



Prabha प्रभा

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The Prabha Khaitan Foundation Chronicle

अपनी भाषा अपने लोग

"Books give a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and life to everything"
— Plato

In this edition of *Prabha* we bring you glimpses from a month-long literary celebration, with book launches and conversations across the country

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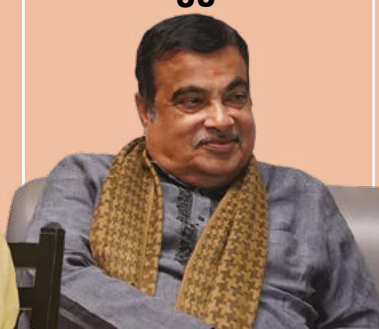
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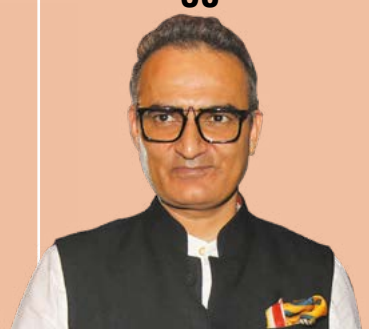
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Prabha
खैतान



MANISHA JAIN
Communications & Branding Chief,
Prabha Khaitan Foundation

On behalf of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, I take this opportunity to wish you a happy and healthy New Year. Winter is the season of gatherings and celebrations but the festivities were tempered by the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in India. Before the third wave hit, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** hosted multiple book launches throughout the country along with a one-of-its-kind **Kitaab** Festival in the capital city. The festival was hosted at India International Centre, in the heart of the greenest part of Delhi, and **Ehsaas** Women from all over joined hands to make the festival a roaring success. We released books in three different languages—English, Hindi and Urdu.

The year 2021 marked the birth centenary of auteur Satyajit Ray. On this occasion, the Foundation was fortunate to be associated with the publication of Raghu Rai's visual tribute to Ray, which is featured in this issue. You can also read an article penned by our Managing Trustee, Sundeep Bhutoria, on the legacy of the film director.

The last month has indeed been eventful for our **Ehsaas** Women. They had a memorable trip to Nagpur, where they interacted with the Sarsanghchalak of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Mohan Bhagwat, followed by an informal evening at the residence of Union Minister Nitin Gadkari.

This issue of *Prabha* also features sessions with Nandita Das, Sidhartha Mallya and more. You can read about how our **Muskaan** initiative attempted to make Christmas 2021 a memorable one for children across India.

Do write to us with your feedback and suggestions at newsletter@pkfoundation.org and follow us on social media to stay abreast of all our initiatives.

Once again, wishing our readers a safe, healthy and joyous year ahead!

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, under its **Aakhar** initiative, hosted a Rajasthani Yuva Lekhak Mahotsav in Jawahar Kala Kendra, Jaipur. You can read more about this in our next issue.

Happy Birthday

Prabha WISHES **EHSAA**S WOMEN BORN IN JANUARY

1st January



Dimple Trivedi

1st January



Madhuri
Halwasiya

1st January



Smriti Aggarwal

3rd January



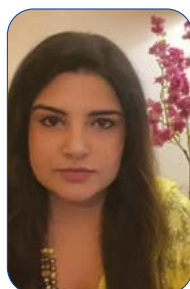
Jyoti Kapoor

8th January



Srutimala Duara

14th January



Rishma Gill

23rd January



Shruti Mittal

24th January



Swati Agarwal

25th January



Shinjini Kulkarni

A Celebration of Books

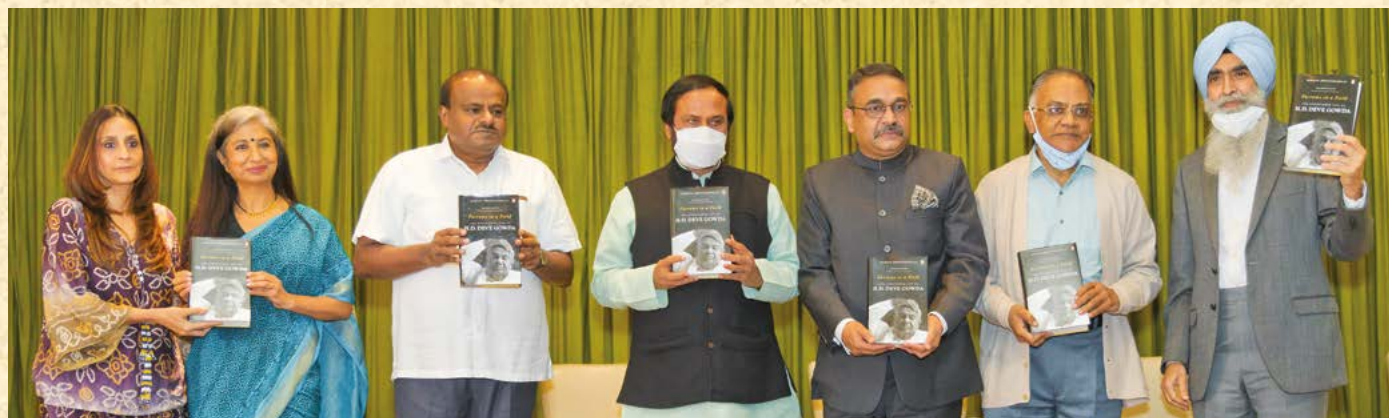


Prabha Khaitan Foundation's inaugural week-long **Kitaab** Festival created a wonderfully cohesive literary experience for a niche audience and the media. From December 13 to 17, 11 works of literature in English, Hindi and Urdu were launched and celebrated at the India International Centre in New Delhi.

Diverse themes ran through each day of the festival. Day one began on a unique note with the launch of Sugata Srinivasaraju's biography of the former Indian Prime Minister, H.D. Deve Gowda; Day two witnessed discussions on women, poetry, love, laughter and photography in the midst of the launch of three books by authors Sudipti, Waseem Nader and Raghu Rai, and a compilation edited by Ejaz Maqbool.

Day three brought with it thought-provoking conversations about politics, nationalism, genocide in Kashmir and religion, as books by Kshama Kaul, Anshul Chaturvedi and Khalid Javed were launched. Day four tackled mental illness and its taboos through a discussion with Daman Singh about her book on India's asylums and battle for mental healthcare. The final day witnessed engaging discussions around Indian history with the launch of Arjun Singh Kadian's book. Along with the incredibly enjoyable and enlightening week in the national capital, the celebration of books continued with book launches through the month in Kolkata, Bengaluru and Hyderabad.





Babita Kathotia, Surekha Prahlad, H.D. Kumaraswamy, B.L. Shankar, Sugata Srinivasaraju, S.S. Meenakshisundaram and Chiranjiv Singh



'Not Dark Horse, Deve Gowda Was a Reasoned Choice As PM'



Sugata Srinivasaraju is an ambivalent atheist in whose glossary the word 'blessed' hesitates to enter into routine parlance. But in the weeks following the publication of *Furrows in a Field*, his biography of former Prime Minister of India H.D. Deve Gowda, he had no choice but to resort to the word 'blessed' and reason with himself that the word had a greater halo of humanity than the omnipotence of divinity that the subject of his biography, Deve Gowda, had completely surrendered himself to. The author shared many more such insights while talking about the book and Deve Gowda in a session of **Kitaab Bengaluru**, organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**.

Srinivasaraju is a bilingual journalist, author and columnist who has authored a biography of former Prime Minister Deve Gowda titled *Furrows in a Field: The Unexplored Life of H.D. Deve Gowda*. He has also conducted multiple high-profile interviews and researched several public documents and letters. M.N. Venkatachaliah, former Chief Justice of India, launched *Furrows in a Field* in the presence of Deve Gowda. Chiranjiv Singh, former Ambassador of India to UNESCO, S.S. Meenakshi Sundaram, former Secretary to the Government of India, and B.L. Shankar, former Chairman of the Karnataka Legislative Council, were also present on the occasion.

Furrows in a Field is the first biography of Deve Gowda in 20 years. After reading the book, Deve Gowda had communicated to Srinivasaraju that he had been fair to the politician, his work and his times. "I see in [Deve Gowda's] response a graceful acceptance of the fact that no human, and certainly no prime minister, can think they're perfect and divinely ordained. As I've said in the introduction of the book, he was most democratic while I wrote



H.D. Deve Gowda

the book, never interfered in its process and confined himself to being an archivist of his life. I consider my interactions with him a blessing," said Srinivasaraju.

Srinivasaraju believes Deve Gowda is one such prime minister who made it to the highest chair in the country without any patronage or pedigree.

The author said, "[Deve Gowda] wasn't a socialist like many of his other colleagues... He was a very pragmatic person who was so concerned about the poor that it put to shame a lot of his socialist friends and communists. This was something that people like Surjeet and Jyoti Basu had observed over the decades about Deve Gowda. Therefore, they felt extremely confident to make him their nominee as prime minister. So this thing about Deve Gowda becoming a prime minister suddenly, him being a dark horse, all of that is incorrect, because the decision of the Left to sponsor him as their nominee was a very reasoned decision."

Talking about Deve Gowda's expertise in irrigation and river water sharing, Srinivasaraju said he'd been looking at World Bank documents very closely on how Deve Gowda had rehabilitated people in the Krishna basin. The author added, "Even to this day, the World Bank thinks that was one of the finest packages ever given. Ever since then, whenever they went to Southeast Asia or South Asian countries and explained this package, people started saying, 'We want the Gowda package'. He crafted this himself... I've been a journalist for 25 years and travelled with many prime ministers and seen many chief ministers, but this was something unusual."

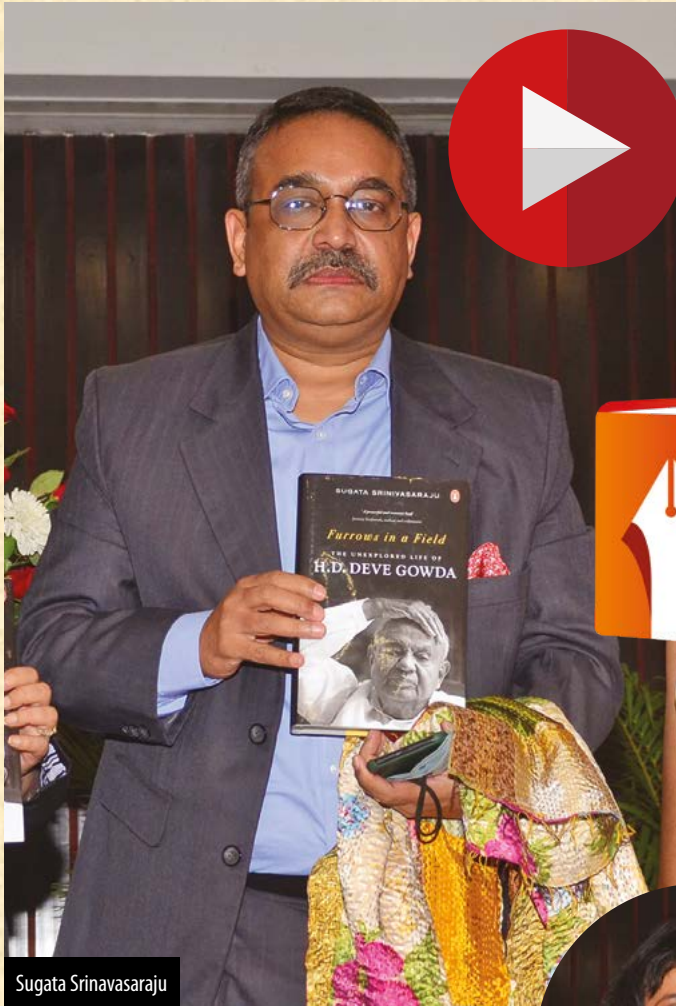


Karthik Venkatesh



Anil Kathotia

Kitaab Bengaluru, organised with the support of Ehsaas Women, is presented by Shree Cement Ltd, in association with Penguin Random House and Taj West End



Sugata Srinivasaraju

The Person, the Political Figure & the Political Fighter



H.D. Deve Gowda



Milee Aishwarya

Sugata Srinivasaraju's work in journalism speaks for itself. Known as one of India's foremost bilingual journalists, he began his career in the mid-1990s with *The Deccan Herald*, and has since gone from strength to strength. A member of the Editors Guild of India and a former Chevening scholar, Srinivasaraju is also an author, having penned books like *Keeping Faith with the Mother Tongue: The Anxieties of a Local Culture* and *Pickles from Home: The Worlds of a Bilingual*. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation's Kitaab Festival** began with the launch of the author's latest book, *Furrows in a Field: The Unexplored Life of H.D. Deve Gowda*, a comprehensive biography that chronicles the veteran politician's journey towards becoming one of the nation's most improbable prime ministers. The former PM was present at the event to inaugurate the book. Joining the event over video link was the distinguished jurist and Padma Bhushan awardee, Fali Sam Nariman. Also part of the event were stalwarts of the Indian political firmament like P. Chidambaram, Jairam Ramesh, Farooq Abdullah, H.D. Kumaraswamy and Sitaram Yechury.

Nariman opened the session by observing that the book had been launched as ceremoniously as a ship is

launched to go out to sea. "I'm delighted that Deve Gowda is present with everyone this evening," said the Supreme Court advocate. "It is often said that some are born great, some achieve greatness and only a few have greatness thrust upon them. From Srinivasaraju's very readable book, it is clear that Deve Gowda had greatness thrust upon him. During his 10 months as Prime Minister, he proved to his constituents and the public that even though his interlude in national politics was brief in time, it was noteworthy in performance."

"This 500-page-book will be of great interest to those who follow the ups and downs of politics," observed Nariman. "As the author says, the political life of Deve Gowda has been a mixed bag of victories and defeats, of adulations and humiliations, but his image as a politician, as a statesman and as a human being has come out unscathed and untarnished."

Corroborating Nariman's observations, Abdullah took the podium next. "Deve Gowda was a prime minister who, during the most difficult times, visited my state four times," said the former Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, reminiscing about the 1996 Assembly elections.



Ehsaas Women with Deve Gowda

"At that time the situation in Kashmir was so bad that it was difficult for anyone to walk around. But he came. He met all of us and said that he wanted a new beginning and new ways to move forward. And we started on a mission that was dear to him: to bring people closer, not push them against a wall. It was a difficult process: the ordinary people of my state were scared for their lives. But when the poll results started coming in, I could not believe it when my daughter started telling me how many seats we were leading in. Whoever voted, voted for peace and prosperity, and for remaining with India."

Abdullah recalled how Deve Gowda visited Kashmir to inaugurate the Uri hydel project despite the SPG's (Special Protection Group) objections. "When he spoke to me, he said he would come even if his life was at risk, because Kashmir is a part of India. After the inauguration, we went on to address the people of Uri just near the border. The crowd was elated that the Prime Minister of India had arrived even in such difficult times. This is what India needs: a prime minister who can hold everybody together,

whether they're Muslim, Hindu or Sikh. India will never be strong unless the people of India are strong; that is the message that Deve Gowda, who rose from nothing, gave us."

After Abdullah, the audience got to hear from the author himself. "When I started working on the book in 2019, people scoffed at me. They asked whether Deve Gowda deserved a Penguin biography. Today, the same people say that the book is a rehabilitation of his legacy. During my research for the book, I found the answer to why Deve Gowda was not spoken about nearly as much as he should have: he came from nothing, and nobody before him with a similar background had achieved so much in politics."

Yechury, who spoke next, echoed some of these sentiments. "Srinivasaraju has brought back to life events that happened 25 years ago. This book is not just about rehabilitating Deve Gowda's legacy; it's also about rehabilitating India, where we all have to come together."

"It is very difficult to write political biographies; but writing one on a person who is still with us is even more difficult," observed Ramesh. "Deve Gowda was a chief minister for less than two years and prime minister for less than one, but his engagement with democratic politics has been over 60 years. Srinivasaraju should be congratulated for focusing not just on Deve Gowda's brief tenures in office, but also on the person, the political figure and the political fighter."

"Deve Gowda is no ordinary politician," said Srinivasaraju in the final moments of the session, while in conversation with Praneet Bubber, Ehsaas Woman of Amritsar and Milee Ashwarya of Ebury. "Ordinary politicians just fight elections; Deve Gowda had big ideas."



Sitaram Yechury



P. Chidambaram



Farooq Abdullah



Gen. Dhillon



Raghu Rai

The Story of a Titan through the Lens of Another

Raghu Rai is often called the father of Indian photography. His contribution to and his shaping of the landscape of Indian photography and photojournalism is immense. Appointed to Magnum Photos in the late 1970s by none other than Henri Cartier-Bresson, Rai's images immortalise the moment and perfectly encapsulate the essence of the subject he is photographing. In the course of his illustrious career spanning more than 50 years, he's won several national and international awards, including the Padma Shri in 1972 for his work on the Bangladesh War, and he has photographed eminent personalities across the board, such as the Dalai Lama, Mother Teresa, Vikram Seth, Bismillah Khan, Hariprasad Chaurasia, Amitabh Bachchan, and, of course, the celebrated writer-filmmaker Satyajit Ray. . **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, on the second day of its **Kitaab** festival, organised a session with Rai to talk about his new book of photographs, *Satyajit Ray*. In conversation with him was author, art curator and **Ehsaas** Woman of Delhi, Ina Puri. The session was introduced by fellow **Ehsaas** Woman of Delhi, Huma Khalil.

Puri started the session by commenting on the remarkable coincidence of 2021 being the centenary year of Ray's birth as well as Rai's 50th year in the profession.

"I was visiting Raghu's studio one day, and I found him looking at some pictures of Ray from the time of *Ghare Baire*. I asked Raghu if he knew that the ongoing year marks 100 years since Ray was born. Raghu was stunned at the coincidence; he said that was really amazing. I said this needs to be documented and we should look at doing a book together. That's how the Foundation came into the picture, Sundeep Bhutoria agreed to do this book, and so here we are!"



Ina Puri

Puri then observed that Ray has been on Rai's radar for a while, having featured in his previous books as well. This time, however, he has dedicated an entire book to the filmmaker.

"I've done it very lovingly," responded Rai. "There have been some magnificent people in our lives, like Mother Teresa, Pandit Ravi Shankar, Satyajit Ray, and so many others. I've maintained that no matter who takes their pictures, they'll always be good, because they have so much energy and expression flowing all the time."

"In Bengal, '*dadu*' means grandfather," Puri observed. "So it's interesting that you've called the book *Dadu*." In Rai's case, however, it turns out that the usage of the term, *dadu*, was to showcase the larger-than-life nature of Ray's personhood. "We used to call him '*Manikda*' affectionately. But the power, the energy, the eyes this



Top row (L-R) - Archana Dalmia, Raghu Rai, Ina Puri and Aradhana Pradhan;
Bottom row (L-R) - Anindita Chatterjee, Anantimala Potdar, Nidhi Garg, Neelima Dalmia Adhar and Huma Khalil Mirza

man had... you know, we call a man 'dada' when he's considered a 'big guy'. But here was a man who was even bigger. So when I was editing this book, I called him 'dadu'. In photography, I respond to the spirit and the energies that are being transmitted to me. That's how I take photographs. But when I met Ray for the first time to photograph him, I was so conscious and uneasy before I could settle down!"

In all his familiarity with the world of films, including Bengali cinema, out of all the creative minds, Rai chose to focus on Ray. Why was that? "When I was with *India Today* as a picture editor for 10 years, on a lean day, I had proposed a meaningful cover story on Ray. I was told that everyone already knows about him, so there was nothing new to reveal. But I didn't think like that. Revelations do not happen merely by interviewing and clicking a few pictures. The mystery of every individual comes across only once in a while when you make yourself available mentally and spiritually to understand, feel and receive the other person."

"When I started taking pictures by chance way back in 1965, my elder brother and I came across Edward Streichen's *Family Of Man*, which is a bible of documentary creative photography, and the works of almost all the important photographers of the world were there. When I went through the pages, I spotted an Indian subject. I read the name. It said 'Satyajit Ray'. I wondered who this man was—the only Indian photographer whose work featured in *Family Of Man*. Through research, we



Gurmeet Sangha Rai

Jatin Das

Nassar Abdullah

found out he was a filmmaker. And I thought, if he can take such a beautiful photograph—a mother combing her son's hair—then he must be quite a man. That's how I got interested in Ray and his work."

Rai recalled how Cartier-Bresson had said that people who had not watched Ray's *Jalsaghar* had not seen cinema that's visual poetry. "And you haven't forgotten him either," observed Puri. "Even now, I'm still in my studio looking at the images of Ray I had clicked so many years ago. This is because he brings a smile to my face, as well as a charge and a challenge to me to look at me and my work all over again." Does Rai have a dream subject he'd still like to create a book of photographs on? "Dreams only come into reality when our intuitive selves begin to receive what the universe has to offer," replied Rai. "To me, those are my dreams taking physical shape."

The engrossing discussion ended with a lively Q&A session between the photographer and his audience, and spanned everything from politics and television to photography and cinema.



Ejaz Maqbool

Arz Kiya Hai

Complete with caricatures, sketches, cartoons, couplets and anecdotes from legal luminaries, Ejaz Maqbool's book *Law, Humour and Urdu Poetry* has become an Amazon bestseller, gaining immense popularity in a very short span of time. What prompted Maqbool to write the book? How long did it take for him to compile? The author answered all these questions and more during the launch of *Law, Humour and Urdu Poetry* in a session of the **Kitaab** festival, a week-long celebration of books and authors in Delhi, organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**.

Maqbool is an advocate by profession, practising in the Supreme Court of India for the last 36 years. After graduating with honours in history from Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), Maqbool went on to obtain his law degree from AMU as well. He was elected the vice-president of the AMU Students' Union and represented AMU in several debates in prominent universities. His name appearing in more than 271 reported Supreme Court judgements, Maqbool is also a member of the Delhi Bar Association, the Supreme Court Bar Association of India and the International Bar Association in London. He was in conversation with Hasan Zia, who has been associated with the government media for the last 35 years. Huma Khalil, **Ehsaas** Woman

of Delhi, welcomed the guests to the session, while Aradhana Pradhan, **Ehsaas** Woman of Noida, felicitated them.

Law, Humour and Urdu Poetry is unique in the way it presents *shers* that are mostly critical of the entire legal system and a satire on the process of judgement. It took Maqbool five years to compile the book. The pandemic helped speed up the process, giving him time to focus his efforts on finishing it. But what motivated him to bring out such a book in the first place? Maqbool said he had worked with many legal luminaries throughout his career. Even in the midst of heated arguments, most of them used to come up with humorous anecdotes. This made him want to compile all of these in one place. His book is an attempt to highlight the significant role of humour and Urdu poetry in defusing tension even in the most serious legal arguments.

Maqbool regards G. Ramaswamy, former Attorney General of India, as one of the wittiest persons in the history of the Supreme Court. "One day, Ramaswamy caught Soli J. Sorabjee in the court and he started singing a song, '*Soli ke peeche kya hai?*' Sorabjee was visibly flustered, wondering what Ramaswamy was up to. Ramaswamy replied, '*Soli ke peeche Sorabjee hai!*'"



Hasan Zia



(L-R) Anindita Chatterjee, Nidhi Garg, Karuna Goenka, Anantmala Potdar, Ejaz Maqbool, Archana Dalmia, Huzefa Ahmadi, Hasan Zia, Neelima Dalmia Adhar, Aradhana Pradhan and Huma Khalil Mirza

laughed Maqbool.

