर उन्होंने कहा कि विभाजन का साहित्य इसी दौर में लिखा गया। विस्थापन, दंगे, महिलाओं पर अत्याचार, वे हादसे, वे घटनाएं, जिन्होंने हमारे साहित्य पर असर डाला, मैं उनपर काम कर रही थी। इनविजिबल सिटी दिल्ली के मोनुमेंट्स पर है। मैं कई ऐसी जगहों पर गई, जो चर्चित नहीं हैं, पर खूबसूरत हैं। सेफ भी नहीं हैं, लेकिन जब तक लोग जाएंगे नहीं सेफ कैसे होंगे। मेरी कोशिश है कि लोग इन जगहों पर जाएं, उन जगहों को देखें। अब हेरिटेज पर लोगों का ध्यान गया है।

डॉ राशिद जहाँ - ए रिबेल अंद हर कॉज पर उन्होंने कहा कि इस्मत् चुगताई कहती थीं कि वे डॉ राशिद जहां से प्रभावित थीं। लोग उन्हें बोल्ट्स कहते थे। इस किताब में मैं यह कहना चाहती थी कि वे किन चीजों के प्रति विद्रोही थीं। ट्रिएटल पर उनकी टिप्पणी थी कि यह कृशन चंदर की किताब थी। जावेद अख्तर के कहने पर मैंने 'गद्दार' का अनुवाद किया। यह कहानी सांप्रदायिकता की बर्बरता को उजागर करती है। फिर भी उसकी सीख यही है कि जब भी आप बुराई देखते हैं, उसी के भीतर से मानवता उपजती है। अनुवाद से जुड़े सवाल पर रक्षंदा ने कहा कि अगर अनुवाद न होता तो हमारी साहित्यिक जिंदगी कितनी सीमित होती। आदान-प्रदान केवल अनुवाद के जरिए संभव है। जिस भाषा से अनुवाद हो रहा है, उसमें अनुवादक की स्क्रिल ज्यादा होनी चाहिए। मेरी खुद की लेखकीय यात्रा भी प्रेमचंद के अनुवाद से शुरू हुई थी। उन्होंने सलाह दी कि आप अपने प्लेजर के लिए ही सही थोड़ा-थोड़ा अनुवाद जरूर करिए। जैसे सिंगर केवल कंसर्ट के दिन रियाज नहीं करता।

समाज, लेखन व संस्कृति? पर रक्षंदा का उत्तर था, दो तरह के विचार हमेशा से रहे हैं। लिटरेचर फॉर लाइफ सेव और लिटरेचर फॉर आर्ट सेव। मैं मानती हूँ कि लिटरेचर का सोशल फंक्शन है। प्रेमचंद अपने लिए नहीं लिख रहे थे। मैं भी दुनिया के लिए लिख रही हूँ। पढ़ाई की कोई सीमा नहीं होनी चाहिए। फायदे और नुकसान से अलग आप इसे देखें। प्रगतिशील लेखक संघ का जिक्र करते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि फैज, मंटो, मजाज, चुगताई सभी प्रोग्रेसिव राइटर्स असोसिएशन का हिस्सा थे। प्रेमचंद ने जब इसकी पहली बैठक में भाषण दिया था तो कहा था कि हमें सौंदर्य की परिभाषा बदलनी होगी। खेत में काम करने वाली औरत के माथे के पसीने में भी सौंदर्य हो सकता है। यह विचार देश भर में फैला और हर भाषा के साहित्य में दिखता है। हालांकि यह काम पहले भी हो रहा था, पर निजी स्तर पर। आज के लेखक सम्मेलन पर रक्षंदा की टिप्पणी थी, आज के ज्यादातर लेखक अपने-अपने टापाओं में बैठे हैं। संस्थाएं अपने स्तर पर बहुत काम कर रही हैं, पर वे निजी स्तर पर कर रही हैं। उन्होंने हिंदुस्तानी आवाज कार्यक्रम को एक सफल प्रयोग बताया और यह भी कहा कि हर भाषा की अपनी खूबी है। उन्होंने गौरी देशपांडे द्वारा कलात्मक स्वतंत्रता से जुड़े सवाल और अनुवाद की सीमाओं पर भी अपनी बात रखी।

कलम पुणे के हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर द ओ होटल और मीडिया पार्टनर लोकमत हैं।
अहसास वूमेन का भी सहयोग मिला



The desire for a simple yet meaningful existence and the deep understanding of divinity, devotion and dedication expressed through soulful strains is the Baul way of life. We have all heard the twang of their ektaras and their haunting, raw voices raised in song. But how much do we actually know about these mystic musicians and their philosophy and craft? Who are these Bauls? The documentary *Who is Baul*, which was recently screened at Nandan, Kolkata, makes an attempt to find answers to these questions.

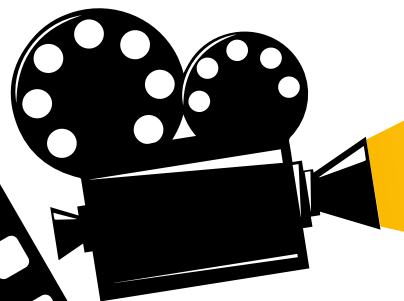
A collaborative venture by well-known Bengaluru biographer Vikram Sampath, Bengaluru-based Grammy Award winner Ricky Kej and filmmaker Sairam Sagiraju, the 54-minute documentary film seeks to find out what's at the heart of the Baul 'mon' (state of mind).

The film has been directed by Sagiraju and produced by Sampath, Kej and Rajib Sarma. Kej has also supervised and created the original score for this documentary about this nonconformist fraternity that dates back to over a thousand years.

Speaking about the experience of being a part of *Who is Baul*, Kej revealed that it was often difficult to shoot, thanks to the nomadic life many of them lead and their reluctance to talk to strangers.

However, through well-researched and heartfelt interviews Sagiraju tried to decode what it means to live with no dogmas, rituals, religious institutions or scriptures — what it means to seek divinity and love through music.

**Getting
to the
Heart of
the Baul
Mon**





(From left) Ekavali Khanna, Rajib Sarma, Vikram Sampath and Esha Dutta

According to Sampath, the project was initially conceived as a means to archive videos of musical tribes in the Northeast, but ended up being about the Bauls and about conserving their indigenous musical form after detailed research.

The documentary not only details how the small but culturally vibrant community has left an indelible mark on the culture of West Bengal, Bangladesh, parts of Assam and Tripura, but it also focuses on how modern demands have threatened their simple, enlightened lifestyles.

It also addresses biases and prejudices which often paint the Bauls in an unfavourable light, despite being deemed an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO. This labour of love, according to Kej, has "been an insightful journey" and three years in the making. However, Sampath, who is known for establishing the Archive of Indian Music — India's first digital sound archive for vintage recordings — admitted that one can never do justice to the Bauls of Bengal with just an hour of screen time.

He does harbour hope that this documentary, if loved and shared, might pave the way for more such documentation related to different indigenous peoples of India. *Who is Baul* has also been screened in Bangalore as well and will soon be submitted for international film festivals.



