



# Prabha

December 2021 | Issue 31

The Prabha Khaitan Foundation Chronicle

# प्रभा

## The Lockdown Gallery



In the past year, the contents of our photo gallery changed dramatically as we became confined to our homes. What replaced the usual clicks? What are the stories behind the new pictures? *Prabha* gets a sneak peek into a few creative minds

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Prabha  
खैतान



MANISHA JAIN  
Communications & Branding Chief,  
Prabha Khaitan Foundation

## *Lockdown Through the Lens*

Once, we captured our busy days and nights on our phones, filling up our galleries with photos of food, travel, outfits, friends, night-outs and everything in between. For the last two years, these moments we captured, of happy days and warm memories, have slowly descended to the bottom of the gallery. We asked some film directors, corporate leaders, actors and entrepreneurs to share what has replaced these pictures—ambitious cooking projects, playtime with pets or plants they potted.

In this issue you can also read a touching letter written by an **Ehsaas** Woman to her daughter-in-law and see how children have expressed themselves with art, words and more during Children's Day events.

The nip in the air has set the mood for the festive season throughout the country, but let's not forget to stay cautious and celebrate responsibly.

On behalf of our entire team, wishing you and your loved ones a cheerful and safe festive season!

*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 ]

Prabha Khaitan Foundation hosted two special Kalam sessions at the Indore Literature Festival



The session *Hum Tumko Bhool Na Payenge* was organised in memory of Ravindra Kalia and saw Mamta Kalia (centre) in conversation with Vazda Khan (right) and Sapna Shivale Solanki



Pravin Sharma (left) and Purushottam Agrawal at the Indore Literature Festival. Agrawal was part of the session *Akath Kahani Prem Ki: Kabir Ke Hawale Se* organised by the Foundation



Team **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** met with Stephane Amalir, the director of Alliance Francaise, Delhi, and his wife Laura in Kolkata to discuss collaborations at New Delhi World Book Fair where France will be the Guest of Honour and further future associations

## Happy Birthday

Prabha WISHES **EHSAAS** WOMEN BORN IN DECEMBER

6th December



Manisha Jain

7th December



Babita Kathotia

19th December



Arundeeplaha

21st December



Anvi Thaker

21st December



Archana Dalmia



# Lockdown Caught on Camera

There was a time when our phones were full of photos of food, travel, #OOTDs (outfit of the day), friends, dinner parties and destination weddings. Since the pandemic hit, those moments come back to us only occasionally, in a 'this time that year' feature. So, what has replaced our perfect clicks in a year of lockdowns and restrictions that kept us confined to solitary pursuits, mostly in our homes and neighbourhoods?

We asked some people—film directors, fashion designers, entrepreneurs, corporate leaders—to share the contents of the photo galleries on their phones, through pictures and words, that they have gathered over the past year. From ambitious cooking projects to making reels, time spent with pets to rediscovering forgotten passions, *Prabha* brings you the stories behind some of the photos that have been collected as memories as we embraced a new *abnormal*.

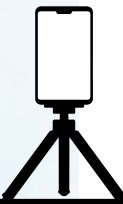






## Walk With Me

Ashdeen

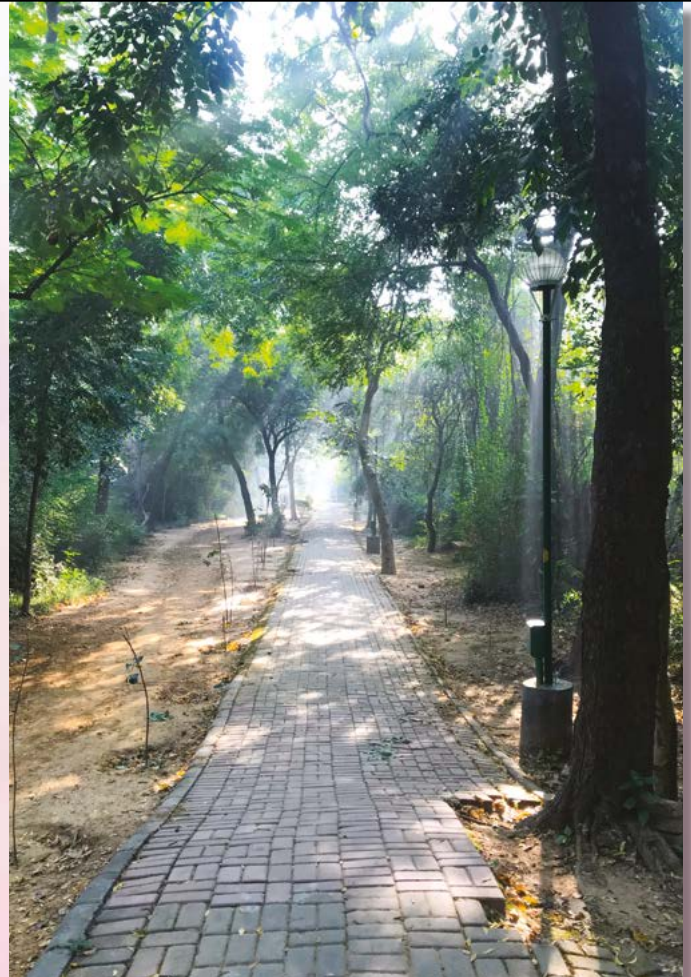


“In every walk with nature, one receives far more than he seeks,” said the Scottish-American naturalist and author John Muir. This adage proved particularly true for me from the time the pandemic hit and my morning walks became an important part of my daily routine, having a profound effect on my mood and outlook to life. Most images in my camera roll of late have been moments I have tried to capture during my solitary walks in the city.

Walking through paths engulfed in lush greenery always brings me delight. I find that this kind of wild foliage is nature at its best, and to me it holds the promise of a better tomorrow. I am not someone who enjoys going in search of a new adventure every day. I prefer sticking to a route. The repetitiveness of walking through the same paths day after day over time evolves into a kind of walking meditation. I find that it anchors me, offering predictability, a sense of comfort and solace in times of unpredictability. Trees become familiar and you develop a deeper relationship with them. You become a keen observer of nature as the seasons slowly turn and you see your friends—the trees, transforming.

While Delhi doesn't offer much in the form of dramatic open skies, during lockdown we started pausing to watch the skies a whole lot more—whether that was from our balconies, our windows, during our walks or when we were running our 'essential' errands. One such time I paused to capture the ever-transforming drama of the skies. With dramatic colours and textures at play, I find it no less impressive than a striking impressionist painting.

During my walks I often came across colonies of mushrooms and I always stopped to admire their intricate, unselfconscious beauty. To me the mushroom is life-affirming—an example of the fact that nature just goes on, demonstrating growth and strength against all odds. I watch these colonies with childlike inquisitiveness. Sometimes they appear like mysterious little civilisations and developments far more sophisticated and scientific than our own.



Walking through paths engulfed in lush greenery always brings me delight



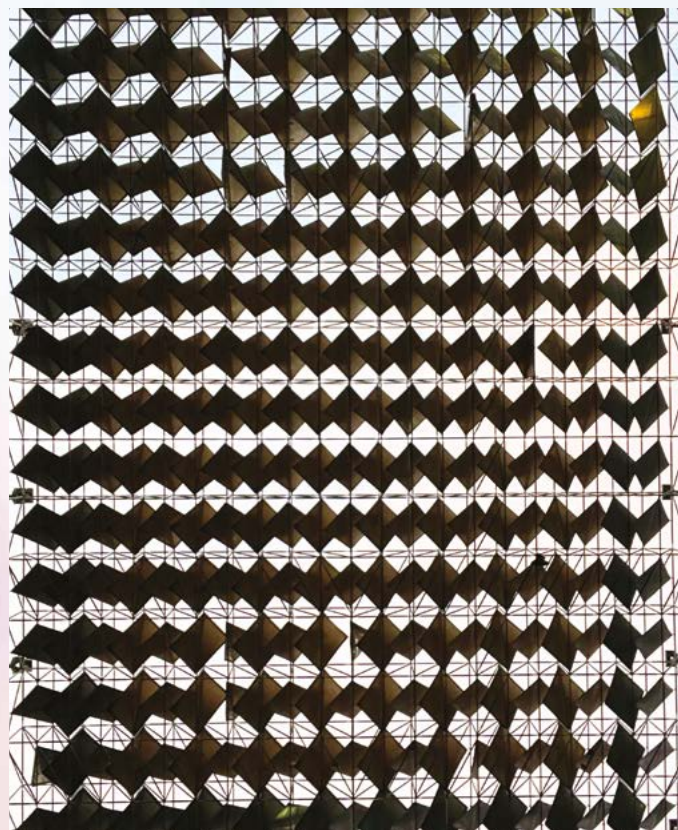
The ever-transforming drama of the skies



I find walking in Delhi immensely pleasurable. Old monuments root me to the city and I love running into them right in the middle of this megapolis with all its modern accoutrements. Take the tomb of Muhammad Shah Sayyid in Lodi Gardens for instance. The octagonal monument is architectural perfection incarnate. It has no bad angles! Surrounded by tall palm trees, it brings to mind the Persian Garden of Paradise.

That said, I also love select post-Independence architecture in Delhi. The beautifully landscaped India Habitat Centre designed by American architect Joseph Allen Stein is a particular favourite and a delight to visit during these quieter times. My favourite feature is the cleverly designed pergola with angled panels that filter the sunlight little by little reminding us to guard our inner space and only let the good things into our minds and our lives. There's a reason *#neverforgettolookup* is such a popular hashtag on social media!

**Ashdeen Z. Lilaowala** is an award-winning textile designer, author and curator known for his research and revival work on the Parsi Gara through his eponymous label



The cleverly designed pergola at India Habitat Centre



The tomb of Muhammad Shah Sayyid in Lodi Gardens



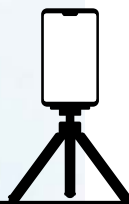
A colony of mushrooms with their intricate, unselfconscious beauty





## The Achaar Wala

Anuj Bahri



*Zindagi mein itni,  
Masroofiyat bhi toh nahin,  
Ke zaike ka nasha,  
Dil mein ho aur zabaan pe nahin.*

*Khwaabon mein swaad dekhe they  
Nazar se nahin,  
Do ghadi aankh bhar lo,  
Zindagi bhar ka safar hai—kuch teekha kuch sahi.*

This past year, I rediscovered a word that not only brings joy but a whole world of memories to mind—*achaar* or pickle. A word that not only allows us to experience a myriad tastes but also the nostalgia of our mother, grandmother or that distant aunt whom we no longer meet. With a little dollop of this tangy mess of vegetables or fruits on your plate, you become a time traveller.

This is a journey that I found myself on during the two lockdowns that shut us away to hibernate in our homes. I discovered my love of *achaar*.

While growing up, I used to sit with my aunt, the official *achaar*-maker of the family, while she painstakingly and joyfully poured the oils and the masalas with expert hand measurements onto the neatly cut mangos or the mix of vegetables in season in the *paraat* in front of her. I took joy in seeing the love in her eyes when she seasoned the fruit with hot, red chilli powder and a pinch of salt or sugar to get the balance of the taste right.

Every house has a special flavour, a distinct taste, a unique texture of the *achaar* that is brought by the maker. In the Bahri household, *achaar* is a labour of my love. Fresh from the bazaar starts the journey of mango and chilli, a perfect song and dance of hot and sweet, cut in precise pieces so that everyone enjoys an equal share of the spoonful of love.

But the masalas are the true magicians of flavour. A little of this and a little of that certainly make the world go round. This is the true ingredient, mixed with a shower of the mustard oil, that enhances the taste. This is also the



Mango *achaar* in the making







stage when one can taste the smell of the strong mustard mixing with the mango.

Now comes the most exciting part of the journey—mixing the masalas with the oils. The love and tenderness of your hands, with which one mixes and blends the content, brings out the aroma of the pickle and you know that you are on the right track—you can instantly feel that you've got it right and in a few weeks, the fragrance of your labour will linger in the home.

I love to mix every batch of mango separately, individually caressing every slice with love and a gentle squeeze to get the fruit's juices flowing. Mixed with the oils, the fruit gets its unique flavour and fragrance that you can immediately feel around you.

I was always fond of food and trying new recipes in my spare time, so this whole year of lockdowns, I have finally found that alternate trade, being the *achaar-wala* in case all else fails.

Here we are all packed and ready, my new batch of the *Bahri homemade achaar*, with love from my hands to your table.

**Anuj Bahri** heads Bahrison's Booksellers and is the CEO and principal agent of Red Ink, a literary and film agency in New Delhi



Mixing each batch of mangoes by hand



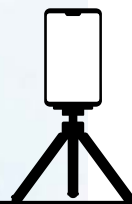
The Bahri homemade *achaar*, all packed and ready





## LSD: Lockdown Secret Diary

Gauri Shinde



Fact: A year in a blur.

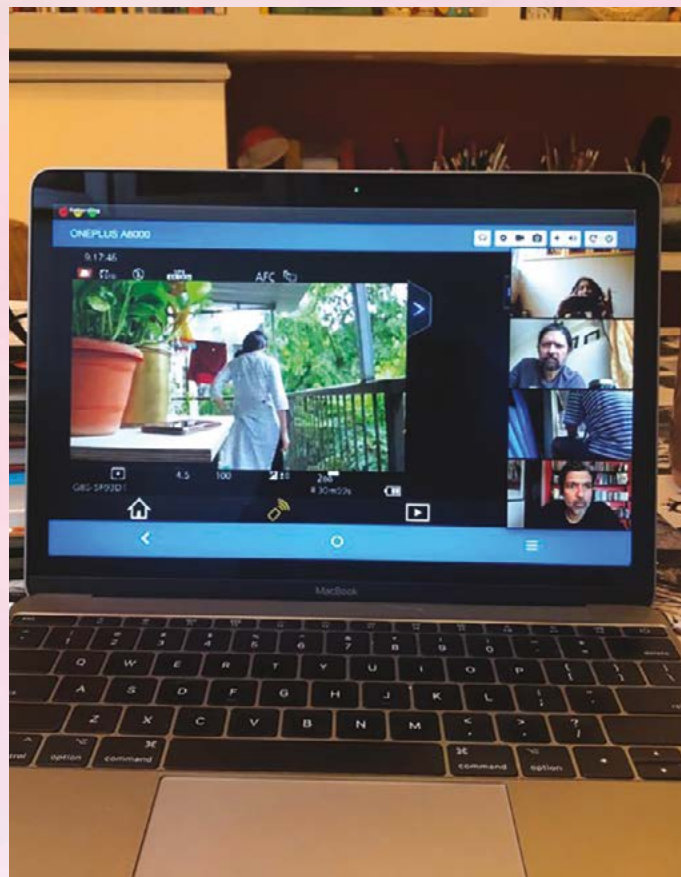
Lesson: A year of clarity.

An unexpected vacation. With no room service. As far as a lockdown routine was concerned, I didn't do anything unique, we all had similar stories—cleaning the house, missing the house help every time we had to wield that broomstick, a cat overjoyed with our 24-hour company and with attention fatigue, wondered when we would get out of the house and he would finally get some “me time”. A sudden discovery of culinary talent, food photos, the infinite choices of films on Mubi, burning of

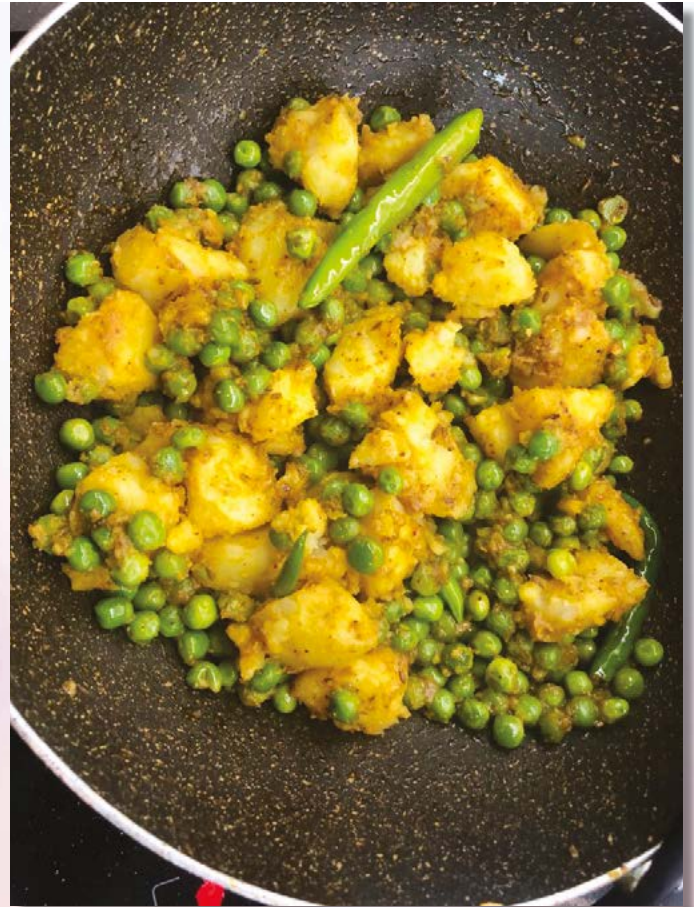
the bra, literally, video calls in PJs and bushy eyebrows.

When waxing could no longer wait, the initial excitement started waning. Every day was like a photocopy of the previous day. Even therapy sessions seemed repetitive, there was nothing new to report. Life is so unpredictable and we are all going to die anyway, the pandemic proving this even more. Every other day, news of loss was making this belief stronger, that it is all pointless.

But in those silent afternoons and lazy evenings, clarity began to filter in like a sunrise in slow motion. What do I really want from life? Do I just travel, have more fun with







friends, indulge in debauchery, just watch films instead of making them, which is so much easier?

Shouldn't we just enjoy ourselves with the time we have got? But also, don't we have to occupy ourselves with something meaningful until we hit the grave with a smile?

Something unexpected happened. I got a project, an ad film to be directed, guess how? On Zoom. How the hell can that happen?! Without a shooting floor and not meeting people. But at the end of the day, we are creatures who can find a way out of anything when pushed to the wall. A zillion con-calls, texts, meticulous planning and innovative solutions later I found myself seated in my study glued to my laptop to direct my first remote-controlled shoot. Yes, it took way longer, but it happened. It was possible. Of course, for a TV commercial but even then. I was so happy to meet my team and be back at work, having many laughs as we treaded along on this newfound work module, even if it was online.

A new joy was found. And the realisation that my work makes me so happy. To not take these little joys for granted, like ever.

Other equally important life lessons:

- I can manage myself when my house help is on vacay, what with my new hi-tech vacuum cleaner and Nigella's cooking skills.
- I am fine with my overgrown eyebrows. I finally look like my goddess, Frida Kahlo.
- I don't have to feel guilty about most things except for over-petting my cat.
- I don't need so many pants and skirts, just new tops. Video call protocols.
- The minute I get a chance to travel anywhere I will. Never know when we get banned from entering that country.
- I can avoid meeting people I don't want to. I could have a sudden cough or cold at will.
- Amazon has great deals if you are a Prime member.
- I don't have to take myself so seriously or think so much about the future. I may not have one. Such relief.

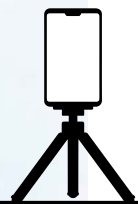
**Gauri Shinde** is an Indian film director and screenwriter, known for movies like *English Vinglish*, her directorial debut, and *Dear Zindagi*





## Chasing Shadows

Mayank Mansingh Kaul



At one point, a few months back, after weeks of trying I finally cracked the right proportion of a favourite Balsamic-olive vinaigrette to be used on top of a dollop of burrata. The flavours still missing something, I reached out for a never-before-used jar of roasted garlic flakes for garnish and an old cracked bowl with just the right depth to serve, from a pile of rusting grandfather trunks. This coming together of simple elements for an early dinner became a big triumph; with the unbearable devastation that has raged outside over a year through the pandemic, such small acts of nourishment for oneself and the family have defined a period of immense trials and wait.

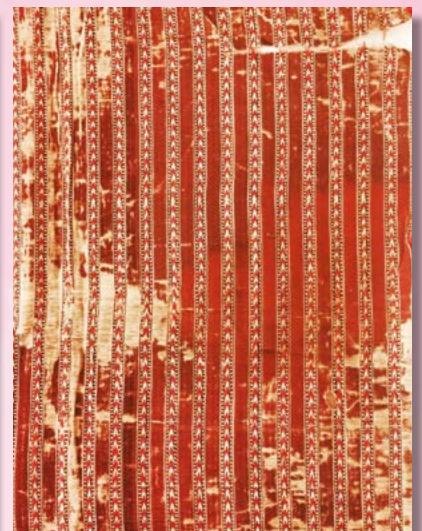
For almost a decade before COVID-19 brought in a long, forced pause at home, life had been full of overcommitments, hectic travel schedules and eating out of cardboard food delivery cases. As the kitchen became the epicentre of a new life, of learning everyday recipes as well as experimenting with new ones, the space's functional aesthetics transformed into a platform to stage objects, which brought back memories from past travels and time spent with friends. Earlier dreaded chores became meditative processes; peeling and chopping a scaly fruit, sorting weekly groceries and storing them, planning menus, measuring ingredients.





In between the ensuing steaming, pressure cooking and baking, going through things packed away for years became an obsession. There was so much one had acquired over the years that one had forgotten about; working with textiles and crafts, revisiting them started revealing the milestones of a narrative of one's personal and professional journey that one had altogether forgotten: an old *mashru* fragment bought at a recycling shop outside a palace in Hyderabad, a *bagh* bought as a wedding present for a friend but never given... soon these sessions expanded into timeless stretches through the day and night. One started observing light and its play at home in ways that one had not earlier. In this play of intimacies, small daily rituals acquired a new meaning: a brisk walk at dusk in the neighbouring park, chasing a ball with Tiboh—my year-old indie, gathering *motias* from bushes in the garden at midnight, plucking cherry tomatoes on the terrace, staring at shadows of objects and things endlessly.

