



Prabha

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The Prabha Khaitan Foundation Chronicle

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Heartstrings

Grammy Award-winning musician **Ricky Kej** tinkers together a caller tune for **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** and talks about the close connection between his music and his love for the environment.

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Prabha
खैतान



MANISHA JAIN
Communications & Branding Chief,
Prabha Khaitan Foundation

Celebrating Unity in Diversity Through Music and More

Our country has a rich cultural diversity and each culture has its own legacy of music and dance, and it is this legacy that unites the people of India. We, at **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, are dedicated towards preserving India's cultural capital. On World Music Day, the Foundation released a personalised caller tune, composed by Grammy Award-winning musician Ricky Kej. In the cover story, Kej talks to us about his work as a musician and as an environmentalist. The caller tune resonates with the true spirit of the Foundation. It is a timeless piece that celebrates the blending of India's artistic diversity with rich musical heritage. The Foundation extends its sincere gratitude to Kej for composing such an exquisite creation.

This issue of *Prabha* also features a conversation with singer Kailash Kher, who left the audience mesmerised with his story and his unique perspective on life. A session with transgender activist Acharaya Mahamandaleswar Laxmi Narayan Tripathi inspired us with her efforts to usher in concrete changes in mindset and outlook towards the third gender, breaking stereotypes and fostering acceptance.

We hope you continue sending us your feedback as they are the beating heart of the success of this chronicle. Do keep writing to us. Your words are our motivation. You can mail us at newsletter@pkfoundation.org. For updates on the Foundation's activities do follow us on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.

Happy reading!

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 **Ehsaas** Woman of
Ahmedabad, Priyanshi Patel.



Happy Birthday

Prabha WISHES **EHSAAS** WOMEN BORN IN JULY

2nd July



Sheetal Khanna

6th July



Sujata Sabnis

14th July



Anshu Mehra

14th July



Vinnie Kakkar

14th July



Aanchal Garcha



A Timeless Tune

To mark World Music Day on June 21, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** launched its official caller tune, a 30-second melody composed by Ricky Kej, a Grammy Award winner and US Billboard #1 artiste.

A musician and environmentalist who was featured in 2018's list of Real Leaders as well as 2020's GQ Heroes, Kej has performed in over 30 countries, including at the United Nations headquarters in New York and Geneva. With more than a hundred music awards to his name, Kej has been recognised as a "United Nations Global Humanitarian Artist" as well as a "Youth Icon of India". Kej has to his credit more than 3,500 placements for television and radio jingles and composed the music for the opening ceremony of the 2011 ICC Cricket World Cup in Dhaka. Kej and his team have created caller tunes and ringtones for several renowned companies such as Microsoft, Google, Amazon, the Aditya Birla Group and Infosys, among others.

In 2015, Kej launched his magnum opus, *Shanti Samsara*, an album on environmental consciousness, at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in the presence of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and then French President Francois Hollande.

Speaking about his association with **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, Kej said: "I have been following the work of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** for a while now. Their immense dedication and passion towards socio-cultural welfare and humanitarian causes is commendable. During these unprecedented times, it is arts and music that are spreading positivity, and I am grateful to **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** for always being steadfast in their mission. On this World Music Day, I am thrilled to release a special caller tune I created for the Foundation. It is a true amalgamation of the North and South of India. Featuring *bansuri*, *santoor*, and vocals rendering *sargams* and percussive *konnakol*, this 30-second piece is packed with hope, motivation, solidarity, and diversity for a better tomorrow."



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Based in Kolkata, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** is named after the exemplary changemaker, the late Dr Prabha Khaitan. Reflecting the vision of its founder, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** strives towards the promotion of the performing arts, literature, and culture besides collaborating with caregivers, committed individuals and like-minded institutions to implement cultural, educational, literary and social welfare projects in around 40 cities, across India and the world.

Over time, the Foundation's programmes and endeavours have been graced by eminent leaders of society. The Foundation has also collaborated with various national and international institutions and associations, with the honour of hosting prominent performing artists and world-famous scholars alongside serving presidents and prime ministers.



Music for a Cause

Grammy Award-winning music composer Ricky Kej spoke to *Prabha* about his work as a musician, music composer and environmentalist and the projects and issues he is passionate about



Ricky Kej performing live in Chennai

When and how did you realise that music was your calling?

Ever since I remember, I have always been in love with music. Even as a child, my ears have always been more important than my eyes. While most of my classmates in school were fascinated by television and cartoons, I was hooked to my music system. I would dissect songs I heard to try and figure out the instruments used, the musicians playing those instruments, and I would learn about different cultures and people through music. I was also passionate about the environment. It was through my music that I fell in love with our natural world and I have always found a deep connection between music and Nature. I have no idea why, but we had a baby grand piano at home, and a guitar. So I started off by trying to make music on those instruments. Much later as an adult, after I already embarked on a thriving professional musical career, I took a formal education in music to avoid what I perceived could be a handicap in future.

How does Nature inspire your music ?

There is a deep connection between music and Nature. My music is a reflection of this link. There is never any lack of inspiration when your muse is planet Earth. It is

said that we humans will only protect what we love. So, with my songs, I seek to inspire audiences to fall in love with Nature again, and hopefully, through that love, to protect, conserve and sustain.

This is also why I don't compose music for mainstream movies unless these have a strong connection to our natural world. My most recent film score was for the two-time National Award-winning film, *Wild Karnataka*, which perfectly embodies the message of conservation of our incredible biodiversity. I'm also a huge fan of Sir David Attenborough and it is a tremendous honour for me to have composed music for a film that he's helped bring to life.

Who were your musical and spiritual inspirations when you started your career in entertainment and musical healing for the planet?

I have loved the styles of Pandit Ravi Shankar, Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, and A.R. Rahman because they have never let genre boundaries define them. All they did was make music that they strongly believed in and collaborated with some of the best musicians and individuals across the globe. The world was/is their musical canvas. After I won the Grammy Award in 2015,



Ricky Kej and Wouter Kellerman with the Grammy Award

I decided to dedicate my life and music towards creating environmental consciousness through my art and there has been no looking back. Although my music is global, it is strongly rooted in India. I am a huge fan of various Indian art forms and I have always been inspired by ancient Sanskrit phrases and traditional Indian music. The ancient Indian texts were filled with musical verses and those verses spoke about co-existence and environmental consciousness.

What made you realise that this is what you want to do professionally and what were some of the challenges you faced?

Through high school I was very serious about music, and in India, during our 12th grade we needed to make a decision about what we would like to do with the rest of our lives professionally. Whether you want to become a doctor, an engineer, accountant, manager, businessman, etc. I had made up my mind that I wanted to be a musician. I wanted music to be my hobby, my passion, my profession, my bread and butter, my everything. I went to my father, a third-generation doctor, and told him that and he thought I was absolutely crazy. 'How can music be a profession?!' I fought with my parents and after many days of fighting, my father and I



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reached a compromise—I would have to get a degree in dental surgery, and once I finish my degree, I could do whatever I wanted for the rest of my life. So I went to a dental college for five years and got a degree. The day I got my degree I gave the certificate to my father, and I became a full-time musician. I did not practise dentistry, even for a single day. As they say, there was no looking back after that.

How did the album that got you the Grammy Award come about?

It was around 2012 that I met South African flute player Wouter Kellerman. I was a huge fan of his music, he was a fan of my music. We wanted to work together. We finally met in Los Angeles, and while discussing ideas for a potential collaboration, I mentioned that I had just composed a piece of music based on the ideals of peace by Mahatma Gandhi, the father of my nation. It was a huge coincidence that Wouter was working on a piece of music inspired by Nelson Mandela, the father of his nation. Through our discussions we realised that there was a whole lot of cross-pollination here—Mahatma Gandhi spent his formative years in South Africa, so he has some South African-ness in him. Nelson Mandela was heavily inspired by Mahatma Gandhi so he has Indian-ness in him. Wouter started to add South African elements to my music and I started to add Indian elements to his music. While doing this, both of us became the best of friends, travelled across the globe and in two-and-a-half years we had the album *Winds of Samsara* (my 16th album!) ready. The album went to the top of the US Billboard charts, and we eventually won the Grammy Award for it.

How did you feel after winning the Grammy?

I felt elated after receiving the award. Receiving the highest award is everyone's dream. I am very glad that I am the youngest Indian to receive a Grammy Award. Such awards and recognitions always propel me to contribute more to society. I was also awarded the United Nations 'Global Humanitarian Artiste Award' and won 'Producer of the Year Award' at the South African Music Awards, 'Album of the Year Award' at the Zone Music Awards (New Orleans), 'Global Indian Music Award' and 'Mirchi Music Awards' (India), 'Centre for Conscious Creativity 'FutureVision' Award' (Los Angeles). I was conferred with titles 'Pride of Karnataka' and 'Youth Icon of India.'



I have always made music from the heart. Awards and accolades are a by-product.... In order to make a tangible difference in the world through my music and address global issues like climate change and air pollution, I cannot rest on my laurels. I consider every award to be a recognition, and super important. If awards are used just for vanity, it's pointless



After the Grammy, were you under pressure to raise the bar for your later compositions?

I have always made music from the heart. Awards and accolades are a by-product, but essential too. In order to make a tangible difference in the world through my music and address global issues like climate change and air pollution, I cannot rest on my laurels. I consider every award to be a recognition, and super important. If awards are used just for vanity, it's pointless. Using awards for a greater good is what matters to me. I try and use the platform that these awards give me to do bigger and better things.

Tell us about life after the Grammy.

After I won the Grammy Award, Prime Minister Narendra Modi invited my wife and me for a private meeting to his office. With a population of 1.3 billion in India, I was incredibly honoured by this invitation. The meeting turned out to be an hour-long philosophical discussion. Modi knew I was a strong conservationist and inspired me to dedicate my life and my music to the sole cause of environmental consciousness. This was the push I needed, and ever since then, all of my music has been about the environment and raising awareness on climate change.

Soon after that, my album *Shanti Samsara—World Music for Environmental Consciousness* took shape and was launched by Prime Minister Modi and French



Ricky Kej with Prime Minister Narendra Modi after winning the Grammy Award



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Francois Hollande launching Ricky Kej's album *Shanti Samsara* at UN COP21

President Francois Hollande in the presence of world leaders at the United Nations COP21 Climate Change Conference in Paris. It features over 500 musicians from over 40 countries including India, United States, Australia, Turkey, Algeria, Senegal, Sweden, Korea, China, Vietnam, Tibet, Azerbaijan and more, all coming together to celebrate the natural world, and raise awareness on climate change.

I have since then, gone on to perform music from this album thrice at the United Nations General Assembly, New York, among other prestigious venues all over the world and most recently at the United Nations Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. I have performed this music to thousands of people at historic venues in over 30 countries now, including the US, Canada, India and South Africa. Performing at these historic venues to thought leaders, law makers, legislators, scientists, environmentalists and also the general public reflects a lot on my music and I am always grateful for these opportunities.

Any new collaborations?

I had been working on a follow-up to *Winds of Samsara* and had catalogued some of my favourite ideas. Recordings were delayed because of my relentless touring schedule and when the pandemic hit, it presented an opportunity for me to spend time in my studio and kick-start this project again. I reached out to Stewart Copeland (The Police) and was thrilled when he said yes to making this album with me. I have always relied on technology for all of my recordings

BB

Wouter started to add South African elements to my music and I started to add Indian elements to his music. While doing this, both of us became the best of friends, travelled across the globe and in two-and-a-half years we had the album *Winds of Samsara* (my 16th album!) ready. The album went to the top of the US Billboard charts, and we eventually won the Grammy Award for it

BB

and Stewart too is high on technology, and has one of the most amazing home studios. That helped us record seamlessly during the pandemic. Stewart and I recorded our portions individually and it all came together superbly. Despite the pandemic, we are thrilled to have created an album that celebrates life and will create a wave of much-needed positivity in our audiences.

Stewart Copeland has always been my musical hero, and I have been a life-long fan. Working with him was like attending the best masterclass imaginable. Stewart is not just the founder and drummer of one of the biggest selling bands in history, he has composed for operas, orchestras, and for Hollywood movies, including the Oscar-winning *Wall Street*. Despite reaching the pinnacle of success, he is constantly evolving and learning by exploring new sounds, traditional music instruments, and rhythms. We constantly threw ideas at each other, adapted sounds, and crafted this album together piece by piece. All of the songs have strong Indian roots with a fusion of the west and the entire album celebrates the magnificence of our natural world and the resilience of our species.

How do you think you've evolved as a musician over the years and what have been your biggest learnings?

Early on in my career, I found recognition by making over 3,000 jingles for multinational corporations and other global brands. It took me a while to realise that these corporations understood the power of music and used my music to sell their products to consumers. It was then that I decided to focus only on creating music for positive social impact. Music created just for entertainment, or to sell a product, did not appeal to me any more. Since then I have created anthems for various causes, including many official songs for the United Nations and other global non-profit organisations like WWF, Earth Day Network, etc. I work with several national and state governments, global bodies, scientists, and other world leaders to effectively convey their urgent complex messages related to the environment through the powerful language of music. Instead of waiting to be hired to create music, I now create music from the heart, as an extension of my beliefs and personality. Since I am an environmentalist, all my music has themes of sustainability. I am humbled to serve as an ambassador

for the UNCCD, UNESCO MGIEP, UNICEF, Earth Day Network etc. Through my live concerts in India and around the world, I can directly interact with hundreds of thousands of people and disseminate these important messages through my music.

Is it exhausting, overwhelming or frustrating to be a musician and an activist at the same time? Do you face a lot of hurdles because your music is niche and socially conscious?

I have always been a strong conservationist and environmentalist, along with being a musician. Being exhausted, overwhelmed, frustrated are negative emotions and when it comes to music and the environment,

I never feel those things because I find peace, comfort and inspiration through them. Also, I have never considered myself to be an activist. Even though activism and protest is an extremely important part of a democracy, I take a different route of working closely with governments, elected bodies and corporations, on either side of the aisle, and bring about change through goodwill and music. Unfortunately, the movie industry in India still holds a vice-like grip on the entire music industry and a lot of independent artists who are extremely talented seek validation from Bollywood or just give up. This is one of the reasons why I released most of my music abroad although my music is strongly rooted in India. There is so much more to Indian music than film music and independent, folk and classical artists in India deserve the spotlight. There will only be a dedicated audience to socially conscious music when more mainstream artists

align themselves with causes close to their hearts and use their talents to create awareness by making impactful music and films. We need this now more than ever.

With so many roles at the UN, what are you doing now and what is keeping you busy? And what are the key initiatives in the recent past that you have been passionate about?

I am humbled to serve as an ambassador for a few agencies of the United Nations such as UNICEF, UNCCD, UNESCO MGIEP and also to work closely with organisations such as WHO, Earth Day Network etc. I am spending a lot of my time focusing on children, because

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Ricky Kej live at the UN
Headquarters in Geneva



if we are speaking about creating a more environmentally conscious society, then we need to start with the children. I have created a musical education programme for children called the 'My Earth Songs'.

'My Earth Songs' are 27 rhymes/songs specially created for children and are inspired by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is the first ever set of songs in the world to be made on SDGs. Everyone needs to play their part to help reach these goals. As musicians, we use our art to raise the importance of these goals and spread awareness about them. Our audience will sing our songs, and keep humming them many times a day. One goal will catch their attention, followed by another, and another, becoming a topic for conversation that will build into a cause for action.

These songs were launched by UNICEF and have been published in over 5 million school textbooks in India in English, Hindi and Kannada. I am in the process of releasing them in more languages across the world. I am also working with several initiatives of UNCHR India, a two-time Nobel Peace Prize-winning organisation.

I work closely with a company that audits my carbon footprint for every single project of mine whether it is a live concert, an album recording, studio sessions, travelling or my talks.

Awareness is key. The onus is not just on politicians, actors and other celebrities to offset their emissions. There are various tools readily available for each individual to calculate their own carbon/water footprint and work towards being carbon neutral. Conscious actions such as these will have a ripple effect and will greatly contribute to the well-being of our planet

Can you talk about some of your contributions towards the Earth and the environment?

Ever since I won the Grammy Award in 2015, I have dedicated my life and all of my music towards elevating environmental consciousness. All of the music that I have made since then have addressed different aspects of various environmental and social issues such as climate action, human-animal conflict, sustainable farming, the refugee crisis, etc. I have always believed that only when people start acknowledging an issue and start a dialogue to solve it, a solution will come. My aim is to inspire this dialogue through my music. Music has the power to retain a message deep in the consciousness of a listener. All of the music that I create is about our natural world and social issues. Through our concert performances, we do what we call the 'Top-Down Approach' where we perform to intimate audiences consisting of world leaders, decision-makers, and prominent dignitaries to urge them to create stronger policies to tackle environmental issues and health issues, and the 'Ground Up Approach' where we perform to the general public to raise awareness about these issues. Climate change is the biggest existential crisis we humans have ever faced, and I feel that it is upto artists, especially musicians to advocate for Climate action.

You walk the talk on the things you are most passionate about—can you share how Ricky Kej lives by those principles?

I work closely with a company that audits my carbon footprint for every single project of mine whether it is a live concert, an album recording, studio sessions, travelling or my talks. They calculate my carbon footprint and we work together to offset it through various methods such as collaborating with organisations that focus on reforestation and renewable energy. This helps me stay carbon neutral. I do not own a car and use only public transportation. I am also a vegetarian (and aspiring vegan) and consciously use products manufactured by environmentally sustainable businesses who do not source their materials by destroying Nature. At any given point of time, I only have 11 sets of clothes and I have no qualms about repeating my outfits, as evidenced in pretty much the same clothes I wear from all of my events.

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You are a professor at Indian Institute of Science, can you share something about that?