Priti Patel, Darshan Shah and Sangeeta Datta

The film has tried to decode what it means to live with no dogmas, rituals, religious institutions or scriptures — what it means to seek divinity and love through music



Soumitra Mitra

अमेठी संग्राम एक परिवार के खिलाफ जनता के उठ खड़े होने की कहानी: अनंत विजय



Anant Vijay

कोरोना वैक्सिनेशन ड्राइव के बीच कोरोना प्रोटोकॉल का पालन करते हुए प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन के वर्चुअल और जमीनी कार्यक्रमों की शुरुआत हो चुकी है। इसी क्रम में कलम नोएडा में अतिथि वक्ता के रूप में बहुचर्चित पुस्तक अमेठी संग्राम: ऐतिहासिक जीत, अनकही दास्तां के लेखक अनंत विजय ने शिरकत की। फाउंडेशन और अहसास वूमन की ओर से उनका स्वागत दीपाली भसीन ने किया। उन्होंने बताया कि फाउंडेशन भारत और विदेश के 30 के करीब शहरों में महिलाओं की तरक्की के साथ ही साहित्य, संस्कृति और सेवा से जुड़े अभियान चला रहा है। अब तक 550 से अधिक ऑनलाइन और 1500 से अधिक जमीनी इवेंट आयोजित कर चुका है। अतिथि वक्ता का परिचय देते हुए उन्होंने बताया कि अनंत विजय जानेमाने लेखक, आलोचक व पत्रकार हैं। करीब ढाई दशक से टीवी और प्रिंट पत्रकारिता में सक्रिय हैं और राजनीति, साहित्य और सिनेमा पर समान रूप से लिखते हैं। विजय की शैक्षणिक उपलब्धियों का उल्लेख करते हुए उन्होंने बताया कि विजय की अब तक बारह पुस्तकें प्रकाशित हैं, जिनमें प्रसंगवश, कोलाहल कलह में, विधाओं का विन्यास, बॉलीवुड सेल्फी, लोकतंत्र की कसौटी और मार्क्सवाद का अर्धसत्य काफी चर्चित हैं। इन दिनों आपकी नई पुस्तक अमेठी संग्राम काफी धूम मचाए हुए है। दैनिक जागरण समूह में एसोसिएट एडिटर विजय सिनेमा पर

उत्कृष्ट लेखन के लिए नेशनल फिल्म फेस्टिवल के प्रतिष्ठित राष्ट्रीय पुरस्कार 'स्वर्ण कमल' से सम्मानित हैं। संवादकर्ता वर्तिका नंदा का परिचय देते हुए उन्होंने बताया कि आप पत्रकार, अध्यापक, समाजसेवी और जेल सुधारक हैं। देश की जेलों पर तिनका-तिनका नामक अनूठी श्रृंखला चलाती हैं। राष्ट्रपति प्रणब मुखर्जी द्वारा स्त्री शक्ति पुरस्कार से सम्मानित हैं। जेलों पर आपका काम लिम्का बुक ऑफ रिकॉर्ड्स में दो बार दर्ज है। कवयित्री हैं और आपकी कई पुस्तकें प्रकाशित हैं।



Vartika Nanda

नंदा ने एक चिड़िया द्वारा आग बुझाने की कोशिशों का जिक्र करते हुए विजय की पुस्तक अमेठी संग्राम: ऐतिहासिक जीत, अनकही दास्तां के लेखन के पीछे की वजह पूछी। विजय ने फाउंडेशन का आभार प्रकट करते हुए बताया कि मई 2019 में जब लोकसभा चुनाव के परिणाम आ रहे थे, तो अमेठी के नतीजों को लेकर मेरी बहुत उत्सुकता थी। मैं अमेठी की मतगणना पर लगातार नजर रखे हुए था। राहुल हर राउंड में लगातार पिछड़ते जा रहे थे। सिवाय जायस की मतगणना को छोड़कर। नौवें-दसवें राउंड तक यही स्थिति बनी रही। जब चुनाव आयोग ने नतीजों की घोषणा नहीं की थी, तभी राहुल गांधी ने प्रेस कांफ्रेंस कर अपनी हार स्वीकार कर ली। मुझे याद नहीं आता कि 136 साल पुरानी पार्टी में कोई भी कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष कभी लोकसभा चुनाव हारा



Vandana Singh, Anant Vijay, Shinjini Kulkarni, Shweta Aggarwal, Dipali Bhasin



Aradhana Pradhan



Geeta Shree

था। उधर स्मृति इरानी ने भी दुष्यंत कुमार की पंक्ति ट्विट किया कि कौन कहता है आसमां में सुराख नहीं हो सकता... लेकिन राहुल की हार की स्वीकृति से मेरे अंदर की जिज्ञासा जगी। राहुल गांधी वह पहले व्यक्ति थे, जिन्होंने अपनी हार को स्वीकारा।

एक सवाल के उत्तर में विजय ने यह बताया कि इस किताब को लिखने के पीछे उनके अंदर का पत्रकार सजग था। इसके लिए उन्होंने रोचकता का पुट बनाए रखा। नंदा के इस सवाल पर कि अमेठी संग्राम में बेहद रोचकता शैली में इस बात का जिक्र है कि मतगणना के दौरान स्मृति इरानी गाने सुन रही थीं, तो ये गाने कौन से थे? विजय का उत्तर था, "इस पुस्तक को लिखने के दौरान मैंने उनसे सिर्फ बारह मिनट में बातचीत की थी, जिसमें उन्होंने सत्रह सवालों का जवाब दिया था। मेरे पास इतनी सामग्री थी कि मुझे स्मृति जी से दोबारा मिलने की जरूरत नहीं महसूस हुई।" विजय का कहना था कि वे अमेठी संग्राम पर आलोचकों की प्रतिक्रिया की प्रतीक्षा कर रहे हैं। अभी तक जितने भी लोगों ने प्रतिक्रिया जाहिर की है, उन सबने तारीफ ही की। नंदा के इस सवाल पर कि आपने जिन कांग्रेसियों को पुस्तक लिखने में बिना नाम लिखे आभार प्रकट किया है, उनकी प्रतिक्रिया क्या थी? विजय का जवाब था कि सबने कहा कि ठीक लिखा है। अमेठी के एक स्थापित कांग्रेसी के बयान का जिक्र करते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि स्थानीय नेता भी चाहते थे कि राहुल के जीत की मार्जिन कम रहे। लिहाजा कार्यकर्ताओं ने ऐसा मार्जिन कम कराया कि वे चुनाव हार ही गए। राहुल गांधी के स्वभाव की चर्चा करते हुए विजय ने कहा कि वे किसी से नाराज होते हैं, तो उससे रूठ जाते हैं, बात करना बंद कर देते हैं। इसका बड़ा नुकसान होता है। अमेठी के कांग्रेसियों ने ही कहा था कि राजा का काम है गलती पर दंड देना और खुश होने पर पुरस्कार देना। जबकि राहुल ऐसा नहीं करते। इसी तरह राजीव गांधी के समय तक अमेठी के लोगों से इस परिवार का रागात्मक संबंध था, पर अब यह बात नहीं है।

अपनी लेखकीय यात्रा पर विजय ने कहा कि मेरी शुरुआती तीन-चार

किताबें बचकानी हैं। अमेठी संग्राम की लेखकीय यात्रा का जिक्र करते हुए उन्होंने बताया कि अमेठी के ऐतिहासिक महत्त्व वाला हिस्सा लिख कर हटाना पड़ा। पांच बार अमेठी और गोवा भी गया। क्योंकि गोवा के कई कार्यकर्ताओं ने अमेठी में मदद की। देश भर के कार्यकर्ताओं, नेताओं से बातचीत की। इतनी जानकारी इकट्ठा हो गई कि सेकंडरी सोर्स की बहुत सारी जानकारी हटानी पड़ी। विजय ने इस पुस्तक के संपादकों की मदद का भी उल्लेख किया। उन्होंने वरिष्ठ पत्रकार राजदीप सरदेसाई की स्वीकारोक्ति का भी जिक्र किया और बताया कि अमेठी में नरेंद्र मोदी की रैली अमित शाह के नहीं बल्कि मनोहर पर्रिकर के कहने पर हुई थी। पत्रकार विनोद मेहता को नमन करते हुए विजय ने उनकी पुस्तक आनंद भवन टू अमेठी से मदद का भी उल्लेख किया। विजय ने कहा कि मेहता को अमेठी में 1977 में जो स्थिति मिली मुझे वही स्थिति 2019 में मिली। फर्क सिर्फ इतना आया कि तब बस स्टैंड पर ट्रांजिस्टर होता था, इस समय लोगों के हाथों में मोबाइल होता है। नंदा के अनुरोध पर विजय ने अमेठी से जुड़ी कई घटनाएं बताईं, जिसमें 'हू स्मृति' से अमेठी के ताकतवर शुक्ला परिवार के मुखिया की प्रियंका गांधी पर अमर्यादित टिप्पणी और उस पर स्मृति इरानी कठोर प्रतिक्रिया शामिल थी। विजय ने पुस्तक के अन्य पहलुओं, उत्तर प्रदेश की राजनीति, संघ की भूमिका, नेहरू परिवार आदि की भूमिका पर विस्तार से चर्चा की। सेलिब्रिटी लेखक के जवाब में विजय ने कहा कि हिंदी के लेखकों की भी लाख प्रतियां बिकें, यही मेरी कामना है। विजय ने सवाल-जवाब सत्र में श्रोताओं के हर तरह के सवाल का बखूबी उत्तर दिया और कहा कि अमेठी संग्राम एक परिवार के खिलाफ जनता के उठ खड़े होने की कहानी है। फाउंडेशन और अहसास वूमन की ओर से श्वेता अग्रवाल ने धन्यवाद ज्ञापित किया।

कलम नोएडा के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट। हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर होटल हॉलीडे इन मयूर विहार और मीडिया पार्टनर दैनिक जागरण हैं

The Importance of Integrated Nutrition



Payal Kothari

Nilisha Agarwal

What is the meaning of integrated nutrition and how can it be incorporated in diets? Which are the food items to avoid and which are the ones to embrace? What is the role of the gut in keeping us healthy?