**Mayank Mansingh Kaul** is a Delhi-based textile designer, writer and curator with an interest in post-Independence histories of textiles, design and fashion in India. He is also the founder-director of The Design Project India, a not-for-profit organisation

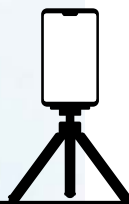






## What's On My Phone

Mita Vasisht



The first announcement of it is like a call to arms. Gear up, strengthen the resolve, equip the base, sing your ode to courage, the enemy can attack anytime, be alert, awake, strong and fit. Cannot reach the other camp where my mother is—all routes, by road or by air, shut down. Stay where you are. The cellphone is the only contact mode. Manage your mother's home base by remote, and keep panic out of the conversations. Only practicality.

What began to settle into my phone in that three-and-a-half months of just me and my two cats in my two-bedroom flat?

Putting out videos on social media—something that I had never really done before. Floating my boat of resolve and all the above-mentioned survival modes on the sea of social media. Many boats, hundreds of those boats riding the waves of social media sea, unfurling sails, AHOYS, AYE AYE's and all the rest—some boats will sit, letting the wind flap the sails, content to just be in the sea, others chart courses, plant buoys and will 'tack, jibe, run' (yachting terminology) windward and leeward, sails pulled tight or loosened in place, to make it first to the finishing buoy

run' (yachting terminology) windward and leeward, sails pulled tight or loosened in place, to make it first to the finishing buoy.

My first video makes a star out of every wrinkled vegetable that I pull out, assess and caress with the now 'natural' (albeit sudden) resolve that I am a 'brilliant chef' too, among other things, and every past-its-freshness-date-vegetable that I allowed to shrivel in the veggie basket of my fridge, I can transform into a gourmet meal. I consume the meal and float it's AV on the sea of social media.

I am inspiration—I am I am....

I exist—I will be Walt Whitman—and celebrate myself!

The next boat I will put to sail on the social media seas (let's call it SMS for the rest of the article—come to think of it, if one replaces the M with an O... isn't that the subtext of every 'Yoo hoo hoo I am so cool' AV, actually? an SOS to

the Self?)... Anyway to complete the sentence begun, the next boat I will put to sail on the social media seas (SMS)





will come a few days later: as I begin the daily chore of sweeping and swabbing my home, every corner of it meticulously, washing my clothes by hand; a popular Hindi film Punjabi ditty comes to my mind and I make a parody of it, upload it and check the likes over the days—it surprises me that my home-cleaning garb, a gentle bit of (not planned) comedy, no make-up, no glamour look, garners more ‘likes’ in a jiffy, than the more professional pics uploaded. Realisation!

Realisation number two: all this house cleaning work done meticulously and swiftly still takes up a whole hour and 15 minutes. So, how is it that my house help insisted all these years that she had done it ALL in 35 minutes, every day? I remembered a time when I was driving out of my building gate and she had just entered it to head for my flat (in Mumbai we leave our keys with the house help)—she hadn’t noticed me, absorbed as she was with her cellphone. Twenty-five minutes later when I returned to my flat she had left—the washing was done too—on an impulse I had sniffed the wet clothes dripping—no, not a whiff of detergent assailed my nostrils.

Realisation number two dents the belief that I am an essentially empathetic person. It is ethical in these times to pay my maid

her full salary—if only I could do it without this underlying resentment and without feeling I am paying someone who has anyway constantly taken me for a ride.

An essential part of my actor’s craft is to be ruthlessly honest—so here it is. I resent paying her a full salary or ANY salary in these times even though I am paying it. Is this bad karma? I overheard a *pujari* in Trimbakeshwar temple telling a group of devotees “if you do not wish to give alms, don’t. But do not taunt the beggar saying ‘why don’t you do some work’” because you do not know what karma had put him there despite being able in body and mind. I must accept my resentments and see them for what they are. Besides, no payments for any of my acting work are going to be released ‘for now’.

As the initial war-zone bravado settles, I will battle with the vagaries of the inner storms that I will weather by making more boats and setting them afloat on the SMS. Then six weeks into it, all activity ceases. I sit at the shore and watch some boats and then turn my back to the sea and gaze at what lies within the immediacy of me.

The street is so quiet outside nowadays. I can actually hear myself breathe and think. Yes, I will have to move from this flat once things get back to ‘normal’.

My NSD classmate’s wife calls and tells me things about my NSD soul sibling (at NSD

This horrible time’ is a divine time. It is soul time. This is IT. Learn the lessons, reform or face doomsday. How long before the stench from ‘there’ hits the AC ducts of exclusive air-purified bubbles



classmates become that for life) that are soul shocking. Now that they have been locked in as a family and no shoots are taking him out of the home space, the demons are dancing in him and he with them. She tells me also that she is no more than a full-time house help—cooking, cleaning, washing day after day while he chats on Zoom with friends. I'll speak to him, I tell her (I have the authority and the connection of 35 years to slug him in the face and pull him up by the collar). No no no—she shudders. He must not know I spoke with you... no no no.

Next boat to sail the SMS: Video three. Me dressed up in chiffon and jewellery, with the bathroom as the Switzerland scenic backdrop, performing the Sridevi's *Mr India* number *Kaate nahin kat te yeh din yeh raat* number with broom and washing in hand.

Sail away, dear video. I also sent it to him... just by the way.

Who am I? Asks my inner voice. Miss Rajini of the *Rajini* serial of many decades ago? Trying to fix-it the world!

My own fraternity of actors, some who I have a high regard for, insist on 'doing a piece' from home—for theatre. I conveniently blame the internet and no one to fix it for me, as being unable to do any of the many things on Zoom.

My left brain and right brain are in deep discussion—for a change they both agree and are not arguing—as it is, theatre is going a-begging in India, even in normal times. Do 'it' anywhere, in anyone's drawing room, do 'it' for less, for free, for nothing. Just doing 'it' is the theatre spirit!!! YAAAAYYYY!

So many theatre boats bobbing on Social Media Seas: kitchens, bedrooms and unaesthetic intimacies of personal space visible in the background. I will not sell theatre cheap. It has to be an art

form; ACCEPTED as an art form of the highest calling, calibre and skill. Read the goddammmmm NATYASHASTRAAAA!!!

It's a quiet, slow but clear realisation, borne of quiet long hours spent alone, reading, thinking, breathing, doing nothing in particular that something of the me, the me that dove into the sea of uncertainties of life at the age of 19, dove in without a swimming tube, without a raft in sight, or a boat, with just the soul speak (that acting was my path), that this me surfaces from the depths of a

stormy ocean that the world is being tossed about in. 'This horrible time' is a divine time. It is soul time. This is IT. Learn the lessons, reform or face doomsday. How long before the stench from 'there' hits the AC ducts of exclusive air-purified bubbles.

'It' is forcing everything out in the open. Everything inside and outside in the world we have created, is

exposed now, to the sharp clear beam of a light.

What's on my phone tells me the difference between the SMS I have boats bobbing on, and that other sea of my soul calling that needs neither to preach, nor to affirm; that always told me I was a speck of dust but/and, within that speck was a divine universe. Who am I?

I can view all my boats in the Social Media Sea, bobbing, floating and saying 'hiya' to other boats....

Me? I believe it is time: I will do an underwater somersault and swim to where the Ganga makes a U-turn to flow back to its source.

My left brain and right brain are in deep discussion—for a change they both agree and are not arguing—as it is, theatre is going a-begging in India, even in normal times. Do 'it' anywhere, in anyone's drawing room, do 'it' for less, for free, for nothing. Just doing 'it' is the theatre spirit!!!

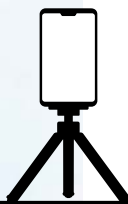
**Mita Vashisht** is an Indian actress known for her work in films, theatre and television. She is best known for her roles in shows like *Space City Sigma*, *Pachpan Khambe Laal Deewarein*, and *Swabhimaan*





## Doing a Quarter Bit More

Sangita Kathiwada



The last two years have had us all go through dramatic changes. Confined within the walls of our homes, one had more time for reflection.

Life appeared to move in slow motion. I paused, looked, appreciated, experienced and felt more deeply.

From this time stemmed an opportunity to reach out to friends, far and beyond, who were buried in the corners of my heart but were never allowed to surface, considering my hectic living. Geographic boundaries melted and although we weren't together physically, we were able to connect deeply, thanks to technology. I felt as if I looked into the eyes and faces of my friends more than I did when we met in person. I realised the importance of

nurturing the relationships which mattered the most. I found time to respond to the overflow of compassion that I had felt and help in whatever ways I could.

I also became extremely conscious of what I put inside my body, rather than on my body, which gave rise to a fabulous new initiative—Sava.

The Hindi word 'sava' means one and a quarter. Our name reflects our vision of 'doing a little bit more'. More for our bodies, minds, more for our health, more for our community, environment and more for our spirit. Usually, food stories begin at a farm and end in the stomach. Ours with Sava, goes further and considers the entire food cycle from soil to soil. What you will find on



My new initiative — SAVA at Melange



Private Members' club for the culturally curious—Circle1434—Kathiawada City House



our shelves is a result of a little more mindfulness and a little more willingness to learn from nature. Luckily, I found a perfect partner in Kavitha Mantha to spearhead this project.

My journey has revolved around sustainability for 30 years. Being a vocal advocate of empowering artisans and reinvigorating the country's rich heritage, creating Sava during these times and launching it at Melange felt like a natural progression for me.

While my mind was in this space of nurturing bonds, I took a step further to hopefully strengthen not only my

personal, but a few strong bonds for individuals in the same areas of interest as mine, including art, design and wellness. This helped me push the idea, at a great speed, of building a culturally conscious community to come together, interact and create.

Circle 1434 is the result. I created a members' community for the culturally curious. We envision the circle as a meeting place for the like-minded, to inspire, support, learn, co-create and collaborate. We see it as a coming together of individuals with diverse backgrounds and strengths who can contribute to one another. To



Creating happiness for myself by treating fresh pomegranates growing on my terrace with utmost respect and care



Getting creative while doing pottery with my friends, which I finally got to tick off my bucket list!



be a starting point for everlasting friendships, flourishing partnerships and transformational journeys. To curate events and workshops around art, design, literature, food, fashion and well-being. We also see it as a place to pause, reflect and unwind. To break away from the hectic everyday and find your moment of solitude.

My camera went into the direction of shooting images of trees in my compound, earthenware and nature.

Not prone to social media, I was never keen on sharing my personal images with the world. However, this was a great way to share what I was up to.

**Sangita Kathiwada** is the founder and creative director of Melange, one of the country's first multi-designer stores



Sunday morning glimpse of this cooking site on the side of the road making me recall how we all coexist in the city of dreams



My tropical star fruit tree in my Kathiwada City House compound which truly inspires me to be as fruitful and generous as she!



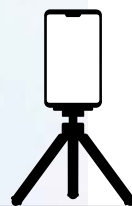
Radiating boundless love towards the entire world through the Buddha in me



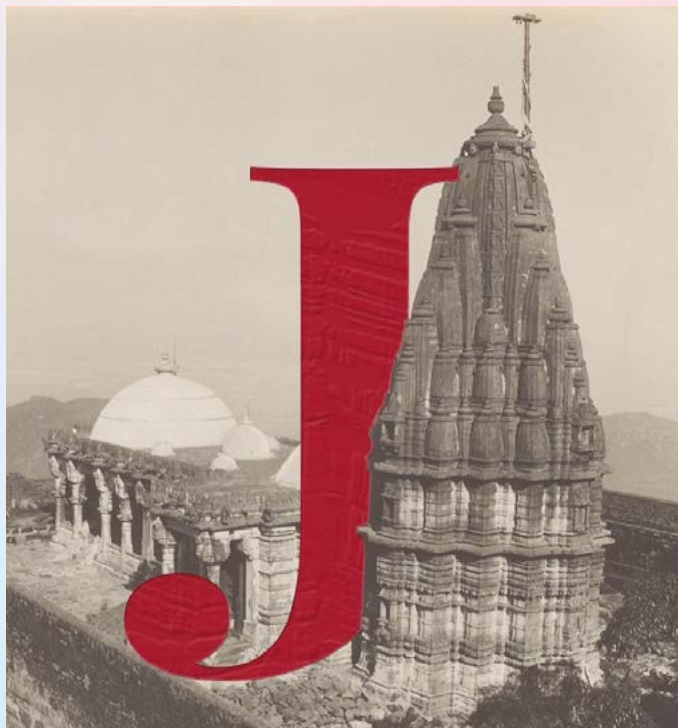


## Transforming the Professional and Personal

Paul Abhraham



The pandemic has been like none other. The fear and uncertainty it induced when it first came and the sense of all-pervasive dread has scarred us in ways we haven't yet fathomed. I could see mental health fraying on account of many concerns around job loss, inability to meet loved ones, the sense of entrapment, the loss of school days, the fear of loss of loved ones and so much more. Yet, in all of this, we did also have a chance to introspect. We had to alter our daily calendars. We learnt to deal with time, which hung heavy on days. We learnt to live with rules that were guided by the common good. We upskilled our digital abilities. We read more. Watched more serials and movies out of home. We wrote more. Managed with so much less, including clothes and travel. We engaged in our passions. The early excitement of Zoom sessions with colleagues and family became tedious chores very soon.



I for one had just begun to unwind from my career of many years. At the start of 2020, I took up a job at the Hinduja Foundation and was looking to drive the group's engagements in social impact spaces like Health, Education and Water Stewardship. Suddenly COVID-19 came and upended all that. There was a frenzy of relief work, which needed to be coordinated and delivered in double quick time. But the sense of satisfaction in being able to make a difference propelled the teams and a sense of purpose drove our energy levels. My job required me to sit as an ex-officio member of the governing teams at the hospital and college. It was a completely new vista of learning. Seeing these institutions from the inside and appreciating a new world was particularly special after having been a banker for close to four decades. We have since restarted the many streams that were core to us and working in areas like water conservation has been particularly fulfilling.

I also started to work much more intensely with my own Arts Foundation, progressively learning new ways to tell stories and engage audiences digitally. It was a moment of epiphany when one realised the tremendous



loss of learning with children who were the most impacted by the incarceration at home, often unable to even play with friends within their home environs. We realised that content in the arts would be appreciated by the children, especially if told well and visually. We went about our job with a manic mission, delivering content to kids via partner organisations that worked with children. I got involved in interviewing storytellers and bringing their narratives to larger audiences. We made movies on crafts. We had digital exhibitions. We researched subjects extensively, honing our ability to tell stories better and building databases of content targeting children across age groups. Sarmaya Arts Foundation became a place where we tried to bring innovation to bear upon the art of storytelling. There is a long way to go but we seem to be on the right track.

Much as it may sound clichéd, I learned to cook under my mother's tutelage. I helped her with her gardening. I started to look at my own health, and my wife and I made a commitment to improve our physical well-being. Daily walks became part of our private time together, when we shared the day and its proceedings.

The greatest excitement that 2020 brought was on the personal front. I got married to Pavitra. To be able to have a companion in life is a blessing and we had planned for it all to come together in the middle of the year in June. Lists of invitees, hotel bookings, destination travels, clothes, etc were all discussed and many shortlists made and then it all got stood on its head. Finally it was done in the simplest of ceremonies at the registrar's office at

Town Hall for a princely spend of Rs 250 in the midst of the pandemic in the presence of three witnesses. Now we spend a lot of time planning the future after the pandemic and managing the many pulls and pressures of the combined family of four boys and our mothers.

Our youngest took a year off and did a bunch of exciting internships, including one to certify himself as a naturalist, post which he became vegetarian with a vengeance. Another son who had completed math from one of the most prestigious universities of the world made a career switch to the culinary arts and now works as a chef at one of the world's best-known restaurants, which was in the news recently for having converted from a meat-based cuisine to a plant-based one. The third shifted homes and returned to his passion for Muay Thai and his indulgences in locating extra-terrestrials and sundry fellow travellers in this universe we call home. The eldest got admission to an MBA and took a break from his job to spend time with his girlfriend. That's when I realised that the world has changed in so many fundamental ways. COVID-19 has shaped career choices, pastimes, influences, social mores and the sensitivity to the happenings of the world around.

**Paul Abraham** is the president of the Hinduja Foundation, which he joined in 2020. He was previously the COO of IndusInd Bank

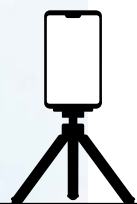






## The Year of Magical Thinking

Moez Singh



The dark cloud of the virus choked the earth in its vice-like grip and sent us sputtering back into the safe cocoons of our homes last March. We were all bewildered, confused, paranoid, petrified and enraged by how the virus was upending our lives, and how monumentally powerless we were before it. Suddenly, our fragility as human beings, something we have not always acknowledged, became shockingly obvious to us. Death was just a breath or a touch away now, and if we stepped out of the shelter of our homes, Death would come charging at us like an invisible samurai thirsty for the kill.

It has been a tumultuous time. The world has been precipitously plunged into a bottomless abyss of death, disease and decay and the mind has been possessed by a gripping fear that refuses to evaporate, no matter how much one has exercised, watched Netflix, made Zoom calls to friends and families, worked from home or cooked and spring cleaned. The fear is too visceral as the invisible enemy lurks outside our doors and the horror, panic and anxiety that it creates has crippled many of us into a state of catatonia.

What to believe? Who to believe? Do I really need to sanitise the groceries? Just as I felt myself sliding down a rabbit hole of relentless paranoia, I was commissioned to write and direct a series for Disney+ Hotstar, and the offer felt like the hand of God was at long last on my head. I understand. It was a busy time for that hand.

I have spent most of the last year writing and filming "Human". Uncannily enough, "Human" is a fictional medical thriller set in the world of clinical drug trials and is therefore very current. I spent eight months writing the 10-episode series and what a joy it was! Writing this became not just the ultimate escape from the spooky reality of the world outside, but it became a balm, a lullaby, a thing of magic that lifted me in its arms and took





me away to a place where the virus did not exist.

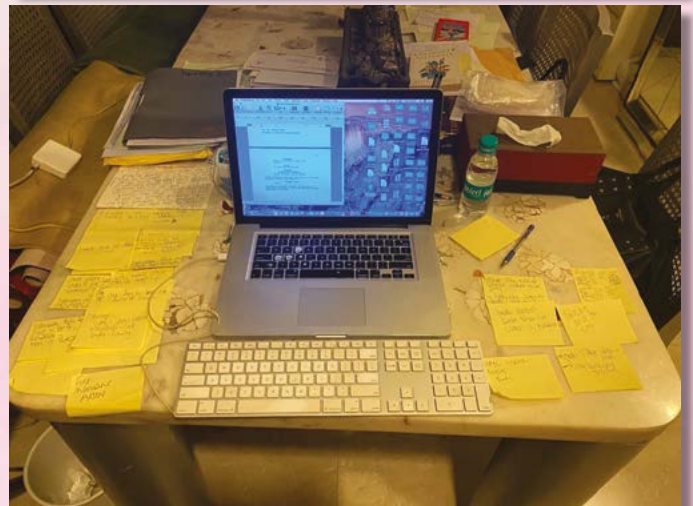
My daily routine was fixed. I would wake up, do an hour and a half of yoga and calisthenics, meditate, shower, eat lunch and then sit on my desk every afternoon from 3pm to 8pm either discussing the script with the writers room, which had three other superb writers in it and which I ran over Zoom for these eight months, or then using those five hours to write the scenes in the solitude of my home.

Every day I would be filled with a deep sense of gratitude for being able to do this work. The make-believe world of my series let me travel into an alternate reality. A reality in which the world was the normal place we all knew before the onslaught of this virus obliterated what we knew as normal and where life still functioned as we used to know it. A world in which there was love and pain, hope and failure, faith and deceit, all cohabitating in the grand design of Life. Unlike the world created by the virus, where mostly fear reigned supreme, like a towering inferno in a room filled with smoke and mirrors, ugly politics, misinformation, unaccounted for deaths, the birth of medical mafias and not enough graves and pyres to burn or bury the dead.

The singular question the series poses is, What is humanity? In the epoch-changing era of COVID-19, there has been such a colossal amount of loss on so many levels. Millions have died, businesses have collapsed, families have broken up. I felt the story I was writing should be one of hope and compassion. I felt it was important to show that no matter what happens, all is never really lost, and that if you try hard enough, you will find a way, just like so many regular citizens did as they opened the floodgates of 'seva' and shared their largesse, whether it was love, food, money, medicine, shelter or art.

In Joan Didion's masterpiece, *The Year of Magical Thinking*, grief is her catapult into spellbinding creativity. As she begins writing this sublime memoir about loss, her catharsis begins. The words cast a spell of hope around her, and so begins her healing process.

I spent eight months writing the series and we filmed it over a span of six months (the second wave interrupted the shoot and extended the shooting time), and like a mantra, I kept telling myself through this entire journey, that no matter what kind of threat the virus poses, no matter how much the world outside suffocates my joy, I should feel so blessed to be able to exist in this parallel world of my own creation. *This is my catapult into catharsis.*



I should give every ounce of passion to this world, because if the real world is hurtling us down the valley of violent endings, at least my fictional world can make us believe that from the peak of the highest mountain blooms the Power of Creation.

And so I began to climb.

