



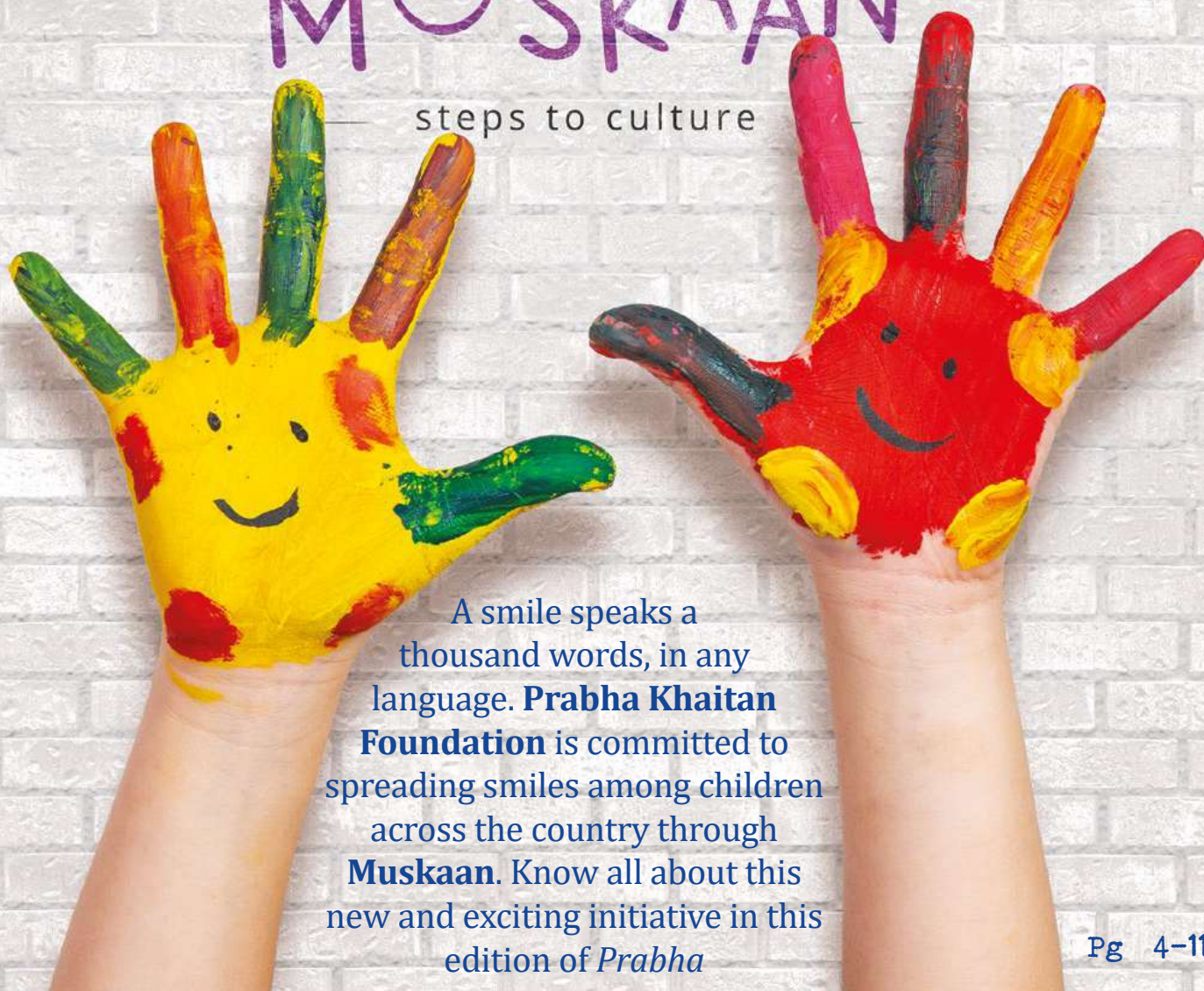
Prabha प्रभा

The Prabha Khaitan Foundation Chronicle

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MUSKAAN

steps to culture



A smile speaks a thousand words, in any language. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** is committed to spreading smiles among children across the country through **Muskaan**. Know all about this new and exciting initiative in this edition of *Prabha*

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Prabha
खैतान

MANISHA JAIN
Communications & Branding Chief,
Prabha Khaitan Foundation



Changing Lives, One Smile at a Time

Our children are our greatest treasure; they are our future. With this in mind, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** is endeavouring to spread smiles among children with a special initiative called **Muskaan**. Along with skill-building courses and workshops, the Foundation is helping underprivileged children with tuition and coaching and providing them with stationery and other study materials. **Muskaan** also aims to popularise India's heritage, literature and culture among young children by blending creativity with constructive lessons to complement both formal and informal education.

The Foundation started with a pilot earlier this year, which was an instant hit with the schools. Already the initiative has around 100 institutions on board and has hosted interactive sessions with the likes of Sudha Murty, Shashi Tharoor, Ruskin Bond, Khyrunnisa A. and others. In this edition of *Prabha* we talk about the recent **Muskaan** sessions held with children.

This edition also covers other events, from book launches hosted in different parts of the country to our humble effort to salute frontline forest warriors. We also celebrated the birthdays of our cherished associates and expanded our horizon by hosting sessions on a new platform—Clubhouse.

We hope you enjoy reading this edition of *Prabha*. Do write to us at newsletter@pkfoundation.org with your feedback, submissions and suggestions. Keep following us on our social media handles to stay updated about all our initiatives!

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]



Our Executive Trustee, Anindita Chatterjee, met Chairperson, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, Government of India, Priyank Kanoongo, to discuss welfare programmes for children



प्रभा खेतान के पैतृक जिले चुरू राजस्थान में फाउंडेशन द्वारा राजकीय महाविद्यालयों में स्थापित होगा गांधी साहित्य एवं दर्शन कॉर्नर. चुरू जिलाधिकारी साँवर मल वर्मा की अध्यक्षता में प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन के सहयोग से राजकीय महाविद्यालयों में स्थापित होने वाले गांधी साहित्य एवं दर्शन कॉर्नर समिति की बैठक

Happy Birthday

Prabha WISHES **EHSAA**S WOMEN BORN IN AUGUST & SEPTEMBER

1st August



Kalpana
Chaudhary

8th August



Huma Khalil
Mirza

12th August



Anantmala
Potdar

22nd August



Dona Ganguly

23rd August



Ina Puri

27th August



Aakriti Periwal

29th August



Anjum
Babukhan

2nd September



Shweta Bansal

2nd September



Priyanka
Kothari

4th September



Poonam Anand

7th September



Amita Munot

8th September



Kanika Agarwal

9th September



Neelam
Seolekar

11th September



Jasmit Nayyar

11th September



Vidya Gajapathi
Raju Singh

17th September



Kirti Kirdatt

23rd September



Shalu Goel



The Gift of a Smile



MUSKAAN
— steps to culture —

A simple smile. That's the start of opening your heart and being compassionate to others.

—Dalai Lama

Prabha Khaitan Foundation, in collaboration with **Education For All Trust**, is endeavouring to spread smiles among children across the country with a special initiative, aptly called **Muskaan**. Aimed at promoting skill development among children, **Muskaan** organises skill-building courses and workshops for marginalised students, helps them with tuition/coaching classes and equips them with stationery and other study materials.

Muskaan also aims to popularise heritage literature and culture among young children nationwide by blending creativity with constructive lessons to complement both the formal and informal education of children. From cultural programmes to creative storytelling, theatre, dance, music and art, organised in collaboration with the Foundation's national and international associations and institutes in a pan-India and overseas network of schools and educational and art institutions, the initiative has been an instant hit with children.

Nearly 100 schools from Kolkata, Jaipur, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Bangalore, Mussoorie, Hyderabad, Dehradun, Ajmer, Nagpur, Mangalore, Kasauli, the NCR region and Mumbai are now on board the **Muskaan** initiative.

With activities like Puppets and Stories (for ages 2 - 10 years), Book Readings (for ages 6 - 13 years, 10 - 16 years and 13 - 18 years), Interactive sessions with authors (all age groups), Competitions (all age groups) in Drawing & Painting, Art & Craft, Storytelling / Just a Minute (J.A.M), Writing (Essay/Story/ Report), Performing Arts and Quiz, and Motivational Sessions (for all age groups) on topics like public speaking, career counselling, diversity and inclusion, UN Sustainable Development Goals, wildlife, civil society and global citizenship, **Muskaan** has something for everyone.

In this edition, we present some of the recent sessions organised under the Muskaan initiative from book launches to storytelling to author interactions. Each session of **Muskaan** is presented by Shree Cement Ltd, under their CSR initiative.

Shreedeви Sunil

A woman with dark hair, wearing a dark top, is holding a large, fluffy puppet bird. The puppet has a blue head and neck with a long, pointed beak, and a body covered in blue and yellow feathers. The background is dark and out of focus, showing some greenery and a building.

A Novel Form of Storytelling

Nothing fires up the imagination quite like a good story. This is especially true for children whose impressionable minds are optimised to process stories by using both reason and imagination to enhance learning. And at a recent **Muskaan** event, Shreedeवि Sunil, a professional storyteller and founder of Talking Turtles Storytellers, captured the minds of children studying in Classes II and III and hailing from different parts of India.

Sunil, who began her career as an educationist, is presently a professional storyteller who combines elements of story and theatre to perform for both children and adults.

In the sessions conducted by Sunil for **Muskaan**, children learnt how to use different body parts to tell stories in a more engaging way, besides picking up tips on voice modulation and mimicry.

Even though the sessions were digitally conducted, Sunil was able to retain the attention of her young audience throughout by keeping them involved in some activity or the other. She also brought in colourful hand puppets which became an attraction for the kids.

The most important lesson for the children participating in Sunil's sessions was how storytelling is not just about communicating ideas or emotions, but also about representing those ideas or emotions through body language. Be it hand or eye movements, postures, or little tricks with one's voice, non-verbal messaging is as

valuable to a good story as the words that describe it.

The schools which got to experience Sunil's masterful storytelling included APEEJAY Faridabad, Maharaja Sawai Bhawani Singh School in Jaipur, The Shri Ram School in Vasant Vihar, Delhi, and KIIT International, Bhubaneswar. In Kolkata, Sunil held a series of interactive sessions with South City International School, Future Campus at Garia, Techno India Public School (both Garia and Ariadaha campuses), Loreto Entally, Bridge International School, La Martiniere for Boys, Shri Shikshayatan School, Newtown School, Garden High School and Mahadevi Birla World Academy.

A special session was arranged for Sunil to share her insights on educating children with primary school teachers from all over the country.

Sunil's association with **Muskaan** not only introduced children to a novel form of storytelling but also cultivated in them the desire to think independently and innovatively.

In a world where COVID-19 has radically altered the ecosystem of education, sessions like these are vital to remind children of the values of their community and culture. Moreover, colourful storytelling, especially when performed as elegantly as Sunil, is likely to be remembered by children longer, as compared to traditional and regimented lessons where community and culture are discussed in more mundane ways.

'Books Can Give You Something Other Things Can't'



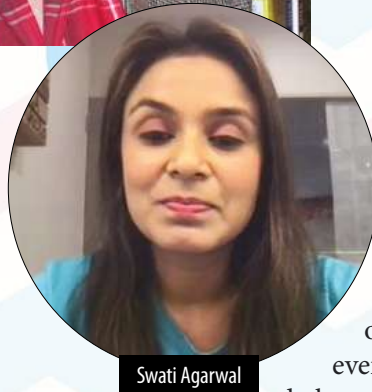
There is something friendly and familiar about a book," Ruskin Bond said at a virtual session organised by **Muskaan**, an initiative of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. That is exactly how his legions of readers feel about him too — friendly and familiar!

In conversation with **Swati Agarwal**, Ehsaas Woman of Mumbai and Udaipur, the prolific writer gave the audience a peek into his myriad thoughts.

The Sahitya Akademi and Padma Shri awardee spoke about one his greatest influences — Nature. "This was once a perfect world. Sometimes, when I look at a beautiful bird on the branch of a tree or on a wire outside my window, somehow, it is the essence of perfection — Nature."

Asked whether the hills around him had changed, he said it wasn't the hills or the mountains, but we, the people, who had changed. He pointed out the current reality of unbridled urbanisation and shrinking villages, acknowledging that while it was necessary for people to find an income, he hoped that there would be a limit to this modernisation.

Though he himself does not use a computer or a mobile phone, the 87-year-old is not averse to technology. Technology was useful, he said, without it he would not be having this virtual conversation at all! That said, Bond did suggest that children maintain a balance between the world inside and outside the internet, going out, visiting parks, taking trips, and making friends. He admitted to being more fond of reading books in their paper-ink form, although he did not mind children preferring the digital format. What matters, he said, was that people



were reading.

When the conversation turned to our reading habits, he said that contrary to popular opinion, reading has always been a minority pastime, even during his own boyhood. But he added that "It's not everybody who becomes a reader, but once you do become one, then you're a reader for life, because books and literature can give you something that other things can't."

To inculcate a love for reading, he suggests people be allowed to choose their own books. We should not force ourselves to read certain titles just because they are popular or classics. It is more important to enjoy what one reads, he feels.

Readers may be in short supply, but writers are not. Bond said he was amazed by how many youngsters today want to write. He advised them to develop a command over their language of choice, to "be able to write a good sentence, and put words together, and put them together meaningfully."

He also said that it is important to be observant. If someone were to ask Bond what inspired him to write, it would be people. It is crucial for young writers to look around them, to absorb what happens around them, for them to have ideas and an imagination. He also suggested they take time out to write, to make a schedule, and to keep doing it consistently. Above all, Bond specified, to write, one has to read. "Read as much as you can, because all the great writers, when they were young, were great readers. Read well, write well."



Raja Ravi Varma: The Story of a Pioneer

Did you know there's a crater in Mercury named after Raja Ravi Varma?

Or that the famed 19th century artist set up a lithographic printing press to make art affordable and accessible to the common man?

Muskaan, an initiative of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, presented a virtual interactive reading session with Shobha Tharoor, the author of, *Prince With A Paint Brush*, with children of classes IV and V.

After a welcome address by Sonakshi Kundra, **Ehsaas** Woman of Amritsar, Tharoor started the session by introducing the protagonist of her book. It's based on the celebrated artist Raja Ravi Varma, whose works are one of the best examples of the fusion of European academic art with Indian sensibilities and iconography.

Being a voiceover artist, Tharoor's reading from the book left her young audience rapt with attention. Raja Ravi Varma is most well-known for his paintings of mythological characters as ordinary men and women, but he began by painting the people he saw around him. Since he was born in Kerala, a lot of his art depicts various women of South India in their traditional attire.

Varma initially started painting with naturally derived colours and later used oil paints. This medium was a rarity in those days and thus, he became a pioneer in oil paintings in India. He also introduced European realism to Indian art, and took Indian painting from the then-popular "Company style", where figures seemed one-dimensional and flat, to three-dimensional realism. His painting style was much influenced by Italian Renaissance painters, synergising Indian aesthetics with western techniques.

Varma's skill earned him commissioned paintings from the royal families of India. Awards and recognition soon followed this disciplined artist, who would practise almost for 12 hours a day to hone his skills. He spent several years in Baroda, staying in the palace there and painting



royal figures as well as ordinary people. Varma travelled all over India, and his art travelled the world.

To make his painting easily accessible at an affordable price, he set up a lithographic printing press in Bombay (now Mumbai). Buying original paintings could be expensive for most, and by setting up this press, Varma ensured that more people could see, enjoy and own copies of his paintings. Tharoor said that making his art accessible for all made him much more honoured, liked and appreciated.

Varma painted everyone, irrespective of their religion, class or social status. The artist's paintings were an authentic depiction of the apparel and jewellery of the regions he travelled to and drew. He brought a new genre to Indian art and is fondly remembered even two centuries later. Tharoor also read out some fun facts about Raja Ravi Varma, from how Dadasaheb Phalke worked in his press and was influenced by him, to the crater of Mercury that has been named "Varma" in his honour.

The young audience had a chance to ask her questions about the book and the artist, which she answered with enthusiasm. The session was both informative and entertaining, and the children had a lot of fun, while learning something new.



On Myths and Mischief



Anand Neelakantan

Anand Neelakantan made a compelling case for letting children be "naughty" at a virtual session for **Muskaan**, an initiative of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**.

The author who introduced a new genre of storytelling to contemporary Indian writing — the "countertelling" of mythology — with bestselling books like the *Ajaya* series and *Asura*, was in conversation with Shalu Goel, **Ehsaas** Woman of Chandigarh.

When asked what inspired him to start retelling our epics from the viewpoint of the antagonists, he said that it started with a mischievous thought. He simply found the good characters too boring! Once he delved deeper into mythology, it, of course, took on more meaning. His writing became about giving a voice to characters who were antagonised, about thinking what their perspectives might have been.

To elucidate, he asked what the people of Lanka might have felt when Hanuman suddenly came and burned down half the city. So many people would have died, and what would the asuras have to say about that? "The characters start haunting you, the characters start telling you what to write," he said.

In his books for adults, he demystifies myths and treats them as historical fiction, trying to give everything a rational and scientific basis. But when he is writing for children, there's magic, fantasy, and music.

His book for children, *The Very*,



Shalu Goel

Extremely, Most Naughty Asura Tales for Kids, revolves around two mischievous children, Kundaka and Mandaka, and how their guru teaches them through stories of naughty asuras. "How I wish all of us were taught through stories instead of the dry things which we learn," the writer rued.

There are six stories in the book, from Bhasmasur and his pet pig chasing Shiva to a team to asuras building a stairway to heaven. The book is colourful and full of fun, lively illustrations that are sure to captivate children.

His characters are quite goofy and naughty, perhaps reflecting his own ideas of childhood. He reminisced how he found his classes boring and wasn't an obedient child himself. Some part of him is reflected in his books. "Instead of projecting our ideas on kids, we should let them be naughty, because this is the only time they can be mischievous."



Shweta Aggarwal

Through this book, Neelakantan also wants to familiarise the children of modern India with our mythology. He said that millennials were reading foreign mythology, mainly because it was more accessible to them, while Indian stories were deemed too preachy. This book is his attempt to change that.

He encouraged children to read more. "Switch off for a few minutes and discover the magic of books," he said. His advice to parents was to let children read whatever they wanted to rather than dictating their choices. If they found entertainment, they would fall in love with books and were bound to move on to more serious ones.

The author also answered a mixed bag of questions from the audience, ranging from character names to film adaptations. Neelakantan has a unique perspective on literature, and he is not only a gifted writer but also a charismatic speaker who won over his audience, adults and children alike.

Talking Tumultuous Teenage



Sangeeta Ghosh



Jyotsna Mohan

If the pressure of scoring well in examinations wasn't enough, children today are constantly being judged for how they look and project themselves on social media. The result is mental health issues, depression and anxiety, with more and more teenagers resorting to substance abuse.

Such concerning facts are what prompted journalist-turned-author Jyotsna Mohan to delve into the lives of India's urban teens in her book *Stoned, Shamed, Depressed*. The author spoke about her bestselling book while also interacting with school students of classes IX–XII in two **Muskaan** sessions organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** in Faridabad and Kolkata.

In Faridabad, Anshu Mehra, **Ehsaas** Woman of Meerut, introduced the session and Shweta Aggarwal, **Ehsaas** Woman of Faridabad, was in conversation with Mohan. In Kolkata, Sumitra Ray, Student Programme Advisor at **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, introduced the session, while Sangeeta Ghosh, a teacher from Mahadevi Birla World Academy, conducted it.

Stoned, Shamed, Depressed is not a guide to parents, yet it talks about the real dangers that teens and tweens face in the current age. Herself a parent to two young girls, one of them on the threshold of teenage, Mohan said she wanted to explore these tumultuous ages of a child's life. The author admitted to learning a lot while doing her research for the book. "This generation is very sensitive," said Mohan. "They need empathy and strong roots to feel secure and stay grounded."

Talking about the reactions she had received from parents and teachers for her book, Mohan said teachers were glad someone had finally taken up the ever-pressing issues that tweens and teens of urban India face and don't

know how to handle. But parents were in two minds. While some were pleased that someone had stepped forward to bell the cat, others were still in denial—they didn't want to acknowledge that depression in teens was prevalent.

Children, however, had opened up to Mohan and even brought in their friends to talk to the author. "I also received calls from young adults in their twenties, thanking me for bringing out their issues," she said.

Concerned about children who were on social media even before they reached their double-digit birthdays, Mohan said, "Social media is a trap where a lot of unpleasant incidents can happen. Trolls and bullies are rampant, and an emotional young child is susceptible to such intimidations." The author advised parents not to bend to peer pressure and present smartphones to their young children.

The author recommended all children to take up a sport to keep their minds off social media. It was also important to keep the bridge of communication open with adults.

Too much pressure on academic excellence could dampen a child's confidence. Especially in such trying times, when children were being forced to stay at home because of the pandemic, Mohan said it was important for parents to focus more on a child's mental health than educational excellence. "These little lights of our lives need a bit more attention. Listening to them is very important," said Mohan.



Sumitra Ray



Anshu Mehra



Shashi Tharoor

It's A Smash Hit!

They both hail from "God's own country", they both have a love for the English language and their sense of humour is in tune. It is no wonder then that author-politician Shashi Tharoor turned up at a virtual session of **Muskaan** and **Kitaab** to launch *Smash it Butterfingers*, a book by award-winning children's author Khyrunnisa A.

A continuation of the hilarious and chaotic tales of Amar Sen AKA Butterfingers that Khyrunnisa first created for the Tinkle comics, *Smash it Butterfingers* is the fourth in the series. A favourite with kids, Khyrunnisa's clumsy protagonist, Butterfingers plays all kinds of sports, such as cricket, athletics and football, and gets into all kinds of scrapes. The series has been a bestseller from the get-go and has allowed Khyrunnisa to transition from a professor to a full-time writer.

And throughout her successful career, there has been one constant—her wish that Shashi Tharoor, the author of her favourite book, *The Great Indian Novel*, launch all her books. "There was no doubt as to who should launch the books. It had to be Dr Shashi Tharoor—because of his wonderful writing skills, his comic acumen and the clarity

in his language," she smiled.

Tharoor, who did launch *Butterfingers* books, was all praise for Khyru, as he calls her, and her works. Lauding the wit, humour and extremely clever plotting of the new instalment, he said, "*Smash it Butterfingers* really shows Khyru at her entertaining best." He also felt that it will be a fun walk down memory lane for adult readers because "all the descriptions of the school tournaments are bound to bring back glorious memories of both the joy and the trepidation of school sports." The well-known wordsmith also commended the way she wields "the English language with the exactitude you would expect from a professor of English yet a tremendously light touch."

Khyrunnisa spoke about her illustrator, Abhijit Kinney, lauding how he has always managed to bring the characters to life. "What I love about his illustrations is that Amar is exactly what I had in mind—the fun, the mischief, the brightness, the laughter and expressions. The pictures are so lively. They almost jump out of the page and be with you," she shared.

She also spoke about why she decided to focus on badminton. "It is a sport I can play and I follow, so I said, why not badminton!" she laughed and went on to explain the genesis of the book's title—the image of players jumping and smashing associated with badminton. Touching upon the book's other dominant theme—superstition—she explained, "There I was with the title, the genre and the sport but no story idea. So, I decided to bring in something that has always intrigued me—people's obsession with superstitions and how their lives are moulded by these."

Using only western ones to avoid controversies in India, she has dealt with the heavy topic with a light, child-friendly hand. Her aim—to use her book to "make people sensible and knock off these irrational beliefs from the mind."

The book launch concluded with Khyrunnisa answering a stream of questions from young students in the audience. "Reading improves your imagination and introduces new words to you. Anything around you can trigger your imagination," she advised as Monica Bhagwagar, **Ehsaas** Woman of Nagpur, brought the session to a close.



Khyrunnisa A

A Call for Compassion, from Sudha Murty



Sudha Murty

Compassion for Mother Earth and all its creatures formed the heart of a virtual session hosted by **Muskaan**, an initiative of the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, with beloved author, speaker, entrepreneur, engineer, and social worker Sudha Murty.

The session saw the launch of Murty's latest children's book, *How the Earth Got its Beauty*. Following a warm welcome by Aakriti Periwal, honorary convenor of overseas affairs, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, Murty discussed her writing and much more, in conversation with the chief editor of all her books, Shrutkeerti Khurana.

Khurana informed the audience that *How the Earth Got its Beauty* was Murty's 39th book and 230th title, including the translations into other languages. When asked when she fell in love with books, Murty said that it was a joy she had discovered at a very young age. She realised how a single word had the potential to make a reader feel so much. "A sentence can make an enormous difference and has enormous power. That means, the more the words you know, the more the power you have," she said.

Speaking about the many genres she straddles in her writing, Murty explained that for her, nonfiction was the easiest. She works at a foundation [Infosys Foundation], where she meets all kinds of people from various walks of life, and these people have unique stories of their own. Writing nonfiction is about telling these stories in whichever way the medium required her to. With fiction and children's literature, it is different. Fiction takes more effort, since she first writes in Kannada and then translates her stories to English herself. Writing for children, Murty says, is a "joy", since they are so

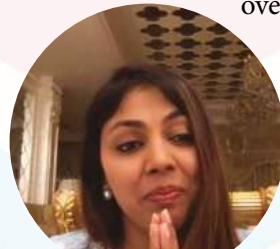


Shrutkeerti Khurana

impressionable and anything can leave an imprint on their minds.

One such children's book is her latest title, which centres around the environment. Murty passionately argued for a kinder attitude towards our fellow species, saying that the pandemic had allowed her to notice just how much we abuse our earth.

"The earth belongs to everyone. It is not just our Mother Earth," she pointed out, and encouraged her audience to share the earth with everyone—the trees, the birds, the animals—rather than constantly commercialising it or asserting ownership over it.



Aakriti Periwal

She also discussed the time she had spent with her grandparents as a child, and how they used to go on literary pilgrimages together to the library. In a poignant recollection, she said that, as children, they were asked not to keep books on the floor, because books were forms of Saraswati, and libraries were her abode.

When asked about her strengths and weaknesses as a writer, she said that as a Kannada-medium student, her vocabulary was limited, but the simplicity and directness of her writing was also her greatest strength. The session was thought-provoking and stimulating, while also being emotional. It made the members in the audience, especially the older ones, nostalgic about the days gone by.

When given the word "women" during a rapid-fire round of questions, Murty replied "strength", giving the audience a glimpse of her persona as a strong and charismatic woman, with words that inspire everyone, young and old.