Along with Ramaswamy, Maqbool identified a few of the other witty advocates in judicial history. One of them was Charles Alston, who used to practise in Allahabad in pre-Independence India. "Alston was a very short-statured person. There was another person, Walter Colvin, in the same court, who was a very tall man. One day, Walter caught Alston and told him, 'I'm thinking of putting you in my pocket.' Alston replied, 'Don't make that mistake. If you do that, you'll have more law in your pocket than in your head,'" said Maqbool.

Ram Jethmalani was another such person who always had something witty to say. Maqbool said, "When the Chief Justice of India had asked Jethmalani when he would retire, Jethmalani had said, 'My lord, why are you asking me when will I die?'" Recalling another such hilarious incident, Maqbool added that there was once a case being argued before the Supreme Court where the lawyer had said his client was 70 years old and, therefore, couldn't have committed a rape. The judge had asked Jethmalani what he thought of such an argument. Jethmalani had quietly risen from his seat and said, 'My lord, I plead guilty.'"

While the first part of *Law, Humour and Urdu Poetry* comprises anecdotes from legal luminaries from pre-Independence to post-Independence India, the second part deals with weird cases. One such case was of a man from Uttar Pradesh called Lal Behari who had to fight for 22 years to prove himself alive. He had been declared

dead by his uncle who wanted to usurp his property. "[Lal Behari] kidnapped his cousin, he bribed a government officer, he contested elections, he applied for his wife's pension to enter government records, he marched inside the Assembly, shouting, 'Mujhe zinda karo!' He was finally declared alive on June 30, 1994. He now runs an organisation called Mritak Sangh, Association of Dead People, which has about 20,000 members, to help people who have been wrongly declared dead," said Maqbool.

Maqbool's book starts with a verse by famous Urdu poet Akbar Allahabadi, "*Paida hua wakīl toh shaitan ne kaha/ Lo aaj ham bhi sahib-e-aulad ho gaye*" (when a lawyer was born, Satan exclaimed, 'Today, I have also been blessed with a child'). It is a coincidence that Maqbool's book has been published in 2021, which marks Allahabadi's death centenary. "[Allahabadi] belonged to our fraternity—he was a judge himself. In one of his couplets, he writes, '*Mujhse insaaf talab kaisi biyabani hai/ Jis adalat ka main hakim hoon, who diwani hai.*' A civil court is known as *diwani* and *faujdari* is the criminal court. He used to preside over cases as a civil judge and had written this couplet then," said Maqbool.

Fuelled by his success, Maqbool intends to bring out a second edition of *Law, Humour and Urdu Poetry* soon. Many lawyers and judges were now contacting him to share their anecdotes he said. "Today, we have many, many anecdotes from our corona days, particularly from the hearings that happen over video conferences," Maqbool added.



सुदीप्ति की पुस्तक 'हिंदी की पहली आधुनिक कविता' का विमोचन

जब हम आधुनिक कविता की बात करते हैं और उसके निकषों पर किसी कविता को कसते हैं, तो केवल उसके शिल्प और भाषा को नहीं देखते, यह भी देखते हैं कि इसमें कहां पर स्वत्व की बात है, स्वाधीनता की बात है।" यह कहना था सुदीप्ति का, जो प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की ओर से आयोजित किताब फेस्टिवल में अपनी पुस्तक 'हिंदी की पहली आधुनिक कविता' के विमोचन और संवाद के दौरान मौजूद थीं। कार्यक्रम के आरंभ में आयोजकों की ओर से अहसास वूमेन की अनंतमाला पोद्दार ने अतिथियों का स्वागत किया।

बहुत दिनों तक, बहुत सारे लोग, जिसमें भारतेंदु अग्रणी हैं कि ब्रज भाषा ही ऐसी भाषा है, मीठी भाषा है, जिसमें कविता लिखी जा सकती है। जैसे हम आजकल मानते हैं कि उर्दू नफासत की, प्रेम की, इश्क की भाषा है, उसमें एक तहजीब है और हिंदी में एक रुखापन है

उन्होंने संस्थापक डॉ प्रभा खेतान के सामाजिक, साहित्यिक और स्त्री सशक्तीकरण के क्षेत्र में किए गए कामों की चर्चा के साथ ही इस सत्र की अतिथि लेखिका सुदीप्ति और संवादकर्ता अणुशक्ति सिंह का परिचय भी दिया।

अणुशक्ति ने पुस्तक की प्रशंसा की और पूछा कि आपने अपनी पुस्तक 'हिंदी की पहली आधुनिक कविता' में खड़ी बोली का भी जिक्र किया है, मेरा सामान्य सा सवाल है कि खड़ी बोली और इस समय की बोलचाल वाली हिंदी, यानी जिस हिंदी में बात करते हैं, उसमें क्या कोई फर्क है? सुदीप्ति का



(L-R) Anindita Chatterjee, Aradhana Pradhan, Anantimala Potdar, Nidhi Garg, Unnati Singh, Sudipti, Anu Shakti Singh, Archana Dalmia and Neelima Dalmia Adhar

उत्तर था, "जो आज की बोलचाल वाली हिंदी, जिसमें हम बरतते हैं, हम बात करते हैं, वह खड़ी बोली का ही आज का रूप है। अगर हम उन्नीसवीं सदी की खड़ी बोली के रूप को देखें....तो खड़ी बोली यानी वे बोलियां, ब्रज, अवधी, भोजपुरी, राजस्थानी ये सारी बोलियां, जिसमें मध्यकाल में कविताएं लिखी जाती थीं। इस बात पर बहुत विवाद है कि क्या उसे भी हिंदी साहित्य मानना चाहिए, या खड़ी बोली में गद्य पहले लिखा जाने लगा और कविताएं बाद में लिखी गईं। बहुत दिनों तक, बहुत सारे लोग, जिसमें भारतेंदु अग्रणी हैं कि ब्रज भाषा ही ऐसी भाषा है, मीठी भाषा है, जिसमें कविता लिखी जा सकती है। जैसे हम आजकल मानते हैं कि उर्दू नफासत की, प्रेम की, इश्क की भाषा है, उसमें एक तहजीब है और हिंदी में एक रुखापन है। तो उस समय यह माना जाता था कि कविताएं तो मीठी बोली में ही लिखी जा सकती हैं, खड़ी बोली में नहीं लिखी जा सकती...यह खड़ी बोली वहां से है, जिसकी जमीन पर आज हमारा हिंदी का गद्य है, या जो हिंदी हम बरत रहे हैं। उसमें और हमारी बोली में बहुत अंतर नहीं है। सारा ढांचा वहीं से आता है।"

अनुशक्ति ने भारतेंदु और पुस्तक की एक टिप्पणी के उल्लेख कि किसी ने कहा कि हिंदी भाषा इतनी शुष्क है कि इस भाषा में अगर कविताएं लिखी गईं तो पिशाचिनी नहीं तो डाकिनी अवश्य हो जाएगी को हिंदी के प्रति अनुदार होना बताया, तो सुदीप्ति का उत्तर था कि परंपरा से हटकर कुछ करने में लोगों को डर लगता है। यह अभ्यास की बात है। अगर आप देखें तो मध्यकाल में केवल कविताएं लिखी जाती थीं। साहित्य मतलब कविता, रामचरित मानस कविता में है। गद्य विचारों की भाषा हुई तो इसे रुखी भाषा मान लिया गया। खड़ी बोली स्वीकार हुई लोगों तक पहुंचने के लिए,

पर कविताई उसी भाषा में चल रही थी। उस समय खड़ी बोली में कविता लिखने में लोगों में एक झिझक या असमर्थता थी। वही लोग नागरी आंदोलन कर रहे थे। वही लोग भाषा के लिए लड़ भी रहे थे। हिंदी उर्दू विवाद भी इसीलिए था। सुदीप्ति ने मुंशी हिंदी से जुड़े सवाल का उत्तर देते हुए कहा कि मेरा नजरिया यह है कि उर्दू हिंदी अलग-अलग भाषा नहीं हैं। जब मैं उर्दू कहती हूँ कि उर्दू से शब्द लिए तो मुझे खुद ही अटपटा लगता है कि उर्दू से नहीं अरबी, फारसी से शब्द लिए।

मेरा नजरिया यह है कि उर्दू हिंदी अलग-अलग भाषा नहीं हैं। जब मैं उर्दू कहती हूँ कि उर्दू से शब्द लिए तो मुझे खुद ही अटपटा लगता है कि उर्दू से नहीं अरबी, फारसी से शब्द लिए

एक सवाल के उत्तर में सुदीप्ति ने अपनी पुस्तक में शामिल 'स्वप्न कविता' और महेश नारायण का विस्तार से जिक्र किया। उन्होंने कहा कि यह कविता 1881 में अक्टूबर से दिसंबर तक 'बिहार बंधु' अखबार में एक धारावाहिक के रूप में प्रकाशित हुई। तब उसके कवि के नाम का कोई जिक्र नहीं था। तब महेश नारायण का नाम आया। उनके बारे में हमें जरूर जानना चाहिए। बिहार के निर्माण में उन्होंने

अपने कवि रूप को छोड़ दिया। यह पहली ऐसी कविता है जो स्वप्न के बारे में कहती है कि मैं चंद्र लोक से आई हूँ। वह पितृसत्तात्मक समाज की बात करते हुए वह केवल अपनी ही नहीं देश की आजादी की बात करती है। उन्होंने बिहारी लोगों से देश में होने वाले भेदभाव का जिक्र करते हुए अस्मिता के लिए सजग रहने पर जोर दिया। और 'ऐसे थे बाबू महेश नारायण' अध्याय का कुछ हिस्सा पढ़कर सुनाया। उन्होंने विमाता के भाव पर खुलकर अपनी बात रखी। संवाद के दौरान उन्होंने कई बार 'स्वप्न कविता' के कुछ अंश पढ़ कर सुनाया। सुदीप्ति ने कहा कि समाज बहुत एकांगी दृष्टि से देखता है, इसे समग्रता से देखना होगा, व्यक्ति गलत होता है, परिस्थितियां गलत होती हैं, जेंडर गलत नहीं होता।



Waseem Nader

Abhinandan Pandey

ग़ज़ल दो मिसरे में बात कहने के चलते मकबूल: वसीम नादिर

हैरान मेहरबानों के रुमाल हो गए,
आंसू कमाल-ए-जब्त से जब लाल हो गए... वसीम नादिर की इन पंक्तियों
के साथ शाजिया इल्मी ने प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की ओर से आयोजित

किताब फेस्टिवल में वसीम नादिर की पुस्तक
'रंगों की मनमानी' का विमोचन और संवाद हुआ।
कार्यक्रम की शुरुआत शाजिया इल्मी द्वारा फाउंडेशन
की संस्थापक डॉ प्रभा खेतान के परिचय और
फाउंडेशन द्वारा कला, समाज, साहित्य और स्त्री
सशक्तीकरण के क्षेत्र में किए गए कामों की चर्चा से
हुई। उन्होंने किताब उत्सव में अतिथि वक्ता शायर
वसीम नादिर और संवादकर्ता अभिनंदन पांडे का
परिचय दिया और अहसास वूमेन और आयोजकों
की ओर से अतिथियों का अभिनंदन किया।

शायर से उसी की शायरी के बारे में बात करना
बड़ा मुश्किल काम होता है, वजह शायर अपने

को किसी एक खांचे में नहीं रखना चाहता। वह चाहता है कि जो भी उसे
पढ़े अपनी तरह से उसकी शायरी को समझे की बात करते हुए पांडे ने यह
बुनियादी सवाल किया कि शायरी आपके पास कैसे पहुंची? नादिर का उत्तर

हर शायर से हर जगह यह सवाल
पूछा जाता है और इसका जवाब
भी तकरीबन वही है कि वह
बचपन से इस मिजाज के साथ
पैदा होता है कि उसके अंदर
कोई चीज ऐसी है जिसे वह
लफ़्जों में पिरो सकता है, कुछ
जज़्बात हैं ऐसे जिन्हें वह शक़ दे
सकता है

था, "हर शायर से हर जगह यह सवाल पूछा जाता
है और इसका जवाब भी तकरीबन वही है कि वह
बचपन से इस मिजाज के साथ पैदा होता है कि
उसके अंदर कोई चीज ऐसी है जिसे वह लफ़्जों
में पिरो सकता है, कुछ जज़्बात हैं ऐसे जिन्हें वह
शक़ दे सकता है। बस सवाल यह है कि वह कब
मंजरेआम होता है। कब उसे यह महसूस करता है
कि हां मैं लिख सकता हूँ, और मुझे लिखना चाहिए।
मेरे साथ ऐसा कोई खास हादसा, वारदात नहीं है
कि जिसका मैं जिक्र कर सकूँ, अलबत्ता शायद
1997 की बात है, मैं सऊदी अरब गया था। एक
साल वहां रहा तो वह जो अपने वतन से दूर रहने
का अहसास था, मैं डायरी लिखना शुरू किया, तो

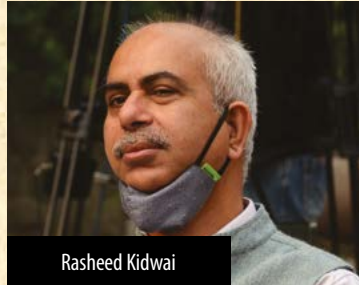


(L-R) Anindita Chatterjee, Anantmla Potdar, Waseem Nader, Shazia Ilmi, Nidhi Garg, Abhinandan Pandey and Aradhana Pradhan

उस समय एक शेर मैंने लिखा। हालांकि मुझे शायरी के वसूल के बारे में पता नहीं था, लेकिन मैंने यह कहा—
बस्ती तो दूर मुझको वतन छोड़ना पड़ा
मुझको कहां-कहां मेरे हालात नहीं ले गए
इसके बाद मुझे लगा कि मैं लिख सकता हूँ और इस तरह हल्के-हल्के यह सिलसिला शुरू हुआ और आज यहां तक है।"

पांडे ने अदबी हलके से जुड़ी इस बहस कि ग़ज़ल की शायरी की तरफ नए लोग बढ़ रहे, नज़्म, सलाम, शोज़, मर्सिया, रुबाई, कता की तरफ नहीं, आखिर क्या वजह है? नादिर का उत्तर था कि ग़ज़ल की सबसे खूबसूरत बात यह है कि इसे दो मिसरे में समझाया जा सकता है। यह कहने में भी आसान है और सुनने में भी आसान है। इसका कोई दायरा नहीं है कि दो मिसरे में कितनी बात कहनी है। किसी पूरे उपन्यास के आखिर में कोई एक शेर लिख दिया जाता है, जो पूरी बात कह देता है। यही बात ग़ज़ल के बारे में है कि किसी दो मिसरे को कोई शायर पूरे दिन सोच सकता है, पूरी उम्र सोच सकता है, एक लम्हा सोच सकता है और वह अपनी पूरी बात कहकर सुनने वाले पहुंचा सकता है। नज़्म अपने स्वरूप के चलते खास तबके तक रह गई जबकि ग़ज़ल आम आदमी तक पहुंच गई। नादिर ने बशीर बद्र के—

उजाले अपनी यादों के हमारे साथ रहने दो
न जाने किस गली में जिंदगी की शाम हो जाए
का उदाहरण देते हुए कहा कि जिसे शायरी नहीं पता होगी, उसे भी यह

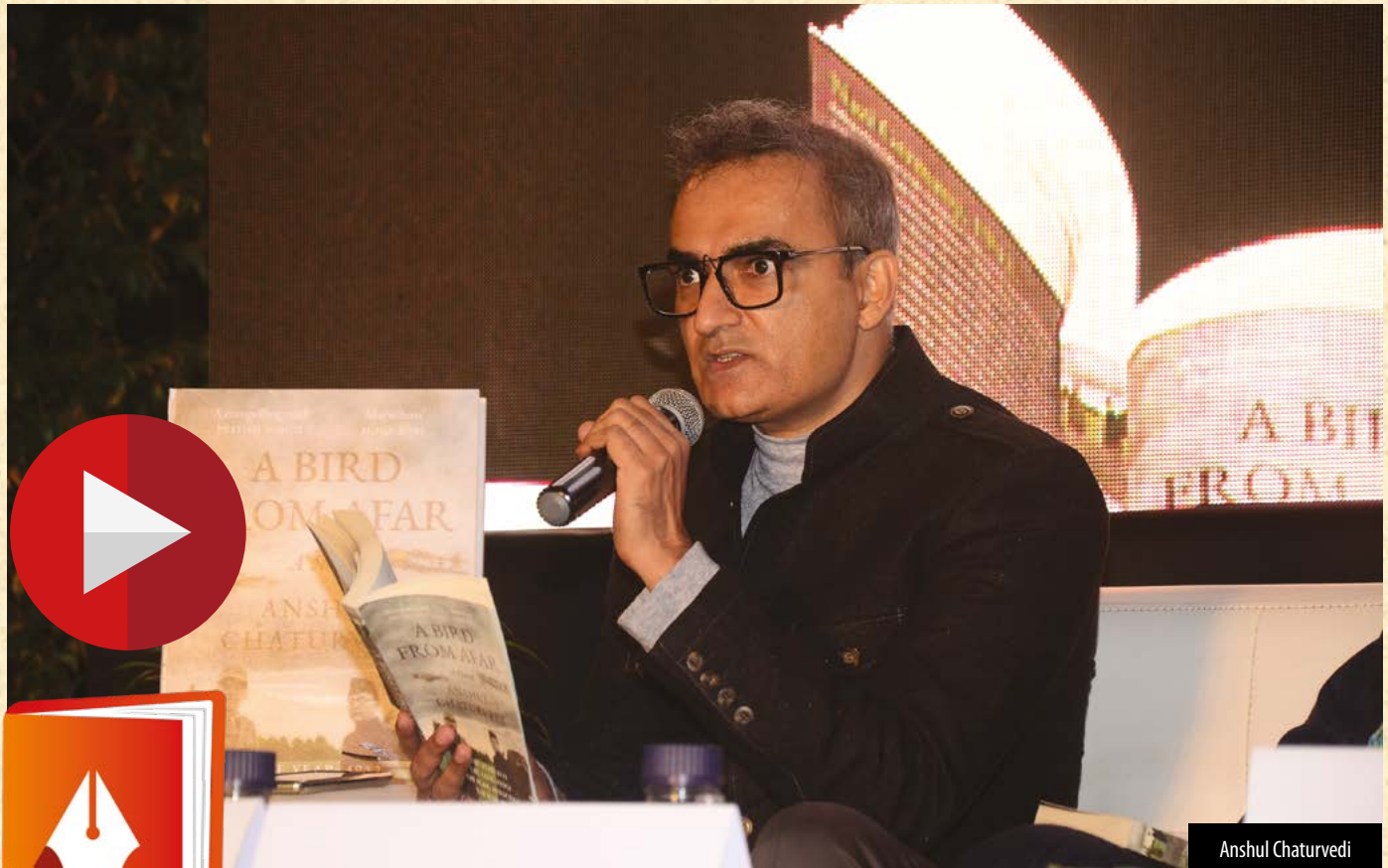


Rasheed Kidwai

शेर समझ में आता है क्योंकि इन दो मिसरों में उसकी अपनी बात जैसे कह दी गई है। ग़ज़ल की यही सबसे बड़ी खासियत है। हिंदुस्तान में आने के बाद ग़ज़ल का दायरा बड़ा हो गया, वह और मकबूल हो गई। नादिर ने ग़ज़ल के लोकप्रिय होने में मुशायरों के महत्त्व को स्वीकारा और एक बार फिर बशीर बद्र के इस शेर—
दुश्मनी का सफ़र इक कदम दो कदम
तुम भी थक जाओगे हम भी थक जाएंगे
का जिक्र कर उसके सहज होने की बात कही।

नादिर ने एक सवाल के उत्तर में ग़ालिब के कठिन अल्फाज और मीर तकी मीर, इरफ़ान सिद्दिकी के आम जुबान में कही गई ग़ज़ल के आम लोगों तक पहुंचने की बात कही। नादिर ने अपनी ग़ज़लों में अंग्रेज़ी के शब्दों के प्रयोग के हवाले से अल्फाज और तलफ़ुज़ से जुड़े सवाल का भी उत्तर दिया और स्वीकारा कि संस्कृत और हिंदी के बहुत सारे शब्द उर्दू में हैं। नादिर ने उर्दू पर अरबी और परसियन के प्रभाव के बारे में अपनी बात कहते हुए 'सुफेद' और सफेद शब्द का उदाहरण दिया। नादिर ने कहा कि कई बार किसी भाषा में कोई वर्ण नहीं है तो बात अलग है। नादिर ने जदीद और रियायत शायरी से जुड़े सवाल के बीच का रास्ता अपनाने की बात पर बल दिया। उन्होंने नई नस्ल को शायरी की जबान, तौर-तरीकों को समझने पर जोर दिया। कार्यक्रम में नादिर ने श्रोताओं की मांग पर नज़्म और ग़ज़लें सुनाई और श्रोताओं के सवालों के उत्तर भी दिए और बदायूं की माटी की तासीर के बारे में बताया।

ग़ज़ल की सबसे खूबसूरत बात यह है कि इसे दो मिसरे में समझाया जा सकता है। यह कहने में भी आसान है और सुनने में भी आसान है। इसका कोई दायरा नहीं है कि दो मिसरे में कितनी बात कहनी है



Anshul Chaturvedi

Decoding Bose: His Persona & Purpose

When Anshul Chaturvedi wrote a book on Swami Vivekananda, he received a letter from somebody in Bengal who thanked him for taking Vivekananda off the calendar hanging behind him. The author feels that the big names in our country—political, social and philosophical—are names of such stature that one doesn't aspire to emulate them, one worships them instead. But these people had lived difficult lives and it is important for us to know and learn from them. This is what prompted Chaturvedi to write about the lives of such people in books. Many more such facts came to the fore in a session of **Kitaab Festival**, a week-long celebration of books and authors in Delhi, organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. Chaturvedi's novel *A Bird from Afar* was launched at the session by NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant. Marketing maven Suhel Seth and National Award-winning filmmaker Nila Madhab Panda were special guests on the occasion. Shinjini Kulkarni, **Ehsaas** Woman of NCR,

introduced and welcomed the guests to the session, while Garima Mittal, **Ehsaas** Woman of Meerut, felicitated them.



Amitabh Kant

Chaturvedi is the national editor of the *Times of India*'s Metro supplements. After authoring three successful books, *Work Sucks! Or Do You?*, *Uncut* and *The Vivekananda Handbook for Everyday Living*, Chaturvedi's fourth book, *A Bird from Afar*, is a historical fiction set during the course of World War II, exploring what could have happened if the war went differently, enabling Subhas Chandra Bose to come to India from the West.