**Mozez Singh** is an Indian writer and director. He was awarded the Rising Director Asia Star Award at the 20th Busan International Film Festival for his directorial debut, *Zubaan*





Puneet Kumar Ranga



Pramod Sharma



Haricharan Aharwal



Madan Gopal Laddha



Omprakash Bhatia

## आखर पोथी में पुनीत कुमार रंगा की लागी किण री नजर का विमोचन

तकनीक के इस जमाने में यदि कोई युवा आखर के दर्पण में कुदरत की छटा को देखने के लिए प्रयास करता है, तो इसकी प्रशंसा स्वाभाविक है। “प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की ओर से ग्रासरूट मीडिया फाउंडेशन के सहयोग से आयोजित आखर पोथी कार्यक्रम में पुनीत कुमार रंगा की पुस्तक *लागी किण री नजर* की समीक्षा करते हुए यह बात डॉ मदन गोपाल लड्डा ने कही। उन्होंने कहा कि रंगा की कविताएं प्रकृति से जोड़ने वाली हैं। वृक्ष के पत्ते से शुरू होकर कवि की यात्रा पुष्प, पेड़, पक्षी, रेत, बादल, धरती नदी, समुद्र, धोरे, बरसात, बसंत, गर्मी, सर्दी को समेटते हुए जब मरुस्थल की वनस्पति तक पहुंचती है, तो अनेक बिम्बों से कविता को समृद्ध कर देती है।

आखर पोथी में इस पुस्तक के विमोचन के साथ साहित्यिक चर्चा भी हुई। लड्डा ने अपनी बात को और भी स्पष्ट करते हुए *किण विध, कियं सोधूं, अक ठावों मारग, उळझाड़ा रै जंगल, पज्यौ थकौ, अक मारग भूल्यै, मारगी दांई* कविताओं का जिक्र किया और कहा कि इन कविताओं को पढ़ते हुए लगता है कि कवि रास्ते से अनजान नहीं है। आने वाले समय में कवि इस मार्ग की लंबी यात्रा करेंगे और अपनी रचनाओं के माध्यम से कविता जगत में अपनी अलग पहचान बनाएंगे।

कवि रंगा ने अपनी काव्य-यात्रा के बारे में बताते हुए कहा कि प्रकृति पर कविता लिखने का मन किया तो लगा कि यह निर्णय सही है। मायड़ भाषा राजस्थानी में लेखन मुझे एक नई ऊर्जा देता है। आज के वैश्विक संदर्भ में देखा जाए तो मनुष्य प्रकृति का असीमित दोहन कर रहा है। ज्ञान-विज्ञान के माध्यम से आपसी होड़ के कारण उससे छेड़छाड़ कर रहा है। रंगा ने अपनी अनेक कविताएं *पुहप सी कार्या, हरी-भरी डाळ-डाळ, मुट्ठी भर रेत ज्यूं* आदि सुनाई-

पुहप सी कार्या  
सौ झंझट  
है मोह-माया  
पण अंतस कीं सौरप  
धीजो इण पेटै  
कै  
छेकड़ माया नै पार घातैला  
आ ई  
पुहप सी कार्या।  
हरी सूं पीळै री  
करती जातरा  
दरखत डाळ सूं  
हुय मुगत  
आयनै मिळै माटी संग  
रिळा-मिळा कार्या-माया  
पूठी आवै है  
आ ई पीळी पत्ती  
हरी री रंगत सूं  
अर  
करै पूठी  
हरी-भरी डाळ-डाळ।



कार्यक्रम के आरंभ में प्रस्तावना पढ़ते हुए हरिचरण अहरवाल ने कहा कि किसी बात को अपनी भाषा में कहने पर उसकी मिठास बढ़ जाती है। राजस्थान में चंद्रसिंह बिरकाली, उमरदान लालस, महाराजा मानसिंह, विश्वनाथ विमलेश, धर्मचंद खेमका, डॉ. मनोहर शर्मा, राजलक्ष्मी साधना, गणपति चंद्र भंडारी, खेमचंद प्रदीप आदि ने प्रकृति पर लेखन किया है। चंद्रसिंह बिरकाली की *बादली, डाफर, लू कालजयी* रचना है। वैश्विक परिवेश में देखा जाए तो प्रकृति के प्रति संवेदना व्यक्त करने, उसके पास जाने और संरक्षण की जरूरत है। प्रकृति के करीब का लेखन और प्रकृति के लेखन की आज बहुत आवश्यकता है। रंगा ने प्रकृति और मनुष्य के बीच सेतु बांधने की ऐसी ही कोशिश की है। राजस्थानी साहित्य के माने हुए लेखक घराने की तीसरी पीढ़ी का अच्छा लेखन पढ़ने को मिला है। इस पुस्तक में प्राकृतिक कविताओं का अद्भुत समावेश है। इसकी कविताएं स्वयं पैदल चलती हैं और आगे बैठती हैं। जंगल अपनी कहानी खुद कहता है, हरे पेड़ प्रकृति में रंग भरते हैं और सूखे पेड़ बादलों से अरदास करते हैं, मानव से विनती करते हैं। रंगा की कविताओं में पक्षी आपस में बात करते हैं और मानव समाज को सीख देते हैं कि आपस में हिल मिल कर रहो। रंगा ने कविताओं को केवल शब्दों में ही नहीं पिरोया बल्कि उनमें भाव भी भरे हैं। प्रकृति के साथ हंसी खुशी में हंसते हैं तो दुख में कलेजा भी जलता है। प्रकृति की पीड़ा छुपाने से भी नहीं छुपती है जैसे-

म्हारै ई  
कुटुम्ब रा  
भाई-टाबर टोळी  
दरखत-मरु वनस्पति नैं  
नी जाणै  
लागी किण री नजर

कार्यक्रम की अध्यक्षता करते हुए ओमप्रकाश भाटिया ने कहा कि यह कविताएं प्रकृति की हैं। इन कविताओं में जंगल भी है और समुद्र है, तो रेत के धोरे भी हैं। इस बीच कहीं रेत मिलती है तो कहीं पक्षी भी मिलते हैं और खुशबूदार फूल भी। हमारे प्राकृतिक परिवेश को लगी नजर चिंता की बात है। व्यक्ति की बजाय प्रवृत्ति और प्रकृति पर लिखी रचना ही कालजयी हो सकती है। संवेदना और करुणा के प्रति कविता हो सकती है। रचनाकार रंगा की कविताओं में लय है और आंचलिकता से जुड़ाव भी है। आजकल तो गद्य में भी लय की मांग है। आंचलिकता से जुड़ा हुआ लेख ही सफल हो सकता है और कालजयी कृतियों की रचना कर सकता है।

आयोजकों की ओर से ग्रासरूट मीडिया फाउंडेशन के प्रमोद शर्मा ने सभी का आभार व्यक्त किया और आखर पोथी की जानकारी दी। उन्होंने कहा कि राजस्थान के सभी क्षेत्रों से लोग इसमें शामिल होते हैं और अपनी भाषा को सरलता से समझते हैं। रंगा को उनके लेखन की बधाई देते हुए शर्मा ने कहा कि संवेदना के बिना अच्छी कला और साहित्य का सृजन नहीं हो सकता है। रंगा ने कम आयु में ही प्रकृति के प्रति संवेदनशील लेखन किया है, जो राजस्थानी के लिए खुशी की बात है।

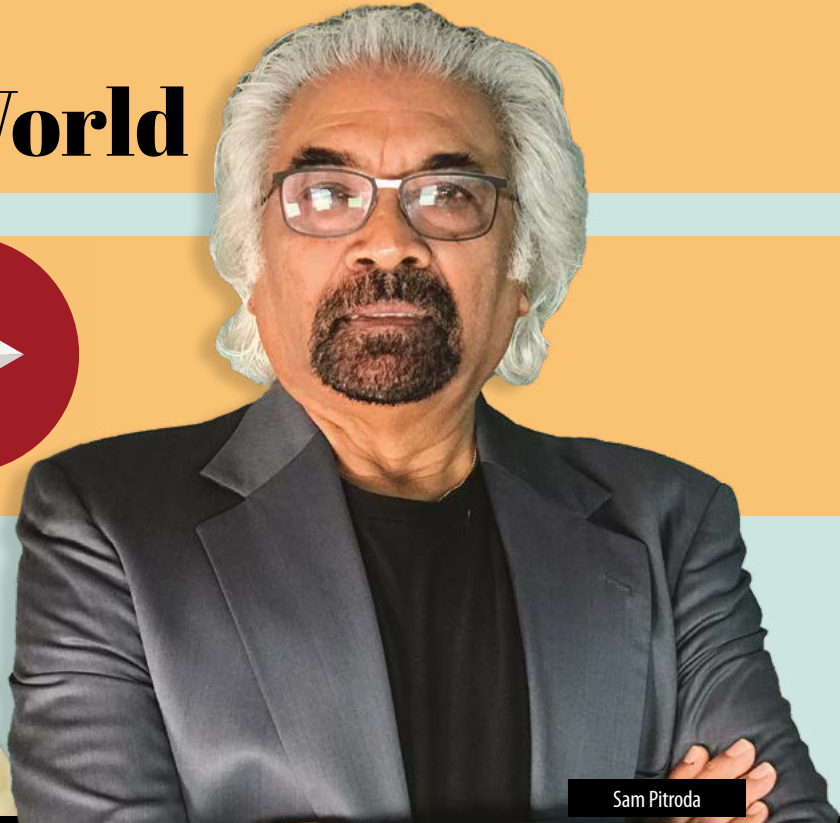
आखर पोथी राजस्थान के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट, हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर हैं आईटीसी राजपूताना।



# It is Time to Redesign the World



Archana Dalmia



Sam Pitroda

Sam Pitroda's journey began in a small tribal village in Odisha in 1942 during the days of the British Raj. His parents had come from Gujarat to Odisha looking for work in the 1930s. Because there were no schools in the tribal village, Pitroda's parents decided to send him to a boarding school when he was nine years old. That was when his formal education started—in the fifth grade, in a small town called Vallabh Vidyanagar. It was there that Pitroda imbibed the idea of Gandhian values as he started comprehending the ideals of truth, trust, love, diversity, inclusion, justice and freedom—ideas that were fundamental to his upbringing. Mahatma Gandhi was his role model while growing up, as were Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Maulana Azad, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Rabindranath Tagore and Sarojini Naidu.

Internationally acclaimed telecommunications entrepreneur Sam Pitroda revealed all this and much

more in a virtual session of **Ek Mulakat Vishesh** organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. With more than 55 years of experience in the fields of telecommunications and development, Pitroda

Today, in the world, you have two visions: the American vision, which is based on command and control, and the Chinese vision, which is also based on command and control. What the world needs is a third vision, which is based on collaboration, cooperation and decentralisation

has helped spread the reach of telecommunication to remote parts of India and attempted to bridge the global digital divide. He's also an expert planner and policymaker as well as a former adviser to ex-prime ministers Rajiv Gandhi and Dr. Manmohan Singh. In conversation with Pitroda was Archana Dalmia, **Ehsaas** Woman of Delhi. Riddhima Doshi introduced and welcomed the guests to the session.

In his recently published book, *Redesign the World: A Global Call to Action*, Pitroda has talked about the historical opportunities post-COVID-19 to rethink the world with an emphasis on science and technology. Pitroda had decided to write the book when he was locked up at home in self-quarantine for 18 months.



His analysis while writing the book showed him that the world had last been designed just about the time he was born. And while that design had indeed solved certain problems and democratised technology to some extent, it hadn't solved problems related to hunger, violence, poverty and environmental concerns.

"To me, COVID-19 says we're interconnected, interwoven, interdependent and interrelated. At the end of the day, there are only two things that matter in life: the planet and the people. The planet doesn't need us—we need the planet. We've not taken care of our planet in the last 50 years. In this rush for consumption, we've destroyed a lot of good things on our planet. Our air is polluted. We have mountains of plastic in the ocean. Global warming has been debated on for the last three to four decades... People set targets, but nobody meets targets, and life goes on as if nothing has happened," said Pitroda.

The entrepreneur believes the whole conversation globally is only for people at the top of the pyramid and not for the people at the bottom. But when global warming isn't addressed, the people at the end of the economic chain are the ones who suffer the most. These are the tipping points that make Pitroda feel it's time to redesign the world. "The redesigning of the world can be done by beginning a new conversation, exciting young people, whose future is at stake, sensitising, identifying the change agents, bringing about generational changes through new conversation. Somebody has to dream. People should be sensitised and seeds should be planted to redesign the world," said Pitroda.

Can the new telecommunications technology help in disaster management? "Absolutely," said Pitroda. "India is a nation of connected billions. For the first time in human history, we are all connected. Borders do not have the same meaning we had before hyperconnectivity," he added.

Pitroda believes he is a digital national, who is loyal



Ridhima Doshi

to multiple countries, values, ethics, morals, human rights and democracy. He said, "I think IT and telecom have changed the face of India. We've seen the benefit of IT during the COVID-19 crisis. We could manage the world better. We could connect with our loved ones, get information on them and see them on screen through video

conferences at zero cost... This is a great contribution of hyperconnectivity. Hyperconnectivity is about the democratisation of information, decentralisation of information and demonetisation of services. It's about both content and context. To me, hyperconnectivity is more like fire. It's that basic. But we don't understand that. We don't realise that this is our opportunity to take humanity to the next level."

To bridge the gap between supply and demand, Pitroda thinks the whole idea of consumption has to change. "Demand as we see it today is very different. It's demand by people who can afford to buy and not by people who need it... You need a simple life. That's what Gandhiji taught. You need to tone down things. Just because you can afford to do something doesn't mean you should. You've got to live a modest life," he said.

Talking about education, Pitroda said with the rise of technology, he believes education needs to be completely decentralised. It's important to give the responsibility of education and health to every district and community and leave the government out of such matters. "The government is too deeply in control in education and health—it's a command and control system. Today, in the world, you have two visions: the American vision, which is based on command and control, and the Chinese vision, which is also based on command and control. What the world needs is a third vision, which is based on collaboration, cooperation and decentralisation," said Pitroda.

The redesigning of the world can be done by beginning a new conversation, exciting young people, whose future is at stake, sensitising, identifying the change agents, bringing about generational changes through new conversation. Somebody has to dream. People should be sensitised and seeds should be planted to redesign the world

*Ek Mulakat Vishesh is presented by Shree Cement Ltd*





Naveen Choudhary



## अगर हालात बदलना है तो राजनीति में हिस्सा लेना होगा: नवीन चौधरी



Vedula Ramalakshmi

“राजनीति हमारे यहां निगेटिव शब्द इसलिए है कि हम उसमें भाग नहीं लेते और उसे अनदेखा कर देते हैं। पर इसे सही करने के दो ही तरीके हैं या तो आप इसमें एक्टिवली पार्टिसिपेट करें या इसका जो निगेटिव पार्ट है, उसे जानें। अगर आप इसके निगेटिव पार्ट को जानेंगे तो उसके निगेटिव असर को रोक सकते हैं।” यह कहना है लेखक नवीन चौधरी का, जो **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** की ओर से आयोजित **कलम** भुवनेश्वर में अतिथि वक्ता के रूप में बोल रहे थे। फाउंडेशन और **अहसास** वूमेन की ओर से निधि गर्ग ने उनका स्वागत और धन्यवाद किया। उन्होंने फाउंडेशन की साहित्यिक और सांस्कृतिक गतिविधियों की चर्चा की और लेखक चौधरी का भी विस्तार से परिचय दिया। उन्होंने कहा चौधरी नई पीढ़ी के चर्चित लेखक, व्यंग्यकार एवं ब्लॉगर हैं। उनका पहला उपन्यास ‘जनता स्टोर’ हिंदी बेस्टसेलर सूची में रहा और एक ओटीटी प्लेटफॉर्म ने उस पर वेब-सीरीज बनाने का अधिकार भी प्राप्त किया है। चौधरी कई पत्रिकाओं और न्यूज वेबसाइट्स के लिये राजनीतिक व्यंग्य और लेख भी लिखते हैं और वर्तमान में मार्केटिंग कंसल्टेंसी के साथ-साथ ओटीटी प्लेटफॉर्म के लिए स्क्रीनप्ले भी लिख रहे हैं। चौधरी से आगे की बातचीत के लिए उन्होंने **अहसास** वूमेन भुवनेश्वर से जुड़ी डॉ वेदुला रामालक्ष्मी को आमंत्रित किया, जो हिंदी प्राध्यापक, उम्दा वक्ता, समाजसेवी हैं और अपना यूट्यूब चैनल भी चलाती हैं।

रामालक्ष्मी ने चौधरी उनको लिखने की प्रेरणा कहां से मिली? यह सवाल पूछा। चौधरी का जवाब था, “लेखन में मैं एक्सीडेंटल आया। मेरी तो स्कूल से भागने की आदत थी। पिता लिखते जरूर थे पर उनकी किताबें अकादमिक हैं। वे संस्कृत के बड़े नामों में हैं। शायद कहीं जीस में रहा हो। चंडीगढ़ में मैं ब्रांडिंग में था, तो मेरे दिमाग में यह आया कि ब्रांडिंग और कंटेंट को जोड़ दिया जाए। ब्रांड इमेज कंटेंट की मार्फत हो। इससे मेरे साथियों को लगता था कि मुझे कंटेंट की समझ है। तो कई बार मैं कॉपी भी चेक कर लेता था। उस दौरान ब्लॉगिंग की बातें हुआ करती थी, यह बड़ा कूल वर्ड था। किसी ने मेरा डोमिन बनाकर दिया। उस दौरान मैं जो किस्से सुनाया करता था, तो कुछ लोगों ने कहा इसे लिखते क्यों नहीं हो। शुरुआत अंग्रेजी में की। अंग्रेजी मेरी काम की भाषा थी हमेशा, जबकि भाव व्यक्त करने की भाषा हिंदी थी। अंग्रेजी में लिखना मशीनी लगता था, तो मैं हिंदी में लिखने लगा, पॉपुलर भी होने लगा। यूथ से भी ज्यादा कनेक्ट हुआ। उसके बाद तो डॉट कॉम का बूम आ गया। यह समझ में आया कि लोग सिंपल भाषा को पसंद करते हैं। इसी के बाद मैंने उपन्यास ट्राई किया और वह भी हो गया।”

आप अपनी पुस्तक **ढाई चाल** को घोर राजनीतिक कथा कहते हैं और उससे पहले का उपन्यास **जनता स्टोर** भी छात्र राजनीति पर था। तो राजनीति ही क्यों? चौधरी का उत्तर था, “छात्र राजनीति में मेरी रुचि रही, लेकिन इसका एक दूसरा पहलू है। राजनीति में आप रुचि लें या न लें, यह आपको बदल देती है। पेट्रोल के दाम बढ़ गए, जीएसटी लग गया, नोटबंदी हो गई, ये सब आपको हाथ में नहीं था। ये सभी फैसले सरकार ने किए।” चौधरी ने आगे कहा कि पहले राजनीतिक लेखन अधिक होता था, पर अब की जेनेरेशन हिंदी में प्रेम ज्यादा लिख रही थी। इसलिए मुझे लगा कि कुछ नया लिखा जाए। फिर सोशल मीडिया पर सभी पॉलिटिक्स की ही बात करते हैं, इसलिए पढ़कर समझो तो सही कि जिसकी तुम बात करते हो दरअसल वह है क्या? फिर भी मेरी दोनों किताबों में काफी अंतर है। पहली किताब छात्र राजनीति की बात करती है। व्यक्ति का परिवर्तन कैसे होता है, कहां से होता है, स्टेट पॉलिटिक्स कैसे छात्र राजनीति में इन्वाॉल्व होती है। जबकि दूसरी किताब वर्तमान की कहानी है। कैसे नैरेटिव सेट होता है। आज किसी हैशटैग पर हमें गुस्सा आ जाता है, पर हमें यह अंदाज नहीं कि किसी और ने इसे प्लान करके हमारे दिमाग में डाल दिया, जिसका असर दो दिन बात होता है। यह एक अलग तरह की पॉलिटिक्स है। मेरा कहना है कि चेहरे वही रहते हैं, राजनीति बदल जाती है।

**ढाई चाल** उपन्यास में मीडिया, ऐड और खबर के बीच न्यूज को बाई प्रॉडक्ट बताते हुए चौधरी ने कहा कि असली चीज विज्ञापन है। इस दौरान उपन्यास के एक पात्र राघवेंद्र के बहाने राजनीति में व्यावसायियों और राजनीतिज्ञों की सांठगांठ पर भी खुलकर चर्चा हुई। इस उपन्यास में शामिल अजहर और सीमा के बहाने प्रेम, बलात्कार, हत्या और सहज मानवीय संबंधों के उल्लेख पर चौधरी ने कहा कि हमारे नाम पर धर्म, सेकुलर की जो भी बात होती है, हम उसका हिस्सा नहीं हैं। राजनीति हमें हथियार की तरह इस्तेमाल करती है। अगर हमें इस हालात को बदलना है तो हमें इसका हिस्सा बनना होगा। चौधरी ने सलाह दी कि मीडिया और पत्रकार सिर्फ घटना को प्रस्तुत करें, वह अपनी राय न परोसे। चौधरी ने राही मासूम रजा के उपन्यास और **महाभारत** में भीष्म, गंवई माहौल, आपसी संबंध, राजनीति को देखने के अपने नजरिए, अपने पात्रों, लेखन प्रक्रिया, उपन्यास की भाषा, नारी विषयक समस्या और ओटीटी प्लेटफॉर्म के बारे में भी बताया। उन्होंने यह भी कहा कि कहानी आइडियल हो कि रियलिस्ट हो, इसे लेकर एक बड़ा चैलेंज मेरे सामने था। चौधरी ने कहा कि मुंबई की दुनिया ही अलग है। चौधरी ने सवाल-जवाब सत्र में श्रोताओं के सवालों के भी उत्तर दिए। सृष्टि द्विवेदी ने स्मृति चिह्न दिया।