The late professor Dr Baldev Raj, who was an eminent scientist, director of the Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research and an IISc alumni, is a massive inspiration to me. He found it really interesting that I combined my two great passions—music and environment—to promote a message of environmental consciousness. Dr Baldev strongly felt that although scientists can showcase

hard data to effectively convey a complex message such as the effects of climate change, music can play a role in breaking down these complex messages and making it more relatable to the general society since it is such a powerful emotional language. He invited me to use my skills to further what The National Institute of Advanced Studios (at IISc) does so effectively through their research through my lectures and music compositions.

I have always been a strong conservationist and environmentalist, along with being a musician. It was through music that I fell in love with our natural world and I found a deep connection between music and nature. Being exhausted, overwhelmed, frustrated are negative emotions and when it comes to music and the environment, I never feel those things because I find peace, comfort and inspiration through them

What are crucial facts on environmental conservation that you would like to highlight today?

We all know that our carbon emissions must be contained and lowered to counter global warming. To do this, we have to move away from fossil fuels, intensive farming of crops and animals, deforestation, etc. Fossil fuels also affect the air and millions

perish from air pollution-related diseases every year. There is also plastic and its effects, freshwater pollution, ocean acidification, etc. All of this is interlinked.

But, in my opinion, the biggest threat to our species is the confidence we have that someone else will make a difference. We're always waiting for governments, NGOs, corporations or leaders to make a difference, when we need to change ourselves. As consumers, we must make concrete changes in our own lives to address these issues. We need a change in consciousness and behaviour. We need to consume less. We need to support

Ricky Kej live at the UN General Assembly, New York



“The independent music scene in India is extremely vibrant and promising. But with Bollywood's hold on the music industry most of the independent music is created with the intention of hopefully making it into a Bollywood film....

I believe that only when musicians stop seeking validation from Bollywood, independent music will rise

environmentally responsible businesses. Conscious actions like these will have a ripple effect and contribute greatly to the well-being of our planet.

Is this a good time for independent musicians?

The independent music scene in India is extremely vibrant and promising. But with Bollywood's hold on the music industry, most of the independent music is created with the intention of hopefully making it into a Bollywood film. There are several artistes that I am a huge fan of and record labels in India need to step up and actively seek and promote talent. I believe that only when musicians stop seeking validation from Bollywood, independent music will rise.

How are you dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic?

I miss performing my music to a live audience. Live concerts allow me to connect and interact directly with my audience and to ensure that they leave my concerts with a renewed love for our planet and hope. It is always an amazing feeling to look at an audience and realise that I have succeeded in emotionally connecting with

them through my music. The pandemic has hit the entertainment industry very hard. The music industry is extremely dynamic and different professionals in the industry rely on each other. Performing artists, production companies, event management companies, sound engineers, recording studios and everyone else involved is stuck in limbo at the moment especially here in India. I performed multiple virtual concerts over the course of this pandemic with my last three online concerts watched by an estimated 200 million viewers from around the world. It is all about adapting to the times and our surroundings, because no matter what pandemic hits us, music will never leave our lives.

Of Loves and Losses, Triumphs and Tragedies



Kabir Bedi

His strapping stature, his booming baritone and his quiet but vibrant presence have made him instantly noticeable throughout his life and career. He is charm personified and has been a familiar face in Bollywood, Hollywood and the European film and television industry for over four decades.

Known to many as the conniving Bond baddie from *Octopussy*, the traitorous husband from *Khoon Bhari Maang*, Prince Omar from *The Bold and The Beautiful* and the titular pirate in *Sandokan*, Kabir Bedi was all smiles as he tuned in for the inaugural session of **The Write Circle** Guwahati edition.

Organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, the session was opened by Apra Kuchhal, Honorary Convener, Rajasthan and Central India Affairs of the Foundation, and Antara Bhattacharjee, founder of My Secret Bookshelf. Bedi spoke to Nilisha Agarwal, **Ehsaas** Woman of Kolkata, about the ups and downs of his life as penned in his recently launched autobiography, *Stories I Must Tell: The Emotional Life of an Actor*.

Bedi started the session by fondly reminiscing about his



Nilisha Agarwal

Assam connection. "As a child, I would often come to Assam because my brother was a tea planter and I would be at his tea gardens near Jorhat and Dibrugarh," he recalled. "In the course of my mother's life, when she was taking care of Tibetan refugees, I visited her and stayed with her in the Tibetan refugee camp at Missamari," he added. He recalled how in those days he used to travel for four days and change three trains and then cross the Brahmaputra on an old ferry to get from Delhi to Dibrugarh.

“Along with the incredible triumphs, there were great tragedies I went through, along with great loves there were great losses, along with milestones there were mistakes as well. All those things, to revisit them was difficult at times”

The actor then shared the impetus behind penning his memoir. Calling his journey across many continents, professions, experiences and relationships "an amazing life", he said that he had made it to a point in his life where he wanted to tell his story, honestly. "I just sat down and wrote the story which was dying to come out of me. I wrote it in a blaze during the



Antara Bhattacharya

pandemic," he said. "It's a journey that I have shared (in his book) with passion because I lived it with passion," added the actor.

However, being honest about his life was far from an easy task for Bedi. "Along with the incredible triumphs, there were great tragedies I went through, along with great loves there were great losses, along with milestones

there were mistakes as well. All those things, to revisit them was difficult at times," he revealed. And though there are parts of his life which he would wish to forget, he had to revisit them for the story to be authentic.

The toughest part to write about was the death of his son, Siddharth. His child with reputed Odissi dancer Protima Bedi was diagnosed with schizophrenia and took his life at the age of 25. The actor disclosed that "for a parent to lose a child is a very deeply wounding experience". He spoke about the tremendous grief his family went through at the time and has tried to share it as truthfully as he could with his readers. "It was very difficult to write about because... to go there again stirs up tremendous and profound, almost primal emotions," said the bereaved father whose regrets might have lessened over time but his "sense of loss remains".

The actor then moved on to speak about being a "crazy Beatles fan" and how his stint at All India Radio while still in college led him to interview the band. But he was shattered when the radio station rewrote his interview tapes. "The interview with The Beatles became a turning point in my life. What was done with that interview by All India Radio forced me to leave them, caused me to go to Mumbai, which in turn led to my career in advertising, led to my career in theatre, Bollywood, Hollywood, etc."

Bedi also spoke about being in an open marriage with Protima Bedi. "Open relationships are never socially acceptable because society always likes conformity and certain norms. Anyone who steps outside that norm is scandalous... Nobody who gets married does so with the idea of getting divorced.... The truth of the matter is, the open marriage was a last-ditch attempt to save the marriage for the family. And when that didn't work I



Mitra Phukan and Srutimala Duara members of the newly initiated Ehsaas Women of Guwahati

moved on."

Bedi moved on to talk about achieving success as an actor, especially in and as *Sandokan* in Italy. Deeming it an enormously gratifying experience, he revealed,

"When the *Sandokan* series released, it was like a cloudburst. Everyone went crazy. The streets were empty when it was screened and jammed when I came out onto the streets." He said he counted himself lucky because his parents, who were his strength, were around to see his success. "It was extraordinary that here I was interviewing The Beatles in Delhi... and 10 years later I was getting adulation like The Beatles in Italy, Europe."

He also spoke about *Octopussy* and the privilege of being part of such a long-running franchise, no matter the size of the role. "It was all very glamorous because that's what Bond films are—guns, girls, glamour, gadgets—to be part of that was a very

exciting experience," he said before reminding the audience that not all his Hollywood years were shiny. "I faced some of my hardest times there as well... to the point of bankruptcy... and what it feels like to go through that if you are a celebrity is a whole different experience," he confessed.

Moving on from talks of the past, he spoke about his future. "Creative people never retire, we don't say that we have achieved this and therefore we can sit back... that's not who we are. We are constantly looking for new ways to express ourselves, new ways to reach out to people and enhance our own lives. So, I can sum up with my motto 'the best is yet to come'," he concluded with his signature sparkling smile.

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The Write Circle Guwahati is in association with My Secret Bookshelf

हमीं हम हैं तो क्या हम हैं: डॉ रक्षंदा जलील



Rakhshanda Jalil

लंदन के हिंदी प्रेमी श्रोताओं के लिए यह एक उम्दा शाम थी। आयोजन था प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की ओर से आयोजित कलम लंदन, अतिथि वक्ता थीं डॉ रक्षंदा जलील। वर्चुअल आयोजित इस कार्यक्रम में रक्षंदा का स्वागत किया डॉ पद्मेश गुप्त ने। उन्होंने कलम के आयोजनों की संक्षिप्त चर्चा की और आगे के संवाद के लिए वरिष्ठ पत्रकार परवेज आलम को आमंत्रित किया। आलम और रक्षंदा ने संवाद की शुरुआत विनोद दुआ की पत्नी चिन्ना दुआ को श्रद्धांजलि के साथ की। चिन्ना का असली नाम डॉ पद्मावती था। वह एक चिकित्सक, सिंगर, और सामाजिक कार्यकर्ता थीं और दो जवानों के बीच सेतु का माध्यम थीं। आलम ने रक्षंदा की साहित्यिक यात्रा में 25 से अधिक पुस्तकें और 50 से अधिक अकादमिक पत्र और निबंध का जिक्र करते हुए कहा कि हम विस्तार में न जाकर सीधे यह जानना चाहेंगे कि आप अपने को लिटरेरी हिस्टोरियन कहती हैं, यह क्या है? रक्षंदा का उत्तर था, “सरल भाषा में कहें तो जहां हिस्ट्री और लिटरेचर का मेल है। साहित्य की धारा जहां इतिहास से मिलती है वहां लिटरेरी हिस्टोरियन काम करता है।



Padmesh Gupta

लिटरेचर टेक्स्ट और हिस्ट्री घटनाएं दर्ज करती है, जबकि हम उसके संदर्भ को देखते हैं। हमारे मुल्क में कोई भी भाषा एक दूसरे से अछूती नहीं है। पिछले दस-पंद्रह सालों से मैं इतिहास और साहित्य के बीच इसी संदर्भ को टटोल रही हूँ।”

तरक्की पसंद तहरीक और डॉ रशीद जहां से जुड़े सवाल पर रक्षंदा का उत्तर था, “औरतों को हम उनके शारीरिक दायरे में समेट देते

हैं, कि वह बहुत बोलू, बहुत खूबसूरत है। बतौर लेखिका वह क्या लिख रही थीं, क्यों लिख रही थीं, अगर वह रिवोल्ट कर रही थीं, तो क्यों कर रही थीं? किसके खिलाफ रिवोल्ट कर रही थीं। हम इसकी चर्चा नहीं करते। एक नारीवादी होते हुए भी मैं यह मानती हूँ मैंने भी जब पहली बार डॉ रशीद जहां के बारे में लिखा, तो पहले फुटनोट ही लिखा था, पर बाद में मैंने सोचा कि वह फुटनोट ही क्यों हैं? हम कौन हैं यह तय करने वाले की यह हाई लिटरेचर है, यह लो लिटरेचर है, और इसकी अहमियत कम है। साहित्य एक दरिया है। जब हम नारीवादी लेखिकाओं की बात करते हैं तो उनके बेहतरीन कामों की चर्चा की बजाय उनके अपीयरेंस के बारे में, खूबसूरती के बारे में बात करने लगते हैं। यह मर्दों के बारे में कम होता है। रशीद जहां के बारे में भी यही हुआ। महिलाओं की जो बात, अंदरूनी बात, उसकी जाती जिंदगी जो लेखिका दर्ज कर सकती है, वह लेखक नहीं कर सकता। जब औरतें डॉक्टर ही नहीं थीं तो रशीद जहां ने जो देखा, लिखा। अंगारे, परदे के पीछे की ऐसी कहानी है, जिसे एक लेडी डॉक्टर ने दो बेगमों की जो गूफ्तगू सुनी, उसे हूबहू बयां कर दिया। लेखिका औरतों की जो छोटी से छोटी, बारीक चीज पकड़ सकती है, उसका डायलॉग लिख सकती हैं, उसे कोई पुरुष उतनी बारीकी से नहीं लिख सकता।”

आप अपने बचपन को अन-कूल क्यों कहती हैं? रक्षंदा का उत्तर था, मेरा स्कूल बहुत फैशनेबल था। मेरी हिंदी बहुत उम्दा है। मेरी पॉकेट मनी का एक सोर्स यह भी था कि मैं हिंदी प्रतियोगिताओं में भाग लेती थी। कार्यक्रम 'हिंदुस्तानी आवाज' से जुड़े सवाल पर रक्षंदा का कहना था कि मैं हिंदी और उर्दू का जो रिश्ता है, इन जवानों के बीच काम करती हूँ। हिंदी, उर्दू की अपनी एक तहजीब है। शेर को उठाना, सही जगह पर दाद देना, सही जगह पर चुप होना, सबका एक सलीका है। मेरा मकसद है कि साहित्य को समझने का तरीका बताना। अनुवाद से जुड़े वाक्य टेक्स्ट, कांटेक्स्ट और ट्रांसलेशन के जिक्र पर रक्षंदा ने 1992 में साहित्य अकादमी में डॉ के श्रीनिवासराव से हुई मुलाकात के बाद एक अनुवादक की अपनी यात्रा को खूंखार जानवर के मुंह में खून लगने से की और उदाहरण देकर समझाया कि साहित्यिक ट्रांसलेटर का काम सिर्फ तर्जुमा नहीं है, बल्कि एक लिटरेरी सेंसिबिलिटी का काम है। उन्होंने देश और दुनिया भर में हो रहे अनुवाद का भी जिक्र किया और कहा कि तर्जुमा से हमने पूरी दुनिया के बदलाव को जाना। अनुवादक को अपने कांटेक्स्ट को जरूर लिखना चाहिए। पाठक के लिए एक फुटनोट, इंट्रोडक्टरी रिमार्क और संदर्भ देना बहुत जरूरी है। इस बीच आलम ने ज़िगर की इस शायरी के साथ साहित्यिक अनुवाद की मुश्किलों पर सहमति जताई।

हमें भी जलवागाह-ए-नाज तक ले चलो मूसा
तुम्हे गश आ गया तो हुस्न-ए-जाना कौन देखेगा.



रक्षंदा ने 'और जुलेखा खुश' का उल्लेख करते हुए कहा कि केवल इसका अनुवाद कर देने से बात नहीं हुई। आलम और रक्षंदा ने योरोप और अमेरिका में हो रहे अच्छे अनुवाद का जिक्र करते हुए वर्तमान में हो रहे अनुवाद संस्थाओं का जिक्र किया और दोनों ने उर्दू और हिंदी दोनों के हवाले से यह कहा कि इन देशों में बहुत बेहतर काम हो रहा। इस दौरान गालिब और राल्फ रसेल का भी जिक्र हुआ और भारत के भी कई विश्वविद्यालयों में अच्छे अनुवाद का काम होने की बात कही। रसेल की बात का उल्लेख करते हुए रक्षंदा ने कहा कि हर एक जबान वाले को दूसरे जबान में इंटरैक्ट है। रक्षंदा ने अब्दुरहीम खानखाना को अनुवाद के क्षेत्र का अगुआ पुरुष बताया। रक्षंदा ने टेक्स्ट, कांटेक्स्ट और ट्रांसलेशन से जुड़े सवाल का भी विस्तार से उत्तर दिया और शहरयार पर अपने काम को गुरु-दक्षिणा सरीखा बताया। मैंने उन पर जो किताब लिखी, वह एक तरह की गुरु दक्षिणा है। साहित्यिक जीवनी की जब हम बात करते हैं, तो निजी जीवन की बात नहीं करते हैं। शहरयार पर मेरी किताब यह बताती है कि वे साहित्य और शायरी में कहां खड़े हैं। रक्षंदा ने बताया कि तर्जुमों में जब आप करते हैं तो अनुवादक को अलग अलग अनुभव होते हैं। इस दौरान गुलज़ार, जावेद अख्तर, कृष्ण चंदर आदि से जुड़े काम की चर्चा भी रक्षंदा ने की। उन्होंने बताया कि उनकी पुस्तक 'बट यू डोन्ट लुक लाइक ए मुस्लिम' में रिलीजन, कल्चर, पॉलिटिक्स और आइडेंटिटी के तहत 40 निबंध संग्रहित हैं। रक्षंदा ने कहा कि हमें यह मान लेना चाहिए कि सेकुलरिज्म जैसे एक फैक्ट है वैसे ही सांप्रदायिकता भी एक सच्चाई है। आलम ने रक्षंदा के नाना प्रो अले अहमद सरूर का जिक्र किया तो रक्षंदा ने बहुत सी यादें शेयर कीं। कार्यक्रम का अंत डॉ पद्मेश गुप्ता के धन्यवाद से हुआ, पर उससे पहले डॉ रक्षंदा ने यह शेर सुनाया-

चमन में इख्तिलाते रंग बू से बात करती है

हमीं हम हैं तो क्या हम हैं, तुम्हीं तुम हो तो क्या तुम हो...

प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की ओर से आयोजित कलम लंदन के सहयोगी थे वातायन, यूके हिंदी समिति और वाणी फाउंडेशन।



Jeffrey Archer

"I still love writing. When that stops, I will stop"



at age 77, looking to keep himself fully occupied, he took up the "interesting challenge" of penning a book about a fictitious writer's book hero. Sounds confusing? Not if you are familiar with Archer's previous seven-book series, *The Clifton Chronicles*, about Harry Clifton, a novelist loosely based on Archer himself. "I wrote those seven books and when they were over, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do. But many of the readers around the world wrote to me and said, 'Harry Clifton's hero is a policeman in the Metropolitan police force called William Warwick. We want to know more about him'," explained Archer.

So was born his latest series, which follows the life of William Warwick. "I didn't want it to be a detective series, I wanted it to be a story about a detective.... So the first book is the story of Warrick as a police constable.... In the second book, he is a detective sergeant.... In this third, he

is promoted to detective inspector and given a very unpleasant job of checking on bent coppers," said Archer, who hopes that there will be eight books in the series.