To throw light on his inspiration behind the book, Chaturvedi read from his author's note: "Bose is many things to many people and attracts a range of extreme emotions... I admire the manner in which he faced the endless series of conflicts and dilemmas life sent his way, almost in an assembly-line fashion, without, at any point, being a



(L-R) Suhel Seth, Anshul Chaturvedi, Amitabh Kant and Neel Madhav Panda

man of compromise or adjustment. I admire even more how, instead of being nothing more than a man of steel forged by all those fires, he retained and sustained his sensitivity, his concern, his inclusiveness, his objectivity... Given that I have been almost an obsessive consumer of World War II for decades, even as I read and wrote a little about Subhas, over time, the mind drew up its own stories, its conjectures, its responses to 'what would Subhas have done if...?' And at some points, I searched for some such stories to read, stories such as Robert Harris's fabulous *Fatherland*, in the Indian context. A space to reimagine, reconstruct. I could not find much, perhaps because there's in any case so much mystery, intrigue and speculation about the details of his real life. And then, I somehow ended up writing the book I wanted to read."

Chaturvedi believes that to Bose's followers and fans, the man remains a romantic idealist who can do no wrong. To his critics, his alliance with Nazi Germany and fascist Italy is a definitive sin for which the rest of his life isn't enough redemption. But to Chaturvedi, Bose is someone who had a single-minded purpose right from his days as a student, and he stayed with it throughout, all means justifying the end, that end being the liberation of India. "The more I read of him, the more I understood his unwillingness to take a politically correct position and watch the opportunity that World War II brought pass India by... Had things gone somewhat along the lines my imagination has drawn up in the book, had he been an active part of the military and political situation before the British rule ended in India, there's a strong chance that the India we grew up in and the India we live in today would've been somewhat different," said Chaturvedi.

Kant has known Chaturvedi for a long time and

believes more than being a great writer, Chaturvedi is a great human being, full of affection, warmth and creativity. "*A Bird from Afar* is a tremendous read because of the subject Chaturvedi is dealing with—and he deals with the subject with so much compassion... Imagine the ethical dilemmas that Subhas Chandra Bose was undergoing... he wanted freedom for India and yet he had to choose the Nazis as his friends... All these dilemmas have been brought out in the book with such fascinating details... It's a book that brings out Bose's character, uniqueness and commitment to the freedom of India."

What do you say about an author who uses research to then craft a narrative that's steeped in fiction? This was the question Seth posed to the audience as he stepped up to discuss Chaturvedi's book. He said, "Authors are made up of three things—craft, compassion and empathy. The craft is what endears you in terms of the mind. Compassion is what you understand about the subjects you're dealing with contextually. Empathy is when you're empathetic without being either judgemental or agenda-driven. I was born and raised in Calcutta and Netaji is very special to each one of us and will remain so... Where the book scores is that it not only defines the persona of Netaji but also his purpose. Very few books capture persona and purpose... We all remember stories, we don't remember slogans. When history is conveyed anecdotally, it tends to be remembered more. That is why very few historians make for great authors, because what they miss is the craft and the narrative and, more importantly, the storytelling. Where this book again scores is that it gives you an insight into a historical perspective, yet retaining the base of storytelling and the memorability of the anecdotal references."



Sunita and Jyotish Joshi

तुलसी चाहते थे कि लोक से सारी विषमताएं मुक्त हो जाएं: ज्योतिष जोशी

आलोचना से परे कोई नहीं है, लेकिन आलोचना और भर्त्सना में फर्क किया जाना चाहिए... किसी को अपनाना या छोड़ना बिना जाने, नहीं करना चाहिए..." यह कहना है लेखक, आलोचक ज्योतिष जोशी का, जो प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की ओर से आयोजित किताब फेस्टिवल में अपनी पुस्तक 'तुलसीदास का स्वप्न और लोक' का विमोचन और संवाद के दौरान बोल रहे थे। कार्यक्रम की शुरुआत आराधना प्रधान द्वारा फाउंडेशन की संस्थापक डॉ प्रभा खेतान के परिचय से हुई। उन्होंने फाउंडेशन द्वारा कला, समाज, साहित्य और स्त्री सशक्तीकरण के क्षेत्र में किए गए कामों की चर्चा से की। उन्होंने किताब उत्सव में अतिथि वक्ता ज्योतिष जोशी और संवादकर्ता

मैं इस बात पर बहस कर सकता हूं कि स्त्रियों और रुढ़ियों के बारे में जितने उग्र और अभद्र कबीर हैं उतने तुलसी नहीं हैं। अगर तुलसी के यहां स्त्री को लेकर कुछ विलोम है तो उसका एक संदर्भ है। वह महाकाव्य लिख रहे थे। सुलोचना, तारा, शबरी के बारे में भी तुलसी की राय जाननी चाहिए

डॉ सुनीता का परिचय दिया। अहसास वूमेन और आयोजकों की ओर से अंशु मेहरा ने अतिथियों का अभिनंदन किया।

सुनीता ने सवाल किया कि तुलसीदास को लेकर आपने क्या स्वप्न देखा? जोशी का कहना था पूरे भारत, उत्तर भारत में तुलसीदास की वजह से राम नाम सत्य है को सम्मान मिला। मैं बचपन से मानस पढ़ रहा था। बाबा अथाह सागर हैं। संस्कृति मंत्रालय ने फेलोशिप दी और यह कारवां बन गया। आज अस्वीकरण की जो प्रक्रिया चल रही है, इसलिए एक अलग दृष्टि से मैंने यह काम किया। तुलसी के बारे में प्रतिगामी विचार आए हैं तो तुलसी को उनके मानस



(L-R) Vandana Singh, Anindita Chatterjee, Anshu Mehra, Vimla Mishr, Jyotish Joshi, Sunita, Nidhi Garg, Poonam Anand, Aradhana Pradhan and Anant Vijay

के साथ मैंने इस पुस्तक में रखने की कोशिश की। तुलसी की बराबरी में बैठने वाला कोई कवि नहीं है। उनके यहां हर समस्या का समाधान है।

सुनीता ने जोशी की पुस्तक में वर्णित मुक्तिबोध के हवाले से तुलसी के यहां वर्णाश्रम और जाति से जुड़ा सवाल उठाया, तो जोशी का उत्तर था कि जाति देखकर, जीवन व्यवस्था देखकर कवि का मानकीकरण नहीं किया जा सकता। कबीर के बारे में तो आप कुछ नहीं कहते। तुलसीदास साठ सत्तर साल से पहले समझ भी नहीं आते। मैं इस बात पर बहस कर सकता हूं कि स्त्रियों और रूढ़ियों के बारे में जितने उग्र और अभद्र कबीर हैं उतने तुलसी नहीं हैं। अगर तुलसी के यहां स्त्री को लेकर कुछ विलोम है तो उसका एक संदर्भ है। वह महाकाव्य लिख रहे थे। सुलोचना, तारा, शबरी के बारे में भी तुलसी की राय जाननी चाहिए। शंका लुप्त से तुलसी के बारे में हो रही बातों के निराकरण के लिए मैंने यह पुस्तक लिखी है।

एक सवाल के उत्तर में जोशी ने कहा, "तुलसी का स्वप्न रामराज्य है। लेकिन उनके स्वप्न का अधिष्ठान है, मनुष्य को मनुष्योत्तम बनाना। उसको परम कृतार्थता देना। एक मनुष्य किस तरह से जीते जी कैवल्य को प्राप्त कर लेता है और वह मनुष्य हो जाता है। तुलसी बार-बार सज्जनों के लिए संत शब्द का प्रयोग करते हैं। स्वप्न उनका रामराज्य का था, वही—

दैहिक दैविक भौतिक तापा

राम राज काहुहि नहीं ब्यापा

लेकिन इस रामराज्य के मूल में ऐसे मनुष्य को निर्मित करना था, जो रामराज्य ले आने में, इस जगत को सुंदर बनाने में, मनुष्य से मनुष्य को प्रेम करने में प्रभावी हो सके, सफल हो सके। और इसको उन्होंने अपने लोक से जोड़ा।" जोशी ने हमारी इंद्रिय प्रतीतियों में जो कुछ व्याप्त है उसे लोक का रूप दिया।

तुलसी चाहते थे कि लोक से सारी विषमताएं मुक्त हो जाएं और संस्कार विकसित हो। तुलसी का आदर्श है कि अपने परिवार को देखो। उसका पोषण और निर्वाह करते हुए संबंधों की गरिमा और उसके दायित्व का निर्वाह करते हुए अनासक्त जीवन जीओ

उन्होंने कहा कि रामचरित मानस कथा नहीं है। वहां सब कुछ है। वे सभी शास्त्र, पुराण, निगमागम को लोक में प्रतिष्ठा देते हैं। तुलसी पुरोहितवाद के खिलाफ थे। उन्होंने सभी यातनाएं सही लेकिन अपने संकल्प से खुद को डिगाया नहीं, जिससे लोक में बहुत बदलाव आया। इतिहास गवाह है कि पराजित भारतीय मन को राम का आधार मिला, एक आदर्श गृहस्थी मिली, एक आदर्श परिवार मिला, आदर्श मूल्य मिले। लोगों ने अपनी अस्मिता पर, अपनी धरती पर, अपनी संस्कृति पर गर्व करना सीखा। यह तुलसीदास के मानस और उनके आविर्भाव के कारण संभव हुआ।

जोशी ने तुलसी के गृहस्थ समाज से जुड़े सवाल का उत्तर देते हुए कहा कि तुलसी चाहते थे कि लोक से सारी विषमताएं मुक्त हो जाएं और संस्कार विकसित हो। तुलसी का आदर्श है कि अपने परिवार को देखो। उसका पोषण और निर्वाह करते हुए संबंधों की गरिमा और उसके दायित्व का निर्वाह करते हुए अनासक्त जीवन जीओ। एषणा न हो ताकि विकार न हो। पूरे संसार को राममय देखो। सियाराम मय सब जग जानी। पापाचार से डरो। और हमेशा उस ईश्वर के प्रति कृतज्ञ रहो, जिसने तुम्हें ईश्वर का शरीर दिया है। जोशी ने कहा तुलसी ने हर संबंध में आदर्श की रचना की। गांधी ने

भी कहा था कि सुराज तुम्हारे भीतर से आएगा। जोशी ने परिवार के संदर्भ में पुनर्संस्कार से जुड़े सवाल का भी उत्तर दिया और इस संबंध में भी तुलसी को पढ़े जाने की आवश्यकता पर बल दिया। तुलसी ने उत्तरकांड में कलिकाल के बहाने अपने समय का वर्णन किया है। जोशी ने नागरिक न रह कर मनुष्य के उपभोक्ता बनते जाने का उल्लेख करते हुए बार-बार तुलसी की तरफ जाने का आवाहन किया और अपने समाज और राष्ट्र को देखते हुए अपने नियंता को देखने की बात कही और एक मनुष्य के रूप में अपना अर्थ तलाशने की बात कही। जोशी ने श्रोताओं के प्रश्न का भी उत्तर दिया।

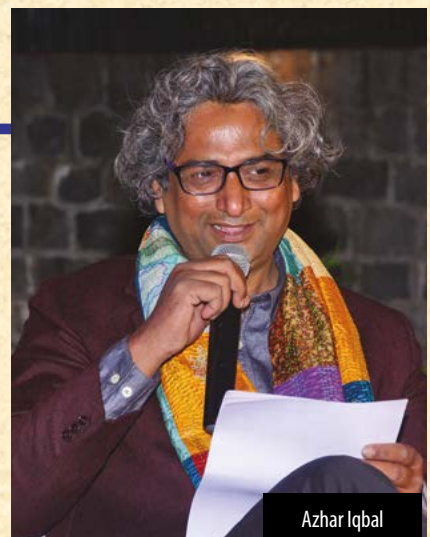


Khalid Jawed

लेखक को अपनी रूह की जुबान लिखना चाहिए: खालिद जावेद

फि कशन की अपनी शर्तें होती हैं। मौत और जिंदगी दोनों से बढ़कर लेखक की जो जिम्मेदारी और एकाउंटबिलिटी है, वह मौत के तई नहीं है, न जिंदगी के तई है, वह उसके आर्ट के तई हैं, कि आर्ट, फन या कला कि क्या शर्तें हैं।" यह कहना है उर्दू लेखक खालिद जावेद का, जो **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** की द्वारा नई दिल्ली के इंडिया इंटरनेशनल सेंटर में आयोजित पांच दिवसीय **किताब** फेस्टिवल में अपनी पुस्तक 'मौत की किताब' के देवनागरी लिपी में प्रकाशित संस्करण के विमोचन और संवाद के दौरान बोल रहे थे। कार्यक्रम की शुरुआत में फाउंडेशन का संगीतमय एंथम प्रस्तुत हुआ। शाज़िया इल्मी ने **किताब** उत्सव में फाउंडेशन की संस्थापक डॉ प्रभा खेतान की सोच, चिंतन और सेवाकर्म का परिचय दिया। उन्होंने फाउंडेशन द्वारा कला, समाज, साहित्य और स्त्री सशक्तीकरण के क्षेत्र में किए गए कामों की विस्तार से चर्चा की और अतिथि वक्ता खालिद जावेद और संवादकर्ता अजहर इकबाल का परिचय, स्वागत और धन्यवाद दिया। **अहसास** वूमेन और आयोजकों की ओर से अंशू मेहरा ने अतिथियों का अभिनंदन किया। इस

खुदा जब खामोशी से बच्चों की किलकारियां सुनते हुए बेखबर सो रहा था, तब शैतान ने चुपके से उसकी किताब में जिंदगी की जगह मौत और मौत की जगह जिंदगी लिख दिया। इस तरह उसके मायने बदल गए



Azhar Iqbal

अवसर पर उपस्थित रश्दा जलील का भी अभिनंदन किया गया। रश्दा विमोचित की जा रही पुस्तक 'मौत की किताब' के तीन रूपों अंग्रेजी, उर्दू और देवनागरी की चर्चा की और कहा कि किताबों की जिंदगी बढ़ जाती है जब उनके तर्जुमे होते हैं या उनका लिप्यांतर होता है। उन्होंने शम्सुर्रहमान फारुकी के उदाहरण के साथ बताया कि तर्जुमों का शोहरत से बड़ा तालुक है।



(L-R) Aradhana Pradhan, Anindita Chatterjee, Anshu Mehra, Shazia Ilmi, Rakshanda Jalil, Archana Dalmia, Khalid Jawed, Azhar Iqbal, Neelima Dalmia Adhar, Poonam Anand, Nidhi Garg and Garima Mithal

किताबें झांकती हैं बंद आलमारी के शीशों से
बड़ी हसरत से तकती हैं
महीनों अब मुलाकातें नहीं होती
जो शामें उनकी सोहबत में कटा करती थीं
अब अक्सर गुजर जाती हैं कम्प्यूटर के पदों पर
बड़ी बेचैन रहती हैं किताबें
उन्हें अब नींद में चलने की आदत हो गई है...
गुलजार की इस नज़्म को पढ़कर अज़हर ने
फाउंडेशन को किताब आयोजन के लिए सराहा और
पहला सवाल किया कि यह किताब एक सिहरन पैदा
करती है। आपके जेहन में यह दिलचस्प उन्वान कैसे
और क्यों आया? खालिद का उत्तर था, "इसका
नाम 'मौत की किताब' जरूर है, पर इसमें मौत कहीं
नहीं है। इसका जो मरकजी किरदार है, जो नरेटर है
वह खुदकुशी करने के बारे में लगातार सोचता रहता
है, लेकिन वह खुदकुशी करता नहीं है। बाद में उसे
इस बात का एहसास होता है कि खुदकुशी करने
का खयाल खुदकुशी करने से बेहतर है। हमारे जमाने
में और इससे और पहले के जमाने में जिंदगी और मौत के जो माने हैं, वे
रिप्लेस हो गए हैं।" जावेद ने नाज़िम के हवाले से एक अंश सुनाया कि खुदा
जब खामोशी से बच्चों की किलकारियां सुनते हुए बेखबर सो रहा था, तब
शैतान ने चुपके से उसकी किताब में जिंदगी की जगह मौत और मौत की
जगह जिंदगी लिख दिया। इस तरह उसके मायने बदल गए। यह फिक्शन
है... इसलिए मुझे इस उपन्यास के लिए यही नाम बेहतर लगा।

खालिद ने कहा कि हर लिखने वाले की अपनी एक राह होती है, हर
लिखने वाला अपनी कहानी लिखता है, स्टाइल, विषय अलग हैं। रिल्के के
हवाले से उन्होंने कहा कि हर अफसानानिगार जिंदगी भर एक ही कहानी

कोई एक ख्वाब जिंदगी भर
आपका पीछा भेष बदलकर
करता रहता है। लेखक को
वही लिखना चाहिए जो
उसकी रूह की ज़बान हो।
आपको नकल नहीं करना
चाहिए। फैशन के तहत कोई
काम नहीं करना चाहिए

लिखता रहता है बदल बदल कर। कोई एक ख्वाब जिंदगी भर आपका पीछा
भेष बदलकर करता रहता है। लेखक को वही लिखना चाहिए जो उसकी
रूह की ज़बान हो। आपको नकल नहीं करना चाहिए। फैशन के तहत कोई
काम नहीं करना चाहिए। गैब्रिएल गार्शिया मार्खेज का जिक्र करते हुए अज़हर
ने मैजिकल रियलिज़्म से जुड़ा सवाल पूछा, तो खालिद
का कहना था कि यह तो हमारी लोक कथाओं,
दास्तानों में भी खूब मिलता है। हमारे यहां भी देव,
जिन्न, परी, उड़ने वाला बागीचा या अलौकिक बातें
मिल जाएंगी। लेकिन मार्खेज ने लैटिन अमेरिका
में मैजिकल रियलिज़्म को कहानी कहने की एक
टेक्निक के रूप में इस्तेमाल किया, यह टेक्निक
हमारे यहां नहीं है। उस जमाने में यहां दास्तान का
मकसद दिल बहलाना था। लेकिन जब यूरोप में
नॉवेल की डेथ की घोषणा हो गई तो कई लेखकों
ने उसे एक चुनौती की तरह लिया। उनका मकसद
एक संदेश देना था। मार्खेज के हवाले से उन्होंने एक
उदाहरण दिया कि एक व्यक्ति अपने आपको गोली
मार लेता है, ढाई सौ किलोमीटर दूर उसकी मां के
पास उसके खून की धार जाती है, तो वह इस बात का भी खयाल रखती है
कि वहां की कालीन, सोफा खराब न हो, छोटा भाई जो सवाल हल कर रहा
होता है, उसे दिखाई न दे और वह रसोई में सीधे अपनी मां के पैरों के पास
नाचने लगती है और मां उसे देखते ही चीखती है, हाय मेरा बच्चा। यह खूनी
रिश्ते को दिखाने की टेक्निक है। खालिद ने और भी कहानियां सुनाई और
अपने उपन्यास से जुड़े किरदार, ज़बान और बयान से जुड़े सवालों के उत्तर
भी दिए। उन्होंने कहा कि नॉवेल के अंदर बहुत सारी आवार्जे होनी चाहिए।
खालिद ने अपनी कृति 'एक खंजर पानी में', नज़्म लिखने और श्रोताओं के
कई सवालों का भी उत्तर दिया।



Kshama Kaul



निर्वासन साहित्य कश्मीर की सच्ची कहानी बताता है: क्षमा कौल

हमारे देश में यह एक अजीब बात है जो सच है। मुझे कश्मीर से क्यों निकाला गया, क्योंकि मैं हिंदू थी...हमारे साथ अछूतों जैसा व्यवहार किया गया। लेखकों ने, मीडिया, शासन ने हमारी तरफ पीठ फेरा, हम बच गए तो ईश्वर की कृपा से। हमें पूरे भारत को यह बात बतानी है कि अगर आप चेते नहीं तो यह आपकी तरफ बढ़ रहा है। यह एक सजग करने वाला साहित्य है। ये चेतना का साहित्य है। यह भारतीय, भारतीयता का साहित्य है।" यह बात लेखिका क्षमा कौल ने कही। वे **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** की ओर से आयोजित **किताब फेस्टिवल** में अपनी पुस्तक 'मूर्ति-भंजन' के विमोचन और संवाद के दौरान बोल रही थीं। कार्यक्रम की शुरुआत नीलिमा डालमिया आधार द्वारा फाउंडेशन की संस्थापक डॉ प्रभा खेतान के परिचय से हुई। उन्होंने फाउंडेशन द्वारा कला, समाज, साहित्य और स्त्री सशक्तीकरण के क्षेत्र में किए गए कामों की चर्चा से की। उन्होंने **किताब** उत्सव में अतिथि वक्ता क्षमा कौल और संवादकर्ता डॉ सुनीता का परिचय दिया। **अहसास** वूमेन और आयोजकों की ओर से पूनम आनंद और वंदना सिंह ने अतिथियों का अभिनंदन किया।

कश्मीर के आतंकवाद ने
हमसे हमारा सब कुछ, जीने
का सामान छीन लिया।
हमारे तन पर कुछ कपड़े थे।
बुद्धि थी और जो शब्द हमने
वहां पढ़े थे, वह हमारे साथ
आया। ईश्वर ने हमें जिंदा
बचा कर यह कार्य दिया कि
मैं इस सत्य को लिखूं



Sunita

डॉ सुनीता ने पूछा आपके लेखन की शुरुआत कैसे हुई? कौल ने कहा कि लेखन की शुरुआत कविता से हुई। देशभर में पत्र-पत्रिकाओं में छपी भी लेकिन जनवरी 1990 से मेरा समूचा कार्याकल्प हो गया। कश्मीर के आतंकवाद ने हमसे हमारा सब कुछ, जीने का सामान छीन लिया। हमारे तन पर कुछ कपड़े थे। बुद्धि थी और जो शब्द हमने वहां पढ़े थे, वह हमारे साथ आया। ईश्वर ने हमें जिंदा बचा कर यह कार्य



(L-R) Anindita Chatterjee, Vandana Singh, Anshu Mehra, Prabhat Kumar, Kshama Kaul, Archana Dalmia, Nidhi Garg, Sunita, Poonam Anand, Neelima Dalmia Adhar, Aradhana Pradhan and Shinjini Kulkarni

दिया कि मैं इस सत्य को लिखूँ। मेरे पास शब्द थे, मेरे पास कलम थी, तलवार तो थी नहीं। आप *मूर्ति-भंजन* को पढ़ें और सोचें कि कश्मीर की वादियों में हमारा रक्त कैसे बहा। पूरे विश्व में मानवता हमारे यहां से आई है। कश्मीर ऐसी भूमि है जहां से हमें निर्वासन झेलना पड़ा। राज्य, शासन, न्यायपालिका सबने हमारी अनदेखी की।