कलम भुवनेश्वर के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट। मेफेयर होटल & रिसोर्ट्स ने सहयोग किया।



Nidhi Garg



Shrishti Trivedi, Ehsaas Woman of Raipur



Paresh Pattnaik



Shilbhadra Shastri



# हिंदुस्तान की पुलिस अपने ऐतिहासिक बैगेज से दबी हुई है: नीरज कुमार

इसका कोई निश्चित सिद्धांत नहीं है, इसीलिए क्राइम के मामले में किसी नतीजे पर नहीं पहुंचना चाहिए। पुलिसिंग भी एक साइंस है। कुछ जन्मजात अपराधी होते हैं, उनके दिमाग की बनावट ऐसी है।” यह कहना है दिल्ली के पूर्व पुलिस आयुक्त और अब अपनी किताबों से चर्चित लेखक नीरज कुमार का। कुमार **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** की ओर से आयोजित **कलम** मेरठ में बतौर अतिथि वक्ता अपने विचार व्यक्त कर रहे थे। फाउंडेशन और **अहसास** वूमेन की ओर से अंशु मेहरा ने कुमार का स्वागत करते हुए विस्तार से उनका परिचय दिया। उन्होंने कहा कि ‘मैन ऑफ एक्शन’ नीरज कुमार का जन्म 4 जुलाई, 1953 को हुआ। भारतीय पुलिस सेवा के 1976 बैच के अफसर कुमार का जोशीला साहसी करियर 37 सालों में फैला है, जिसमें 9 साल सीबीआई से जुड़े केसों के लिए समर्पित था। इस दौरान आप अंडरवर्ल्ड, मुंबई ब्लॉस्ट केस, इकॉनॉमिक अफेंस विंग, फेक लॉटरी ट्रेड, क्रिकेट सट्टा, निर्भया कांड आदि केसों के इन्वेस्टिगेशन से जुड़े थे, इसीलिए आपके पास पुस्तक लिखने का ऑफर प्रकाशकों की ओर से ही आया। कुमार की पहली पुस्तक ‘*डायल डी फॉर डॉन*’ का जिक्र करते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि यह पुस्तक पहले अंग्रेजी में छपी और फिर हिंदी में। आपकी दूसरी पुस्तक ‘*खाकी फाइल्स: इनसाइड स्टोरीज ऑफ पुलिस मिशंस*’ है। इस पुस्तक में भारतीय संसद पर आतंकी हमले और निर्भया केस से जुड़ी घटनाएं और उनकी जांच से संबंधित अनुभवों को लिखा गया है। उन्होंने कुमार की जोशीली यात्रा पर चर्चा के लिए योग्य प्रशिक्षक डॉ मीतू सिंह को बुलाया।



Meetu Singh



Garima Mithal, Anshu Mehra and Anindita Chatterjee

सिंह ने कुमार से लेखन से उनके जुड़ाव की वजह जाननी चाही? कुमार ने फाउंडेशन और कार्यक्रम में उपस्थित फाउंडेशन की ट्रस्टी अनिदिता चटर्जी का आभार प्रकट करते हुए मेरठ की तारीफ की और कहा कि मेरठ रावण की ससुराल तो थी ही, शूगर के केंद्र में भी है। फिर मय का भी अपना अर्थ है। यह शहर मिर्जा ग़ालिब से भी जुड़ा है, क्योंकि वे यहां की छावनी से शराब खरीदने आते थे। कुमार ने कहा कि किताब लिखने का सबसे बड़ा फायदा नए-नए लोगों से मिलना रहा है। उन्होंने बताया कि बचपन से साहित्य पढ़ने का बहुत शौक रहा। प्रेमचंद और गुलशन नंदा को भी खूब पढ़ा। अंग्रेजी भी पढ़ा पर हिंदी हमेशा मेरे दिल के करीब थी। पर कभी सोचा नहीं था कि एक दिन किताबें लिखूंगा। एक स्वप्न जरूर था, पर जानता नहीं था कि किताब कैसे लिखूंगा। पर कुछ हालात ऐसे बने जिसे मैंने ‘*डायल डी फॉर डॉन*’ में लिखा भी है कि किस तरह मैं पत्रकार एस हुसैन जैदी की किताब के लोकार्पण के मौके पर गया था, और वहां मेरी बातों के बाद पेंसिन की



Neeraj Kumar

ओर से मेरे पास एक ऑफर आ गया। पहली किताब के राइट निर्माता नीरज पाण्डेय ने ले रखे हैं, जिस पर वे सीरियल बनाएंगे। पुलिस, थाना, एफआईआर ऐसे शब्द हैं, जो आम आदमी के मन में बेचैनी पैदा कर देते हैं, झंझट में कौन पड़े? आप उसका हिस्सा रहे हैं, आखिर पुलिस की छवि ऐसी क्यों है? कुमार का उत्तर था, “हमारा देश अपने इतिहास से दबा हुआ है। हिंदुस्तान की पुलिस अपने ऐतिहासिक बैगेज से दबी हुई है। उसकी वजह यह है कि जब देश गुलाम था तो हमारी पुलिस का इस्तेमाल हमारे शासकों ने दमन के लिए किया। उस समय पुलिस का लक्ष्य जनता को दबा कर रखना था। उस इमेज को हटाने की जरूरत है। यह जिम्मेदारी पुलिस अफसरों की बनती है कि वे उस इमेज को हटाने की कोशिश करें।” कुमार ने ऐसे आयोजनों में पुलिस अफसरों और पुलिसकर्मियों की भागीदारी पर जोर दिया।

कुमार ने अपने पुलिस आयुक्त रहने के दौरान पुलिस और जनता के बीच फासला घटाने के लिए अपने द्वारा चलाए गए ‘जन संपर्क अभियान’ और ‘आपका अपडेट’ के बारे में भी विस्तार से बताया। ‘खाकी फाइल्स’ में दर्ज सभी नौ केसों में कौन सा उनके लिए सबसे चैलेंजिंग था? के उत्तर में कुमार ने कहा कि चैलेंज दो तरह के होते हैं, एक तो केस इतना जटिल हो कि आपको अपराधी तक पहुंचने का रास्ता न मिल रहा हो। जटिलता के लिहाज से इस पुस्तक में दर्ज खतरनाक दौलतिया गैंग से जुड़ा किस्सा सुनाया। उन्होंने कहा कि दबाव के लिहाज से निर्भया कांड बहुत चैलेंजिंग था। कुमार ने अपराध और अपराधियों से जुड़े मसले पर हार्ड कालर्स क्रिमिनल का भी जिक्र किया। सीबीआई पर दबाव से जुड़े सवाल पर कुमार ने यह माना कि हां पुलिस पर दबाव है। इस दौरान उन्होंने पुलिस आयुक्त रहते हुए खुद पर देश के गृह मंत्री के दबाव तक का किस्सा सुनाया। साथ ही यह भी कहा कि दबाव तभी काम करता है जब अफसर अपने लाभ या लालच के लिए समझौता करता है। अगर पुलिस दबाव या लाभ के लिए तैयार न हो तो उसे प्रभावित नहीं किया जा सकता। कुमार ने परिवार और दायित्व के अलावा सवाल-जवाब सत्र में भी हिस्सा लिया। उन्होंने आर्यन खान, मुद्रा पोर्ट, ड्रग्स कारोबार, रेव पार्टी से जुड़े कानून, गोवा एमएलए फार्म हाउस से जुड़े वाकिफ, आरुषि तलवार से जुड़े केस, बच्चों के क्राइम एजुकेशन, गर्ल्स सिक्योरिटी, दाऊद इब्राहिम के फोन और पुलिस हिरासत में हुई मौत से जुड़े सवालों पर अपने विचार रखे। अंत में अतिथि वक्ता कुमार और संवादकर्ता सिंह को स्मृति चिन्ह भी प्रदान किया गया।

कलम मेरठ के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट। हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर होटल क्रिस्टल पैलेस और मीडिया पार्टनर दैनिक जागरण का भी सहयोग मिला।





Geet Chaturvedi

## पश्चिम से तुलना के चक्कर में हम अनुगामी हो गए: गीत चतुर्वेदी

**प्र**भा खेतान फाउंडेशन की ओर से आयोजित कलम न्यूयॉर्क का यह वर्चुअल सत्र कई मायनों में अनूठा था। वजह संवाद की जगह दो कोमल कवि मन बतकही कर रहे थे। अतिथि वक्ता थे लेखक, कवि गीत चतुर्वेदी और उनसे संवाद का जिम्मा सात समंदर पार अमेरिका में हिंदी की मशाल थामने वाले भाषाकर्मी कवि अनूप भार्गव पर था। कार्यक्रम का आरंभ फाउंडेशन के सुरीले एंथम के साथ हुआ। संदीप व्यास ने स्वागत किया और संवादकर्ता भार्गव का बहुत भावुक परिचय दिया। उन्होंने कहा कि हमारे जीवन में मां की बहुत भूमिका है। धरती, नदी, भाषा में हम मां को ढूँढ ही लेते हैं। भार्गव हिंदी के ऐसे ही बेटे हैं। आर्ट मैटर्स के लक्ष्य से झिलमिल अमेरिका की स्थापना का जिक्र करते हुए व्यास ने भार्गव की लिखी ये पंक्तियां पढ़ीं—  
मंजिलों की चाह नहीं है मुझको  
सफर खत्म न हो यह इत्मीनान है हमको।

भार्गव ने व्यास का आभार जताते हुए अतिथि वक्ता गीत से अपने संवेदनात्मक लगाव की बात कही। उन्होंने कहा, “गीत का मैं बड़ा फैन हूँ। उनकी कविता सूक्तियों की तरह लगती हैं। उनका औपचारिक परिचय क्या दूँ। उन्होंने हर विधा में लिखा है। गीत का गहन अध्ययन मुझे प्रभावित करता है, खासकर भारतीय और विश्व लेखकों का।” भार्गव ने गीत को मिले पुरस्कारों



Anoop Bhargava

की चर्चा की और स्पष्ट कर दिया कि आज का संवाद बातचीत की शैली में होगा।

भार्गव ने गीत से जानना चाहा कि आपने पहली कविता तेरह बरस की उम्र में लिखी, पर रचना की विधिवत शुरुआत कैसे हुई? फिर अक्सर लोग छोटे



शहर से बड़े शहर में जाते हैं, पर आप मुंबई से भोपाल कैसे पहुंचें? गीत का उत्तर था, “पहली रचना एक कहानी थी। ट्रिंकल पत्रिका में छापने के लिए पत्रिका के अंकल पै नामक संपादक को भेजी और भूल गया। तब मैं नौवीं कक्षा में था। एक दिन क्लास में किसी लड़के ने पत्रिका में वही कहानी दिखा कर पूछा कि यह गीत तुम हो? इसी से मेरा लेखन की तरफ रुझान बढ़ा। वहीं से पढ़ना भी शुरू हो गया।” पूर्णकालिक लेखन की शुरुआत के बारे में गीत ने कहा, “मैं क्रिकेटर बनना चाहता था। दूसरा सपना रॉक सिंगर बनने का था। पर पंद्रह-सोलह साल में तमाम चीजें सोचते हुए समझ गया कि मैं केवल लेखक बन सकता हूं। मैं भाषा और शब्दों के बीच घर जैसा महसूस करता हूं।”

बड़े शहर से छोटे शहर की यात्रा पर गीत ने बताया कि पढ़ाई करने के बाद मैं पत्रकारिता शुरू कर चुका था। पत्रकारिता करने के लिए मुंबई छोड़ कर इंदौर आया। दैनिक भास्कर से जुड़ा। पूरा उत्तर भारत घूमते हुए आखिर में भोपाल में आकर टिक गया। पूर्णकालिक लेखन भारत के संदर्भ में कितना संभव है? के उत्तर में गीत ने स्वीकारा कि भारत में यह व्यावहारिक नहीं है। कठोर शब्दों में कहूं तो हिंदी में वैसा बाजार अभी नहीं बन पाया है कि लेखक केवल लिखकर जी सके। उसे सहारा चाहिए, चाहे वह स्वतंत्र पत्रकारिता, बॉलीवुड आदि कहीं से सहयोग ले। भार्गव की दुख भरी प्रतिक्रिया पर कि अमेरिका में वर्षों तक लेखक शोध कर सकता है और सरकार भी उसे सहयोग करती है, गीत ने जोड़ा कि वहां संस्थाएं भी ऐसा काम करती हैं। मैकाथर फेलोशिप दी जाती है। अमेरिका, यूरोप में लेखक, प्रकाशक दोनों को सहयोग मिलता है। पर हमारे यहां लेखन पार्ट टाइम जॉब है। मैं कभी-कभी सोचता हूं कि क्या सचिन तेंदुलकर, छन्नूलाल मिश्रा जैसे लोग फुल टाइम जॉब करते तो अपने क्षेत्र में क्या इतना महान बन पाते?

भार्गव के यह जोड़ने पर कि लोग किताब नहीं खरीदते, लोगों की रुचि कैसे बढ़ाई जाए? गीत का सुझाव था, “भारत में किताबों के बारे में लगातार बात करना जरूरी है। जैसे फिल्मों की चर्चा होती है, किताबों की कहानियों की चर्चा करनी चाहिए। लेखकों से अनुरोध करता हूं कि वे अपनी किताबें मुफ्त देना बंद कर दें।” गीत ने उलाहना सा दिया कि मित्र सोचते हैं कि मित्र की किताब खरीदकर क्यों पढ़ें। भार्गव ने प्रेमचंद के एक चर्चित चित्र के हवाले से कहा कि लेखक की इमेज अभी भी फटा हुआ कुर्ता है, गीत ने कहा कि इसे अब बदलने की जरूरत है। हमें ज्यादा से ज्यादा बात करके अच्छी छवि बनानी चाहिए। जैसे हर क्षेत्र में दोनों तरह के लोग होते हैं, वैसे यहां भी हैं।

नए लेखकों की पौध के बारे में गीत ने कहा कि नया और युवा का अर्थ यही है कि पीछे वालों को मत देखो। नदी की तरह अपने बांध को तोड़ कर निकलो। अब हिंदी का भाषाई व्यवहार बहुत बदल रहा है। हिंदी आज बहुत बदल चुकी है। अंग्रेजी उस तरह से नहीं बदली है। यहां क्रियाओं और शब्दों का अंतर है। ‘आत्मा’ शब्द प्रसाद, प्रेमचंद के समय में पुलिंग था, अब स्त्रीलिंग हो गया है। मैं बहुत सकारात्मक हूं। हर तरह के नए लेखकों ने हर पॉकेट में अपनी जगह बनाई है। पाठक संख्या और पठनीयता को इससे बहुत विस्तार मिला है। विदेशी साहित्य के अध्ययन की शुरुआत पर गीत ने बताया कि कविता लिखने के साथ पढ़ने की इच्छा हुई। जनसत्ता, पहल, समकालीन भारतीय साहित्य, वागर्थ में बीस की उम्र तक छप चुका था। बड़े साहित्यकार प्रशंसा भी करते थे, पर मुंबई में जब विश्व साहित्य पढ़ने लगा तब मुझे लगा कि उस स्तर का लिखने के लिए, पहले पढ़ूंगा। फिर जापान से अमेरिका और नॉर्वे से अफ्रीका तक सर्वश्रेष्ठ लेखन का अध्ययन करने लगा।

भारतीय और विश्व साहित्य की तुलना? के सवाल पर गीत ने कहा कि यह तुलना बहुत मुश्किल है। यह हम कर नहीं पाएंगे। निर्ममता के साथ महसूस करेंगे तो पाएंगे कि हम बौद्धिक नेतृत्व करने की जगह बौद्धिक अनुसरण कर रहे



Sandeep Vyas

हैं। जबकि प्राचीन परंपराओं का विस्तार कर पश्चिम के साथ जोड़ कर आगे बढ़ते तो बात और होती। आज नवीनता की कमी है। पश्चिम से तुलना करने के चक्कर में हम अनुगामी हो गए हैं। हम प्राचीन भाषिक परंपरा से दूर हो गए हैं। अनुवाद के सवाल पर उन्होंने कहा कि सही समय पर अनुवाद नहीं हुआ। अमेरिका में 1969 तक प्रेमचंद की केवल एक पुस्तक का अनुवाद हुआ था। भार्गव ने जोड़ा कि गीतांजलि का अनुवाद सही समय पर हुआ, तो उसका परिणाम सबको पता है। गीत ने संस्थागत सहयोग आवश्यकता पर बल दिया और दक्षिण कोरिया का उदाहरण दिया। उन्होंने बिज ऐप पर अपनी रहस्यमयी प्रेम कथा ‘उस पार’ की भी चर्चा की।

गीत ने इस अवसर पर अपनी कविताएं भी सुनाई, जिसमें ‘चार वचन’ कविता भी शामिल है—

खिलाई गई रोटी  
व दिए गए चुंबन,  
कभी गिने नहीं जाते।

पोंछे गए आंसू  
व चुराई गई नसीहतें,  
बताई नहीं जातीं।

भीगी हुई आत्मा को  
धूप में टांगकर,  
सुखाया नहीं जाता।

जिया हुआ प्रेम  
व सुना गया संगीत,  
लौटकर जरूर आते हैं

भार्गव ने गीत की ढेरों सूक्तियां पढ़ीं, जिनमें से कुछ यों थीं—  
मैं आधी समझी गई पंक्ति हूं

जाने देना भी प्रेम है

लौंटे हुए को शामिल करना भी प्रेम है

ये दुनिया अभी भी रहने लायक है... इस दौरान छंद मुक्त और छंद बढ़ कविताओं के अनुवाद पर भी चर्चा हुई। गीत ने रैपिड सवालों पर भी अपनी पसंद रखी। कार्यक्रम में रेखा सेठी, ममता त्रिपाठी, वंदना वात्स्यायन आदि भी उपस्थित थीं।

प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन द्वारा कलम न्यूयॉर्क झिलमिल अमेरिका के सहयोग से आयोजित किया गया





Shashi Tharoor

David Davidar

# Of Puns, Politics and Punditry

Asking me to choose among the books I've written is like asking a mother who her favourite child is!" exclaimed Shashi Tharoor in his inimitable fashion. The former international civil servant, politician and parliamentarian has also attained iconic status as an author and a wordsmith, with the nation on several occasions hanging on to his every word and then going scrambling for dictionaries. His literary output has, of course, been formidable; he has written more than 20 books, some of which are *The Great Indian Novel*, *India: From Midnight to the Millennium*, *Pax Indica: India and the World of the 21st Century* and *Why I Am A Hindu*. Under its **Kitaab** initiative, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** recently organised a session with Tharoor in Delhi to talk about his 2021 book, *Pride, Prejudice and Punditry: The Essential Shashi Tharoor*. In conversation with Tharoor was novelist, publisher and editor David Davidar.

Davidar observed that Tharoor's star has shone over three endeavours—politics, international diplomacy and writing; but of the three, it has shone the brightest

—and for the longest time—on his writing. "It is thus entirely appropriate that we are celebrating *Pride, Prejudice and Punditry: The Essential Shashi Tharoor* today—the book that marks the culmination of the first 50 years of Shashi's writing career," said Davidar. "Not to mention 10 years of Aleph!" remarked

Tharoor, drawing attention to the fact that the Aleph Book Company was founded by Davidar a decade ago in 2011. Davidar went on to reveal that Tharoor had published his first short story when he was 10, and his first book about 40 years ago. "*Pride, Prejudice and Punditry* is meant to celebrate those milestones as well as the fact that it's the 10th anniversary of Aleph's founding, and Shashi was one of the earliest authors to join our list and has been our most steadfast pillar of support."

The selections in *Pride, Prejudice and Punditry* number over 70 and range from fiction

to nonfiction, politics to history. How did Tharoor's early start at writing come about? "As a kid, I was asthmatic," revealed Tharoor. "As a result, I was often confined indoors, struggling to breathe and unable to go out and play with friends. I grew up in an India

I've always maintained that the tale is not as important as the telling of the tale. You might think of a plot, but if you don't tell it well the story falls flat. Style is important, and it involves many things: vocabulary, wit, the use of formulae for effect and so on. To me, words have a certain value as a part of that process, which is not necessarily only about getting a simple message across





(L-R) Anantmala Potdar, Karuna Goenka, Huma Khalil Mirza, Shazia Ilmi, Archana Dalmia, Ina Puri, Shashi Tharoor, David Davidar, Kapish Mehra, Dipali Bhasin, Neelima Dalmia Adhar, Anindita Chatterjee and Shinjini Kulkarni

without television; computers didn't exist, let alone mobile phones. The only distraction available for an asthmatic kid was reading; so reading became my escape, my entertainment and my education." Tharoor said that he read whatever he could lay his hands on. Being the eldest child meant that he didn't have any elder siblings' books to borrow, so he read, rather precociously, whatever was in his father's or mother's collection at home. "And to while away the rest of my time, I had two other activities that both involved books. One was playing book cricket—a game that can keep you distracted for quite a while if you were as much of a cricket nut as I was—and the other was writing!"

Tharoor readily admitted that what he wrote at the time was very derivative of what he was reading. Having grown up reading typical English books of children's stories—"Enid Blyton was a favourite, and

my mother started me off by reading *Noddy* tales"—he then graduated to the adventures of kids trying to solve mysteries. As he grew older, he started reading more widely and eclectically, as a result of which his writing became more diverse. "A story by another author about the US civil war inspired me to imagine a civil war in the Indian context, and I wrote a slightly silly and morbid story around it. The Sunday edition of the *Free Press Journal*, which in those days was called the *Bharat Jyoti*, decided to publish it. So I appeared in print; I was all of 10 years old. Thereon, writing became a daily activity. There were no distractions, so that is what I focused on and I think it helped shape the writer in me."