He expressed his gratitude for being a writer during these pandemic times because "a writer can just get on with his job." Speaking of his privilege, he admitted, "I am almost in an enclosed environment that isn't affected by what's happening in the outside world, so I have been very lucky."

In fact, it seems he managed to be more productive, thanks to the pandemic. "During this one year, I have written two books because of not having the normal life like going to theatres, social intercourse or the auctions which I do for charity," said the erstwhile politician.

While insisting that everyone's methods are different, and "you must

We all know that Lord Jeffrey Archer's arrows never fail to hit their mark—be it a plot point or his signature wit. All of it—words, wit and verve—was present in full force at the recent launch of his new book, *Turn a Blind Eye*, in the successful *William Warwick* series.

The internationally bestselling author, known equally for his novels, short stories, plays and non-fiction sat in for a virtual chat with **Ehsaas** Woman of Chennai, Vidya Gajapati Raju Singh, during a **Kitaab** session organised by the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. Archer and Raju were welcomed and introduced by Vinnie Kakkar, National Advisor, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**.

The *Kane and Abel* author first chose to don the cape of a proud family man as he gushed about soon becoming a five-time grandpa (his daughter-in-law was in labour during the chat!).

Archer revealed how his *William Warwick* series came to be. He said that



Vinnie Kakkar



Vidya Gajapati Raju Singh

Absolutely delightful. Thank you so much for this wonderful opportunity to hear Lord Jeffrey Archer.

— Anubha Arya, Ehsaas
Woman of Patna



What a marvellous man! Proud of his age and awaiting his fifth grandchild. I hope we get all eight books and that he turns 84 and beyond in sparkling health. It was a rare moment listening to him and all the things he loves. Thank you, PKF.

— Jasmit Nayyar, Ehsaas Woman of Amritsar



Thank you so much for organising an interesting session with Lord Jeffrey Archer. Thoroughly enjoyed it.

— Kalpana Chaudhary, Ehsaas
Woman of Raipur



do your own thing", Archer shared a few trade secrets with budding writers in the audience. "In a normal year, I would write 14 drafts for one book. I wish there was a quicker way of doing it, but there's no shortcut if you want to write a novel. The first draft is not the end, it's the beginning," he pointed out.

In his typically humorous way, he shared yet another secret—"If you've written a book, don't listen to your wife or husband. Don't listen to your best friend. They will lie! They will tell you it is wonderful, it'll be a bestseller.... I have never met a husband or wife who will say 'It's rubbish, you shouldn't have bothered!'" he laughed.

So what's the ideal route? "Get someone you trust to show it to someone who has never met you and ask them what they think. Then you might have a chance of getting an honest reply," was his advice. Archer also joked that he has thrown himself a challenge to complete the *Warwick* series in eight years, which means he has to keep himself alive at least till the age of 84. "I have never enjoyed a series more.... I am still loving writing. I am still getting a kick out of it and when that stops, I will stop," said the 81-year-old.

Archer also critiqued India's trend of selling pirated books at street corners. Winking outrageously and joking that he secretly doesn't object to people putting money in their own pockets, he shared an anecdote about when he was approached by a little boy trying to sell him "a copy of the latest Jeffrey Archer." In his quintessential tongue-in-cheek manner, he recalled replying, 'I am the latest Jeffrey Archer!'"

His connection to India shone through as he went on to speak about not just his dedicated fan-following (10 million Indians have read *Kane and Abel!*), but his love of cricket. But he won't ever write a book based in India. "You have some of the finest writers in the world in India. I write about what I know. (You should) never tread on to territory you are not at ease with." Citing R.K. Narayan as his hero, Archer lauded the former's ability to transport him to a small Indian town. Calling Narayan a genius, Archer said, "He was a great storyteller and writer but I wouldn't expect him to write about the British House of Commons! So no, I will not be writing about India because I don't have enough knowledge or confidence to do it."

The conversation also meandered to his wife Dame Mary, on basing characters on people he knows, favourite characters from his own books (not Kane or Abel), his upcoming book release in October, handwriting the first three drafts of each book, about not having a "blooming clue" as to where his plots will go, and more.

The chat drew to a close with Archer reading the opening excerpt from *Beware of Pity*, one of his favourite books by author Stefan Zweig) and wishing everyone in India a speedy recovery from the COVID-19 crisis.

On a fan saying she stayed up nights to finish his books:

I go to bed with 20,000 women every night. My only aim is to keep them awake.

On the perks of not knowing where his story will take him:

The advantage of that is if you don't know where it's going, how can the reader know where it's going?

On his early ambitions:

When I began life, I wanted to captain the England cricket team but I had a problem with that as I couldn't bat, bowl or field.

This session of Kitaab is presented by Shree Cement Ltd, in association with Pan Macmillan India



Riva Razdan



Aanchal Gupta

A Fresh Story of Hope and Love



individual identity and independence are interwoven into the plot that sees Arzu navigate a complex world in order to gain control of her life.

According to Razdan, a lot of contemporary literature fails to reflect the existential underpinnings of females who are millennials or a part of Gen Z. With Arzu, she tries to address this shortcoming, taking inspiration from famous characters like Helen Fielding's Bridget Jones and Margaret Mitchell's Scarlett O'Hara.

A background in political science helped Razdan contextualise the increasingly globalised world that Arzu finds herself in. A world whose prominent male characters—Siddharth, Aditya, and Rohit—each add something new to Arzu's life by introducing her to different socio-political contexts and different emotional contours.

Few authors publish their first book at 23, fewer still write their debut novel with as much imagination and intricacy as Riva Razdan, a graduate of New York University and a screenwriter at Anil Kapoor Films.

To discuss her first book *Arzu* as well as examine her creative journey, Razdan was hosted by **The Write Circle**, Jaipur. Razdan was joined in conversation by Aanchal Gupta, a digital marketing professional specialising in social media marketing and content management. Mita Kapur of Siyahi introduced both panelists ahead of the interaction.

"I have always wanted to be a storyteller. While doing my assignments, I would write scripts for one or two sets, but I wanted to write a bigger story. I am an avid reader but I have rarely seen myself reflected in what I read, a girl who wants love and agency equally," began Razdan. Her bigger story eventually arrived in the form of *Arzu*, a novel she wrote in class within 14 weeks under the mentorship of poet and journalist Tishani Doshi.

Set in the early 1990s, at a time when Indian society was being drastically refashioned by the reforms of economic liberalisation, *Arzu's* eponymous protagonist reflects the meaning of her name in Urdu—fresh hope and love. Women's rights and the relationship between

"I have always wanted to be a storyteller. While doing my assignments, I would write scripts for one or two sets, but I wanted to write a bigger story. I am an avid reader but I have rarely seen myself reflected in what I read, a girl who wants love and agency equally"

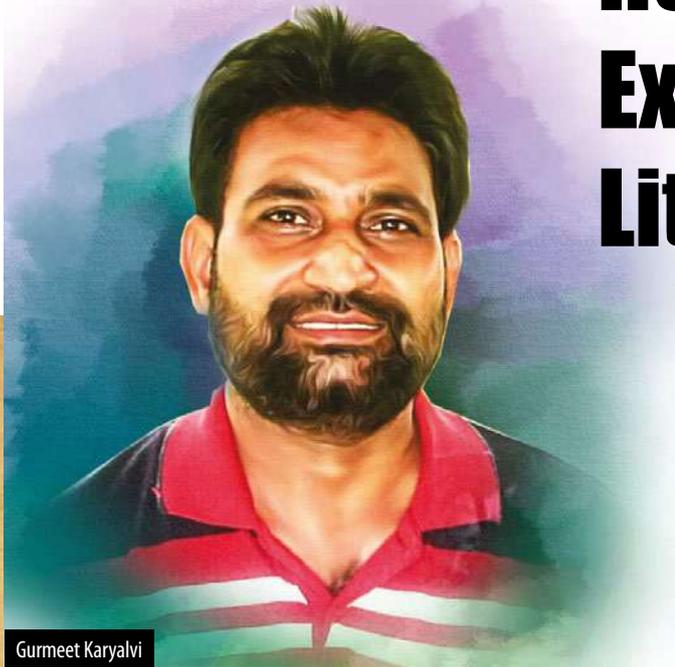
Gupta went on to speak about Parul and Sarah, two of her favourite characters in the book. While the former is a fictional amalgamation of all the aunts in Razdan's life, the latter draws heavily from Razdan's best friend.

Following the success of *Arzu*, Razdan has already written a second book, *The Nani Diaries*, which will be published soon. When asked to advise young writers who want to blaze their own trail in the literary world, Razdan acknowledged that "writing and getting published is a tough business. People would rather see you not finish [your work], but you have to retain your conviction and keep writing."

Urging would-be writers to not be esoteric, Razdan stressed the importance of creating stories that are relatable and universal, stories that compel their authors to avoid resting on their laurels and continue striving for greater authenticity.

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

How Personal Experiences Shape Literary Creations



Gurmeet Karyalvi

When does the personal become the political? In what way does one's consciousness seep into their writing? How do the experiential and the imaginative faculties combine to produce literature?

To discuss these questions and more, **Aakhar** Amritsar hosted Punjabi writer Gurmeet Karyalvi, who shared several important insights about his life and work in an intriguing virtual session. In conversation with Karyalvi was writer and poet Nirupama Dutt.

Karyalvi started the session by talking about his "tryst with literature" and how it began when he was asked to write some essays for his teacher. As he read what he wrote, Karyalvi realised he had a gift—writing came to him naturally.

"I found that I had many stories, many personal experiences inside of me just waiting to come out and be put into words. I have faced discrimination as well as borne the brunt of terrorism.... I found that I simply had to open the floodgates of my consciousness. The writer inside me took care of the rest and the stories just flowed," explained Karyalvi on the subject of his creative process.

When asked about the books and authors that have inspired him, Karyalvi cited "two books that are honest and realistic and are milestones in the annals of Punjabi literature"—*Tootan Wala Khoo* by Sohan Singh Seetal and

Guardial Singh's *Marhi Da Deeva*.

Shifting gears, Karyalvi shared his perspective on how the previously stereotypical representation of Dalit Sikhs is beginning to change in Indian literature. "Earlier they were presented as addicts or buffoons, cast in the role of sidekicks for the sole purpose of humour. But it is heartening to see Dalit Sikh characters being presented as the protagonists nowadays. They are becoming more realistic, as are their experiences and the pain they undergo," noted Karyalvi.



Nirupama Dutt

Having started out with the novel as his medium, Karyalvi proceeded to short stories and plays. Reflecting on his journey he recollected how "my story *Aatu Khoji* was widely acclaimed. It was even selected in an anthology of Sahitya Akademi's award-winning stories. Even my first play received a standing ovation."

Karyalvi's latest work *Oh Ikki Din* sees him return to the novel. Based on his experiences during the pandemic, the novel was born out of a visit to a COVID-19 ward in which his wife, a health worker, was assigned her duties. "I observed the patients [in the ward] closely and found that their stories were very interesting. I scribbled down my ideas and showed them to my wife, who liked it and encouraged me," said Karyalvi.

In the final part of the session, Karyalvi answered a series of questions from an engaging audience. He reiterated how it is natural for the Dalit consciousness to pervade through his novels, besides expressing his disappointment at the lack of widespread attention towards Punjabi literature among readers across India.

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Acharya Mahamandaleshwar Laxmi Narayan Tripathi

प्रतिभा को लैंगिकता से जोड़ना गलत: आचार्य महामंडलेश्वर लक्ष्मी नारायण त्रिपाठी



Apra Kuchhal

सुर और साज, लफ्ज, आखर, किताब और ऐसे कई कार्यक्रमों से फाउंडेशन कलाकारों, शिल्पकारों, साहित्यकारों, कारीगरों और सामाजिक हस्तियों को मंच उपलब्ध कराता है।

कलम विशेष के अतिथि वक्ता त्रिपाठी का परिचय देते हुए सिंह ने बताया कि सम्मानित सामाजिक कार्यकर्ता और किन्नर समाज को समानता का अधिकार दिलाने के लिए दुनिया भर में जानी जाने वाली शख्सियत त्रिपाठी का जन्म 13 दिसंबर, 1978 को महाराष्ट्र के ठाणे जिले के एक ब्राह्मण परिवार में हुआ। आप ट्रेंड डॉक्टर और भरतनाट्यम में पोस्ट ग्रेजुएट हैं। आप कई टीवी कार्यक्रमों का चर्चित चेहरा रही हैं। किन्नर अखाड़े की आचार्य महामंडलेश्वर हैं। यूएनएड्स सिविल सोसाइटी टास्क फोर्स में एशिया प्रशांत क्षेत्र का प्रतिनिधित्व करने के अलावा एशिया पैसिफिक ट्रांसजेंडर नेटवर्क सहित कई संस्थाओं की सदस्य तो कई की संस्थापक सदस्य, अध्यक्ष हैं। आप नालसा बनाम भारत संघ मामले में एक प्रमुख पक्षकार थीं जिसने भारत में ट्रांसजेंडर को समान अधिकार दिलवाया। आप कई राष्ट्रीय, अंतर्राष्ट्रीय, सरकारी, गैरसरकारी समितियों की सदस्य हैं। आपके जीवन को बॉलीवुड की कई फिल्मों में दिखाया गया है। आपकी दो आत्मकथात्मक पुस्तक छप चुकी है। त्रिपाठी से संवाद के लिए अहसास वूमेन जयपुर, राजस्थान और मध्य भारत की समन्वयक अपरा कुच्छल को आमंत्रित करते हुए सिंह ने कुच्छल का भी परिचय उम्दा कलाप्रेमी, स्थापित महिला उद्यमी और प्रतिष्ठित समाजसेवी के रूप में दिया।

कुच्छल ने कई पौराणिक पात्रों का उल्लेख करते हुए त्रिपाठी से सवाल किया कि आप अपने संघर्ष के बारे में बताइए? त्रिपाठी ने फाउंडेशन, अहसास वूमेन और कलम की सराहना की और कहा कि इससे जुड़कर बात करने में मुझे हमेशा खुशी होती है। जहां तक संघर्ष की बात है, जिंदगी खुद एक संघर्ष का नाम। अगर आप चलना सीख लें तो थोड़ा आसान हो जाता है। मेरी निजी जिंदगी में उतार चढ़ाव लगे ही रहे। सच कहूं तो संघर्ष ही जीवन है, जीवन ही संघर्ष है। पर हमें कोशिश करनी

एक औरत होना आसान बात नहीं है। यह एक संघर्ष की शुरुआत भर है। जब मेरा जन्म हुआ तो घरवाले मुझे लड़का मानते थे, जबकि मैं लड़की थी। लोग आज भी पूछते हैं कि आपको कब पता चला कि आप अलग हैं? मैं कहती हूँ, मुझे तो कभी पता नहीं चला। अलग होने का अहसास तो मुझे समाज ने कराया।" यह कहना है आचार्य महामंडलेश्वर लक्ष्मी नारायण त्रिपाठी का। वह प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन और अहसास वूमेन की ओर से आयोजित कलम विशेष सत्र में बतौर अतिथि वक्ता मौजूद थीं। अहसास वूमेन इंदौर से उन्नति सिंह ने त्रिपाठी का स्वागत वक्तव्य और धन्यवाद किया। फाउंडेशन की गतिविधियों और त्रिपाठी का संक्षिप्त परिचय भी उन्होंने दिया। सिंह ने कहा कि कोरोना के विपरीत दौर में भी फाउंडेशन ने वर्चुअल माध्यम से अपनी गतिविधियां जारी रखीं। फाउंडेशन भारत और विदेश के लगभग 30 शहरों में महिलाओं की तरक्की और कल्याण के कार्यक्रमों से जुड़ा है। साहित्य, संस्कृति, विरासत और कला से जुड़ी गतिविधियां इसकी पहचान हैं। कलम, एक मुलाकात,



Deepa Mishra



Unnati Singh

चाहिए कि हम अपने अंदर की औरत को कभी मरने न दें। ट्रांसजेंडरों पर अपनी पुस्तकों से जुड़े सवाल पर त्रिपाठी ने कहा, "जब वैशाली रोडे ने मैं हिजड़ा, मैं लक्ष्मी को लेकर मुझसे बात की तो मैंने कहा था कि आप भरी जवानी में मुझे बूढ़ा बना रही हैं। उनका कहना था कि ट्रांसजेंडरों की खुली जिंदगी पर कोई किताब नहीं है, इसलिए मेरी जीवन यात्रा पर वह किताब मराठी, फिर हिंदी और अंग्रेजी में आई। स्त्री जब किसी बड़े पद पर होती है तो उस पर प्रहार होता ही है। रेड लिपस्टिक: द मेन इन माई लाइफ में मेरी जिंदगी के सारे मर्द, जिनमें मेरे पिता भी शामिल हैं पर लिखी पुस्तक है। मुझे लगा कि एक तीसरी किताब नारी की नजर से धर्म पर आनी चाहिए, तो इस पर भी काम हो रहा है।"