To answer such questions and provide a comprehensive insight into health and wellness, **An Author's Afternoon** hosted Payal Kothari, an integrative nutritionist and author of *The Gut: Story of Our Incredible Second Brain*.

Kothari began her health and wellness journey at the Institute for Integrative Nutrition (IIN), New York, before receiving training at several other institutions — Medvarsity, India's leading training academy, Kaizad Kapadia's K11, and Q1 academy. A prolific writer on health issues for multiple Indian publications like *The Times of India*, *Vogue India*, *The Indian Express*, *Hindustan Times*, and *ET Panache*, Kothari holds certifications from the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM). She has also been a part of some of the most powerful global transformation programmes such as *Date with Destiny* and *Unleash the Power Within* with Tony Robbins. Presently, Kothari is one of the few IIN-certified coaches in India who practise integrative nutrition and transformation.

In conversation with Kothari was Nilisha Agarwal, **Ehsaas Woman of Kolkata**. Welcoming them to the discussion was Sourabh Mitra of Taj Bengal.

"Integrative nutrition is all about combining our physical and emotional demands. Emotions are our primary foods, followed by the physical items our bodies ingest," said Kothari, starting the interaction.

Whereas mainstream nutrition often advocates a one-size-fits-all approach, integrative nutrition is all about tailoring medical advice based on individual requirements. While mainstream nutrition only comes in handy once an illness has manifested itself through symptoms, integrative nutrition functions in a more wholesome manner, detecting the root causes of disorders and eliminating them altogether.

A firm believer in individuals calibrating their own diets, Kothari emphasised how one has to be "their own guinea pig, to know what suits them and what doesn't."

Kothari proceeded to share a story from her childhood and how she was diagnosed with tuberculosis when she was just two years old, developing what is known as a "leaky gut". Having a leaky gut means that the walls of the gut become extremely porous, allowing different kinds

of bacteria and pathogens to enter the bloodstream. Kothari's personal health struggles, she admitted, had played an important role in her career choice besides serving as motivation for her first book.

Shedding light on what is colloquially known as "the gut feeling", Kothari described how our gut, or the gastrointestinal system, is key to our physical, mental, and emotional well-being. She highlighted the importance of heeding our gut feeling — an "evolved instinct" based on thousands of years of civilisation — to prevent ourselves from overeating or undereating at any time. The gut is the second mind that equips us to make split-second decisions, playing a vital role in our fight or flight response during critical situations.

According to Kothari, any form of diet must maintain an 80:20 balance for proper gut functioning, the former signifying the consumption of food items our body needs and the latter referring to food items we all want to indulge in.

As a child, Kothari faced both malnutrition and obesity issues. When she hit puberty, she started gaining weight and was on the verge of becoming obese. The weight gain took a toll on her physical as well as mental wellness. During that spell, she was taking dance training from Shiamak Davar, and it was there while training with the other dancers that Kothari saw her fellow students managing their diets through healthy, nutritious food that allowed them to dance for hours on end.

As someone who has dealt with weight issues personally, Kothari went on to speak about how India faces a double burden today, as most Indian youngsters are considerably underweight or obese. She sees this problem in Indian society as another reason to embrace integrative nutrition as part of a wellness wheel that can synchronise our emotions with our diet.

Getting down to specific items one should incorporate in their diet, Kothari highlighted the value of harnessing good bacteria through probiotics and prebiotics, which can boost the gut. She also listed five must-have ingredients, which can harness good bacteria in the gut and help them multiply: coconut water, spirulina (an algae that stimulates the gut),



Esha Dutta

fruits, soup and salad. She insisted on frequent water intake and developing a habit of spacing out meals so that the gut does not have to function overtime.

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For non-vegetarians, Kothari suggested trying out free-range eggs and grass-fed poultry. She warned against consuming any food item that has been injected with antibiotics as such items only serve to erode a healthy body in the long run.

Kothari also spoke about her desire to pen a book compiling her favourite recipes that she has learnt through years of training and experimentation.

The integrative nutritionist took several questions from the audience, providing personal recommendations and dietary tips. Before the end of the session, she provided some final words of wisdom on channeling our inner food detectives: "Become a food

detective, find out where your foods come from and what they mean for your body. At the end of the day, you have to take care of yourself and figure out what works best for you."

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



Anu Singh Choudhary

जीवन में परफेक्शन जैसा कुछ नहीं, सबमें खामियां और खूबियां: अनु सिंह चौधरी

आप जो हैं, और जो होना चाहते हैं, उसके बीच संतुलन साधने और खुद के पहचान के लिए मैंने कुछ कहानियां लिखीं। विस्थापन और अपनी जड़ों के बीच की इस यात्रा में मेरी पहचान की तलाश जारी है, और यही यात्रा हमें सक्षम बनाती है।" यह कहना है कलम जोधपुर के वर्चुअल सत्र में अतिथि वक्ता लेखिका अनु सिंह चौधरी का। प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन द्वारा आयोजित इस कार्यक्रम में फाउंडेशन और अहसास वूमेन पुणे की ओर से उनका स्वागत और परिचय दिया प्रीति मेहता ने। संवादकर्ता की भूमिका अहसास वूमेन पटना से जुड़ी अनुभा आर्या ने निभाई। उन्होंने पांच-छह साल पहले की चौधरी की पटना यात्रा का उल्लेख कर उनके बड़े आत्मविश्वास की बात कही, तो चौधरी का उत्तर था, "हां यह एक यात्रा है, सफर है। मेरी पहली किताब नीला स्कॉर्फ 2014 में छपी थी। पटना मैं प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन के आयोजन में ही आई थी, जहां उसके लेखन पर चर्चा हुई थी। अपनी आवाज ढूँढ़ने और रिस्क लेने की हिम्मत मुझे नीला स्कॉर्फ से ही मिली थी।"

बिहार से बाहर मुंबई पहुंचकर आप अपने को अपनी जड़ों से कैसे जोड़ती हैं? के उत्तर में चौधरी ने कहा कि ये मेरे निजी अनुभव हैं। मैं बिहार से 96 में बाहर निकली थी। मैं रांची में पली-बढ़ी थी। उस समय झारखंड को अलग करने का आंदोलन चल रहा था। उस दौर में कई बार महीनों महीने स्कूल बंद रहते थे। चक्का जाम, हड़ताल आम थे। आप नॉस्टैल्जिक होकर भी वास्तविकता से मुंह नहीं मोड़ सकते। शाम ढलने के बाद लड़कियों के लिए सुरक्षा का मसला था। हमारे पास संस्कृति थी, बौद्धिकता थी, शिक्षा और विरासत थी, पर माहौल ऐसा था। यह



एक पैराडाक्स है कि हर दूसरा आदमी मीडिया में बिहार का है। आज भी जब मैं बिहार जाती हूँ तो मेरी बिंदी की साइज, ड्रेस बदल जाती है। बिहार और मुंबई की सोच में जमीन से आसमान तक का फर्क है। यह केवल बिहारी की नहीं, पहचान की बात है, जो राजनीति, क्षेत्र, भाषा, जेंडर आदि से जुड़ी हो सकती है। यह आप पर तय करता है कि आप अपनी खामियों और खूबियों को जानते हुए, अपनी जड़ों से जुड़े और अपनी पहचान पर लगातार बात और गर्व करें।