तालीम की वजह से औरत के सृजन का दायरा बढ़ा: डॉ नुसरत मेहदी



Dr Nusrat Mehdi



Aradhana Pradhan

साहित्य और भाषा की कोई सीमा नहीं होती, हर जबान को पढ़ना चाहिए। हिंदी, अंग्रेजी, उर्दू, के साथ फारसी और अरबी का साहित्य भी मैं पढ़ती रही। जब आप बहुत सारी जबान को पढ़ते हैं तो आपके ज्ञान का दायरा बढ़ता है। इसलिए लगातार पढ़ते रहना चाहिए। यह कहना है प्रख्यात शायरी डॉ नुसरत मेहदी का। मेहदी प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन द्वारा रेखा के सहयोग से आयोजित लफ़्ज़ कार्यक्रम में श्रोताओं से मुखातिब थीं। आरंभ में उनका स्वागत अहसास वूमेन राजस्थान और मध्य भारत की समन्वयक अपरा कुच्छल ने किया। उन्होंने भारतीय भाषाओं को बढ़ावा देने के लिए फाउंडेशन की गतिविधियों की चर्चा की और उर्दू, अरबी, फारसी भाषाओं को बढ़ावा देने के लिए सहयोगी रेखा के प्रयासों और प्रायोजक श्री सीमेंट की सराहना की। कुच्छल ने डॉ मेहदी के परिचय के साथ ही आगे की चर्चा के लिए अहसास वूमेन आराधना प्रधान को आमंत्रित किया।

प्रधान ने मेहदी के ही एक शेर के साथ उनसे उर्दू, अंग्रेजी, फारसी इन तीनों जबान में एम.ए. करने की वजह पूछी? मेहदी ने कहा, "भाषा पुल का काम करे, तोड़ने का काम न करे। मैं जहां भी गई, वहां की जबान, तहजीब और अदब को समझने की कोशिश की।" शोध का विषय निर्भया जैसे हादसों के बाद जो ट्रामा पैदा हुआ, उस पर रखा। अपनी पहली रचना के बारे में बताते हुए कहा कि यह एक कहानी थी, नाम था 'मैं क्या हूं।' मैं तब दसवीं कक्षा में थी, मैंने रेडियो पर यह कहानी पढ़ी। मेरे परिवार में साहित्य का माहौल था। मैं अभी विद्यार्थी ही हूं।

अध्ययन से आपका लेखन और व्यक्तित्व दिखाई देता है। आपके पसंदीदा शायर और लेखक? के उत्तर में मेहदी ने कहा, "मैंने गालिब, फैज सभी को पढ़ा। पर आम फहम जबान में बशीर बद्र साहब का लिखा, उनका कलाम सबसे प्रभावित हुई। मैंने शायरी में उन्हें ही आदर्श माना। मैं मध्य प्रदेश उर्दू अकादमी में उनके साथ सचिव रही। उनसे बहुत कुछ सीखा। प्रधान के अनुरोध पर डॉ मेहदी ने सुनाया—

इश्क में मजनूँ-ओ-फ़रहाद नहीं होने के
ये नए लोग हैं बर्बाद नहीं होने के
ये जो दावे हैं मोहब्बत के अभी हैं जानां
और दो-चार बरस बाद नहीं होने के
क्या कहा तोड़ के लाओगे फ़लक से तारे
देखो इन बातों से हम शाद नहीं होने के...

एक सवाल के उत्तर में डॉ मेहदी ने कहा कि दिल्ली, लखनऊ, मुंबई में शायरी के बहुत चाहने वाले हैं। पर देश में बहुत सारे सुल्तानपुर, बुरहानपुर जैसे छोटे शहर हैं, जहां आम अवाम भी मुशायरे को समझती है। ये शौकीन लोग आज भी किताबें मांगते हैं। जबकि देश के बाहर के मुशायरों में केवल चुने लोग होते हैं। इसलिए मैं अपने

हिंदुस्तान के मुशायरों की तारीफ करूंगी। बीसवीं सदी की शायरी में औरत के दुख दर्द और बाद में सारा आसमान खुला होने के सवाल पर डॉ मेहदी ने कहा, "एक जमाने में औरत को अपनी जबान में शायरी की इजाजत नहीं थी। शिक्षा के बढ़ने के साथ उन्हें अपने अंदर के सलाहियत का भान हुआ। कुछ पुरुष भी साथ थे। धीरे-धीरे उसने अपने संघर्ष से अपने आपको दर्ज किया। तालीम इसकी वजह बनी, उसके सृजन का दायरा बढ़ा हुआ। वह बराबर से पढ़ने लगी। उसने विरोध के बावजूद मर्द का पूरक बनकर काम किया। इसमें हमारी पीढ़ी की भूमिका अहम है।" डॉ मेहदी ने कहा कि प्रतिभा जेंडर की मुहताज नहीं है। फिर भी लेखन, प्रकाशन, मंच पर स्त्री-पुरुष को लेकर आज भी भेद है। डॉ मेहदी ने कुछ अशआर भी सुनाए—

आप शायद भूल बैठे हैं यहां मैं भी तो हूँ
इस ज़मी और आसमां के दरमियां मैं भी तो हूँ...

अक़ को भूल जा कुछ देर तो नादानी कर
तू मेरे ख्वाब उठा इनकी तो निगेबानी कर

डॉ मेहदी ने म. प्र. उर्दू अकादमी द्वारा तलाशे जौहर कार्यक्रम की चर्चा की, जिससे हिंदी और उर्दू के कई कलाकार सामने आए। उन्होंने अपनी यह नज़्म भी सुनाई—

खाना-वीरान तो नहीं हो तुम
मुझसे अनजान तो नहीं हो तुम
इतने बेध्यान तो नहीं हो तुम
आप करो गिले शिकवे
कोई मेहमान तो नहीं हो तुम
इश्क में काम अक़ से लगे
इतने नादान तो नहीं हो तुम...

आज के शायरों में उन्होंने शाहनवाज अंसारी, सलमा शाहीन, मलका नसीम, जायरा निगार जैसे युवा शायरों की तारीफ की और रेखा के प्रयासों की तारीफ की। सवाल जवाब के सत्र में डॉ मेहदी ने एस शाकिर अली, जसवीर नैय्यर, डॉ नीता सिंह, शुचि शुक्ला, निलिमा देशपांडे और डॉ वेदुला रामालक्ष्मी के सवालों के उत्तर में बताया कि रवायती शायरी खुद को मनवाने की शायरी थी, उसके बाद बगावती शायरी आई कि पुराने खयालात को मानने के बावजूद हम ऐसा करेंगे, क्योंकि यह हमारी पहचान है, और आज बराबरी की शायरी है। इस सवाल पर कि क्या इश्क में वाकई आदमी निकम्मा हो जाता है? डॉ मेहदी ने कहा कि एक जमाने में इश्क था और शायरी करते थे, तो वही करते थे। पर अगर आज आप फनकार हैं तो जिंदगी के तकाजे भी पूरा करने होते हैं। मेरा कहना है कि कोई भी तालुक है, इश्क है तो वह हमारी कमजोरी क्यों बने, वह ताकत क्यों न बने। मेहदी ने अपनी चर्चित पुस्तकों साया साया धूप, मैं भी तो हूँ, फरहाद नहीं होने के तथा निबंध संग्रह आप कब हंसेंगे कामरेड का उल्लेख किया। डॉ मेहदी ने मीर अनीस की शायरी को भी याद किया।

लफ़्ज़ के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट। रेखा और अहसास वूमेन का सहयोग मिला।

आखर राजस्थान में इस बार रही हाड़ौती के गीतों की गूंज

ऐरी पढ़ लिख बेटी म्हारी राज करैगी

कारां मोटरां में बैठी बैठी फरैगी... यह गीत कवि मुरलीधर गौड़ ने प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की प्रेरणा और ग्रासरूट मीडिया फाउंडेशन के सहयोग से आयोजित आखर राजस्थान में बतौर अतिथि वक्ता सुनाया। राजस्थानी माटी, कला, साहित्य, संस्कृति, भाषा और बोली को समर्पित आखर राजस्थान में कवि ने अपने जीवन, रचनाकर्म पर संवाद के साथ ही सामाजिक चेतना पर आधारित कई स्वरचित कविताएं और गीत भी सुनाया। गौड़ से संवादकर्ता की भूमिका साहित्यकार विजय जोशी ने निभाई।

ग्रामीण परिवेश में गीत लिखने की प्रेरणा कैसे मिली? के सवाल पर गौड़ ने बताया, "कोटा जिले के हिंगी ग्राम पंचायत में पिता रामकल्याण गौड़ और मां कंचन बाई के यहां मेरा जन्म हुआ। घर में शुरू से ही गाने बजाने का माहौल था और यह मुझे विरासत में मिला। दिन में स्कूल पढ़ने जाता और रात में मंदिर में कीर्तन करता। पिता मूर्तियां बनाते और चित्रकारी करते, साथ ही खेल, तमाशे और नाटक होने पर रामलीला में रावण की भूमिका भी निभाते थे। गांव में लोग मुझे रावण का बेटा ही कहते थे। चित्रकारी करने पर मां ने कभी नहीं रोका। दीवाली पर लिपाई पुताई के बाद भी मैं दीवारों पर चित्र बना देता था। गीत गाना भी विरासत में मिला। गांव से 6 किलोमीटर दूर जोलपा में कक्षा 7 में था तो राजस्थान के प्रसिद्ध कवियों का कार्यक्रम हुआ। वहीं कवि दुर्गादान सिंह गौड़ के गीत सुनकर मुझमें भी गीत लिखने की हूक जागृत हुई।"

गीतों में लोक भाव और संवेदना के बहुविध आयाम और पहले गीत के भाव कैसे उपजे? पर गौड़ का उत्तर था, "मैंने सातवीं कक्षा में पहला गीत लिखा तो उसे सभी ने सराहा। हायर सेकंडरी में भी लिखता रहा। कोटा में डीसीएम में ऑपरेटर की नौकरी लगी तो साहित्यिक माहौल के साथ कवि गोष्ठी में भी जाने लगा। पहली ही गोष्ठी में जोरदार प्रोत्साहन मिला और आकाशवाणी से बुलावा भी आया। तब से अब तक गीतों की यह यात्रा अनवरत जारी है। राजस्थानी मेरे संस्कारों में है जो मां की घुट्टी और लोरी सुनकर बड़ी हुई है। इसमें हर बात कहना आसान है। इसीलिए मैं अपने संस्कारों की भाषा राजस्थानी में लिखता हूँ और लिखता रहूंगा। गौड़ ने जोशी के अनुरोध पर गुरु महिमा गीत सुनाया—

गुरुब्रह्मा गुरुविष्णु

गुरुदेवो महेश्वरः

साक्षात् जो परम ब्रह्म छै अस्या गुरु जी नै नमन करौ

ज्ञान का भंडार ज्योंको नहीं कोई आर पार

थांकी ही माया मैं डूब्यो छै जी सारो संसार

मंदिर में पाओ कभी मस्जिद में पाओ जी

गुरुद्वारा मैं तो कभी जोगियां की लार लार

थांकी कृपा सूं तर जावै, लूला लंगड़ा अर बहरा...

गुड्डी यानी पतंग गीत की संवेदना से जुड़े सवाल के उत्तर में गौड़ ने कहा, "कई बार हम बहुत कुछ करना चाहते हैं लेकिन समय और परिस्थितियां हमें नहीं करने देती हैं। मैं यह भी जानता हूँ कि परेशानियों से जूझना ही जिंदगी है। जो हार गया वह क्या जिंदगी जिया? इसीलिए मैंने यह गीत यों लिखा—

कैड तो पवन तेज कैड कम

साथ न देवें यो मौसम

कस्यां उड़ै रै म्हारी गुड्डी

कागज घणो नरम...

मन मैं आवैं अलंग्यां चोढ़

चाहूं जठी गगन में मोड़ूं

इं पतली सी नरम डोर सूं

धरती आसमान ने जोड़ूं

आज नजर की भीत लोंघ म्हूं

तोड़ूं कई भरम...



Murlidhar Goud



Vijay Joshi



Pradakshina Pareek



Pramod Sharma

माण्ड बेटी माण्ड गीत पर गौड़ ने कहा, "बेटी पढ़ी लिखी होगी, मां पढ़ी लिखी होगी तो समाज में उन्नति करेगी देश उन्नति करेगा। ग्रामीण क्षेत्र में बेटियों को दोयम दर्जा के भाव पर मैंने यह गीत रचा—

माण्ड बेटी माण्ड

माण्ड आड़ी लकीर, माण्ड खड़ी लकीर

दायां हाथ को चूल्हो री, बायां हाथ को चूल्हो

माण्ड ऊपर मुखी चूल्हो, माण्ड नीचें मुखी चूल्हो

माण्ड गोळ अण्डो माण्ड, बीझणी को डण्डो माण्ड

ऐरी पढ़ लिख बेटी म्हारी राज करैगी

कारां मोटरां में बैठी बैठी फरैगी

बदल्यो जमानो बेटी तू भी तो बदलऽरी

थारै आगें खुशियां ये कब सूं मचलऽरी

अणपढ़ बायरां दबैल रही मरदां की

फेर कस्यां जीवती मांछी नै तू नंगळरी

म्हारी कड़वी बातां का जे घूंट भरैगी

कारां मोटरां में बैठी बैठी फरैगी...

शृंगार गीत की चर्चा पर गौड़ ने कहा कि मैंने अधिकतर विरह शृंगार के गीत ही लिखे हैं, जैसे—

गाउं गीत हरखूं तन मन में

म्हूं वांकी अगवाणी में

कद सूं बैठी आस लगायां

काई लावंगा सैनाणी में

वह भी आच्छूया न लागै जी, जे छा मन भावणा

कोरा-कोरा लागै अब माई का मनावणा

नींद भागी कोसां दूरै, ताक री छै अखियां

नरम गदला होग्या अब कांटा भरा बिछावणा

सोच सोच म्हूं होई दूबळी

रूपगी रोटी पाणी मै।

गौड़ ने त्योहार गीत भी सुनाया, जिसमें नायिका अपने नायक के इंतजार में यों कल्पना करती है—

जे घर होता री भरतार, मजो दूणो हो जातो री

मीठी चीज वांके संग और मीठी लागती

नमकीन देखतां ई और भूख लागती

हरख हरख सब काम कर लेती हां

भागी भागी फरती म्हूं तो भी यूं न थाकती

म्हूं करती जब मनवार भोजन कतनो भातो री

जे घर होता री भरतार मजो दूणो हो जातो री

जगत में अध्यात्म रंग के सवाल पर गौड़ ने चीरहरण की लीला पर एक गोपी के मन की भावना को यों उजागर किया—

कब तक ठाड़ी रहूं सायरो ले जमुना का नीर को

दे दे अब तो महाचोर तू काई करैगी चीर को...

जोशी ने उलाहने के इस भाव गीत पर गौड़ के हरिया रे हरिया गीत संकलन को याद किया, तो गौड़ ने जंवाई को बुलाने की परंपरा से जुड़ा गीत—

हरियां री हरिया गेहूं घणा

खेत सुहावणा लागै घणा...

सुनाने के साथ ही अपना पसंदीदा गीत भी सुनाया—

मत पटको रंग सायबा जी म्हूं मरु लाज की मारी

मरु लाज की मारी जी म्हूं छुई मुई की क्यारी...

अंत में प्रमोद शर्मा ने अतिथि कवि गौड़ और संवादकर्ता जोशी के साथ श्रोताओं का आभार व्यक्त किया।

प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की ओर से ग्रासरूट फाउंडेशन के सहयोग से आयोजित आखर राजस्थान के प्रायोजक हैं श्रीसीमेंट

यह धरती, हमारी परंपरा और हमारे पूर्वज एक हैं: सरसंघचालक मोहन भागवत



Dr Mohan Rao Bhagwat



Dr Khwaja Iftikhar Ahmed

सं गठन कोई एक रचना नहीं है, अपनेपन का भाव है। हिंदू-मुसलमान एकता, मेरी समझ से यह बात ही भ्रामक है। हिंदू-मुस्लिम दो हैं ही नहीं, वे एक ही हैं। उन्हें जोड़ना क्या, ये जुड़े हुए ही हैं। ये जब मानने लगते हैं कि हम जुड़े हुए नहीं हैं, तब दोनों संकट में पड़ जाते हैं। यहां यही हुआ है।" राष्ट्रीय स्वयंसेवक संघ के प्रमुख सर संघचालक मोहन भागवत ने यह बात डॉ ख्वाजा इफ्तिकार अहमद की पुस्तक *द मीटिंग ऑफ माइंड्स, ब्रिजिंग इनिशिएटिव* का लोकार्पण करते हुए कही। कार्यक्रम में पुस्तक के अंग्रेजी संस्करण के साथ हिंदी और उर्दू संस्करणों का भी लोकार्पण हुआ। हिंदी की पुस्तक *वैचारिक समन्वय-एक व्यवहारिक पहल* नाम से प्रकाशित हुई है। इस कार्यक्रम का आयोजन राष्ट्रीय मुस्लिम मंच की ओर से प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन द्वारा शब्दों की दुनिया को समर्पित कड़ी किताब के तहत श्री सीमेंट के सहयोग से किया गया।

कार्यक्रम के आरंभ में डॉ इफ्तिकार की इस पुस्तक पर समाज की अजीम शख्सियतों के संदेश वाली फिल्म दिखाई गई, जिसमें इंद्रेश कुमार, अवधेशानंद, सैयद अहमद बुखारी, स्वामी चिदानंद सरस्वती, इमाम उमर अहमद इलियासी, सैयद गुलाम किराजा दस्तगीर, अल्लामा मुफ्ती मुहम्मद तौसीफ, मुफ्ती अब्दुल कासिम नूमानी, सिराजुद्दीन कुरैशी आदि के संदेश शामिल थे। दीप प्रज्वलन और राष्ट्रगीत *वंदेमातरम* के बाद संचालक ने लेखक डॉ ख्वाजा को आमंत्रित करते हुए कहा कि लफ्जे ख्वाजा में भाईचारा, जहनियत सबकुछ आ जाता है। यह एक सिलसिला है। एकजहती, मोहब्बत उनका उद्देश्य है। अब आप सीधे उन्हीं से सुनें।



(From left) Lt Gen Zamiruddin Shah, Ram Lal, Dr Krishna Gopal, Prof Shahid Akhtar, Dr Mohan Rao Bhagwat, Dr Khwaja Iftikhar Ahmed, Dr Indresh Kumar and Gen V.K. Singh

डॉ ख्वाजा ने कहा कि आप सबने अभी डॉक्यूमेंट्री देखी। डॉक्यूमेंट्री तो बहुत बनती हैं। पर समाज में विपरीत विचार और धर्म के लोग किसी एक बिंदु पर इकट्ठा हो जाएं यह करिश्मे से कम नहीं है। कांग्रेस के साथ मैंने चालीस साल काम किया। जो सुनता चला आया उसके चलते मैं संघ को अच्छा नहीं मानता था। 1996 में जब संसद में अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी की सरकार के अविश्वास प्रस्ताव पर पांच दिन चर्चा चली, तो मैं सुनता रहा। मैंने खुद से पढ़ कर सीखने और समझने का फैसला किया। उस समय मैंने कुछ प्रश्न निर्धारित किए, जिनके उत्तर तलाशने का क्रम चलता रहा। उसी से यहां तक पहुंचा। यह आसान बात नहीं है। 95 साल से ये जो दूरी है, जो एक-दूसरे के लिए शको सुबहात है, उसे दूर करने के लिए यह जो क्षण है उसे पकड़ने का अवसर है। अब तक जो कटा, जो गुजरा वो गुजरा, अब पार्टनरशिप होगी। देवबंद और बरेली में भी दूरी दूर हुई। उन्होंने इस पुस्तक के लेखन और इस कार्यक्रम में मददगार प्रोफेसरों, अनुवादकों, संपादकों और प्रकाशकों के साथ इंडिया इस्लामिक सेंटर का आभार व्यक्त करते हुए यह मशहूर शेर पढ़ा—

मोहब्बत के लिए थोड़ी है ये जिंदगी

नफरत के लिए वक्त लाऊं कहां से

उन्होंने कहा कि कभी ये ख्वाब देखा था कि यह दिन आएगा, और यह आ गया।

मंजिल मुझे मिले इसका गम नहीं

मंजिल की जुस्तजू में मेरा कारवां तो है...

शेर के साथ डॉ ख्वाजा ने कहा, "मेरा जीवन हमेशा जोड़ने में बीता, तोड़ने वालों से केवल गाली खाई। इस पुस्तक का चालीस फीसदी भाग छद्म धर्मनिरपेक्षतावादियों पर है। मैंने सच को अच्छे लहजे में कहा है। किसी को बख्शा नहीं है। नरसिंह राव, अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी, सुधींद्र कुलकर्णी को याद करते हुए डॉ ख्वाजा ने कहा, "1920 में खिलाफत आंदोलन हुआ। उस समय हिंदुस्तान के मुसलमान ने गलती की। हिंदुओं ने आठ सौ साल में हिंदू राष्ट्र नहीं मांगा। यह तो किसी और धरती की बात थी। आरएसएस और हिंदू महासभा, सावरकर, गोलवलकर, हेडगेवार के मन में मुसलमानों को लेकर जो विचार है,

वह खिलाफत मूवमेंट से आया। 1947 में भी यह उसी से आया था। विभाजन ने हमारे जिस्म के दो टुकड़े किए। उस विभाजन ने सबसे बड़ा नुकसान हमारा किया। आज हमें गले में पट्टा डालना पड़ता है कि मुझ पर भरोसा कर लो मैं मुसलमान हूं। हमारा परिवार एक, भाषा एक, संस्कृति एक, किसी ने नहीं कहा कि तुम अपना मजहब छोड़कर आओ। ईमानदारी जरूरी है।" सेकुलर सियासत पर चोट करते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि जिस रास्ते पर सेकुलर राजनीति चल रही है वह अंत की ओर है। आज हमारा कोई संगठन नहीं है। जब संगठन नहीं होता, तो विचार नहीं होता। जब हम फासला करके चलेंगे, जब किसी के जज्बात, अहसासात को चोट लगाएंगे तो चोट पहुंचेगी।

उन्होंने कहा कि 2014, 2019 में कुछ लोगों ने पूरी ताकत लगा ली। कोरोना को लेकर लोग सोचते हैं कि 2024 में सब पलट जाएगा। मान लीजिए वह पलट जाए। तो क्या होगा? चुनाव होते हैं, होते रहेंगे, पर जो आधार संघ के पास है। करोड़ों लोग जो संघ में लीन हैं। जितने अंदर और गहराई तक आप पहुंच चुके हैं इसका वास्ता भाजपा के जीतने, हारने भर से नहीं है। हमारा ताल्लुक चौबीस घंटे का है। मैं एक मुसलमान हूं और कुरान कहता है कि मैंने तुम्हें पहचान दी है, पर लड़ो मत। ऐसे में हमें एक-दूसरे को समझने की जरूरत है। जो धार्मिक आस्थाएं हैं, उन्हें समझ लें तो इसमें कहीं दिक्कत नहीं है। मुस्लिम समुदाय की ओर से दो बात अपने हवाले से कह रहा हूं। हम निराकार को मानते हैं.. आप निराकार और आकार दोनों को मानते हैं। अगर मैं ऐसी क्रिया से अपने को अलग मानता हूं तो आप बुरा मत मानिए। यह आस्था का सवाल है, यकीन का सवाल है। अगर मैं आकार में जाता हूं, तो मैं अपने धर्म से बाहर चला जाऊंगा। आप इसकी संवेदना को समझना होगा। आप इसे समझिए। दूसरी बात, कुरान और आयतों की बड़ी चर्चा होती है। किसी के धर्म को पढ़ कर आप ज्ञानी नहीं हो सकते। अगर आप पढ़ लो तो उस पर टिप्पणी मत करो। हम केवल सम्मान करना जानते हैं।

ब्रिगेडियर उस्मान और परमवीर हवलदार अब्दुल हमीद को याद करते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि कुरान की आयतें हमें अपनी माटी से अलग नहीं करती हैं। उनका नाम अली हो या राम, अराजक तत्व राष्ट्र के दुश्मन हैं। विश्व गुरु हम बंटवारे से नहीं बनेंगे। इस धरती पर जो पैदा हुआ है वह यहां का है। गलत और सही पर इंसाफ होना चाहिए। गलत को छोड़िए मत, सही को पकड़िए मत। विपक्ष

पर कटाक्ष करते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि जिन्होंने टोपी पहनी, रोजे रखवाए, चारों चढ़वाई वे हमें उल्लू बना रहे। खिलाफत वापस नहीं आने वाली है। प्रधानमंत्री मोदी, जो अंदर हैं वह बाहर हैं। मोस्ट डिसाइसिव प्राइम मिनिस्टर हैं। कन्चिसिंग पीएम हैं। सबका साथ, सबका विकास, सबका विश्वास। यह एक ऐतिहासिक अवसर है। एक बार इन्हें गले लगाओ, पहचानो। एक वक्त होता है, जब इज्जत से रास्ते बनते हैं। असम और भागलपुर के दंगों का जिक्र करते हुए उन्होंने मुसलमानों को चेताया कि वे हकीकत को समझें। मैं इस राष्ट्र में, यहीं पैदा हुआ, यहीं से जनाजा उठेगा। जिसकी मिट्टी से पानी न हो तो वजू करके हम नमाज पढ़ते हैं। अल्लाह और इस देश की परंपरा और आस्था को गवाह बनाकर अहद कर लें।

सरसंघचालक मोहन भागवत ने मुस्लिम राष्ट्रीय मंच की सराहना के साथ उद्बोधन में कहा, "ये ऐतिहासिक है या नहीं है, लेकिन सार्वजनिक रूप से संघ के किसी पदाधिकारी द्वारा ऐसी किसी पुस्तक का लोकार्पण पहली बार हो रहा है। इसे लेकर बहुत सारे तरह की अटकलें हैं। संघ वही है, जो नब्बे साल से है। हमको अच्छा काम करना है, इसके लिए इमेज की परवाह नहीं रही कभी। हमारा संकल्प सत्य है, इरादा पक्का है, पवित्र है। इसलिए यह मेक ओवर एक्सप्रेसराइज नहीं है। यह विरोध में नहीं है, प्रतिक्रिया में नहीं। दुनिया चाहे जो समझे हम अपना काम करते जा रहे हैं। मुझे यह पता है कि हम जो करेंगे उससे सबका भला होगा, किसी का बुरा नहीं होगा।