अपनी पुस्तक का नाम आपने *मूर्ति-भंजन* क्यों रखा? के उत्तर में कौल ने कहा कि दर्दपुर में जेनोसाइड का वह रूप है जो विचारधारा, कट्टरपंथ और सेकुलरिज्म की चीरफाड़ की है। मैंने *मूर्ति-भंजन* में उसी आंतरिक जेनोसाइड के निरंतर बने रहने की बात लिखी है। एक समुदाय, एक देश स्वयं में एक मूर्ति होता है। आप पत्थरों की मूर्तियों की बातें कर रहे हैं। मैं ग्वालियर गई थी, वहां म्यूजियम में कोई मूर्ति ऐसी नहीं थी, जो टूटी हुई न हो, चाहे नाक ही कटी हो... ये हमारे शत्रु ने किया है। मूर्ति जो पूरा एक समुदाय है, जो भारतीय समुदाय है, सांस्कृतिक समुदाय है, जो धार्मिक समुदाय है, जिनका कश्मीर है, जो भारत से जुड़े हैं। जिनका विस्तार भारत में है, उन्हें कैसे अंदर से रेजा-रेजा तोड़ा गया है, *मूर्ति-भंजन* में उसी कहानी को एक परिवार के माध्यम से कहा गया है। एक परिवार जिसमें एक मूर्ति शिल्पी लड़की होती है, जेहाद कैसे घुसता है, उनके अंतर में, उनके रग-रग में, उनके स्नायुतंत्र में और उन्हें जला देता है। आज भी शरणार्थी शिविरों में बहुत से लोग गल रहे हैं। हम किसी तरह से बचकर यहां आए हैं। कश्मीर का एक निर्वासन साहित्य है। जिसमें आप कश्मीर की सच्ची कहानी पढ़ते हो।

भारत में प्रतिरोध का कोई साहित्य है तो वह कश्मीरियों का निर्वासन साहित्य है, उसे आप पढ़िए। भंजित मूर्ति के टुकड़े वह साहित्य लिख रहे हैं। अपनी किताबें मैंने अपने खून से लिखी हैं

एक सवाल के उत्तर में कौल ने कहा कि *मूर्ति-भंजन* का विषय वही है। जिहादी आतंकवाद से जब हम बिखर गए तो हमारे अंदर की कहानियां क्या हैं, फिर हम कैसे जियें, परिवारों में फिर क्या हुआ, कैसे संबंध टूटे। स्मृतियों का यह एक भयावह दौर रहा। संबंधों का एक दुखद पहलू भी रहा। हमारी सबसे बड़ी त्रासद बात हमारी निस्सहायता रही।

हमारी बात कोई कर नहीं रहा। जिसने हमें मारा उसकी बात सभी करेंगे। इस्लामी आतंकवाद ने कैसे हमें तोड़ा दर्दपुर उसकी कथा है। ज्ञानपीठ के ऊपर भी इसे लेकर काफी दबाव था। रशियन कवि कि इन पंक्तियों—

हम जानते हैं वो झूठ कहते हैं
वह भी जानते हैं कि वह झूठ कहते हैं
हम जानते हैं कि वो जानते हैं
कि हम जानते हैं कि वह झूठ कहते हैं

फिर भी वह झूठ कहते हैं...को अपनी त्रासदी बताते हुए कौल ने अलीगंज के जोरबाग में एक शरणार्थी के रूप में अपने कष्ट का बयान करते हुए भावुक हो गईं। उन्होंने अपना शरणार्थी नंबर

529 बताते हुए यह आह्वान किया कि कोई हमें हिंदू

होने के चलते मारे न। हम भारत को भारत बनाकर रहेंगे, यही मेरा लक्ष्य है। भारत में प्रतिरोध का कोई साहित्य है तो वह कश्मीरियों का निर्वासन साहित्य है, उसे आप पढ़िए। भंजित मूर्ति के टुकड़े वह साहित्य लिख रहे हैं। अपनी किताबें मैंने अपने खून से लिखी हैं। कौल ने स्त्री विमर्श पर भी अपनी बात रखी और निर्वासन की पीड़ा को मार्मिक ढंग से सबके सामने रखा। हमें अगर बचाएगा तो धर्म ही बचाएगा। मूल्य ही बचाएगा। जब तक कश्मीर में हम अपनी भूमि वापस नहीं पा जाते, हम इस देश में शरणार्थी हैं। कौल ने श्रोताओं के सवाल का भी उत्तर दिया।



Daman Singh and Priyanshi Patel

Mental Health Diaries

Writing is the biggest pleasure of Daman Singh's life, apart from, of course, her beloved dog. She had always enjoyed writing ever since she was a child, letter writing being her favourite assignment in school. It was like a sport for her, where she could express herself without inhibition. That's why finding a box full of her letters from more than 20 years back in her house was like finding a chest of treasures. The author shared many more such insights during the launch of her book *Asylum* in a session of **Kitaab Festival**, a week-long celebration of books and authors in Delhi, organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**.

Singh graduated in mathematics from St. Stephen's College, Delhi, in 1984. She went to the Institute of Rural Management Anand and worked in the field of development for 20 years. She is the author of two previous works of non-fiction, *The Last Frontier: People and Forests in Mizoram* and *Strictly Personal*, a memoir on her parents Dr Manmohan Singh and Gursharan Kaur. She has also written three novels, *Nine By Nine*, *The Sacred Grove* and *Kitty's War*. *Asylum* is Singh's

sixth book. She was in conversation with Priyanshi Patel, **Ehsaas** Woman of Ahmedabad. Archana Dalmia, **Ehsaas** Woman of Delhi, introduced and welcomed the guest to the session, while Preeti Gill, **Ehsaas** Woman of Amritsar, felicitated her.

Talking about her journey as an author, Singh said she had done a lot of writing in the course of her professional journey. She used to work for an NGO and had to travel a lot. "None of the people in the office wanted to come back and write a tour report. When I came back, I'd be itching to start writing that report... I think it was inevitable that I would one day drop everything else and turn to writing. And it has been very good for me. I've enjoyed every minute of it... It's something I see myself doing for the rest of my life... As long as my fingers are working, I don't need to retire as a writer," said Singh.

Singh's first book was very different from *Asylum*. The author lived in Mizoram in those days and *The Last Frontier* was a study of how local communities use forests. "It was a heavily researched and serious book. I remember my husband telling me, 'Lighten it up. Add



(L-R) Aradhana Pradhan, Neelima Dalmia Adhar, Poonam Anand, Archana Dalmia, Nidhi Garg, Anindita Chatterjee, Seema Singh, Anshu Mehra, Priyanshi Patel, Preeti Gill and Shinjini Kulkarni

some anecdotes to make it more readable'. I told him, 'No. This is a serious book and it's going to have footnotes, references and a bibliography. It'll have charts and tables. I don't want anybody to say this doesn't have academic quality'. I was very conscious of that... While it's a good book, I must say it's very unreadable for most people," laughed Singh.

The author believes she has grown as a writer since her first book came out in 1996. While *Asylum* is also a heavily researched book, it simultaneously reflects the perspective of a non-expert. Singh said, "It's a book for which I read books and papers by historians, doctors, medical scientists, lawyers, political scientists, social workers... I wanted to distill all that the experts had written and put it together in a way that I understood. If I understood it as a non-expert, then you would also understand it. I didn't want the burden of research and data to fall on the reader. My entire attempt was, how do I take a very serious and difficult subject and make it come alive for an ordinary citizen? Because I feel this is an important story to tell. The challenge is how to tell it well."

When asked about what prompted her to write *Asylum*, Singh said she believes a writer is always on the lookout for ideas and ideas tend to pop up in the most unexpected places. Two books ago, she had been working on something that needed material on partition. "At that time, there was a series of seminars going on focused on

the mental health aspects of Partition. I attended these seminars to learn more about Partition and in the process, I learnt about mental health. That was really the trigger... When the series of seminars ended, I had already gotten so interested in the subject of mental health that I started reading up on my own, talking to people and attending more workshops, lectures and discussions. That's what really set me off," she added.

Singh believes there's still a taboo on the term 'mental illness', and people don't talk about it as freely and as often as they should. The author said, "My book isn't about mental illness or how to deal with mental illness. It's the story of how mental healthcare in India evolved

over the last 125 years. It's a story that starts with mental hospitals in the country, which were then known as asylums, and it brings us up to date. In today's India, mental hospitals are a very tiny part of the healthcare landscape. There was a time when this was the only solution and the only alternative available to people if they wanted to seek help... If we look back, where did it all start? It started

basically from a single purpose that

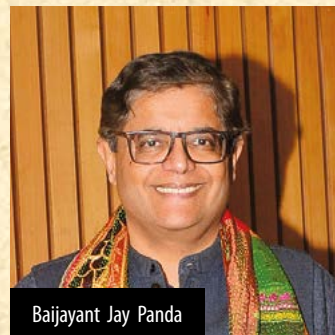
mental healthcare must be humane and based on science. This was the whole idea that started the reform of asylums in India. The question I asked myself was how did this idea come to India in the first place? How did it evolve? Who pushed it forward? Who held it back? How did we reach the point where we are today? That's the story I wanted to share."

If we look back, where did it all start? It started basically from a single purpose that mental healthcare must be humane and based on science. This was the whole idea that started the reform of asylums in India

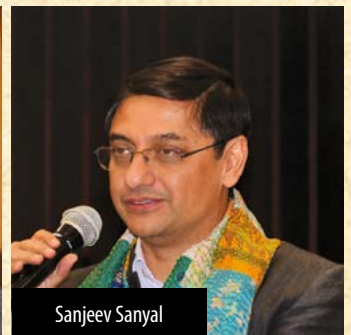
Travelling through Haryana



Arjun Singh Kadian



Baijayant Jay Panda



Sanjeev Sanyal

Haryana is the land where key events of the *Mahabharata* happened. The important epics and Vedas, which are fundamental to the Hindu religion, find their origins in Haryana. But for some reason, the state has lost such an introduction over the course of centuries and fallen victim to stereotypes. This is what Arjun Singh Kadian wanted to correct with his book, *Land of the Gods: The Story of Haryana*. The author revealed all this and much more during the launch of the book in a session of the **Kitaab Festival**, a celebration of books and authors organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. Sanjeev Sanyal, chief economic adviser to the Government of India, and parliamentarian Baijayant 'Jay' Panda were guests at the launch.

Kadian is an academic by profession, who takes classes on stratigraphy and geomorphology. In the last two years, he has been spearheading the work of the Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan for higher education at the grassroots level. His academic research concerns the climate, vertebrates, fluvial patterns and River Saraswati. Passionate about history and culture, Kadian documents

stories from India's geographical past and works to bring life and essence to them. He was in conversation with Shazia Ilmi, **Ehsaas** Woman of Delhi. **Ehsaas** associate Vandana Singh felicitated the guests.



Shazia Ilmi

Talking about the title of his book, Kadian said the book was aptly titled *Land of the Gods* because Haryana was where the Sindhu-Saraswati civilisation had prospered. Even the name 'Haryana' was a confluence of the words 'Hari' plus 'ayana', which means the abode of Hari or the abode of God. The land had been called by multiple names throughout the course of history such as Bahudhanyaka or the land of riches and Dharmakshetra Kurukshetra. Kadian added, "Over

Over the course of centuries, post Islamic invasions, [Haryana] has been scarred several times because of the battles and wars that happened here. Haryana was not a reason—it was a consequence of what was happening in Delhi

the course of centuries, post Islamic invasions, the land has been scarred several times because of the battles and wars that happened here. Haryana was not a reason—it was a consequence of what was happening in Delhi. It was a consequence of the defence of the Delhi throne. As a result, you see Shahabad, you see Sonapat, Panipat, Hisar, Fatehabad, Sirsa, Karnal—all of them have seen epic defining battles. And, in effect, the land of Gods, the centre of Indic civilisation, became a

battleground of civilisations."



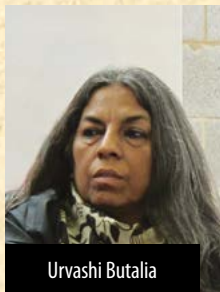
(L-R) Neelima Dalmia Adhar, Nidhi Garg, Vandana Singh, Seema Singh, Archana Dalmia, Shazia Ilmi, Arjun Singh Kadian, Baijayant Jay Panda, Sanjeev Sanyal, Anindita Chatterjee, Poonam Anand, Karuna Goenka, Aradhana Pradhan and Preeti Gill



Anantmala Potdar



Anjum Babukhan



Urvashi Butalia

The author believes Haryana being a 'Jat land' is one of the many stereotypes surrounding the state. In reality, Haryana is home to many other communities. "But it's important to talk about Jats, which I do in the book. In the 17th to 18th centuries, the Jats had risen in rebellion against the Mughals... you get a sense that the Mughal rule was a fairly peaceful rule. It was not. Rebellions were happening very close to home, that is, Delhi... An Italian traveller, Niccolao Manucci, writes that although people visit Akbar's tomb, they don't realise they're visiting an empty grave because the Jats had desecrated the tomb. They had pulled out the bones and put them into the pyre," said Kadian.

Kadian feels the way history has been written and taught in schools and colleges needs a remarkable change. According to the author, it's important to bring in more context to our history and make it more relatable to understand where we're coming from and decide where we could potentially go in the near future. "A student who prepares for the UPSC examination or anybody who wants to learn about history—Mughal history or the decline of the Mughal empire—talks or reads about the Satnami rebellion. But nobody realises that the Satnami rebellion happened only 100 or 150 km from Delhi... I also talk about the Pataudis

in the book. You'd see that the Pataudi family is usually related to their success in the film industry or sports. But Pataudi is quite close to Delhi and nobody is comfortably able to put those pieces together and figure out, 'Oh! Pataudi is very close!' This is what I've done in the book, bringing together all these different names and important aspects of the region from the 17th to the 21st centuries. I also take the reader further back... every now and then, I draw the reader's attention to what was happening in the medieval ages, what was happening in Haryana in ancient India," Kadian said.

The author took advantage of the lockdown phase to write his book. His research had been ready for the last few years. "I've had a discussion about Haryana some time in the last many years with all of the people

The book was aptly titled *Land of the Gods* because Haryana was where the Sindhu-Saraswati civilisation had prospered. Even the name 'Haryana' was a confluence of the words 'Hari' plus 'ayana', which means the abode of Hari or the abode of God

I called for this session. All of them have, in a way, helped me understand what non-Haryanvis think about Haryana... I remember getting into conversation with Sanjeev [Sanyal] sir in Bangalore, when I asked him how to go about it. How do I write a book? He says this often—and this is also a message for everybody else—'Just do it. Don't mull over it, don't waste time thinking about it and overanalysing the situation,'" Kadian added.

Panda had had the opportunity to read *Land of the Gods* when it was in manuscript form. On being asked about his thoughts on the book, Panda said, "It's a very impressive debut book. There's no better person to be discussing this book at the launch than Sanjeev Sanyal, who has epitomised the younger face of India's public intellectuals who contribute to policy and governance. This book triggered a thought in me that Arjun is following in Sanjeev's very eminent footsteps."



Shashi Tharoor



A Monument to a Wordsmith's Writing



Shashi Tharoor's eloquence and erudition both precede him. What can be said about the veteran parliamentarian, politician and author that has not been said already? Among a lifetime of other achievements, Tharoor has authored 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*. The wordsmith who can, by the mere turn of a phrase, have the entire nation hooked on his words (and send everyone scrambling for dictionaries) was recently the guest at a scintillating session in Hyderabad as part of the multi-city **Kitaab Festival** organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. Talking to Tharoor about his latest book, *Pride, Prejudice and Punditry: The Essential Shashi Tharoor*, was journalist, television personality and author Nidhi Razdan. Introducing the session was Anjum Babukhan, **Ehsaas Woman of Hyderabad**.

Razdan began the session by quoting from Tharoor's

book. "I'm already a former minister, one day I'll be a former MP, but I hope never to be a former writer." "That's how much writing means to you, doesn't it?" she asked.



Nidhi Razdan

"It does indeed," replied Tharoor. "I've had the privilege of being able to do some very interesting work in the course of my life, at the UN and now in Indian politics. But these things come and go, including every position one has occupied. The books, on the other hand—the writing, the ideas they contain—are meant to be lasting. It's greatly gratifying to me that a generation of readers who weren't born when I wrote *The Great Indian Novel* are coming up to me today and asking me to sign the latest reprint of it! That's the ultimate vindication I can have: if the things I wrote in my early 30s still matter, now that I've crossed into being a senior citizen."

Given the wide range of its subject matter—history, contemporary politics, extracts from other books—what was Tharoor's criteria for choosing what went into *Pride*,



(L-R) Anjum Babukhan, Shashi Tharoor, Nidhi Razdan and Anindita Chatterjee

Prejudice and Punditry? "It was a collaborative effort between my editor, David Davidar, and me," responded Tharoor. "He wanted a monument, as it were, to my writing, but at the same time we could have put together a book twice the length of this one. There's a lot of stuff that is not there in this book, but the hope is to whet the reader's appetite for more. For people who don't know my work; in fact, I was joking earlier today that there are people who only know me by my last tweet!"

"What among the personal experiences you've described means the most to you?" asked Razdan. "The two sections on my parents," was Tharoor's prompt reply. "The section about my father (Chandran Tharoor) is particularly important to me. My father meant a lot to me; he infected me with his own fondness for words, and he raised me with a liberalism that was unusual in his generation. I was an asthmatic kid; oftentimes I was confined to my bed, unable to breathe and sleep. Reading was my only source of entertainment and as the oldest child in the family, I quickly ran out of things to read. So I started reading books from my parents' collection, and I turned into a precocious reader. And when I couldn't read, I wrote. That is how I got into writing. My father seemed to recognise the potential in my writing; he encouraged me. And when I was just 10 years old, he sent my story to a publisher, who published it with my name!"

Why did Tharoor once write that he didn't believe that the system of parliamentary democracy is working in India? "I'd forgotten this piece had made it to the book!" laughed Tharoor. "I've been reiterating this idea over the years. The problem with talking about a presidential system of governance is that people will only focus on the

president at the top; they'll think, in our Indian context, that our leader is already so powerful that if we make him president there'll never be an end to his tenure. The truth, however, is that I've been talking about a system of directly elected chief executives *at all levels*. In this way, the village panchayat heads are also directly elected, as are town mayors. This extends to chief ministers and state governors as well. In this way, leaders will be directly elected by the people instead of being picked by the party they belong to. This puts several checks and balances in place. The essential idea is that we need a separation of powers among the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. Then you have three ways of ensuring that the liberties and the rights of the people are protected."

Is there a reason the word 'punditry' was included in the title of the book? "I've been writing columns around the world for several years, and the casual description for a columnist is 'pundit'. Not in the sense of a very wise man, but someone who gives *gyaan* to his readers, as it were," joked Tharoor. "Other people who have asked me about the title of the book have asked why I've included the word 'prejudice'!"

The deeply enjoyable session, peppered with wit and good humour came to an end with a Q&A session with the audience.

This session of Kitaab Hyderabad, organised with the support of Ehsaas Women, is presented by Shree Cement Ltd, in association with Aleph Book Company



Shashi Tharoor and Mimi Chakraborty



'India Matters to Me and I Hope to Matter to India'

To say that Shashi Tharoor has enjoyed a prolific writing career would be an understatement. More than 40 years of published writings and over five million words in print have earned Tharoor a permanent position in the canon of India's greatest modern writers, but the diplomat-turned-politician still shows no signs of stopping.

How does Tharoor keep churning out ideas? Is there no saturation point for him?

"I have ideas bubbling over in my mind all the time. Unlike some writers, who only have one story to tell and find 15 different ways of doing so, I try to make each of my books different from the other," smiled Tharoor.

The writer and Member of Parliament was speaking as part of the of the **Kitaab Festival**, an initiative of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. The occasion also marked the launch of Tharoor's new book, *Pride, Prejudice and Punditry*, which is a compendium of his best writings across fiction, non-fiction, and poetry. The book was launched by Mimi Chakraborty, actor and Member of Parliament, followed by a conversation between Tharoor and **Ehsaas** Woman of Noida, Shinjini Kulkarni.



Shinjini Kulkarni

"When was the first time you wielded a pen to write a book?" Kulkarni began, to which Tharoor replied: "I have never actually used a pen for

a book, since I was an early adopter of word processing. My first book, *Reasons of State* (1982), was diligently produced on a typewriter."

Kulkarni proceeded to quiz Tharoor on the topic of nationalism, something he has written about at length, and how it differs from the idea of patriotism. "Patriotism is about love for your country, but nationalism is a sort of blind love that puts your country first, above all else, which is why nationalism can be harmful," said Tharoor while also reiterating his belief in humanism as advocated by the likes of Rabindranath Tagore.

The conversation segued into Tharoor's formative influences and the role of P.G. Wodehouse in making him the writer he is today. "I haven't written much like Wodehouse, but I've read him for pleasure since I was 11. Some of his work may seem quite silly and light-hearted, but they also constitute a source of escape, particularly in today's world," observed Tharoor, who admitted that he had prepared several drafts of a letter to be sent to Wodehouse as a member of the Wodehouse Society at St. Stephen's College. Unfortunately, Tharoor had rejected each of those drafts himself: "I was never satisfied, and then the man eventually passed away."

Kulkarni asked Tharoor about his stand-up comedy act a couple of years ago. "I enjoy a good laugh and don't

mind humour that is produced at my expense either. Sadly, as a country, we are a fairly humourless breed, especially in politics, where being funny can often prove to be dangerous," Tharoor pointed out. He also added that Indians must lighten up and not seek to take offence in any and every joke that is cracked.

As for Tharoor's favourite word, one of India's most famous wordsmiths admitted that he was "particularly fond of 'defenestrate', which means to throw someone out of a window, but it's a word that can be used

figuratively in several contexts. But when I am asked this question in schools, I usually say 'read', for there is no better word that can introduce youngsters to more words than the act of reading itself."

The session, which was also attended by Ehsaas Women of Patna, Anvita Pradhan, and Anubha Arya, drew to a close with Kulkarni enquiring whether Tharoor's life as a politician had sidelined the fiction writer in him and whether a third novel was something his readers could still hope for. "If my voters return me to the world of fiction, I'd be happy to write another novel (his last was *Riot* in 2001). But in order to write fiction, you need not just time, which is scarce enough for me already, but also a space inside your head that can populate a parallel universe," replied Tharoor.

A number of questions were asked by a packed

Patriotism is about love for your country, but nationalism is a sort of blind love that puts your country first, above all else, which is why nationalism can be harmful



Anubha Arya



Mahua Chatterjee



Anvita Pradhan



Tejinder Singh



Shukla Sil



Sreeja Sen



Arjun Chakrabarty



Soni Jain



Nilanjana Sengupta



(L-R) Soni Jain, Malika Varma, Tejinder Singh, Shashi Tharoor, Mimi Chakraborty, Shinjini Kulkarni, Esha Dutta and Anindita Chatterjee

audience, two of which produced interesting answers.

In response to his choice of title, Tharoor said, "'Pride' is for my pride as an Indian in all things Indian, 'Prejudice' is for those whom I have attacked for their prejudice, and 'Punditry' is for everything I choose to have an opinion on... At the end of the day, the title revolves around my experience as an Indian, which is an identity I take very seriously. India matters to me and I hope to matter to India."