गुरु चेला परंपरा एक पवित्र रिश्ता है, इसे आप कैसे साधते हैं? के उत्तर में त्रिपाठी ने कहा, "गुरु बिना ज्ञान कहाँ? गुरु जिंदगी में जरूरी है। किन्नर समाज में हर चले को गुरु चुनने का हक है। जब मैं चेला बनी तब रुढ़ी परंपरा है। पर आज यह बदल रही है। मेरे खानदान में अलग-अलग चले हैं, सब एक दूसरे से अलग हैं। मेरा मानना है कि सभी आधुनिक बनें पर अपनी परंपरा के साथ। यह जो विकास है वह संस्कृति के साथ आगे बढ़े, रुढ़ियां खत्म हों पर परंपरा खत्म न हो, उसका सार बना रहे।" शिक्षा का महत्त्व क्या है, आप किन्नर समुदाय के लिए क्या कर रही हैं? के सवाल पर त्रिपाठी का उत्तर था, "आज किन्नर माताएं अच्छे स्कूलों में अपने बच्चों को पढ़ा रही हैं। पर मैं सोचती हूँ, स्कूल से अधिक ज्ञान होना जरूरी है। सीखना मुझे बहुत पसंद है। आचार्य की गद्दी पर होने का अर्थ नहीं कि हमें सब कुछ आता है। ज्ञान हो, सही ज्ञान हो।" किन्नर समुदाय की स्वीकार्यता और लोगों के दृष्टिकोण? पर त्रिपाठी का उत्तर था, "लोगों की सोच बदलिए। लड़का या लड़की होने की जगह एक भारतीय होना जरूरी है। किसी की प्रतिभा को लैंगिकता से जोड़ना गलत है। हमें यह विभेदकारी नीति बदलनी होगी।"

किन्नर समुदाय के लिए संघर्ष? पर त्रिपाठी ने कहा कि मैं अपने आत्म सम्मान और वजूद के लिए लड़ी। अपने लिए न्यायालय जाकर लड़ना हमारी बाध्यता थी। किसी भी समाज को अपना हक पाने के लिए कानून एक बड़ा स्तंभ है। हमारे संविधान ने एक नागरिक के रूप में सभी को समान अधिकार दिया है। पर किन्नर क्या, व्यवहार में नारी को भी उसका सम्मान नहीं मिला है। रजिया सुल्तान, रानी लक्ष्मी बाई, अहिल्याबाई होल्कर, सावित्रीबाई फुले और इंदिरा गांधी के देश में हमें त्रिपुर सुंदरी जगदंबा की कृपा से अपना हक ललकार कर लेना चाहिए। यूएन में मिले सम्मान के बाद देश में आपके लिए कुछ बदला? के उत्तर में त्रिपाठी ने कहा कि यूएस में कानूनी समानता बहुत है। हमारे यहां बहुत अंतर है। यहां एक वर्ग में तो बहुत सम्मान था तो सामान्य लोगों के लिए मैं वही किन्नर थी। लेकिन मैं लोगों के कटाक्ष के लिए भी आभारी हूँ। उसी के चलते मैं यहां तक पहुंची। किन्नर समुदाय की वर्तमान स्थिति के लिए ब्रिटिश शासन को जिम्मेदार ठहराते हुए त्रिपाठी ने कहा कि उन्होंने थर्ड जेंडर को लेकर जो नीति एशियन प्रशांत इलाके में बनाई वह गलत थी। ब्रिटिशर्स ने समाज में भ्रांतियां फैलाई, जो आज भी कायम हैं। उम्मीद है आने वाली सदी में ये भ्रांतियां खत्म

होंगी।

कुच्छल के अन्य सवालों के उत्तर में त्रिपाठी ने कहा कि तमाम दावों के बीच भी जो सफलता औरत को चाहिए वह आज भी नहीं मिली। फिर भी अनेकता में एकता जरूरी है। हमारा एकत्रित विश्वास ही हमारी सबसे बड़ी ताकत है। माइक्रोमीटर वाली लक्ष्मी से महामंडलेश्वर तक की यात्रा के पीछे लंबा संघर्ष रहा। पाश्चात्य से भारतीय, अधीर से संतुलित होकर मुझे अपनी पहचान मिली और क्या चाहिए। कोरोना दौर के अपने प्रयासों की चर्चा के बीच उन्होंने की कि वैकसीनेशन बहुत जरूरी है। मास्क पहनना, सेनिटाइजर लगाना, दो गज की दूरी जरूरी है, कोरोना कहीं गया नहीं है। त्रिपाठी ने कहा कि मेरी मां ने सिखाया कि सब कुछ समाजोन्मुख होना चाहिए। सत्य से बड़ा कोई तप नहीं, झूठ से बड़ा कोई पाप नहीं। सत्य से जीना जो सीख गया, उसका कोई कुछ नहीं कर सकता। अब मेरे बचपन का अंधेरा खत्म हो चुका है। मेरी जिंदगी में अब सिर्फ प्रकाश ही प्रकाश है। सत्य की रोशनी मुझे हमेशा घेरे रखे।

अलका बत्रा, दीपा मिश्रा, महेश शर्मा, उर्मि, जाह्नवी, गुरुलीन, दुर्गा प्रसाद अग्रवाल, प्रणीत, अशोक माथुर, प्रभात रंजन और किरण राजपुरोहित आदि श्रोताओं के अलग-अलग सवालों का बखूबी उत्तर त्रिपाठी ने दिया। उन्होंने कहा कि आचार्य महामंडलेश्वर की उपाधि के साथ एक बड़ा दायित्व है। समाज में जो धारणा है पुरुष प्रधान समाज की, उसे बदलने में किन्नर अखाड़े की बड़ी भूमिका है। इतिहास में किन्नरों को सम्मान मिला पर आधुनिक भारत में उन्हें क्यों सताया गया का सवाल पुरुष प्रधान समाज से होना चाहिए, जिसने मां के आंचल से बच्चों को अलग कर दिया। जिन्हें उपदेवता कहा गया उन्हें एक रोटी के लिए अपना तन क्यों बेचना पड़ा।

नौकरियों में आरक्षण के सवाल पर त्रिपाठी ने कहा कि आरक्षण का नाटक बंद हो। काबिलियत पर नौकरी मिले। सभी समान हों। समाज को संवेदनशील बनाने की योजना पर त्रिपाठी ने कहा कि हमारे बच्चों को सिखाना चाहिए लिंग क्या है, लैंगिकता, सेक्सुअलिटी क्या है। उन्होंने एचआईवी एड्स और कमाटीपुरा सेक्स वर्कर से जुड़े अपने जीवन के निर्णयात्मक क्षण की भी चर्चा की और कहा अनकंडीशनल लव की बराबरी कोई नहीं कर सकता।

त्रिपाठी ने कहा महामंडलेश्वर के रूप में धर्म रक्षा का दायित्व है। पर इसका असली अर्थ है कि हम धर्म में शरणागत होकर रहें। धर्म स्वयं में प्रबल है, वह अपनी रक्षा करने के साथ ही समाज और मनुष्य की रक्षा करने में सक्षम है। आज धर्म की परिभाषा अलग है। धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः की यह मेरी अपनी व्याख्या है। नारी हो या किन्नर जब मां अपने बच्चों के लिए पति के विरुद्ध भी खड़ी हो जाएंगी, समाज बदल जाएगा। त्रिपाठी ने कहा कि हमारी पीढ़ी और वर्तमान पीढ़ी को समझना है। आने वाली पीढ़ी संवेदनशील है, बदल रही है। हमें इस बदलाव का हिस्सा बनना होगा। प्रकृति का स्वभाव है, बदलाव।



मैं जिंदगी नहीं, ज़िद जीता हूँ: कैलाश खेर



Kailash Kher

विश्व संगीत दिवस और अंतर्राष्ट्रीय योग दिवस पर मैं पृथ्वी, पूरे जनमानस और ब्रह्मांड को यह संदेश देना चाहता हूँ, कि कलाकार का शाब्दिक अर्थ है जो कल को आकार दे। हम समाज का हिस्सा हैं। यहां हर तरह की सोच और हृदय वाले लोग हैं। पर जो कला के सेवक हैं, आराधक हैं, उन्हें परमात्मा ने पृथ्वी पर इसलिए भेजा कि आप गंधर्व के गण बन कर जाइए और लोगों को जीना सिखाइए।" यह बात चर्चित सूफी गायक कैलाश खेर ने **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** द्वारा आयोजित **सुर और साज** कार्यक्रम कही। कार्यक्रम की शुरुआत **अहसास** वूमन अहमदाबाद की प्रियांशी पटेल द्वारा खेर के विस्तृत परिचय से हुई। उन्होंने पद्मश्री से सम्मानित गायक, संगीतकार और गीतकार खेर की उपलब्धियों और संघर्ष का जिक्र करते हुए कहा कि आपने पंद्रह से भी कम सालों में बीस भाषाओं में पंद्रह सौ से अधिक गाने गाये। आप प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी द्वारा शुरू किए गए कई अभियानों के ब्रांड अंबेसडर भी हैं।

कथक नृत्यांगना एवं **अहसास** वूमन शिंजिनी कुलकर्णी ने खेर से संवाद की शुरुआत खेर के शुरुआती जिंदगी के संघर्षों से की। खेर ने कहा, "आप धन दौलत शोहरत कितना भी कमा सकते हैं, पर जीना तो आपको आर्ट ही सिखाता है। अगर आपकी जज्बातों



Shinjini Kulkarni



Priyanshi Patel

की दुनिया, भावनाओं की दुनिया खाली है, फिर आपके चाहे जितने भी महल बन जाएं वे किसी काम के नहीं होते। ऐसे में कलाकारों का होना इस पृथ्वी पर ऐसा ही है जैसे संस्कारों का होना।" अपने बचपन को याद करते हुए खेर ने कहा कि मैं दिल्ली में पला बढ़ा। तीस साल पहले यह शहर ऐसा नहीं था। लोग छोटी छोटी खुशियों से खुश हो जाते थे। अब तो शहर महानगर बन रहे हैं और मनुष्य मशीन। उस वक्त संगत और रंगत में जो शौकिया लोग मिलते थे, उनके अंदर बालपन, भोलापन था। वे लोग दिल से गाते थे —

पांच बरस की मीरा लाइली हो,
सखियों में खेलन जाय री सुन राणा भाई ,
खेलत पाया री मीरा पाया कांगणा हो जी...

उस समय उनके अंदर का वात्सल्य झलकता था। मैं छोटा था तो अर्थ समझ तो नहीं पाता था, पर महसूस कर पाता था। यह महसूस करना ही कलाकार का हृदय होता है, संवेदनशील हृदय होता है। घरवालों ने पढ़ाई को लेकर प्रेशर बनाया, तो मैंने घर त्याग दिया। कुछ पाने के लिए त्याग तो करना ही पड़ता है। यह मेरा हठ था, यह मेरी जिद थी। मैं जिंदगी नहीं जीता, जिद जीता हूँ।

उस दौर की आपाधापी की चर्चा करते हुए खेर ने कहा कि घर छोड़ने के बाद संगीत सीखने के लिए बहुत चक्कर काटा। किसी ने घरेलू काम कराया तो किसी ने कहा आवाज अच्छी नहीं है, तो किसी ने कोई वाद्ययंत्र सीखने के लिए कहा। पैसे तो थे नहीं, तो मुझे लगा पहले जिंदगी को बचा लूं। जिंदा रहा तब तो जिद बचेगी। इश्क की खातिर इनसान कुछ भी कर सकता है। अपने जीने के लिए मैंने कई तरह के काम किए। गुरुकुल में भी पढ़ाई किया। एक समय लगने लगा कि शायद संगीत मेरे लिए नहीं है। पर उस दौरान भी मैंने सुनना जारी रखा। कुमार गंधर्व, पं भीमसेन जोशी, पं जसराज सबको सुनता था। अविनाश पसरिचा जी से किसी कंसर्ट के वीडियो रिकॉर्ड करा कर सुन लेता था और मान लेता था मैंने सीधे गुरु से सीखा। कहते हैं न —

हालात ने छीन ली चेहरे की रवानी

वरना दो-चार बरस में कभी बुढ़ापा नहीं आता

उस समय ऐसे हालात थे कि हृदय कुम्हला जाता था। फिर संगीत



Vandana Singh

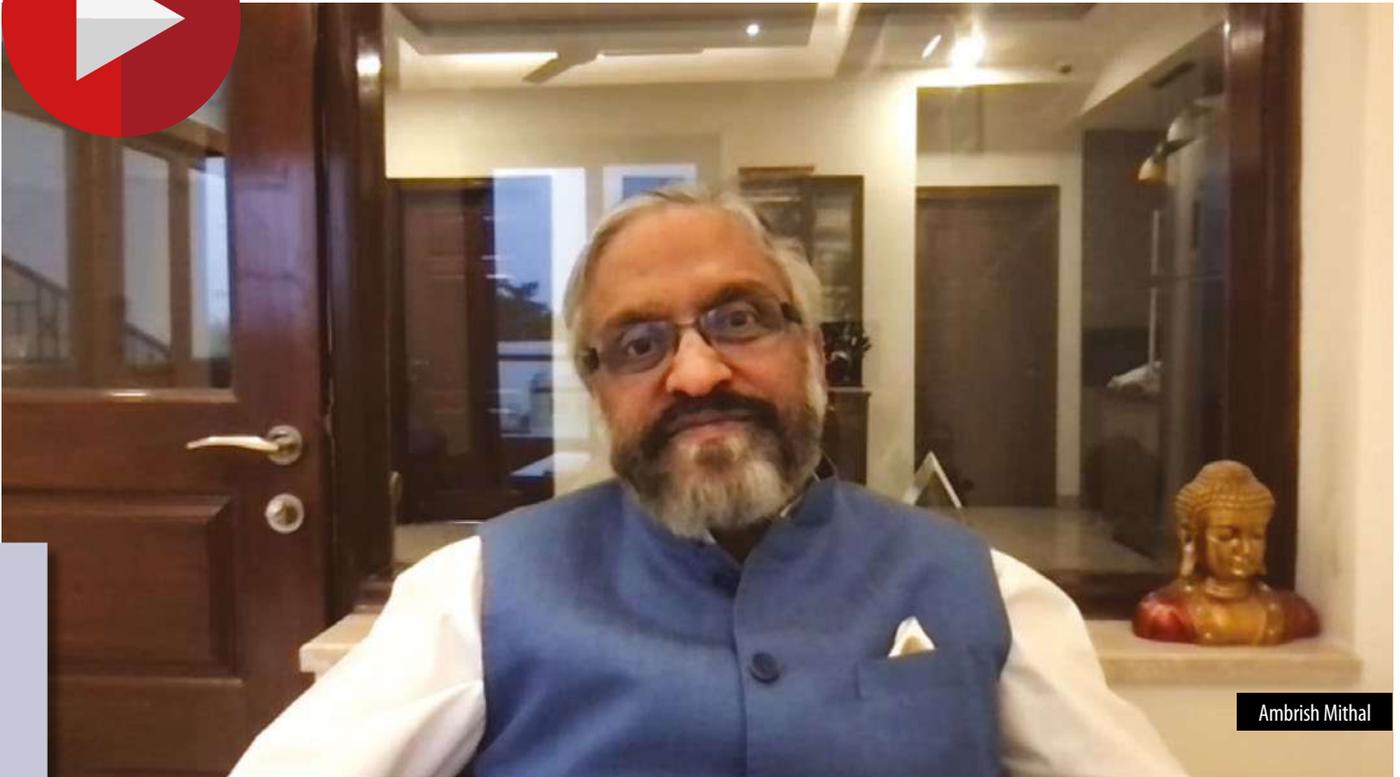
छोड़ मैं काम में जुट गया। पैसे कमाने लगा, एक्सपोर्ट से जिसके पास सौ नहीं थे उसे लाख दिखने लगे थे। पर ईश्वर जिसे जैसा बनाना चाहता है उसे ऐसी ही चाल देने लगता है। मेरे दाता ने वही चाल चली कि बावले तू तो इन दिमाग वाली चीजों के लिए बना ही नहीं है। तो बाबा ने ऐसी पटकी दी कि मेरा एक्सपोर्ट का कारोबार खत्म हो गया। मुझ पर कर्ज का बोझ बन गया था। मैं तब हारकर पागल होने लगा था। मैं मानने लगा था कि शायद इस दुनिया के लिए बना नहीं था।

जब भी मैं ख्वाबों में होता हूँ, सबको है लगता मैं सोता हूँ.
होता हूँ सबसे जो मैं जुदा, उसकी पनाहों में होता हूँ...

मेरे पिता कर्मकांडी ब्राह्मण थे, मैं लौट कर ऋषिकेश चला गया और कर्मकांड सीखने लगा। वहीं मेरा जीवन बदला। परमार्थ निकेतन आश्रम में गंगा आरती होती थी। वहां मैं आरती से पहले गाने लगा। जब मैं गाता था तो साधु लोग नाचने लगते थे। तभी मुझे लगा कि संगीत ही शायद मेरे लिए बना है। यही मेरी नियति है, यही मेरा जीवन है। फिर मैं मुंबई आया 2002 में। आज मैं फिल्म इंडस्ट्री में नहीं, फिल्म इंडस्ट्री मुझमें आ गई है। खेर ने तेरी दीवानी, अपने पहले कंसर्ट, अल्लाह के बंदे हंस दे और बम लहरी से जुड़े कई संस्मरण भी सुनाए। खेर ने कहा हम सूफी नहीं, गूफी हैं। आज कैलाश खेर घराना बन गया। आज दस हजार आर्टिस्ट ऐसे हैं, जो मेरी स्टाइल में गाकर अच्छा कमा रहे हैं। कभी ऐसा था कि मेरा अपना ठिकाना नहीं था। उन्होंने मुंबई के अपने संस्थान कला धाम, कैलाश खेर फाउंडेशन, 'रंगत' फेस्टिवल की चर्चा के साथ ही प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी की भारत निर्माण की योजनाओं को स्वर देने की बात भी बताई और कहा कि मैं अपने देश के प्रकल्प में और अच्छा क्या हो इसकी कोशिश कर रहा। सवाल जवाब के सत्र में उन्होंने अर्चना डालमिया सहित कई श्रोताओं के संगीत, भक्ति, अध्यात्म, भगवान शिव आदि से जुड़े सवालों के उत्तर दिए। धन्यवाद स्वर से जुड़ी वंदना सिंह ने दिया।

सुर और साज के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट। ईस्टर्न जोनल कल्चरल सेंटर, स्वर और अहसास वूमन का भी सहयोग मिला।

Understanding the COVID-19 Crisis



Amrish Mithal

The pandemic has been the most challenging crisis faced by humankind in the 21st century. Making sense of its devastating impact while the crisis is ongoing is no simple task, for information about COVID-19 keeps changing on a daily basis. However, with the data and analysis that have become available over the past one-and-a-half years, what are the most salient lessons and warnings that the public should keep in mind when it comes to tackling COVID-19?