"यह अगले चुनाव में मुसलमानों का वोट पाने का तरीका नहीं है। वोट की राजनीति में हम नहीं हैं। संघ पार्टी पॉलिटिक्स में नहीं है। हमारे विचार को जिससे ताकत मिलेगी, मदद मिलेगी हम उसका समर्थन करते हैं। हम राष्ट्र के पक्षधर हैं। हम पार्टी के पक्षधर नहीं हैं। संघ के जन्म से हमने यह तय किया है कि हम राजनीति में नहीं जाएंगे। कुछ काम ऐसे हैं, जिसे राजनीति नहीं कर सकती। मनुष्य को जोड़ने का काम राजनीति से नहीं हो सकता है। राजनीति प्रभाव डाल सकती है, बिगाड़ सकती है। इसलिए जो जोड़ना चाहते हैं, उन्हें उतनी चिंता करनी पड़ती है। इसलिए जब पहली बार ऐसी पहल हुई, बुद्धकाल से अब तक का विश्लेषण करते हुए ऐसी पुस्तक आई कि डायलॉग बढ़ना चाहिए, तो मैंने सरसरी तौर पर देख कर ही तय कर लिया कि इसका लोकार्पण करूंगा। इस पुस्तक में एक प्रामाणिक आवाहन है, एकता का आवाहन है, दिल से आवाहन है कि हम एक हैं, हमको एक होना है। राष्ट्र की प्रगति एक समाज, संगठित समाज के बिना नहीं हो सकती। संगठित समाज यानी आपस में आत्मीयता से जुड़ा हुआ समाज। हम लोग अलग नहीं हैं क्योंकि हमारे देश में यह परंपरा नहीं है कि आपकी पूजा अलग है, इसलिए आप अलग हैं।"

लेखक डॉ ख्वाजा के कथन का उल्लेख करते हुए भागवत ने कहा, "आपने कहा कि हम निराकार की पूजा करते हैं। हम ऐसा नहीं कहते कि निराकार के साथ आकार की भी पूजा करो। इसी तरह यह कहना गलत होगा कि मैं निराकार



Mohammad Bilal

को मानता हूं इसलिए तुम आकार को मत मानो। सबकी अपनी श्रद्धा है। हिंदुओं में भी हम एक पर ही श्रद्धा करते हैं, पर हमारे यहां धर्म पूजा पद्धति से ये तय ही नहीं होते। हमारे समाज में किसी की श्रद्धा का आदर से हमारी आस्था भंग नहीं होती। मैंने एक कहानी सुनी है कि हजरत मूसा जा रहे थे। एक बूढ़ा बैठा था तो कह रहा था कि हे ईश्वर तुम मेरे बुलाने से भी मत आना क्योंकि तुम उतनी दूर से जन्नत से अगर चलकर आओगे, तो तुम्हारे पांव दबाने के लिए मेरे पास हाथ तो है, पर तेल नहीं है... ऐसी ही ढेरों बातें वह कह रहा था, तो हजरत मूसा गुस्सा हो गए, क्योंकि वह भी निराकार को ही मानते थे। वह बोले तुम पागल हो गए हो, भगवान ऐसे आते हैं क्या? वह उसे डांट रहे थे कि उनके दिल में आवाज आई, 'वह जो कह रहा उसे कहने दो, तुम तो मुझे जानते हो। उसका दिल दुखा के तुम मेरे दिल को न दुखाओ, ऐसा करके तुम मुझे कलंकित कर रहे हो।' भारत में हम इसे मानते आए हैं। इतने देवी-देवता हैं। नए-नए देवी देवता भी आ रहे हैं।

पुराने विस्मृत होते जा रहे हैं। अब रुद्र और इंद्र की पूजा कहाँ हो रही? ठीक भी है। जाकी रही भावना जैसी, प्रभु मूरत देखी तिन तैसी।' इसमें झगड़ा कहाँ है।

"हम एक हैं, और हमारी एकता का आधार है हमारी ये मातृ भूमि। हम केवल इस पर जन्मे हैं इसलिए ऐसा नहीं है। हमारी परंपरा, सुजल, सुफल, मलयज, शीतल की परंपरा रही है। यह हमें इतना देती है कि हम साथ में रह सकते हैं। आज भी यह भूमि, इतनी जनसंख्या को पाल सकती है। आगे खतरा है, जिसे सोचना होगा, पर आज दिक्कत नहीं है। इसलिए हमको बाहर जाना नहीं पड़ा और इसका भूगोल ऐसा है कि पुराने जमाने में यहां बाहर से आना मुश्किल था। जो आ गया वह रह गया। हमको यह कल्पना भी नहीं कि कोई दूसरा है, हमसे अलग है। भाषा तो बहुत पहले से अलग-अलग है। अथर्ववेद का एक श्लोक है। उसमें लिखा गया है—

जनं विभ्रति बहुधा विवाचसं,

नाना धर्माणं पृथिवी यथौकसम्...

अनेक भाषाओं के बोलने वाले, अलग धर्मों को मानने वाले। आज की भाषा नहीं है। उपनिषदों में एक कथा है कि एक ज्ञानी व्यक्ति था। उसके पास पांच लोग गए। एक पृथ्वी की पूजा करता था, एक अग्नि की, एक वायु की। उससे पूछा किसकी पूजा सही है। एक ने कहा अग्नि की, उसने कहा इसीलिए तुम्हारा सब ठीक है। तुम्हारा

कल्याण है, तुम्हारे घर में सब ठीक है। दूसरे ने कहा वायु की। उसने उन्हें भी वही जवाब दिया। सबको एक ही जवाब। फिर सब कन्फ्यूज हो गए, तो उसने हंस कर कहा, 'देखो तुम अपनी भावना से जिसकी पूजा करते हो वह एक अंश हैं, जिस पूर्ण के अंग हैं, उन्हें न देखने से यह दिक्कत है।' तो यह हमारा आधार है। इस तरह यह धरती, हमारी परंपरा और हमारे पूर्वज एक हैं।"

भागवत ने आगे कहा, "हजारों साल से, चालीस हजार साल से सभी भारतीयों का डीएनए एक है। इस आधार पर हम विचार करते हैं तो अपनापन आता ही है। इस विचार के साथ हम एक होते हैं। राजनीति से यह भाव नहीं



Prof Shahid Akhtar

आता, पर संघ इसे पहले से मानता है। यह ठीक है कि खिलाफत आंदोलन के बाद हिंदुत्व शब्द आया, पर संघ की विचारधारा साफ है। डॉ हेडगेवार साहब ने कहा कि देखो भाई, हिंदू अपनी दुरावस्था के लिए के लिए अंग्रेजों, मुसलमानों को दोषी मान रहा है, यह गलत बात है। हां इतिहास में कुछ उपद्रव हुए हैं, उससे नुकसान हुआ। आज भी हम दोनों एक दूसरे को यह कह सकते हैं। पर हेडगेवार साहब का कहना था कि तुम अपने घर में थे, अपने घर के मालिक थे, तुम्हारी विचारधारा इतनी उच्च है फिर भी ऐसा हुआ तो तुम दूसरों पर दोष कैसे दे सकते हो, जरूर तुम्हारे अंदर कोई कमी होगी, उसे दूर करो। उस पर विचार करो। संघ के बारे में अपने देश के तथाकथित अल्पसंख्यकों, तथाकथित में इसलिए कह रहा कि वे हमारे अपने समाज के, हमारे भाई हैं, एक ही हैं। कभी भी भाषा, पंथ, संप्रदाय, धर्म के नाम पर किसी को कम या ज्यादा नहीं कहा। लेकिन आज कहा जाता है।"

सरसंघचालक ने आगे कहा, "एक समाज के मन में यह डर भरा गया है कि संघ वाले तुमको खा जाएंगे। दूसरा एक डर लगता है, हिंदू बहुमत वाले देश में तुम रहोगे तो तुम्हारा इस्लाम चला जाएगा। अन्य किसी देश में ऐसा होता होगा, मेजॉरिटी, माइनॉरिटी पर हमारे देश में ऐसा नहीं है। हमारे यहां जो जो आया है, चाहे जिस भी कारण से आया हो वह यहां रहा है, मौजूद है। यह हमारी विचारधारा है। हर बात को बोलने का अर्थ है। संघ कभी छोटा था तो उसकी बात नहीं सुनी गई। आज सब सुनते हैं। हमारा समाज और संविधान ऐसा मानता है। आज अगर मेजॉरिटी से माइनॉरिटी का कोई विरोध होता है तो मेजॉरिटी से ही उसके खिलाफ आवाज उठती है। आज मैं आग बबूला होकर भाषण दे दूं, तो हिंदू हमारा साथ नहीं देगा, क्योंकि वह आततायी पर चलने वाला नहीं है। वह जानता है कि कितना भी अलग है, अगर वह शत्रु भी है, पर अगर जीव है, तो उसे भी जीने का हक है।"

उन्होंने कहा, "गुरुनानक देव, तुकाराम, रामदास स्वामी के अभंग हैं कि अल्लाह ईश्वर अलग नहीं एक हैं। इन्हें एक करने का सतत प्रयास करना है। यह एकता सत्ता से नहीं होगा। यह समाज से होगा, समझदार लोगों के बीच बातचीत से होगा। देश के एकता में बाधक बातें होती हैं तो हिंदू के खिलाफ हिंदू खड़ा होता है। हो सकता है मुसलमानों के बीच भी ऐसा होता हो, इसलिए समझदार लोगों को बात करनी होगी। बंच ऑफ थॉट्स में ऐसा लिखा है। हम हिंदू संगठन हैं, हम हिंदू को मजबूत बनाना चाहते हैं। पर हमारी हिंदू दृष्टि वसुधैव कुटुंबकम की है। इसलिए हिंदू-मुस्लिम संघर्ष का एकमात्र समाधान 'संवाद' है, न कि 'विसंवाद'। संघर्ष से हमेशा नुकसान होता है। इसलिए कभी हमें यह बात करनी होगी। डायलॉग को लेकर एक मत यह भी आता है कि चर्च की ओर से है लोगों को धर्मांतरण के लिए समय मिले, इसलिए बात में उलझाकर रखो। पर हम ऐसा नहीं मानते। हमें कुछ अलग से पाना नहीं है। ये देश हमारा है, समाज हमारा है। हमारा कुछ भी हो, हमारे समाज का भला। कोई माने न माने, हमें करना है।

"एकता की आधारभूमि, हमारी ये धरती, मातृभूमि, परंपरा, संस्कृति और



Anindita Chatterjee (left), executive trustee of Prabha Khaitan Foundation, with Anantmala Potdar, Ehsaas Woman of Delhi

पूर्वजों का गौरव है। बाकी हमारे यहां हर चीज की आजादी है। हमारे यहां कुछ बदलना नहीं होता। राम कृष्ण परमहंस जैसे संत ने प्रत्यक्ष उपासना करके यह देख लिया। इस्लाम की भी उपासना करके उन्होंने देखा और कहा, जो तो मत तोतो पथा रास्ते अलग हैं मंजिल एक ही है। यह सत्य है। यह हमारा विचार है। मन और बुद्धि से परे जाकर उनका अनुभव करिए, तो यह पता चलेगा। मुस्लिम फकीरों के शिष्य हिंदू हैं। हिंदू संतों के भी मुस्लिम शिष्य हैं। हमें इसे समझना चाहिए। रास्ता लंबा है। मंजिल दूर है। लोगों के मन में अंधकार है। इसे दूर करना होगा। दुष्ट लोग विरोध करेंगे। आपके प्रामाणिक आवाहन को संघ मानता है। संघ मानता है कि किसी की पूजा उसका अपना प्रयास है। किसी की श्रद्धा को हमें भंग नहीं करना चाहिए। यह पाप होगा। ऐसा होगा तो इसका प्रायश्चित्त करना होगा। सत्य और न्याय के साथ हमें आगे बढ़ना है। किसी की धर्म, पूजा, मजहब का अनादर इस देश में नहीं हो सकता, पहरावा तो बहुत पहले से अलग है।

मुसलमानों के आने के पहले से। हमारी तहजीब अलग अलग है। सत्यार्थ प्रकाश, आर्य समाज भी है, मंदिर वाले भी हैं। जैसे ये चलते हैं वैसे ही हमारे पूर्वज, हमारे अपने भाई क्यों नहीं साथ चल सकते।"

सरसंघचालक ने कहा कि खरी बात का मतलब छिपाना नहीं होता। भारत हमारा राष्ट्र है। गौ पूज्य है। पर लिंगिंग अपराध है। इसका न्याय होना चाहिए। उन्होंने कहा, "डरने वाला व्यक्ति एकता नहीं कर सकता। एकता प्रेम से होती है। निःस्वार्थ भाव से होती है। लोकतंत्र में हिंदू वर्चस्व, मुस्लिम वर्चस्व की बात नहीं हो सकती। यहां केवल भारतीयों का वर्चस्व हो सकता है। यह मातृभूमि, ये पूर्वज हमारे हैं। चालीस हजार साल से हमारा डीएनए एक है। इस पहल का स्वाभाविक प्रतिसाद है कि हमारी हैसियत बन गई है। सभी हमारे लिए हिंदू हैं। भारत का एक भी आदमी अगर अक्षम है, तो परम वैभव भी अधूरा है। सर्वे संत निरामयः...के साथ उन्होंने कहा हम कदम आगे बढ़ाने के बाद अब पीछे नहीं जाएंगे। सब मिलकर इस देश को बनाएंगे। हम हिंदू कहते हैं, आप भारतीय कहो, नाम का झगड़ा छोड़िए। सब मिलकर हिंदुस्तान को बनाइए।"

डॉ शाहिद अख्तर ने धन्यवाद देते हुए हिंदुस्तान फर्स्ट, हिंदुस्तानी बेस्ट और मुस्लिम राष्ट्रीय मंच की ओर

से 'संवाद...संवाद...संवाद' का भरोसा दिलाया और सरसंघचालक, लेखक डॉ ख्वाजा सहित संघ के पदाधिकारियों, मेवाड़ इंस्टीट्यूट, मीडिया, स्थानीय प्रशासन के अलावा प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन और प्रायोजक श्री सीमेंट का आभार व्यक्त किया। कार्यक्रम का समापन राष्ट्रगान से हुआ।

मुस्लिम राष्ट्रीय मंच एवं प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की ओर आयोजित इस किताब के प्रायोजक हैं 'श्री सीमेंट'।

A Hearty Conversation



Dr Samin Sharma

Prabha Khaitan Foundation delved into the matters of the heart, quite literally, with their virtual **Ek Mulakat Vishesh** session with Dr Samin Sharma, a renowned interventional cardiologist. Dr Sharma, who is the senior vice-president, Operations and Quality, at the Mount Sinai Hospital as well as the director of interventional cardiology and president at the Mount Sinai Heart Network, is known for performing high-risk, complex coronary interventions.

He opened his conversation with Karishma Mehta, banker, lawyer and **Ehsaas** Woman of Mumbai, by talking of his heart's desire as a child in Jaipur—to go to the US—and he worked steadily towards achieving it. Sharma stressed the importance of staying committed to one's goals and working towards making it a reality. "Thinking doesn't take you anywhere. There's the thought, and then your work for that thought. That is the key. Always want it, and work towards it, and work hard," he said. And work hard he did, topping the MBBS exams not just in SMS Medical College, his alma mater, but in Rajasthan



Karishma Mehta

University. He told the audience fondly that people's names were written in white if they topped SMS, and in gold if they topped Rajasthan as well; his name glitters in gold on the SMS porch.

Sharma, however, was not satisfied by achieving that feat. He had his ambitions to chase, so he went to the US even though he had no relatives or connections over, only a dream. He worked many odd jobs before he got

hired by Mount Sinai, but after he did, he worked hard to master his procedures, which was instrumental in making Mount Sinai the top-rated hospital for Cath Lab Volume in the US. He spoke about how often, when the volume of procedures goes up, the quality goes down. That did not happen because he had his institution's support, which meant he had the adequate manpower, the space, and all other necessary resources.

Sharma stayed in the same hospital his whole career and worked on making it the best, but there was something missing. "I was missing something", he said, "I was missing India. I told myself 'you've done something good here, you have to do equally good there'." This led him to establish a healthcare centre in Jaipur, a centre which is efficient, reputed, and yet serves everyone who needs it. He said that he had envisioned, and successfully built, a hospital that people look to come to because they know that things will be done correctly, in a transparent fashion and at an affordable price. It is connected with a foundation that can support people who cannot afford it, which means that anyone who enters the healthcare facility gets treatment. This hospital was his payback, to his city and his homeland. While speaking about this achievement, he made a claim that very few people are able to make. "I am satisfied on both fronts—on the Indian front and the American front."

One of the many hats that Sharma dons is that of a teacher. Back in 2009, much before Zoom became popular, he thought of creating a website through which doctors across the world could attend procedures and learn from him. He mentioned how, in India, there are said to have been *rishi-munis*, learned sages, who knew a lot about Ayurveda, but took their knowledge with them, without sharing. He did not want that. He not only broadcasts his procedures live but also gives those in attendance the chance to ask questions, with the help of a moderator, during the virtual sessions. He gets approximately 30,000 hits every session, proving his popularity as a teacher. Sharma has received many best teacher awards in Mount Sinai and students under his residency have consistently had a high pass rate.

Dr Sharma is passionate about what he does and believes that it is that passion that makes you keep going. "You undertake several procedures, but if you love what you do, you never work a day in your life," said Sharma, but was quick to add that he, however, does not advocate tireless work either. He said he works six days a week, while Saturday is a day for rest and recuperation. "Even a machine needs rest and Saturdays are battery-charging



Shubh Singhvi

days for me," he said.

The talk then turned to the present COVID-19 pandemic and how it was affecting heart health. He approached the issue from two aspects, the direct effect of COVID on the heart and the present pandemic situation and its effect on heart health. The latter has led to a drop in reported heart attacks, one because people are eating healthier and there is less pollution, but also, sadly, because the fear of COVID is keeping people away from hospitals. But as a direct result of COVID, several people were coming in with a weak heart, even months after recovery. Sharma recommended that every patient get an ECG and an echocardiogram after recovering, just so that they can ensure there has been no damage to the heart. This damage is, in most cases, reversible if discovered on time, so it is highly advisable to get a checkup.

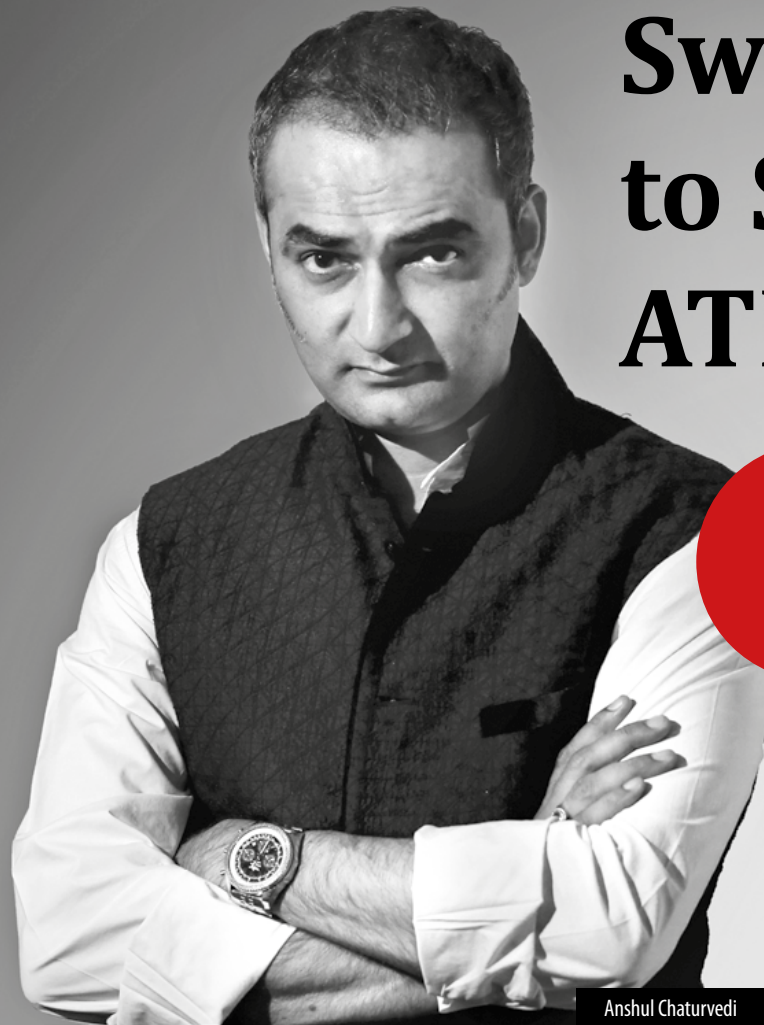
As for the vaccine, Sharma was emphatic. "Everyone should get the COVID vaccine," he said. Sharma told the audience that even when a heart patient is on strong blood thinners, he asks them to stop it for two days before the shot, lest they get local side bleeding, but to take the shot. He kept reiterating the importance of the vaccine. He also addressed concerns of the audience about COVID and how it affects children and said that children, largely, are unlikely to get too affected by COVID, and that even if they do get the infection, it will often be a positive test with mild or no symptoms.

Overall, Sharma's words were reassuring, informative, and inspiring. Our healthcare staff are our heroes, and Dr Sharma is a powerful example.

Ek Mulakat Vishesh is presented by Shree Cement Ltd

Thinking doesn't take you anywhere. There's the thought, and then your work for that thought. That is the key. Always want it, and work towards it, and work hard

Swamiji's Secret to Surviving the ATM-PAYTM Life



Anshul Chaturvedi



Nila Madhab Panda

He is not one for mind-refining self-help books or soul-enriching religious books. A journalist by profession, he admits to never relating with people who write those types of books—the super-achievers and the uber zen individuals. Yet, his latest book is about none other than Swami Vivekananda—a man who achieved a lot and was synonymous with spirituality.

So, how would Anshul Chaturvedi categorise his latest book, *The Vivekananda Handbook for Everyday Living*? It is "more of a travelogue where Vivekananda is the travel guide," was the second-time author's answer at a recent virtual session of **The Write Circle Special**, organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**.

Introduced to the audience by **Ehsaas** Woman of Chandigarh Rishma Gill, Chaturvedi opened up about his 30-year tryst with Vivekananda, his latest book and the impetus behind writing it, to filmmaker and

environmentalist Nila Madhab Panda.

Panda, a Padma Shri winner, who is known for directing films like *I Am Kalam* and *Kadvi Hawa*, began the conversation by describing Chaturvedi's book as "a much-needed mental and emotional booster shot" to help us get through the difficult pandemic times. He said that while dealing with "everything from conflict and confusion to education and relationships", Chaturvedi's book has impressively managed to explain and make Swamiji's words accessible to the reader in about 200 pages.

In doing so, Chaturvedi has, as one of his colleagues from Bengal had put it, "taken him (Vivekananda) off the calendar on the wall and brought him slightly closer" to the people.

Speaking about the book, Chaturvedi was quick to declare what it is not—"a scholarly analysis of Vivekananda's religious views"—in a bid to explain

I wanted to tell the story of the normal life, what I call the ATM-Paytm space—getting appraisals, salary cuts, increment and facing hirings and firings—and how you can still have some ideological anchor

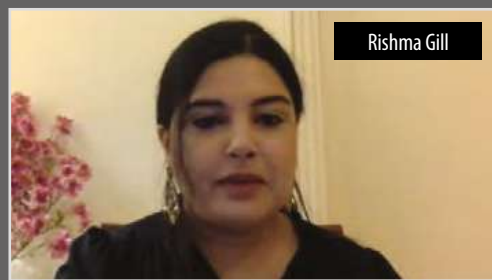
what his book stands for. "I didn't write this as a *gyaan* statement. The idea is that the book should be easy to comprehend and implement—not be read as an intimidating religious book primarily about the greatness of the person concerned," he elaborated.

The title of the book, then, is key to understanding Chaturvedi's actual goal—to highlight the relevance and "the practicality of his (Vivekananda's) thoughts in our daily life." The author admitted that people who picked up his book thinking it to be a religious treatise, will be left surprised. He attributed his different take on the subject of Vivekananda and his teachings to the monk himself. "The reason the book hasn't come along that way is also because of the same philosophy which this individual (Swami Vivekananda) planted into my head very early when I was younger and more combative—I will not tailor my thought process to meet conformity."

With utmost candour, Chaturvedi revealed, "He (Vivekananda) refused to Christianise or Hindu-ise or any '-ise' his message other than 'my-ise'. So when you write about him, your reflex begins to toe the same line. So, I have kept the book my-ised and that is it." Furthermore, since many scholars have written about Vivekananda in the last 100 years, Chaturvedi felt that he didn't need to reiterate his (Vivekananda's) greatness. "I'm not qualified to comment on it. I am only qualified to comment on how he has shaped my thinking. I kept the book limited to what I have practically experienced—how I saw him through my eyes," he explained.

As for what got him started on his journey of writing this book—it was a column he penned in 2004 called *Vivekananda: The Manager Monk* and the confusion it caused in everyone's minds. "There was a contradiction—how can Vivekananda be a manager because for management you go to Stephen Colby.... But for me, it was the natural reference point. That's when I realised that somehow what I occasionally say about Vivekananda is not the common pattern," he revealed. It was his attempt at voicing all his contradictory views about Swamiji's words that finally took the form of *The Vivekananda Handbook for Everyday Living*, which has been a decade in the making.

His dissatisfaction with the existing self-help books was another reason for writing. He admitted that he cannot identify with the sorted views of extremely successful people, nor with the always-at-peace views of those whose



"bread and butter is religion". "The problem when I am consuming these stories (of the rich or the religious) is that they are in different realities from mine... the middle-aged, middle-class dilemmas and issues that we live through seem in a different space," he revealed.

None of those books resonated with him. "I wanted to tell the story of the normal life, what I call the ATM-Paytm space—getting appraisals, salary cuts, increment and facing hirings and firings— and how you can still have some ideological anchor," he stated, adding, "I understand that the super-achiever has the authority to write and I understand that the super-detached person sitting in a temple has a perspective, but I am not leading either of those two lives."

And Vivekananda's words rang out to him like no other. "I realised that in my actual space all my battles were answered by scanning through one person's writings.... It began to change the way I used to think," noted Chaturvedi.

Through the course of the chat, Chaturvedi also spoke about lessons on self-reliance, purpose and loss that he internalised from Vivekananda's words.

The session came to a close with Chaturvedi answering a number of insightful audience questions and leaving a message for the youth—"Do not be in a hurry to believe. Question; keep questioning very hard. About someone as brilliant as Ramakrishna, Vivekananda said, 'For six years I questioned him every single step of the way, only then did I actually believe him'. I think sometimes we believe quickly and stop exploring further.... Collective thinking is not the most sorted way to grow at the youth stage. Think for yourself, read for yourself, make your notes and ask your questions. Be aggressively inquisitive."

*The Write Circle Special is presented by
Shree Cement Ltd*



On Belonging from In-Between



Mohammad Tufael Chowdhury



Mita Kapur



Peter Griffin

There's a world in between the two worlds Mohammad Tufael Chowdhury occupies. This place of "in-betweenness" — being Bengali but not Bengali enough, British but not British enough, formed the heart of the discussion at the July session of **The Universe Writes** by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, in association with Shree Cement and Siyahi. In conversation with writer-editor Peter Griffin, Chowdhury dwelt on this experience, captured in his book *Border Crossings*.