सोशल मीडिया पर अपने परिचय 'एवरी डे अ वूमेन एवरी डे अ राइटर' का मतलब समझाते हुए चौधरी ने कहा कि मैं हर दिन लेखक हूँ और हर दिन औरत हूँ। रचनाओं में कम्युनिकेशन से जुड़े सवाल पर चौधरी ने कहा कि संवाद वो पूंजी है जो बंद दिलों को, बंद रिश्तों को खोलती चली जाती है। यह मां बाप, बच्चों, दोस्तों, सहयोगियों के बीच भी हो सकता है। हम फेसबुक पर बात कर लेते हैं पर अपने अंतर्संबंधों के बीच खुलकर बात नहीं कर पाते। अपने से परे दूसरों की संवेदना को समझ कर संवाद करना आवश्यक है। नीला स्कॉर्फ की कहानी एक टूबलड दंपति की कहानी है। मैं नहीं जानती कि मैं अपनी बात समझाने में सफल हो पाती हूँ या नहीं पर बतौर लेखक मैं कोशिश करती हूँ कि ऐसा हो।

आर्या सीरियल को पीटर बैटर कोरथ्यूस के डच ड्रामा पेनोज़ा का अनुवाद कहे जाने पर चौधरी ने कहा कि आर्या बिल्कुल अलग कहानी है। यह कोई अनुवाद नहीं बल्कि अडोप्शन है। डच और भारतीय बच्चों और औरतों के संघर्ष के अलग होंगे। हालांकि मूल रस तो एक ही हैं, प्रेम व संवेदना दुनिया भर में एक जैसी हैं। पर उसकी पृष्ठभूमि अलग है। आर्या का राजस्थान अलग है। स्क्रिप्ट राइटिंग एकदम अलग चीज है। किताबें लिखना, अनुवाद करना एकदम अलग है। मूल लेखन और स्क्रिप्ट लेखन में क्या अच्छा लगता है? के जवाब में चौधरी ने साफगोई दिखाई और कहा कि अपने लिए जो लिखती हूँ, उससे मैं अपने बच्चों की फीस नहीं दे सकती। साहित्य की दुनिया के बड़े नामों ने मुंबई में पैसे के लिए काम किया। इनमें इस्मत् चुगताई, कमलेश्वर, राही मासूम रजा, गुलज़ार जैसे नाम शामिल हैं, पर एक संतुलन होना ही चाहिए। राही मासूम रजा फिल्मी दुनिया में आधा गांव का मैजिक रिपीट नहीं कर पाए।

अपनी लेखकीय पसंद पर उन्होंने कहा कि कहानी लिखना मुझे पसंद है। कह दी अपनी बात और बात अधूरी भी रह गई। कविता की विधा मुझे नहीं आती। एक छोटे कैनवास में अपनी बात कह देने का मजा ही कुछ और है। नीला स्कॉर्फ और मम्मा की डायरी ऐसी ही किताबें हैं। इन्हें लिखने के समय मुझ पर अपेक्षाओं का डर नहीं था। अपने परिवार के बारे में चौधरी ने कहा कि मेरे जुड़वा बच्चे इस साल पंद्रह साल के हो जाएंगे। जब मैं थकने लगती हूँ, तो वे मुझे प्रेरित करते हैं। बच्चे मेरे पंखों के नीचे की उड़ान हैं। आजकल परदे के चरित्र ब्लैक एंड व्हाइट नहीं हैं? के जवाब में चौधरी ने कहा कि परफेक्शन जैसा कुछ नहीं है। सबमें कमियां और खूबियां होती हैं। डिजिटल क्रांति की वजह से भी यह बदलाव आया। जब हम यह पाते हैं कि जिसके लिए हम डरते हैं वह दुनिया में दूसरी जगहों पर भी होता है। पहले भी ऐसा रहा होगा। हम दिखाते रहे कि इंसान अपने भ्रष्ट रूप में भी बेहतर हो सकता है। हमारे पास फिल्म और टीवी था, तो वह औरत को त्याग की मूर्ति, बलिदान दिखाता था। अब डिजिटल स्पेस ने बहुत सारे मौके दे दिए।

चौधरी ने बताया कि एक बड़े लेखक ने मुझसे कहा था कि मुंबई में स्ट्राइक रेट दस परसेंट है। आप कर बहुत कुछ रहे होते हैं, पर दस चीजों में एक ही चीज सामने आएगी। चौधरी ने बताया कि उन्हें घूमना बहुत पसंद है। राजस्थान में बहुत शहरों में घूमी हूँ। लक्षद्वीप छोड़कर पूरा भारत घूम चुकी हूँ। उन्होंने अलवर के नट समुदाय से जुड़ी एक लड़की के संघर्षशील जीवन की गाथा भी सुनाई। लेखन के अलावा क्या शौक है? पूछे जाने पर उन्होंने कहा कि मैं वर्कहोलिक हूँ। बच्चे समय में हिंदी, हिंदुस्तानी, उर्दू, पंजाबी के म्यूजिक सुनती हूँ। अनुवाद पढ़ती रहती हूँ। बच्चे और घर के काम में व्यस्त रहती हूँ। अपने भाई को मैजिक मिरर बताते हुए चौधरी का कहना था कि जो कुछ भी मैंने किया उन सबके पीछे मेरा भाई था। उनका सुझाव था कि आप चाहे जिस भी क्षेत्र में हों, आपको सपोर्ट सिस्टम तलाशते रहना चाहिए।

सवाल जवाब के सत्र में चौधरी ने पुनीत राव, डॉ पमिला विधि और प्रेरणा माहेश्वरी के अपनी पुस्तकों, कहानियों, नीला स्कॉर्फ संकलन के नाम और आर्या से जुड़े सवालों के उत्तर दिए।

कलम जोधपुर के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट। हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर ताज हरिमहल जोधपुर हैं। अहसास वूमेन का भी सहयोग मिला



Anubha Arya



Dilip Kumar Jha

मैथिली साहित्य में कविता श्रेष्ठ स्थिति में है: दिलीप कुमार झा

जिस समाज में मैं रह रहा था वहां सीधे संघर्ष नहीं कर सकता था, प्रत्यक्ष रूप से अपनी बात नहीं कह सकता था, इसलिए साहित्य का सहारा लिया।" **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** और मसि इंक द्वारा आयोजित **आखर** बिहार में बतौर अतिथि वक्ता यह बात कही मैथिली साहित्यकार दिलीप कुमार झा ने। आराधना प्रधान ने झा की एक कविता के साथ उनका स्वागत और परिचय देते हुए बताया कि हिंदी और राजनीति शास्त्र से स्नातकोत्तर मधुबनी निवासी झा बिहार सरकार में बतौर शिक्षक कार्यरत हैं। आपकी प्रकाशित पुस्तकों में कविता संग्रह, *अरुण स्तम्भ*, *बनिजाराक देश में*, उपन्यास *दू धाप आगा* एवं संस्मरण *यात्री नागार्जुनक मिथिला* शामिल हैं। आप *अरुणिमा* पत्रिका के संपादक भी हैं। यात्री अवार्ड व ग्लोबल साहित्य क्लब ऑफ इंडिया से सम्मानित हैं। संवादकर्ता रुपेश त्योंथ का भी परिचय प्रधान ने उनकी कविता सुनाकर दिया और कहा कि त्योंथ आइटी प्रोफेशनल हैं, स्वतंत्र लेखन-संपादन करते हैं। आपकी प्रकाशित कृतियों में कविता संग्रह *एक मिसिया*, व्यंग्य संग्रह *खुरचन भाइक कछमच्छी* शामिल हैं।

त्योंथ ने संवाद का आरंभ करते हुए झा के बचपन, पहली मैथिली कविता व *अरुण स्तम्भ* कविता संग्रह का उल्लेख करते हुए उनकी लेखकीय यात्रा के बारे में पूछा? झा ने कहा कि लेखक से पहले मैं पाठक रहा। मैं लिखूंगा, ऐसा सोचा नहीं था। काशी में पढ़ने के दौरान आलेख लिखता रहा। साहित्य में हस्तक्षेप नहीं किया। 15 साल तक साहित्य पढ़ने के बाद कुछ लिखूं ऐसा सोचा। काशी से पढ़ाई पूरी करने के बाद गांव आया तो मैथिली में लिखने लगा। तीन साल तक कोई पाठक नहीं था। खुद लिखा, खुद पढ़ा। फिर उन्होंने विस्तार से साहित्य में प्रवेश की अपनी बात बताई। कवि के रूप में अपनी यात्रा पर झा ने कहा कि समाज की विषमता, समस्या को मैं अपनी कविता में ले आया। वंचित मनुष्य, संघर्ष, विषमता और पर्यावरण मेरी कविता की प्रेरणा है। मानवीय समानता, प्रकृति संरक्षण, मनुष्य और पारिस्थिकी मेरी कविता का मूल है।