Finally, when asked about his memorable speech chastising British colonialism at Oxford Union in 2015, Tharoor narrated how the "speech had made things a bit awkward ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the

[I am] particularly fond of 'defenestrate', which means to throw someone out of a window, but it's a word that can be used figuratively in several contexts. But when I am asked this question in schools, I usually say 'read', for there is no better word that can introduce youngsters to more words than the act of reading itself

United Kingdom later in 2015. I got a call from the PMO asking me how I thought the matter should be handled, whether the Prime Minister should bring up the British injustices against India as mentioned in my speech or whether he should ignore it. I suggested that he say something along the lines of, 'While people have come here and addressed what has happened in the past, my visit is about focusing on relations between our countries in the future.' So, you can rest assured that I didn't scupper the Prime Minister's visit in any way!"

This session of Kitaab Kolkata, organised with the support of Ehsaas Women, is presented by Shree Cement Ltd, in association with Aleph Book Company, Ficci Flo Kolkata and ITC Sonar

I have been a fan of Shashi Tharoor's writing for a long time now. I'm heavily into non-fiction, especially when it comes to his books. As usual, he had all of our undivided attention. I'm also glad to have got the chance to catch up with him after the event. He had previously signed a copy of the book for me, which is quite something!"

— Arjun Chakrabarty, actor



As part of the **Ehsaas Women** of Kolkata, it's always enriching to host authors for their book launches, especially Dr. Tharoor. Everybody who reads his books is a fan. We had an exceptional session today, but as always with Dr. Tharoor, one always feels one hasn't heard enough from him!

— Malika Varma, Ehsaas Woman of Kolkata

कविता का सृजन साहित्य का निकष है: 'अंतस रो ओळमो' का विमोचन, चर्चा



Devail Mahiya



Aanand Hajari

यह कविताओं का ऐसा गुलदस्ता है, जिसमें अलग-अलग खुशबू वाली 84 समकालीन कविताएं शामिल हैं। इनका उद्भव अंतस की गहराई से हुआ है, शिल्प और कथ्य की कसावट इनको परिपक्वता देती है।" आखर पोथी में युवा कवि देवीलाल महिया की पुस्तक 'अंतस रो ओळमो' के विमोचन और चर्चा के दौरान यह बात साहित्यकार आनंद हजारी ने कही। उन्होंने कहा कि कवि का भाव प्रेम की माला बनाने का है। वह जीवन की पहली सीख कच्चे से पके में आते ही सीख लेता है और लिखता है—

ओ जीवन पेंसल दायीं करडो है
पण रबड़ दायीं कंवल्पो है।

हजारी ने कहा कि गांव गुवाडी की खुशबू बिखेरती इस पोथी को पढ़ने से ऐसा लगता है कि बातों-बातों में ही कविता हो रही है। यह आसपास के जीवन की कमियों को गाती कविताओं का संग्रह है। इनमें लोक संस्कृति, तीज-त्योहार, प्रेम-व्यवहार जिंदगी का सुंदर चित्रण दिखता है। पूरे राजस्थान का लोक परिवेश प्रकट होता है। समकालीन कविता में चंद्रप्रकाश देवल, सत्यप्रकाश जोशी, नंद भारद्वाज, ओम पुरोहित कागद, मीठेश निर्मोही, जितेंद्र निर्मोही, अम्बिका दत्त, राजेश व्यास, निशांत, अतुल कनक आदि बड़े नाम हैं। इनके बाद की पीढ़ी में डॉ. नीरज दर्शिया, मदन गोपाल लद्दा, रवि पुरोहित, ओम नागर, प्रीत रंगा, राजूराम बिजजारिया आदि नाम बहुत सम्मान से लिए जाते हैं। नानूराम संस्कृती की जन्मभूमि लूणकरणसर के खारी गांव में जन्मे महिया की कविताओं का उद्भव अंतस की गहराई से होता है। ईमानदारी से अपना धर्म निभाते हुए कवि पूछता है—

कुणसी प्रमेय लगावा मानस जात री
कुणसी संख्या सू करां ई नै गुणा भाग
काई जोड़ा, काई घटावां
निकल आवै जिणस्यू नवो अकळडो मान
ई मानसजात री प्रसनावली रो।

कवि निशांत ने कहा कि काव्य-गोष्ठी में आते-आते महिया कविताएं लिखने लगे। इनको कविताओं को पत्र-पत्रिकाओं में भेजने के लिए कहा तो वहां भी छपने लग गईं। कवि ने लोक में जीवन जीते हुए विचार विमर्श प्रस्तुत किया है। इनमें स्त्री विमर्श सहित मानव संवेदना वाली कविताएं हैं। इन्होंने जो विषय उठाए हैं वे गंभीर हैं। वह अमूर्त कविता के हिमायती नहीं हैं। लोक पर लिखते हैं और जब भी लिखते हैं तो सोच विचार कर ही लिखते हैं।

कवि महिया ने कहा कि मूलतः मेरा मन संगीत की तरफ रहा है। मैंने संगीत की थोड़ी बहुत शिक्षा भी ली। पीलीबंगा में दूध बेचते हुए भूपेंद्र जी और कमलेश जी से संगीत सीखा। इस दौरान कई बार कुछ बहुत सामान्य से लगने वाले विषय मेरे दिमाग में उपजते कि इन पर लिख कर गाएं, लेकिन गीत का तो अपना क्षेत्र होता है। हर चीज को गायन में नहीं बांध सकते। जो विषय जो मेरे गायन से बाहर थे शनैः शनैः मेरी छोटी-छोटी कविताओं के रूप में आने लगे। 'अंतस रो ओळमो' शीर्षक रखते वक्त मेरे मन में यही ख्याल था कि मानव मन की बहुत सी शिकायतें पूरे समाज तक प्रत्यक्ष नहीं पहुंच पाती हैं, इसलिए कविताओं का सहारा एक अच्छा माध्यम हो सकता है। इस किताब में अधिकतर वही भोली-भोली सी शिकायतें (ओळमो) कविता रूप में हैं, जिन्हें पाठक पढ़कर थोड़ा सहज सोच सकता है। कार्यक्रम में महिया ने अपनी मुख्य कविताएं सुनाई।

बिना भासा रै राजस्थान
जियां कोई गुवाड़ बीचलो
बो बिना फोटो रो थान
जिकै मांयलो देवता
गांम रा तो जाणै
पण दूजा नै कै'ठा
मा गांगो है
या हड़मान ?

म्हारी नहीं
तो किंगी और गी हुवैली
पण है तो मां ही
मंगती कोनी।

मिनख रो
घणो उंचो होवणों ई
कठै जस आळी बात है ओ
गांव में टावर ने देखता थकां ई
बूडा बडैरा कैह ही देवै
'बाळ रे, नस दूखण लागगी।

कुण बनायो ऐडो दर्द भरो होरण
जिकै री टीस
फौजियां री काळजै भी
लागै सेलें दाईं
ठा'नी
पण जिकै ई बणायो व्हैलो
मां री ममता रो
जाणीजाण व्हैलो।

उन्होंने अपने गाए गीतों में से कुछ प्रस्तुति दी—

मायड़ री पहचान रुळें क्यूं राज मै
जीभ थकां अणबोल फिरा म्हे राज मै
भाषा रो अधिकार गमयो गणराज मै
जीभ थकां
माँ बोली बिना मिनख जमारो
गूँगाँ गेलो और पतबारो ,
भाषा बिन बालकपन बोळो
बोळी बाखल साल चोबारो ,
भासा ही पत राखै मिनख समाज मै
जीभ थकां ...

इसी तरह उन्होंने 'हरित राजस्थान री अलख जगावां रै, रूख लगावां-रूख लगावां रै' सुनाकर श्रोताओं को मंत्रमुग्ध कर दिया।

कार्यक्रम की अध्यक्षता अरविंद सिंह आशिया ने की। उन्होंने कहा कि कविता बहुत मुश्किल कार्य, अलग तरह की साधना है। महिया मधुर आवाज के भी धनी हैं। कवि किसी के प्रति आक्रामक नहीं हो सकता है। जिसके मन में सुख, शांति और सुंदरता है, वही कविता कर सकता है।

आयोजकों की ओर से ग्रासरूट मीडिया के प्रमोद शर्मा ने सभी का आभार व्यक्त करते हुए बताया कि प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन के सहयोग से इस कार्यक्रम में राजस्थानी युवा लेखकों की पुस्तकों पर साहित्य चर्चा होती। आखर पोथी का प्रारंभ लेखक मोहनपुरी की अचपळी बातां से शुरू होकर देवीलाल महिया की पुस्तक अंतस रो ओळमो तक पहुंच गया है। लोगों का राजस्थानी भाषा के प्रति अनुराग ही इस कार्यक्रम को प्रोत्साहित कर रहा है।

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



Nishant



Pradakshina Pareek



Pramod Sharma



Arvind Singh Ashiyani

मानवता अधिक समृद्ध हो, देश अधिक बड़ा बने: सरसंघचालक मोहन भागवत



Mohan Bhagwat

हिंदू शब्द का वास्तविक अर्थ है सभी विविधताओं को न केवल सहन करने वाला, बल्कि स्वीकार करने वाला। सभी रास्ते एक जगह पहुंचते हैं, इसलिए सभी रास्ते 'सत्य' हैं। रास्ते अलग हैं इसलिए झगड़ा मत करो। रूप अलग है, इसलिए हम अलग नहीं; हम डिफरेंट हैं सेपरेट नहीं हैं।" यह बात राष्ट्रीय स्वयंसेवक संघ के प्रमुख सरसंघचालक मोहन भागवत ने **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** की ओर से नागपुर में आयोजित कार्यक्रम में कही। इस कार्यक्रम में देश भर के विभिन्न शहरों से जुटी **अहसास वूमेन** ने हिस्सा लिया। आरंभ में राजस्थान और मध्यभारत की मानद समन्वयक अपरा कुच्छल ने भागवत का औपचारिक स्वागत करते हुए फाउंडेशन के कार्यक्रमों और गतिविधियों का परिचय दिया। **अहसास वूमेन** नागपुर मोनिका भगवागर ने सरसंघचालक डॉ मोहन भागवत का परिचय दिया।

सरसंघचालक ने संवाद की शुरुआत में कहा, "अपना संवाद संघ को अधिक समझने के लिए है। संघ की कार्यपद्धति ऐसी है कि हमें भी इसे जानना, समझना पड़ता है। संघ को लेकर अपप्रचार भी बहुत हुआ। पर आज संघ के स्वयंसेवक केंद्र में हैं। इसी नागपुर में 1925 में विजयादशमी के दिन संघ की स्थापना हुई। संघ के संस्थापक डॉ हेडगेवार जन्मजात राष्ट्रभक्त थे। जिस आयु में बच्चे विचार भी नहीं करते उस आयु में उन्होंने रानी विक्टोरिया के राज्यारोहण वाली मिठाई फेंक दी थी कि यह हमें गुलाम बनाने वालों का उत्सव है, यह शोक का दिन

है। 11 साल की उम्र में वह एक ही दिन में अनाथ हो गए। उनके माता-पिता दोनों प्लेग के रोगियों की सेवा करते हुए कुछ ही घंटों के अंतराल में चल बसे। फिर भी उनकी पढ़ाई और देश के लिए पूर्ण शक्ति से कार्य साथ-साथ चलता रहा।

"वंदेमातरम आंदोलन संगठित करने के उद्द्यम में उन्हें विद्यालय से निष्कासित होना पड़ा। जब वह मेडिकल कॉलेज कलकत्ता में पढ़ाई करने के लिए गए तो वहां क्रांतिकारियों से संपर्क कर इधर भी क्रांति करने की सोचा। उस समय के नेताओं गांधी जी, लोकमान्य तिलक, सुभाषचंद्र बोस, सावरकर जी, अंबेडकर जी, भगत सिंह, चंद्रशेखर आजाद, राजगुरु सबसे उनका संपर्क हुआ, संवाद हुआ। उनका भी अपना निरीक्षण और अध्ययन था। उनको यह ध्यान आया कि बार-बार देश को किसी अंधकार से निकालने का काम न करना पड़े, इसलिए एक मूल काम करना आवश्यक है कि अपने समाज में जो कुछ गड़बड़ बातें घुस गई हैं, जिसके कारण हम दुर्बल हैं, बाकी लोग हमें लूटते हैं, पीटते हैं, अगर हम इसे ठीक कर लें तो लुटने, पीटने का यह सिलसिला समाप्त हो जाएगा। यह काम कोई और नहीं कर रहा, तो इस काम को मैं करूंगा सोचकर अपने समाज को संगठित करने के लिए उन्होंने अनेक प्रयोग किए और इसके अंदर से जो कार्य पद्धति निकली उसका नाम है 'राष्ट्रीय स्वयंसेवक संघ'।"

अपनी बात को विस्तार देते हुए सरसंघ चालक ने कहा कि संघ हिंदू



The Ehsaas Women with Mohan Bhagwat

समाज को संगठित करता है, क्योंकि हिंदू अपने देश का उत्तरदायी समाज और स्थाई भाव है। हमारे देश के मुसलमान भी हिंदवी मुसलमान कहे जाते हैं। हिंदू कहने से आज पूजा में फंसा देते हैं, पर वह मूल अर्थ नहीं है। यह ज्ञान हिंदुस्तान के प्राचीन लोगों के अनुभव से विकसित हुई कि संपूर्ण अस्तित्व एक है, इसलिए विविधता को लेकर झगड़ा नहीं करना। सृष्टि से झगड़ा नहीं करना, सबको साथ लेकर चलना। मनुष्य इस समस्त सृष्टि का हिस्सा है तो उसका दायित्व है कि सब ठीक से चले। इसको हमारे यहां धर्म कहते हैं। धर्म जो समाज जीवन की धारणा करता है, जोड़ता है और उन्नति करता है। धर्म मतलब पूजा नहीं। पूजा एक अनुभव हो सकता है। अपने यहां हिंदू धर्म में अनेक पूजाएं हैं। पूजा न करने वाले भी हिंदू हैं। ये ऐसा एक विचार है, जो सारी दुनिया को जोड़ता है।

संघ प्रमुख ने कहा कि चाहे हमारी भाषा कोई भी हो, हमारी भाषाई परंपरा में विचार यही है। उस विचार को लेकर हमारे यहां जो ग्रंथ बने- रामायण बना, महाभारत बना, इतिहास हो या कल्पना हो, सभी भाषाओं में एक है। भाषा अनेक है भाव एक है। पंथ, संप्रदाय अनेक हैं, पर वे शुरू यहीं से होते हैं कि सब कुछ एक है। दर्शन अलग-अलग होने के बावजूद

रहना कैसे है, इसके लिए पांच यम और पांच नियम बनाते हैं। आचरण का उपदेश सबका एक है। सब जगह एक अंदरूनी एकता है। आचरण की इस परंपरा को लोगों ने जीकर बताया। सत्य वचन, सत्य वचन केवल बात नहीं हुई। हरिश्चंद्र जैसे चरित्र बताए जाते हैं। गांधी जी तक यह परंपरा चल रही है।

ऐसे हर बात को पीढ़ी दर पीढ़ी जिया और हर पीढ़ी को एजुकेट करने की एक व्यवस्था बनी, वह हमारी संस्कृति है।

हिंदू कहने से आज पूजा में फंसा देते हैं, पर वह मूल अर्थ नहीं है। यह ज्ञान हिंदुस्तान के प्राचीन लोगों के अनुभव से विकसित हुई कि संपूर्ण अस्तित्व एक है, इसलिए विविधता को लेकर झगड़ा नहीं करना। सृष्टि से झगड़ा नहीं करना, सबको साथ लेकर चलना

सरसंघ चालक ने कहा कि गुणवत्ता के आधार पर दुनिया को ज्ञान देने का अपना जो कर्तव्य है, उसमें योगदान देने के लिए लोगों को तैयार करने का काम राष्ट्रीय स्वयंसेवक संघ कर रहा है। एक ही काम उसे करना है दूसरा कोई काम उसे नहीं करना। पिछले 96 वर्षों से संघ ने यही काम किया है। संघ के एक लाख तीस हजार स्वयंसेवक देश भर में, सुदूर वनों में, देहातों में अपने अपने ढंग से ऐसे कार्यक्रम सरकारी पैसा लिए बिना, समाज की मदद के आधार पर चलाते हैं। जीवन के हर क्षेत्र में और सब जगह आज वे नंबर एक पर हैं। संघ का काम उन्हें डायरेक्टली या

रिमोटली कंट्रोल करना नहीं है। संघ की कार्यपद्धति में नियंत्रण नहीं है, संघ प्रेरणा देता, संस्कार देता है। फिर वे अपने विवेक से कार्य करते हैं। ऐसा संघ



Memento from Poonam Anand, Ehsaas Woman of Ranchi



Memento from Unnati Singh, Ehsaas Woman of Indore



Neelima Dalmia Adhar, Ehsaas Woman of New Delhi, with Mohan Bhagwat



Memento from Nidhi Garg (left) and Vedula Ramalakshmi, Ehsaas Women of Bhubaneswar



Memento from Aanchal Garcha, Ehsaas Woman of Raipur



Memento from Ankita Khattri, Ehsaas Woman of Varanasi



Memento from Anshu Mehra, Ehsaas Woman of Meerut

आपके सामने है, अब आप अपने सवाल पूछ सकते हैं।

इंदौर की उन्नति सिंह ने युवाओं को संदेश देने की बात कही कि वे अपनी उर्जा को देश के काम में कैसे लाएं? सरसंघ चालक का उत्तर था, "संदेश की जगह उदाहरण देने की आवश्यकता है। युवा सुनकर नहीं, देखकर चलेगा। उसमें उत्साह है, उर्जा है, वह अच्छे की तरफ स्वाभाविक रूप से आकर्षित होता है। हम इसीलिए कहते हैं कि स्वयं अच्छे बनो। कृतित्व संपन्न बनो। मनुष्यता सीखो। यशस्वी जीवन से बेहतर है सार्थक जीवन। मानवता अधिक समृद्ध होनी चाहिए, देश अधिक बड़ा बनना चाहिए, समाज के दुख दर्दों का निवारण होना चाहिए, परिवार अच्छा होना चाहिए, तब हमारे बड़प्पन की सार्थकता है। भुवनेश्वर की वेदुला रामालक्ष्मी के वीर सावरकर संबंधी सवाल पर सरसंघ चालक का उत्तर था कि उनके जीवन पर प्रकाश पहले ही पड़ चुका है। उनका सारा जीवन राष्ट्र को समर्पित था। उन्होंने क्रांतिकारी राह चुनी। वह अखंड हिंदुस्तान के समर्थक थे। अंग्रेजों ने भारत की एकता को खंडित

महिलाओं की भूमिका, हमारे यहाँ बराबर की है। रथ के दो पहिए की तरह। परंपरा से हमारा यह दृष्टिकोण है कि पुरुष महिला समान हैं। कोई किसी से श्रेष्ठ नहीं हैं। दोनों को मिलकर श्रेष्ठ होना है

किया। मुसलमानों का अलगाव फिर से खड़ा करने वाले अंग्रेज थे। सावरकर इन सबसे लड़ते रहे। सावरकर स्वातंत्र्यवीर थे पर उन्हें गांधीजी की हत्या के आरोप में कठघरे में खड़ा होना पड़ा।

नोएडा की शिंजिनी कुलकर्णी ने नृत्य और संगीत से जुड़ा सवाल पूछा। सरसंघ चालक ने कहा कि हमारी कलाओं की अपनी ताकत है 'सत्यं शिवम् सुंदरम्'। मराठी फिल्म का उल्लेख करते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि कला का उद्देश्य दिव्यता का साक्षात्कार कराना है। अगर हम युवाओं तक दिव्यता का साक्षात्कार करने वाली अनुभूति पहुंचा दें, तो हम अपने लक्ष्य को प्राप्त कर सकते हैं। रांची से पूनम आनंद ने जानना चाहा कि यदि हम सरकारी फार्मों से जाति का कॉलम हटा दें तो क्या हमारी राष्ट्रियता और मजबूत हो जाएगी? सरसंघ चालक का त्वरित उत्तर था, "हमारी राष्ट्रियता और मजबूती की तरफ जाएगी तो जाति का कॉलम अपने आप हट जाएगा।" भुवनेश्वर की निधि गर्ग ने भागवत से बचपन की यादों को लेकर प्रश्न पूछा तो सरसंघ चालक ने कहा कि संघ की ही याद है। यह मेरे साथ बचपन से,



Memento from Apra Kuchhal, Honorary Convenor of Rajasthan & Central India Affairs, PKF



Memento from Deepika Goyal, Ehsaas Woman of Chennai



Memento from Garima Tiwari, Ehsaas Woman of Bilaspur



Memento from Jyoti Kapoor, Ehsaas Woman of Nagpur

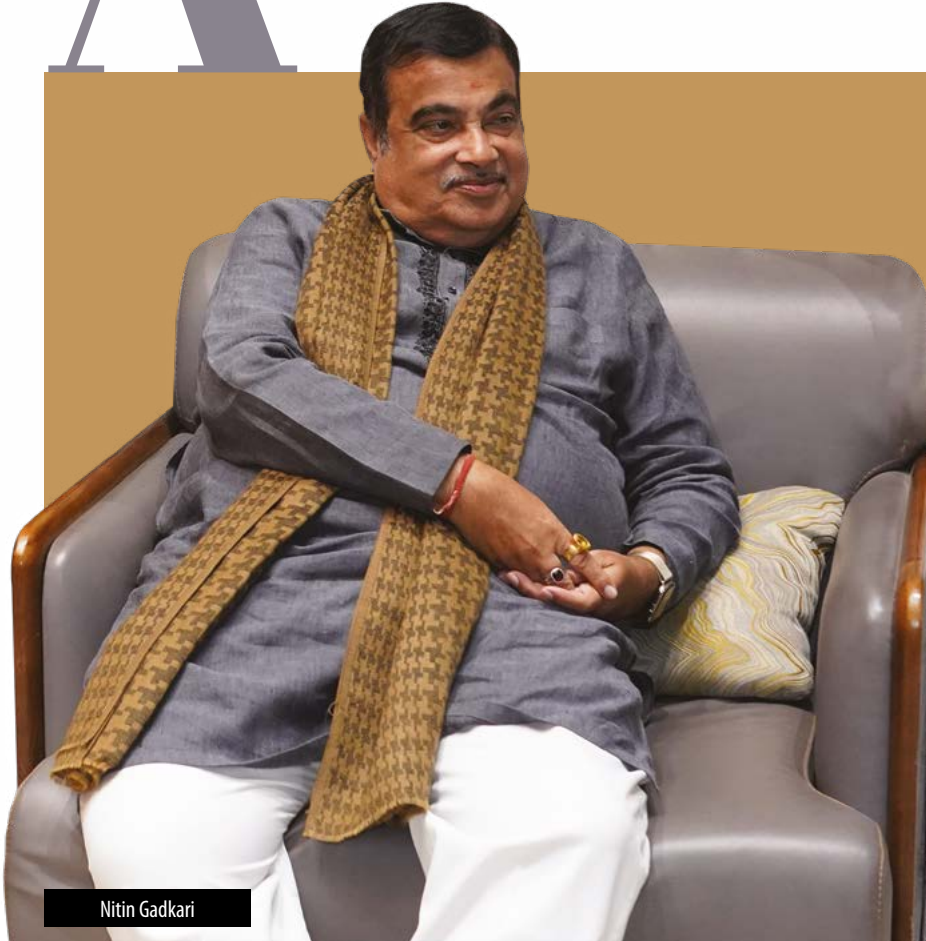
चार साल की आयु से साथ है। दिल्ली की नीलिमा डालमिया आधार ने अपने पिता रामकृष्ण डालमिया के उल्लेख के साथ गौ हत्या, अहिंसा, मुसलमान और संघ की इमेज से जुड़ा सवाल पूछा, तो सरसंघ चालक ने कहा कि संघ को विज्ञापन नहीं करना है। संघ के स्वयंसेवक केवल सेवा के कार्य में जाते हैं। *ना भय देत काहू को, ना भय जाने आप।* गाय के संवर्धन, संरक्षण के साथ सरकार, प्रशासन, कानून, संविधान की मर्यादा में रहकर कार्य होना चाहिए।