Chowdhury is one of the first few British-born Bangladeshis to have studied at Oxford University. Currently an adviser to several ministers and CEOs across 80 countries, he has also worked with the BBC, *Financial Times*, CNN and *Forbes*.

After introductions by Mita Kapur, the CEO of Siyahi, Chowdhury and Griffin discussed how, as a Muslim British citizen of Bangladeshi heritage, Chowdhury has a unique identity. The conversation revealed several facets of Chowdhury — as a writer, a reader, a Muslim and a citizen of the world.

It began with a question on how Chowdhury came to books. He confessed that he wasn't much of a reader as a child, he really started exploring books in university. As for writing, his start was quite bumpy. In fact, he failed two of his preliminary examinations at Oxford! Though he felt it was "slightly embarrassing" to talk about it, the story is in the book, because he wanted to "go all-in".

The book also captures his family's eagerness to keep their Bengali culture alive and how he and his sister were asked to speak only in "*shuddho*" (pure) Bangla, rather than English or even the Sylheti dialect of his father's native land. He also mentioned how he was taught to read the Arabic of the Quran at a young age, but he never understood what it meant. This always played on his mind, till he started learning Arabic after his divorce.

He considered this a fresh start and took an Arabic course as well as writing classes. With a newfound interest and proficiency in the language, he went to Damascus, where he would be compelled to practise Arabic since nobody understood English. Here, he started writing blogs and sent some samples to a journalist, Robert Fisk.

Fisk told Chowdhury that he was in a unique position of being brown, Muslim and thus easily assimilated into places like Damascus, while also having a Westerner's outlook. This perspective became the backbone of *Border Crossings*.

The book was ready, but publishers were not — if the writer was not a reformed member of the Al Qaida or from a terrorist group, they did not want the story. But Chowdhury wanted to share his experience of the in-betweenness, and believed that it would resonate with others like him. He wanted to talk about the racial and communal discrimination he had faced abroad, and how when he was in Bangladesh, he was treated as an outsider or called an "Englishman".

Eventually *Border Crossings* was published, telling Mohammad Chowdhury's story as he navigates his complex identity, but also the story of countless other migrants who find themselves in a crisis of belonging when they do not know where exactly "home" is.



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



Politics for Peace and Progress



Preet Kaur Gill



Rishma Gill

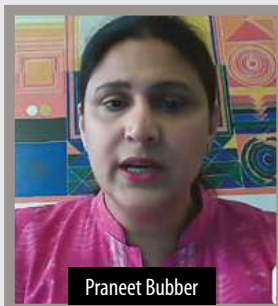
Politics is about changing lives", said Preet Kaur Gill, the first female Sikh MP of the United Kingdom, who was the guest for a virtual session of **Tête-à-tea** organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. In conversation with her was **Ehsaas** Woman of Chandigarh, Rishma Gill. Preet spoke about her inspiration to join politics and the accomplishments and struggles of Indian-origin migrants abroad.

The conversation opened with discussions of Preet's childhood. Her parents were first-generation migrants to the UK; they had moved there from Punjab when her father was 15 and her mother was eight. "Those were difficult times for migrants... and the gurdwara became a place of support, not just for worshipping purposes but also for things like jobs and welfare," she recalled about the hardships her family faced. Even highly qualified people were forced to work in places like foundries and bakeries, while women often sewed at home to contribute to making both ends meet. Her father became the Pradhan of the first gurdwara in Guru Nanak Dwara Smith, and she later realised how extraordinarily progressive he and his committee were. She saw her father helping people, talking to people, assisting women who had moved to the UK from Punjab and got married there without any family support.

Preet revealed how her political career had been inspired by what she saw her father do. Her father was active in politics, and she had accompanied him for

campaigns and distributed leaflets with him when he ran for councillor; although he was not successful, it had sowed a seed in Preet's mind. She was always interested in politics, eagerly discussing and debating issues with her father but admitted that she became a counselor only because her father pushed her. She was grateful for the support of her family, her partner and other close ones in being able to achieve what she had. Having faced a lot of sexism herself where she had been told to go home and look after her kids, she believes women need the support of their near and dear ones to combat it. She spoke about how, as a woman, it becomes important to pick one's battles, because if one were constantly fighting, it would become exhausting.

When asked which achievement she took most pride in, Preet, who is the Labour Cooperative MP from Birmingham, spoke about being able to mobilise the current government and hold them accountable, which was significant, particularly since she had realised the limitations of the Opposition early on in her career. She had wanted to help people in a wider context, but as a politician, she was compelled to think about her constituency, the people she was serving, and the issues that they were facing locally. Opposition, she said, can be very frustrating in terms of achievements, so people had to innovate and engage in creative problem-solving, which was what she had to do.



Praneet Bubber

In terms of India, she said what stood out to her was the need for universal healthcare. There is a divide between public and private hospitals that should not exist. Whether or not someone was rich should not determine whether they would live.

"Be ambitious, dream big, just go for it, and never lose sight of where you came from", said Preet, when asked what advice she had for her daughters. Despite how accomplished she is, Preet is grounded in her Sikh values, and her intelligence and humility were evident in the grace with which she answered the questions that were put to her.



Dr Sudhir Bhandari

Decoding the Pandemic with Dr Bhandari



In today's world, when most information is consumed via social media, chat forwards and high-on-drama-yet-low-on-detail journalism, getting credible, data-driven knowledge from an actual expert is much-needed. This is especially true during this COVID crisis.

That is what a recent COVID-special **Ek Mulakat Vishesh** session, organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, offered to its patrons—an *aavashyak mulakat* with renowned physician and diabetologist, Dr Sudhir Bhandari.

But it is not just his "doctor" designation that makes him most-suited to talking facts to laymen, but also his status as a senior professor of medicine and the principal and controller at SMS Medical College, Jaipur—he can talk simply and effectively yet get his message across to the masses.

In conversation with **Ehsaas** Woman of Nagpur, Jyoti Kapoor, Dr Bhandari started by highlighting



Jyoti Kapoor

the need for talks like these—to address burning issues, help everyone be wiser and combat fear psychosis. He stated, "We are going to talk about the journey of the COVID pandemic from the initial days to the vaccination, the upcoming third wave and when we can get back to mainstream life."

Deeming it a new disease pattern that no one anticipated, Dr Bhandari reminded the audience that Rajasthan had the first cases of COVID in India—three tourists from Italy. "The institute to which I belong became the pioneers to use a drug called hydroxychloroquine and some HIV antiretroviral drugs to build a bridge between the point of no treatment and the point of specific treatment. Our patients got cured with this combination," explained Dr Bhandari, whose team was approached by the United Nations and the White House for relevant information and feedback.

He went on to highlight the history of the pandemic through the two waves and the progression of the virus after every wave. He pointed out the different patterns noticed during them—that first wave majorly affected people who were 60+ years and those between 40 to 60 years, albeit mildly. He highlighted that the second wave took a more aggressive toll, even on the younger populace, and 80 percent of patients required oxygen as compared to the earlier 20 percent.

Using a fact-rich slideshow, Dr Bhandari, who has penned over 80 articles for prestigious medical journals, continued to explain more about the virus. He pointed out how it affects the body, how to take care after contracting COVID and when someone should consult a doctor.

He gave the audience a low-down on the viral replication phase when the active virus stays in the body and the second, inflammatory phase. "The first week, 80 percent of cases do not need anything, only in 20 percent cases will the oxygen level fall. So, you need to be very careful if there is a fever or cough and cold. If you see that your oxygen saturation is above 94 percent, it is okay," he elaborated.

However, the resting oxygen saturation can be normal in cases even though there is a need to go to the doctor. To know whether someone falls in that category, Dr Bhandari suggested a quick test. "I would like everyone to learn about the Six-minute Walk Test. You need to place the pulse oximeter on your finger and walk for six minutes. If there is more than a 4 percent fall in the oxygen saturation levels, you need to contact a doctor," he explained, adding that now there are a few first-week management drugs in the market. He then spoke about the second week's inflammatory phase and what it entails in detail.

Moving on to the next topic—lockdown, he explained its need in the context of the R-factor. "R-factor means

the number of people that one infected person can spread the virus to. Towards the beginning of the first phase, the R-factor was 80 to 90. By the end of it, it was down to 28 to 30. Now the R-factor is down to 1 to 1.5! So, you see, because of the high infectivity, a lockdown was the need of the hour," he said. "Another reason is that when a virus spreads, it changes its character. It can work in our favour if it becomes benign. But as we have seen with COVID... the Delta strain is very aggressive and caused thrice the number of deaths. So we needed total isolation to prevent the virus from changing its character," he added.

Partial measures and partial lockdowns are ineffective in preventing the increase in the number of COVID cases, whereas complete lockdown has great advantage. So, if we are not in complete lockdown, then our self-discipline, our masking and social distancing should be so strong that our discipline coupled with partial lockdown should give us the same result as a total lockdown

He used graphical depictions of case histories and incident reports Jaipur to further drive home the point that it is all or nothing in the lockdown game. "Partial measures and partial lockdowns are ineffective in preventing the increase in the number of COVID cases, whereas complete lockdown has great advantage. So, if we are not in complete lockdown, then our self-discipline, our masking and social distancing should be so strong that our discipline coupled with partial lockdown should give us the same result as a total lockdown," he opined.

He also emphasised the importance of getting vaccinated and explained why, despite being vaccinated, we are not immune to COVID-19. "Vaccination merely protects you from critical disease and the ventilator, but you might still have a mild or asymptomatic disease.

Hence, COVID-appropriate behaviour has to be followed till 80-90 percent of our population have been vaccinated," he explained. Dr Bhandari, who was the first in his state to get vaccinated, also busted a few myths circulating about the COVID vaccines.

The award-winning doctor patiently answered a stream of audience questions on all things COVID and convalescence—booster shots, third wave, non-specific varied symptoms in children, general post-COVID care and more. He concluded his talk by once again pointing out the bottom-line—"Don't worry about the third wave, just get vaccinated and continue to follow COVID-appropriate behaviour."

Ek Mulakat Vishesh is presented by Shree Cement Ltd

A Childhood Amidst Conflict

The July session of the **Write Circle** hosted Farah Bashir, in conversation with Swati Vashishtha, discussing Bashir's first book, *Rumours of Spring — A Girlhood in Kashmir*. Farah Bashir is a former photojournalist with Reuters, and now works as a communications consultant, while Swati Vashishtha is a journalist and formerly the head of bureau at CNN-News 18.

The book is part-memoir and covers the stories of the author's own and other women's experiences of living in a conflict zone. Bashir said her book tells the story of ordinary women in conflict zones, something underrepresented in the media. "How I grew up — I hadn't read that anywhere," she revealed.

Pointing out that "Kashmir has always been broken into binaries, and the same applies to women," Bashir said she went beyond this divide; she has known many shades of women, and has written about them.

The book opens with Bashir and her sister going to get their hair done in a salon, a day before Eid. When they step out, the world seems to have turned over. When they reach home, they realise a cousin who was out with his father buying shoes, had been shot in the crossfire, and bled to death.

Bashir said that to this day, she has difficulty celebrating the festival. As a young girl, she blamed herself and her trip to the salon, which left her with a habit of pulling her hair out.

Bashir described her shock after she returned to school after the exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits, realising that her friends were missing and her life had transformed almost



Swati Vashishtha



Farah Bashir

overnight. She was deeply affected, as were other youngsters, resulting in widespread mental health issues. Older people faced their own set of problems — Bashir's grandmother used to spend almost all of her time by the window, looking out at the world beyond. With curfews and more chaos, the windows were boarded up, literally cutting off her lifeline.

Asked if writing serves as a catharsis for her after all she has been through, Bashir said, "It would have been, if it had stopped." The conflict in Kashmir goes on, and when the same things happen repeatedly, writing cannot provide catharsis. She said what *did* help was "a lot of faith". She went to shrines and though she did not pray, she often cried. She said she had gone through so much as a child, and it gave her strength. "I really borrow resilience and courage from that younger self of mine", Bashir said.

There have been larger, more intangible losses too. From the four-day unsaid ritual of rice-washing to the shehnai player that came on Eid, the conflict has destroyed many cultural aspects of life in Kashmir.

Nevertheless, Bashir's book is named after spring, symbolising a distant yet ever-present hope. As Bashir showed through the excerpt she read out, *Rumours of Spring* is as much about girlhood and innocence as it is about conflict and curfews. It is a book that brings to the fore people who have been long marginalised, yet have shown tremendous courage and resilience in the face of loss and longing.

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



Anshoo Sharma



Dr Goutam Sen



Dr Meeta Singh



Lokendra S. Rathore



Manasvini Mathur



Nandini Atal



Puja Arya



Shivranjani

प्राथमिक शिक्षा में शामिल हो राजस्थानी भाषा



Bhanwar Lal Suthar



Mahendra Singh Chhayon

आखर राजस्थान में वरिष्ठ साहित्यकार भंवरलाल सुथार से संवाद शैली में ऑनलाइन चर्चा हुई। साहित्यकार महेंद्र सिंह छायाण ने कार्यक्रम के आरंभ में कहा कि सुथार ऐसे कवि और रचनाकार हैं, जो अपने रचनाकारों के कारण विशेष पहचान बनाते हैं और लोक रचना में आरुढ़ रहते हैं। संवाद के संपादित अंश:

राजस्थानी साहित्य के प्रति आपका झुकाव कैसे हुआ? राजस्थानी भाषा की मान्यता से आप कैसे जुड़े?

कक्षा 7 में पढ़ते समय स्कूल की लाइब्रेरी में विजयदान देथा की *बातां री फुलवारी* पढ़ी तो सोचा कि ऐसी भाषा तो मैं भी लिखूँ। 11 वीं कक्षा में रचनात्मक लेखन पर लिखने का अवसर मिला। 1971 युद्ध के घटनाक्रम को शिक्षक के कहने पर 32 पेज की कॉपी में पूरा लिख दिया। इसके बाद जोधपुर आने पर प्रिंटिंग प्रेस में कंपोजिंग का काम मिला। सीताराम लालस का *राजस्थानी शब्दकोश* उनके अर्थ और रूचि के साथ किया। दूसरा काम 'मारवाड़ रा परगना री विगत' जिसमें ठेठ देशज शब्द थे, को नारायण सिंह जी ने छापा। इससे राजस्थानी में रूचि बढ़ी।

कंपोजिटर रहते हुए जिन साहित्यकारों से जुड़ाव हुआ, उनमें खास-खास लोग कौन हैं?

45 साल पहले जिन साहित्यकारों से संपर्क हुआ, उनसे आज भी वैसे ही आत्मीय संबंध हैं। मैंने नारायणसिंह भाटी की परंपरा का अनुशीलन किया है। इतिहास, हिंदी और संस्कृत के विद्वान बराबर प्रेस में आते थे, जिनमें रामप्रसाद व्यास, डॉ रामप्रसाद दाधीच, विजयदान देथा, रघुनाथसिंह खींची, कोमल कोठारी, सौभाग्यसिंह शेखावत, नंदकिशोर शर्मा, दीनदयाल ओझा, शक्तिदान कविया, आईदान सिंह भाटी, डॉ कल्याण सिंह शेखावत, अर्जुन सिंह शेखावत, डॉ सोहनदान चारण, सुखबीर सिंह गहलोत, प्रोफेसर जहूर खान जो मेरे गुरु भी हैं आदि से मिलना हुआ। जहूर साहब शब्दकोश पढ़ते थे।

आपने पद्मश्री सीताराम लालस के साथ काफी काम किया। उनके बारे में बताइये?

सीताराम लालस ने 56 साल तक लगातार राजस्थानी शब्दकोश पर शब्द साधक के रूप में काम किया। वे कहीं भी होते तो सिर्फ शब्द ही देखते। एक बार प्रिंटिंग प्रेस से सड़क पार कर टेम्पो में बैठ रहे थे, तो उनके छाते की नोक एक साइकिल में फंस गई। साइकिल सवार गिर गया और लालस जी गिरते-गिरते बचे। जब मैंने उनको संभाला तो वे बोले, मैं ठीक हूँ पर यह बताओ कि वो आदमी क्या बोल कर गया। क्या मालूम वो शब्द शब्दकोश में है कि नहीं। एक व्यक्ति ने उनको अपनी राजस्थानी पुस्तक भेंट कर उनकी राय पूछी। 2 दिन बाद उसकी पुस्तक वापस करते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि इसमें कोई नया शब्द नहीं है। उनका बेटा कैलाश हमेशा कहता है कि उनके दो बेटे हैं, एक मैं और एक शब्दकोश।

हाल ही में आपकी पुस्तक 'कोरोना काळ' छपी है। इसकी प्रेरणा आपको कहां से मिली?

कोरोना के समय लोगों में भय व्याप्त था, लेकिन समय भी था। इसका सदुपयोग करते हुए सोशल मीडिया पर लिखा। लोगों की प्रतिक्रिया अच्छी रही। उमरदान का 'छप्पनियां काळ' ध्यान में आया तो मैंने इसका नाम 'कोरोना काळ' रख दिया। लोगों के सुझाव पर इसे किताब का रूप दे दिया।



Pramod Sharma



Dr Ramratan Latijal

आपने राजस्थानी हिंदी-अंग्रेजी शब्दकोश का संपादन किया है। इस बाबत जानकारी दीजिए?

नारायण सिंह जी की इच्छा थी कि एक छोटी डिक्शनरी आए। उन्होंने अपने कार्यालय में काम भी शुरू करवाया लेकिन संतुष्ट नहीं हुए। बाद में मैंने यह काम किया। सुखबीर सिंह जी ने सहयोग कर अंग्रेजी का भी कार्य किया। इसमें वही शब्द काम में लिए हैं कि जो आम बोलचाल की भाषा में हैं।

मैंने सुना है कि आप व्हाट्सअप ग्रुप के माध्यम से भी दोहा लिखना सिखा रहे हैं?

छंद में महिलाओं की संख्या कम है इसको देखते हुए श्याम महर्षि और रवि पुरोहित ने एक समूह बनाया। इसमें 100 महिलाएं जुड़ीं और रूचि से सीखा। महिलाओं ने दोहे भी लिखे। पूरे राजस्थान की महिलाएं इसमें शामिल रहीं, जिनमें संतोष चौधरी, उर्मिला गौड़, रेखा लोढ़ा, मोनिका राज, सपना व्यास, शकुंतला अग्रवाल, मंजू शर्मा, सरोज कंवर आदि खास हैं।

मातृभाषा में प्राथमिक शिक्षा के बारे में आपका क्या विचार है?

प्राथमिक शिक्षा से ही राजस्थानी होनी चाहिए। कक्षा 11 में राजस्थानी विषय से उसकी नींव कमजोर हो जाती है। इस बारे में मैंने लेख भी लिखा था। त्रिभाषा फार्मूले को लागू करते हुए राजस्थान सरकार राजस्थानी भाषा को प्राथमिक शिक्षा में शामिल करे। भारत सरकार इसे संवैधानिक मान्यता दे। अपने सभी सांसदों को भी बोलना चाहिए। यह होगा तभी अपने संस्कार और संस्कृति बचेगी।

आप युवा एवं नए लेखकों को क्या संदेश देना चाहेंगे?

मार्गदर्शन जरूरी है। पुरानी पीढ़ी को चाहिए वो नए लेखकों का खुले दिल से मार्गदर्शन करे। नए लेखकों में गजेंद्रसिंह राजपुरोहित, महेंद्रसिंह छायाण, विनोद स्वामी, दूल्हाराम सारण, नहुष व्यास, मदनगोपाल लड्डा, राजू बिणजारियां, डॉ लक्ष्मण सिंह, महेंद्रसिंह तंवर, शक्तिसिंह तंवर, मदनसिंह सोलंकी, मांगूसिंह राठौड़, मोहन पुरी, डॉ रामरतन लटियाल, गौरीशंकर प्रजापति आदि लगातार लिखते रहे तो राजस्थानी का भविष्य उज्ज्वल है।

कार्यक्रम में पुस्तक *कोरोना काळ* की समीक्षा करते हुए डॉ रामरतन लटियाल ने कहा कि सुथार ने इस समय की सबसे बड़ी समस्या कोरोना पर सृजन किया है। पुस्तक में देवी-देवताओं से कोरोना को मिटाने की प्रार्थना की गई है। कवि अपने दोहों से आम आदमी का मनोबल बढ़ाता है।

आफते केड़ी आ पड़ी माच्यौ त्राहिमा

सूंडी बिंध्यो रामजी कोविड काम तमा

कवि इन रोगों के पनपने का कारण प्रकृति से छेड़छाड़ बताता है, साथ ही लोगों से कोरोना गाइड लाइन का पालन करने और काढ़ा लेते हुए मन को मजबूत बनाए रखने का भी आग्रह करता है। शराब की दुकानों पर छूट को लेकर सरकारों पर व्यंग्य है। पुस्तक के 108 दोहे एक से बढ़कर एक हैं। राजस्थानी तीज-त्योहार का वर्णन आम जनता से जुड़ाव को बताता है। पुस्तक राजस्थानी साहित्य की धरोहर है।

आयोजकों की ओर से प्रमोद शर्मा ने महेंद्र सिंह छायाण और डॉ रामरतन लटियाल का उल्लेख करते हुए अतिथियों, श्रोताओं का आभार प्रकट किया।

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



Cinematic Stories of a Rollercoaster Life



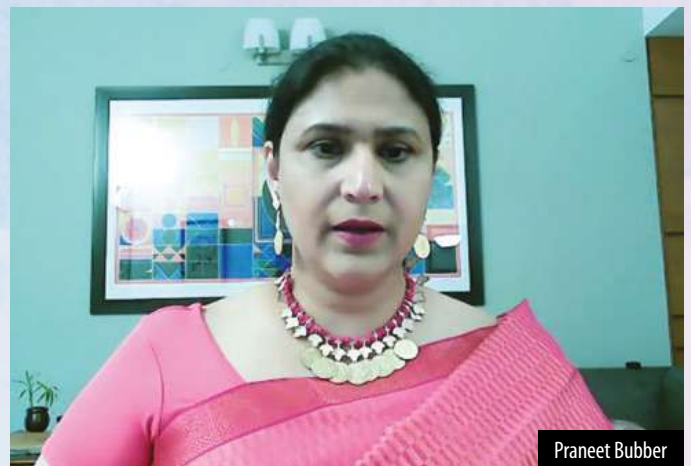
Kabir Bedi

Kabir Bedi has always cut a striking figure thanks to his dashing demeanour and his performative prowess. With over 70 Bollywood films and several Hollywood and European screen and film credits to his name, he has garnered both popular and critical approval through his stage and screen career. From his depraved and nefarious roles in films like *Khoon Bhari Maang* and *Octopussy* to his depiction of the mad monarch in *Tughlaq* and his swashbuckling stint in *Sandokan*, he has been lauded at home and across the globe.

His heights of success, however, have been dappled with lows and struggles—both of the professional and the personal variety. But far from letting them pull him down, Bedi has managed to take them in stride. In fact, at 75, he has taken all the ups and downs of his life and used them to add another feather in his illustrious cap—that of an author.

At a recent virtual meet of **The Write Circle, Punjab**, organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, Bedi opened up to Praneet Bubber, **Ehsaas** woman of Amritsar, about the ins and outs of his life.

At the session, which was opened with a welcome speech by **Ehsaas** Woman of Jalandhar, Ruhi Walia Syal, Bedi admitted that his book—*Stories I Must Tell: The Emotional Life of an Actor*—has been in the making for



Praneet Bubber

over three decades. Calling it a series of cinematic stories, he revealed, "It's been in my head for 20 years and I have tried to write it for 10 years. I decided I just have to dive in. It is now or never!"

Sadly, most of his drafts "ended up in the wastepaper basket". It was the lockdown that finally allowed him to bunker down and focus on penning his life lived across three continents and three film industries. "I felt that I've got to tell my story because I have one hell of a story to tell. I have led an extraordinary, varied life... I felt that the experiences I've had in life, the people I've met, the

relationships I've shared with each of them could be a book in itself," he said. He felt that not writing a book would be a great waste of an opportunity and a missed chance to share his incredible journey with everyone.

Speaking about his humble beginnings, he touched upon his life as a middle-class Delhi boy studying at St. Stephen's College and reporting for the All India Radio to pay for his tuition. He spoke about his incredible luck of interviewing The Beatles and how it kick-started his journey towards a life in Mumbai—in advertising, in theatre and in cinema. "When I think about it today, it seems so foolhardy. I could have landed on my face and crashed and burned. But when you make a decision and act on it boldly, the universe conspires to make your reality come true. Your life can change with a sentence overheard at a bus stop if you just learn to listen," he said about how things fell into place for him.

About his European stint at portraying the titular character of Sandokan and the fame it brought him, Bedi called it "a kind of stardom that most actors dream of but rarely achieve." He mentioned moving to the US. He spoke about living with dignity in Hollywood as the first Bollywood actor to go there and make a name for himself and the thrill of working with Hollywood greats like Roddy McDowell, Michael Caine, Omar Sharif and Roger Moore.

But unlike other actors who skirt all things unglamorous, Bedi spoke about his setbacks. He elaborated on how his popularity led him to get typecast in Italy, and he was forced to start anew in Hollywood. He revealed how he had reinvented himself as the "foreign" character, using his looks, because there were no roles written for Indians. He also spoke about his failed relationships, facing financial ruin and of course, his biggest tragedy—the death of his son—with sensitive candour.

Hence, to Bedi, his autobiography is about "his making, breaking and remaking" over the last 50 years. "It is not a catalogue of achievements, it is an emotional story told with a heart. It is a human story—of the joys and sorrows, the triumphs and the tragedies of being human," is how Bedi described it, adding, "It is about how I rose from the ruins of that to resurrect my life, myself, my soul, my career and ended up being knighted by the Italian Republic."

Over the course of the hour-long chat, Bedi also spoke about his own spiritual enquiry and how his parents affected his personality and worldview. The son of free-



Ruhi Walia Syal



Kanak Rekha Chauhan



Jasmit Nayyar

thinking, freedom-fighting, philosopher-activists, he was deeply inspired by them to have the courage to do what he wanted and never quit.

When you make a decision and act on it boldly, the universe conspires to make your reality come true. Your life can change with a sentence overheard at a bus stop if you just learn to listen

On the subject of relationships, Bubber asked Bedi to speak about the many loves of his life. Acquiescing that all his relationships had a huge impact, he confessed, "For me to say that Protima or Parveen (Babi) affected me more deeply wouldn't be right. They both affected me very deeply. But what's affected me more deeply than all of them is the relationship that I share with Parveen Dosanjh, my wife. I have finally found the love that I was seeking through three marriages, which I never found before."