मैथिली साहित्य पर बात करते हुए झा ने कहा कि सत्ता के साथ संघर्ष कवि करता है। वह व्यवस्था विरोध व यथास्थितिवाद का विरोधी है। चंदा झा की कविता का मूल भाव संघर्ष था। आज भी लोग महंगाई पर कविता लिख रहे हैं।



Rupesh

व्यवस्था विरोध का स्वर राज्याश्रय प्राप्त कवि चंदा झा में भी था। भुवनेश्वर सिंह भुवन, बटुक जी, यात्री जी सबमें यह भाव है। मैथिली में धारा के साथ उपधारा बहुत चल रही है। मैथिली साहित्य में कविता श्रेष्ठ स्थिति में है। मैथिली कविता से मैथिली उपन्यास और कथा तक की यात्रा के बारे में झा ने कहा कि मैं अपनी बात कविता में ही कहना चाहता था, लेकिन मुझे लगा जिस बात को मैं विस्तार के साथ कहना चाहता हूं वो कविता में आ नहीं रही थी, इसीलिए मैं कथा की ओर, गद्य की तरफ मुड़ा। मैथिली पुस्तकों के प्रमोशन की आवश्यकता पर बल देते हुए झा ने कहा कि मैथिली में पाठक तक पहुंचने के लिए कथा और उपन्यास का प्रमोशन आवश्यक है। यहां के प्रकाशक पोथी को लेकर उतनी रुचि नहीं रखते हैं।

मिथिला-मैथिली संदर्भ से जुड़े सवाल पर झा का मत था कि यात्री जी की आत्मा मिथिला में बसती थी। *मिथिला प्रसंग* में बहुत बातें हैं। हम अपने लोगों को जीवित रहते हुए महत्त्व नहीं देते। आधुनिक मिथिला के निर्माण का रास्ता यात्री से होकर जाता है। रेणु का *मिथिला प्रसंग* भी लिखा जाना जरूरी है। आज मैथिली और मिथिला के खिलाफ लोगों द्वारा एक कुचक्र चलाया जा रहा है जबकि मिथिला एक है, इसे बांट नहीं सकते हैं। रेणु, दिनकर, नागार्जुन, विद्यापति की चर्चा मजबूती से होनी चाहिए। डिजिटल मीडिया की चर्चा पर झा ने कहा कि इसके महत्त्व को नकारा नहीं जा सकता। आज युवाओं को प्रोत्साहन की जरूरत है। मिथिला के युवा अलग-अलग गतिविधियों में भी आगे आ रहे हैं। चाहे भाषा की बात हो, क्षेत्र की बात हो, प्रारंभिक शिक्षा में मैथिली शिक्षा की बात हो, ट्यूटर ट्रेड की बात हो, ये सब युवाओं के द्वारा ही संचालित हो रही है। त्योंथ ने कार्यक्रम के दौरान अपनी कविता भी पढ़ी। धन्यवाद ज्ञापन मसि इंक की संस्थापक और निदेशक आराधना प्रधान ने किया। कार्यक्रम में उषाकिरण खान, श्याम दरिहरे, कमल मोहन चुन्नू, नारायण जी, मृदुला प्रधान आदि उपस्थित थे।

प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन और मसि इंक की ओर से आयोजित **आखर** बिहार के प्रस्तुतकर्ता हैं श्री सीमेंट।

राजस्थानी में लिखे गीतों ने एक सप्ताह में मेरी जिंदगी बदल दी: डॉ शकुंतला सरूपरिया



Shakuntala Satyapriya



Pramod Sharma



Abhilasha Pareek

म्हारा पिया जी री काई बातां केहूं
म्हारा साहब जी री थाने काई बाता केहूं
हो जी म्हाने प्यारा लागे सुहाग पिया जी
पिया जी री काई बातां केहूं
प्यारा म्हारा साजगिया सरताज
वाने ही म्हारो हिवड़ो कितारे
प्यारा लागे वेरे पीली पाग
वाने ही म्हाने हिवड़ो पुकारे....

नारी विमर्श की रचना सुनाने के अनुरोध पर सरूपरिया ने मां की पुकार पर लिखी अपनी यह राजस्थानी नज़्म सुनाई –
आज म्हारी कोख बेटा रानी जाई है
काल तल्यो नर्वी जिंदगानी पाई है
काळजा री कोर म्हारा जीवन री आस
गोद्यां माय उतर आई भवानी आई है
हिवड़ा रे बागा हरियाली छाई जी
मुस्कवाँ कली जो मुस्कवाई है
बाजी नहीं थाल बाज्यो नहीं ढोल
कठै पूजे नार जो कहानी सुनाई जी
आज म्हारी कोख बेटा रानी जाई जी...

भक्ति रस का जिक्र होने पर सरूपरिया ने बताया कि सबसे पहले मैंने बीजासन माता के मंदिर में एक कैसेट अर्पित किया। ऐसे ही सांवरिया सेठ, आवड़ माता और जैन भजन भी रचे। सांवरिया सेठ के लिए रचे भजन मुझे बहुत पसंद हैं। जैसे –

हो जी म्हारा सांवरिया घनश्याम
थारा कतरा कतरा नाम
सांवरो नाम रूपालो है तू ही जग रो रखवालो है
हो जी म्हारा सांवरिया घनश्याम
कान्हा, किशन, कन्हाई, गिरधर, द्वारिकाधीश, गोपालो
गिरधर नटवर नागर गोविंद गोपालो
नाम थारो घणो रूपालो है
तू ही जग रो रखवालो है
हो जी म्हारा सांवरिया घनश्याम...

आप मेवाड़ में वागड़ की संस्कृति को आगे बढ़ाने का काम कर रही हैं। आपने राजस्थानी गरबा कैसे रचा? गरबे की दो पंक्तियां सुनाइए? के उत्तर में सरूपरिया ने बताया कि नवरात्रि के दिनों में राजस्थानी कैसेट बनाने वाली कंपनियों के कहने पर ही पहला गरबा तैयार किया।

हो मने सोनो वोनो नहीं चावे चांदी
अंबा म्हारी आओ नी देर क्यों लगा दी
भोग लगावा मैया नारिअल चढ़ावा
ओ मैया अतरी रे देर क्यों लगा दी
ऐ अंबा म्हारी आओ नी देर क्यों लगा दी
अंबा म्हारी रात गई आधी....

जद फागण रंग में रंग गयो रे
देखो फागण रो जादू चढ़ गयो
होली आई रे भाई होली आई रे
आनंद हुयो रे आनंद हुयो रे...

डॉ अंबेडकर से जुड़े सवाल पर सरूपरिया ने बताया कि बाबा साहेब अंबेडकर पर अलवर में आयोजित सम्मेलन के विचार-विमर्श से मैं बहुत प्रभावित हुई। घर आकर मैंने डॉ अंबेडकर पर 'मैं एक समाज हूँ' नाम से कमेंट्री के साथ एक कैसेट बनाया। इसी पर भारतीय दलित साहित्य अकादमी की ओर से डॉ अंबेडकर कलाश्री सम्मान मिला। कार्यक्रम के अंत में प्रमोद शर्मा ने धन्यवाद ज्ञापित किया।

प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन और ग्रासरूट फाउंडेशन की ओर से आयोजित आखर राजस्थान के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट।