What about Tharoor's mother's influence on his writing and her move to push him towards excellence? "My father was very much a man of words," said Tharoor. "He was a Scrabble addict and there wasn't

#### On his childhood writings

"Like the Famous Five or the Five Find-Outers, I invented the Six Solvers, who were much like the creations of Enid Blyton, except that my solvers were going off, like me and my sisters, to a Kerala village every year for holidays and solving mysteries there!"

#### On being published for the first time at the age of 10

"There's something terribly addictive about seeing your name in print; when that happens, you want to see more of it!"

**On the importance of style in writing**

“One of the things that make me a devotee of P.G. Wodehouse is that he was a master of English prose in a way very, very few writers have ever been.”

**On jokes and memes that have been made on him**

“There was one that I thought was not too bad. It said, ‘I thought I was poor. Then I met Shashi Tharoor and realised I was impecunious!’”

**On being saddled with a reputation for using unfamiliar words**

“When a rather egregious fellow broadcast a series of lies about me on television, I reacted in fury, saying that it was a ‘farrago’ of misrepresentations. I thought all of the individual words I used were fairly simple; I had been using ‘farrago’ since my debates in college! I didn’t think these were unknown words, but apparently they were because a few hours later there was a mystified tweet by the Oxford English Dictionary asking why there were a million searches for the word ‘farrago!’”

a word game that he couldn’t play and excel in. He instilled this love of words in his children. My mother’s influence was different; she is someone who was very driven, and wanted to ensure that her children did everything that she never had an opportunity to do, growing up in a village in Kerala.” Tharoor revealed how she used to sign her kids up for competitions and drive them there so that they could participate. For instance, she was constantly taking Tharoor off to speech contests; she even got her children to appear for a few shows on the All India Radio.

“A lot of my books are dedicated to my mother’s ‘divine discontent,’” laughed Tharoor. “She always wanted to do more, and wanted us to do more. That, I think, drove me a great deal. In some ways, there’s a part of me that would be happiest sitting alone in a room either reading a book or typing something on a computer screen rather than going out; but my parents being the way they were, ensured that all three of us kids grew up into being a little more outgoing.”

Davidar observed that even though Tharoor had gained a reputation for using big, unfamiliar and often opaque words, that reputation did a disservice to his writing, which is clever, lucid and precise. What does Tharoor characterise as good writing and what

would his advice to an aspiring writer be? “The first question to ask is, why is one writing? Presumably, one is writing to communicate with people; I know I am,” said Tharoor. “If you’re writing, you should share it with others; the purpose of writing is to reach other people. And you cannot reach people effectively if you’re not understood.”

“When you enter politics believing it to be a battlefield of ideas, and if you believe that it’s about principles and values and what you care about, you realise that these things occupy very little space in the mind of the average politician. It’s essentially a lot about personal interests; things that the average Indian MP is required to do are things that western democratic politicians would be forbidden to do under ethics rules in their own countries”

Tharoor said that he tries to use words that are appropriate for conveying an idea, but which, at the same time, are understood by most readers. “But style is also a part of writing,” Tharoor emphasised. “And especially in my fiction, I’ve always maintained that the tale is not as important as the telling of the tale. You might think of a plot, but if you don’t tell it well, the story falls flat. Style is important, and it involves many things: vocabulary, wit, the use of formulae for effect and so on. To me, words have a certain value as a part of that process, which is not necessarily *only* about getting a simple message across. Having said that, I would not be read as widely as I am if people couldn’t understand what I was writing!”

Tharoor’s only tip to an aspiring writer would be to read, as the more one reads, the more they get comfortable with language, and with a sense of how words are used. “Write to be understood. I won’t go as far as Ernest Hemingway, who said you should write a



sentence and then strike out all the adjectives; sometimes adjectives, adverbs and modifiers are all useful. In any case, my style is more ornate than Hemingway's ever was! But I would say, write simply and clearly, and if a sentence seems unnecessarily heavy, then use different words."

"You write in *Pride, Prejudice and Punditry* about your political heroes," Davidar pointed out. "What was the one trait they shared that you admire?" Tharoor began his answer by admitting that he really sees all of his heroes as having feet of clay. After all, nobody is a superman in the real world. "But this book has some of my writings on the likes of Ambedkar, Nehru, Patel, Krishna Menon and Tilak; one thing that linked them all was their passion for India, their realisation and dedication to the idea of building a better India that they were spending their lives serving. The other thing is that they were all

to do are things that western democratic politicians would be forbidden to do under ethics rules in their own countries."

The talk was followed by a Q&A session between Tharoor and the audience. Tharoor also read out, upon Davidar's request, some of his own poetry. The evening came to a close with a rather pertinent question: which of his own books would Tharoor recommend to someone who has never read him before?

Tharoor stated that all of his books are of equal value to him; the answer, therefore, essentially depends on the reader and their area of interest. His novels are very different from one another; so are his non-fiction books. "If you're interested in reading about literature then *Bookless in Baghdad* is the book for you," said Tharoor. "If you like biographies, then you could read my book



Emmanuel Lenain



Neeraj Kumar



Pavan Varma



Sunita Kohli



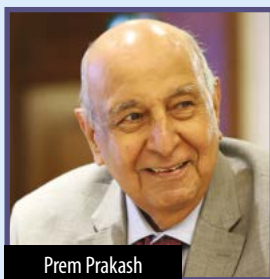
Benita Sharma



Lily Tharoor



Milinda Moragoda



Prem Prakash



Raghu Rai



Sujata Prasad

very good with words! They all wrote and spoke; Nehru, of course, stands out as a writer, though Ambedkar is a very close second. So did Gandhi. His prose is not literary the way Nehru's is, but it's very clear and has a simplicity and sincerity that would be difficult for people in contemporary politics to match."

"You also write in the book about some of the things you most despise about politics today," observed Davidar. Tharoor responded from the point of view of an individual entering politics from outside the arena, as he did. "When you enter politics believing it to be a battlefield of ideas, and if you believe that it's about principles and values and what you care about, you realise that these things occupy very little space in the mind of the average politician. It's essentially a lot about personal interests; things that the average Indian MP is required

on Nehru. And if readers are prepared to grapple with some heavy theorising and then relating to contemporary politics, then the whole issue of nationalism has been dealt with in *The Battle of Belonging*."

In many ways, however, *Pride, Prejudice and Punditry* is the simplest answer to the question, according to Tharoor. "It includes tastings of each one of my various kinds of writing. By reading this book from cover to cover, it might be easier to decide which of the other books one might want to read more fully!"

*This session of Kitaab is presented by Shree Cement Ltd, in association with Aleph Book Company and Ehsaas Women of NCR*

# साहित्य संरक्षण के लिए राज्याश्रय जरूरी: गौतम चौबे

बिहार जैसे पितृसत्तात्मक समाज में एक अपहृत महिला को पहचान और सम्मान दिलाने के कथानक के चलते 'फूलसूँधी' को याद किया जाएगा। यह बात प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन और मसि इंक द्वारा आयोजित आखर कार्यक्रम में युवा साहित्यकार डॉ गौतम चौबे ने कही। आरंभ में आयोजकों की ओर से आराधना प्रधान ने अतिथि लेखक डॉ गौतम चौबे का परिचय दिया। दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय के आत्मा राम सनातन धर्म कॉलेज में अंग्रेजी साहित्य के अध्यापक चौबे ने पांडेय कपिल के भोजपुरी उपन्यास 'फूलसूँधी' और 'ट्रैल फेल' का अंग्रेजी और आंद्रे बेटे की रचनाओं का हिंदी में अनुवाद किया है। आप हिंदी-अंग्रेजी की तमाम पत्र-पत्रिकाओं में लिखते रहते हैं। इन दिनों ग्रेटेस्ट भोजपुरी स्टोरीज एवर टॉल्ड और अ कल्चरल हिस्ट्री ऑफ भोजपुरी पर काम कर रहे हैं। चौबे के साथ संवाद का दायित्व पत्रकार निराला बिदेसिया ने निभाया।

बिदेसिया ने लोकभाषा के अनुवाद की महत्ता को बताते हुए कहा कि यह तकनीकी अनुवाद नहीं है, बल्कि बहुत कठिन काम है, जिसे चौबे ने बखूबी अंजाम दिया है। आखिर भोजपुरी भाषा की तरफ आपका छुकाव कैसे हुआ? उसमें भी पांडेय कपिल की किताब 'फूलसूँधी' का अंग्रेजी में अनुवाद कैसे किया? चौबे ने वरिष्ठ सहयोगियों की मदद का उल्लेख किया और बताया, "हमारे नाना डॉ चन्द्रधर पाण्डेय 'कमल' भोजपुरी में लिखते रहे हैं, उनके सात उपन्यास भी प्रकाशित हुए हैं, तो भोजपुरी से लगाव बचपन से ही रहा है। एमए के बाद हिंदी पत्रकारिता पर मैंने पीएचडी की। इसी के बाद अनुवाद की तरफ सोचा। 'फूलसूँधी' को पढ़ते ही मैं बहुत प्रभावित हो गया। हालांकि मैं अंग्रेजी, हिंदी भी पढ़ा था, पर भोजपुरी इतिहास में इससे बढ़िया किताब नहीं मिली, इसीलिए इसपर काम किया।" अनुवाद की कठिनाई और सफलता पर चौबे ने कहा कि दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय से पीएचडी करने के चलते आत्मविश्वास काफी ऊपर था, पर जब अनुवाद करना शुरू किया तो लगा कि अंग्रेजी खराब है मेरी, हिंदी उससे भी चौपट है और भोजपुरी तो बिल्कुल भी नहीं आती। यह ऐसी भाषा है जिसे हमने बहुत सरसरी तौर पर लिया था। फिर मैंने अपने पिता सहित जो लोग भोजपुरी में काम कर रहे थे, सबके संपर्क में आया।

चौबे के मुताबिक भोजपुरी में दक्ष बौद्धिकों के संपर्क में आया और यह एक समन्वित कार्य है। डिक्शनरी, वेबसाइट, शब्द के सहयोग से मैं इस काम को कर



Nirala Bidesiya



Gautam Choubey

पाया। पेंविन से मैंने संपर्क किया। उन लोगों की टिप्पणी उत्साहवर्धक रहा। 'फूलसूँधी' की किस बात ने आपको प्रभावित किया? के सवाल पर चौबे ने कहा कि हिंदी साहित्य पर शरतचंद के प्रभाव से इनकार नहीं किया जा सकता। यह अनुवाद भोजपुरी से अंग्रेजी की तरफ नहीं बल्कि अंग्रेजी से भोजपुरी की तरफ है। यह एक तरह से जड़ की ओर

लौटने की प्रक्रिया है। भोजपुरी लेखन और साहित्य के बारे में उन्होंने कहा कि कई लोगों में भोजपुरी को भ्रामक बना दिया है कि यह मजदूरों और किसानों की भाषा है। जबकि कई अच्छे साहित्यकार भोजपुरी भाषा ने दिए हैं। एक कहानी का जिक्र करते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि जब भी भोजपुरिया आदमी कोलकाता के बारे में सोचता है तो नौकरी, वियोग, विस्थापन, मजदूरी, शोषण, श्रम, संघर्ष, गांव में छूटी पत्नी की बात करता है। पर 'पुरानोपापी' एकलौती कहानी है जिसमें वह कोलकाता की युनिवर्सिटी के बारे में सोचता है। इसका नायक शांति निकेतन से पढ़कर लौटते हुए नायिका से मिलता है। चौबे ने टैगोर और शरतचंद पर भी लंबी चर्चा की। महेंद्र मिश्र की कल्पना कवि के रूप में हुई है। उनके पास बहुत बैचैनी है।

अंग्रेजी-भोजपुरी में अनुवाद की गति में आए विराम के सवाल पर चौबे ने कहा कि ग्रियर्सन का काम बहुत सारी भाषा में है। जैसे वे लाठी में गुण बहुत हैं को भोजपुरी का एंथम कहते हैं, जो कि गलत है। भोजपुरी का लोक साहित्य बहुत बड़ा है। जो लोग इस दिशा में काम करते हैं वे लोक पर काम करने लगते हैं। इसके चलते गद्य पीछे चला जाता है। लोक साहित्य के चलते आधुनिक साहित्य पीछे छूट जाता है। चौबे ने भोजपुरी के हालातों का जिक्र करते हुए शिवपूजन सहाय, राहुल सांकृत्यायन आदि भोजपुरी भाषी लोगों का जिक्र किया कि ये लोग चाहते तो बहुत कुछ कर सकते थे, पर ये हिंदी में लगे रहे। ज्ञानी बनने के बाद लोग भोजपुरी को छोड़ दे रहे इसकी क्या वजह रही होगी? के सवाल पर चौबे ने कहा कि आपको यह देखना होगा कि भोजपुरी में गुणवत्तापूर्वक काम कितना हुआ है। भाषा के क्षेत्र में ओडिआ और मलयालम पर लोग बहुत काम कर रहे हैं। अपने शोध संस्मरण को याद करते हुए चौबे ने कहा कि मैं भोजपुरी में काम करना चाहता था। मैथिली को सरकारी मान्यता से लाभ मिला।

चौबे ने इस बात पर संतोष जताया कि युवा पीढ़ी अब भोजपुरी में ज्यादा काम हो रहा है। युवा अपनी भाषा और संस्कृति की ओर लौट रहे हैं। चौबे ने भाषाई फिल्मकारों द्वारा साहित्यिक कृतियों पर फिल्म बनाने में मिलने वाली मदद का उल्लेख करते हुए सत्यजीत रे को 'पाथेर पांचाली' फिल्म पर मिली मदद का उल्लेख किया। चौबे ने कहा कि सुनने में 'एक बिहारी सौ पर भारी' अच्छा लगता है, पर इससे कुछ हासिल नहीं होता। सच तो यह है कि साहित्य संरक्षण के लिए राज्याश्रय जरूरी है। चौबे ने सवाल-जवाब सत्र में भी हिस्सा लिया। धन्यवाद ज्ञापन मसि इंक की आराधना प्रधान ने किया। बिहार इंडस्ट्री एसोसिएशन सभागार में आयोजित इस कार्यक्रम में बिहार के मुख्य सचिव त्रिपुरारी शरण, मुन्ना पांडेय, डॉ अजित प्रधान, पृथ्वी राज सिंह आदि उपस्थित रहे।

आखर बिहार के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट, मसि इंक का सहयोग मिला।



Tripurari Sharan



M.K. Pandey



Ankita Pandit



Aradhana Pradhan



Tushar Kant Upadhyay



P. Raj Singh



## चारण कवि मरने का डर होते हुए भी डरे नहीं: गिरधर दान रतनू 'दासोड़ी'

राजस्थानी भाषा के प्रति उदासीनता को दूर कर आम जनता को जागृत होना होगा। जब भी देश को स्वाभिमान, संस्कृति, शौर्य, सम्मान, देशभक्ति आदि जीवन मूल्यों की आवश्यकता होगी तब-तब डिंगल प्रेरणा देती रहेगी।" साहित्यकार गिरधर दान रतनू 'दासोड़ी' ने यह विचार आखर कार्यक्रम के दौरान डॉ लक्ष्मण सिंह गड़ा से संवाद में कही। प्रदक्षिणा पारीक ने लेखक और संवादकर्ता का परिचय दिया। सिंह ने रतनू से पहला सवाल उनकी साहित्यिक यात्रा को लेकर पूछा? उन्होंने बताया कि चारण समाज में जन्म और दादा गणेशदान से प्रेरित होकर साहित्य में रुचि जगी। कक्षा 11 में पढ़ते हुए पहली रचना प्रकृति चित्रण पर लिखी। इसके बाद कॉलेज के दौरान कई रचनाएं सृजित की। बीकानेर के डूंगर कॉलेज में राजस्थानी विभाग का पहला विद्यार्थी बना। राजस्थानी साहित्य परिषद की स्थापना की। विभिन्न कार्यक्रम आयोजित किए, जिसमें डॉक्टर भूपति राम साकरिया, डॉक्टर मनोहर सिंह, डॉक्टर शक्ति दान कविया आदि वरिष्ठ साहित्यकारों के व्याख्यान करवाए। मधु भारती पत्रिका में शोध आलेख भी प्रकाशित हुए। अन्य पत्रिकाएं विशम्भरा, वैचारिकी आदि में भी आलेख प्रकाशित हुए। वर्ष 1995 में शिक्षक बनने के बाद पुस्तकों का लेखन भी शुरू किया। 'जल ऊंडा थल उजला' निबंध संग्रह, छंदा री छोर, मरुधर री मठोठ, दलगी बातां बहगी बातां आदि पुस्तकें प्रकाशित हुईं।

डिंगल की कई कविताएं सुनाते हुए रतनू ने कहा कि राजस्थानी में एकरूपता है। बांसवाड़ा से श्रीगंगानगर और कोटा से जयपुर तक डिंगल साहित्य एक है। राजस्थानी भाषा का इतिहास आठवीं शताब्दी से शुरू होता है और यह अधिकतर श्रुति परंपरा पर आधारित है। यह साहित्य लोकमानस में व्याप्त है। इस अमूल्य साहित्य को हमें संजोना होगा। डिंगल कविता के एक जाति से जुड़ी होने के सवाल पर रतनू ने कहा, "डिंगल कविता बहुत सरल है। इस कविता में अधिकारी विद्वान तो चारण रहे हैं लेकिन डिंगल कविता एक जाति और वर्ग से बंधी हुई नहीं है। चारण, राजपूत, ब्राह्मण, प्रजापत, जाट, दशनामी संत, मेघवाल, कृष्णाजी छीपा आदि ने बहुत सारी डिंगल कविताएं रचीं। डिंगल कविता सीखने का ग्रंथ मंशाराम सेवक ने लिखा जो शाकद्वीपीय ब्राह्मण थे। मेड़ता के लुहार ने त्रिकुट बंध गीत लिखा। अगर अपने स्वाभिमान, राष्ट्ररक्षण, जातीय गौरव, उदारता, मानवीय जीवन, मूल्यों की रक्षा, गोधन की रक्षा, गरीब की स्त्री की रक्षा की प्रशंसा में कविता लिखे तो क्या गलत है।

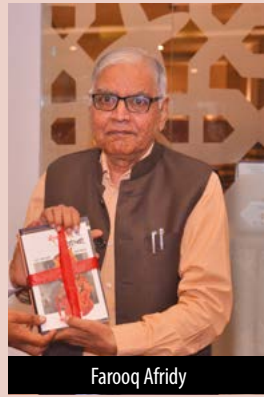
राजस्थानी पत्रिकाओं में डिंगल को जगह नहीं मिलने के कारण पर रतनू ने कहा कि वर्तमान में डिंगल के प्रति पूर्वाग्रह है। लोगों की शब्दावली इतनी घट गई है कि साधारण से साधारण शब्द भी समझ में नहीं आ रहे हैं। पांडुलिपि और ग्रंथ संपादन के काम को लेकर डॉ शक्तिदान कविया की प्रशंसा से जुड़े सवाल पर रतनू ने बताया कि यह काफी कठिन काम है। पांडुलिपि सुस्पष्ट और सुपाठ्य नहीं है। मैं तो अभी पांडुलिपि सीख ही रहा हूं। सिंह ने रतनू के निबंध संग्रह को खोजी अध्ययनशीलता का प्रमाण बताते हुए पूछा कि शिष्ट वाचिक श्रुत साहित्य के साथ-साथ इतिहास परंपरा की संस्कृति आपने कैसे सहेजी? रतनू का उत्तर था कि वर्तमान में कोई चीज अगर अर्थ प्रधान जुड़ी हुई नहीं है तो यह मानते हैं कि यह समय खराब कर रहा है। बीकानेर शहर की परम्परा में हर पीढ़ी को अपनी बात कहने का अवसर मिलता है। नहीं तो अधिकतर स्थानों पर यह हाल हो गया है कि हुंकारदास और चेला चकोरदास।



Thakur Durga Singh Mandawa

Laxman Singh Gada

Girdhardan Ratnu Dasodi



Farooq Afridy

अपने निबंध काव्य संग्रह मरुधर री मठोठ में विसर्ग काव्य से जुड़े सवाल पर रतनू ने कहा कि विसर्ग काव्य में आ बैल मुझे मार वाली स्थिति है। वर्तमान में लोकतंत्र है। डिंगल कविता पर गलतफहमी है कि या तो स्तुतिपरक काव्य है या कीर्तिपरक काव्य है। डिंगल कविता दो धारा- सर्ग काव्य और विसर्ग काव्य में लिखी गई है। विसर्ग काव्य पर आज तक कोई काम नहीं हुआ है। मैंने लेख लिखा तो अपने लोग नाराज हो गए। विसर्ग का एक अर्थ है निंदात्मक और एक अर्थ जैसे सांप-बिछूर के काटने से अनुभव होता है। राजस्थान में उस समय तो तलवार के दम पर शासक बनते थे, तब भी डिंगल कवियों ने निरपेक्ष भाव और निडरता से अपनी बात कही। निरंकुश शासकों, जिन्होंने अपने पिता, भाई, बेटे, बहोई, साले को भी मार दिया, उन्हें भी कवियों ने खरा-खरा सुनाया। यह विसर्ग काव्य है। वर्तमान लोकतंत्र में निरपेक्ष भाव से मूल्यांकन करो कि आज जनता ही जनप्रतिनिधियों निर्वाचित करती है, पर सांसद, विधायक, पार्षद आदि की सोशल मीडिया पर आलोचना नहीं कर सकते हैं। कोई न कोई अदृश्य डर है। उस समय तो चारण कवि मरने का डर होते हुए भी डरे नहीं।

रतनू ने कई व्यंग्य सुनाए, जिसमें कुछ यों हैं। जैसे कवियों ने कहा है-  
भीतां तणा झरोखा भागै, गीतां तणा न भाजै गोख... अर्थात् दीवारों वाले झरोखे तो गिर जाएंगे लेकिन गीतों के झरोखे नहीं गिरेंगे।

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कुत्तो ई समझै काव्य में, हीण न समझै हाय।

तू तू सू आवै परो, दुर दुर कैतां ई जाय।

अर्थात् कुत्ता भी काव्य को समझता है। तू तू कहकर बुलाते हैं तो पास में आता है और दूर कहते ही दूर चला जाता है।

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पण नाहक गंवायो जन्म जस ना बसायो रसना कवि कवीन की।

अर्थात् कवि की जबान पर रस नहीं बसाया तो कुछ नहीं किया।

आयोजकों की ओर से प्रमोद शर्मा ने धन्यवाद ज्ञापित किया और कहा कि राजस्थानी भाषा को प्रोत्साहित करने के लिए राजस्थानी भाषा महोत्सव की भी योजना बनाई जा रही है।

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

# Writing From the Gut



Sharlene Teo



Mita Kapur



When we think of Singapore, the glittering towers of Marina Bay Sands immediately come to mind. Or the iconic Merlion, the bustle of Clarke Quay, even the Singapore Sling! But what about Singaporean literature? .