The chat came to a close with Bedi stating his belief that we can recover from tragedy by finding our inner strength. "We have to all find our source of strength—to know that we can overcome—because from that decision begins the resurrection," he summed up.

The Write Circle, Punjab, is presented by Shree Cement Ltd, in association with Dainik Jagran, Taj Swarna Amritsar and Ehsaas women of Amritsar, Chandigarh & Jalandhar



Empowering the Youth: The World's Most Valuable Resource

"We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future"

—Franklin D. Roosevelt

The youth of today, approximately 1.2 billion individuals aged between 15 and 24, are in a race against time. From climate change to a precarious job market to the compulsion to hustle in everyday life, it is difficult to remember a generation of young people who have grown up with as many myriad challenges as the youth of the 21st century. Limited time and limited means have compounded these challenges, with the disastrous COVID-19 pandemic further denting the ambitions of the young.

According to recent estimates, 600 million jobs need to be created over the next decade and a half to meet youth employment demands across the world. The proportion of young people not in employment, education or training (also known as the youth NEET rate) has remained worryingly high over the past 15 years and currently stands at an alarming 30 percent for young women and 13 percent for young men worldwide.

Numbers like these have led António Guterres, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, to reiterate how it is "young people who are on the frontlines of the

struggle to build a better future for all. The pandemic has highlighted the dire need for the kind of transformational change they seek—and young people must be full partners in that effort."

To promote greater understanding and awareness on youth issues, the United Nations has been celebrating the International Youth Day (IYD) every year on August 12, with the first such occasion marked in 2000 to help draw attention to cultural and legal issues surrounding the youth. As part of IYD, concerts, cultural programmes, seminars, workshops and meetings, involving national and local government officials as well as youth organisations are held around the world.

Over the years, IYD has been used as an opportunity to stimulate conversation on a range of topics affecting the youth—mental health, civic engagement, sustainable consumption, social justice, inclusion and conflict prevention, among others. In 2021, the focus is on "Transforming Food Systems: Youth Innovation for Human and Planetary Health".

With the world's population expected to rise by another two billion in the next 30 years, merely producing a larger volume of healthier food will not be enough for human and planetary well-being. Increased production

ARTWORK BY **SUDIPTA KUNDU**

must coincide with poverty reduction, social inclusion, biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation, none of which can happen without the active and engaged participation of the youth.

To mark the IYD in 2021, a partnership has been struck with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) as well as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN and the Major Group for Children and Youth. One of the central goals for IYD 2021 is to carry the momentum generated by participants at the ECOSOC Youth Forum into the high-level Food Systems summit.

Another vital element of IYD 2021 is the #YouthLead Innovation Festival, which recognises innovative youth-led solutions for the achievements of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

At **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, we believe that

the youth are the world's most valuable resource, for it is through them that a more secure, sustainable and sensitised world can be ushered in. At the same time, we are fully aware that without adequate support, today's youth cannot build the "muscles of iron" and "nerves of steel" that Swami Vivekananda had wanted the youth of his era to harness.

For the youth to make tangible progress, society as a whole must create an ecosystem where young people feel empowered, enriched, and encouraged. The deluge of information, the aggravation of polarisation, the deepening of inequality are just some of the major obstacles that the youth must be trained to confront and counter.

To make this happen, we need a societal consensus on how dialogue for the youth, of the youth, and by the youth is no longer just a desirable feature of a globalised world, it is now a basic necessity, one that ensures that the gifts of youth are not wasted on the young.

Over the years, IYD has been used as an opportunity to stimulate conversation on a range of topics affecting the youth—mental health, civic engagement, sustainable consumption, social justice, inclusion and conflict prevention, among others

Musings on marriage & mores



Devdutt Pattanaik



Riddhima Doshi

As an expert on all things mythological, especially as it relates to and reflects on all things modern, Devdutt Pattanaik has, through his books, debunked the idea of absolute truth, defied fixed notions with alternate interpretations, and challenged heteronormativity by unearthing queer tales hidden in our ancient tomes.

With his latest book, the author-illustrator has zoomed in on the institution of marriage—a much-coveted, respected and indispensable part of Indian culture, no matter which part of the country one belongs to. Speaking about his *Marriage: 100 Stories Around India's Favourite Ritual* at the virtual session of **The Write Circle Special**, Pattanaik detailed how he took innumerable stories from *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *Bhagavad Purana* and local folk literature to explore the various facets of marriage.

Beginning the session with a fitting introduction to the man with over "50 books and 1,000 columns," **Ehsaas** Woman of Amritsar Preeti Gill passed on the mic

to **Ehsaas** Woman of Udaipur, Riddhima Doshi—the moderator for the chat.

The question, "They say marriages are made in heaven, but who decides the marriages of heaven?" kick-started the intriguing conversation where Pattanaik detailed the different kinds of marriages talked about in his book. "From *asura vivah* where you buy a wife to a *rakshasa vivah* where you abduct a wife to *Gandharva vivah*, which we now call a love marriage... or even *pisaach vivah* which is the most unfortunate of them, based on rape—the scriptures talk about all kinds of marriages, which are discussed in this book," he elaborated.

Discussing the outlook that the ancient texts had

towards marriage, he pointed out that the eight different kinds of marriages go to show that they understood the "brutality, practicality and complexity" of the institution. "It is far from simple... it is not just love-marriage or arranged marriage. Sometimes you marry for economic reasons, sometimes for political reasons, sometimes out of compulsion because life is full of challenges. Read Krishna's or Shiva's story or the *Ramayana*, and you will realise that there is no rosy picture. They talk about marriage in a very playful yet practical manner."

Pattanaik next tackled the subject of gender fluidity and "the marriage of souls" as described in old tales, and what got him interested in the topic. "We think that marriage is a fixed institution and in India, everybody is obsessed with the idea of marriage. After a certain age everyone is supposed to settle down... and the standard arguments [crop up] that marriage is between men and women. And I thought 'is that so? Where do these ideas come from?'" posed the author.

These questions about fixed notions got him started on an archival dig that led him to pen this book. "History shows that marriage is very complex, across society there are different traditions associated with weddings. So, I decided to dig deeper to see if there are [examples of] marriages between two men or of two women living together. I found a lot of stories of men living together and even women, but not of the actual rituals on how they are married," he elaborated.

This lack of evidence led him to dive into tantric texts and their clear vision of the *aatma* or soul being genderless. "*Aatma* is *aatma*. It is just there and is wrapped in different layers. The scriptures were very fluid about these ideas—that the body is a medium for the soul and the *aatma* expresses itself through the body. So, if two men or two women want to live together, the *shastras* have no problem—the Indian scriptures are very fluid and open-minded... This fluidity makes Indian philosophy very powerful," he explained in answer to Doshi's question on whether "ancient literature had a more liberal view of same-sex marriages than modern India."

Talking about the concepts of *kalyug* and *satyug*, Pattanaik said that they are childish and overly simplistic ways of looking at life. He explained that they are not meant to be interpreted literally—that they are metaphors to explain problems of life, such as jealousy, greed, anger. He says that, "If we say that there was a time when



everything was fine, it will be untrue and improbable... Be it Shivji and Shakti, Rukmini and Satyabhama, there are stories of '*ghar ka kalesh*'. The *Ramayana* had property disputes and Mahabharata had jealousy cropping in between the many wives Arjuna visits," he pointed out.

When asked about patriarchy versus feminism in ancient literature, Pattanaik explained that concepts like patriarchy or feminism need not exist in society if people are self-aware, but sadly that is rare. "I found so many instances of strong women in the scriptures—the Goddess can choose to be both Durga and Annapurna and can choose who to marry, that Lakshmi can leave Vaikuntha and come to Earth, that Damayanti can support her husband; that they had choices and voices—for me, these are stories of feminism," he said. Pointing out that since our "society is steeped in *murkhata*," these strong stories are conveniently left out while narrating the scriptures for fear that "girls will get ideas," he rued. Falling back on his decade-long role as a consultant in the

television industry, he further revealed that, thanks to strong patriarchal trends, "Even today, if women are portrayed as strong, the TRP goes down. Therefore, women are consistently shown as weaker individuals. The only strong women people seem to love watching are the evil ones."

Concluding his talk, Pattanaik reiterated his belief that "The job of the *shastras* is to provoke you and make you think about things you hadn't pondered. They have to shake up our *zameer* and question things, otherwise, they have no value."

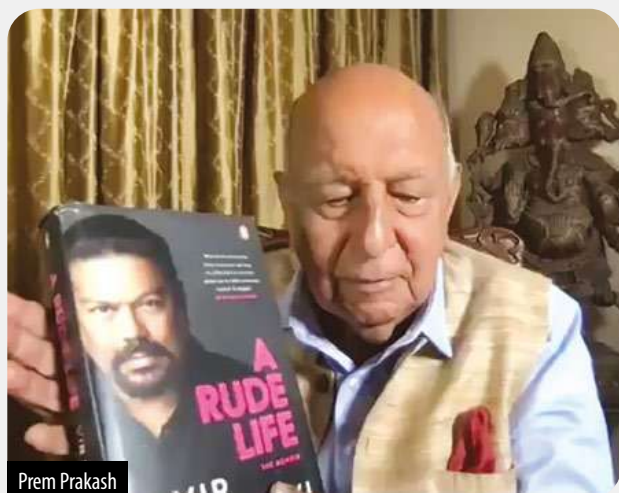
The Write Circle Special is presented by
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Journalism was a Series of Accidents: Vir Sanghvi

Vir Sanghvi has always been a brand unto himself—journalist, columnist, anchor and author are merely a few facets of the man. As a journalist, he made a name for himself as the editor, the editorial director and columnist with the *Hindustan Times*. As a columnist, he has had a thriving run as a leading food and travel writer. As an anchor, he has worked with various television channels, hosting informative, political and lifestyle shows. Finally, his role as an author, which started with a compilation of his food columns for HT titled *Rude Food*, has led him to pen five more books.

To launch his sixth—*A Rude Life: The Memoir*—Sanghvi teamed up with another stalwart from the world of journalism, Prem Prakash. The virtual event, organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, started with Soni Jain, the chairperson of Young FICCI Ladies Organisation, Kolkata, requesting Prakash to launch the book.

Prakash admitted to being greatly enthused by the prospect of the launch. "I agreed to release this book because I have high regard for Vir, particularly for how he brought about those big changes in what was Delhi's own newspaper, the *Hindustan Times*. It was a pleasure to read about it in his book," said Prakash.



In return, Sanghvi raved over Prakash's long and illustrious career as the pioneer of Indian video journalism and the founder and current chairman of ANI, India's premier news agency. "You are a legend... It is a real honour for me that you are launching the book," said Sanghvi.

The conversation turned to Sanghvi's autobiography—and what struck Prakash the most after reading it. "Now having read your book, I am surprised [to know that] you are very much a self-made man. Right from the age of 15, when you had to make decisions about how to get into school. My God! I admire you," he said, adding with a smile, "But for all that work, you've named your book *A Rude Life*! It has been anything but that... It is full of action and adventure!"

Sanghvi took the conversation forward with the story of that journey. "Yes, in my own small way, I did things myself. It happened because I was born in an upper-middle-class family and my life was going fine till my father died at the age of 50. I was an only child and my mother fell to pieces and it was left for me to try and figure out what to do next," revealed Sanghvi. What he did was to follow his father's wish



Soni Jain



Nalini Mehra

to get him educated in England, without a clue as to how or where. "I went off to England and stayed with relatives. I found the Public Schools' handbook... called various schools—some were kind and others indifferent. There was one school I was very keen on... I had nothing to lose so I called the headmaster and he said, 'Come and see me.'"

Since it all worked out the way he wanted, Sanghvi calls himself "very fortunate." "It is great to say I am self-made, but I had enormous advantages... I have been very lucky all my life to depend on the kindness of strangers... I was somebody who had nothing going for me except the decency and kindness of other people," he said.

Veering away from decisions and on to accusations, Prakash addressed another incident from the book that struck him as interesting—a police charge against Dilip Kumar for being a "Pakistani spy". Sanghvi recalled a pale-faced Dilip Kumar seeking help from his father who was a lawyer. "Even I, a small child, thought the idea was preposterous. Dilip Kumar was at the forefront of nation-building and worked with Pandit Ji... finally the matter was dropped. But it was an eye-opener for me that if the police want to get you, they don't really need much evidence. Of course, you will get cleared eventually but in the interim, you will suffer," Sanghvi reflected.

Moving on to discussing "a series of accidents" that led him down the journalistic path, Sanghvi acknowledged

that his interest in editing and writing blossomed in school. And he "became one of the youngest editors of the school magazine". However, it was during his gap year before Oxford, that he found out from his friend's mother, who worked for the people who started *India Today*, that they were "desperate for somebody who was hanging around and would do it for nothing." Sanghvi laughed as he recalled, "I was available and happy to do it. I remember in those days we would get about Rs 150 for a full-length article and Rs 25 for a small item. So no sensible person could have made a living on that but I was a kid and it came easily to me, it was fun. So that's how I drifted into journalism gradually."

The chat took a political turn as Prakash lobbed questions at Sanghvi—from *India Today* being a government mouthpiece glorifying the Emergency to the Vajpayee era to Amitabh Bachchan's stint as a politician, from rumours of P.V. Narasimha Rao and L.K. Advani's tacit understanding during the Babri Masjid demolition to Prime Minister Morarji Desai being unscrupulous, and even how much more lucrative white-collar crime is in India.

During the talk, Sanghvi also spoke about his seamless jump from print to TV, his historic run with *HT*, his experiences as a food writer and food show anchor, and finally his views of India ever being a superpower. "If we play our cards right, yes, we could become a world power. Are we playing our cards right? No, we are not!" he concluded. Nalini Mehra from Spectrum, Pune, closed the session with a vote of thanks.

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

Words with Vir

On racketeering trends:

"You've got to be stupid to be a violent criminal in India, there is much more money in white-collar crime."

On the repressive powers of the Indian state:

You can inconvenience individuals, businesses. If the law doesn't allow you to do it, change the law. Do it retrospectively. It is frightening.

On India becoming a world power:

"If we play our cards right, yes, we could become a world power. Are we playing our cards right? No, we are not!"

On police brutality:

If the police want to get you, they don't really need much evidence. Of course, you will get cleared eventually but in the interim, you will suffer.

On current media trends:

We've become a society that prizes opinion over fact, bias over objectivity, sensation over reasonableness and that's not good for the media.



Jay Vasavada

Rekindling the Love for Literature



Paras Dave

How can today's youth be encouraged to meaningfully interact with literature when Instagram is just a click away? What is the best way for teachers to incentivise youngsters to read? What goes into the making of a fulfilling literary work?

These were some of the key questions that were discussed at the latest session of **Aakhar Ahmedabad**, organised by Karma Foundation and **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. Jay Vasavada, the renowned Gujarati author and orator, was the chief speaker for the event and conversed with

moderator Paras Dave on a wide range of topics.

After Vishalbhai Pittalia introduced the guests, Vasavada started the discussion by reflecting on healthy reading habits in an age of instant distractions and dwindling attention spans. He also spoke at length on how teachers need to re-orient traditional approaches of learning with new modes of information and renewed energy to encourage youngsters to return to the world of books.

Vasavada briefly touched upon his

most widely read books—*Mummy Daddy*, *Jai Ho*, and *JSK*— while also reflecting on one of his heroes, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. Talking about the man who had played an instrumental role in the integration of Independent India, Vasavada said, "A mother's heart was always beating inside the Iron Man that was Sardar Patel.... Like a small child is looked after by their mother, Patel nurtured a newly born India with care and affection."

Aakhar Ahmedabad is presented by Shree Cement Ltd, in association with Karma Foundation



Advaita Kala

Ehsaas Women Debut on Clubhouse

The latest addition to the growing range of social media applications is Clubhouse, a voice-only forum that allows individuals and organisations to host discussions on a wide range of topics in an engaging and systematic manner.

As a group that has taken great pride in its ability to shape conversations and disseminate ideas, **Ehsaas Women**, in association with **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, jumped on the Clubhouse bandwagon to continue the art of deliberation and discourse, under the guidance of honorary convener, Rajasthan and Central India Affairs, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, Apra Kuchhal and Ehsaas Woman of Noida, Shinjini Kulkarni.



Mandhira Kapur

The exclusive Clubhouse group of **Ehsaas Women** hosted its first event with Advaita Kala talking to Mandira Kapur Koirala on the former's personal story of overcoming a bad marriage and finding a new lease of life.

Kala is an Indian author, screenwriter and columnist who has written screenplays for films such as the romantic drama *Anjana Anjani* and the superhit thriller *Kahaani*. Kala is also a novelist, having published two books so far—*Almost Single* (2007) and *Almost There* (2013). After calling three countries home for several years, Kala has finally settled down in Delhi, from where she also works as a contributing editor for *India Ahead*.

Kapur is an entrepreneur with more than 15 years of experience in her profession.

Sharing her thoughts on the Clubhouse chat between Kala and Kapur, Kuchhal said, "It was a very powerful session, a heart-to-heart talk on how stressful and emotionally provocative situations like a bad marriage can send hearts racing. The session discussed how no matter what happens, it is important to gather the required courage after a failed relationship and bounce back stronger."

Looking for Role Models in Mythology



Ira Mukhoty



Mita Kapur

When Ira Mukhoty took her daughters to watch the *Ramayana Ballet* year after year, she always returned with a feeling of disquiet about the ending. Despite her unwavering loyalty to Ram, Sita is questioned on her chastity, distrusted and abandoned at the end. A sense of frustration would fill Mukhoty at the thought of telling her daughters that a woman could never be pure enough in the eyes of society. She wanted to find strong, independent women characters in Indian history and mythology who could be role models for her daughters. Thus began her journey as an author.



Manjot Chawla

Mukhoty revealed all this and much more in a virtual session of **The Write Circle**, Jaipur. Mukhoty writes on history and mythology and has books such as *Heroines: Powerful Indian Women of Myth and History, Daughters*

of the Sun: Empresses, Queens and Begums of the Mughal Empire and *Akbar: The Great Mughal* to her name. Mita Kapur introduced and welcomed the guests to the virtual event and Manjot Chawla, a curator and producer of cultural events in India and abroad, was in conversation with Mukhoty.

Mukhoty's search for independent women in Indian history and mythology led her to Draupadi, whom she chose as a counterpoint to Sita's *pativrata patni*. Her latest

book, *Song of Draupadi*, was in fact, her first manuscript. It took the author four to five years to write the book because she spent a lot of time reading and researching on it.

Sexist microaggressions were already troubling Mukhoty when Jyoti Singh was brutally assaulted and murdered in December 2012. The author's rage at the way women were treated in Indian society—criticised for their clothing, a smile not bright enough or a word said incorrectly—found voice through Draupadi's candour, passion and anger.

Draupadi's transformation from a shy bride to a confident woman who unapologetically criticises her husbands in an open *sabha* intrigued Mukhoty. She began to view Draupadi as the perfect role model for young women.

With historical figures, Mukhoty said she makes it a point to be as true to sources as possible because these were real people who had lived and died and it wouldn't do for someone to tamper with their thoughts. However, with mythology, the author gave herself the leeway to put herself in a character's shoes and imagine the thoughts going on in their mind.

Irawati Karve's *Yuganta* was a revelation for Mukhoty and liberated her to write the *Song of Draupadi*. A decade ago, she would have been careful to stick to only written sources. But now, if she were to rewrite her books, Mukhoty said she would take into account oral sources as well, because a lot of Indian culture is oral.

Mukhoty didn't want to be typecast as a women's writer because she felt that was a way to lessen the impact of the voice of women. So she wrote *Akbar: The Great Mughal*, believing that Akbar was largely shaped by the women around him.

Mukhoty has released two books during the pandemic—*Akbar: The Great Mughal* and *Song of Draupadi*. The author said it was tough to have a book release in such times but the online space had opened up endless possibilities for writers and readers to connect. Her next book is set in late 18th century Awadh, with Bahu Begum holding the reins of power over Asaf ud Daullah, the Nawab Wazir of Awadh.



Anita

Ranoo Nathany

Shivranjani

Suryakant Jodha

Vandana

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



Chetan Bhagat

भारत तक पहुंचना है तो सरल भाषा में लिखना होगा: चेतन भगत

मुझे जल्दी ही समझ आ गया था कि क्रिटिक्स मुझे पसंद नहीं करेंगे। वे मेरी सास की तरह हैं। मुझे खुद की तरह लिखना होगा। मुझे क्रिटिक्स के बेस्ट राइटर की जगह अपने पाठक से यह कहलाना पसंद था कि यह मेरा लेखक है।" यह कहना है लेखक चेतन भगत का। वह **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** की ओर से आयोजित **कलम विशेष** में अतिथि वक्ता के रूप में संवाद कर रहे थे। आरंभ में फाउंडेशन और **अहसास** वूमेन की ओर कल्पना चौधरी ने उनका स्वागत किया। उन्होंने कोरोना महामारी, वैक्सीनेशन और अनलॉक के साथ *दो गज की दूरी और मास्क जरूरी* की बात कही। फाउंडेशन के वर्चुअल कार्यक्रमों के उल्लेख करते हुए उन्होंने भारत और विदेश के लगभग 30 शहरों में महिलाओं की तरक्की, कल्याण, साहित्य, संस्कृति, विरासत और कला से जुड़ी गतिविधियों के बारे में बताया और **कलम, एक मुलाकात, सुर और साज, लफ्ज, आखर, किताब** और जैसे कार्यक्रमों की चर्चा की। अतिथि वक्ता भगत का परिचय देते हुए उन्होंने चेतन भगत की ब्लॉकबस्टर पुस्तकों का जिक्र किया और बताया कि बॉलीवुड की कई हिट फिल्में उनके नॉवेल पर आधारित हैं। *द न्यूयॉर्क टाइम्स* ने उन्हें 'भारतीय इतिहास में अंग्रेजी भाषा का सबसे बड़ा उपन्यासकार', *टाइम* उन्हें 'दुनिया के 100 सबसे प्रभावशाली लोगों' और अमेरिका की *फास्ट कंपनी* ने उन्हें 'दुनिया के सबसे रचनात्मक लोग' की सूची में स्थान दिया है। सफल स्तंभकार, प्रेरक वक्ता और पटकथा लेखक भगत से संवाद के लिए **अहसास** वूमेन जयपुर, राजस्थान और मध्य भारत की समन्वयक अपरा कुच्छल को आमंत्रित करते हुए चौधरी ने कुच्छल का भी संक्षिप्त परिचय दिया और उन्हें उम्दा कलाप्रेमी, स्थापित महिला उद्यमी और प्रतिष्ठित समाजसेवी बताया।

कुच्छल ने भगत से पहला सवाल उनकी ताजातरीन मर्डर मिस्ट्री पर किया और कहा कि आपके पाठकों ने यह सोचा भी नहीं होगा कि उन्हें



Apra Kuchhal

कभी आपसे मर्डर मिस्ट्री पढ़ने को मिलेगी। यह बदलाव कितना कठिन था? भगत का उत्तर था, "जिंदगी ही मुश्किल है और जिंदगी में बदलाव भी लाना होता है। मैं एक मोटिवेशनल स्पीकर भी हूँ, तो मैं यह कहता भी हूँ कि हम आज जो अपनी जिंदगी में कर रहे हैं, वह शायद पहले नहीं कर रहे थे, और शायद आने वाले समय में भी नहीं करेंगे। अंग्रेजी में इसको अडाप्टेबिलिटी कहते हैं। आज कोरोना के समय में हम वेबिनार पर बात कर रहे हैं, नहीं तो जयपुर की किसी खूबसूरत जगह पर मुलाकात कर रहे होते। लोगों से मुझे इतना प्यार मिला, मेरे लेखन को प्यार मिला तो उन्हें मैं फॉर ग्रांटेड नहीं लेना है। पाठकों को सरप्राइज करते रहना है। एक सरप्राइज एलिमेंट्स जरूरी है। कुछ नया जरूरी है। दूसरे, हम ऐसे समय में जी रहे हैं जब यूथ का अटेंशन टाइम कम होता जा रहा है। उनका वीडियो पर टाइम बढ़ता जा रहा है। पहले मैं लव स्टोरी लिखता था, पर अब उतने से काम नहीं चलेगा। अभी मर्डर भी लिखना चाहिए। इसलिए मैं मर्डर मिस्ट्री लिख रहा। आज का युवा लड़के को लड़की मिली या नहीं, की जगह जानना चाहता है कि लड़की का मर्डर किसने किया? टेस्ट बदला है, तो मैंने भी



समय के हिसाब से खुद को बदला है। सस्पेंस लिखना कठिन है। पाठक ऐसी किताब को पढ़ते समय खुद डिटेक्टिव की तरह सोचता है। तो मैंने भी यह टेक्निक सीखी। कठिन था पर सीखा।"

इस सवाल पर कि कथानक के लिए दिल्ली ही क्यों, सिंगापुर, मुंबई क्यों नहीं चुना? भगत का जवाब था, "मुझे भी आजतक समझ नहीं आता। मुंबई भी काफी रहा, मेरा घर है। सिंगापुर और बैंकाक में भी रहा, पर मेरी बहुत किताबों में दिल्ली हमेशा रहा। मर्डर मिस्ट्री में दिल्ली है। *थ्री इडियट्स* वाली *फाइव प्वाइंट्स समवन, टू स्टेट्स, वन नाइट एट कॉल सेंटर* में दिल्ली है, *हाफ गर्ल फ्रेंड* में भी दिल्ली की शूटिंग है। जहां हम बड़े होते हैं वही शहर हमारा अपना है। आज भी दिल्ली जाने से लगता है यही मेरा शहर है, इसे मैं जानता हूं।" आप मोटिवेशनल स्पीकर भी हैं तो क्या कभी आपको इस पर कोई संदेह हुआ? कभी आपके मन ने हार मान ली हो, या आपको खुद मोटिवेशन की जरूरत पड़ी हो? के सवाल पर भगत का कहना था, "कभी कभी डॉक्टर भी बीमार हो जाता है। मोटिवेशन लेवल ऊपर नीचे जाता रहता है। ऐसे समय में जिसका मोटिवेशन लेवल हाई है, वह आपकी मदद कर सकता है। यह कैसे ही है कि कभी-कभी दीया की अपनी रोशनी भी धीमी पड़ जाती है, तो कोई और आकर उसे जला जाता है। कोरोना के समय मुझे भी ऐसा लगा। मैंने बहुत सारी तैयारियां की थीं। अचानक सारा काम रुक गया, तो मैं हताश हो गया। मैंने सोचा, जिंदगी में जो सोचो वह हो जाएगा। मैं ही सिखाता हूं कि आदमी को बदलना चाहिये, तो उस समय मुझे यही लगा कि मैं केवल लिख ही सकता हूं तो मैंने वही किया। मैंने इस उम्र में दौड़ना शुरू किया। अब मैं मोटिवेशनल स्पीकर था तो अपने मैसेज यूट्यूब पर डालने लगा। इस उम्र में मैं यूट्यूबर बना।"