बिलासपुर की गरिमा तिवारी के सांस्कृतिक, धार्मिक, आध्यात्मिक संरक्षण के सवाल पर सरसंघ चालक ने कहा कि हिंदू तो आध्यात्मिकता से निकलता है। *पोथी पढ़ पढ़ जग मुआ...* का उदाहरण देते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि बोलने से ज्यादा स्वयं अनुभव कर दूसरों को और खुद के जीवन को देना है। *हम अच्छे पथ के सच्चे बने।* मेरठ की अंशु मेहरा ने शाखा से जुड़ा सवाल पूछा ? तो सरसंघ चालक ने कहा हमारा विश्वास है कि लोग देखें और समझें। पहले हम बहुत छोटे थे। हमारा भाषण लोग सुनते हैं या नहीं पता नहीं, पर हमारे स्वयंसेवकों का आचरण जो देखते हैं वे समझते हैं। हमारी पहुंच बढ़ रही है। रायपुर की आंचल गिरिजा ने सोशल मीडिया पर युवा वर्ग के जुड़ने से संबंधित सवाल पूछा तो सरसंघ चालक ने कहा कि संघ के स्वयंसेवक भी सोशल मीडिया पर हैं, पर वे ट्रोलिंग वगैरह का काम नहीं करते।

जयपुर की अपरा कुच्छल ने आत्मनिर्भर भारत में महिलाओं की भूमिका पर सवाल पूछा तो सरसंघ चालक का उत्तर था कि महिलाओं की भूमिका, हमारे यहां बराबर की है। रथ के दो पहिए की तरह। परंपरा से हमारा यह दृष्टिकोण है कि पुरुष महिला समान हैं। कोई किसी से श्रेष्ठ नहीं हैं। दोनों को मिलकर श्रेष्ठ होना है। गृहस्थ जीवन समान धारणा है। महिला सशक्तीकरण, महिलाओं का प्रबोधन आवश्यक है। हमारे यहां महिलाओं में बहुत विविधता है। हमारे देश में घर के संस्कार माता के हाथ में हैं। बिना उसके प्रबुद्ध और सशक्त हुए भारत खड़ा ही नहीं हो सकता। सरसंघचालक ने कहा कि संघ अनुभव से समझ में आता है। जैसे चीनी की मिठास पर लिखा और पढ़ा जा सकता है, पर आधा चम्मच खाने से जो अनुभव होता है, मिठास मिलती है, वह अलग है। संघ के कार्यकर्ता मेरी बात इसलिए मानते हैं कि यह मन से मन का संबंध है। आप सुन सुनाकर अपना मत नहीं बनाइए, बल्कि संघ को देखिए और अपना मत बनाइए।

अंत में अहसास वूमेन वेदुला रामालक्ष्मी, निधि गर्ग, गरिमा तिवारी, दीपिका, उन्नति सिंह, अंशु मेहरा, ज्योति, नीलिमा डालमिया आधार, अनंत माला, शिंजिनी कुलकर्णी, वंदना सिंह, अमिता, आंचल, पूनम, अंकिता और अपरा कुच्छल ने अपने-अपने शहर से लाए स्मृति चिन्ह प्रदान किए।

A Meeting to Remember



Nitin Gadkari

The Ehsaas Women's trip to Nagpur was made more memorable by a visit to the residence of Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways, Nitin Gadkari, on his special invitation. The **Ehsaas Women** spoke about their work and their passions and left the Union Minister's home enriched with information, encouragement, memories and a copy of his book, *Unmasking India*



Ehsaas Women with Nitin Gadkari



Nitin Gadkari address Ehsaas Women

It was an enthralling experience to meet Nitin Gadkari in Nagpur. In the first place, it came as a surprise to us. It was not on the itinerary. He was so down to earth and simple. We met him in the late evening after he had finished his day's work. He had invited us to his home.



We were well-received by his staff. He was friendly and motivating. Everyone appreciated him for the most commendable work that he has been doing. He asked everyone their name and asked them about what they are doing. He shared information about various interesting projects. He showed us a rug that was made from waste material generated by the textile industry. He told us about government subsidies if anyone implements a project like this. Women who are running NGOs could actually provide employment through this venture.

It was truly an inspiring experience for all the Ehsaas Women. He gifted us his books and asked us to share our feedback. His clarity of thought and approachability made the whole meeting special. It was insightful in terms of all the great opportunities he shared and ideas about how we could contribute to society.

— Nidhi Garg, Bhubaneswar

प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन द्वारा आयोजित नागपुर यात्रा का अनुभव साझा करना, अपने आप में पूनः उस यात्रा से गुजरने जैसा है, माननीय सरसंघचालक डॉ मोहन भागवत जी से मुलाकात के अनुभव को फिर कभी बताऊंगी |



अभी तो केन्द्रीय मंत्री श्री नितिन गडकरी जी से मिलने का समय तय था, हम सब एहसास वुमन बस चलने की तैयारी में थे कि उनके कार्यालय से फोन आया, सर एक मीटिंग में थे वहां थोरी देर होगी, उन्होंने कहा है कि आप लोगों को सूचना दे दें कि आप लोग आधा घंटा देर से चलें, यह था उनका बडप्पन कि हमें वहाँ इंतजार न करना पड़े. हम सब उनके आवासीय कार्यालय पहुंचे पता चला मंत्री जी हम सबका इंतजार कर रहे हैं, इतने सारे दायित्वों को पूरा करते हुए सामाजिक सरोकार से जुड़े रहना उनके सरल और नियोजित व्यक्तित्व को दर्शाता है. प्रत्येक एहसास वुमन से परिचय लेना, उनके कार्यक्षेत्र के विषय में जानकारी लेना, उनके नेतृत्वकर्ता गुण को बता रहा था. महिलाओं का समुह था हम सब लगे फोटो खिंचवाने सबके आग्रह को स्वीकार किया और अपनी लिखी किताब हस्ताक्षर कर सबको भेंट स्वरूप दिया. गडकरी जी के बारे में जो सुना था कि वे योग्य प्रशासक और family man हैं, सही सुना था. उनसे मिल कर लगा कि परिवार के किसी बड़े सदस्य से मुलाकात हुई, स्नेह और सम्मान ले कर वापस आई

— Poonam Anand, Ranchi

Each person you meet influences your mental universe in a way that has the potential to inspire you to do more.



Recently **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** gifted the **Ehsaas Women** from different states of India one such memorable and inspirational experience by organising an opportunity to meet Shri Nitin Gadkari. He shared his wisdom and vision for a better India. It was a conversation that inspired new ideas. As it is said, all the people we meet in life add some value to our lives and meeting with Gadkari ji was motivating for us all. A special thanks to **Ehsaas Women** Apra Kuchhal and Monica Bhagwagar for arranging and coordinating this meet.

— Jyoti Kapoor, Nagpur

A Day in the Life of an Ehsaas Woman



Apra Kuchhal

The pandemic has been quite harsh on all of us. These two years (almost) have gone by attending virtual events and sessions. The in-person hugs have been substituted with emojis. The longing and excitement to meet with the other Ehsaas women was more than the efforts of hopping onto a brutally early morning flight.

I knew a warm sun will be rising, coral and gold, bringing with it a new day to be grateful for.

'It will be a good day', I self-affirmed, muttering my gratitude in prayer. Even the unusual delay in arriving in Nagpur didn't dampen my spirits.

With humongous hugs, happiness, *ho-halla* we greeted each other as if parted for years, and started our day with a visit to Resham Bagh, the headquarters of RSS. All of us dressed in our traditional saris arrived at the venue and were greeted warmly by the officials. When going to such places of high security and significance, the

feeling of excitement has no measure. Our visit started with a walk around the premises of the headquarters with Shri Arvind Kukde, who shared stories of the origin, important events and moments of the formation and existence of the Sangh. Then we all proceeded towards the venue for our session with the RSS Chief, Shri Mohan Bhagwat. With numerous cameras, coordination, instructions and directions, it felt almost like we were attending a session at one of the State Legislative Assemblies. Then came a moment where I, along with my colleague, were asked to receive Shri Bhagwat at the entrance. A fleet of cars with sirens came in as if it was a scene from a film. We stood with butterflies in our stomach, waiting to greet the Big Boss. Dressed soberly and elegantly in a yellow kurta and white pyjama, Shri Bhagawat got down from the car, a simple yet powerful man with a magical persona and vigour. In no time he won everyone's hearts. He spoke effortlessly on every topic and answered every question with ease, enthusiasm and eagerness. He accepted different traditional mementos from all the ladies and posed patiently for pictures. This was followed by an informal chit-chat over yummy Maharashtrian snacks and tea.

Before leaving the premises we all ensured that we had captured these precious moments from every possible angle.

The sun had already set and we were excited to go back to our hotel to relax. Little did we know that the day was not complete, we had another meeting, this time we were invited by Honorable Union Minister Shri Nitin Gadkari to his residence.

Many of us had taken early morning flights to reach Nagpur and had to return the next morning. But not for a moment did we feel

Dressed soberly and elegantly in a yellow kurta and white pyjama, Shri Bhagawat got down from the car, a simple yet a powerful man with a magical persona and vigor. In no time he won everyone's hearts

Shri Gadkari shared his knowledge and experience of MSMEs, best out-of-waste products, women-oriented schemes, and more. He also showed rugs made out of waste and encouraged women to contribute towards nation-building. He gifted each one of us his books

tired. On the contrary, after a little break, we all gathered in the hotel's lobby to leave for Shri Gadkari's residence. Some went in cars and some on foot. We all reached his residence for a meet and greet session. He was very welcoming and heard each of us patiently. All of us shared about our businesses, work and passion. Shri Gadkari shared his knowledge and experience of MSMEs, best out-of-waste products, women-oriented schemes, and more. He also showed rugs made out of waste and encouraged women to contribute towards nation-building. He gifted each one of us his books. With beautiful memories we left his residence.

Now was our time—**Ehsaas** Time of adda, gossip, singing, enjoying and relaxation. We all took cozy corners in the Ethyl Bar of Radisson Hotel. There were countless songs, poetries, couplets, jokes, selfies and laughter as we all sat and chit-chatted till the wee hours, till we had no energy left, till the hotel staff told us politely that they were closing.

Many of us left in the morning, many got a chance to again catch up over breakfast. With promises to meet again, we all had our hearts filled with love and our phones with photographs.

Prabha Khaitan

Foundation has given all of us—the **Ehsaas** women—an opportunity to meet, participate and learn from some very important personalities. It has also given

us a chance to be the LINK, LEARN from each other and be LEADERS in our respective communities.

Bye-bye my fellow **Ehsaas** women, till we meet again for another exciting event.

Apra Kuchhal

Honorary Convenor of Rajasthan & Central India Affairs



Nandita Das



Ina Puri

The Similarities Between Manto and My Father were Uncanny — Nandita Das

Nandita Das has been one of the most thought-provoking actors and filmmakers of our times, someone who never hesitates to stimulate the public imagination on the most contemporary issues and debates.

At the latest session of *Ek Mulakat*, organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** at ITC Royal Bengal, Das was the guest of honour and engaged in a freewheeling conversation about her stellar career. Interacting with Das on an evening filled with anecdotes was writer, art curator and **Ehsaas** Woman of Gurugram Ina Puri.

Having acted in over 40 feature films in 10 different languages, Das was made Chevalier l'Ordre des Artes et des Lettres (Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters) by the French government in 2011, one of the highest civilian awards in France. In the same year, Das also became the first Indian woman to be inducted into the International Hall of Fame of the International Women's Forum in Washington, DC. Das has served twice on the jury of the Cannes Film Festival—first in 2005 with the likes of Faith Akin, Salma Hayek, Toni Morrison and Javier Bardem,

and again in 2013 (on the short films jury) alongside names like Jane Campion and Nicoletta Braschi.

Over the last few years, however, Das has been recognised mostly for directing her second film, *Manto* (2018), based on the story of the acclaimed Indo-Pakistani writer Sadat Hasan Manto. Speaking about the enigmatic character of Manto, Das observed how he reminded her of her father: "My father (Jatin Das) is a lot like Manto, and the similarities were uncanny. Both mavericks and misfits, both misunderstood, both very impractical and righteous. I could relate to a number of things about Manto and having grown up with my father, I felt I would know Manto a little better than those who formed their impressions just by reading him and about him."

A deep connection with Manto eventually led Das to make the film, even though the poor distribution of her directorial debut, *Firaaq* (2008) had led her to "swear that I would never make another film." Premiering at the Toronto Film Festival, *Firaaq* travelled to more than 50 festivals, winning a host of awards, but failed to make a mark at the Indian box office.

Box office success, however, did not elude *Manto*, with Nawazuddin Siddiqui delivering a masterful performance as the titular lead. Notwithstanding Siddiqui's brilliance, Rasika Dugal's turn as Safia (Manto's wife) remains remarkable, and Das acknowledged that fleshing out Safia's character was not an easy task.

Das revealed that getting information about Safia was hard. Even though the daughters had more memories about Safia, they did not have a great deal to say apart from reflecting on Safia's supportive and soft-spoken nature. To delve deeper, Das had visited Safia's sister in Lahore—the only person who had memories of Safia and Manto together.

Safia's sister mentioned to Das how Safia had developed a skin disease a few months before Manto's death that just would not subside. But after Manto died, the disease disappeared in a month, which perhaps shows the extent of the emotional stress that Safia was under during the last years of Manto's life and how that stress had started affecting her physically.

This recollection about Safia had "triggered" Das, making her decide that "I am going to give voice to everything she felt, I am going to give her a little more agency."

In the next segment of the discussion, Das spoke about her acting career, which has seen her work with some of the most distinguished directors of Bengal, from Mrinal Sen (in *Amar Bhuvan*) to Rituparno Ghosh (in *Shubho Mahurat*) to Suman Ghosh (in *Podokkhep*). Talking about Deepa Mehta's 1996 film *Fire*, where Das was paired with Shabana Azmi, both Das and Puri recalled the stir the film had created upon its release. "I feel that *Fire* triggered

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”

a conversation, and if 20 years later, the Act was repealed, then *Fire* had a role to play in making change happen in the public domain," said Das, referring to Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which criminalised all sexual acts "against the order of nature" until it was declared as unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of India in 2018.

In 2020, with most of the world locked down on account of COVID-19, Das "just got up one morning and wrote a seven-page script." The result was a short film

called *Listen to Her*, which addresses domestic violence, something that has worsened during the pandemic. Explaining her motivation behind writing the film, Das said: "The whole period was very disturbing... And then all these stories about increase in domestic violence started coming up, and not just from India but all over the world—America, the United Kingdom, France. That created a sense of chaos [which ultimately led to the film]."

In the final part of the conversation, Das spoke about her involvement in the "Dark is Beautiful" campaign, remembering how she was initially unsure of whether the internalised colourism of Indian society deserved standalone attention, before being gladly proven wrong by waves of curious viewers. Das also brought up *India's Got Colour*, a music video she had made in 2019 starring Radhika Apte, Vikrant Massey and Swara Bhaskar to mark a decade of her original campaign against colourism.

Ek Mulakat Kolkata, organised with the support of Ehsaas Women, is presented by Shree Cement Ltd in association with ITC Royal Bengal



Deepak Menezes



Malika Varma



Shafali Rawat Agarwal

The Nitty-Gritty of Writing



Richa S. Mukherjee



Dipali Bhasin

To Richa S. Mukherjee, every book represents a body of experiences. She believes when one writes with complete honesty and channelises their experiences on paper, their work gains a certain uniqueness that sets it apart. In conversation with Dipali Bhasin, **Ehsaas** Woman of Delhi, Mukherjee engaged in a lively chat about her process of writing and journey of becoming an author in a session of **The Write Circle** Noida, organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**.

Mukherjee is a Mumbai-based blogger, writer and poet. A former advertising professional, she became instantly popular with her debut novel, *I Didn't Expect to be Expecting*, a humorous tale on an accidental pregnancy. Her novels have been snapped up for screen adaptations and her latest book, *Excess Baggage*, is headed for the big screen. She is a **SHEROES** champ and Blogchatter mentor who has authored several e-singles, anthologies and audiobooks. Dipali Bhasin is a fashion and food blogger, fashion designer and author.

On being asked about the trajectory of her life, Mukherjee said her journey started at the confluence of her travels from city to city. Change is the only constant she has known because her father was in government service. "That one memory I can never get rid of is sitting in the back of an ambassador and moving across cities. While I was meeting people, changing cities, homes, gathering new experiences, I think the writer within me was marinating. I had no intention or desire of becoming a writer at that time... Somehow my penchant for

experimentation reflected in the jobs I chose... I was in journalism for a long while and then in advertising," said Mukherjee.

It was in one of the most chaotic phases of life that Mukherjee decided to write. "When you don't have a minute to spare and you're buried under diapers, during my maternity break was when I suddenly realised I wanted to write a book. It was a very organic process. I was looking at it like a change for me to channelise the circus that was happening around me. Writing was such an unencumbered process that I enjoyed it thoroughly and decided I needed to continue doing this," said the author.

Talking about her methodology, Mukherjee said writing is a very personal and individual process for every writer—her way of going about it wouldn't match anyone else's. As long as she kept her eyes and ears open and acted like a sponge, the ideas kept coming to her. "My ideas come to me as a logline. Logline, in screenplay parlance, is a one-line summation of what your idea is... I write down my logline and from there on—most people will tell you they go on to the plotline because that's sacrosanct, you need to get your story in place—I move on to my characters first because for me that's the most fun part," said Mukherjee.



Shinjini Kulkarni



Kanchan Chetal

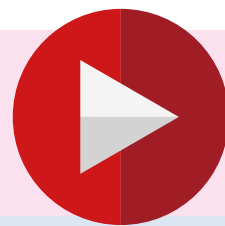
The author believes if plotlines constitute the skeleton of a story, research is the muscle and sinew on top that helps writers flex characters and conversations in it. That's what makes for compelling story writing. Mukherjee added, "I go into the nitty-gritty of understanding who I'm writing about. That's why sometimes I take great umbrage when some people say research isn't required in contemporary fiction or certain genres. Yes, there are certain genres that require more. But for an authentic voice, you must understand your characters completely."

The Write Circle Noida, organised with the support of Ehsaas Women, is presented by Shree Cement Ltd, in association with Dainik Jagran



Tishani Doshi

When Words Are Like Gossamer



spent quite a lot of time listening to Abida Parveen on loop and trying to understand why I miss home. At a time when home felt so far away, her songs, her pitch, texture and form came together to create something divine: in my case, invoking the feeling of being home."

"Can poetry, too, have this element of bringing about such a transformation?" Doshi continued. "Writing poetry then becomes an act of reconciliation. We are a

species with great capacity to create art and intricate systems that move the world, but we also create horror. To be able to hold these two ideas together creates the tension that forms poetry. Each poem, after all, is a complex labyrinth of emotions."

When Doshi writes prose, does she find her writing becoming more evocative than she would like? "I am always interested in how language can

be used best," said Doshi. "There's definitely a difference between prose and poetry. In a poem, because of its 'liveness' and form, evocative language isn't wasted because that's what is needed. In prose, there is a narrative and a plot; one has to figure out how to use language to move forward. As a poet, writing prose does require a shift. But I do think that as writers we are trying not to waste words. I try not to write fiction and poetry at the same time. It would be too confusing!"

The engaging exchange of ideas between the two authors concluded with a Q&A session with the virtual audience in which Doshi addressed a multitude of thoughts about hope, beauty and the earliest forms of eco-poetry, such as works by one of the greatest Indian minds, A.K. Ramanujan.

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



Mita Kapur

Tishani Doshi's identity as a master of poetry and prose is well-known. Born to Welsh and Gujarati parentage, Doshi is both an award-winning writer and a skilled dancer. She has authored 11 books of poetry and fiction, with the latest, *A God at the Door*, having been published in 2021. Her first book of poetry, *Countries of the Body* (2006), won a Forward Prize for Best First Collection, and her third collection, *Girls Are Coming Out of the Woods*, was shortlisted for the Ted Hughes Award 2018. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** organised a virtual session of **The Write Circle Jaipur** with Doshi. In conversation with her was author and the founder of Siyahi, Mita Kapur.

Kapur set the tone for the session by quoting some of Doshi's lines and observing how she has always been fascinated by the way in which Doshi's mind functions. "The inherent beauty in your poetry... it's almost gossamer, like lace," said Kapur. "How do you put all these words and emotions together?" "I am teaching a course about poetry," replied Doshi, who is a visiting associate professor at New York University, Abu Dhabi. "For me, poetry is a magical, slippery thing that escapes definition; we can't all agree on what a poet is. As a reader and maker of poems, I try to recognise how a poem is different from another piece of writing. During the first lockdown, I

Congratulations to Tishani Joshi and Mita Kapur for a delightful session. Doshi explained the true essence of poetry writing so well.

— Lata Kaku

The event was tremendously absorbing. There were no highs and lows; it was a steady, smooth gallop. Nothing was left unsaid.

— Aruna Pandey

The Courageous Act of Being Honest



Aanchal Garcha



Siddhartha Mallya

“Mental health does not care whether you are rich, poor, Asian, African, European, Muslim, Hindu, woman, man or gender neutral. Everyone is susceptible to suffering from mental health issues. No matter who you are or where you come from, you have a right to feel the way you do, and to claim it openly. It is an illness, after all. And there are different kinds of treatments available for it

”

Siddhartha Mallya is no stranger to the limelight. Having been born into one of India's most prominent business families, the Kingfisher scion has still carved out an identity for himself as an actor and a model. He worked hard for it as well; after being a part of the business world for a brief period, he trained at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama at the University of London, and graduated with a Master of Arts degree in acting. His feature film debut was in *Brahman Naman*, which premiered at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival. Now, of course, he is an author as well, having penned his memoir, *If I'm Honest*, in which he talks with candour and humour about his struggles with depression, obsessive compulsive disorder, alcohol abuse and a turbulent childhood.

Prabha Khaitan Foundation organised a virtual session of **The Write Circle** Jaipur to welcome the new author and talk about his book. In conversation with Mallya was **Ehsaas** Woman of Raipur, Aanchal Garcha.

The moderator delved straight into the question that was on everyone's mind: what inspired Mallya to write his memoir, which is making news and going viral on social media? "I did a series last year on Instagram where I spoke about mental health," replied Mallya. "And I

saw the amazing response that the series received from people, mainly in India, especially youngsters. That made me think that I must keep doing whatever I can to keep shining a light on the subject of mental health and getting more and more people to talk about it. That, for me, is where the book came from."