In their November session of **The Universe Writes, Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, in association with Siyahi, hosted acclaimed Singaporean writer Sharlene Teo. The winner of the inaugural Deborah Rogers Writers' Award for her first novel, *Ponti*, Teo is also the recipient of the 2013 David T.K. Wong Creative Writing Fellowship and the 2014 Sozopol Fiction Fellowship. The young author was in conversation with Shivranjani Singh about *Ponti*, a riveting coming-of-age story about female friendships.

Teo began the conversation by reflecting on the experience that shaped a lot of what *Ponti* is about. "I recall my years growing up in the Singapore of the 1990s, picking books off my brother's and sister's bookshelves and spending hours at the bookstore. Having grown up on a steady diet of western literature, I am glad to see how far the literary scene in South Asia has come. I attended a convent girls' school in Singapore; I saw and experienced the friendships, the cliques and all the cruel experiences of growing up. All my characters are painted in shades of grey.

The bullied kids aren't angels and the monstrous mother isn't the devil incarnate."

"With each character the reader explores, there is an immediate sense of kinship, because of how well the characters are written," Singh noted about *Ponti*.



Shivranjani Singh

"I started writing the story from the view of the Pontianak, a Southeast Asian supernatural creature in white that gouges people's eyes out, with elements of magical realism," responded

Teo. "Eventually, the writing took a more realistic turn. I wrote of a beautiful woman cast in a campy horror film about a Pontianak, at a time when these lurid horror films were going out of fashion, relegating Amisa to play the part of the dissatisfied, shallow yesteryear actress who can destroy you with one glance. Circe, a woman nearing her 30s, and working in marketing and social media, embodies millennial angst, struggling to fit into a teenage or 20-something Instagram world. Szu, whose life you see as a teenager, is in shambles, with no parents and an eating disorder, but when you see her 17 years later, things turned



out okay for her. These characters could so easily be the reader.”

Teo also had interesting insights on South Asian and Southeast Asian literature. “India’s literature had been typecast into the Great Indian Novel written primarily by men, while Singapore barely had a recognisable name from its literary scene. These clichés are the effects of post-colonialism and took a long time to wear off; both countries are only now shedding that colonial burden. Singapore today is thriving; Kevin Kwan’s *Crazy Rich Asians* has drastically changed the way the world looks at Singapore. Writing from the East has always needed to be flattened for the western reader, and there is a burden on the author to be a flagbearer of their culture. The move away from these limitations over the past two decades has helped literature as a whole grow by leaps and bounds.”

What would Teo’s advice to young writers be? “Break free from your own inhibitions,” said Teo. “It’s

an alchemical process. Another writer said that fiction doesn’t come from the head or the heart, it comes from the gut. Cerebral subjects can sometimes get too unwieldy for fiction, and writing too much from the heart can keep you too close to the skin of your feelings, thereby preventing your writing brain from actually *inventing* anything. Writing from the gut requires you to have a narrative distance from the source of trauma or pleasure you’re trying to tap. That detachment helps you identify what is interesting about your subject matter.”

After an illuminating segment comprising discussions on everything from postcolonial literature to young people on Instagram, the virtual meet ended with an audience interaction on Singapore’s writing scene and Teo’s ideas on writing as an art form.

Writing from the East has always needed to be flattened for the western reader, and there is a burden on the author to be a flagbearer of their culture. The move away from these limitations over the past two decades has helped literature as a whole grow by leaps and bounds

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



“Congratulations to Teo and Singh for an interesting and informative discussion not only on the various characters of *Ponti* but also about the changing culture of Singapore. I thank **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** for bringing such acclaimed writers to this literary forum.”

— Prem Kaku



“It was a riveting session with Sharlene Teo outlining the story of three women, friendship, isolation, despair, the haunting memories of childhood and the heartbreaking truth of growing up.”

— Sunita Pant Bansal

“The conversation between Shivranjani and Sharlene was fresh, thoughtful and moved the frame of reference away from the usual. Both of them I thought were incredibly bright and articulate women. I had to laugh at Shivranjani’s comment about italicising words in different languages, given the extent to which I do it! However, it’s worth considering the view that you want to make it easy for your reader. Great to hear opinions and views that are incredibly well informed.”

— Buchi Ramagopal



Aruna Pandey



Dr Shiv Dutt



Meenal Samdhani



Purushottam Agarwal



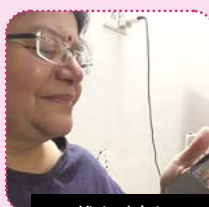
Ranoo Nathany



Shilpa Mehta



Vijay Balakrishnan

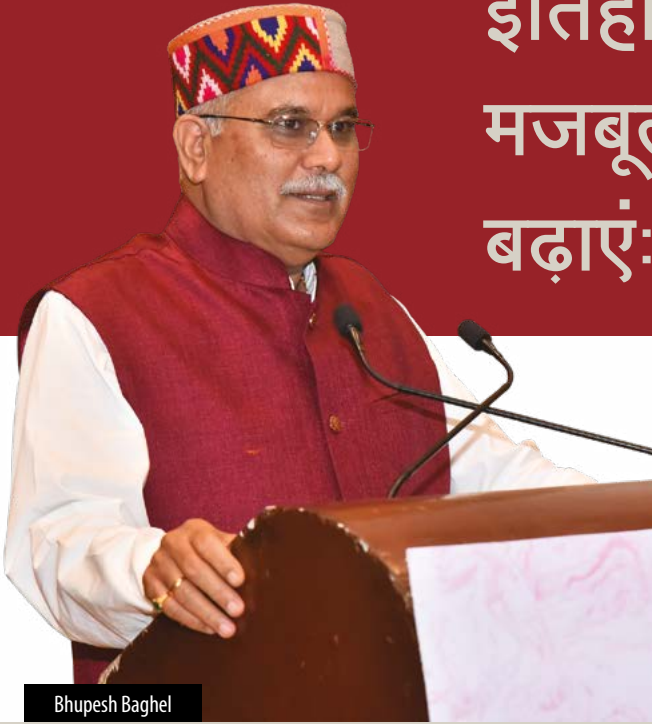


Vinita Johri

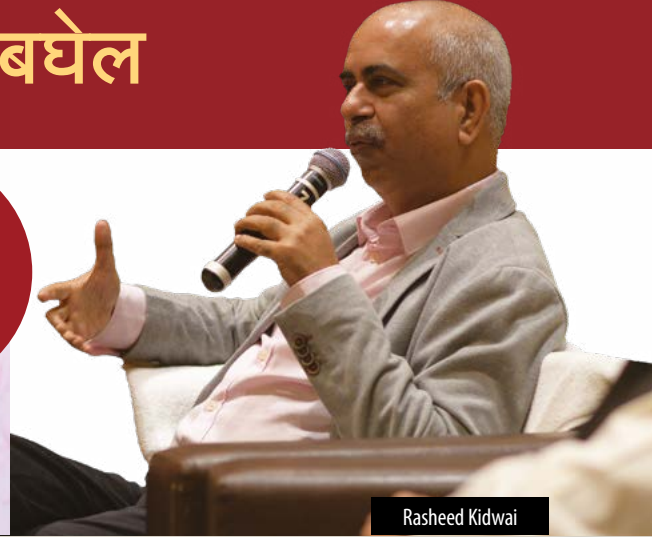
“It was a very interesting session. Sharlene is such a sweet and wise young lady, it was endearing to hear some of the things she said. She was very frank, which was much appreciated.”

— Kavita Atroley

# इतिहास से सीख लें और मजबूत इरादे से देश को आगे बढ़ाएं: भूपेश बघेल



Bhupesh Baghel



Rasheed Kidwai

**वै** से तो हम लोग भारत के जितने भी प्रधानमंत्री हुए पंडित जवाहरलाल नेहरू से लेकर वर्तमान प्रधानमंत्री के बारे में जानते हैं, पर उतना ही जानते हैं, जितना मीडिया या अन्य माध्यमों से जानकारी मिलती है, लेकिन पत्रकार उन्हें बहुत नजदीक से देख पाते हैं, उनके पास वह जानकारी भी होती है, जो आमतौर पर सामने नहीं आ पाती। ऐसे में किसी पत्रकार द्वारा ऐसी पुस्तक का आना कि प्रधानमंत्री अपनी तत्कालीन परिस्थितियों के बारे में निर्णय कुछ और लेना चाहते थे, करना कुछ और पड़ा, के बारे में जानना महत्वपूर्ण है। छत्तीसगढ़ के मुख्यमंत्री भूपेश बघेल ने यह बात **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** की ओर से आयोजित 'किताब' कार्यक्रम में पत्रकार रशीद क़िदवई की पुस्तक 'भारत के प्रधानमंत्री: देश, दशा और दिशा' का विमोचन करते हुए कही। सबसे पहले उन्होंने फाउंडेशन की समाजसेवी गतिविधियों की तारीफ की।

रशीद को इस पुस्तक लेखन के लिए शुभकामनाएं देते हुए मुख्यमंत्री बघेल ने हालिया किसान आंदोलन का उल्लेख किया और कहा कि जैसे आंदोलनजीवी और पैरासाइट कहने के बावजूद प्रधानमंत्री को अपना फैसला बदलना पड़ा, वैसे ही हर प्रधानमंत्री के सामने ऐसे अवसर आए होंगे, जिसका उल्लेख इस पुस्तक में होगा। बघेल ने मजाकिया अंदाज में कहा कि आजकल पुस्तक विमोचन करना खतरे से खाली नहीं है, पर क़िदवई गंभीर पत्रकार और विचारक हैं। मुख्यमंत्री बघेल ने उम्मीद जताई कि निश्चय ही इस किताब में प्रथम से लेकर अब तक के सभी प्रधानमंत्रियों के व्यक्तित्व और कृतित्व पर समीक्षात्मक दृष्टि के साथ सरल शब्दों में उल्लेख किया गया होगा।

मुख्यमंत्री बघेल ने कहा कि भारत में अब तक विभिन्न विभूतियों ने प्रधानमंत्री रहते जो भी निर्णय लिए, उनका प्रभाव देश के भविष्य पर पड़ा है। देश के हर प्रधानमंत्री के पास अपने रचनात्मक, सकारात्मक विचार थे, परिकल्पनाएं थीं, जो भी देश के इस सर्वोच्च पद पर आसीन रहा है, उन्होंने कोई न कोई सीख दी है। देश के निर्माण में प्रधानमंत्रियों का संघर्ष, निर्णय और त्याग अहम रहा है। बघेल ने अपने उद्बोधन में देश के प्रथम प्रधानमंत्री पंडित

जवाहरलाल नेहरू, गुलजारी लाल नंदा, लाल बहादुर शास्त्री, चंद्रशेखर तथा चौधरी चरण सिंह के व्यक्तित्व और कृतित्व का विशेष रूप से उल्लेख किया। साथ ही नयी पीढ़ी से अपील करते हुए कहा कि इतिहास से सीख लेते हुए मजबूत इरादे के साथ देश को आगे बढ़ाने में योगदान दें। बघेल ने पहले के राजनीतिज्ञों और मीडिया के क्षेत्र में उच्च आदर्श का भी विस्तार से उल्लेख किया और कथित हार्ट्स ऐप युनिवर्सिटी के माध्यम से गलत जानकारियों के दौर में पढ़ने पर बल दिया।

कार्यक्रम का आरंभ गौरव गिरिजा शुक्ला के स्वागत वक्तव्य से हुआ। **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** द्वारा कला, संस्कृति, शिक्षा, साहित्य, लैंगिक समानता और महिला सशक्तीकरण की दिशा में चलाए जा रहे कार्यक्रमों **कलम, राइट सर्कल, किताब, आखर** और **एक मुलाकात** आदि के उल्लेख किया और प्रायोजक **श्री सीमेंट, अभिकल्प फाउंडेशन, अहसास वूमेन रायपुर** और **अहसास वूमेन बिलासपुर** की आयोजन समिति की ओर से अतिथि वक्ता लेखक क़िदवई, पीटीआई-भाषा के संपादक निर्मल पाठक और प्रिया सहगल को परिचर्चा के लिए मंच पर आमंत्रित किया।

सहगल ने रशीद की पुस्तक **चौबीस अकबर रोड और नेता-अभिनेता** जैसी पुस्तकों के उल्लेख के साथ 'भारत के प्रधानमंत्री' पुस्तक की तीन बातों पर सवाल पूछा। पहला, आपने इंदिरा गांधी को लेकर यह क्यों लिखा कि वे एक बड़े आदमी की बेटी और एक छोटे आदमी की गलती हैं। दूसरा, प्रणब मुखर्जी को यह क्यों लग रहा था कि कहीं वह गुलजारी लाल नंदा न बन जाएं। तीसरा, सोनिया गांधी और नरसिंहराव के बीच जो मतभेद हुआ उसमें किस आदमी की भूमिका थी? रशीद ने उत्तर से पहले प्रिया की पुस्तक 'द कंटेंडर' का जिक्र किया और अपनी पुस्तक के दौरान पाठक से मिले सहयोग के बारे में बताया। पहले सवाल के उत्तर में उन्होंने कहा कि इंदिरा गांधी के प्रधानमंत्री बनने में के. कामराज की भूमिका थी उन्होंने ही नाराज होने पर इंदिरा गांधी के लिए यह कहा था। रशीद ने नेहरू परिवार पर वंशवाद के आरोपों को खारिज किया और इंदिरा गांधी के प्रधानमंत्री बनने की स्थितियों का जिक्र किया।



Sanjay Shukla



(L-R) Anshuman Sharma, Sireesh Mishra and Pritha Shukla



Ashok Tiwari and L. S. Nigam



Vikas Singh



Farah Kidwai



Dhruv Shukla (left) and Himanshu Dwivedi





(L-R) Gaurav Girija Shukla, Garima Tiwari, Priya Sahgal, Bhupesh Baghel, Rasheed Kidwai, Nirmal Pathak, Ravi Tiwari, Shrishti Trivedi, Kalpana Choudhary and Aanchal Garcha

दूसरे सवाल के उत्तर में उन्होंने कहा कि बहुत से लोगों के बारे में चर्चा होती है कि वे महान प्रधानमंत्री साबित होते। ऐसे लोगों में सरदार पटेल, लालकृष्ण पटेल, प्रणब मुखर्जी, वाईवी चव्हाण, शरद पवार, जगजीवन राम, माधवराव सिंधिया, ज्योति बसु आदि। लोग प्रणब मुखर्जी को लेकर चाहे जो समझें पर उनका बड़प्पन कहिए कि उन्हें अपनी सीमा पता थी। वह हिंदी भाषी नहीं थे, उन्होंने चुनाव नहीं जीता था। उन्हें डर था कि अगर वह बने तो कार्यवाहक ही न रह जाएं। तीसरे सवाल के उत्तर में उन्होंने कहा कि असली टकराव बड़े लोगों के बीच नहीं उनके लोगों के बीच होती है। वी जार्ज इसके पीछे थे।

सहगल ने अगला सवाल पाठक से पूछा कि कौन सबसे बेहतर प्रधानमंत्री है? पाठक ने उत्तर दिया कि जो भी प्रधानमंत्री बनता है वह एक बड़ी संसदीय प्रक्रिया से चुनकर बनता है। इसलिए सभी का महत्त्व है। पंडित नेहरू को देश का एक ढांचा बनाने की जिम्मेदारी मिली थी। आज हम अगर दो कमरे का घर बनाते हैं, तो उसमें भी कई महीने लगते हैं। शास्त्री जी का कार्यकाल छोटा था, पर जय जवान, जय किसान की अपनी भूमिका है। इंदिरा गांधी ने दक्षिण एशिया का नक्शा बदल दिया। उन्होंने राजीव गांधी और अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी के काम का भी उल्लेख किया और कहा कि मोदी जी की नोटबंदी का भी आकलन आने वाले सालों में लगेगा। रशीद ने स्पष्ट रूप से कहा कि पंडित नेहरू के सामने जो चुनौतियां थीं और जो काम था वह निश्चित रूप से बड़ा है। उन्होंने इंदिरा गांधी के कई कामों के उल्लेख के साथ कहा कि भले ही किसी का छोटा कार्यकाल रहा हो हर प्रधानमंत्री ने देश के प्रति समर्पण भावना से काम किया। भारत के लिए बहुमत वाले प्रधानमंत्री ठीक हैं या गठबंधन वाले प्रधानमंत्री ठीक हैं? के उत्तर में पाठक ने कहा कि हमारे देश में इतनी विविधता है, भले ही गठबंधन सरकार को हम कमजोर कहें, पर तय यह करता है कि सरकार कौन चला रहा है? रशीद ने इसके उत्तर में भारत के संघीय ढांचे का जिक्र किया और कहा कि हमारे प्रधानमंत्री कभी कमजोर नहीं थे। इस सिलसिले में उन्होंने चरण सिंह, चंद्रशेखर, इंदर कुमार गुजराल आदि का जिक्र किया।

हिंदुत्व से जुड़े सवाल पर रशीद ने कहा कि कांग्रेस में भी दो तरह की विचारधारा थी। एक गांधी जी की सोच थी, जो सच्चाई, ईमानदारी और ऊपरवाले पर विश्वास के भरोसे शासन करना चाहते थे। दूसरी नेहरू जी की सोच थी, जो धर्म को राजनीति से अलग रखने के लिए अडिग थे। इंदिरा गांधी और गुलजारीलाल नंदा के विवाद का भी उन्होंने जिक्र किया कि वे दो बार कार्यवाहक प्रधानमंत्री थे। पर बस की लाइन में खड़े थे। रशीद ने कहा कि धर्म और राजनीति में घालमेल नहीं होना चाहिए। इस दौरान प्रधानमंत्री कार्यालय से जुड़े सवाल पर

पाठक ने कहा कि सबसे ताकतवर प्रधानमंत्री कार्यालय नरेंद्र मोदी का है। मंत्री तक सामूहिक फैसले नहीं ले सकते, सारी ताकत प्रधानमंत्री कार्यालय में निहित है। श्रोताओं में से अभिषेक प्रताप सिंह ने पूछा कि क्या नेहरू वामपंथी थे? रशीद ने उत्तर दिया कि नेहरू सही मायनों में एक ऐसे राजनेता थे, जिनका दिल जनता के लिए धड़कता था।

अयोध्या विवाद खत्म होने का भाजपा पर क्या असर होगा? के उत्तर में पाठक ने कहा कि भाजपा का नया नेतृत्व यह जानता है कि अपने कार्यकर्ताओं को कैसे पूरे समय व्यस्त रखना है? मोदी के बाद क्या मुख्यमंत्रियों के प्रधानमंत्री बनने जैसा कोई सीएम मॉडल बनेगा? रशीद ने कहा कि हर ताकतवर प्रधानमंत्री के बाद केंद्र में खिचड़ी सरकार बनी। प्रकाशचंद्र होता का सवाल था कि एक प्रधानमंत्री ने सोचा था, हर चीज नेशनलाइज हो, अब एक ऐसे प्रधानमंत्री हैं जो हर नेशनलाइज चीज को प्राइवेटाइज करना चाहते हैं, देश के लिए कौन सा मॉडल ठीक है? रशीद ने कहा कि आजादी के बाद नेशनलाइजेशन देश के सम्मान से जुड़ा था। अब हमारी आवश्यकता बदल चुकी है। सुभद्रा राठौर ने सोनिया गांधी, राहुल गांधी, प्रियंका गांधी और बेहतर विपक्ष से जुड़ा सवाल पूछा। रशीद ने इसे गूढ़ मसला बताया और कहा कि कांग्रेस का अध्यक्ष कोई हो भाजपा समर्थक उसे वोट नहीं देगा। पाठक ने दलों में आंतरिक लोकतंत्र पर बल दिया। एक सवाल के उत्तर में रशीद ने लोकतंत्र में विवेक से मतदान करने की सोच पर बल दिया। समीर दीवान ने सहगल की पुस्तक के हवाले से राहुल गांधी को लेकर आप लोगों की सोच क्या है, सवाल पूछा। संजय शुक्ला ने चुनाव में सोशल मीडिया की भूमिका पर सवाल पूछा। वक्ताओं ने इंटरैक्टिंग प्रधानमंत्री, आरटीआई, प्रधानमंत्री मीडिया संबंध, प्रधानमंत्री राव, ब्रांड मोदी, व्यक्तिवाद, मुफ्त बिजली के वादे, सिख नरसंहार और बाबरी ध्वंस के बाद की हिंसा, पत्रकारों की राजनीतिक रुचि, मीडिया मैनेजर्स की भूमिका, वामपंथी विचारधारा के प्रधानमंत्री क्यों नहीं बने, नौकरशाहों की सियासत में बढ़ती भूमिका जैसे सवालों के भी उत्तर दिए।

पुस्तक विमोचन के दौरान मंच पर मुख्यमंत्री बघेल के अलावा लेखक किदवई, संवादकर्ता सहगल, पाठक, श्री सीमेंट की ओर से रवि तिवारी, अहसास वूमेन की ओर से कल्पना चौधरी, सृष्टि, डॉ गरिमा तिवारी, आंचल और अभिकल्प फाउंडेशन की ओर से शुक्ला मौजूद थे। अतिथियों को स्मृति चिन्ह भी प्रदान किया गया।

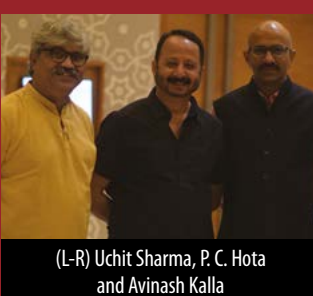
प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की ओर से आयोजित किताब के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट। अभिकल्प फाउंडेशन और अहसास वूमेन रायपुर का सहयोग मिला।



(L-R) Yagnyavalkya Vashishtha, Diwakar Mukhtibodh, Sushil Trivedi and Josef John



Kamal Sharma (left) and Subhadra Rathore



(L-R) Uchit Sharma, P. C. Hota and Avinash Kalla



Uma Tiwari



Jeevesh Choubey



Pradeep Gupta



Manoj Mitra

# A Slice of Life on Stage

Thespian Manoj Mitra feels it isn't necessary to write dialogues for every emotion that needs to be conveyed to the audience. Many emotions can be made palpable through acting without dialogue—through gestures, body language and facial expressions. The way an actor uses their hands and body on stage is very similar to the way people actually communicate in real life. Mitra shared many more such valuable insights and anecdotes while talking about the plays he has written, in a session of **Aakhar** Kolkata organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. He was in conversation with noted theatre director and actor Meghnad Bhattacharya.