सोशल मीडिया पर ट्रोल से जुड़े सवाल पर भगत ने कहा कि मैं अब बदल गया हूं। उम्र के साथ परिपक्वता आ जाती है। युवा था तो गुस्सा आता था, देश को बदलने की सोचता था। पर उम्र के साथ मध्यममार्ग आ जाता है, बैलेंस करना आ जाता है। कभी-कभी बोलना पड़ता है। इसके चलते कंट्रोवर्सी में फंस जाता हूं। कभी किसी की तारीफ कर दी तो दूसरे को बुरा लग गया। कभी किसी की बुराई कि तो उसे बुरा लग गया। पर बतौर लेखक हमें बोलना चाहिए। आप अपने बच्चों की आप कितनी सुनते हैं? के उत्तर में

भगत का कहना था कि मेरे बच्चे टीन एजर हैं, तो वे बहुत बार मुझसे सहमत नहीं होते। आप बहुत सरल भाषा में लिखते हैं, क्या यह जानबूझकर हुआ? भगत ने कहा, "हां, अंगरेजी में एक कहावत है, 'Write to express not to impress' एक अजीब सी मानसिकता है कि अगर आप कठिन भाषा लिखते हो तभी आप बड़े लेखक हो। पर मुझे लगता है कि अगर आप भारत के लेखक हो, भारत तक पहुंचना हो तो सरल भाषा में लिखना होगा। लेकिन बहुत से लेखक हैं जो कठिन भाषा में लिखते हैं।"

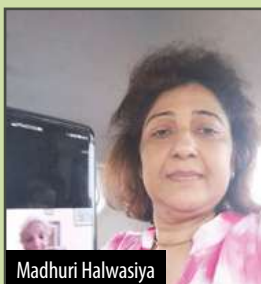
आपकी निजी सफलता की वजह क्या है? भगत ने कहा, "मैंने अपने पाठकों से जुड़ने की कोशिश की। मैं कभी नहीं कहता कि मैं बेस्ट राइटर हूं, पर यह सच है कि मैं बेस्ट सेलिंग राइटर हूं।" एक सवाल के उत्तर में भगत ने कहा कि दोनों भाषाओं में लिखने का फर्क यही है कि अंग्रेजी के क्रिटिक्स मुझे पसंद नहीं करते हैं, पर हिंदी के पसंद करते हैं। टारगेट पाठक के उत्तर में उन्होंने कहा कि मैं चाहता हूं कि सभी मुझे पढ़ें। 18 से 35 तक के लोग मुझे पढ़ते हैं। बुजुर्ग मुझसे पूछते हैं कि उनके लिये क्यों नहीं लिखता हूं, तो मैं कहता हूं मुझे अभी उस उम्र में पहुंचने दीजिये। पत्नी के बेहद सफल होने से क्या कभी किसी तरह का टकराव हुआ? के सवाल पर भगत ने कहा, "अगर आप इगो छोड़ देते हो तो कई समस्याओं का समाधान हो जाता है। मेरी पत्नी मेरी बैचमेट भी हैं। मैंने अपनी नौकरी छोड़ी। मेरे सारे दोस्त बहुत कुछ कर रहे हैं। कंपीटीशन होता है। पर जॉब छोड़कर भी मैं अपने इस काम से खुश हूं।" वारेन बफेट का जिक्र करते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि अच्छे लोगों से बातें करना मुझे पसंद है।

एक सवाल के उत्तर में उन्होंने कहा कि दूसरों से रिपोर्ट कार्ड नहीं लेना चाहिए। आपको खुद को चुनना चाहिए। अगर किताबें ज्यादा न बिकें तो प्लान 'बी' क्या है? लेखक को आराम है कि वह लेट एज तक काम कर सकता है। अभी मैं यूट्यूब पर हूं। अपना हेल्थ का ध्यान रख रहा हूं। डिजिटल युग से जुड़े सवाल पर भगत ने कहा, मीडिया की ताकत कमजोर हो रही है। सरकार की जगह अब डिजिटल ऐड ही सब कुछ है। लेखक, संगीत के क्षेत्र में भी यह हुआ है। लेखक कंटेंट से अपने को जोड़ कर देखें। पढ़ना बहुत जरूरी है। मर्डर मिस्ट्री लिखने से पहले नई-पुरानी सौ से ज्यादा किताबें पढ़ीं। भगत से सवाल जवाब सत्र में शालिनी, पूनम आनंद, पवन सुराणा, मोनिका भगवागर, विनिता जैन, अनंत भटनागर, फलक, नीरजा आदि शामिल थे। भगत ने बॉलीवुड और हॉलीवुड से जुड़े सवाल के भी उत्तर दिए। पायरेसी को उन्होंने बहुत गलत बताया। उन्होंने रीडिंग के महत्त्व पर बल दिया। रीडिंग से इमैजिनेशन बढ़ता है, फोकस बढ़ता है। एकाग्रता बढ़ती है। पढ़ने की आदत बनाइए। वेदुला रामालक्ष्मी ने धन्यवाद दिया।

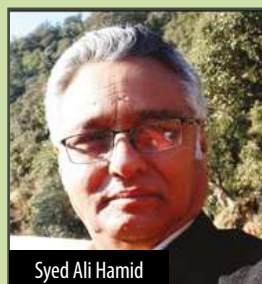
कलम विशेष के प्रायोजक हैं श्रीसीमेंट



Anil Chaudhary



Madhuri Halwasiya



Syed Ali Hamid



Deepa Mishra



Sushila Puri



Justice Rohinton Fali Nariman

Understanding the Role of Dissent in Justice



The foundations of a democracy are based on dialogue and discourse, which not only encourage dissent but make it necessary in the process of building opinions and ideas. In the realm of justice, too, the right to disagree and express an alternative point of view on a matter of law is paramount for a comprehensive perspective to take shape, for society to debate vital aspects of justice that would otherwise have been concealed from scrutiny by the force of the majority.

Thus, for an engaged and informed public sphere to thrive, dissent must be made free and functional.

In *Discordant Notes: The Voice of Dissent in the Last Court of Resort*, Justice Rohinton Fali Nariman traces, articulates and analyses all dissenting judgments in the history of India's topmost institution of justice, the Supreme Court. The book, which is available in two volumes, was launched at a special virtual session of **Kitaab**, organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**.

Justice Nariman, who had received training to become a priest in his formative years, is a former judge of the Supreme Court of India. He completed his education at Harvard Law School and served as the Solicitor-General of India between 2011 and 2013. In 2014, he became a Supreme Court judge, making him only the fifth individual in the history of

the Court to be elevated directly from the bar. At the age of 37, Justice Nariman had been designated as a senior advocate by then Chief Justice of India, M.N. Venkatachaliah. Justice Nariman is an expert in the fields of constitutional, commercial, and arbitration law, with over 500 Supreme Court judgments to his credit. Away from his profession, he is passionate about western classical music and history.

The launch of *Discordant Notes* was followed by a conversation featuring the author and three eminent panelists—former Supreme Court judge Justice B.N. Srikrishna, senior advocate Darius Khambata, and Justice Gautam Patel from the Bombay High Court. The speakers received a warm welcome to the session from Ketki Bhatia, **Ehsaas** Woman of Mumbai.

The conversation got underway with Justice Nariman revealing how the book was conceived during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, when he was "incarcerated at home for six weeks with nothing to do." He proceeded to explain how the book grew out of a lecture he had delivered a few years ago on the four great dissenters in the history of the Supreme Court. The division of the book into two volumes was also contextualised with Justice Nariman providing a brief summary of the most important sections of each part.

From assessing the pros and cons of dissent, the book makes its way to the most courageous and impactful dissents across time before moving on to study how dissent can act as a stabilising force as well as an agent of change.

Reflecting on the uniqueness of *Discordant Notes* as a repository of iconic judgments, their contexts and challenges, Justice Patel hailed the book as a "magisterial work" whose "levels of analysis and insight are absolutely incredible". He was most impressed by how, for all the gravitas of its content, the book was "an absolute joy to read".

Khambata complemented Justice Patel's observations, adding that the book shows the reader "what judges are meant to be and can be". Highlighting the value of the book even for those outside the legal profession, Khambata emphasised how Justice Nariman has been able to show a division of opinion in the highest court of law as a reflection of a robust democratic framework, especially on matters relating to constitutional law.

According to Justice Srikrishna, "a judge should say what he thinks of the Constitution and speak it out boldly, even in the face of an overwhelming majority [that disagrees with them]". This is precisely the kind of judge that Justice Srikrishna feels *Discordant Notes* has

identified. Justice Srikrishna went on to link dissenting judgments to freedom of speech and constitutional ethos and how the elimination of dissent can curb the individuality of a jurist.

Justice Nariman revealed how the book was conceived during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, when he was "incarcerated at home for six weeks with nothing to do." He proceeded to explain how the book grew out of a lecture he had delivered a few years ago on the four great dissenters in the history of the Supreme Court

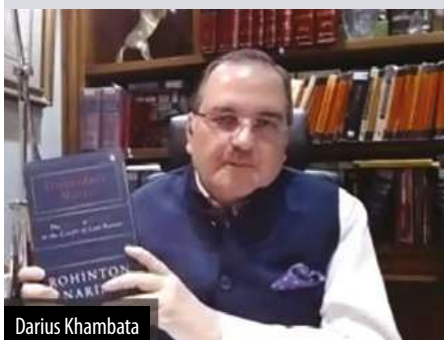
In the second half of the interaction, the session shifted gears away from the book to address the contemporary judicial system. Justice Nariman took the opportunity to argue that "the difficulty of being a Supreme Court judge today is insurmountable.... In the old days there were very few cases [in the Supreme Court] so there was a lot of thought, time and discussion.... There is no time available today. It is not that people do not think or dissent anymore, but the difficulty is sheer time."

The session included two more pivotal points of insight from Justice Nariman. The first revolved around using precedents in jurisprudence as a guiding light and not as a restraining force that cannot be overturned. The second, perhaps even more crucially, went into the nitty-gritty of partial bench composition and how the Chief Justice of India, if they so desired, "could constitute a bench that would overrule an earlier judgment based on personal preference and predilections rather than constitutional law."

"Given the maxim that no one shall be a judge in their own cause, isn't there an inherent slippery slope in the ability of the apex court to set its own ambit and play its own arbiter without any real accountability to the people?" asked Justice Nariman.

As a counterpoint to prejudiced bench selection, Justice Nariman cited how the Supreme Court bench had been curated in the Shayara Bano case (which dealt with the constitutional validity of triple talaq) with the then Chief Justice of India carefully selecting a bench that comprised one Hindu, one Muslim, one Sikh, one Christian and one Parsi, who was Justice Nariman himself.

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



Darius Khambata



Ketki Bhatia



Gautam Patel



B. N. Srikrishna

It is not easy to reclaim narratives from the annals of time. Once the gaze of history has branded someone as good or bad, their perception remains largely ossified, unlikely to be cast in a new light. This is what makes a biographer's job a contentious one, especially when that biographer is documenting the life of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar.

Savarkar and his place in Indian history was the chief talking point at the latest edition of **Kitaab Bengaluru**. The concluding volume of the Savarkar biography series, *Savarkar: A Contested Legacy*, penned by Vikram Sampath was launched at the event, followed by a compelling conversation around it. Present at the unveiling of the book were C.T. Ravi, the current national general secretary of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Mohandas Pai, chairman of Manipal Global Education.

Sampath, the author of several acclaimed books and recipient of Sahitya Akademi's first Yuva Puraskar for English literature in 2012, was in conversation with Vasanthi Hariprakash, an award-winning radio anchor and television journalist. They were introduced to the audience by Surekha Prahlad.

Altering the Gaze of History



Vikram Sampath



Surekha Prahlad

The discussion got underway with Sampath taking a moment to reflect on the challenges of objectively portraying an individual like Savarkar, whose life seemed to have become entangled with his own over the last five years.



C.T. Ravi



Anil Kathotia



Babita Kathotia

Sampath spoke about the juncture at which the most recent volume on Savarkar begins—the conditional release of Savarkar from Ratnagiri in 1924. He went on to clarify how Savarkar, who has become synonymous among a section of contemporary Indians as the fountainhead of upper caste hegemony through Hindutva, was a tireless reformer and, much like B.R. Ambedkar, believed in total annihilation of the caste system.

Savarkar had set up the first inter-caste dining cafe in Ratnagiri, besides opening a temple that was open to all castes and communities and a school



Somnath Mukherjee



Madhu Nataraj



Mohandas Pai

where children from different religions could gather, without disharmony or discrimination to pursue their education.

The author also reminded the audience that Savarkar had been a life-long critic of the Congress' appeasement politics and had helped to provide an ideological counter to M.K. Gandhi and the Congress. Till his last breath, Savarkar opposed the Partition of India, something the book clarifies alongside showing how Savarkar or the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) did not have any role to play in the assassination of Gandhi in January 1948.

Sampath doubled down on his initial observations to emphasise how a "very simplistic, monochromatic narrative" has been fed to Indians about the country's freedom struggle, with Savarkar's role in providing the intellectual corpus to Independence completely wiped out.

Before wrapping up his thoughts and fielding questions from the audience, Sampath mentioned how Savarkar was a true secularist, someone who felt that religion was a private affair best practised at home.

Sampath concluded by reiterating that the impression of Savarkar as an elitist ideologue who advocated for the unchallenged supremacy of Hindus was a flawed one, a product of factual cherry picking and convenient propaganda.

Kitaab Bengaluru is in association with Taj WestEnd Bengaluru, Ehsaas Women of Bengaluru and Penguin Books

A Fresh Narrative on a Fraught Figure



Was Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, a leading figure in the Hindu Mahasabha, a victim of selective history? What made Savarkar more liberal than many of his peers fighting for Indian Independence? Which aspects of Savarkar's character and beliefs have the mainstream narratives ignored?

To answer these questions and shed an expert light on the life and times of Savarkar, **Kitaab** Mumbai hosted the book launch of *Savarkar: A Contested Legacy*. Written by Vikram Sampath, the book is the second-last volume of a biographical series on Savarkar.

In conversation with Sampath, a former writer-in-residence at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, was Yogesh Pawar, a veteran journalist who has worked for organisations like *The Indian Express*, NDTV, and Reddit. The chief guest for the evening was Priyanka Chaturvedi, while Swati Agarwal, **Ehsaas** Woman of Mumbai, introduced the guests.

The interaction began with Sampath talking about his original plan for a three-volume series on Savarkar, before his publishers advised him to settle for two. Sampath also admitted how he was grateful of the popularity of his Savarkar books through sheer word of mouth, as the formal literary ecosystem of India had done little to help him promote the book.

Steering the conversation to the man at the heart of the event, Sampath explained how Savarkar's core beliefs and actions should have made him "the poster boy for Indian liberals and not the *persona non grata*" he seems to have become for a considerable number of Indian intellectuals.

Sampath elaborated on how Savarkar's legacy had been so twisted that anybody found associated with him had come to pay a heavy price for it. Comparing Savarkar to M.K. Gandhi, Sampath argued that the former was far more accommodating in his views and discussions, while the latter often showed dictatorial streaks in putting across his opinions.

Chaturvedi praised Sampath for portraying Savarkar as objectively as possible and for not choosing to whitewash the more problematic parts of Savarkar's life. "We are living



Yogesh Pawar



Vikram Sampath

through times when we have forgotten that disagreement is what debates are about.... Some people have become the gatekeepers of liberal and secular beliefs and they alone get to decide what is acceptable.... The reason why Vikram's book has become a best-seller is because he has made his readers realise how they had been denied authentic knowledge on Savarkar for so long, how Savarkar had been demonised for generations and put on trial," said Chaturvedi.



Priyanka Chaturvedi

Sampath closed the discussion by sharing with the audience how, upon sharing the manuscript with Ranjit Savarkar, the grandson of V. D. Savarkar, the latter made no objections to anything written in the book, barring the rectification of a few factual errors.

"It is liberalism that allows for different views to thrive, and that is what we should encourage... as long as those views remain within the boundaries of civility and facts," concluded Sampath.

Kitaab Mumbai is presented by Shree Cement Ltd, in association with Penguin Random House, ITC Grand Central, Lokmat and Ehsaas Women of Mumbai



Rajeshwari Sachdev



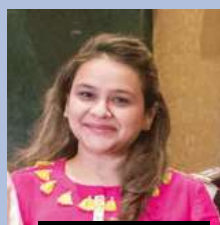
Bhagwan Balani



Karishma Mehta



Ketki Bhatia



Anvi Thaker



Swati Agarwal



Ranjit Savarkar



Varun Badola

All Hail the Heroes of the Forests



Prem Kanwar Shaktawat, recipient of the Vanya Prani Mitra Award



Dwarka Prasad Sharma, recipient of Vanya Prani Mitra Award



W.L. Mahesh Kumar Sharma and his team, recipient of the Machhli award

Conservation of forests and wildlife welfare are of crucial importance today. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** and WWF India joined hands to constitute two awards—The Machhli Award and Vanya Prani Mitra Award—to recognise and reward the highly crucial contributions that forest frontline workers make to wildlife conservation and welfare in Rajasthan. The 2021 edition of the awards was presented in a virtual ceremony, with Areendam Tomar, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Head of Forest Forces, Rajasthan Forest Department, as the chief guest. Also present were Bittu Sahgal, founder of Sanctuary Nature Foundation, Ravi Singh, Secretary-General and CEO, WWF India, Apra Kuchhal, Honorary Convenor of Rajasthan & Central India Affairs, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, and R.G. Soni and Rajpal Singh, who were both part of the selection committee.

The Vanya Prani Mitra Award was presented to Assistant Forester Prem Kanwar Shaktawat, who has conducted research on forest wildlife. According to her, cooperation between villagers and wildlife is crucial; without it, life can be difficult for both. The award was also given to Assistant Forester Dwarka Prasad Sharma, who has rescued 37 panthers, five hyenas, two sloth bears and 50 monkeys. The award includes a prize of Rs 2 lakh and a citation.

The Machhli Award, which is named after a legendary

tigress of the Ranthambore National Park, was presented to Forest Ranger W.L. Mahesh Kumar Sharma and his team, which comprised Premendra Singh (forester),

Mukesh Kumar (forest guard), Pappu Singh (forest guard), Virendra Singh (forest guard), Man Singh (pump operator), Lakhan Singh (forest ranger), Umesh Jat (assistant forester) and Ramveer Singh Gurjar (forest guard). Together, they were successful in arresting several poachers. Sharma said that they noticed hunters with guns on the trap cameras they had set up in the forests. They went to the spot immediately and arrested the culprits. Two years later, they got night cameras installed, the positions of which they keep changing so that they do not get stolen. This award carries a prize of Rs 1 lakh and a citation.



Bittu Sahgal



Ravi Singh



Apra Kuchhal

As Sahgal said, "We need to accept that environmental protection is patriotism in action." These awards not only give forest staff a recognition that has long since been due to them but also, in Kuchhal's words, "will encourage forest and wildlife officials and activists to strengthen their commitment to community-led conservation of wildlife against mounting odds." The awards also help those of us outside the forests to appreciate the contributions of the people who live and work there, making the world greener, more diverse, and a better place for all of us.

Context makes history clearer: Manu Pillai



Manu Pillai



Shreya Ila Anasuya

Reading history not through the prism of judgement but through the insight of context tells us much more than just the story of kings and kingdoms.

There were many such takeaways for the audience at a virtual session of **The Write Circle** with young historian-writer Manu Pillai, organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. After a welcome address by **Ehsaas** Woman of Nagpur, Jyoti Kapoor, Pillai was in conversation with writer and researcher of music and history Shreya Ila Anasuya.

Pillai says in the introduction of his book of essays, *The Courtesan, the Mahatma and the Italian Brahmin: Tales from Indian History*, "We live in times where history is polarising." He also says that he hopes his book gives context to the complexity of South Asian history.

When asked to expand, he talked about how he had seen an online post with a photograph of Tipu Sultan, which was obviously a fake, since the camera came several decades after his death. What he stressed was the context of this post — the same sultan courting Hindus in his established regions of Mysore was plundering temples in other places. Tipu Sultan was, after all, an invader, and invaders weren't known to be peaceful people. It is important that we, as people reading history, understand the position in which he was situated.

"Let me look at this man in his time, in his context, and in his role as a king," Pillai said, and explained that Tipu Sultan didn't live in a democracy, or in a world with human rights and the other benefits we take for granted. Hence, "Context makes history a lot clearer because it allows us to look at history not through a lens

of judgement, but through a lens of knowing what happened and how we know what not to do."

He said writing a book of short stories meant making "conscious compromises" —leaving out details because of lack of space or because they were too complex.

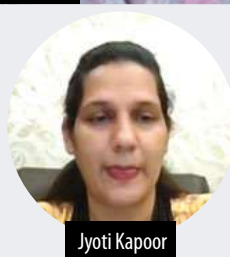
Pillai explained that the purpose behind his writing was to make history more enticing. While history has been popularised through simple storytelling methods in the west, in India it remains restricted to academia, to an extent. Pillai believes he had a duty, as a historian, to make history available beyond academic circles, which is why he wrote his book of essays.

He gave several examples, including Shivaji's policies and invasions by Islamic armies, to explain that restricting ourselves to the binary between religious conflict and syncretic paradise was a trap. History is much more complex than the binaries we impose upon it. For Shivaji, he says that his on-ground society was syncretic, with his father and uncle being named after a Sufi saint. However, politically, his kingship was constructed on a religious vocabulary, because that's what kings did. Even with the Mughal emperor Babur, the moment in which he chose religion was a moment of crisis, when his army was threatened by defeat.

"Just as today's politicians mine religion for political purposes, people in the past also did. We should not make the mistake of thinking that religion governed politics completely—religion was one of several strands in politics, it was not the overwhelming factor in politics," he pointed out.

Aside from being captivated by the stories he told, Pillai's session left the audience both curious about history as well as enlightened about the judiciousness required in studying it.

The Write Circle Mumbai, Nagpur & Pune is presented by Shree Cement Ltd, in association with Lokmat, ITC Grand Central, Radisson Blu Nagpur, O Hotel Pune & Ehsaas Women of Mumbai, Nagpur & Pune



Jyoti Kapoor

राजस्थान का जातिवाद ज्यादा स्ट्रांग है: नवीन चौधरी



Naveen Choudhary



Shweta Aggarwal



Sangeeta Arora



Priya Vashista

को रोगा काल के कठिन दौर में भय, लॉकडाउन और पूरी तरह से वर्चुअल हो चुके हमारे जीवन में अब वैक्सीनेशन और दो गज की दूरी मास्क है जरूरी वाली सावधानी के साथ थोड़ी राहत आने लगी है। इसीलिए **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** ने अपनी भाषा अपने लोग मुहिम के तहत चलने वाले अपने **कलम** जैसे कार्यक्रम को वर्चुअल के साथ जमीनी स्तर पर भी आयोजित करना शुरू कर दिया है। इसी कड़ी में **कलम** फरीदाबाद में अतिथि वक्ता के रूप में लेखक, ब्लॉगर नवीन चौधरी उपस्थित हुए। फाउंडेशन और **अहसास** वूमेन की ओर से उनका स्वागत और परिचय न दिया। संवाद प्रिया वशिष्ठ ने किया। वशिष्ठ ने चौधरी उनके उपन्यास **जनता स्टोर** को लेकर पूछा कि क्या है यह **जनता स्टोर**, यहां क्या बिकता है? चौधरी का उत्तर था, "जनता स्टोर एक दुकान नहीं बल्कि जयपुर में एक मार्केट का नाम है। बापू नगर मार्केट में 1970 में एक दुकान खुली जनता स्टोर के नाम से वह बाद में वह बंद हो गई। फिर भी लोगों को वह याद रही और बाद में उस मार्केट का नाम जनता स्टोर हो गया। मतलब जो दिख रहा है वह दिख नहीं है। हमारे जनतंत्र की भी हालत आज ऐसी ही है। इसमें भी जन गायब है तंत्र हावी है।"

जनता स्टोर के कवर से जुड़े सवाल पर चौधरी ने बताया कि कवर पर एक जार है। लोग उसके अंदर जा रहे हैं या बाहर जा रहे हैं, यह समझ में नहीं आता। राजनीति भी ऐसे ही है। लोग बदलते हैं। पर जनता की हालत वही रहती है। इस किताब में हर चौथे पन्ने पर सस्पेंस है। बचपन और लेखन से जुड़े सवाल पर चौधरी का उत्तर था, "मेरा जन्म बिहार के मधुबनी में हुआ। पिताजी की नौकरी राजस्थान में थी। शिक्षा विभाग से जुड़े थे। निरीक्षक और प्रवक्ता भी थे। उनकी किताबें भी आ रही थीं। उनकी जब पहली किताब आई तो दादी जो कि पढ़ना-लिखना नहीं जानती हैं, उस किताब पर हाथ रखकर बहुत खुश हुईं पर यह भी कहा कि तू अगर लिखेगा तो मुझे ज्यादा खुशी होगी, क्योंकि मूल से सूद ज्यादा प्यारा होता है। तभी से लगा कि मैं भी लिखूं। पिता जी की किताबें अकादमिक थीं। अकादमिक पढ़ाई से मैं भागता था, उसमें उतना मन नहीं था। वर्ष 2009 के दौरान ब्लॉगिंग शुरू की। उसी पर लिखना शुरू किया। ब्लॉग पर व्यंग्य की प्रतिक्रिया उत्साहित कर देने वाली थी, इसी ने साहित्य की ओर रुझान पैदा किया। पहले ब्लॉग लिखता था तो कुछ ने कहा कि इसे बड़ा कर के लिखो इसी तरह से लिखा। बातचीत वाली भाषा में लिखते-लिखते दादी की बात याद आयी। पहले दिमाग में आया कि प्रेम कहानी क्यों न लिखी जाए। फिर नए की तरफ ध्यान गया और सोचा कि प्रेम इतना आसान नहीं है। मैं राजनीति में काफी सक्रिय था।

उसी दौरान विश्वविद्यालयों में आंदोलन शुरू हुए। 2016 में जेएनयू में काफी कुछ घट रहा था।

"मैं मार्केटिंग का बंदा था, तो मुझे लगा ये प्रॉडक्ट है। फिर मैं विश्वविद्यालयों में जाने लगा। यहां से मुझे आइडिया आया कि इसे लिखा जाये। **जनता स्टोर** की कहानी राजस्थान की राजनीति खासकर यूनिवर्सिटी की राजनीति की कहानी है। मुझे लगा कि कहानी बोर न हो जाए। मैंने इसीलिए इसको सस्पेंस के साथ बना। हर पृष्ठ पर कहानी में सस्पेंस आ जाता है। हालांकि कहानी में वास्तविकता ज्यादा है पर उसे व्यक्त करने के लिये कल्पना का सहारा लिया। इसमें साहित्यिक भाषा नहीं है। यूपी, बिहार छोड़कर राजस्थान की पृष्ठभूमि पर कहानी लिखने की वजह इस जगह से एक कनेक्शन था। दूसरा यूपी बिहार केवल बदनाम हैं। राजस्थान का जातिवाद ज्यादा स्ट्रांग है। यहां जाट और राजपूतों के बीच में एक स्ट्रांग दुश्मनी है। उन्होंने जनता स्टोर पुस्तक लांच का उदाहरण दिया। राजस्थान यूनिवर्सिटी का भी उदाहरण दिया। राजपूत, जाट और गूजर कैसे यहां की स्टुडेंट युनियन पर हावी है।

आपके पात्र ग्रे और व्हाइट नहीं हैं? किसी चरित्र पर कोई राय बनाते ही आप उसका रंग बदल देते हैं? के सवाल पर चौधरी का उत्तर था कि हर इंसान बदलता रहता है। पूरी तरह से कोई अच्छा या बुरा नहीं होता है। जिसमें अच्छे गुण ज्यादा नजर आए वह हमें अच्छा लगता है। इसीलिए ग्रे, व्हाइट दोनों दिखना चाहिये। ऑडिओ बुक का क्या भविष्य है और क्या एक लेखक को वक्ता भी होना चाहिये? के सवाल पर चौधरी का उत्तर था कि इसका भविष्य बहुत अच्छा है। जो लोग यात्रा करते हैं, बस, कार, ट्रेन में होते हैं, उनके लिये सुनना सुविधाजनक होता है। लेखक को एक अच्छा वक्ता भी होना चाहिये। आप के जो विचार आप लिखते हैं उसे बताना भी आना चाहिये। राजनीति का जो चेहरा आप ने दिखाया है, उसे जानने के बाद युवा राजनीति में क्यों आए? के सवाल पर चौधरी का उत्तर था कि जरूरी नहीं है आप उस राजनीति का हिस्सा हों। आपको बदलाव लाना है, बाहर रहकर या फिर अंदर रहकर। चौधरी ने सवाल-जवाब सत्र में श्रोताओं के सवालों के भी उत्तर दिए।

कलम फरीदाबाद के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट, हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर होटल रेडिसन ब्लू, मीडिया पार्टनर दैनिक जागरण, ह्यूमैने फाउंडेशन और अहसास वूमेन फरीदाबाद का सहयोग मिला

Kabir Bedi: Honest & Unputdownable

Kabir Bedi is etched in our minds as the dapper man who pushed Rekha into crocodile-infested waters in *Khoon Bhari Maang*, as one of India's first international stars and as a sex symbol.