To grapple with this all-important question, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** organised a virtual session of **Ek Mulakat Vishesh** with Dr Amrish Mithal. A Padma Bhushan and B.C. Roy awardee, Dr Mithal is the chairman and head of the endocrinology and diabetes department at Max Healthcare. He is also the domain expert on the governing board of the National Health Authority (NHA) of India as well as the president of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Gorakhpur. Dr Mithal was in conversation with Ina Puri, **Ehsaas** Woman of Gurugram. Aradhana Pradhan, Honorary Convenor of Bihar Affairs of **Prabha Khaitan**



Ina Puri

Foundation, gave the welcome address.

"The pandemic really exploded in our faces in March and April of this year. Regardless of what people might say, in retrospect, I don't think any expert had predicted the velocity or the ferocity of the pandemic," began Dr Mithal. Even though he feels that the worst of COVID-19 is behind us, there is always a chance that cases might show a resurgence as the economy opens up and society emerges out of lockdown.

While Dr Mithal acceded to the uncertainties around COVID-19 and agreed that there is no silver bullet, he nonetheless emphasised on the importance of vaccinations to give people a fighting chance against the virus: "The faster we can vaccinate, the better off we are... if the virus doesn't mutate again or come out with some nasty new form, which is not covered by the vaccine, then things would be under control... I think the vaccination programme has really taken off. There will always be naysayers who will find fault with everything. But I think, at least for the moment, vaccination is on track and reaching the numbers required. It is a huge credit to the whole team that is working on it."

Over the last few months, the challenge for Dr Mithal has not just been a medical one, but also an emotional one. As doctors, people like Dr Mithal are used to comforting patients and their families during difficult times. But social distancing and the total absence of human contact has made it impossible for him to provide emotional support in person.

Although the first wave of the virus spread a lot of awareness about sanitising regularly and not touching surfaces that could be contaminated, Dr Mithal doubled down on how India has to be far more responsible when it comes to wearing masks and spending as little time as possible in completely closed environments.

Addressing the black fungus aspect of the pandemic, Dr Mithal noted that "when you use hydro-steroids and have blood glucose problems, then you increase the risks of black fungus. It is a sequel to the COVID infection and it flows from the same thing."

Reflecting on the toughest months of the pandemic during the second wave, Dr Mithal said that "they constituted the worst period of my professional life, when you are flooded with all that happens, and you cannot help people, even those you know very well. You can't get them a hospital bed, you can't get them oxygen... you can't do anything for them. As a doctor, it was the most depressing period of my career and I hope it doesn't happen ever again."



While he has found precious little time for himself outside his medical services during the pandemic, having taken just one day off during the lockdown (for Holi), Dr Mithal has made it a point to continue with his morning walks regularly. A lover of nature and art, he has missed visiting galleries and museums and is looking forward to the time when they reopen, animated with human presence and the return of normality.

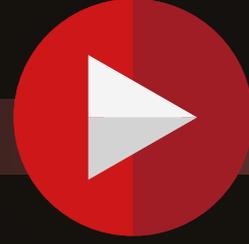
Keen on writing a book, but with no time to devote to it right now, Dr Mithal mentioned how he could end up writing one of two books at some point in the future—one that would be based on his medical expertise and would be helpful for patients and the other based on his experiences, which would reflect his fascinating personal journey.

Dr Mithal called for patience before jumping to conclusions about a potential third wave of the pandemic. He explained that if the virus does not mutate into more lethal forms, the present vaccines should be adequate to allow life to gradually return to normal. Booster shots, according to Dr Mithal, could also turn out to be necessary in a few months' time, especially for frontline healthcare workers.

Characterising the pandemic as a "syndemic", Dr Mithal added that "in order to make our systems stronger, it makes sense to have a healthy diet, to follow the basics. If one has diabetes or blood pressure, it needs to be well-controlled. I call it a syndemic—a combination of two pandemics, because there is the virus that can hit us all, but there are also more dangerous effects for those who have comorbidities or pre-existing conditions."

Aradhana Pradhan closed the session with a thank you note.

Ek Mulakat Vishesh is presented by Shree Cement Ltd



हमारी पीढ़ी पुराने लोगों से धैर्य सीखे: यतीन्द्र मिश्र

Yatindra Mishra

राज परिवार में जन्मने से जो बड़ी और अच्छी बात मैंने अपने परिवार, कुल परंपरा से सीखी, वह यह थी कि बड़ा होना सिर्फ़ पैसे से, रूतबे से या विरासत के साथ बड़ा होना नहीं है बल्कि कला, संगीत, संस्कृति और साहित्य से जुड़े लोग भी बड़े होते हैं, क्योंकि उनका बहुत सम्मान देखा है मैंने।" अयोध्या राजपरिवार से जुड़े कवि, लेखक यतीन्द्र मिश्र ने यह बात प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की ओर से कलम चेंनई के उद्घाटन-सत्र में कही। इस कार्यक्रम में अहसास वूमन चेंनई की दीपिका गोयल ने अतिथि वक्ता मिश्र और श्रोताओं का स्वागत और धन्यवाद दिया। उन्होंने फाउंडेशन और अतिथि वक्ता मिश्र का परिचय दिया और संवाद के लिए अहसास वूमन उदयपुर रिद्धिमा दोशी को मंच सौंप दिया।



Riddhima Doshi

मिश्र ने अपनी साहित्यिक रुचि से जुड़े सवाल पर अयोध्या राजघराने के संगीत, कला जगत और साहित्य से जुड़ाव की विस्तार से चर्चा की और अपने परदादा राजा जगदंबिका प्रताप नारायण सिंह के दरबार में बेगम अख्तर के महफिलें करने, दादी विमला देवी को संगीत सिखाने, साहित्य पढ़ने, मां ज्योत्सना मिश्र और बुआओं की संगीत की समझ का उल्लेख करते हुए कहा कि हमारे घर में पढ़ने-पढ़ाने का जो माहौल था,



Deepika Goyal



Jasmit Nayyar

उसमें धीमे-धीमे पढ़ने का शौक बढ़ा और फिर मैं लिखने लगा। मिश्र का कहना था कि सूरदास, तुलसीदास, कबीरदास, मीरा बाई, प्रेमचंद, जयशंकर प्रसाद, हजारी प्रसाद द्विवेदी, फणीश्वरनाथ रेणु का मुकाम पाना हर साहित्यकार का सपना होता है।

लता सुर गाथा के लिए लता जी को कैसे मनाया? के उत्तर में उन्होंने विस्तार से पारिवारिक संबंधों की चर्चा की और कहा, "मैं भाग्यशाली हूँ कि मैं ऐसे परिवार में पैदा हुआ जिससे लता जी के पारिवारिक संबंध थे। उनके गणपति महोत्सव में हमारे यहां से पूजा प्रसाद जाता था, जिसे वे चढ़ाती थीं, तो उनसे एक कनेक्ट बना हुआ था, जिसे प्रगाढ़ता दी उदयपुर राजघराने के श्री अरविंद सिंह मेवाड़ जी ने। होली, दीवाली, गणपति में हम उन्हें फोन करते थे। मैं बचपन से ही उनका बड़ा प्रशंसक था। उनके गाने, अलबम कलेक्ट करता था, स्टार बुक बनाया था। पर सोचा नहीं था कि उन पर काम करूंगा। जब उनसे मैंने कहा कि मैं आप पर काम करना चाहता हूँ, तो वह तैयार हो गई।"

मिश्र ने बताया कि मैंने तहलका पत्रिका में लताजी पर एक कवर स्टोरी पं. नरेंद्र शर्मा के गीत ज्योति कलश छलके को आधार बनाकर 'सुर कलश छलके' शीर्षक से की और उसका अंक उन्हें भेजा तो उन्हें बहुत पसंद आया। उनके एक गाने जोगिया से प्रीत किए दुख होय...की सीडी बनाकर दिया, तो उन्हें लगा मैं गंभीर हूँ। छह साल मैंने लता जी को फोन पर रिकॉर्ड किया। उनके जीवन के इतने पहलू हैं कि जितने लोगों के साथ उन्होंने काम किया है, सब पर एक संचयिका बन सकती है। सिनेमा में इस किताब से पहले कोई अर्काईव रिकॉर्ड नहीं है। किशोरी अमोनकर जी पर मैं काम करना चाहता था, पर नहीं कर पाया। लता मंगेशकर होने का यह मतलब नहीं है कि उन्होंने सारे अच्छे गाने गाए, बल्कि यह है कि जो भी गाना उन्हें मिला उन्होंने परफेक्ट नोट पर गाए। यह मैंने लता जी से सीखा कि चाहे कुछ भी करें, पूर्णता में करें।

आपने बहुत सारे बड़े लोगों पर काम किया है। सोनल मानसिंह, गुलज़ार, लताजी। इन सबमें समानता क्या है? के उत्तर में मिश्र ने कहा, "विनम्रता और शील और जमीन से जुड़ाव...ये लोग अहसास नहीं कराते कि हम बहुत बड़े हैं। इनमें अपने काम, हुनर के प्रति जुनून

है, इसके लिए वे किसी भी तरह का कष्ट, साधना वे सह सकते हैं। उनमें बहुत ईमानदारी है... आज की पीढ़ी के पास संयम नहीं है। उन्हें इनसे सीखना चाहिए...आखिर ये लोग अपनी विधा के पर्याय हैं। इन लोगों ने पूरा जीवन गुजार दिया, फिर भी अपने को छात्र ही मानते हैं। और यह भाव केवल दिखावे का नहीं है, मैंने नजदीक से देखा है उन्हें। गुलज़ार किसी भी सोशल मीडिया पर नहीं हैं। उन्हें किसी माध्यम की जरूरत नहीं है। इनसे धैर्य सीखने की जरूरत है। आज माध्यम बड़े हैं। एक जमाने में मौखिक परंपरा थी। फिर भोजपत्र पर लिखा जाने लगा। किताबें आईं। आज आप एक पेन ड्राइव में चीजें संभाल लेते हैं।"

बेगम अख्तर से जुड़े सवाल पर मिश्र ने बेगम साहिबा अख्तरी फैजाबादी के फिल्म स्टार होने, उनकी ग़ज़ल गायिकी, रागदारी और बाई से बेगम तक के सफर और अपनी हिंदी तथा अंग्रेजी में छपी पुस्तक अख्तरी: सोज और साज़ का अफसाना और Akhtari: The Life and Music of Begum Akhtar के जिक्र के साथ बंगाली फिल्म में उनके हिंदी ग़ज़ल गाने, अभिजात्य लोगों के बीच सम्मान, गंडा बांधने से लेकर सिगरेट पीने, मदन मोहन और इंदिरा गांधी तक से उनके संबंधों की चर्चा की और कहा कि बेगम साहिबा एक ऐसी सांस्कृतिक शख्सियत के रूप में उभरती हैं, जिन्होंने नारी सशक्तीकरण की मिसाल कायम की। मिश्र ने आधुनिक दौर में के संगीतकार, अयोध्या की सांस्कृतिक विरासत, संगीत आदि से जुड़े सवालों के भी जवाब दिए और गुलज़ार, शुभा मुद्गल, जावेद अख्तर आदि की चर्चा के साथ कबीर पर लिखी अपनी एक कविता भी सुनाई।

कलम चेन्नई अहसास वूमन के सहयोग से आयोजित हुआ।

Shining 'Light' on a Timeless Verse



Gopalkrishna Gandhi



Jairam Ramesh

As part from his role as a prominent Member of Parliament in the Rajya Sabha and the chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Science and Technology, Jairam Ramesh is also known as an established author. With more than six books to his name, the Congress leader is no stranger to the written word.

So, what sets apart his latest authorial endeavour? It is a departure from the world of political biographies and treatises that Ramesh is usually known to write. The book, *The Light of Asia: The Poem that Defined the Buddha*, is an exhaustive analysis of the epic poem of the same name written by Sir Edwin Arnold in 1879, about Gautam Buddha's life and teachings.

Launched in the presence of veteran politician and former diplomat Gopalkrishna Gandhi at a recent session of **Kitaab** organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, the book is a product of Ramesh's interest in the original work since he was a teenager.

The virtual session, which was opened by **Ehsaas** Woman of Kolkata, Malika Varma, started with Gandhi drawing the audience's attention to the exceptional nature of Ramesh's work. By being a two-in-one book—"a biography of a composition (Edwin's poem) and the biography of the author of it (Edwin himself)"—it can be considered a rare gem, he felt.

By way of introducing Ramesh's book, the erstwhile

Governor of West Bengal also delved into his own impression of it. "There is an underlying vein of pathos.... I have had a whole spectrum of emotions while reading this book, which has included sheer pleasure at the richness of your research, doubt as to whether all the credit you are giving to different interpreters of Arnold is entirely deserved... also a great admiration for this man who was a journalist for 40 years and came to India, learnt the languages of India... and went into the life of the Buddha to create this amazing work," he said.

Ramesh revealed that the book had been "fertilising in his mind for a long time." Refuting claims that he published this book—centred around Buddha's realisation of human suffering—with the pandemic in mind, he said, "It's very tempting to say that this book was written to bring solace and succour at a time of great anguish and pain, but I wouldn't say that it was a major motivation. I would have written it even if there was no lockdown and pandemic." Instead, it was a combination of reasons that got him to pen his latest. "I had written three political biographies... and I wanted a break from writing the biography of a person, so I said why not try writing the biography of a book! Something offbeat," he smiled.

His curiosity was further piqued when he came across some correspondence between Jawaharlal Nehru and Winston Churchill in 1955 regarding Arnold's *The Light of Asia*. He wanted to delve deeper into the background of this and find out why an "arch India-phobe," who imprisoned Nehru in the 40s, would refer to this work, twice, and ask the latter to "remember *The Light of Asia*".

The third factor, of course, was the parallel that Ramesh drew in his mind between the current Ayodhya dispute and the Bodhgaya controversy over the control over the Mahabodhi temple between Hindus and Buddhists that took 67 years to resolve.

Stating that, "The Buddha is hardwired into every Indian... we may not all be Buddhists in the creed sense of the term but we are all great admirers," Ramesh went on to explain why, therefore, Arnold and his poem continues to be of importance. "Arnold did not focus



Malika Varma

on the divinity but rather on the humanity of the Buddha.... He gave a radically new interpretation of the concept of Nirvana... meaning equanimity, stillness, true enlightenment and understanding, not something born out of a rejection," he posited.

Considering the sustained popularity of Arnold's poem in the Indian subcontinent down the decades, Gandhi and Ramesh's conversation soon turned to Indian translations of Arnold. Ramesh went on to explain the two approaches that were taken—the cultural-literary stream, which influenced greats such as Tagore and Vivekananda, and the political view that impressed the likes of Ambedkar.

"I had written three political biographies... and I wanted a break from writing the biography of a person, so I said why not try writing the biography of a book! Something offbeat"

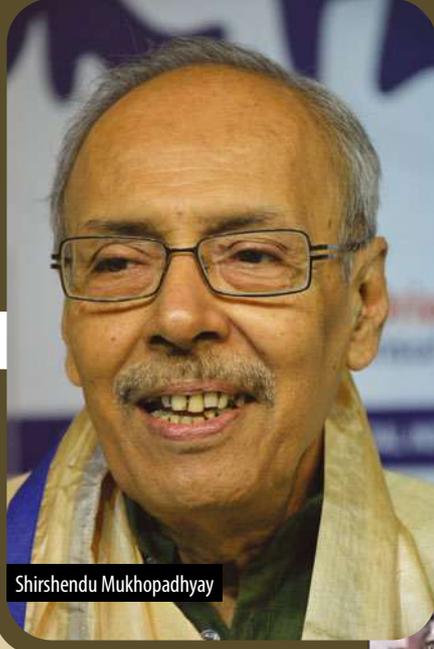
"There were translations into Bengali, Telugu, Odia, even Marathi, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which looked at the translation from the perspective of the life and personality of the Buddha. Not Buddhism or Buddhist philosophy," he revealed, adding that the second stream, particularly the translations into Malayalam and Tamil, had a political agenda. "These (translators) were social reformers and what they took out of the poem of Arnold, what they took out of the life of the Buddha was his rejection of caste orthodoxy," he pointed

out.

And what is Ramesh's takeaway from the literary work and its subject? "The Buddha gave a system of personal ethics to people as opposed to blind devotion. His lasting message was that you do not have to be a *bhakt*, you can be your own Buddha," said the author. "Buddha himself became the Buddha by not following any one master. The lesson for us is that you have to be your own experimenter. There's no guru out there who has all the answers. That's the message that I take away from the poem and all that I have read about the life of the Buddha," he concluded.

The virtual meet came to a close with Ramesh fielding a few questions from the audience and Varma thanking Ramesh and Gandhi for holding such an engrossing discussion.

This session of Kitaab is presented by Shree Cement Ltd, in association with Penguin India



Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay

'My Writing is Filled with Positivity'



A prolific writer who has never allowed himself to be confined by the limitations set by specific genres, Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay has been an oft-heard name in most Bengali households for the past five decades. Leaping out from the pages of reputed magazines such as *Desh* and *Anandamela*, his words have captured the hearts and minds of readers young and old. His works have been serialised, adapted into comics as well as celebrated films, such as *Dosar*, *Hirer Angti* and *Goynar Baksho*.