मेरे जीवन में सबसे बड़ा बदलाव वर्ष 1995 में राजस्थानी में लिखने से आया। एक सप्ताह में ही मैं गीत लिखने लगी, कवि सम्मेलन में पहुंच गई और ऑडियो कैसेट भी बन गया। तब से राजस्थानी में लिख रही हूँ।" यह बात साहित्यकार एवं गीतकार डॉ शकुंतला सरूपरिया ने प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन द्वारा ग्रासरूट मीडिया फाउंडेशन के सहयोग से आयोजित आखर राजस्थान में कही। फेसबुक पेज पर लाइव हुए इस कार्यक्रम में डॉ सरूपरिया से अभिलाषा पारीक ने बातचीत की। पारीक ने सरूपरिया के पत्रकारिता से कविता की ओर झुकाव को लेकर पहला सवाल पूछा? सरूपरिया का उत्तर था, "एक बार मैं मंच संचालन कर रही थी, तो आयोजक ने मेरे आत्मविश्वास की प्रशंसा करते हुए कविताएं लिखने के लिए कहा। मैंने घर आकर गीत लिखा और उनको दिखाने गई तो उन्होंने फिर कभी देखने के लिए कहा। उन दिनों मैं विज्ञापन एजेंसी का संचालन करती थी, तो जिंगल बनाते समय स्टूडियो में गीत भी रिकॉर्ड करा लिया। दो-चार दिन बाद वहां आए संगीतकार मधुसूदन वैष्णव ने और गीत लिखने के लिए कहा। इसके बाद ऑडियो कैसेट तैयार होकर आ गया।

म्हारा तो नैणां में बस गया
साहब जी सलोनो
वे तो टक टक नाले सामी साम रे
सहेलियां म्हाने याद आवैं
सहेलियां म्हाने ओल्यु आवे
काल गई जद पानी भरबा
पाछे-पाछे आया रे
देस्या सैनाणी हरियो रूमाल रे
सहेलियां म्हाने लाज आवैं..."

इस सवाल पर कि गीत तो भाव के रूप में ही आते हैं, आपका क्या कहना है? सरूपरिया का उत्तर था, "सही बात है। जब मैं साहब (पति) के साथ काम करने के लिए स्कूटर पर जा रही होती तो चौराहे पर उनकी डायरी पेन लेकर गीत लिखती। हर साल नवरात्रि के आने पर राजस्थानी में गरबा गीत लिखती। रातों रात ऐसा भाव उमड़ता, पर घरेलू कामकाज भी करना होता था। फिर मैंने छोटा सा टेपरिकार्डर खरीदा और रोटी बनाते हुए रिकॉर्ड करती। एक बार गर्मी के दिनों में रात को घरों में लाइट नहीं आ रही थी। सुबह 5 बजे के समय छत पर फूड लाइट की रोशनी में ब्रश से गीत लिखे जो फिल्म देवा में काम आया। सुबह लाइट आने पर उसे पेन से लिखा। इस तरह गीत लिखने की दीवानगी थी। मां शारदे की कृपा से मेरी पहचान कवयित्री के रूप में बन गई। राजस्थानी में 300 गीत अलग-अलग धुनों के लिखे। मेरे जीवन में यह चमत्कार हुआ।" गीत सुनाने के अनुरोध पर सरूपरिया ने भूमिका में बताया कि इस गीत में सायब जी की तारीफ सखियों से होती है। राजस्थानी में सायब जी के कई नाम हैं आलीजा, बादीला, सरताज। इसमें नायिका सायब जी को प्रकृति की उपमाएं देती है।

A History of the Horse and Humankind

"Write what you know," said the great storyteller, Mark Twain. No wonder then that lecturer-author Yashaswini Chandra, with her love of history and horses, chose to yoke her two areas of interest together and write about them in her recently published book, *The Tale of the Horse: A History of India on Horseback*.

An avid horse rider and a horse owner, Chandra, who has a PhD in History of Art from SOAS University of London, spoke about her book to moderator Swati Vashishtha at an edition of **The Write Circle**, Jaipur. The event started with Urvi Bhuwania welcoming the speakers and the audience warmly.

Introducing Chandra's book as "a monograph on the intertwined history of the horse and humankind, focusing on the medieval to the modern period in the subcontinent", Vashishtha asked the author what drove her to write on horses. Chandra revealed that apart from her personal interest in horses, her experience of co-editing *Right of the Line: The President's Bodyguard*, made her "realise that horses are not just great fun to ride but it can be a pleasure writing about them".

Chandra explained that though horses lend themselves to a rich study of history and their cultural contribution is immense, most past treatises have handled the topic of horses in a very utilitarian and prosaic manner. This disheartened her greatly and she wanted to treat the horse as a "living, feeling being". She touched upon the mythological references on horses across religions and geographies, and spoke about their loss in status with the mechanisation of society. Chandra shared a slideshow of photographs used in her book to depict "the exalted beginnings of the horse in the Indian imagination" and pointed out that "we very often miss how the horse has been a silent witness, how it has been a sentinel to some of the most crucial moments in our history and culture".

Chandra also spoke about early trade routes and imports stemming from high demand for horses, indigenous horse breeds like the Marwari horse, the extinct Bhimthadi Deccan horse, and more.

However, the most intriguing part of the evening's conversation was about Chandra's findings of horsewomen amidst very male-dominated accounts. Deeming it a "super challenging" feat, Chandra said that she kept digging for stories of women riders beyond Rani Lakshmibai. As a horsewoman herself, she "refused to



Swati Vashishtha



Yashaswini Chandra

believe that there were no women riders in India" and was very sure that she "didn't just want to write about great men on horseback". So, a portion of her book details breakthroughs found in art-historical sources, since not much was available by way of textual resources.

Chandra found out that the accounts of Peter Mundy, a 17th century British traveller, noted that in Mughal times, women who belonged to the higher classes tended to ride horses whereas women from the lower classes rode oxen. What surprised Chandra most, however, was the fact that these high-class women used to ride astride like men, unlike their European counterparts, who until recently rode side-saddle. Not just Mughal, Chandra gives examples of women from the Rajputana and the Deccan Sultanate as well.

Chandra emphasised that though the horse is an elite animal and one cannot escape talking about the elite history of India associated with it, she also wanted to make the book more inclusive by focusing on communities such as the *charans* and the *banjaras* of Rajasthan, who were heavily involved with horses. She said that she wanted to focus on "the horse culture of the off-beat remote areas like Manipur — the birthplace of modern polo".

Her aim with this book, concluded Chandra, was to make people realise that the horse being central to Indian culture meant that "it had to be present in almost all aspects, across gender, across class....".

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

Ladies of Lucknow



DEEPA MISHRA

An MBA graduate from Pune's Symbiosis Institute of Business Management, Deepa went on to complete her postgraduate diploma in computer science before working in a series of roles across different sectors. Since 2019, she has been an integral part of METAPHOR, the Lucknow Literature Festival. Involved in curating different aspects of METAPHOR and handling the coordination of a number of verticals, Deepa has demonstrated her versatility in juggling a variety of positions and the vast responsibilities that come with them.

Deeply passionate about wildlife conservation and appalled by the rate at which our fellow species are disappearing from the planet, Deepa frequently volunteers for events associated with promoting greater awareness about endangered wildlife as well as the importance of environmental sustainability in general. As part of her mission to work towards a greener and healthier planet, she has also helped organise a series of plantation drives that have raised the need for increasing afforestation in the present era of global warming.

A thorough people's person who thinks that age is just a number, Deepa has experience in the corporate world as well as in working from home. In the latter capacity, she has helped educate and nurture underprivileged children, especially by providing skill development training for girls from humble backgrounds.

A perennial optimist, Deepa shares an inherent curiosity for her core domains like education and event management. A firm believer in the value of hard work, she remains unfazed by having to do whatever it takes in order to bring about meaningful change in society.



MADHURI HALWASIYA

Hailing from one of the most illustrious and socially prominent families of Lucknow, Madhuri has been closely associated with FICC FLO's Lucknow chapter since its inception. In 2019, she became the chairperson for FLO Lucknow.

An extremely dynamic woman who can seamlessly juggle a number of roles, Madhuri is a certified Sujok practitioner (Sujok is a form of therapy meant to cure ailments present in the hands and the feet) and runs a free Sujok clinic that helps alleviate pain for patients of all ages and backgrounds. Additionally, she also manages the CSR activities for the BP Halwasiya Foundation, one of Lucknow's most important and effective agencies for social change.

Currently, Madhuri is serving as president of the Deaf Women's Welfare Foundation, an organisation which works towards making auditorily impaired women socially and financially independent. She is also the present secretary of the Samvad Samajik Sansthan, an organisation dedicated to the uplift of the marginalised and downtrodden sections of society by providing a voice and sources of livelihood to the most vulnerable. Moreover, she is associated with the Navyug Radiance Senior Secondary School, a charitable school for girls, and Cheshire Home, an old-age home in Lucknow.