At a virtual session of **The Write Circle** organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, the audience met Kabir Bedi the man behind the star. In conversation with **Ehsaas** Woman of Nagpur, Parveen Tuli, Bedi laid bare many aspects of his fascinating life, which he has captured vividly in his memoir, *Stories I Must Tell*.

The actor became an international star after playing a pirate in an Italian series, and went on to work with the likes of Michael Caine in *Ashanti*, Roddy McDowall in *Thief of Baghdad* and as a James Bond villain in *Octopussy*.

When asked what influenced him to take an unconventional path in life, Bedi said he was fortunate to have had idealist parents who gave up everything for India's freedom struggle. They were Oxford graduates and could have had the best jobs in the world, instead they chose to work for their country. His mother was a Satyagrahi handpicked by Mahatma Gandhi and his father was a communist who later became an adviser to Sheikh Abdullah in Kashmir. Their life taught him that it was okay to live an offbeat life.

"What I learnt was that you can live a very unconventional life, and still thrive, and still survive," Bedi said. He was also born at a time of great cultural and social revolution, which further inspired him to carve out his own niche.

Bedi shifted to Mumbai to be in the movies and made a number of ad films; since he had worked in theatre, he got offers for films as well. But Bedi didn't see himself singing and dancing as heroes were expected to. So, when he was called to Italy to audition for a role of a pirate who fought the British, he gave it his everything. The show, *Sandokan*, made him a superstar in Europe.

The harder part was convincing himself to go to Hollywood, where there weren't any roles for Indians at the time. Bedi had to improvise and work as a "foreign actor" wherever he could. "If a role isn't written for you, how do you get to play it?" he pointed out.

Told that his book was a page-turner, Bedi said that it was deliberate. He said he has been told his book is "honest", and "unputdownable". His honesty shone



Kabir Bedi



Parveen Tuli

through at the session too, especially in the candor with which he spoke about his personal life, which has been the subject of tremendous gossip in the past. He talked about how he had always liked strong women, and admitted that while things didn't always work out, he was proud of how he remained great friends with the women who were a part of his life once.

He also talked about his son and of losing him. It wasn't just a story of a son's mental illness, but also of a father trying to stop his son from taking his life. Although it was difficult for him, he wrote about his son's suicide in his book because he felt it could help others to know that they were not alone as they went through difficulties.

Bedi's vulnerability and openness were a breath of fresh air which made the session not just enjoyable, but also deeply inspiring.

The Write Circle Indore is presented by Shree Cement Ltd in association with Nai Duniya & Ehsaas Women of Indore



Dr Ghanshyam Nath Kachhawa

वेदना, संवेदना में रची बसी है घनश्याम नाथ कच्छावा की अटकळ

राजस्थानी लघुकथा एक तटस्थ भाव और सिंहावलोकन के साथ यथार्थ का दर्पण भी। इसमें चिंतन, मनन और दर्शन के रंग-रंगीले मोती मिलते हैं। इक्कीसवीं सदी में राजस्थानी लघु कथा क्षेत्र में कहानी कहने की अटकळ को समझना हो तो डॉ. घनश्याम नाथ कच्छावा की पुस्तक *अटकळ* को देख सकते हैं, जिसके शब्द और अक्षर वेदना और संवेदना से भरे हुए हैं। वह टूट से अपनी यात्रा शुरू कर अपने कौशल से *अटकळ* पोथी को सामने लाते हैं और मानवीय जीवन की सूक्ष्म मनोवैज्ञानिक पड़ताल करते हैं। **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** की ओर से *ग्रासरूट मीडिया फाउंडेशन* के सहयोग से आयोजित राजस्थान **आखर पोथी** में वरिष्ठ साहित्यकार कमल रंगा ने यह बात कही।

कार्यक्रम की प्रस्तावना में आशीष पुरोहित ने कहा कि आखर मतलब जिसका क्षरण नहीं हो सकता है, फिर भी इसको उपयोग में लाने का तरीका आदमी को आना चाहिए। कम से कम शब्दों में बात कहने की बौद्धिकता चाहिए। यही कारण है कि अपनी मितव्ययिता के कारण पूरी दुनिया में अपनी विशिष्ट पहचान रखने वाले राजस्थानियों को कम से कम शब्दों में गहराई से समझाने वाली यह लघुकथा विधा पसंद आई। डॉ. कच्छावा ने इस विधा को साध लिया है। इनकी लघु कथाएं अपने असली विन्यास को बरकरार रखती हैं।

डॉ. करुणा दशोरा ने *अटकळ* की समीक्षा करते हुए कहा कि कि 88 पेज की इस पुस्तक में 64 लघुकथाएं हैं। इसका आवरण किशन कुमार व्यास ने तैयार किया है। डॉ. कच्छावा ने इसे अपने गुरु भंवरसिंह सामौर और सुजानगढ़ के प्रसिद्ध समाजसेवी स्व. कन्हैयालाल झंगरवाल को समर्पित किया है। राजस्थानी साहित्यकार मधु आचार्य आशावादी ने इसे अपने समय की अनूठी लघुकथाएं बताते हुए कहा है कि इसमें प्रतीकों से पूरी बात कहने में लेखक सफल रहे हैं। इस पुस्तक में भाव, भाषा, संवाद, कहने का तरीका, शब्दों का अनूठा प्रयोग, विषय वस्तु सब बेहतर है। इसकी लघुकथाओं के विषय आम जनजीवन से ही लिए गए हैं। इसमें वर्तमान में लोगों का रहन सहन, उनकी सोच, रूढ़ियां, ओछी राजनीति, झूठा व्यवहार, मनुष्यता का पतन आदि के साथ गांव-गुवाड़ी, गली मोहल्ला, सरकारी कामकाज, पुलिस, स्कूल, व्यापार आदि के बारे में बेबाकी से खुलासा किया गया है। प्रमुख लघु कथाओं में *खुराक*, *कानून*, *बीनणी*, *पटरी*, *खास बात*, *साख*, *चिन्तया*, *उमर*, *अरदास*, *रावण* आदि हैं। घर की बात कथा नारी सशक्तीकरण की अनूठी मिसाल कायम करती है तो फरक में मनुष्य और जानवर का अंतर पता चलता है। डॉ. कच्छावा के लेखन में



Kamal Ranga



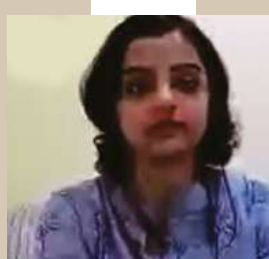
Ashish Purohit



Dr Karuna Dasora



Pramod Sharma



Pradakshina Pareek

समय की संवेदना और लेखन कला का अनोखा संयोग है। यही इनके सृजन की खासियत है। इस संग्रह में कथाओं का आकार-प्रकार, सहज पर प्रभावी शब्दों का प्रयोग, भाषा की सुगम्यता, कथन की सटीकता और शब्दों की मारक क्षमता गामर में सागर भरती है, साथ ही मन में आस जगाती है कि आगे भी वे नए-नए विषयों पर महत्वपूर्ण काम करेंगे।

लेखक डॉ. कच्छावा ने पुस्तक *अटकळ* के विमोचन और समीक्षा कार्यक्रम के लिए **आखर पोथी** के आयोजकों, प्रायोजकों के साथ संदीप भूतोड़िया और प्रमोद शर्मा का भी आभार जताया। उन्होंने कहा कि वर्तमान में जिस तरह नई पीढ़ी जुड़कर राजस्थानी भाषा में काम करने लगी है, उससे मुझे लगता है कि राजस्थानी भाषा एक बार पुनः प्रभावी होगी। पुस्तक के लेखन, प्रकाशन से जुड़े सहयोगियों और मार्गदर्शकों की चर्चा करते हुए उन्होंने अपनी पहली पुस्तक टूट के कोलाकाता विमोचन को याद किया और कहा कि वहां कन्हैयालाल सेठिया ने कहा था कि अब लोगों के पास समय की कमी को देखते हुए राजस्थानी साहित्य में नए प्रयोग की आवश्यकता है। उनका आदेश था कि मैं छोटी-छोटी कहानियों के माध्यम से समाज के सामने अपनी बात रखूं। कविता के माध्यम से नई विधाओं हाइकु, चैका आदि में सृजन करूं। आज का युग एसएमएस का है। इस युग में सीधी और साफ बात कम शब्दों में पाठकों के बीच पहुंचनी चाहिए। मैं इसे आदेश या आशीर्वाद मानूँ कि मैं साहित्य में नया-नया प्रयोग कर रहा हूँ। इन लघुकथाओं को लिखने में मैंने कल्पना शक्ति का उपयोग बिल्कुल भी नहीं किया है। जो बात मैंने देखी वो मैंने लिखी है।

अटकळ से *धणी* नामक कहानी का भाव उन्होंने यों रखा—

"ओ घर किणरो है ? म्हारो ! घरधणी बोल्यो। ओ खेत किणरो है ? म्हारो ! किसान बोल्यो। ओ जमीन किणरी है ? म्हारी ! जमींदार बोल्यो। ओ धन किणरो है ? म्हारो ! साहूकार बोल्यो। ओ देश किणरो है ? सगळा चुप व्हैग्या। देश रो कोई धणी-धोरी नीं बण्यो।" इसी तरह *घी* कहानी यों है—

"घी काई भाव ? ग्राहक पूछ्यो।

कुणसो...कोजोडा घी...कै...चोखोडो घी...दोन्यां रा न्यारा न्यारा भाव है...पण थे काई काम लेस्यो...। दुकानदार बोल्यो। भगवान री दीया बाती करण मांय चाईजै। ग्राहक बोल्यो। जणा ओ कोजोडो घी लेय ज्यावो... ओ सौ रिपिया किलो है दीया-बाती रै काम रो ईज है...मिनख रै खावण वालै चौखोडै घी रा दाम पांच सौ रिपिया किलो रा पडै-दुकानदार समझायो।

ग्राहक राजी व्है परो'र भगवान री आरती वास्तै सौ रिपिया किलो रो कोजोडो घी लेय लियो अर आप रा च्यार सौ रिपिया बचा लिया।" डॉ. कच्छावा ने *मुगती* और *गौ माता* नामक लघु कथा भी पढ़ी।

आयोजकों की ओर से प्रमोद शर्मा ने कहा कि डॉ. कच्छावा की लघुकथाओं में संवेदना महत्वपूर्ण है। वह चाहे पशु के साथ बातचीत है, गाय का दुख है, कुत्ता सर्दी में परेशान है; अगर इनकी संवेदना महसूस नहीं हो तब कोई कैसे लिख सकता है। एक लघु कथा तो मात्र 6 लाइन की है। *अटकळ* की लघु कथाएं समाज की चिंता से आगाह करती हैं।

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



Rations for Relief from Rahat

It has always been the mission of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** to reach out to the vulnerable sections of society. This kind of protection and support has never been more important than during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has hit the underprivileged sections of society the hardest.

Rahat, which encapsulates all philanthropic activities conducted by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, has been actively engaged in arranging relief missions, donations, and other community support events to assist those most affected by the ongoing pandemic in finding their feet.

On July 22, **Rahat** organised the distribution of dry rations to The Calcutta Orphanage, a home for underprivileged children. Dr Shashi Panja, Cabinet minister for the Department of Women and Child Development and Social Welfare, Government of West Bengal, was the chief guest for the event.

As part of the distribution drive, businessmen Ghanshyam Sharda and Bimal Kumar Choudhary and social worker Manisha Rampuria donated rice, puffed rice (*moori*), cakes and biscuits. Prominent thespians such as



Manisha Rampuria

Soumitra Mitra and Debshankar Haldar also graced the occasion.

For all those in attendance, it was heartwarming to witness the smiles and twinkling eyes of the little members of The Calcutta Orphanage.

Dr Panja appreciated the reach out programme by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, reiterating the need to offer a helping hand to the weaker sections of society at a time when the pandemic has impacted not just the national economy, but that of the world as a whole.

Dr Panja acknowledged that little steps of assistance towards those who need it can collectively make a large impact in these challenging times.

On behalf of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, we sincerely express our gratitude to Dr Panja for her unstinting cooperation and constant encouragement. We are also indebted to all the donors, without whom this initiative would not have been a success. Finally, we would like to extend our thanks to all the volunteers who worked tirelessly to execute the distribution drive and whose energy and enthusiasm went a long way towards putting some precious smiles on little faces.





Aadil Raza Mansoori

खिड़की में है ख्वाब खुला इसमें कैसे रहते हो: आदिल रज़ा मंसूरी



Mumal Bhandari

'अपनी भाषा अपने लोग' विचार शृंखला के तहत उर्दू, फ़ारसी और अरबी ज़बान को बढ़ावा और मजबूती देने के लिए **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** ने रेख्ता के सहयोग से **लफ़ज़** उदयपुर का आयोजन किया। कोविड वॉरियर्स और सर्वाइवर्स को समर्पित इस आयोजन के अतिथि वक्ता थे उर्दू के बेहतरीन शायर आदिल रज़ा मंसूरी।

अहसास वूमेन उदयपुर की श्रद्धा मूर्डिया ने आयोजकों की ओर से अतिथि वक्ता का स्वागत किया और फाउंडेशन की गतिविधियों, कार्यक्रमों की जानकारी दी। *यूँ ही कहाँ जुड़े हैं तेरे दास्तां से हम, कि भेजे गए हैं उसकी रजा आसमां से हम* शायरी के साथ मंसूरी की शैक्षणिक और व्यावसायिक योग्यताओं का संक्षिप्त परिचय देते हुए मूर्डिया ने उर्दू अदब और हिंदुस्तानी असातीर और सकाफ़त से जुड़ी मंसूरी की कोशिशों, कामों और सम्मान का जिक्र किया। उन्होंने बताया कि *खिड़की में ख्वाब* नामक संपादित कृति के अलावा आप चर्चित शायर शीन काफ़ निज़ाम के साथ मिलकर *इस्तिफ़ास* नामक रिसाला निकालते हैं और बेहतरीन मुदीर और मानस मराल सम्मान से नवाजे जा चुके हैं। **अहसास** वूमेन उदयपुर मूमल भंडारी को बातचीत के लिए आमंत्रित करते हुए मूर्डिया ने मंसूरी के अल्फाज़ का सहारा लिया और पढ़ा—

बहुत सोचा जुदा होने से पहले

मैं किसका था तेरा होने से पहले

फ़िज़ाएँ ऐसी तो आदिल कभी महकी न थी

हवा के हाथ में ये किसका नाम लिखा था

ये फ़िज़ा, हवा, शाम आपके नाम।

भंडारी ने संवाद की शुरुआत इस सवाल के साथ की कि आप पेशे से सीए हैं, फिर शेरों-शायरी की तरफ आपकी रुझान कैसे हुई? मंसूरी ने उत्तर दिया, "डिग्रियों का ताहल्लक मेरे पेट से है और शायरी का मेरे दिल से है। पेट और दिल के बीच संतुलन बनाना इनसान का काम है। शायरी से पैसा तो मिलता नहीं। हमारे बुजुर्ग मेरठ के पास एक गांव के रईस थे। पिता का बैंकग्राउंड फाइनेंस का था। मैंने सीएस किया और यह सिलसिला चल निकला।" शायरी की शुरुआत कब हुई या उसे पहली बार मंच पर पढ़ा? के उत्तर में मंसूरी ने कहा, "अदब में मुझे बीस-बाईस साल होने को आए। मुझे नहीं पता चलता कि लोग कैसे यह बताते हैं कि उन्होंने अपनी पहली शायरी कब की। मेरठ में किसी जमाने में नौचंदी का मेला लगता था। मेरे वालिद उस समय शेर नोट करते थे। उन्हें सुनकर मैं पढ़ता था। फिर धीरे-धीरे लिखने लगा। उसमें कमियां रही होंगी, पर उनमें पहला कौन था यह कैसे पता चलता।"

शायरी के इस सफर में आप जिस मुकाम पर हैं, वहां तक पहुंचने के लिए आपने क्या क्या किया? के उत्तर में मंसूरी ने कहा, "मुझे शायरी में कहीं पहुंचना नहीं था। शायरी आपके दिल की चीज है। मैं इससे अपने आपको जानने की कोशिश करता हूं। शायरी का अर्थ ही है जानना। आदमी अपने अंदर एक शून्य लेकर पैदा होता है। हर कोई अपनी तरह से इस शून्य को भरने की कोशिश करते हैं। मुझे इस सफर में कहीं पहुंचना नहीं है। मुकाम कौन सा है, यह भी नहीं पता है।" बशीर बद्र से जुड़े सवाल पर मंसूरी ने कहा कि वे मेरे पहले उस्ताद हैं। वे मेरे वालिद के भी उस्ताद थे। वालिद डिफेंस में थे तो देश भर में घूमा। जब लिखना शुरू किया तो चंडीगढ़ से भोपाल बशीर साहब से पांच-छह बार मिला और यह सीखा

कि शेर संजीदगी से कैसे कहते हैं। उन्होंने ही मुझे शीन काफ़ निज़ाम साहब के पास भेजा। उनसे जब मैंने कहा कि मुझे आपसे शेर लिखना सीखना है, तो उन्होंने मुझसे तीन सवाल पूछे। आप किताब छपवाना चाहते हैं? नमाज पढ़ते हैं? उर्दू आती है? मेरे उत्तर के बाद उन्होंने मुझे दो साल तक किसी महफिल में कुछ भी न पढ़ने की सलाह दी। तब से आज तक मैं सीख रहा हूं।



Sshradha Murdia



Swati Agarwal

Riddhima Doshi

अपनी ज़िंदगी से जुड़े दिलचस्प वाकिये पर उन्होंने *खिड़की में ख्वाब* से जुड़ी एक घटना का जिक्र किया कि यह किताब जब आई तो उस पर शम्सुर्रहमान फारूकी ने लिखा और गोपीचंद नांग का फोन आया, यह मेरी ज़िंदगी का यादगार लम्हा था। मेरी एक अंजुमन है, उसी के माध्यम से मैंने कुछ नए शायरों को बुलाकर उन्हें नंद किशोर आचार्य, गुलज़ार और शीन काफ़ निज़ाम के सामने पढ़ने का मौका मुहैया कराया। यह कार्यक्रम बहुत सफल रहा। इसी के बाद निज़ाम साहब ने मुझे इतिखाब का सुझाव दिया। मैं तैयार तो हुआ पर सोचने लगा कि ग़ज़ल का इतिखाब किया जाए या नज़्म का। मैंने बारह मुल्कों से चालीस की उम्र से कम लोगों को चुना। सौ लोगों से चुनते हुए आखिर में पंद्रह लोग चुने गए। इनमें अलग-अलग लोगों को चुना गया। इसमें कोई ख्वातीन नहीं आ पाई। *खिड़की में ख्वाब* नाम कैसे दिमाग में आया के जवाब में मंसूरी ने कहा कि *खिड़की* का अर्थ है आंख। उन्होंने अपना शेर सुनाया और पढ़ा— *खिड़की में है*

ख्वाब खुला इसमें कैसे रहते हो।

सोशल मीडिया से जुड़े सवाल पर मंसूरी ने कहा कि हर मीडियम की अपनी अच्छाई और बुराई होती है। सोशल मीडिया आज अनजाने लोगों से आपको जोड़ देता है। पहले उर्दू शायरी में स्थापित होने के लिए साठ साल की उम्र हो जाती थी। पर आज के कवियों, शायर और लेखकों के लिए अच्छा यह है कि इससे उन्हें मंच मिल जाता है और बहुत जल्दी एक ऑडियंस मिल जाती है। जबकि सोशल मीडिया के जमाने से पहले शायरों-कवियों को खुद को स्थापित करने के लिए काफी संघर्ष करना पड़ता था। सीढ़ी-दर-सीढ़ी अपनी पहचान बनाने में उनकी उम्र बीत जाती थी, मगर अब एक लाइन लिखकर भी मशहूर हुआ जा सकता है। पर इसका नुकसान यह है कि इसमें रिजेक्शन नहीं मिलता। यहां बारीकियों से परखा नहीं जाता, जबकि सफलता के लिए रिजेक्शन बेहद जरूरी है। कार्यक्रम में मंसूरी ने अपनी कई नज़्म और ग़ज़लें भी सुनाईं। अहसास वूमेन की स्वाति अग्रवाल धन्यवाद न दिया।

लफ़ज़ उदयपुर के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट। रेख्ता, हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर रैंडिसन ब्लू उदयपुर पैलेस रिसॉर्ट और स्या तथा अहसास वूमेन उदयपुर का सहयोग मिला।



Nancy Springer

I Have Always Been My Own Little Misfit—Nancy Springer



Eric Lindstrom

attempted to woo a wife, I knew that he was ignorant of all this. That was my opening!" laughed the author.

Calling her heroine, 'perditorian,'—a word Springer coined from the Victorian term 'perdita'—a woman who is lost—she claimed she was absolutely certain that she "didn't want her [Enola] solving murders." "She doesn't see herself as a detective. She is a finder of things that are lost. Enola is an explorer, she loves to hunt, and peep into nooks and crannies. Enola is psychologically me," explained Springer, drawing parallels to her own childhood and upbringing.

She went on to speak about the predominant themes in her books, such as naivety, abandonment, inexperience and the conflict born out of Enola's desire to find lost people while fearing the loss of

Even before the world got to see a charming Millie Bobby Brown prance around the English countryside, running circles around Sam Claflin and Henry Cavill, the game was afoot for Enola Holmes.

The youngest sibling of the famed Holmes brothers—Sherlock and Mycroft—has been having marvellous adventures on-page for quite a while now, though Enola and her creator, Nancy Springer, might be new to some. The books have a dedicated, worldwide readership and Springer just released the seventh book in this successful series, *Enola Holmes and the Black Barouche*.

At a recent edition of **The Universe Writes**, the award-winning *Enola Holmes* author told the moderator for the session, Eric Lindstrom, all about her indomitable young heroine, the inspiration behind her settings, her love of mysteries and always being happy to be her "own little misfit."

Lindstrom, himself a young-adult fiction writer, was all praise for the "intricate character and plotting" of the bestselling series. He lauded Springer's ability to carve out a space for Enola, despite Sherlock's massive personality and popularity, and questioned her choice of setting.

"Sherlock Holmes knew a lot about the world of men and very little about women. Given that Sherlock Holmes was about men, it was not difficult to say Enola is going to be about women," Springer pointed out simply.

In addition, the writer explained that dominated by patriarchy, the women of the Victorian era communicated secretly, through codes, such as the language of flowers, of sealing waxes, of handkerchiefs, postage stamps, hand fans and secret messages. "Because Sherlock had never



her independence.

Discussing her journey as a writer—from fantasy to mystery—Springer highlighted how her emotional and psychological issues provided her with the ammunition and impetus to take up a pen. "Writing started as my therapy, it was my out... the only place I had to go with all my mess," she said. The author also detailed the fine balance she had to maintain between how people thought in the Victorian era versus how people think now, and the secret to reaching children and young adults—to write "in rebellion" and always "be on their side".

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

India Through Seven Decades



Prem Prakash

Journalism may be the first draft of history, but a journalist's challenges are very different from that of a historian. Blending immediacy with impartiality and information with insight in a country as diverse as India is a unique test for journalists, one that Prem Prakash has mastered for close to seven decades.

Working with the biggest names in Indian and overseas media, Prakash has covered many of the most consequential stories of post-independence India, including the 1962 war with China and the 1965 and 1971 wars with Pakistan. In 1953, Prakash, who had started out as a photojournalist, founded Visnews, the world's first global television news agency, which later turned into Reuters TV. A few years later, Prakash registered Asian News International (ANI), which is presently the

biggest television news agency in India, comprising 50 bureaus and over 300 reporters across the country, with Prakash as chairman. Documenting his incredible career and the lessons he has gleaned from his life, Prakash has recently authored *Reporting India: My Seventy-Year Journey as a Journalist*.

At the latest edition of **The Write Circle** in Delhi, Prakash was present as the chief speaker to discuss his book and the evolution of Indian politics. In conversation with Prakash was Vikram Sood, currently an adviser to the Observer Research Foundation and a regular writer on national security, foreign relations and strategic issues. A former civil servant, Sood served as the head of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), India's foreign intelligence agency, between 2000 and 2003.