Garcha pointed out that while Mallya grew up with privilege and several material comforts, he talks a lot in the book about feeling emotionally deprived. How much of his life and choices have been affected by the nagging fear—one which he mentions in the book—that anything he did would be viewed as the actions of an individual who got lucky because of who his father was? "Honestly, I would say, quite a lot," replied Mallya. "There's an entire chapter in the book in which I speak about how a constant fear of being judged or ridiculed in some way or another because of my family background affected me and some of the decisions I made. It drove me to want to prove to people that I was more than just what they might have thought I was."

Garcha reminded Mallya about a poignant observation he had made in the book: mental health does not discriminate, and no one is immune to mental health issues. "This point needs to be driven home," she said, "because many people do not get this." "For me, this is one of the biggest points I wanted to get across in the book. Mental health does not care whether you are rich, poor, Asian, African, European, Muslim, Hindu, woman, man or gender neutral. Everyone is susceptible to suffering from mental health issues. No matter who you are or

where you come from, you have a right to feel the way you do, and to claim it openly. It is an illness, after all. And there are different kinds of treatments available for it."

On the subject of addiction and alcohol consumption, Garcha asked Mallya about the nuanced view he has expressed in the book on the subject of responsible drinking. How does one drill the idea of responsible consumption into the minds of the youth? "Like anything in life, the longer you try to keep something away from someone, the more there is a desire to get that thing. So this is not just about alcohol or responsibility; it comes down to finding a balance. Most young people are addicts; they might not drink alcohol or do drugs, but they spend all their time scrolling through Instagram on their phones. Is that not an addiction? So we must stop looking at addiction only in the context of narcotics, tobacco or alcohol; an addiction is an addiction, regardless of what it involves. We must teach youngsters moderation or balance; not just in relation to alcohol, but in relation to life."

With that observation, the discussion was opened up to the virtual audience, who engaged Mallya in a series of relevant questions. How does Mallya deal with loneliness and pain? "With pain, it's important to accept that it exists and is a part of life. You can do a lot of self work, but pain will always be there. But dealing with pain and loneliness involves surrendering to it, acknowledging it and allowing oneself to be vulnerable to it. It's far easier to let it pass through than to fight it."

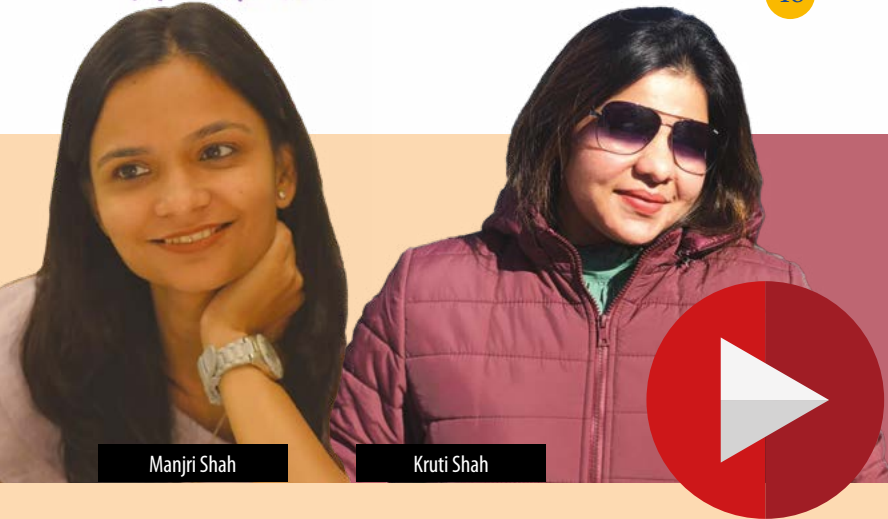
What is Mallya most grateful for? "I'll tell you what I'm most grateful for at this moment," replied the author. "I'm grateful that I was given an opportunity to write a book that might be able to help one other person in the world if not more. I am truly grateful for having been given that chance by my publishers and everyone. It has been incredible to be able to share my story in the hope that it may be able to help other people out there."



Srutimala Duara



Unnati Singh



Manjari Shah

Kruti Shah

Dance the Day Away

It was an afternoon full of fun, song and dance with instructors Manjari Shah and Kruti Shah in a virtual session of **Muskaan** Kinaesthetic Learning, organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** for classes I and II of Pinewood School, Saharanpur. Sumitra Ray, Student Programme Advisor at the Foundation, introduced and welcomed the guests to the session.

Manjari and Kruti hail from the Academy of Creative Movement and Dance. They have introduced kinaesthetic learning into early child education, the word 'kinaesthetic' referring to a person's ability to sense body position and movement. The Academy specialises in teaching movement and dance to children up to the age of six years.

Manjari began the session by asking the children if they were excited to be back in school. Spreading out her fingers, she pointed at the space between them and said this meant these hands were 'jazz hands'. Next, she brought her fingers together and said now these hands were 'blade hands'. "Now, make a fist. These are called fist hands... Jazz hands, blade hands and fist hands... We are all going to stand on our dancing spot. Find some place near you and stand. Make fist hands and roll—roll faster and then slow down. Now, on your dancing spot... jump and get your feet together," she added, prompting the enthusiastic children to follow her actions.

Manjari believes it's important for all of us to stay healthy and fit. "There are three very important things that we should do to keep our body strong and be very healthy. The first thing is to eat lots of fruits and vegetables. When you eat your lunch and dinner, your plate should look like a rainbow—it should be colourful with lots of different fruits and vegetables, because they give you vitamins and minerals... Another important thing is to drink a glass of milk every day to make your bones very strong. The second thing is to exercise... After we exercise, we get lots of muscles. The third thing is to get some sleep. After eating healthy food, after drinking a lot of milk and doing a lot of exercise, our body needs rest," she said.

After taking the children through a fun dance routine,

Manjari handed over the reins to Kruti who said she had felt like a child herself while dancing along with Manjari. Drawing a likeness to how gummy bear jellies move when touched, Kruti explained the way our bodies move to the excited children. "We all have to become gummy bears. All of us have to become jellies. Let's all wiggle and jiggle like jellies," said Kruti, demonstrating the moves to the children and asking them to spread out so that they didn't bump into each other while dancing.

As Kruti brought the session to a close, she asked the children to give themselves a pat on the back for being such amazing dancers. "I want to give you a flying kiss because all of you are fantastic. Did you know that you all can dance really very well? This pat is from your Kruti teacher and Manjari teacher because you all did amazing," she added.





Deoshankar Naveen

राजकमल चौधरी ने अपनी रचनाओं में महिला मुक्ति का मार्ग खोजा: देवशंकर नवीन



Kailash Kumar Mishra

स्त्री की स्वतंत्रता देह की स्वतंत्रता में नहीं

है, बल्कि उसकी निर्णय लेने की स्वतंत्रता में है, इसलिए यह जरूरी है।" यह कहना है प्रोफेसर देवशंकर नवीन का, जो प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन और मसि इंक की ओर से बिहार उद्योग संघ में आयोजित आखर के मासिक कार्यक्रम में बतौर अतिथि बोल रहे थे। आयोजकों की ओर से मसि इंक की आराधना प्रधान ने स्वागत और धन्यवाद दिया।

कार्यक्रम की शुरुआत में संवादकर्ता डॉ कैलाश कुमार मिश्र ने नवीन के अनुवादक, कवि, रचनाकार और साहित्यकार होने के साथ-साथ उनके अध्ययन-अध्यापन को लेकर बात की कि आखिर मैथिली, हिंदी और साइंस की पढ़ाई ने उनके लेखन को कैसे प्रभावित किया है? जवाब में नवीन ने कहा कि साइंस की पढ़ाई से हमको अध्यापन में बहुत मदद मिली। साइंस ने हमें यह बताया कि किसी विषय या रचना को समझा और पढ़ाया कैसे जाता है।

नवीन ने हिंदी और मैथिली के बड़े साहित्यकार राजकमल चौधरी पर अपनी बात विस्तार से रखी। उन्होंने बताया कि राजकमल चौधरी ने 12 साल की अल्पावधि में 850 से अधिक कविता, 10 से अधिक उपन्यास और 30 से अधिक कहानियां लिखीं। हिंदी के कई साहित्यकार बहुत बार उन्हें महिला विरोधी बताते हैं लेकिन उन्होंने अपनी रचना में महिला मुक्ति का मार्ग खोजा है। उनकी कहानी चंपाकली और विषधर में बेमेल शादी को दर्शाया गया है, उससे आप यह बात समझ सकते हैं। उनकी रचना में हिंदी में स्त्री अपनी सामर्थ्य को लेकर जबकि मैथिली में अपनी अस्तित्व की रक्षा के लिए खड़ी होती दिखाई गयी है।

नवीन ने अपने 3 कविता संग्रह ओनामासी, अखर खम्बा और चानन काजल पर भी बात की और अपनी एक कविता का पाठ भी किया। उनकी एक कविता का पाठ मिश्र ने भी किया। मैथिली साहित्य के गद्य और पद्य में स्त्री विमर्श के विषय पर उन्होंने कहा कि महिला विमर्श को देह से उठकर

निर्णय की स्वतंत्रता पर आना चाहिए। स्त्री विमर्श को सभी लोग सीमोन द बोउवार से जोड़कर देखते हैं जबकि विद्यापति ने 14वीं शताब्दी में स्त्री को लेकर लिखा है। उषा किरण खान के समय 3 महिला लेखिका थीं, जबकि हमारे समय सिर्फ 2, पर आज मैथिली में महिला स्वर मजबूत हो रहा है। इस बात का उदाहरण देते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि रोमिषा की कविता में स्त्री स्वर बहुत मजबूती के साथ दिखता है। उनकी कविता में स्त्री आंदोलन के स्वरूप में नहीं है। स्त्री के लिए परिवार ही जीवन होता है, यह बात महादेवी वर्मा ने कही है।

मैथिली साहित्य के आलोचना पद्धति पर बात करते हुए नवीन ने कहा कि मैथिली के शिखर पुरुष रामानंद झा रमण ने आलोचना के क्षेत्र में बहुत काम किया है। लेकिन मेरी हताशा मैथिली अध्यापकों से है जो नवतुरिया को वो आंख नहीं दे पा रहे हैं, जिससे वो साहित्य में मर्म को समझे या ठीक रचना कर सके। मिश्र ने नवीन के 5 फैक्टर क्या हैं? पूछा तो उनका उत्तर था,

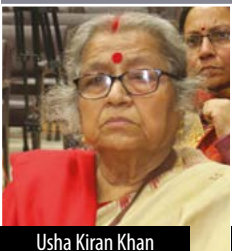
जिस विषय में मुझे जानकारी नहीं रहती उसे कहने से बचते हैं, साथ ही बिना पक्षपात के रचना की तारीफ या आलोचना करता हूं। उन्होंने मैथिली साहित्यकार चंदा झा के बारे में कहा कि वे भारतेंदु से धान बराबर भी कम नहीं थे, लेकिन हमारी भाषा के लोगों ने उन्हें वह सम्मान नहीं दिया, जिसके वे हकदार थे।

अनुवादक और अनुवाद के सम्बन्ध में नवीन ने कहा कि मैथिली में अनुवाद की नियति नहीं है। अनुवाद का अर्थ है कि ज्ञान का प्रकाश हमारे

लोगों तक पहुंचे, लेकिन मैथिली में सिर्फ यह अर्थोपार्जन या पुरस्कार के लिए किया जाता है। अपने बारे में नवीन ने कहा कि मैं यह नहीं जानता कि मैं क्या-क्या करता हूं लेकिन मैं यह जरूर जानता हूं कि मैं रिसर्च स्कॉलर बढ़िया हूं। अपनी आगामी योजनाओं पर उन्होंने कहा कि अभी विद्यापति पर काम कर रहा हूं, पर यह कब तक पूरा होगा कह नहीं सकता। हां एक उपन्यास लिखने की भी योजना है।

आखर बिहार के इस कार्यक्रम में वरिष्ठ साहित्यकार और पद्मश्री से सम्मानित उषा किरण खान, कथाकार अशोक, रामानंद झा रमण, उमेश मिश्रा, किशोर केशव और अजित आजाद सहित आमंत्रित साहित्य प्रेमी उपस्थित थे।

आखर बिहार के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट। सहयोगी हैं मसि इंक।



Usha Kiran Khan



Ramanand Jha Raman



Umesh Mishra



Ashok



Ajit Azad



Aradhana Pradhan

A Different Side of Netaji



Esha Dutta



Anshul Chaturvedi

A lot has been written about Subhas Chandra Bose, from his deeds of valour that helped India achieve independence from British rule to his differences with Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru to the circumstances around his disappearance or death in August 1945. Yet all these writings have focused on Bose, the leader, often at the expense of Bose, the person.

Anshul Chaturvedi, who has been fascinated with Bose for as long as he can remember, is interested in Bose, the person. At the latest session of **An Author's Afternoon**, an initiative of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, Chaturvedi discussed the personality of Bose and how the freedom fighter takes centre stage in his latest book of historical fiction, *A Bird from Afar*.

Organised at Taj Bengal, Kolkata, the interaction with Chaturvedi was moderated by Esha Dutta, **Ehsaas Woman of Kolkata**. Both Chaturvedi and Dutta were introduced to the audience by Gouri Basu, **Ehsaas Woman of Kolkata**.

"I ended up writing the book that I wanted to read. I wanted to focus on the more human aspects of Bose in my book, within the larger context of something else that fascinates me, which is the Second World War," began Chaturvedi, who references a letter written by Bose to his wife Emile Schenk in the title of *A Bird from Afar*.

On the war that gave Bose the opportunity for a fresh

movement in the struggle for Indian independence, Chaturvedi noted how "we in India don't fully comprehend the magnitude of the Second World War. We talk about it as if India was incidental to the war, but India actually came very close to being the centre of the war. If Singapore had fallen, India would have become the focal point of everything, and a German-Japanese alliance would have been heading towards India in order to supplant the British from the country."

Dutta praised Chaturvedi for his nuanced juxtaposition of fact and fiction in the book, before enquiring why the author chose 1942 as the point of divergence, the precise juncture where history makes way for imaginative writing in the book.

"I think it had to do with me contemplating what would've happened had the Germans won the Battle of Stalingrad (August 1942 - February 1943) instead of the Soviets," responded Chaturvedi.

The next topic up for discussion was the relationship between Bose and Swami Vivekananda and how the latter shaped the former's personality. "I had already written a book on Vivekananda (*The Vivekananda Handbook for Everyday Living*, which was published in June 2021), and wanted to show how Vivekananda's ideas formed the moral basis of Netaji's actions. Bose was deeply inspired by what he learnt from Vivekananda, as well as from



Usha Menon Bose



Gouri Basu



Rajiv Soni

Ramakrishna Paramhansa. A lot of Vivekananda's ideas echo in Bose's own writings. It's a pity that not too many people read what Bose had written himself," explained Chaturvedi.

The conversation then segued to the magnetism and appeal that Bose exuded with his personality, something that permeates Chaturvedi's plot. "Bose didn't believe in compromising, but at the same time, he was a sensitive man who felt deeply for others. In my fictionalised world, Bose ends up working closely with the most non-violent man in the 20th century (M.K. Gandhi) as well as the most violent one (Adolf Hitler), but plays second fiddle to neither," said Chaturvedi.

According to Chaturvedi, nobody in India had a clearer vision of the political destiny of Europe than Bose, who Chaturvedi credits for waging "an uncompromising struggle" against the British, one that was devoid of any of the caveats that many of Bose's peers had applied.

The riveting discussion drew to a close with Dutta probing Chaturvedi on whether Bose's love for his motherland had overwhelmed all other attachments he formed in his life. "Bose was a believer in romantic nationalism. The motherland was his first love, as well as his greatest love. And he paid a big price for that. For all

the attention that Bose gets, I still don't think he gets the appreciation that he deserves," replied Chaturvedi.

After the session, Chaturvedi took a handful of questions from the audience, one of which led him to characterise Bose's role in the Indian National Army (INA): "Bose was able to do something which nobody else could, not even Gandhi. He had the ability to make Indians in the military, who had been loyal to their British masters for decades, turn on their colonisers. That was a unique achievement and it certainly played a decisive role in making India independent."



Chaturvedi also commented on the equation between Bose and Nehru, citing "ideological differences rather than personal animosity" as the basis of their disagreements, while also accepting how Bose's personality sometimes undercut his own identity: "The power of Bose's personality could change the convictions of others, but it also meant that Subhas, the leader, was so immense that Subhas, the person, rarely had the space to emerge."

An Author's Afternoon, organised with the support of Ehsaas Women, is presented by Shree Cement Ltd, in association with Taj Bengal Kolkata with digital partner The Telegraph-My Kolkata



Anshul Chaturvedi gave us several fresh insights into the multi-faceted personality of Netaji. As the liberator of India, Netaji's personality doesn't get the attention it deserves or needs. This session helped provide that attention alongside sending the message that the path shown by Netaji is the one a united India should follow.

— Chandra Kumar Bose, politician



It was an interesting and insightful discussion, which piqued the audience's interest in learning more about a different aspect of Subhas Chandra Bose and our history.

— Vijay Shrikent, General Manager, Taj Bengal

I had the opportunity to read *A Bird from Afar* ahead of the session and enjoyed the easy-flowing narrative of the book. It was practically unputdownable. Our knowledge of Netaji has always been very academic, but this book, just like this session, explores the Netaji persona in an anecdotal, engaging way.

— Esha Dutta, Ehsaas Woman of Kolkata

Journalism, Literature and Excellence



Anindya Jana

Dipannita Roy

Rupa Majumder

Pracheta Gupta

Pracheta Gupta feels journalism and literature are in many ways inextricably linked to one another. Excellence to Anindya Jana is like a tall mountain in the distance that a villager admires from afar. The more he moves towards it, the more elusive it seems. To Dipannita Roy, there's a certain discipline associated with journalism, a responsibility that doesn't allow a journalist to waver in their commitment to deliver the right news to thousands of people around the world. Gupta, Jana and Roy shared many more such interesting insights in a special session of **Aakhar** Kolkata at the seventh edition of the Apeejay Bangla Sahitya Utsob (ABSU).

Gupta is a writer and journalist. His story *Chander Bari* was adapted into a Bengali film by director Tarun Majumdar. Gupta is also a recipient of the Kishore Sahitya Academy Award, 2021. Jana is a journalist who has been associated with *Anandabazar Patrika* for 22 years. Before starting work at *Anandabazar*, he worked with Gupta for more than three years at *Aajkaal*. He has also served as Executive Editor of *India Today's* Bengali edition. Roy has 18 years of experience working as a journalist on electronic media platforms. Gupta, Jana and Roy were in conversation with Rupa Majumder, director of Dev Sahitya Kutir.

Gupta believes a journalist is also a writer from within, nurturing and developing a story—be it a story on accidents, loss, politics or social issues. "Similarly, when a writer is writing, they're nurturing news within themselves, whether of love, relationships, separation, reunion or anything else, for that matter. It's very

difficult to draw a fine line of difference between the two professions. In fact, people from any professional field can become a writer. For instance, Albert Camus was a goalkeeper who later evolved into a world-famous writer," Gupta added.

Talking about his work, Jana said he doesn't consider himself a writer in any way and there has always been a tendency to unnecessarily glorify journalism. "People usually view journalism as larger than life. But it's just another profession. I've always viewed it as nothing but a profession. Yes, there are and have been renowned journalists who have left their mark but I refuse to count myself among them... I always chase excellence. Yet, I never want to be able to achieve that excellence because I know once I reach that point, my journey will end—and I never want that to happen," said Jana.

Journalism has played a significant role in Roy's life, helping her in her journey as a writer. Thanks to their profession, journalists receive a plethora of news throughout the day, not all of which gets released to the world. Roy said, "But news stories keep coming in and we listen to them. We need to, for our professional needs. Often, these unpublished journalistic stories—and sometimes also published stories—act as seeds of future plots for a writer. Even though sometimes the stories these seeds grow into have little to no similarity with the news that inspired it."

“Often, these unpublished journalistic stories—and sometimes also published stories—act as seeds of future plots for a writer. Even though sometimes the stories these seeds grow into have little to no similarity with the news that inspired it

— Dipannita Roy

ABSU was supported by Prabha Khaitan Foundation.
Sessions from the festival will be covered in the next edition of Prabha



Priya Sahgal



Pallavi Ghosh



The High of Political Journalism

Pallavi Ghosh started her career doing back-of-the-book journalism. She wrote on health, education and entertainment for the last few pages of a magazine that were left for 'soft' stories. Priya Sahgal, on the other hand, wasn't interested in politics at all and wanted to get into academics. Today, political journalism is like a high to her and she loves the thrill of it. Many more such interesting anecdotes came to light in a virtual Tête-à-tea with Ghosh and Sahgal, organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. The women were in conversation with author, screenwriter and columnist Advaita Kala. Praneet Bubber, **Ehsaas** Woman of Amritsar, introduced and welcomed the guests to the session.

Ghosh is a senior editor at CNN News18. Covering politics and Parliament for 15 years, she has reported extensively not only on UPA-1 and UPA-2 but also on the current finance ministry and Niti Aayog. Ghosh has exclusively interviewed top political leaders such as Narendra Modi, Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi. Sahgal has been a political journalist for three decades. She is the senior executive editor of NewsX and ITV Network and author of *The Contenders*, which profiles 16 next-gen leaders, including Rahul Gandhi, Akhilesh Yadav and Yogi Adityanath, among others.

Ghosh and Sahgal go way back, having had the opportunity to work together in *Sunday* magazine. On being asked about what inspired them to get into political journalism, Ghosh said: "Priya was someone we looked up to because she's definitely one of the best political journalists around. I used to watch her getting all these *gup shup*! That's where the interest began... Doing political journalism is exciting. It's like a play you act in, in comparison to acting in a movie—the instant reaction you get in response.



Advaita Kala

Political reportage does give that kind of a thrill."

Sahgal said, "I remember our initial days in *Sunday* magazine. I'm really impressed with the way Pallavi is carrying on... I was doing the crime beat initially. I met up with Charles Sobhraj and interviewed him. I did a lot of stories on him and the crime beat, and that's when the Hawala scandal broke... the Hawala scandal was targeting politicians, which was my first political contact."

As far as the newsroom is concerned, Ghosh has never been told not to go for an assignment because she's a woman, barring one particular incident. She

had been working for Aaj Tak and the Bihar elections were going on, which turned out to be pretty violent. Outside the newsroom, her experience has been mixed. "Something that still bothers me... if you get a good story or a good interview, especially with a male politician, they'll tell you, '*Mahila hai na*'. That's why they've given her the interview.' If you don't get it, they'll say she's dumb... the worst part is, this is not always in the newsroom, it's not even the *netas*, it's my peer group," said Ghosh.