Recognised by the Governor of Uttar Pradesh for her wide range of social work, Madhuri has emerged as one of the most recognisable faces for social empowerment in Lucknow, acting as an inspiration for many other women who, like her, want to do their bit to enrich their city and state even more in terms of education, culture and the most essential social amenities.



DIMPLE TRIVEDI

As someone who believes that the path to success lies in climbing small ladders, Dimple has been actively involved in a wide range of activities in an attempt to make society more developed as well as more humane. Since 2014, she has been one of the core members at METAPHOR, the Lucknow Literature Festival, cementing her status as one of the indispensable women who make the Festival the annual success it is. Her participation in METAPHOR stems from her love for art and culture, a passion she has always managed time for in her life.

Dimple has been running a successful business of her own for the better part of a decade through her brand store, Surammya Apna Ethnic Adda, besides working with a number of NGOs.

She has been a part of the Anupama Foundation in working towards saving the female foetus alongside collaborating with Neel Abhivyakti, where she has been contributing towards greater social equality, generating awareness about public and private violence, and facilitating development of children through co-curricular activities.

Author of the book *Taaza Coffee Thoughts*, an account of her feelings and experiences from years of work in the business and social sectors, Dimple is a member of Wordhazard, a group of volunteers inspiring youngsters to write and recite.

Dimple has assumed the responsibility of helping two families with their educational needs and daily sustenance and has received a number of accolades for her contributions to society. Besides being felicitated by the Anupama Foundation, she has been recognised by the Bank of India as one of the leading women entrepreneurs of her generation.



KANAK REKHA CHAUHAN

The founder-director of METAPHOR, the Lucknow Literature Festival, as well as the Kanpur Literature Festival, Kanak has enjoyed an illustrious career and contributed significantly to expanding literature and culture in her home state of Uttar Pradesh. Having obtained a diploma in management studies from Mumbai University, she completed her Master's in chemistry from the same institution.

Recognised as the "Pride of Uttar Pradesh" and felicitated by the Governor of the state for her efforts, Kanak has, over the years, held a series of key positions across a number of organisations. Currently, she is the vice-president of the Lucknow Expressions Society, which works for literary and cultural promotion, and is in charge of organising the Lucknow Literature Festival. She is also the co-convenor of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), UP chapter, for which she started the project, Our Heritage, Our Children, in order to sensitise children about the tangible as well as the intangible or abstract heritage of India. Earlier, she was vice president at the Society for the Promotion of Indian Classical Music And Culture Amongst Youth (SPIC MACAY), Lucknow chapter, where she played a pivotal role in promoting classical music and other arts in the city.

In 2011, Kanak was selected as Penguin Ambassador for Lucknow after emerging as one of the winners in a pan-India short story contest held to celebrate Penguin Publications' silver jubilee anniversary in India. A frequent author of articles and poems across Indian newspapers and magazines, Kanak assisted her husband, Capt. P. Chauhan, in his voluntary project to reconstruct Lucknow's Hussainabad clock tower, which is among the tallest in India.

A firm advocate of the Each One Teach One policy, Kanak has also taken up the cause of educating the underprivileged girl child, assuming personal responsibility to complete the education of several children, from kindergarten to postgraduate studies.

Hotel Crystal Palace, Meerut: Where Business Is a Pleasure



Located in a residential area in the heart of Meerut, Hotel Crystal Palace has emerged as a premier business hotel in a little over two decades. It has found the right blend of service, luxury and efficiency — thereby providing guests with multiple reasons to keep coming back for more.

Hotel Crystal Palace is a 70 km drive from India's capital city, New Delhi. It is located between the Meerut Cantonment railway station and the early 20th-century Mustafa Castle which was built as a memorial to the poet Nawab Mustafa Khan Shefta. The hotel is close to the city centre, with easy access to commercial and shopping areas and is situated strategically across the serene cantonment area, making it a popular venue for both business and leisure travellers.

From in-house conferences to press conferences and product launches, this 30-room hotel can be relied upon for a professional approach to services. The hotel staff are also committed to providing world-class services on occasions such as cocktail evenings, receptions and weddings. There are a variety of facilities to choose from, depending on one's needs. The Glass House is a luxurious banquet hall with a translucent crystal roof and sliding glass walls that open into lovely greenery. There's also the more relaxed and informal Opal Room which too connects to a garden. The Coronation Hall is perfect for smaller meetings, while The Wild Orchid Hall with its wooden flooring is a versatile space that works well for a business conference that segues into a party.

Whether you're looking to host a breakfast meeting or just have a fun night out with friends, Hotel Crystal Palace has various dining options. There's the all-day



Deepa Garga

multicuisine restaurant, Mineral, for a formal meeting or an off-hour craving. Carbon Cocktail Bar and Cafe with its hand-blown glass chandeliers and sink-in leather seats is perfect for a date night. To let your hair down, head to Moon Stone, the open-air restobar known for its wood-fired oven pizza, handmade pasta and innovative cocktails.

The trendy, cutting-edge facilities with dependable service from attentive staff make Hotel Crystal Palace in Meerut the ideal venue for



Prabha Khaitan Foundation's initiatives. Services and amenities are frequently customised to make one's stay as comfortable as possible. The hotel is efficiently run by a team with years of experience in the industry. Their attention to detail has helped Hotel Crystal Palace emerge as Meerut's most graceful and elegant hotel. With its contemporary design and understated elegance, its facade embodies an artistic vision that runs through the entire hotel.

Lot More Than Skin-Deep



I had always apologised... even when I was 10. [Expra sp] I didn't want to cycle or swim as it might 'ruin' my skin with scars and a tan. As a teen, flipping through those glossy lifestyle magazines, I was sure that my acne-dotted face looked like crap, and people around me would never let me forget that. People felt commenting or making fun of my acne, genetically acquired dark circles, fine hair and skinny body was a potent way to motivate me to 'FIX MYSELF'. I got the message loud and clear. I am good or bad skin, hair and body first, a person second.

Three decades later, the number of girls voluntarily deselecting themselves from activities has escalated and so have the unsavoury comments, sometimes not even garbed as bits of advice. These unsolicited 'comments' can be from complete strangers, and sadly no one finds anything wrong in it, neither the giver nor the taker.

Why do people with skin disorders have to be called names? You don't do that to people with diabetes. No one chooses their skin, surely not a bad and painful one at that. Lookism is at its peak now, but is it truly Instagram or is it us? Are we using anonymity, invisibility, lack of authority, and the fact that we are not communicating in real time as a mask to be rude?

The locker room just went virtual (quite literally, recently). Is this our best? If social media is awash with these skin-influencers promising miracles, there is a growing tribe of skin positivity advocates. A big shoutout to a horde of Insta celebrities who started the various skin positivity and acne positivity crusades online.

And a big hooray for our social media celebrities Kusha Kapila and Dolly Singh flaunting their acne and grey hair. The acne-positivity community is working to destigmatise zits. They regularly post photos of their unretouched, blemished skin, with captions like "Acne or not, you are beautiful" and "Your skin isn't your life, so don't make it that way."

More celebrities are becoming honest about their trysts with acne and disparate other skin issues and are attempting to normalise it. This could create an inclusive definition of body positivity and lessen the opprobrium. And, not surprisingly, social media networks are feeling the heat and the platforms are making changes. Like now, on Instagram, even if your account is public, you'll be able to customise who can or can't comment on it. They have launched a filter to block certain offensive comments.

Brands are increasingly using 'unaltered images' of their models and models with vitiligo and shaven heads. Mattel unveiled a new Barbie doll with vitiligo. But until the rest of the world catches up, the onus is on us.

At the crux of this movement lies Self-Love. Let's face it (like, literally): we all have bad-skin days. Most of us have acne, and soon enough more of us will have acne with wrinkles. We despairingly self-care to bring out the glow, but sometimes the constellation does show up with a big bang due to the lack of sleep, digital overdose, pizza (pasta, dairy, cheese, wine, insert your own) and stress.