Prakash and Sood were welcomed and introduced by Archana Dalmia, **Ehsaas** Woman of Delhi.



Vikram Sood

"Not many people start writing a book at the age of 89 and complete it by the time they are 90," said Sood about Prakash, complimenting *Reporting India* as a broad and brilliant account of some of the defining moments in Indian history through the lens of one of its greatest

reporters. According to Sood, the fact that the book chose lucidity over a more convoluted and complicated style enhanced its appeal, making it eminently readable from cover to cover.

“India has a habit of giving up what it wins on the battlefield at the negotiation table. When it comes to brinkmanship, we walk away and give up”

Talking about the India he has seen and analysed for so long, Prakash began with his impression of Jawaharlal Nehru, describing India's first Prime Minister as a "one-man foreign office and one of the few prime ministers in Indian history who would meet the foreign press every year, attend their dinners, and interact with them.... He (Nehru) believed in a press that would be independent rather than controlled."

Despite his considerable praise for Nehru, Prakash mentioned how Nehru had been mistaken in sending V.K. Menon as Ambassador to the United States, a mistake that stemmed from Nehru's inability to understand Menon thoroughly despite their close friendship.

Prakash went on to explain the politics within the Congress party that facilitated the rise of Indira Gandhi and how Gandhi had been envisioned by certain senior Congress leaders as a neutralising force against Morarji Desai, who too had strong leadership ambitions of his own.

Prakash rated Indira Gandhi's prime ministership as "excellent in many ways" with a "tragic second tenure" that culminated in her assassination. Prakash felt that the Opposition at the time had not treated Gandhi fairly and that accusations of "an illegal government" against Gandhi's regime were anything but justified.

Switching deftly between speaking about post-Independence India and the turbulence of the period immediately preceding August 15, 1947, Prakash made a number of interesting observations about the struggle for

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Indian Independence. This included his view that Lord Louis Mountbatten was not the right choice as Governor-General of India and that complete independence of India is a direct legacy of the demands of Bhagat Singh.

When probed by Sood on matters of foreign policy and national security, Prakash said that "India has a habit of giving up what it wins on the battlefield at the negotiation table. When it comes to brinkmanship, we walk away and give up." The only exception to this tendency in Prakash's mind was Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who did not back down in the face of a belligerent stance from Pakistan's Pervez Musharraf.

In the final part of the discussion, Prakash and Sood shifted the focus to Afghanistan in the wake of America's withdrawal of troops from the country and the Taliban's return to power.



"What is happening in Afghanistan is extremely unfortunate.... It took 20 years to change the face of Afghan cities... Kabul, in particular, became so well-developed," reflected Prakash, citing his bewilderment at the suddenness with which American troops left in the absence of a constructive withdrawal plan.

On the subject of India's relationship with Afghanistan, Prakash reminded everyone how the bond between the two countries had once been that of fraternal neighbours: "Afghanistan used to call India its brother... to the extent where Afghan women present in formal banquets often discarded the burqas as they saw no need for a purdah in front of brothers."

Prakash acknowledged that the situation had altered over time, with India no longer enjoying the same degree of confidence in Afghanistan. He concluded by pointing out that the Afghan army had no allegiance towards the political administration and that the relative unpopularity of Ashraf Ghani, the last de facto president of Afghanistan, may have played a major role in the resurgence of the Taliban.

The Write Circle Delhi is presented by Shree Cement Ltd, in association with Dainik Jagran and Ehsaas Women of Delhi



Celebrating 90 Not Out!

A Birthday Bash



Prem Prakash

Prabha Khaitan Foundation hosted an informal dinner to celebrate the 90th birthday of the Foundation's well-wisher, **Prem Prakash**

Prabha Khaitan Foundation organised an informal dinner to celebrate the 90th birthday of journalist extraordinaire Prem Prakash, Chairman ANI, at ITC Maurya on August 31. Present at the celebrations were close friends and family of Prakash including his son Sanjiv Prakash, daughter-in-law Smita, brother Satya and grandson Ishaan. **Ehsaas** Women of Delhi Archana Dalmia, Neelima Dalmia Adhar, Anantmala Poddar, Huma Khalil Mirza, **Ehsaas** Woman of Noida Shinjini Kulkarni, executive trustee of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** Anindita Chatterjee, associates of **PKF** Amitav Adhar, Ryina Maini, authors Anant Vijay and Vandana Singh, former head of India's foreign intelligence agency Vikram Sood, senior advocate at the High Court of Delhi K.K. Manan, senior journalist from ANI Naveen Kapoor and long-time family friend Surendra Kapoor, also converged to wish Prakash.

The evening was filled with happiness and laughter as Prakash shared anecdotes from his life and his experiences as a journalist, travelling all over the world and witnessing history first-hand. He hailed each and every one present at the venue. His friends and family shared their favourite memories of the nonagenarian. After dinner, the Foundation ordered pineapple vanilla cake for the culinary enthusiast. Prakash cherished the evening and expressed his sincere gratitude towards **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** for celebrating his birthday. We at the Foundation, pray for Prem Prakash's good health and long life.

(Left to right) Satya Prakash, Prem Prakash and Surender Kapoor



Anant Vijay



Smita Prakash



(Left to right) Archana Dalmia, Neelima Dalmia Adhar, Vandana Singh, Huma Khalil Mirza, Prem Prakash, Anantmala Potdar, Shinjini Kulkarni, Smita Prakash



(Left to right) Vandana Singh, Anindita Chatterjee, Neelima Dalmia Adhar and Ryina Maini



Shinjini Kulkarni



Anantmala Potdar



Huma Khalil Mirza



K.K. Manan with Prem Prakash

UNSHACKLING THE MIND



"Once you learn to read, you will be forever free"

—Frederick Douglas

The mind is humankind's most valuable asset, the tool through which we can unlock the wonders of the world. Unshackling the mind from the grip of ignorance, prejudice and complacency requires sustained effort and enterprise. An invaluable part of that unshackling is the facilitation of literacy, the ability to read and write, to express and communicate with clarity.

According to data collected by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2020, approximately 773 million adults and young people around the world do not have basic literacy skills. Even more worryingly, 617 million children and adolescents lack minimal proficiency in reading and mathematics.

Over the last year-and-a-half, the COVID-19 pandemic has dealt a severe blow to literacy and education worldwide. Nearly 63 percent of the world's student population had their learning disrupted indefinitely due to the closure of schools during the first wave of the pandemic.

Since 1967, UNESCO has been observing September 8 as International Literacy Day (ILD) in an attempt to disseminate the indispensability of universal literacy. As part of the celebrations, UNESCO also awards

International Literacy Prizes each year. Over 500 projects and programmes undertaken by governments, NGOs, and individuals across different parts of the planet have gained recognition and prominence through these awards.

Over time, celebrations of ILD have focused on a range of themes, analysing literacy and spreading awareness about the same through the lens of public health, gender empowerment, epidemic management, to name a few.

An esteemed and constantly enlarging group of writers has also supported UNESCO in its endeavours through the Writers for Literacy initiative. The group includes names such as Margaret Atwood, Amitav Ghosh, Alberto Manugel and Anna Moi. Institutions with international credibility such as the Global Development Research Center, the National Institute for Literacy, and Rotary International have also assisted UNESCO in a variety of ways to promote literacy.

For 2021, ILD is being celebrated under the theme "Literacy for a human-centred recovery: Narrowing the digital divide", which takes stock of how the pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing structural inequalities to scuttle learning opportunities across the globe. Even as internet access has allowed millions of learners to transition into virtual learning with digital clouds replacing the classroom, millions more have been left without any meaningful education, deprived by the digital divide.

ARTWORK BY **SUDIPTA KUNDU**

The pandemic has shown that when the going gets tough, it is possible to overturn decades of norms and systems to create a new ecosystem of learning. All that remains to be done is to make this new ecosystem equitably accessible, a process that requires the cooperation of governments, private organisations and responsible citizens

Goals. The urgency for literacy also resonates in the words of Audrey Azoulay, UNESCO Director General: "As we celebrate International Literacy Day, UNESCO would like to invite all actors around the world, in the field of education and beyond, to mobilize for the literacy of young people, adults and women. So that they, too, can have the right to dream and be free."

The sudden shift to distance learning has also laid bare the severe lacunae in most parts of the world in terms of connectivity, infrastructure and the ability to engage with technology, as well as disparities in other services such as access to electricity, all of which limit learning options.

To mark ILD 2021, arrangements have been made to explore how literacy can catalyse a human-centred recovery, with a special emphasis on the link between literacy and digital skills required by non-literate youth and adults. Lessons for making digital learning more inclusive and engaging are also a part of the event's agenda.

Universal literacy is an inalienable component of lifelong learning, premised on humanism and defined as such by the fourth goal of the Sustainable Development

At **Prabha Khaitan**

Foundation, we have always been relentless supporters and advocates for universal literacy, opening minds and creating greater dialogue on literacy, education and empowerment. The pandemic has shown that when the going gets tough, it is possible to overturn decades of norms and systems to create a new ecosystem of learning. All that remains to be done is to make this new ecosystem equitably accessible, a process that requires the cooperation of governments, private organisations and responsible citizens.

Regardless of who we are and where we come from, the quest for a better future for the human species is a quest that is impossible without adequate, if not complete, literacy. It is, therefore, incumbent on each one of us to realise this truth and do our bit to actualise the goal of universal literacy.

Dynamic Divas of Delhi

Karuna Goenka



Anantmala Potdar



Archana Dalmia

Social worker, freelance correspondent, columnist—Archana Dalmia wears many a hat. She has been actively working for the development of women and children and has been the secretary for the India Chapter of the World Women Parliamentary for Peace (1986-89), the general secretary for the All India Mahila

Congress (1994-1999) as well as the convenor for the Committee for Peace, Love and Harmony, National Women's Forum. She was also a core group member of the NAM Conference, Youth Congress 1985, and went on to serve as the secretary of the All India Congress Committee, 2004. As a columnist Dalmia has written for *The Asian Age*, *Hindustan Times*, *The Indian Express*, *The New Indian Express*, *Mail Today* and *Rajasthan Patrika*. She is a former member of the Central Board of Film Certification (Delhi) and a former editor of the newsletter *World Women Parliamentarians for Peace*. Additionally, Dalmia has worked on concepts and commentaries for various TV programmes. This includes the concept and commentary of 40 episodes on communalism, secularism, and communal harmony for Doordarshan, the script and commentary of a film on adolescent girls for the World Food Programme, and the concept, script and commentary for a film on Anganwadis for the Ministry of Women and Child Development. Dalmia is a versatile and dynamic leader who believes in giving back to society every step of the way.



Dipali Bhasin

Dipali Bhasin is an award-winning food and travel writer who also runs the successful blog, *Spoons and Sneakers*. For her outstanding work, she has been awarded the Food and Beverage Association India (FBAI) Award. She received the prestigious Indira Gandhi Priyadarshini Award in 2007 for her contributions, services and achievements in the field of education. An event curator and brand host of Dineout Passport, she is also a social media influencer and a theatre artiste. For the last 15 years she has been an active member of the Forum for Breast Cancer Awareness, an NGO that spreads awareness about early detection and treatment of breast cancer. In 2020 she authored a travel e-book, *A Wanderer's Revolution*.

Huma Khalil Mirza

Huma Khalil Mirza is an author, translator and the editor of *Bazm-e-Adab*, an Urdu magazine where women writers contribute from all around the globe. She regularly translates articles and short stories from Urdu into English for several publications. Her major works include *Many Summers Apart*; *Gems from Contemporary Urdu Literature*, which is a 400-page translation of her father's (Khalilur Rahman Azmi) seminal work on progressives, *Urdu Mein Tarraqi Pasand Adabi Tehreek*. She has recently penned a poetic history of her hometown called *The Allure of Aligarh; A Poetic Journey into the University City*. A member of the advisory board of Rekhta, the largest online website for Urdu literature and language, Mirza is currently writing and creating content for audio-visual media on the life of Urdu poets.



Neelima Dalmia Adhar



Neelima Dalmia Adhar has a passion for both the spoken and written word and divides her time between writing and pursuing her interest in poetry, philosophy and the paranormal.

Her writings have earned for her the tag of chronic

provocateur and perhaps, one of India's most fearless authors.

A student of The Convent of Jesus and Mary, Adhar got her Bachelor's degree in home science from Lady Irwin College; and a Master's in psychology from Delhi University. She taught psychology to undergraduate students for a while at the same university.

Her first book, *Father Dearest: The Life and Times of R. K. Dalmia* (2003), scaled the bestseller list and she was labeled a daredevil "family chronicler" who had exposed some fiercely guarded secrets.

Her second book, a novel, *Merchants of Death* (2007), also received critical acclaim. It exposes the underbelly and duplicity of the perceived-to-be chaste, highly religious and overtly orthodox Marwari society. Brought up in a typical Marwari home with six siblings, three older and three younger, in New Delhi, Dalmia in a sense had violated the sacred omerta and shattered that bastion of secrecy of her clan by telling the world what everyone knows, but no one ever speaks about.

The Secret Diary of Kasturba (2016), her third book, is a peep into the life of the wife of Mahatma Gandhi.

Currently working on a book on Radha, Adhar is a passionate "people-watcher", drawn to oddities, and thrives on writing about personalities and human behaviour—from the quirky to the mysterious to the bizarre.

Shazia Ilmi

Shazia Ilmi is an Indian politician. She was previously a television journalist and anchor at STAR News. Ilmi was educated at St. Mary's School in Kanpur and Nainital and then at St. Bede's College, Shimla. She then completed degree courses in journalism and broadcasting at Jamia Millia Islamia and the University of Wales, Cardiff, and also completed a diploma in 16mm film production at the New York Film Academy. Ilmi spent 15 years in varied aspects of television news and documentary production. She has been an anchor on STAR News, where she hosted and produced the popular prime-time news show, *Desh Videsh*. Ilmi has been a member of the International Association of Women in Radio and Television. She is presently the national spokesperson of the BJP.





Dr. Prabha Khaitan

प्रभा खेतान

जन्म: 1 नवंबर 1942

अवसान: 19 सितंबर 2008

यूं तो हर मृत्यु असमय होती है, चाहे मरने वाला सौ साल का क्यों न हो, मगर 66 साल की उम्र में उसका चले जाना, इसलिए 'असमय' है, क्योंकि प्रभा की उर्जा अभी भी नए क्षितिजों में अपने पंख फैलाने को आतुर थी।

हिंदी की स्त्रीवादी लेखिकाओं में प्रभा खेतान शायद सबसे ज्यादा पढ़ी-लिखी महिला थीं। उसने न केवल अपने लेखन और विचारों के माध्यम से स्त्रीवाद को स्थापित किया, बल्कि देश-विदेश घूमकर स्त्रीवादी आंदोलनों के स्वरूप और उसके विचारों को समझने की कोशिश की। प्रभा हिंदी की सबसे साहसी लेखिका थीं, जिसने अपनी आत्मकथा 'अन्या से अनन्या' में डॉक्टर के साथ अपनी प्रेम कहानी को खोलकर रखा है। न वह रखैल थी, न पत्नी, क्योंकि आर्थिक बोझ कोई दूसरा उठाए यह प्रभा खेतान को स्वीकार नहीं था। वह स्वयं करोड़ों की मालिक थीं, मगर पत्नी बनने की आकांक्षा हमेशा बनी रही। अपनी इस स्थिति को प्रभा समझती न हों—ऐसा नहीं था।

प्रभा खेतान की 'अन्या से अनन्या' अजीत कौर की 'खानाबदोश' के बाद महिला लेखिकाओं में सबसे दुस्साहसी आत्मकथा है—मैत्रेयी पुष्पा के 'गुड़िया भीतर गुड़िया' से दो कदम आगे। इस दृष्टि से देखें तो उनका सारा लेखन एक विद्रोहिणी नारी के विभिन्न पक्षों को अभिव्यक्त करता है। परम्परावादी मारवाड़ी परिवारों के बीच प्रभा इस तरह अपना कद उंचा उठाती हैं कि आश्चर्य होता है।

'आओ पेपे घर चलें'—उसका लघु उपन्यास है और आज भी कुछ उसे प्रभा का श्रेष्ठ उपन्यास मानते हैं। 'तालाबंदी' में उसने अपनी फैक्टरी की हड़ताल को अपना विषय बनाया था और वहां मार्क्सवादी दर्शन व ट्रेड यूनियन की जमीनी कार्यकर्ताओं पर गहराई से विचार किया था। 'छिन्नमस्ता' में जैसे उसने अपना सिर ही काटकर रख दिया। मारवाड़ी परिवार के घुटन भरे माहौल में जिस तरह वह अपनी स्वतंत्र लेखन को विकसित करती है और अपने व्यक्तित्व के रेशे-रेशे को जोड़ती जाती है, वह अभूतपूर्व है। उपन्यास के परिवार में अत्यंत महत्वपूर्ण पात्र, नायिका का वह भाई है, जिसने उसके साथ बाकायदा रेप किया है। मगर नायिका अपने व्यक्तित्व के बूते पर इसे दरकिनार करके अपना स्वतंत्र व्यवसाय स्थापित करती है। वस्तुतः स्त्री की स्वतंत्रता ऐसी थीम है, जो प्रभा की हर रचना में गुंथी हुई मिलती है। बहुत कम लेखिकाएं हैं, जिन्होंने सामाजिक अवरोधों को इस कदर जीत लिया हो। अभी उसने चार-पांच सौ पृष्ठों में सोफिया टॉल्स्टॉय की डायरी की पुनर्प्रस्तुति की है। डायरी

टॉल्स्टॉय के भारी भरकम व्यक्तित्व के बोझ तले दबी एक कर्तव्यपरायण स्त्री की कहानी है। जैसे उसे घर के अन्य कार्यों के साथ अपने 11 बच्चों को पालना भी है। सोफिया टॉल्स्टॉय की डायरी एक स्वतंत्र व्यक्तित्व की छटपटाहट से भरी हुई पुस्तक है, मगर वह कहीं भी टॉल्स्टॉय के रचनात्मक व्यक्तित्व को छोटा नहीं करती है। वह 'अपने-अपने चेहरें' (उपन्यास) की मारवाड़ी परिवार में छटपटाती औरत की बेचैन आभा है। पर उसकी व्यावसायिक सफलताओं ने प्रभा को इतना आत्मविश्वास दे दिया था कि वह निर्भीक होकर जो चाहती थीं, लिखती थी। समाज का डर, उसके विद्रोह को कभी दबा नहीं पाया।

कोलकाता के 'चैंबर्स ऑफ कॉमर्स' का अध्यक्ष बनना प्रभा खेतान का दूसरा चमत्कार है। उसने वहां मेधा पाटकर, किरन बेदी और अरुंधति रॉय को बुलाकर बाकायदा सम्मानित किया। सारे भटकाओं के बाद भी मार्क्सवादी आस्था से उसका कभी विचलन नहीं हुआ। न जाने कितना पैसा उसने पार्टी फंड में दिया। 'हंस' के साथ उसका जुड़ाव पहले से ही बना रहा। उसकी लगभग नब्बे प्रतिशत रचनाएं 'हंस' में ही छपीं। प्रभा हमारे समय की एक विलक्षण, मेधावी और विद्रोही रचनाकार एवं निर्भीक विचारक थीं। यूं तो हर मृत्यु असमय ही होती है, चाहे मरने वाला सौ साल का क्यों न हो, मगर 66 साल की उम्र में उसका चले जाना, इसलिए 'असमय' है, क्योंकि प्रभा की ऊर्जा अभी भी नए क्षितिजों में अपने पंख फैलाने को आतुर थी, जिसकी स्त्रीवादी लेखन को बेहद जरूरत थी।

मृत्यु के एक दिन पहले उसने मुझे फोन से अपनी 'आत्मकथा' और उपन्यास को पूरा करने की आकांक्षा जताई थी। कहती थी कि मैं कहीं बाहर जाकर इन दोनों पुस्तकों को पूरा करूंगी। यदि संभव हुआ तो बहन गीता के पास कनाडा जाकर। शायद लिखने की वहां ऐसी फुरसत मिले। फिर मुझे डांटने लगीं की इतनी उम्र तक आपने ऐसी कहीं कोई जगह नहीं बनाई, जहां मैं रुक सकूं। मैंने कहा कि तुम्हारी तरह उद्यमी नहीं हूं कि एक बड़ा आरामदेह रिसोर्ट (विश्राम गृह) बना डालता। अगर मेरे पास ऐसी जगह नहीं है तो इसमें मेरा नहीं, तुम्हारा दोष है। यह सुनकर वह हंसने लगीं और कहा, अब मैंने अपना सब कुछ अपने बेटे (दत्तक पुत्र) संदीप भूतोड़िया को सौंप दिया है। हर बार की तरह इस भी उसने अपना वही संकल्प दोहराया कि मैं दो साल बाद इन सबसे रिटायर होकर सारा समय लिखने-पढ़ने को दूंगी। प्रभा खेतान को मालूम नहीं था कि उन्होंने अपनी जिस 'अधूरी इच्छा' का जिक्र किया है, वह उन पर घटित होने जा रही है। उनका सारा जीवन एक अधूरी आत्मकथा ही बनकर रह गया है।

— राजेंद्र यादव

यह लेख अहा! जिंदगी के अक्टूबर 2008 अंक में प्रकाशित हुआ था, साभार।



The Mystery of Migration

Deepa Mishra

Why do animals migrate and undertake such long journeys? How do they find their destination with such accuracy when they may have been there only once before? What motivates animal movement?

Migration occurs in every living being, be it plants, butterflies, insects, fish, reptile, bird or even man. All living creatures migrate for the reasons of survival. At times it is in search of food or to save oneself from harsh weather. Thus migration is not only by instinct but also from choice and with judgement, and in none is it as extensively developed as in birds.

From time immemorial, the phenomenon of avian migration has fascinated people. Perhaps because the members of "the feathered tribe" conspicuously move farthest and seemingly with least effort, therefore they have attracted most attention and speculation.

Although the navigation of birds is one mystery of migration that has not yet been completely solved, we do know that, in addition to sight, birds use smell and the earth's magnetic field to find their way around. We also know that they can take their bearings from the stars and



Red-crested Pochard

moon as well as from the sun, and can recognise their home even after a gap.

India is a paradise for migratory birds. During winter, the extreme cold of Siberia and Tibetan plateau makes living impossible and thus triggers the migration of birds to India, towards more favourable weather conditions and abundance of food. Although we associate winter with migration, it also takes place in summers to a limited



Whiskered Tern

extent. The Jacobin Cuckoo or Pied Cuckoo (also called Jatak) migrates from Africa to India during summers and migrates back after monsoon.

The winter migration starts with the 'wagtails' migrating from Tibet/Ladakh and the Himalayas to the plains of India in the months of September-October. As the winter progresses, ducks, geese and cranes start their migration from the Tibetan plateau and Siberia to India, and by November they come in thousands. Survival is the primary aim—to escape the harsh winters of the highlands and seek refuge in the more favourable plains of India. As these ducks and geese (prey) migrate, they are followed by hawks and eagles (predators).

The onset of summer, from the month of March onwards, again stimulates these birds to return to their breeding grounds in Siberia and Tibet, where the lakes and marshes are full of food.

Migration in any particular direction is a one-way transit as the birds cannot immediately return to their original place. They migrate as a gamble with the hope of finding greener pastures and it is therefore important that habitats like lakes, large ponds, marshes, grasslands, rivers and forests are preserved for them. Urbanisation and unmindful development are harming and disintegrating a lot of these habitats. What we see as a waste of land—a vast patch of empty marsh or lake—is in reality a home to these migratory birds and also a source of water for us. It

Pied Cuckoo



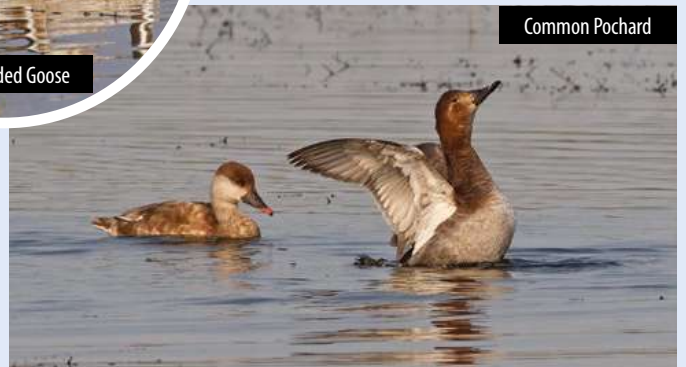
Lesser Whistling Duck



Bar-headed Goose



Common Pochard



Demoiselle Crane



Greylag Goose



is our duty to protect such areas, after all, these migratory birds are our guests and as Indians we have always believed in the concept of 'अतिथिदेवो भवः'.

The mystery of migration is an absorbing and continuing one. We have come a long way from the fanciful theories of early experts on the subject. But there are still countless questions awaiting answers and many species whose migratory behavior is completely unexplained.

*The author is an **Ehsaas**
Woman of Lucknow*

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Guests	Events
Vikram Sampath	Kitaab Delhi & Chennai
Debdatta Bajpai	Kalam Bilaspur & Raipur
Advaita Kala & Mahbouba Seraj	Tête-à-tea Kahali
Shreedevi Sunil	Muskaan
Jackie Shroff	Ek Mulakat Vishesh
Ruchika Nambiar	Ehsaas Dollhouse Project
Anisur Rahman & Akhlaque Ahmad Ahan	Lafz
Subodh Sarkar	Aakhar Kolkata
Ruskin Bond	YPO event
Pawan Paharia	Aakhar Jaipur
Sanjeev Paliwal	Kalam Delhi, Meerut & Amritsar
Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra & Reeta Ramamurthy Gupta	The Write Circle Special
Pallavi Aiyar	The Write Circle Jaipur
Mansingh Rathore 'Matasar'	Aakhar Pothe Kitaab Rajasthan
Aparna Karthikeyan	Muskaan
Dr Karan Singh	Ek Mulakat Vishesh
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Rijula Das	An Author's Afternoon Kolkata
Geet Chaturvedi	Kalam London
Kiran Chadha & Advaita Kala	Ehsaas Clubhouse session
Anant Vijay	Kalam Gurugram
Natasha Ballal	Muskaan WWF



Advaita Kala



Akhlaque Ahmad Ahan



Anant Vijay



Anisur Rahman



Aparna Karthikeyan



Debdatta Bajpai



Dr Karan Singh



Geet Chaturvedi



Jackie Shroff



Kiran Chadha



Mahbouba Seraj



Mansingh Rathore Matasar



Natasha Ballal



Pallavi Aiyar



Pawan Paharia



Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra



Reeta Ramamurthy Gupta



Rijula Das



Ruchika Nambiar



Ruskin Bond



Sanjeev Paliwal



Shreedevi Sunil



Subodh Sarkar



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