To celebrate his life and works, **Aakhar** Kolkata organised a virtual meet with the timeless litterateur. Talking about the influence of Mukhopadhyay's works on him, theatre personality and adviser, Bengali Language, Theatre and film programmes of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, Soumitra Mitra inaugurated the session with a fitting introduction. "I have read so many of his works that I can't list it all here. From his first novel in 1967, *Ghunpoka*, which stirred and influenced the youth like no other, his writings have time and again touched us deeply," said Mitra.

Author Smaranjit Chakraborty took the chat with Mukhopadhyay forward, touching upon everything—the author's past, his genesis as a writer, his oeuvre and his characters—to the audience to the workings of the mind of this Sahitya Akademi Award winner.

Starting with the most imminent topic, the COVID-19 crisis, Chakraborty asked Mukhopadhyay whether the pandemic has spurred him into writing about it. "Literature is not journalism. Writing immediately, in



Smaranjit Chakraborty



Soumitra Mitra

the shock of any event, is unlikely to become literature. It will be reportage. Literature needs a marination time—to internalise the realities," explained the erstwhile teacher.

Next under the spotlight was the author's childhood and early days of writing. Admitting that though he never consciously thought of taking up writing as a career while growing up, his love of literature developed early—in the lap of his book-loving family. "From age seven or eight I started reading Bankimchandra's works. I didn't understand it all but his gorgeous and elegant writing turned my head," he said. He also recalled the cadence of his mother reading out poems by Tagore as he settled down for afternoon naps. "These must have worked on me like a magic wand," he mused. Mukhopadhyay went on to talk about his experience of publishing his first story in *Desh* and how it opened avenues for him.

The *Gosaibaganer Bhoot* author also spoke about his writing process and the propensity of his books to end on a positive note. "Bengali readers love to cry, so they love depressing novels.

But I don't like mine to end negatively. Unhappy endings are easier to work out, but it takes hard work to journey towards a happy ending," he said adding, "We all want to live well and to do so, we need a push, something to propel us forward. That is what I try to give to my readers via my endings. I don't want them to finish my novel and rue life and existence."

Mukhopadhyay revealed that he ventured into children's writing on the insistence of poet Shakti Chattopadhyay and how at heart he still sometimes feels like a child. "I don't think about how old I have become. Inside me that childlike enthusiasm, unfettered joy and wonder persist," he said.

Laughingly calling himself "a failed poet," Mukhopadhyay concluded the session speaking about his deep love for poetry and his inability to write it. He recited a poem on request and signed off with—"The resigned and regretful sigh that emanates from my failure to write poetry permeates my prose with a breath of wistfulness."



Shivcharan Sen 'Shiva'

हाड़ौती की मिठास से भरपूर है शिवचरण सेन 'शिवा' का लघु-कथा संग्रह इंतकाळ



Dr Ramkumar Ghotar

Jaisingh Ashawat

Pramod Sharma



Kiran Rajpurohit Nitila

लघु कथाएं आज के समय की बड़ी आवश्यकता हैं। लघु कथाएं छोटी होने के साथ ही सामाजिक संदेश भी देती हैं, साथ ही कुरीतियों पर तीखी मार भी करती हैं। पर यह एक सच्चाई है कि राजस्थानी में लघु कथाओं पर लेखन काफी कम है, इसको बढ़ाने की आवश्यकता है।" ये विचार राजस्थान के वरिष्ठ साहित्यकार जय सिंह आशावत ने व्यक्त किए। आशावत प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की ओर से ग्रासरूट मीडिया फाउंडेशन के सहयोग से आयोजित आखर पोथी के दौरान लेखक शिवचरण सेन 'शिवा' की हालिया पुस्तक इंतकाळ पर साहित्यिक चर्चा के दौरान बोल रहे थे। किरण राजपुरोहित नितिला ने कार्यक्रम का संचालन किया।

कार्यक्रम का आरंभ अतिथि वक्ता और समीक्षक परिचय के साथ हुआ। लेखक सेन का परिचय देते हुए नितिला ने बताया कि लेखक झालावाड़ में व्याख्याता हैं और कवि, लघु कथाकार, बाल साहित्यकार के रूप में प्रसिद्ध हैं। आप हिंदी और राजस्थानी दोनों भाषाओं में लिखते हैं। बाल साहित्यकार के रूप में आपने जिस सरलता से अपनी भूमिका निभाई है, वही आपकी लघु कथाओं के संग्रह में भी दिखती है। राजस्थानी कविता संग्रह सिरजण हलोल, ठितुरते रेत के कण, हिंदी काव्य संग्रह, टेसू के फूल, खिलता बचपन; रात में डूब्यो चांद, राजस्थानी हाइकु संग्रह, टरमक टू रे टरमक टू- राजस्थानी बाल गीत संग्रह प्रकाशित हो चुके हैं। आकाशवाणी पर भी आपके कई कार्यक्रम प्रसारित हुए हैं। समीक्षक के जयसिंह आशावत नैनवा बूंदी से हैं और आपने भी बाल साहित्य में खूब काम किया है। इसके साथ ही वर्तमान में श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता का राजस्थानी पद्यानुवाद कर रहे हैं।

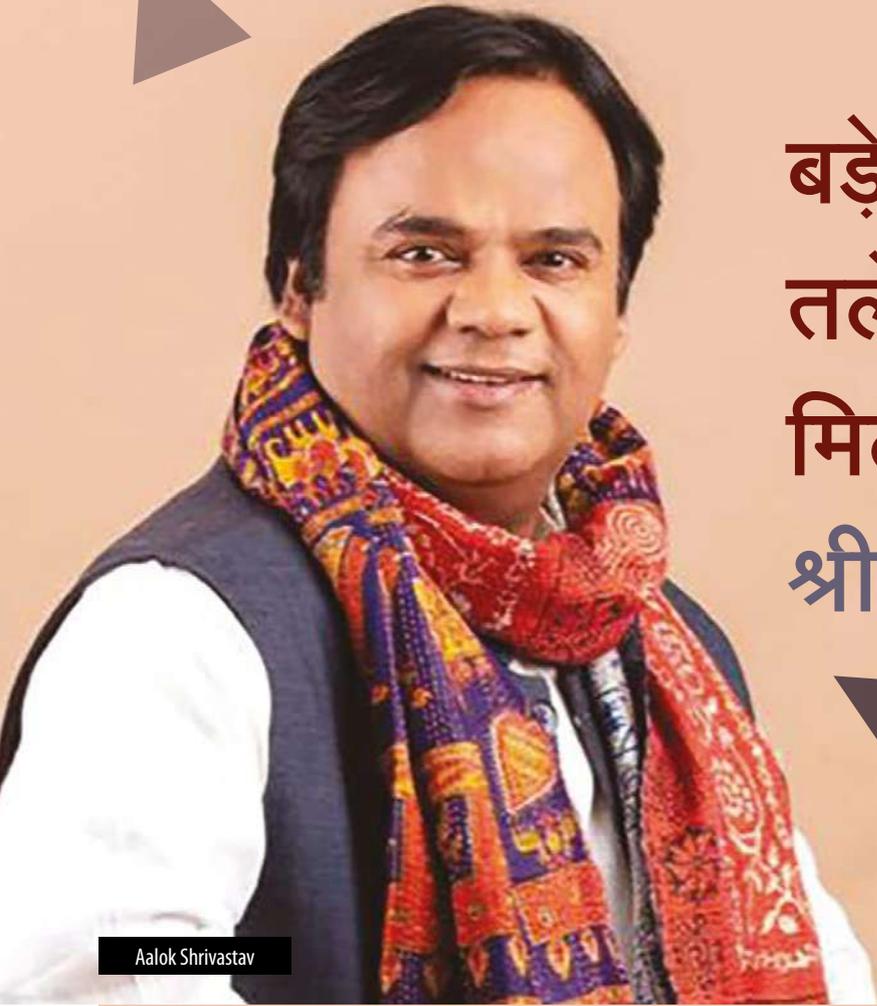
पुस्तक इंतकाळ के विमोचन के साथ ही लेखक सेन ने कुछ लघु कथाओं का पाठ किया, जिनमें मदर्स डे, विश्वासघात आदि को श्रोताओं ने काफी प्रभावित किया। अपने रचना कर्म के बारे में लेखक सेन ने बताया कि मैंने सबसे पहले कक्षा 6 से लिखना शुरू किया। रघुराज सिंह हाड़ा मेरे प्रधानाध्यापक थे। उनकी प्रेरणा से मैंने रचना कर्म में कदम रखा। अंतर्मन में प्रेरणा लेता रहा। झालावाड़ में उनके पास जाता रहता और उनसे सलाह लेकर सृजन करता रहा। उनसे जब भी चर्चा होती तो वे यही कहते कि गद्य लिख, पद्य में तो बहुत कवि हैं। मेरे मन में था कि एक गद्य की किताब सामने आए।

उनसे प्रेरित होकर यह लघु कथा संग्रह रचा। इस अवसर पर मैं गिरधारीलाल मालव को भी याद करता हूँ। वह भी मुझे बार-बार प्रेरणा देते रहे कि लघु कथा या कहानी संग्रह की रचना करो। इनके साथ ही जितेंद्र निर्मोही ने भी मुझे गद्य में ही लिखने के लिए प्रेरित किया। इन सभी की प्रेरणा से यह लघु कथा संग्रह इंतकाळ रचा है।

नितिला ने कहा कि इंतकाळ का मतलब मृत्यु नहीं है, बल्कि किसी की मरने पर उसकी जमीन जायदाद के कागज खुलवाने की प्रक्रिया इंतकाल है। यह फारसी शब्द है और कोर्ट कचहरी में उपयोग में लाया जाता है। आशावत ने कहा कि हाड़ौती का यह पहला लघुकथा संग्रह है। इस पुस्तक की भूमिका देश के ख्यातनाम साहित्यकार मधु आचार्य आशावादी, अम्बिका दत्त चतुर्वेदी, डॉ रामकुमार घोटड़ और जितेन्द्र निर्मोही ने लिखी है, जो किसी मंदिर की मूर्त में प्राण प्रतिष्ठा की तरह है। सेन बहुमुखी प्रतिभा के धनी हैं और इनकी लघु कथाएं चिंतन के लिए मजबूर करती हैं। एक कलाकार की तरह ये अपनी भाषा में लघु कथाओं का सृजन करते हैं। रोजमर्रा की जिंदगी से इन्होंने जो विषय उठाए हैं, वे इनकी तीखी नजर, मन का चिंतन और जनजीवन पर पकड़ को प्रकट करते हैं। लेखक की कलम पाठक के भाव परिवर्तन में सक्षम है। हाड़ौती की मिठास से भरपूर इन लघु कथाओं में दहेज, भ्रूण हत्या, राजनीति आदि विषय पर अच्छे तरीके से लिखा गया है। इन 70 लघु कथाओं में हर तरह का स्वाद है। लेखक ने अपना दायित्व पूरी तरह से निभाया है और कथ्य का संप्रेषण अच्छा है।

ग्रासरूट मीडिया फाउंडेशन के प्रमोद शर्मा ने धन्यवाद ज्ञापित करते हुए कहा कि राजस्थानी भाषा के इस कार्यक्रम में सामाजिक मूल्यों पर आधारित लघु कथाएं सुनने को मिलीं। आखर पोथी के अंतर्गत हर महीने में नयी छपी पुस्तक पर साहित्यिक समीक्षा चर्चा होती है। राजस्थानी भाषा में कोई भी नई पुस्तक आने पर हमें जरूर अवगत कराएं। राजस्थानी भाषा को प्रोत्साहित करने के लिए आखर प्रतिबद्ध है।

प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन और ग्रासरूट मीडिया फाउंडेशन के सहयोग से आयोजित आखर पोथी के प्रायोजक हैं श्रीसीमेंट, हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर हैं आईटीसी राजपूताना



Aalok Shrivastav

बड़े दरख्त के साया तले हमेशा छाया मिलती है: आलोक श्रीवास्तव



Anvita Pradhan

जो दिख रहा है सामने वो दृश्य मात्र है,
लिखी रखी है पटकथा, मनुष्य पात्र है।
नए नियम समय के हैं- असत्य; सत्य है,
भरा पड़ा है छल से जो वही सुपात्र है...

कवि, फिल्म गीतकार और टीवी पत्रकार आलोक श्रीवास्तव की यह ग़ज़ल पिछले काफी समय से अभिनेता आशुतोष राणा की आवाज़ में सोशल मीडिया पर वायरल हो रही है। यह संयोग है कि प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन द्वारा आयोजित राजस्थान कलम विशेष के श्रोताओं को अतिथि वक्ता के रूप में मौजूद श्रीवास्तव ने यह ग़ज़ल खुद अपनी आवाज़ में सुनाई। कार्यक्रम का आरंभ फाउंडेशन के काम को दर्शाती देश के बड़े कलाकारों द्वारा संगीतबद्ध फिल्म की प्रस्तुति से हुआ। अहसास वूमेन राजस्थान और मध्य भारत की समन्वयक अपरा कुच्छल ने कलम और फाउंडेशन की गतिविधियों के परिचय के साथ ही श्रीवास्तव का स्वागत किया। श्रीवास्तव के काव्य-संकलन आमीन और कहानी संग्रह आफरीन के जिक्र के साथ ही उन्होंने जगजीत सिंह, पंकज उधास, शान, शुभा मुद्रल, अमिताभ बच्चन जैसे दिग्गजों द्वारा उनकी ग़ज़लों को आवाज़ दिए जाने और उन्हें मिले सम्मान के बारे में बताया। आगे की बातचीत अहसास

वूमेन पटना की अन्विता प्रधान ने किया।

प्रधान ने श्रीवास्तव के बचपन से कवि बनने तक के उनके सफर के बारे में पूछा। श्रीवास्तव ने कहा, "माता-पिता को उर्दू में रुचि थी। पंद्रह-सत्रह बरस की उम्र में तय हो गया था कि मुझे लेखक बनना है। भोपाल में हम उर्दू तहजीब में रचे-बसे थे। मेरी मां रोजमर्रा की डायरी नोट करती थी। मेरे तीन बड़े भाई बड़े पदों पर थे, कायस्थ परिवार में नौकरी का माहौल था। मैंने अपनी मां

से इच्छा जाहिर की कि साहित्य में मेरा नाम हो। मां को मैंने कहा 'आमीन'। बाद में मैंने इसे ही अपनी पहली पुस्तक का नाम रखा।" प्रधान ने श्रीवास्तव की चर्चित कविता अम्मा का जिक्र किया, तो उन्होंने अम्मा और बाबूजी दोनों कविताएं सुनाई, जिनकी की कुछ पंक्तियां यों थी —

'बाबूजी'

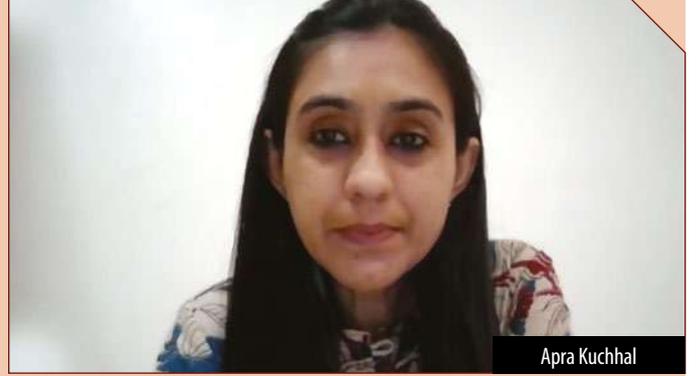
घर की बुनियादें दीवारें बामों-दर थे बाबू जी
सबको बांधे रखने वाला खास हुनर थे बाबू जी।
तीन मुहल्लों में उन जैसी कद काठी का कोई न था
अच्छे खासे ऊंचे पूरे कद्दावर थे बाबू जी...

'मां'

धूप हुई तो आंचल बनकर
कोने-कोने छाई अम्मा
सारे घर का शोर-शराबा,
सूनापन, तन्हाई अम्मा।
उसने खुद को खोकर मुझमें,
एक नया आकार लिया है,
धरती, अंबर, आग, हवा, जल,
जैसी ही सचाई अम्मा...