Mitra believes there are many hidden links within our epics and heritage that can be used to craft compelling stories and plays. Writing more than a hundred plays over six decades, Mitra dons many hats as a celebrated playwright, director and actor. He is a recipient of the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award and the Dinabandhu Puraskar. He is best known for the lead role in the Tapan Sinha-directed *Banchharamer Bagaan*, which is based on Mitra's own play *Sajano Bagaan*.

Mitra was born in 1938 in a small village called Dhulihar in Khulna, Bangladesh, a village unique for the way villagers and thieves lived together in harmony. Recalling an incident from childhood, Mitra said once he was suffering from malaria and his grandmother was sitting by his side. Late at night, they heard sounds of utensils being moved—it was apparently a thief. "My grandmother called out to the thief, saying that she couldn't step out and punish him because she couldn't leave her grandson's side. She asked the thief to leave the utensils behind and promised him food and groceries if



Meghnad Bhattacharya

he came the following day... The next morning we found all our utensils safe and sound, scattered in the courtyard. A little later, a villager turned up and claimed that my grandmother had invited him for lunch. Turns out it was the very same thief from the previous night," said Mitra.

When asked to share his memories of theatre from his childhood days, Mitra said every year after Durga Puja, the boys from his village used to put up plays in the evenings. Those were the times when female roles



“People are incredibly happy to see real life replicated in theatre. They enjoy watching a slice of life being enacted on stage, something they can relate to their own life experiences”

were played by men. One such play was Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay's *Ramer Sumati*. The performance that day was subpar and people were clearly disinterested in the goings-on on stage. That was until a fisherman came in carrying two live fish that would be needed in a scene as props. As soon as the fish were passed on to the stage, they jumped out and started leaping around all over. “This display of fish antics amused the audience so much that they came crowding around the stage to watch the fish, despite having to deal with fish in their own ponds every day,” said Mitra.

Another such play was Rabindranath Tagore's *Roger Chikitsha*, where Mitra himself participated as an actor. A particular scene that had Mitra carrying a couple of live ducks under his clothes had the audience in stitches—even more when the people saw how the ducks had attacked Mitra, leaving him all scratched and bloodied. These instances astonished the thespian, making him realise how much people enjoyed theatre that was as close to life as possible. “People are incredibly happy to see real life replicated in theatre. They enjoy watching a slice of life being enacted on stage, something they can relate to their own life experiences,” said Mitra.

The veteran's father had always wanted him to explore academics and research, irrespective of whether that earned him a job or not. When Mitra got his first job offer from Scottish Church College after completing his Masters in 1960, his father tore his appointment letter and threw it away. However, although Mitra went on to teach at colleges such as Raniganj College and Brahmananda Keshab Chandra College, his heart lay in theatre.

Mitra's grandfather Anyadacharan and grandmother

Hemnalini had an indelible influence on him. His first play as a playwright, *Mrityur Chokhe Jol*, which earned him the first place in a statewide competition, was based on his grandparents. He established Sundaram, a theatre group, in 1957 with his friend and college batchmate Partha Pratim Chowdhury, who went on to become a prominent playwright, stage and film director. The group staged more than 70 plays, including *Sajano Bagan*, *Alokanandar Putra Kanya* and *Chhayar Prashad*.

Sundaram was dissolved in 1970 before being re-established by Mitra in 1975 with the play *Parabas*—a play that remains the veteran's favourite production till date. Helpless people, people who were struggling in life and



the elderly moved Mitra to a great extent. *Parabas* was based on one such person whom Mitra refers to as Phani babu, an acquaintance from Khulna. All of Mitra's plays as a playwright draw on people he has crossed paths with in real life. His celebrated play *Sajano Bagan* is based on Banchharam, an old man he had met as a child in Khulna but had never forgotten. “The impressions we gather as children stay on with us forever. That's called childhood retention. We don't develop such impactful impressions when we grow older because the lure of many other areas of interest expands and overpowers us. But childhood retention is indestructible and omnipresent. All it takes is a little nourishment to preserve it forever,” said the veteran.

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*Aakhar Kolkata is presented by Shree Cement Ltd, in association with Anandabazar Patrika and Purba Paschim*

# Seth and Social Media



Suhel Seth

He is neither a movie star nor a politician, yet he has 4.75 million followers on Twitter. But for Suhel Seth, social media is neither a means of survival nor a means of recognition. He doesn't use Twitter for earning his bread and butter and doesn't get paid for being on Twitter in any way. He believes people follow him because he doesn't stray from the path of common sense. The Indian businessman and columnist was recently in conversation with author and screenwriter Advaita Kala in a virtual session organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. Seth is also the founder and managing director of consultancy firm Counselage India, an actor, keynote speaker and TV pundit.

When asked about his favourite social media platform, Seth said he doesn't have any. To him, each platform has its own unique merit—Twitter is for current affairs, while Facebook is for community building. Instagram, on the other hand, is for



Advaita Kala

sharing the good that's around and is an excellent tool for promoting young talent, emerging restaurants, cafes and home chefs. "People shouldn't use social media

only for themselves but also for the community," said Seth.

Talking about the negativity surrounding social media, Seth said if someone hurled abuses at him for no good reason or had nothing productive to say on social media, he blocked them because he didn't need toxic people in his life and didn't want to stoop to their level by responding to them. "Ninety percent of our country is filled with people who are



reasonable human beings. These are good people—they are people who care about the country. These are people who are neither left of centre or right of centre. These are normal, decent human beings who want only three things: a good quality of life, dignity and decency. When you have these kinds of people, you don't need to worry about the rest," said Seth.

The actor often peppers his tweets with sarcasm and satire because he believes people love a good laugh, and he enjoys himself. Does he get trolled because of his tweets? "Of course, I get trolled," said Seth. But it doesn't matter to him. He added that it was important to be logical and understand that there would always be people who would have a view distinct from one's own. There was a difference between disagreeing and being disagreeable. "More often than not, we are disagreeable. We take too many things to heart... It's sad, but I'm no one to judge. To each their own. Will I follow a path littered with destructiveness and disgust? No.

"There's so much anger and rage in our country. Social media and, more than anything else, Twitter has fanned the flames of rage. Rage isn't a quality that endears or engenders. Rage is a quality that destroys and diminishes. Do you really want to engage in that sort of a thing? If you're upset with people, get off Twitter," said Seth.

Seth feels technology is purpose-agnostic and one needs to remember to use it for good. According to him, social media is like a knife that one could use to either butter their toast or kill. "Blaming the medium is unfair—it's there for you to use. It's your choice how you use it," he added.

How could one use social media to brand and market themselves? Seth believes one would need to be a disruptor to create a niche for themselves in the market. "The only way you can be a disruptor is if you genuinely believe in what you are doing," he said.

Children nowadays are being increasingly affected by social media, developing issues of body dysmorphia and a fear or envy of other people's successes as they compare themselves constantly to others. This is giving way to low self-esteem and increasing incidence of depression and anxiety among

teenagers. How does one help their child prepare for not having it all—not having that iPhone, not having that car, not having those holidays? Seth thinks this is more of a parenting issue. More and more parents are abrogating their responsibility to schools. "You have to remember that only one-fourth of your time is spent in school," said Seth. "Where are parents actually going into the needs of a child or even sharing reading time?" Parents

are replicating the entire school for tuition hours with multiple tutors for every subject.

In Seth's eyes, the current generation is far brighter and more cause-driven than his own generation. He believes they are going to be the ones to save the planet in the future. A lot of success stories today

are of non-entitled people doing well for themselves. "I salute every young person. I learn more from the young than I can ever hope to teach them... they're more committed and family-driven. The essential young Indian to my mind has his or her heart in the right place," said Seth.

Seth believes *sanskriti* and *sanskar* take multiple tsunamis to destroy. When people get goosebumps while listening to the National Anthem, it isn't because

of nationalism or jingoism. It's because of the pride of belonging and the pride of being an Indian, feels the actor. "I am delighted that we have foundations like **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. I am delighted that we use literature to embrace a new civilisational idea of India rather than follow a path of hate, rage and destruction," he said.

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# History, Hitler and India



Ratnottama Sengupta



Vaibhav Purandare

Vaibhav Purandare grew up in Mumbai during the crucial phase spanning the 1980s and 1990s, when he bore witness to the growth of the identity of the Shiv Sena from that of a regional political presence to that of an enthusiastic proponent of a popular political ideology. His foray into journalism began in the early 1990s with the political news magazine, *Blitz*, and since then he has gone from strength to strength, having worked with some of the country's most prominent newspapers, including *The Indian Express*, *The Asian Age*, *Daily News and Analysis*, *Mid-Day*, *Mumbai Mirror* and the *Hindustan Times*, aside from a slew of other publications. He became an author very early as well; he was just 23 when his debut book, *The Sena Story* (1999), was published, and his subsequent work, *Sachin Tendulkar: A Definitive Biography*, has had several editions.

Purandare has been a biographer of Bal Thackeray and V.D. Savarkar as well as a chronicler of the Shiv Sena's history. Now, he has trained his lens on the intriguing and complex connection that the nation once shared with the most reviled figures in modern history, Adolf Hitler. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** organised a session of **An Author's Afternoon** with Purandare to talk about his newest book, *Hitler and India: The Untold Story of His Hatred for the Country & Its People*. The book does not

just delve into the myths that surround Hitler but also the grim truths of what the Fuhrer actually thought of India and its people. In order to put forth his arguments, Purandare references extensive archival material, speeches and interviews as well as the stories of several Indians who, in the 1930s and 1940s, happened to meet Nazis. In conversation with the author was writer and fellow journalist, Ratnottama Sengupta.

India's fascination with Adolf Hitler shows no signs of abating, with *Mein Kampf* continuing to feature on bestseller lists even close to a century after its publication. And while such fascination does not necessarily indicate popular support for the despised historical figure, Purandare does throw light on an interesting point—that this sort of popularity can be attributed to a few basic misconceptions, which over the years, have come to be accepted as fact by the wider public. Among these notions, the most prominent one seems to suggest that Hitler's fight against the British during World War II was indicative of the fact that he must have been in favour of India's struggle for Independence. This, of course, could not be farther from the truth. "We would all imagine that India was somewhere at the edge of Hitler's political consciousness. Surprisingly... right through his totally controversial political and military career... Hitler is time



and again talking about India,” pointed out Purandare.

“I scratched my head to find reasons why Hitler would be of interest to a 21st-century Indian,” laughed Sengupta before asking Purandare why he chose this subject for his newest book. “My curiosity about Hitler’s views on India stemmed from my reading of *Mein Kampf*,” revealed Purandare. “The passage about India in Hitler’s autobiography is completely anti-India. He goes to the extent of saying that India does not deserve freedom. When I read that, I was taken aback. These revelations fuelled my desire to know more, and so I started digging into German archives. It was there that I discovered, much to my surprise, that Hitler not only idolised the reign of the British but also aimed to emulate it with the Nazi party.”

“Hitler, who had derived his ideas about India from the works of a British political philosopher, Houston Chamberlain, considered Indians to be racially inferior, and had warned his party members against associating with them on multiple occasions,” revealed Purandare. “This became a bone of contention between him and the Strasser brothers—Otto and Gregor Strasser—who were, at the time, heading the party’s left wing. When the

Strasser brothers published an article in one of the Nazi newspapers that spoke in favour of India’s independence, Hitler, in a meeting with Otto Strasser, insisted that the Nazi party refrain from associating themselves with the freedom struggle.”

While on the subject of Hitler and India, can Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose’s now-infamous meeting with the Fuhrer ever be forgotten? It cannot, but Purandare had further revelations to make. “Hitler only agreed to meet Bose after making him wait for more than a year. And even after that slight, Hitler was reluctant to issue a declaration in favour of India’s freedom, which he only signed a few days before he took his own life in 1945.” In the course of the discussion, Purandare also spoke at length about other eminent Indian

personalities like Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and the legendary hockey player, Dhyan Chand, under whose exceptional leadership the Indian hockey team defeated Germany and went on to win gold at the Berlin Olympics in 1936.

*An Author’s Afternoon* is presented by Shree Cement Ltd, in association with Taj Bengal Kolkata, The Telegraph Online-My Kolkata

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“Just calling the session an ‘interesting’ and ‘engaging’ one is putting it really mildly. There’s history that is taught to you in schools, there’s history that you read about in books, but there is also this history which everyone doesn’t hear about... and this is the version of history which everyone should know, and it is books like this which do it. This entire session was a learning experience.”

— Esha Dutta, Ehsaas Woman of Kolkata



“The kind of research that Vaibhav Purandare has done to write each book is staggering. The conversation with Ratnottama Sengupta was fascinating as well as gripping. We look forward to hosting more such interesting sessions with the Foundation.”

— Farhan Khan, Taj Bengal



“I liked that international, modern aspect of history and the way Purandare spoke about Hitler, Gandhi and others. It was a really knowledgeable session.”

— Debasree Nazir

# मेरी हर किताब मनुष्यता, मानवता की एक पड़ताल है: अलका सरावगी



Ramanjit Kaur

Alka Saraogi

“रिफ्यूजियों के लिए समय पास्ट से प्रजेंट में नहीं आता, बल्कि प्रजेंट से पास्ट में जाता है। वह स्मृतियों का तोता है। पंजाब के रिफ्यूजियों को सरकार ने बहुत समायोजित किया है, लेकिन बंगाल के रिफ्यूजियों के लिए सरदार पटेल ने कहा था कि बंगाली लोग केवल रोना जानते हैं। वे यहां क्यों आते हैं जब वहां भी बंगाली हैं, यहां भी बंगाली हैं।” यह बात लेखिका अलका सरावगी ने दंडकारण्य के माना कैप का उल्लेख करते हुए कही। वह **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** की ओर से कोलकाता के द बंगाल क्लब में *वैली ऑफ वडर्स* के दौरान आयोजित ‘कलम विशेष’ में बतौर अतिथि वक्ता बोल रही थीं। आयोजकों की ओर से स्वागत-वक्तव्य शेफाली अग्रवाल ने दिया और कला, शब्द, साहित्य, संस्कृति और महिला सशक्तीकरण की दिशा में फाउंडेशन की गतिविधियों की जानकारी दी। साहित्य अकादमी पुरस्कार से सम्मानित अतिथि वक्ता सरावगी का परिचय देते हुए उन्होंने उनकी ‘कहानियों की तलाश में’, ‘कलिकथा वाया बायपास’, ‘दूसरी कहानी’, ‘शेष कादंबरी’, ‘कोई बात नहीं’, ‘जानकीदास तेजपाल मेंशन’ और ‘एक ब्रेक के बाद’ जैसी कृतियों की चर्चा की और आगे के संवाद के लिए अंतर्राष्ट्रीय पुरस्कार विजेता थिएटर और फिल्म अभिनेत्री, निर्देशक रमनजीत कौर को

आमंत्रित किया।

कौर ने सरावगी के नए उपन्यास ‘कुलभूषण का नाम दर्ज कीजिये’ पर केंद्रित संवाद की शुरुआत ‘पधारो म्हारे देश’ और ‘जोदी तोर डाक सुने कोई ना केउ ना आसे’ से की और कहा कि इन दोनों की खूशबू, बंगाली और मारवाड़ी समुदायों का संघर्ष, जीवन यात्रा, विभाजन, विस्थापन और कुलभूषण का किरदार दिल को छू लेता है। उपन्यास की शुरुआती पंक्तियां पढ़ कौर ने सरावगी से पूछा कि कुलभूषण खरबंदा के आत्मकथा नाटक के पोस्टर या वह कौन सा पल था, जब यह उपन्यास आपके दिमाग में आया? सरावगी ने कहा, “जैसा कि आपने पढ़ा कि इस उपन्यास का जो चरित्र है उसके पास शहर का व्यापारिक नक्शा है, इस से यह पता चलता है वह सड़क का आदमी है। वह जब आत्मकथा नाटक से रूबरू होता है तो उसके मन में अपनी आत्मकथा लिखने की ख्वाहिश आती है। कुलभूषण की अपनी जिंदगी विभाजन की रही है। वह 1964 में विभाजन के बाद कुश्तिया से इस पार आता है। जबकि उसके भाई 1946 में ग्रेट कलकत्ता कीलिंग के समय आ जाते हैं। वह यहां आता है तो जानता है कि उसका कोई देश तो नहीं है, अपना घर नहीं है, न ही उसकी कोई पहचान है। कुलभूषण यहां एक नया नाम लेकर जीता





Shefali Rawat Agarwal



Sanjeev Chopra



Anjum Katyal



Anindita Chatterjee

है। एक बंगाली औरत से शादी करता है। अपने भाई के घर में बस ड्राइवर का जॉब, तरह-तरह के जॉब करता है। आमतौर पर एक मारवाड़ी परिवार का कोई बंदा इस तरह का जॉब करे, यह कोई सोच नहीं सकता है। वह जो दो पैरलल लाइफ जीता है, गोपाल चंद्र दास और कुलभूषण जैन की, तो वह सड़क पर नाटक का पोस्टर देखकर सोचता है कि वह भी अपनी आत्मकथा कहीं रजिस्टर करे। संयोग से जो आदमी देख रहा है उससे वह पूछता है कि *बीसवीं सदी का अंतिम महाकाव्य* का क्या अर्थ है। जिससे वह पूछता है वह पत्रकार है, जो एक किताब लिख रहा है बांग्लादेश के पचास साल पर, तो उसे यह प्लेटफार्म मिल जाता है कि वह अपना नाम दर्ज करा सकता है।”

कौर ने कुलभूषण और उसके भाई के बीच हुए संवाद को पढ़ते हुए विस्थापन से जुड़ी बाध्यताओं के बारे में पूछा, तो सरावगी ने कहा कि मैं हिंदी स्कूल में पढ़ रही थी तो बंगाली-मारवाड़ी का भेद नहीं पता था, पर कक्षा नौ में एक टीचर के ‘तुम मारवाड़ी लोग’ के कमेंट, फिर लोरेटो के कॉस्मोपोलिटन माहौल में ‘तुम हिंदी वाले’ से मुझे लगा कि कास्ट सिस्टम कई रूपों में है। ‘कलि कथा, वाया बायपास’ पर काम के अनुभव का जिक्र करते हुए सरावगी ने कहा कि हमसे पहले की पीढ़ी ने बहुत कुछ झेला था। सनातनी और सुधारवादी आंदोलन भी चला था। कुलभूषण की शारीरिक बनावट मारवाड़ियों की तरह नहीं है। वह जिस जाति का है, वह उसे स्वीकारती नहीं और जिससे वह जुड़ता है, वह वो है नहीं।

कौर ने ‘कुलभूषण का नाम दर्ज कीजिये’ के कई अंश पढ़े और कहा

कि स्त्री का आंदोलन अभी भी जारी है। पुरुष यह नहीं समझ पा रहे हैं कि आज की स्ट्रॉंग औरतों के साथ कैसे जीयें, उन्हें प्रेम कैसे करें। उन्होंने सरावगी से ‘भूलने का बटन’ के उल्लेख के साथ पूछा कि आपने इस उपन्यास में इतने रंग, सीमाएं, कल्पना, व्यक्तित्व के ऐसे रंग कैसे भरे? सरावगी का उत्तर था, “यह उपन्यास बंटवारे पर है। यह बंटवारा कितने स्तरों पर काम करता है। हम अपने जीवन में कितने पार्टिशन बनाते जाते हैं, कितने लोगों को हम अपने से दूर करके कैटिगराइज करते जाते हैं। अगर साहित्य इसकी खोज करता है तो कहीं न कहीं वह इसे तोड़ने की भी कोशिश करता है।” अपने उपन्यास ‘कोई बात नहीं’ के विकलांग बच्चे का उल्लेख करते हुए कहा कि वह बच्चा कहता है कि उसके क्लासरूम में भी अलग-अलग बाड़े हैं। कुलभूषण बदसूरत है, उसे बचपन में ही अपने मामूली होने का अहसास हो जाता है। फिर कुशितिया की भी अपनी भूमिका है। टैगोर, लालन फकीर के जिक्र के साथ सरावगी ने कहा कि हम जब सोचते कि हमें सहारा मिलेगा अपनों का, पर हर बार यह उम्मीदों का बिखराव और टूटन के रूप में सामने आता है।

सरावगी ने कहा कि मेरी हर किताब में एक पड़ताल है कि क्या हम इन बातों से ऊपर उठकर एक मनुष्यता, मानवता के हो सकते हैं? मुझे लगता है कि साहित्य इसी को पाने, छू लेने और इस महत्वपूर्ण संदेश को पहुंचाने की कोशिश है। कुलभूषण के लिए हर स्तर पर अपमानजनक स्थितियां हैं। पर भूलने का बटन हर किसी के पास है, नहीं तो लोगों के लिए जीना मुश्किल है। उन्होंने सवाल-जवाब के सत्र में भी हिस्सा लिया। फाउंडेशन की ओर से अनिदिता चैटर्जी ने धन्यवाद और स्मृति चिन्ह दिया।



Sourav Burman



Kruti Shah



Manjri Shah



Feyago

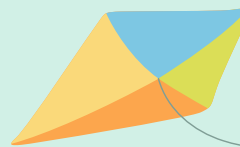
# A Day for the Little Heroes

While the world celebrates November 20 as International Children's Day, India observes Children's Day on November 14, the birthday of the nation's first Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Children are the future of the nation and, indeed, the world. Nehru held the same opinion; he always held these young citizens of the country in high esteem, and said that they should be carefully and lovingly nurtured, as they are the real strength of a country and the very foundation of society. He believed that children in India can bring about much-needed societal change as they, unlike adults "can play together without thinking of differences".

**Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, which has been at the forefront of education and empowering children under its **Muskaan** initiative, celebrated and honoured

Children's Day through a myriad activities. In order to brighten up the occasion for children across age groups, the Foundation organised three virtual events for preschool, middle school and high school students. All of the sessions were moderated by Sumitra Ray, Student Programmes Advisor of the Foundation.

Children from Nursery to Class II participated in an invigorating and energetic session of kinaesthetic learning. This form of pedagogy is designed around the belief that children learn best when their bodies are active. Thus, instead of just listening to a lesson being taught, kinaesthetic learning ensures that kids are actively engaged. This developmentally appropriate approach is a great way to improve





literacy among toddlers and preschoolers. Manjri Shah and Kruti Shah from The Academy of Creative Movement and Dance engaged their young virtual audience in a journey of multi-sensory learning. The objective of the programme was fitness, motor skill development, self-confidence and self-expression through dance, while also equipping students with a strong foundation for professional dancing, with the help of easy steps.

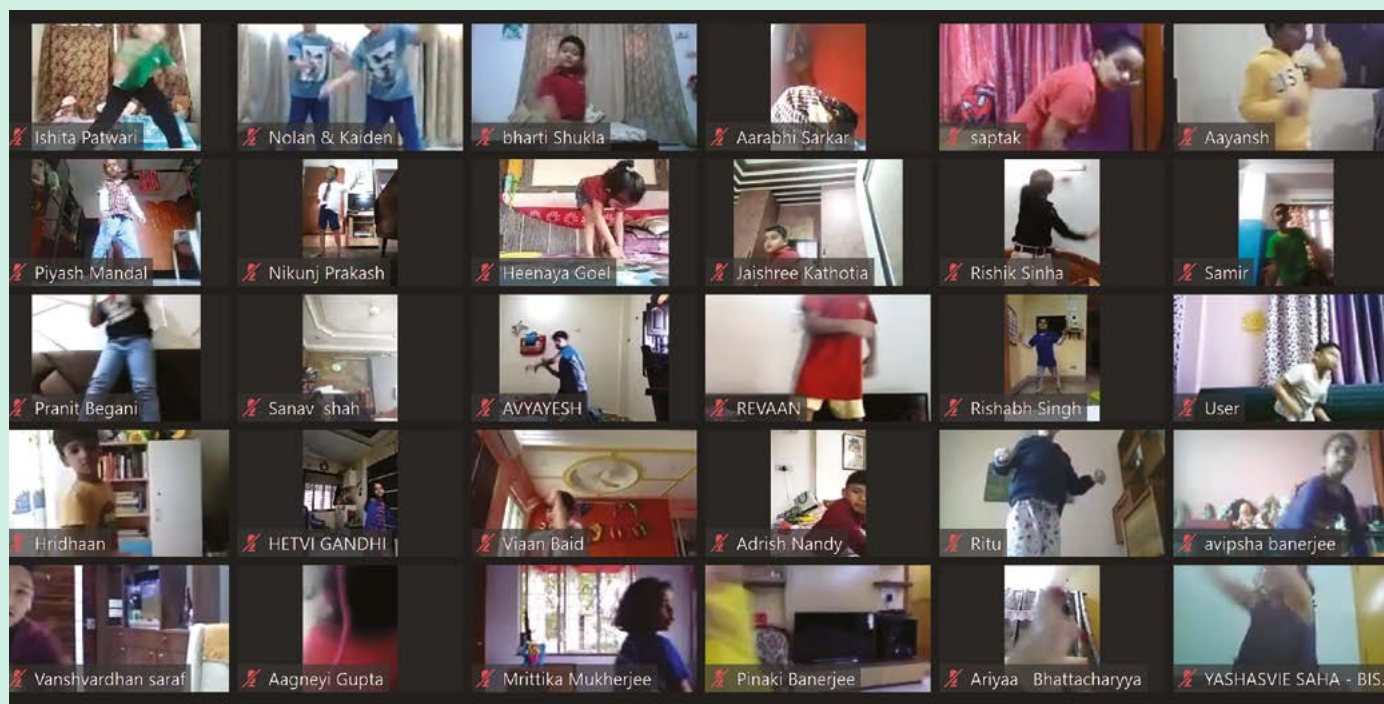
The two teachers engaged the children with their enthusiasm and innovative learning techniques. The music to which the dance movements were matched was a hit with the children, who smartly followed the instructions and grooved with the tunes. The best part of the event was the parents joining their children and matching their steps! It went to show that child-like qualities are present in everyone.

The next virtual event organised under **Muskaan** was for the children of classes III to VI. Prominent illusionist, mentalist and magician Sourav Burman enthralled his virtual audience with mesmerising magical tricks. With a career spanning three decades, it was easy to see how he was able to captivate his audience irrespective of their age. He interacted with the children and made them a part of his act, ensuring that they felt like they, too, were instrumental in making the magic happen. From making things disappear to guessing impossible information from the minds of his audience, he left the students spellbound. It was a fitting Children's Day event, as youngsters need magic in their lives!

Students from senior school also had a treat in store for them; **Muskaan** organised a virtual session with the rapper Feyago. The musician was able to connect with his audience instantaneously, owing to his charm, swagger, groovy music and candid interaction. Feyago is one of the pioneers of Indian hip-hop, having performed at many major festivals across the subcontinent, including NH7 Weekender and the Ziro Festival. He has also won the title of Best Hip Hop Act at the Vh1 Sound Nation Awards in 2014. He is the creator of the *Anthem For The Northeast*, *Logical Guy* and other songs, garnering over eight million views on YouTube. His story has even inspired some aspects of the movie *Gully Boy*. No wonder then that the young audience was hooked to the session!

"My real name is Vikramjit Sen, and I grew up in Darjeeling," revealed Feyago to the students. "My career took a 180-degree turn when I went to study marketing in England. I was highly influenced by music production, and soon started turning my poems into music. Even though I studied in a boarding school in Darjeeling, I never lost touch with Kolkata, as my parents still live there. As a Bengali, I use folk music, especially *baul* music, in my rap so that I can keep in touch with my roots." Feyago performed for the students and asked them to join him in the chorus. They gave Feyago random words to create songs out of, and the musician happily obliged. The thoroughly enjoyable session came to an end with Feyago interacting with the students about anime, creating music with the help of apps and a whole host of other subjects.

@muskaan\_pkf







# An Open Letter To Radhika

My dearest firstborn is no longer a child. He is all grown up now and ready to bring his bride home.

When he was a baby, my overwhelming desire for a daughter led me to dress little Dhruv in frills and frocks—a fact for which he still hasn't forgiven me.

I remember him coming home crying one day because another child in school had called him Halwasiya Market.

Another time he happened to gain access to my jewellery drawer. Six-year-old Dhruv gazed with wide-eyed wonder at it all and lisped, “*Tabhi Papa ko itna kaam karna padta hai*”. Ever since then his admiration (or was it pity?) for his dad multiplied manifold. The lisp, by the way, is still very much there, and it is rather cute.

In all his innocence, he considered the Taj Man Singh to be richer than Taj Lucknow only because they made larger chocolate bullseyes. I think his love affair with chocolates must have begun about then.

He was a rather smart kid. He coined his own words. Peanuts were ‘ajuja’, lollypop was ‘popli’ and his bum was ‘pom pom’. He drove his *mausi* batty when he insisted he wanted ‘popli’ and for the life of her she couldn’t understand what he meant.

Dhruv grew up in a matriarchal household with three generations of women and two hysterical maids whose only preoccupation was to feed him, and his to get away from the tyranny of force feeding.

All this ended abruptly when the time came to leave for boarding school. The poor kid probably thought that he had been abandoned for life.

When he first started writing letters home from Welham School he would laboriously begin—“Dear Mummy, Papa, Daadi and Karn (Raivant was called Karn then)”. After a couple of weeks he had a brainwave and condensed it to “Dear MPD and K”. His penchant for abbreviations was further seen when, whenever angry, he would yell out “KK”. To all you ignoramuses, that is short for “Kutta Kamina”. You see, using the full form was frowned upon, hence this clever idea.

Radhika is my daughter. I can’t call it any other relationship. She fulfills my single most desire and my happiness knows no bounds. My impatience to welcome her into the fold is extreme but I still think it only fair to warn her about her future husband’s fascinating character traits.



Dhruv has a total of three words in his vocabulary—fine, whatever, okay. It is amazing how he can conduct an entire conversation using them.

He has an aversion to closets and drawers. All his worldly possessions lie displayed on the floor of his room, which I have exasperatedly dubbed ‘The Pig Sty’.

His education has been woefully deficient in some quarters. He never learned the difference between ‘kharbuja’ and ‘tarbooj’, not to mention ‘dedh’ and ‘adhai’. Sometimes he even gets his AM-PM wrong.

Also his mental growth seems to have stopped along the way. He fights with Raivant over space on the Lazy Boy, and God forbid if he is ever asked to share his chocolates! The look in his eyes turns positively evil.

The time when he got himself a box of Tangri Kebabs and was quietly eating them in his room... AND Raivant saw them!!! That was the beginning of the crisis. They had to be pried apart and isolated to prevent any major bodily damage.

Reading a train ticket is an extremely challenging job as was proven when he was put on a train to Siliguri and he slept his way to Guwahati, almost giving Nanima and Nanu a cardiac arrest in the process.

During his punk phase, he once, along with his own, also got Raivant’s head shaved clean. The poor kid was hysterical for days crying, ‘Dhruv *bhaiya baal tod diya*’. After I threatened him with all kinds of dire consequences he agreed to grow his hair back and it grew...and grew... and grew till he could tie it into a ponytail. When good sense finally prevailed and he cut his hair the right length, the family heaved a collective sigh of relief. I was amazed at how good-looking my son actually was.

To his credit he is a supremely satisfied soul. His last pair of jeans are on life support but that in no way interferes with his happiness.

Raivant, being the more privileged of the two, is the proud owner of a pair of formal shoes, which they both wore in shifts for Akshay’s wedding.

The baby of the family, Raivant, is superglued to Dhruv’s neck most of the time. I am afraid they come as a package deal, though I am pretty sure he’ll very soon transfer his allegiance from his ‘Dubaiya’ to his adoring, beautiful Bhabi.

The part brat, part aristocrat, is as lovable as he is exasperating.

He very patiently took me to Camden Town for an entire day. Though I think his Marwari DNA and inborn entrepreneurial skills were at play here. This entire exercise was to stop me from shopping at Harrods.

He realises I use Facebook to spy on him but he pretends not to know.

He lets me watch reruns of *Balika Badhu* on his laptop, which in his own words is way above and beyond the call of filial duty.

He heroically watched *The Dark Knight* returns with his dad... in Hindi... and didn’t complain even once.

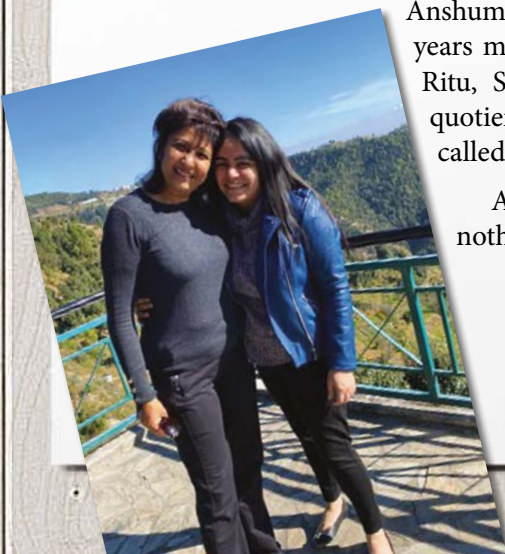
Dhruv was born dazed and confused...he continues to be so. A wonderful space to be in, no doubt.

He is ably supported in every which way by his battalion of cousins. The brat pack consisting of Gaurang, Anshuman, Ayush, Ananya, Sameer, Shrija, Neha, Akshay and Raivant, has over the years mushroomed into a rumbling youth-quake, gathering additions along the way. Ritu, Shivika, Priyanki, Ragini and Aditi have contributed immensely to the glamour quotient of the family. Saurabh and Soubhagya are vigorous in their protest at being called sons-in-law, and I completely endorse the fact that they are sons...and more.

And now with a daughter by my side, my world is finally complete. There is nothing more I could ask for.

Madhuri (Mom)

Madhuri Halwasiya is an **Ehsaas** Woman of Lucknow





# Spreading Cheer and Joy on Children's Day



To celebrate Children's Day, **Muskaan**, in association with Prayas, organised a fun gathering for children with special needs and underprivileged students from different areas. The event had the children participating in some fun activities and was followed by lunch. Each child also received gifts at the end of the day's celebrations.



Anindita Chatterjee, executive trustee of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, and Sumitra Ray, student programmes advisor of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, visited underprivileged children from three NGOs in Kolkata—Awaz, Calcutta School Project and Maya Foundation—to distribute Diwali gift hampers, under the Foundation's **Muskaan** initiative.





## Expressing Through Art and Words of Motivation

**Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, under the aegis of their **Muskaan** initiative, organised an art competition for students of classes VI to VII where they were asked to paint on the theme of Freedom of Expression. Schools were asked to send in three of their best selections from which the winners were chosen.

Pallavi Banerji from Modern High School for Girls (age 12) received the first prize, Shibam Pal of Techno India Group Public School (age 10) won the second prize and Maayra Shah of Cathedral and John Connon School (age 13) won the third prize. Seven other students won the runners-up prizes.

**1st WINNER**

Pallavi Banerji

**2nd WINNER**

Shibam Pal

**3rd WINNER**

Maayra Shah



Deepak Ramola

Mansi Kamdar Shah



Sumitra Ray

**Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, under its **Muskaan** initiative, invited poet and lyricist Deepak Ramola to speak to students of classes VIII to XII in an interactive session that was all about providing the right motivation. Ramola is a two-time TED Talk speaker and UN Action Plan Executor. He has previously served as the Kindness Ambassador for UNESCO MGIEP. Deepak's methodology of designing wisdom has been recognised as the world's top 100 innovations in education by the Finland-based organisation HUNDRED.

*Muskaan is a project of Education For All, presented by Shree Cement Ltd*

# Rights For All



“To deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity.”

Nelson Mandela

Former South African President and revolutionary Nelson Mandela devoted his life to fighting against apartheid, South Africa’s system of institutionalised racial segregation. Although his fight led him to be imprisoned for 27 long years, Mandela never gave up hope for a better future. His negotiations with the government even before his release in 1990 not only helped prevent a civil war but also brought peace and equality to a racially segregated nation. Today, he is remembered across the world as a champion of human rights who was prepared to sacrifice his life to ensure equality for all.

The United Nations (UN) defines human rights as “rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. Human rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more. Everyone is entitled to these rights, without discrimination”. Human rights form the core of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals.

On December 10, 1948, the UN General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

(UDHR). The UDHR is “a milestone document, which proclaims the inalienable rights that everyone is entitled to as a human being”. Ever since then, December 10 is observed as Human Rights Day every year to generate awareness on human rights and highlight their significance in building a better world through collective humanity. The theme of Human Rights Day 2021 is “Equality—reducing inequalities and advancing human rights”. It emphasises Article 1 of the UDHR, “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”. The approach outlined by the UN in the document underscores the need to identify and address discrimination and focus on finding ways to combat such bias that is still rampant in society.

From xenophobia and religious intolerance to discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, disability, gender and religion, bigotry can take many forms. Perfectly capable and competent individuals are denied opportunities, attacked and exploited because they belong to an identifiable out-group. In August 2017, more than 7,00,000 Rohingya Muslims had to flee Myanmar after a vicious attack by Myanmar’s army.

A recent study by the Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law showed LGBT people were “nearly four times more likely than non-LGBT people to experience violent victimisation, including rape, sexual assault, and





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aggravated or simple assault". Women in middle-eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia and Iran have frequently been prosecuted on the grounds of dress code. While as many as one in 10 people live with a disability, such individuals often spend their lives as objects of pity, ostracised from society and denied employment.

These instances are only a few of many. To effectively respond to violations of human rights across the globe, an intergovernmental body, known as the Human Rights Council (HRC), was established on March 15, 2006. The HRC is made up of 47 UN Member State representatives, who are responsible for strengthening and safeguarding the human rights of people over the world. Once every four years, the HRC reviews the human rights records of all UN Member States, which is referred to as the Universal Periodic Review. Each Member State presents the measures they've adopted and the challenges that may be encountered to uphold and improve human rights in their country and fulfil their international obligations. The Universal Periodic Review is crafted in a manner that ensures universality and equality of treatment for every country.

Former UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson had said, "There can be no peace without development, no development without peace, and no lasting peace or sustainable development without respect for human rights and the rule of law." The UN believes equality, inclusion and non-discrimination or, in other words, "a human rights-based approach to development" is the only way forward to reduce inequalities in society. As we build back a "better, fairer and greener" world after a global pandemic, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** commits itself to championing human rights every step of the way and embracing humanity today and in the future.

## IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Guests	Events
Richa S. Mukherjee	The Write Circle Noida
Nandita Das	Ek Mulakat Kolkata
Mohan Rao Bhagwat	Ehsaas Closed Door Session
Nitin Gadkari	Ehsaas Meet & Greet
Tishani Doshi	The Write Circle Jaipur
Sidhartha Mallya	The Write Circle Special
Shashi Tharoor	Kitaab Hyderabad & Kolkata
Devilal Mahiya	Aakhar Pothi   Kitaab Rajasthan
Sugata Srinivasaraju	Kitaab Festival Delhi & Kitaab Bengaluru
Raghu Rai	Kitaab Festival Delhi
Ejaz Maqbool	Kitaab Festival Delhi
Sudipti	Kitaab Festival Delhi
Waseem Nader	Kitaab Festival Delhi
Anshul Chaturvedi	Kitaab Festival Delhi & An Author's Afternoon Kolkata
Jyotish Joshi	Kitaab Festival Delhi
Khalid Jawed	Kitaab Festival Delhi
Kshama Kaul	Kitaab Festival Delhi
Daman Singh	Kitaab Festival Delhi
Arjun Singh Kadian	Kitaab Festival Delhi
Deoshankar Naveen	Aakhar Bihar
Sujata Prasad	The Write Circle Ahmedabad
Pallavi Ghoshi & Priya Sahgal	Tête-à-tea
Manjri Shah	Muskaan Kinaesthetic Learning
Christmas Special	Muskaan
Regional Festival	Aakhar
Apeejay Bangla Sahitya Utsob	Aakhar Special



Anshul Chaturvedi



Arjun Singh Kadian



Daman Singh



Deoshankar Naveen



Devilal Mahiya



Ejaz Maqbool



Jyotish Joshi



Khalid Jawed



Kshama Kaul



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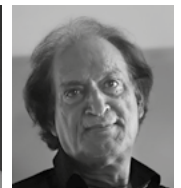
Nitin Gadkari



Pallavi Ghosh



Priya Sahgal



Raghu Rai



Richa S. Mukherjee



Shashi Tharoor



Sidhartha Mallya



Sudipti



Sugata  
Srinivasaraju



Sujata Prasad



Tishani Doshi



Waseem Nader

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

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