And so, you slap another filter, smile, and get on with your life. Or do you? Haven't many of us sighed at our pictures and wished they were for real? Skin-shaming starts with us... when we make those hateful comments about our skin. We don't bat an eyelid before saying "I hate my skin". We'd be remiss to be oblivious to the inner stirrings that take place as we scroll through posts — anxiety, comparison, jealousy. But smart women know better, right? We know the photos and videos have been altered copiously, with extreme Frankenstein photoshop, underage models, body doubles.

That these perfect beauties are no more an illusion, but a delusion... we know, right? So, how did we get to a point that so much of our time, energy, and moolah is taken up by concerns that used to belong only to professional models and actresses or people with grave skin deformities?

Why are 13-year-olds hankering to look like 30 and contrariwise? Teens think about their appearance for anywhere between one to three hours, that is too much of the waking hours unlive! Stop self-objectification. Skin is just another sense organ, not a tool to attack or reassure someone's self-esteem. It may not function properly sometimes, but that's OK. Yes, I am a cosmetic chemist and by saying this, you might think that I am trying to stand in the deep-end of a shallow industry but I'm also saying this self-acceptance will not bring the industry to its knees.

It would only uplift it from a fear-mongering industry that it has been tagged as, to the personal care industry that it is. And as for me, I don't apologise for the way I look anymore. Nah! Not even for the constellation of adult acne I have. The lifelines that run across my tummy as stretch marks, the natural contouring called chloasma. Yeah, my skin issues did swell. But so did my ATTITUDE.

Priyanka Kothari

*The author is a cosmetologist and an **Ehsaas** Woman of Nagpur*

There Is No Planet B



"The earth will not continue to offer its harvest, except with faithful stewardship. We cannot say we love the land and then take steps to destroy it for use by future generations." — John Paul II

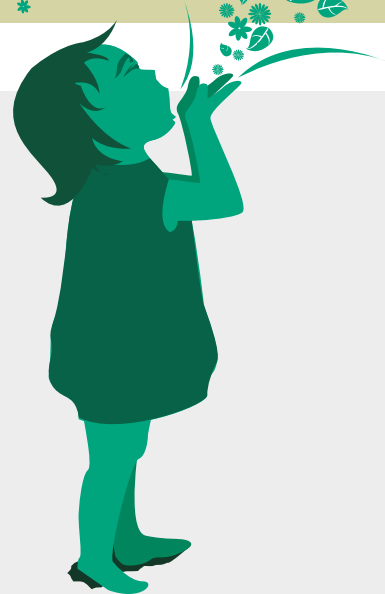
The progress of human civilisation has come at a great cost, a cost borne disproportionately by our planet. The fact that the Earth is enduring one of the most turbulent periods in its existence is no secret. However, what remains baffling is the human apathy to address that fact and mitigate environmental damage.

Perhaps this apathy towards the Earth stems from complacency, too much faith in the resilience of the planet and its ability to regenerate and recuperate according to the timeless laws of nature. But it is precisely this kind of complacency that puts both humans and the Earth at the greatest risk, for the destiny of the Earth is ultimately determined by the symbiotic relationship between itself and those who inhabit it. Once this symbiosis is destroyed and humans only seek to profit from the planet without providing for it in return, a catastrophe is inevitable. A catastrophe that comes with the warning that there is no alternative, no second Earth, no planet B.

While dialogue surrounding environmental

pollution and global warming has rightly shot up in the 21st century, the acknowledgement that the Earth is in peril had come long before, even though it is still in the process of being universally accepted.

In January 1969, American Senator Gaylord Nelson witnessed the ravages of a massive oil spill in Santa Barbara, California, and wanted to raise public consciousness about the hazardous effects of air and water pollution. Senator Nelson announced the idea for a teach-in on college campuses to the national media, and recruited Denis Hayes, a young activist, to



organise the campus teach-ins. They choose April 22 as the date to maximise student participation.

Hayes chose a national staff of 85 to promote events across the country and the effort soon broadened to include a wide range of organisations. April 22 was christened as Earth Day, which immediately sparked national media attention and caught on across America. Earth Day inspired 20 million Americans to take to the streets, parks and auditoriums to demonstrate against the devastating impact of 150 years of industrial development on humans and the environment.

In the 1990s, Earth Day went global, mobilising 200 million people in 141 countries and advancing environmental issues on to the world stage. Earth Day 1990 significantly boosted recycling efforts worldwide

and helped pave the way for the 1992 United Nations Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. An important achievement of this summit was an agreement on the Climate Change Convention, which in turn led to the Kyoto Protocol (signed in 1997) and the Paris agreement (signed on Earth Day in 2016).

Today, Earth Day is widely recognised and marked by more than a billion people every year as a day of action to alter human behavior and initiate policy changes at a local, national, and international level.

Earth Day 2021, based on the theme of "Restore Our Earth", saw three parallel climate action summits on climate literacy, environmental justice, and youth-led climate-focused issues. Earth Day's official website (earthday.org) hosted the second-annual Earth Day livestream event featuring global activists, international leaders, and influencers.

According to data released by the United Nations, the Earth is losing 4.7 million hectares of forests every year — an area larger than Denmark. It is estimated that close to a million animal and plant species are now faced with the threat of extinction.

The outbreak of the coronavirus and the massive toll that the pandemic has taken on public health and the global economy have made the problem of environmental degradation even more complicated to tackle.

At **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, we have always supported building systems of synergy that balance economic growth with environmental care and protection. Industrialisation and the rapid expansion of factories around the world are consistently hollowing the future of the Earth as a sustainable planet to live on. At such a time, the onus is on each and every one of us to do our bit in tempering the desperate drive for development, which does not factor in environmental costs and consequences. As a species, we must ensure that we heed Mahatma Gandhi's words, which stressed on how the "world has enough for everyone's need, but not for everyone's greed".

Once our Earth is irreparably damaged, our future generations have nowhere to go. It is naive to think that humans can extract every last bit of utility from the Earth and capitalise on science to relocate to another planet. For now, and for the foreseeable future, the Earth is our solitary home. The sooner we realise this and reflect this realisation in our actions, the higher the chances of our planet to sustain us for a few more millennia.



ARTWORK BY
SUDIPTA KUNDU

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

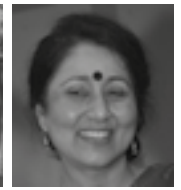
Guests	Events
Prem Prakash & Randhir Jaiswal	Kitaab New York
Ashok Ferrey	The Universe Writes
Bhogilal Patidar	Aakhar Pothe Kitaab Rajasthan
Anamika	Kalam Indore
Guru Prakash Paswan & Sudarshan Ramabadrán	Kitaab book launch
Seema Anand	The Write Circle Faridabad & Meerut
Deepak Ramola	The Write Circle Raipur
Alka Bagri, Bina Rani & Lady Mohini Kent Noon	Tête-à-tea
Shubha Menon	The Write Circle Nagpur
Kamlesh K Mishra	Aakhar Bihar
Nirmala Sitharaman, Vinay Prabhakar Sahasrabuddhe & Sanjeev Sanyal	Tête-à-tea
Bijal Vachharajani	Muskaan book reading
Kabir Bedi	The Write Circle special
Srijato	Aakhar Kolkata
Abhishek Jain	Aakhar Ahmedabad
Earth Day events	Muskaan



Abhishek Jain



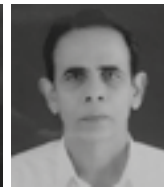
Alka Bagri



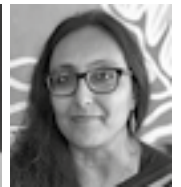
Anamika



Ashok Ferrey



Bhogilal Patidar



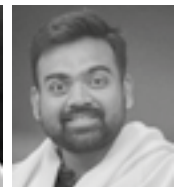
Bijal Vachharajani



Bina Rani



Deepak Ramola



Guru Prakash Paswan



Kabir Bedi



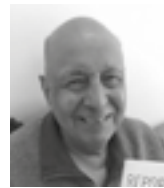
Kamlesh K Mishra



Mohini Kent Noon



Nirmala Sitharaman



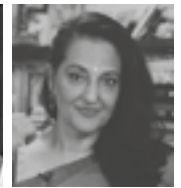
Prem Prakash



Randhir Jaiswal



Sanjeev Sanyal



Seema Anand



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