अपने संघर्ष और सफलता से जुड़े सवाल पर श्रीवास्तव ने कहा कि कोई सपना संघर्ष और समय मांगता है। कुछ पाने के लिए कुछ खोना पड़ता है। कम उम्र में घर छोड़ दिया। हर किसी के जीवन में एक समय ऐसा आता है जब हम दोराहे पर आ जाते हैं। लेखक से जुड़े लतीफे के साथ उन्होंने कहा कि लेखन कोई रोजगार नहीं है। मेरे जो सरोकार हैं एक मनुष्य और सामाजिक होने के नाते, तो उसे पूरा करने की राह बड़ी कठिन है। हमने जब लेखन शुरू किया, तो महीनों इंतजार के बाद छपते या नकारे जाते थे। आज सोशल मीडिया पर आप खुद संपादक हैं। आज का लेखन संघर्ष नहीं देखता। लिखना, सीखना हमारी पीढ़ी ने देखा है। तब प्रकाशित होना, न होना काफी कुछ सिखाता था।

श्रीवास्तव ने जगजीत सिंह, लता मंगेशकर, राशिद खान, शुभा मुद्गल, अनुष्का शंकर, अमिताभ बच्चन, पंकज उधास, आशुतोष राणा, रेखा भारद्वाज और विशाल भारद्वाज के साथ काम करने के अनुभवों को शेयर किया और कहा कि बड़े दरख्त के साया तले हमेशा आपको छाया ही मिलती है। पंकज उधास और जसविंदर सिंह के साथ गजल अलबम सूट के दौरान उदयपुर प्रवास को याद करते हुए श्रीवास्तव ने अपनी वह गजल भी सुनाई, जिसके चंद शेर



यों हैं —

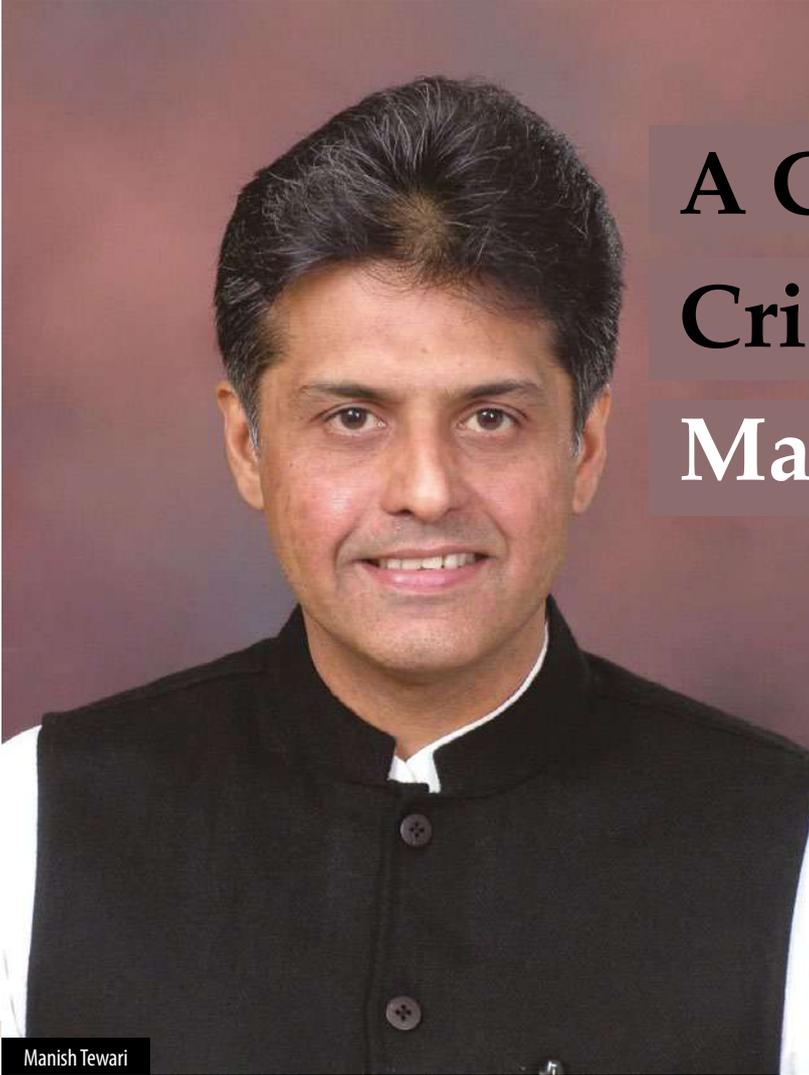
तुम सोच रहे हो बस, बादल की उड़ानों तक,
मेरी तो निगाहें हैं सूरज के ठिकानों तक।
दिल आम नहीं करता अहसास की खुशबू को,
बेकार ही लाए हम चाहत को जुबानों तक...

श्रीवास्तव ने कहा कि हमारे दौर में गजल, गीत, कविताओं में माने थे। मेरे समकालीन लोग इसे सामाजिक सरोकार, आखिरी आदमी की कविता कहते थे। रचनाकार का कैनवास उसके व्यक्तिगत जीवन से बनता है। वही उसका कहन, उसकी जबान बनती है। विदिशा में संयुक्त परिवार में जो जीवन बीता उसमें रिश्ते, संवेदनाएं, दोस्ती संबंध, शहर, फिजां थी, हिंदू, मुसलमान न था। मेरा राष्ट्रवाद राष्ट्रहित में है। मैं किसी सांप्रदायिक भेद को नहीं मानता। हम जब तरक्की करेंगे तब मुल्क तरक्की करेगा। हम जब खुद लड़ेंगे तो आगे कैसे बढ़ेंगे। उन्होंने अपनी इन भावनाओं से जुड़ी जो कविता सुनाई, उसकी कुछ पंक्तियां यों थीं —

जो हममें तुममें हुई मुहब्बत
तो देखो कैसा हुआ उजाला
वो खुशबूओं ने चमन संभाला
वो मस्जिदों में खिला तबस्सुम
वो मुस्कराया है फिर शिवालाय...

सवाल जवाब के सत्र में उन्होंने वीना चौहान, पवन सुराणा, विनिता जैन आदि श्रोताओं के सवालों के उत्तर भी दिए।

कलम राजस्थान के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट। वी केयर, ताज हरि महल जोधपुर, रेडिसन ब्लू उदयपुर, दैनिक भास्कर और अहसास वूमेन अजमेर, अहसास वूमेन जयपुर, अहसास वूमेन जोधपुर और अहसास वूमेन उदयपुर का सहयोग मिला।



Manish Tewari

A Candid and Critical Chat with Manish Tewari



Archana Dalmia

Justice, censorship, the World Wide Web and women's safety were some of the topics of conversation at a recent session of **Ek Mulakat Vishesh** as lawyer and Member of Parliament Manish Tewari settled into the guest seat.

Neelam Seolekar, **Ehsaas** Woman of Pune, welcomed the veteran Indian National Congress leader to the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** event and invited Archana Dalmia, **Ehsaas** Woman of Delhi, to take the conversation forward.

The evening started with a candid effort by the politician to try and "get beneath the veneer of my own public profile." Speaking about the man behind the politician, Tewari revealed, "If I have to characterise in one word, I would say a daydreamer. I love daydreaming."

He also explained the genesis of his tag as "conscientious dissenter" before sharing his views on it. "I am fairly critical and even self-critical. I think that if any person who even has a modicum of thinking capacity does not analyse himself or herself in a fairly objective, unbiased and non-partisan manner, you don't really do

justice to yourself. This fairly brutal appraisal and self-appraisal extends across the entire spectrum of activities that I do—professional and public," he explained.

The fact that he is first and foremost a lawyer plays into this critical worldview as well. The rationality required in a court of law to "put things in the correct perspective" and "not beat around the bush" helps curb indulging in "self-delusion", which according to Tewari, is a disservice to not only yourself but your profession.

The conversation then segued into talks of the "grey subject" that is the law and "can be twisted in any way." Tewari shared an anecdote about his grandfather—a barrister and a freedom fighter—taking him to a club for



Neelam Seolekar

a beer once he finished high school. "He sat me down and asked me what I would want to do in life. I had replied that I wanted to be a lawyer," recalled Tewari, before sharing the wisdom he learnt that day. "He told me to remember that in courts, there is no justice but only decisions. It has stuck with me ever since. And unfortunately, the more I grow older, the more the maxim rings true," he said.

Being a former Information and Broadcasting Minister, the hot topic of censorship soon came up. When asked what changes he would implement if he ever took up the role again, Tewari volleyed back with "abolish the I&B ministry."

"The country doesn't require a minister of information and broadcasting or the ministry. These are extremely ossified structures of a bygone socialist or communist era. What this country requires is something like a federal communications commission and an impartial regulator of both content and the business end of the entire media spectrum," he elaborated.

Tewari believes that instead of pre-censoring content, there should be a broad set of guidelines that all content—print, broadcasting or web platforms—should follow. "It (censorship) should be a self-regulatory mechanism, which should be complemented with very heavy penalties if you violate those guidelines," he explained. He believes that this model will open up the entire creative space and allow a million flowers to bloom but at the same time, ensure that people do not cross a line, with the threat of punitive action.

When asked whether the rise in crime against women has a direct link to the uncontrolled, uncensored content reaching our bedrooms, Tewari said the matter was "a little more complicated." He said that even if we were to adopt an Orwellian stance like China and go that extra mile on censorship—firewall the Internet, make it into an intranet, employ millions to scroll for politically and socially sensitive content—we would never "be able to

Manish Tewari's Witty Words

"One thing I have learned after being a lawyer for close to four decades is to never give advice which is unsolicited or unpaid for."

"Primetime news debate is the WWF of television."

"I don't know whether lawyers make good politicians but we do know that lawyers make politicians."

"My social media posts are either about the work, which I think I do, or about critiquing others for the work, which I think they don't do. So, I, like many others, use social media in a very unsocial manner."

mitigate it, let alone eradicate it". He pointed out that "respect for women is part of the larger consciousness which we as a country need to internalise and imbibe and that's something which is an ethic and needs to start from the day one is born." He stated that he does not think censorship of content is the answer, citing the presence of the ungovernable darknet "where everything, from pornography to live murder, is available" if one were to go looking.

Neither, it seems, is the law the answer. Tewari, who is also a father to a grown-up daughter, rued that "our cities are not safe for our children, especially our women." He added that, "It goes back to the whole mindset issue... The UPA government had tightened the laws after the Nirbhaya incident but has it really mitigated the crimes against women? The answer is no. So, till the time we do not have a bottom-up social change in terms of attitudes, law alone cannot deal with this problem."

The evening's conversation also touched upon the "unsocial" nature of social media today, his fitness mantra, favourite courtroom dramas (most John Grisham book-turned-films; currently *The Good Wife*), past regrets (most recent: not fighting the 2014 elections), future plans (to grow old as disease-free as possible) as well as the future of the country and the role that Congress and other Opposition parties need to play.

The chat closed with Tewari answering a few audience questions and disclosing his ultimate ambition. "It is to write the book which becomes a template for the times to come. There are no material ambitions or overarching political aspirations left but there is that yearning to write the book which would be remembered," signed off the three-time author.

Ek Mulakat Vishesh is presented by Shree Cement Ltd

Rahat Spreads its Rescue Wings



The spirit of giving should come alive when needs are most urgent. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, the urgency for assistance has only grown. The coronavirus has unleashed not just a pandemic, but a syndemic—a crisis that affects every sector and aspect of society. Apart from medical and health requirements, society has faced an acute shortage of support in various aspects concerning regular livelihood.

During this time, **Rahat** has tried its foremost to step up to the challenge, using its wide network and resources to aid the most vulnerable. **Rahat's** rescue wings have reached out to different segments of the population to

curate relief packages and measures based on specific needs. In keeping with its vision of a harmonious society where no one is left behind, **Rahat** organised three programmes as part of its latest relief mission.

The first programme covered daily rations and COVID-19 protective gear distributed to victims of Cyclone Yaas. Compounding the toll of the pandemic, the cyclone hit Odisha, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand in May 2021. More than a dozen lives were lost along with damages worth Rs 20,000 crore in West Bengal alone.

As part of **Rahat's** Yaas relief programme, medicines,

Yaas Relief

Patharpratima



Sulkani



The Sunderbans

Yaas Relief



Rajasthan

Star Foundation



baby food and staples like potatoes, rice, pulses, sugar, salt and oil were handed out alongside masks and sanitisers. This programme could not have been completed without the active collaboration of several like-minded organisations like O2ku Shobar, Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee, the Kolkata Foundation, Lotus Rescue, Iman Sangeet Academy for Gosaba, the Little Sisters of the Poor, Sukumar Paira (Sundarbans), Anando, Sai Sevashram, Responsible Charity, Bhumi, Ashari, the Rainbow Project, SHER, CINI Asha, the Indian Society for Sponsorship and Adoption, Nabajeevan and actor Jisshu Sengupta's Medical Camp in the Sunderbans.

The second programme undertaken by **Rahat** involved the distribution of packets of dry ration, masks and water to underprivileged families of musicians in and around Jaipur. The arts and music are an integral part of the identity of Rajasthan's capital, and during the pandemic, numerous musicians who rely on a daily income had been left without any work or source of sustenance. This programme was conceived and executed in association with Star Foundation, founded by Rukshmani Kumari, which works to uplift women and children in rural Rajasthan. Through an array of projects, Star Foundation has been able to make a tangible difference to countless lives, and its partnership with **Rahat** has proved timely for hundreds of people in and around the Pink City.

Surnai Theatre



Ila Arun



The third programme saw **Rahat** work in tandem with the Surnai Theatre group, of which Ila Arun is the managing trustee, to provide packets of basic amenities to people in Jaisalmer and Mumbai. These packets were stocked with dry rations and COVID-19 protective gear. Experienced local artistes and performers from the Surnai Theatre group played a key role in organising the purchase and distribution of the packets, carrying on the excellent community work done by the group whose objectives are not restricted to the stage. The programme also included supporting the wedding of a fellow artist's daughter, whose logistical requirements were met collectively by **Rahat** and the Surnai Theatre group.



Praveen Kumar Jha

हमें अक्सर लगता है जिसने संगीत की शिक्षा ही नहीं ली, वह भला क्या राग पहचानेगा? छुटपन में सुरभि नामक टी.वी. सीरियल में इंदौर के किसी झरोखे से गाते हुए गायक की एक मिनट की क्लिप सुनाई गयी। हमने दस पोस्ट-कार्ड पर दस राग लिख कर गिरा दिए कि कहीं तुझका लग जाए। भैरव, यमन, दुर्गा, मालकौश आदि जितने नाम सुने थे। उत्तर था अहीर भैरव, तो मालूम पड़ा कि भैरव में भी कई भैरव हैं। बाद में मुझे ऐसे सूरमा मिले जो एक मिनट के आलाप में राग पहचान लेते। मगर कैसे?

व्यवस्थित तरीका तो यह है कि रागों को नियमित सुनना शुरू करें। जैसे एक महीने तक एक नियत समय पर बस राग यमन के गायन और वादन सुनते गए। एक मन में पैटर्न बनता गया कि कुछ महीनों के बाद सुन कर यह कह सकें कि अमुक प्रस्तुति राग यमन के चलन पर है। कुछ रागों को नियमित सुन सकते हैं, जैसे — अहीर भैरव, भैरवी, भीमपलासी, भूप, मालकौस, दरबारी, यमन, बागेश्री, मल्हार, बिहाग, और हंसध्वनि।

हालाँकि, एक श्रोता के लिए राग पहचानने के फेर में अधिक पड़ना आवश्यक नहीं। गायक-वादक यूँ भी राग और ताल पहले बता देते हैं। सी.डी. या यू-ट्यूब पर भी यह लिखा ही होता है, तो यह कोई छुपा रहस्य नहीं कि इसे जानना ही हो। यह जरूर है कि रागों की समझ हो तो आनंद बढ़ने लगता है, और मष्तिष्क भी 'कंडीशन' होता जाता है।

शुरुआत में सबसे सुलभ है बंदिशों से जुड़ना। सुगम संगीत और फ़िल्मी संगीत के गीत हमें याद रहते हैं। जैसे — *मन तड़पत हरि दर्शन को आज* राग मालकौस की हू-ब-हू बंदिश है। इस धुन से मिलता-जुलता राग सुनते ही दिमाग में मालकौस का धुंधला आग। *बोले रे पपीहरा* से मियाँ मल्हार याद आए। कुछ प्रचलित बंदिशें राग सुनते-सुनते भी मन में बैठ जाती हैं। *जा जा रे अपने मंदिरवा* सुना तो भीमपलासी; *कवन बटरिया* सुना तो अल्हैया बिलावल।

बंदिश के बोल भी बहुत कुछ कहते हैं। *जागो, मोहन प्यार* फ़िल्मी बंदिश है, जिसमें यह स्पष्ट ही है कि सुबह का राग है- भैरव। सावन या बरखा की बात हो तो मेघ, मल्हार और देसकर जैसे राग मन में आते हैं। शंकर/शिव पर बंदिश हो तो राग शंकरा, मालकौस या अडाना जैसे राग। भवानी पर बंदिश हो तो दुर्गा, भैरवी या अडाना। बसंत पर बंदिश हो तो बसंत, बहार, या मालकौस। बंदिश थोखा भी दे सकते हैं, क्योंकि यह नियम नहीं कि शिव पर बनी बंदिश राग दुर्गा न हो। लेकिन, यह कुछ मामूली संकेत दे रहा हूँ।

राग कैसे पहचानें?

मुश्किल यह है कि बंदिश तो अक्सर गायकी के अंत में आता है। मुख्य आरम्भिक अंग तो आलाप है, जिसमें गीत ही नहीं। वहाँ तो बस स्वर हैं, और स्वर के विस्तार हैं। यह भी नहीं कि वे सरगम बोलें और हम कम्प्यूटर पर टूँड मिला लें। वहाँ तो जैसे आऽऽ (आकार आलाप) से ही स्वर पहचानना है। अगर वह 'सा' बोले ही नहीं, तो हम कैसे समझें कि वह 'सा' कह रहे हैं? यह वाकई टेढ़ी खीर है। हर गायक का स्केल अलग है। किशोरी अमोनकर का 'सा' और भीमसेन जोशी का 'सा' बिल्कुल ही अलग स्केल पर है, तो सरगम अलग सुनाई देगी। यह कानों के प्रशिक्षण के बिना संभव नहीं, और इसमें वर्षों लग सकते हैं।

अब तकनीकी युग है, तमाम ऐप आ गए हैं कि हम एक-एक स्वर को सुन कर समझ सकते हैं। या कीबोर्ड पर उंगलियाँ चला कर समझ सकते हैं कि अगर 'सा' ऐसा है तो 'म' कैसा होगा। लेकिन इसके लिए श्रोता को आधा संगीतकार ही बन जाना होगा। गाकर सुनना होगा, या सुन कर गाना होगा। मस्तिष्क के अंदर कई खाने बनाने होंगे, जिनमें हम स्विच कर सकें।

इसके आगे की सीढ़ी है, स्वर गाने का अंदाज और उनको सजाने का चलन या पकड़ समझना। यह समझना कि राग में कौन सा 'फ़रेज' अधिक गाया जाता है। किस राग में धैवत आंदोलित कर या हिला कर गाते हैं? किस राग में हम एक स्वर से दूसरे स्वर पर मीड से आते हैं? यह सब मेरे विचार से एक लंबे समय के बाद ही शुरू किया जा सकता है। बिना तैरना सीखे गहरे पानी में उतर गए तो डूबने का भय है।

आखिरी सीढ़ी जो संगीत-प्रेमियों के लिए पहली सीढ़ी है, वह है रस का स्वाद लेना। आखिर रस पाने के लिए ही तो हम सुन रहे हैं। इस सीढ़ी पर लोग राग को सुनते ही नहीं, देखने भी लगते हैं। एक तस्वीर बन जाती है, जिसे रागमाला पेंटिंग में उतारा गया है। हम उस पेंटिंग का संग्रह अपने कंप्यूटर पर रख सकते हैं, और जब कोई राग सुनें तो उन तस्वीरों को गौर से देखें। कुछ तस्वीरें मन में बनती हैं। जैसे सुबह-सुबह भैरव सुनते हुए लगता है आप गंगा में खड़े हैं, और सूर्य को अर्घ्य दे रहे हैं। दुर्गा सुनते हुए लगता है भगवती सिंह पर बैठी आ रही हैं, और सिंह की चाल की तरह स्वर भी चल रहे हैं। जब मल्हार सुन रहे हों तो बादलों की कल्पना मन में आएगी, बिजली चमकने और बरखा होने की। इस तरह शुरुआत न संगीत सीखने वाले करते हैं, न सुनने वाले। रस कोई आखिर कैसे समझाएगा? यह तो अनुभूति है।

प्रवीण कुमार झा

(संगीत प्रेमी और *वाह उस्ताद* नामक पुस्तक के लेखक हैं। सम्प्रति नॉर्वे में चिकित्सक हैं)



Geet Chaturvedi

प्रेम पलों में जीता है, वर्षों में नहीं: गीत चतुर्वेदी

मैं चांद जैसा हूँ। रोज मेरा रूप बदलता रहता हूँ। कुछ समय दिखता रहता हूँ, कुछ दिन खोया रहता हूँ। जब खोया रहता हूँ, तब काम करता रहता हूँ। दार्शनिक भी रहता हूँ।" यह कहना है कवि, कथाकार गीत चतुर्वेदी का। वे प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की ओर से आयोजित कलम बंगलुरु के वर्चुअल सत्र में श्रोताओं से मुखातिब थे। आरंभ में फाउंडेशन और अहसास वूमेन की ओर से सुरेखा प्रह्लाद ने स्वागत और परिचय दिया। चतुर्वेदी से संवाद अहसास वूमेन, लखनऊ और लखनऊ एक्सप्रेसन सोसाइटी की उपाध्यक्ष कनक रेखा चौहान ने किया। चतुर्वेदी ने अपने नाम, बचपन और मुंबई शहर के अपने लेखन पर खुलकर प्रभाव की चर्चा की।

मुंबई की मध्यवर्गीय बस्ती, चाल में रहने वाले लोगों के जीवन पर हास्य के सहारे अमलतास की लड़कियाँ और उसके पहल में छपने का जिक्र करते हुए चतुर्वेदी ने कहा कि मुंबई एक ऐसा महानगर है, जो हजारों गांवों से मिलकर बना है। मैं लेखक हूँ, कवि हूँ, क्या हूँ के सवाल के बीच अपने बारे में यह आश्वस्ति से कह सकता हूँ कि मैं एक अच्छा पाठक हूँ। जब मैं जीवन में निराश था तब मुझे किताबों ने बुलाया। छोटा था तो जयशंकर प्रसाद, निराला, रघुवीर सहाय, कुंवर नारायण की कविताएं। विश्व साहित्य में पाब्लो नेरुदा सहित दुनिया भर के लेखकों ने लुभाया। कवि कुंवर नारायण का उल्लेख करते हुए चतुर्वेदी ने कहा कि वे मेरे जीवन में आदर्श की तरह हैं। जैसे चांद सूरज की तरफ देखता है। मैं ने उनकी रोशनी से खुद को रोशन किया है।

जिस बड़े लेखक से मैं पहली बार मिला था वे ज्ञान रंजन थे। उन्होंने कहा था कि साहित्य कोई सौ मीटर की दौड़ नहीं है। यह एक मैराथन है। इसमें लगातार दौड़ते रहना है। मैं अपने हर काम को धैर्य से करता हूँ, यह कद्दावर लोगों की सलाह थी। पढ़ाई हमारी आत्मा का आहार है। अगर हम अच्छा खाना खाएंगे तो हमारा शरीर सुझौल होगा। अच्छा साहित्य हमारी मनुष्यता को निश्चित आकार देता है। हमें बेहतर मनुष्य बनाता है। चतुर्वेदी ने कविता आलू



Surekha Prahlad



Kanak Rekha Chauhan

खाने वाले भी सुनाई, जिसकी कुछ पंक्तियां यों थीं —

एक सौ दस साल पहले जो लोग खा रहे थे आलू
वे अब भी आलू खा रहे हैं

अभी-अभी भट्ठी या उपलों की सुस्त आग से निकले
राख लगे आलुओं का रंग है यह....

चतुर्वेदी ने उम्मीद जताई कि ये दुनिया बदलेगी। मजदूरों की जिंदगी में बदलाव आएगा। उन्होंने सिनेमा से लेखक के संबंध, तकनीक, फोटोग्राफी, कथानक, निर्देशन की बारीकी सहित विश्व सिनेमा और साहित्य पर खुल कर चर्चा की और अपने प्रेम की दास्तान भी सुनाई। उन्होंने कहा, "प्रेम मंजिल रहित यात्रा है। आप इसमें हर क्षण यात्रा में हैं। जितनी देर आप इस यात्रा में हैं वही इस जीवन को सुंदर बना देता है। प्रेम प्रतिस्पर्धा नहीं आनंद है... प्रेम पलों में जीता है, वर्षों में नहीं। उन्होंने प्रेम में डूबी हुई कविता सुनाई —

नींद में मुस्कराओगी तो फरिश्तों को जलन होगी,
वो तुम्हारे सपनों की तलाशी लेंगे और मैं पकड़ा जाऊंगा...

कलम बंगलुरु के हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर ताज वेस्ट एंड बंगलुरु हैं। अहसास वूमेन का सहयोग मिला।

Go Green and Win

To mark World Environment Day on June 5, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** hosted a special contest on social media urging one and all to share how they are contributing to a better and healthier environment in their own little ways.

Over the last decade or so, formidable environmental challenges have come to the fore across the world, with global warming, in particular, emerging as one of the greatest threats to civilisation and humankind. It is clear that in order to sustain humanity, the responsibility of taking care of the environment cannot be passed onto future generations. It must be done here and now.

Prabha Khaitan Foundation's social media contest was aimed at focusing on the here and now and understanding what Indians are doing to make a difference. With 200 entries, the contest saw wide participation. Here is what some of the contestants had to say about their ideas:



Sudip (Winner 1)

Use-and-throw plastic bottles invariably end up in the trash, polluting the environment. One of the creative ways to use a plastic bottle is to make plants grow inside them. Since the space is limited, it helps conserve water. On the other hand, starting a garden is also a practical project in times of the pandemic.



Fahim (Winner 2)

On this Environment Day, I created a drip water irrigation system with the help of used plastic bottles. In the dry season, it will not only save water but also ensure a constant flow of water to the plants. Such a system helps keep the plants hydrated throughout the day. A water bottle irrigation system of this kind also helps save money since there is hardly any initial expenditure involved. In this way, we can put water bottles to use that would otherwise have ended up in a landfill.



Deepa Mishra

I have been making compost and planting trees in pots before moving them to parks or open spaces where there is a protective environment. I also keep a few pitchers containing sugar solution in the garden, on the terrace, and around the house in general. This is for the birds and bees, especially during the summer, to provide them with some energy, since they work relentlessly for our environment.



Gurleen Kaur

I have been recycling old containers and pots and planting new saplings in them. I have used old newspapers and paints to give these containers and pots their final shape and colour. All these recycled products are being used to grow new succulents.



Suman Jadhav

During this pandemic, we have all realised the importance of oxygen. With that in mind, I have been growing a lot of plants on my balcony. My daughter has realised the importance of these plants, too, and has been helping me out in nurturing the plants.



Nidhi Garg

We are trying to grow our own vegetables and make our own fertiliser using the vegetable peels from our kitchen. We are also encouraging our children to participate in the process of making a difference to the environment.



PKF Spreads its Wings in Kolkata



Kartick Banerjee, councillor Ananya Banerjee, minister of government of West Bengal Aroop Biswas with Anindita Chatterjee

Prabha Khaitan Foundation (PKF) has opened another office of the Foundation in the Bhawanipore area of Kolkata. The sub-office is fully functional, and is an extension of the main office.

The inaugural puja for the sub-office was performed by Anindita Chatterjee, executive trustee, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. A number of dignitaries graced the occasion and conveyed their best wishes to **PKF**, including Aroop Biswas, minister of power, youth affairs, and sports, Government of West Bengal; Ananya Banerjee, councillor, Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC); Esha Dutta, **Ehsaas Woman** of Kolkata; Sumitra Roy, student programmes adviser at **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, among others.

Inspired by the exemplary leadership of our founder, Dr Prabha Khaitan, the Foundation has played an instrumental role in shaping literary, artistic, and cultural milieus across India and abroad. We aim to continue in our goals to contribute to society in meaningful ways through our new sub-office, which has already played an instrumental role in **Rahat's** work during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are thankful to all our associates and partners for supporting our endeavours.



Puja being performed by Anindita Chatterjee



Esha Dutta



Sumitra Ray



(L-R) Sayantani Chatterjee, Mousumi Dutta, Hridi Chatterjee



Trafficking in Persons: A Dehumanising Crime

"What freedom are we to find when our restless minds are enslaved under the chains of human trafficking? What freedom do we preach when our females breathe through enraged wounds? What is this language we speak of when we talk about the law, whom is it protecting because here we are protesting? Human trafficking, I say, has made enough money for the day"

— **Mitta Xinindlu**

Human trafficking is the illegal trade of humans for purposes of forced labour, sexual and commercial exploitation, or slavery. Existing since millennia, trafficking in persons is a direct product of unequal power hegemonies that perpetuate discrimination and oppression of the powerless by the powerful.

Research shows that as recently as 2018, a total of 50,000 human trafficking victims were detected and reported by 148 countries. Experts believe that unreported numbers are higher. Fifty percent of detected victims were trafficked for sexual exploitation while 38 per cent were traded for forced labour. Among the victims, females continue to be the main targets, with women and girls making up 46 percent and 19 percent of all victims of trafficking, respectively. Military conflict has

proven to further exacerbate the problem of trafficking, with armed groups frequently targeting civilians and traffickers exploiting forcibly displaced people.

In the last few years, trafficking of children has also emerged as a major menace. Globally, one in every three victims detected is a child. The share of children among trafficking victims has increased three-fold with the share of boys increasing five times over the last 15 years.

Trafficking in persons is a grave violation of human rights and almost every country in the world is impacted by it, whether as a country of origin, transit or detention for victims. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), as the guardian of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), assists member states of the UN in their efforts to implement the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons.

In 2010, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, urging various governments across the world to resort to coordinated measures to integrate the fight against human trafficking. As part of the UN's broader programmes to boost development and security, one of the crucial provisions of the Global Plan is the establishment of a UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims



Trafficking in persons is a grave violation of human rights and almost every country in the world is impacted by it, whether as a country of origin, transit or detention for victims. . . . The crisis triggered by COVID-19 has made the role of first responders to human trafficking even more urgent, even as the restrictions imposed by the pandemic have made their work more challenging

ARTWORK BY **SUDIPTA KUNDU**

of Trafficking, especially women and children.

In 2013, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution A/RES/68/192 designating July 30 as the World Day Against Trafficking In Persons, observing that such a day is necessary "to raise awareness of the situation of victims of human trafficking and for the promotion and protection of their rights."

As part of observing the World Day Against Trafficking In Persons for 2021, the UN is working towards giving a voice to the survivors of human trafficking, of listening to and learning from their struggles. The campaign identifies survivors as crucial actors in the fight against human trafficking and acknowledges their role in establishing preventive measures, identifying and rescuing victims, and supporting them as part of their rehabilitation. Many victims have endured traumatic post-rescue experiences and some have even faced re-victimisation and punishment for crimes they were compelled to commit by their traffickers.

The crisis triggered by COVID-19 has made the role of first responders to human trafficking even more urgent, even as the restrictions imposed by the pandemic have made their work more challenging.

"Like the frontline heroes saving lives and sustaining our societies in the COVID-19 pandemic, these providers (first responders) are keeping vital services going throughout the crisis—identifying victims, ensuring their access to justice, health, social assistance and protection, and preventing further abuse and exploitation," said António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations.

At **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, we strongly condemn any and every form of human trafficking and urge both governmental and non-governmental organisations to take the requisite steps to outlaw this dehumanising crime. But even more importantly, we wish to raise awareness against all kinds of exploitation—physical, psychological, emotional—in society that eventually contribute towards and consolidate the basis of trafficking in persons.

Just because a menace has been going on for centuries does not mean that it cannot be eliminated. With a clear vision, a diligent approach, and the will to make change happen, our society is capable of putting an end to trafficking in persons and opening the doors to a more just and compassionate world.

Champions of Chennai



DEEPIKA GOYAL

Having started her journey as a Pranic healer 25 years ago, Deepika Goyal is currently a certified Heal Your Life trainer, subconscious release technique (SRT) mind and energy coach, and an Arhatic Yogi. In 2015, Goyal founded You 2.0, which has obtained the status of being a certified assessor of emotional intelligence.

Born in Kolkata, Goyal moved to Chennai after her marriage. She regularly leads group meditation sessions and aims to cleanse people's minds of negativity, which she believes is a deterrent to personal growth. Goyal's career has been dedicated to making people a better version of themselves, and over 400 people have benefited from her expertise.

When not working as a life coach and soft skills trainer, Goyal likes to spend her free time playing golf and badminton.



KAVERI LALCHAND

One of Chennai's most prominent theatre actors, activists and style icons, Kaveri Lalchand is the name behind the popular designer clothing brand *Kaveri*. After living and working in New York for a number of years, Lalchand returned to Chennai to join her family's garment export business.

Before launching her luxury clothing line, Lalchand explored a number of avenues, from collaborating with theatre collectives to running an art gallery and cultural space to starting an indie publishing company. An extensive traveller with a multitude of stories, experiences, and skills, Lalchand has worked closely with the Crafts Council of India to preserve and promote indigenous crafts and textiles.

Lalchand started *Kaveri* with the aim of crafting stylish, empowering, and impressionable clothes exclusively in linen for women of all ages. Kaveri has two standalone stores in Chennai and Mumbai besides cultivating an international presence in countries like Singapore and Turkey.

A firm advocate of body positivity, Lalchand regularly delivers talks and presentations alongside engaging in poetry readings and discussions.



VIDYA GAJAPATHI RAJU SINGH

Born in Vijayanagaram in Andhra Pradesh, Vidya Gajapathi Raju Singh has been the president of the International Women's Association (IWA), a Rotarian, and a committee member of FLO Chennai. She completed her education from Stella Maris College at the University of Madras, where she received her bachelor's degree in English literature and captained the university's tennis team.

Passionately involved in sports and fitness throughout her life, Vidya has won several medals at swimming championships across state and national levels. She has been a fitness columnist for numerous publications, including *The Economic Times*, *The Madras Plus*, *Eve's Touch* and *At A Glance*. Her travel blogs appear thrice a month on her platform, *Wanderlust Princess Vidya*.

A trekking enthusiast, Vidya has trekked in Ladakh, Uttarakhand, Bhutan, Malaysia, and Nepal. She has also bicycled a distance of 100 kilometres twice, in 2017 and 2019.

Vidya is a patron of the Karunnai School for underprivileged, mentally disabled children, for whom she has organised several fund-raising events. She has been regularly profiled in leading publications and has been the Brand Ambassador for ACE, Apollo Hospitals Centre for Excellence, a women's wellness center. In June 2013, Vidya was featured in *Vogue's* list of India's 50 Best Dressed.

Vidya is a partner in Sumyog, a wedding planning company based in Chennai. She also runs an event management organisation that handles company and product launches, book launches and fashion shows.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE



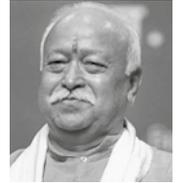
Anand Neelakantan



Anshul Chaturvedi



Dr Khwaja Iftqar
Ahmed



Dr Mohan Rao
Bhagwat



Dr Nusrat Mehdi



Dr Samin Sharma



Dr Sudhir Bhandari



Farah Bashir



Jyotsna Mohan



Kabir Bedi



Mohammad Tufael
Chowdhury



Murlidhar Goud



Preet Kaur Gill



Ruskin Bond



Shobha Tharoor



Shreedevisunil

Guests	Events
Shreedevisunil	Muskaan Puppets & Stories
Dr Nusrat Mehdi	Lafz
Shobha Tharoor	Muskaan Book Reading
Dr Khwaja Iftqar Ahmed & Dr Mohan Rao Bhagwat	Kitaab Book Launch
Dr Samin Sharma	Ek Mulakat Vishesh
Jyotsna Mohan	Muskaan Interactive Session
Anshul Chaturvedi	The Write Circle Special
Murlidhar Goud	Aakhar Rajasthan
Anand Neelakantan	Muskaan Interactive Session
Mohammad Tufael Chowdhury	The Universe Writes
Preet Kaur Gill	Tête-à-tea
Dr Sudhir Bhandari	Ek Mulakat Vishesh
Farah Bashir	The Write Circle Jaipur
Kabir Bedi	The Write Circle Amritsar, Chandigarh & Jalandhar
Ruskin Bond	Muskaan interactive session

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