Doing political journalism is exciting. It's like a play you act in, in comparison to acting in a movie—the instant reaction you get in response. Political reportage does give that kind of a thrill

— Pallavi Ghosh



Praneet Bubber

Sahgal had spent a decade writing cover stories for print publications without anyone noticing or recognising her. But the picture changed once she came on television. "Last seven to eight years, there's been a lot of face recall value. That goes with the territory of being on TV, I think, more than the print and TV argument. Of course, now there's social media. That's making us all more visible and really in-your-face," she added.



The Most Festive Time of the Year

The festival of Christmas has the power to draw everyone into its fold, irrespective of barriers of religion, nationality or class. And no one embodies the joyful spirit of Christmas better than children. However, over the past couple of years, the pandemic has had an adverse effect on the spirit of celebration and togetherness that Christmas is all about. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, under its **Muskaan** initiative, made every effort to make Christmas 2021 a truly memorable one for children across India. The Foundation organised a lively Christmas Special celebration over three virtual events.

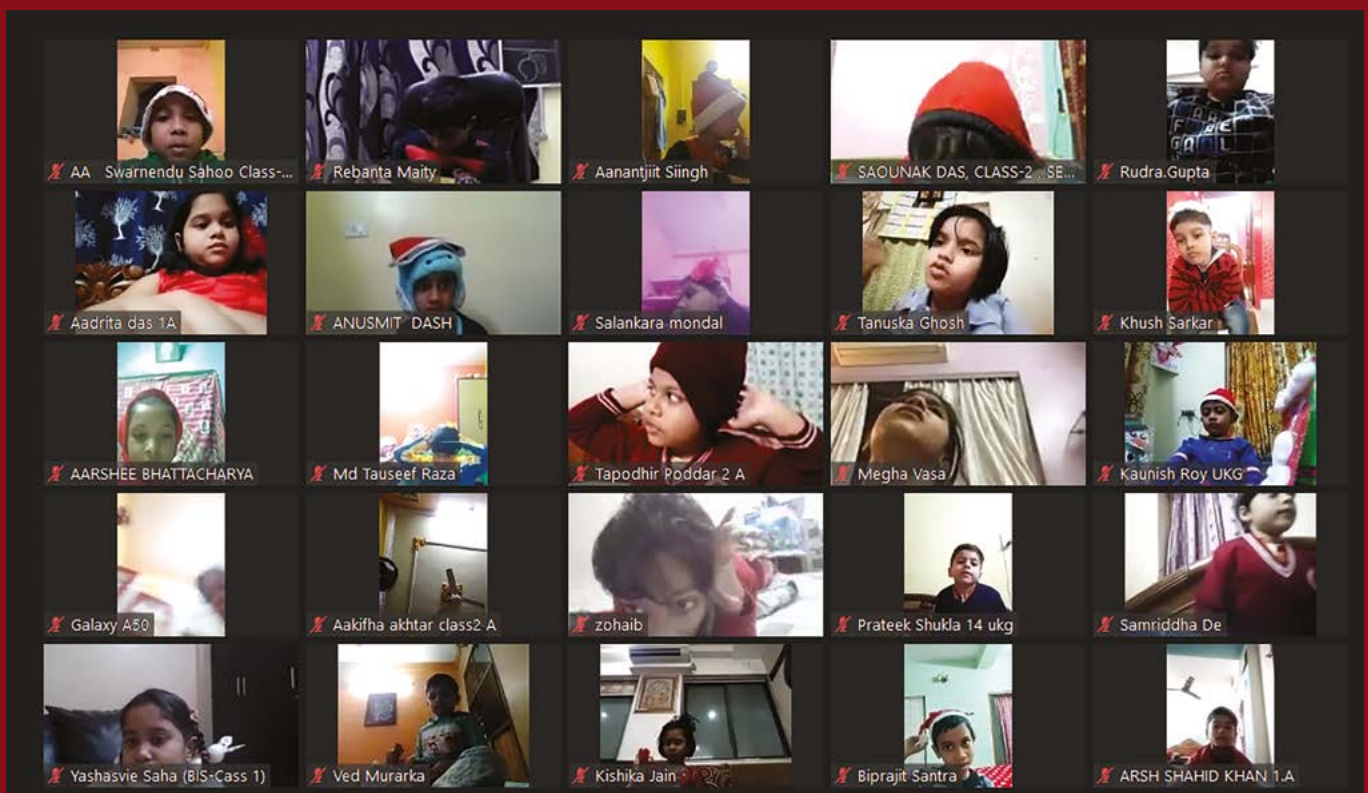
A virtual movie-viewing session was the perfect way to get children into the festive spirit. Along with Goethe Institut Max Mueller Bhavan, the Foundation presented

an online screening of *Noch mehr Anima für Kids*, a compilation of animated movies with heartwarming and thoughtful stories about great friendships, funny witches and the importance of protecting the environment. Around 155 students from kindergarten and classes I and II joined the viewing and thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

The joy was heightened with the help of a Christmas Special fancy dress event titled 'Let's Get Elfed Up!' Even better, this was not a competition; it was an invitation for children to participate in the joy of dressing up festively and celebrating Christmas despite the pandemic. Students from KG and Class I participated, but the enthusiasm for the event encompassed more age groups, from newborns till Class II! Around 65 students participated in their

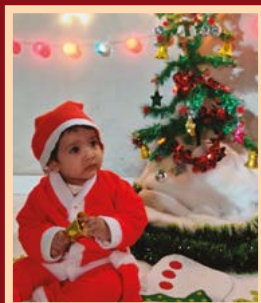


Stills from a Christmas Special virtual screening of multiple animated short films for children, organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation's** initiative **Muskaan**, along with Goethe Institut-Max Mueller Bhavan





Young children dressed up in Christmas-themed finery as they participate in the Foundation's fancy dress event, 'Let's Get Elfed Up', from the safety of their homes



glorious Christmas outfits, and photos of them were sent in, the best of which have been featured here.

Another fun online event for the children was a Christmas Special of Puppets and Stories by Shreedevi Sunil. The session, which had a Christmas-themed dress code, was introduced by

the Foundation's Student Programme Advisor, Sumitra Ray, and Sunil narrated two wonderful stories—*Gingerbread Man* and *The Elves and the Shoemaker*—to a rapt virtual audience. Her animated and engaging style of storytelling made the session come alive and infused the spirit of Christmas into the hearts of her young listeners.



Moments from the **Muskaan** Christmas Special online storytelling session with Shreedevi Sunil (below right), as she narrates popular tales to her young virtual audience



Of Songs and Smiles

This year, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** celebrated the best kind of Christmas in Kolkata, spreading holiday cheer among children. Through its latest initiative **Muskaan**, the Foundation teamed up with Sri Sri Academy, one of the leading schools in the city, to organise a fun-filled fiesta for underprivileged children from an Interact Club. Students from the senior section of Sri Sri Academy distributed balloons, food packets and gifts among them, while also putting together an exciting activity for underprivileged children. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** also arranged for a Christmas cake from ITC Royal Bengal.

The Foundation also partnered with Prayas, a non-profit organisation dedicated to the welfare of underprivileged children, children with special needs and children from the red-light area of Kalighat. To help these bright young minds ring in Christmas with songs and smiles, the Foundation arranged for a Christmas cake from Kookie Jar for the children, along with food packets, tiffin boxes and other gifts.



These are challenging times but I have faith in my Interact Club members. I have faith that they will rise to the occasion. They are a committed lot and their enthusiasm is infectious. I say this with pride—they are my inspiration! I learn from them each day, bonding with them over a common cause—the vision of a better world, the courage to attain it, and above all else, keep Humanity alive.

— **Radhika Bagadthey**
Teacher coordinator, Interact Club of Sri Sri Academy



Sri Sri Academy was founded to give learning opportunities to all in keeping with the policy of ‘no child left behind’. Our Founder His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar lays great emphasis on ‘inclusion’. Keeping his vision in mind, the ‘Sri Kripa Learning Center’ was started in 2012 as an after-school programme with 12 children from the less privileged section of the school neighborhood, which now has close to a hundred students. They are provided academic support and opportunities for making learning fun.

On the 21st of December, the Interact Club of Sri Sri Academy, Kolkata, supported by the Guides and Scouts Club, organised ‘Christmas with a Heart’—a carnival for these children.

We sincerely thank **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** for adding to the excitement and bringing joy into the homes of these students with their delicious Christmas cakes.

— **Suvina Shunglu**
Principal, Sri Sri Academy



Mansi Kamdar Shah, executive officer, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, with the children

The Man Who Believed In Total Revolution

Sujata Prasad wears many hats; she is a writer, columnist, curator, heritage conservationist and a former civil servant who is currently serving as adviser to the National Gallery of Modern Art and as an expert on the Ministry of Science and Technology's advisory group on heritage research. It was, however, her father's close association with activist and political leader Jayaprakash Narayan that had a profound impact on her life. Her father, Bimal Prasad, had started work on a biography of JP; after his passing, she built on his work and took the biography forward. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** organised a session of **The Write Circle** in Hyderabad with Prasad to discuss her book, *The Dream of Revolution: A Biography of Jayaprakash Narayan*, where her father is named as co-author.



Rizwan Kadri



Sujata Prasad

Among other noted personalities, the former Chief Minister of Gujarat, Vijay Rupani, attended the session. In conversation with Prasad was Rizwan Kadri, a historian known for his research on Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. The session involved in-depth discussions by the author and the moderator about JP's remarkable journey in politics and activism, right from his awakening in the United States of America, where he was a student in the 1920s, to his clarion call for 'total revolution' in the 1970s to uproot Indira Gandhi's government. "JP wanted his movement to be non-violent, inclusive and focused on total revolution," said Prasad. "This was frightening for the powers that be. Here was a man talking about revolution on different levels."

The Write Circle Ahmedabad, organised with the support of Ehsaas Women, is presented in association with Divya Bhaskar, The House of MG - Mangalbag Gallery and Karma Foundation



Former Chief Minister Vijay Rupani



Shaneel Parekh



Priyanshi Patel



Justice K.S. Jhaveri



P.K. Lehri, IAS, retd, Gujarat Cadre



Prakash N. Shah, president of Gujarati Sahitya Parishad

Revisiting Ray



"Cinema's characteristic forte is its ability to capture and communicate the intimacies of the human mind."

— Satyajit Ray

Very few filmmakers across the globe had as strong a grasp of cinema's 'characteristic forte' as Satyajit Ray. A renowned auteur, Ray was not only a litterateur, wordsmith and editor but also a skilled calligraphist, designer, illustrator, composer and polymath. His eye for detail and perfection coupled with his skilful handling of both content and technique make him one of the greatest masters of world cinema.

The year 2021 marked the birth centenary of the creative genius. On this momentous occasion, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** was fortunate enough to be associated with the publication of Raghu Rai's visual tribute to Ray. From rare candid shots of Ray by the riverside to the master in action on the sets of *Ghare Baire*, from the stunning shots of the hallowed Bishop Lefroy Road study to the riveting close-ups of the genius, the book *Being with Dadu for a Day and a Half* is a treasure trove of magic moments, milestones and memories.

Writer, art curator and documentarian Ina Puri, who was instrumental in the coming together of this book, writes in the foreword of the book, "Raghu Rai recollects these moments as if it were yesterday, his camera trained on Satyajit Ray as he interacted with his team on the sets of *Ghare Baire*. He especially recalls how intense moments of silence were followed by a release of collective tension in



Raghu Rai

the room when the director's deep, booming voice called, "Cut!" Invariably, the crew broke up for a smoke or headed to the cafeteria for a quick cup of tea while Ray stretched out for a bit, his large frame dominating the four-poster bed (part of the interiors created for the shot), and allowed himself a big grin as he looked back at the photographer.

Ray was familiar with Rai, having seen and admired his work earlier. On his part, Rai had the highest regard for Ray as one of the most brilliant filmmakers of his times. Theirs was a relationship of quiet camaraderie, of a deep and an abiding respect for each other's creativity. While Ray called the shots, immersed in the moment, Rai focused on the director, shooting him from up close and from a distance, capturing every crucial moment and nuance....

A picture is worth a thousand words. Years after those two memorable days spent photographing Satyajit Ray, his birth centenary in 2021 seems the perfect occasion for Raghu Rai to share his photographs and fond memories of his 'Dadu' with us. It has been a personal honour to be a part of Satyajit Ray, albeit in a small way. Thank you, Raghu. This elegant pictorial tribute merits standing shoulder to shoulder on a Ray shelf earmarked by anyone who admires the filmmaker's contribution to world cinema."

Each frame of Satyajit Ray shot by Rai—The Journey, On the Sets, Moods of the Master and Face to Face with Dadu—demands that we pause, stare, study, contemplate and admire the special moments from the life and times of the greatest Indian filmmaker captured by one of the greatest Indian photographers of all time.

Talking about Ray, Rai said, "I guess I should consider myself fortunate that I got the great Ray away from his familiar environment and was able to shoot these special moments when he was relaxed and in a very different frame of mind. Those are the pictures I decided to share with the readers, my memories of those days when I went to Calcutta just to shoot my favourite Dadu, Manik da."

A picture is worth a thousand words. Years after those two memorable days spent photographing Satyajit Ray, his birth centenary in 2021 seems the perfect occasion for Raghu Rai to share his photographs and fond memories of his 'Dadu' with us. It has been a personal honour to be a part of Satyajit Ray, albeit in a small way. Thank you, Raghu



— Ina Puri

This is a limited-edition publication for private circulation by Prabha Khaitan Foundation for a year and is not commercially available

Humanism and Hope: The Legacy of Film Director Satyajit Ray

Sundeep Bhutoria



Satyajit Ray (left) with Ravi Shankar (right) discussing the music for *Pather Panchali*

UDAYAN PANDIT: You first tell me if you are on my side or not...

BAGHA BYNE: We are on the side of good.

GOOPY GYNE: Yes, on the side of good.

This swift exchange between the schoolteacher-turned-rebel Udayan Pandit and the protagonists Goopy and Bagha in the film *Hirak Rajar Deshe* (*Kingdom of Diamonds*, 1980) sums up the universal humanism that permeated Satyajit Ray's films. Simple yet profound.

This "children's film for everyone" is a landmark work of art dealing with resistance against tyranny, with a people's uprising against totalitarianism. Forty years later, *Hirak Rajar Deshe*—the tale of a teacher and his unlikely allies, Goopy the singer and Bagha the drummer, toppling a tyrant—rings truer than ever, as leaders around the world display streaks of the anti-democratic Hirak Raja, out to suppress any form of dissent or critique.

Hirak Rajar Deshe ends on a note of idealistic hope and popular rejoicing as the despot is subjected to his own *magajdholai* (brainwashing) machine, his giant statue is pulled down by the people, and freedom and justice are restored to the land.

The endings of Ray's films often symbolise the humanism and hope that he came to typify as a unique

creative force between 1955 and 1992.

Take *Ganashatru*, his 1989 film based on Henrik Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*, but transcreated in a Bengali small-town setting. Ibsen's play ends on a brutal individualistic note—"the strongest man in the world is he who stands most alone". Ray's film, however, ends with the upright, idealistic doctor hounded by his community for standing up for science and truth, asking "There is hope?", and on cue, the sounds of a rally in his support organised by a young and educated group of locals can be heard. Overwhelmed, the doctor exults, "I am not alone!"

Individual struggle for the collective good was often a Ray leitmotif. As he once put it, "I too am an activist—as an artist. That's my way."

That way of art as activism, of art as an agent of change, was recognised and celebrated by the United Nations some 23 years after Ray's passing, with the exhibition 'The Transformative Power of Art'. His portrait was unveiled in New York in 2015 along with those of 15 other creators, including the likes of Audrey Hepburn, Joan Baez and Malala Yousafzai, to "bring out humanity's transformative power... as ... art can indeed transform lives".

That Ray found pride of place in this pantheon was no surprise because his films did indeed mirror the United Nations core values of universal human rights, justice and dignity for all people, and equity. And they did so by telling human stories and by focusing on relationships and emotions.

Sharmila Tagore, the heroine of *Apur Sansar* (*The World of Apu*, 1959), put it succinctly: "For Tagore and Ray, the people and their predicament came first." She was, of course, referring to the most towering cultural icon of Bengal, Rabindranath Tagore, the Nobel Laureate polymath who had a deep influence on Ray.

"I have been moved by Tagore's work ... Of course, our cultural background, our cultural makeup, is a fusion of East and West.... We have imbibed Western education,



Sundeep Bhutoria with filmmaker Sandip Ray and actress Sharmila Tagore at the Satyajit Ray Memorial Lecture at Nandan, Kolkata, in 2013

Western music, Western art, Western literature," Ray said.

Ray's creative sensibility was a combination of nature and nurture. His grandfather, Upendrakishore Ray Chowdhury, was a famous Bengali writer, illustrator, philosopher and prominent figure of the Brahmo Samaj (an offshoot of Hinduism that shunned idol worship and emphasised the equality of man). His father, Sukumar Ray, was a pioneering Bengali writer of nonsense rhyme and children's literature as well as an illustrator and a critic. His inspirations ranged from Rabindranath Tagore to his teachers Nandalal Bose and Benode Behari Mukherjee in Santiniketan, from the films of Renoir and De Sica (*Bicycle Thieves*), Chaplin and Ford (*Fort Apache*) to the photography of Cartier Bresson and the music of Beethoven.

So, when his biographer, Andrew Robinson, was to ask him if he considered himself "50 per cent Western", Ray had replied: "Yes, I think so—which makes me more accessible to a Western audience than someone who's not to the same extent influenced by Western models."

And yet, Ray remained loyal to his roots and the dishevelled study in his south Calcutta (now Kolkata) home was forever his creative headquarters, from where he explored and depicted universal human values through his films. He was a truly "glocal" citizen—steadfastly local in his medium of work but effortlessly global in its appeal.

Take one of my favourite sequences in a Ray film, the charming memory game in *Aranyer Din Ratri* (*Days and Nights in the Forest*, 1970), where the central characters rattle off names of famous personalities. The glocal range of characters thrown up by the game never ceases to amaze me, as I put my Ray memory to the test—"Rabindranath, Karl Marx, Cleopatra, Atulya Ghosh, Helen of Troy, Shakespeare, Mao Tse Tung, Don Bradman, Rani Rashmoni, Bobby Kennedy, Tekchand Thakur, Napoleon, Mumtaz Mahal!"

It was significant that the memory game focused only on people. As Ray was to say: "I am not conscious of being a humanist. It's simply that I am interested in human beings." And the manner in which he depicted human beings, their frailties and their struggles, their individual rebellions and simple triumphs, drew admirers far and wide.

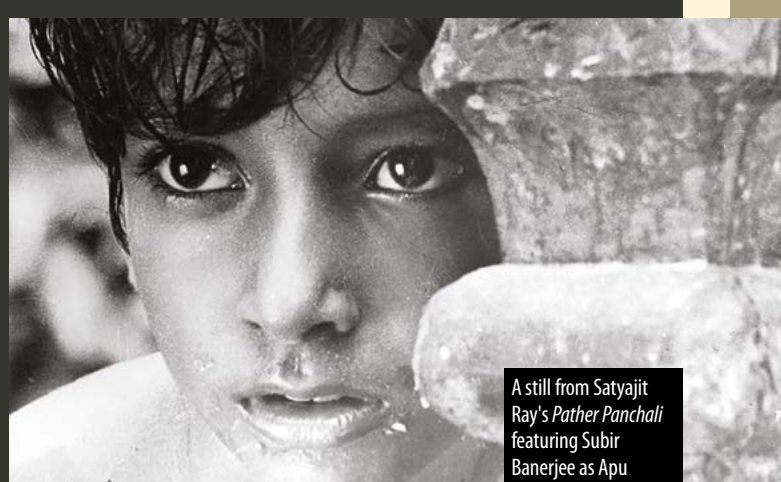
It is no wonder that when Ray approached Richard Attenborough hesitantly for a small role in *Shatranj Ke Khiladi* (*The Chess Players*, 1977), the British thespian said: "Satyajit, I would be happy to recite even the telephone directory for you." After having worked with Ray, Attenborough was to liken his genius to that of Chaplin.

So fundamental to life and humanity were Ray's creations that the Japanese director Akira Kurosawa once wrote: "Not to have seen the cinema of Ray means existing

in the world without seeing the sun or the moon."

Even before he had embarked on his first film, *Pather Panchali* (1955), Ray had written a piece titled "What Is Wrong with Indian Films?" in *The Statesman* newspaper in Calcutta in 1948—"The raw material of the cinema is life itself. It is incredible that a country which has inspired so much painting and music and poetry should fail to move the filmmaker. He has only to keep his eyes open, and his ears. Let him do so."

Ray did just that over the next 40 years and 37 films. From human dignity amid tragedy in *The Apu Trilogy* to the resilience of the human spirit in *Mahanagar*; the strong anti-war message through a children's fable in *Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne* to the triumph of punishment over crime in his



A still from Satyajit Ray's *Pather Panchali* featuring Subir Banerjee as Apu

popular detective films *Sonar Kella* and *Joi Baba Felunath*.

Ray's final film, *Agantuk* (*The Stranger*, 1992), was a culmination of the master storyteller's philosophy and belief systems. When casting Utpal Dutt for the central role of *The Stranger*, Ray told the veteran actor that he had put his own views into this character and so he must speak on the filmmaker's behalf. From civilisation to religion, Tagore to tribal peoples, science to morality, social duties to human values—Ray the humanist explored them all in a most personal manner.

Legend has it that on the final day of shooting his last film, Ray threw his hands up in the air and said, "That's it. That's all there is. I don't have anything more to say." Not long after, he passed away in his beloved Calcutta.

Less than a month before his passing, Ray received an Honorary Oscar. The Academy Award citation read: "To Satyajit Ray, in recognition of his rare mastery of the art of motion pictures, and of his profound humanitarian outlook, which has had an indelible influence on filmmakers and audiences throughout the world."

The article was earlier published in UN Chronicle in May 2021

Empower the Girl Child



"To all the little girls who are watching this, never doubt that you are valuable and powerful, and deserving of every chance and opportunity in the world to pursue and achieve your own dreams."

—Hillary Clinton

Eight-year-old Radha sat scrubbing utensils outside her thatched hut. It was 8am and in the far distance, she could hear the gong of the school bell, signalling the start of classes for the day. Instantly, her mind spiralled back to the time when she was a part of the small group of village girls who made their way to school every morning, laughing and cracking jokes among themselves. The ringing of the school bell then meant a scramble for the best seats in the class beside the windows. Radha released a breath she didn't know she had been holding. It had been a year since she had stopped going to school. Her family couldn't afford to spend on her education anymore. She had an older brother—educating him was far more important. After all, he would grow up to become the

'man' of the family and sustain them. Radha, on the other hand, would soon be married off.

Radha's story reflects the tragedy of hundreds of thousands of girl children across India. Young, impressionable minds are deprived of their right to education, proper nutrition and healthcare and married off even before they learn to spell the word 'marriage'. Data from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) shows almost 1.5 million girls below the age of 18 are married in India. This makes the country home to the largest number of child brides in the world, making up almost a third of the total global number.

Child marriage, female foeticide and gender-based discrimination are deeply rooted evils in society, fuelled by age-old socio-cultural norms. In many parts of India, girl children are considered to be a burden on the family. Their only purpose in life is to get married and compel their families to incur heavy expenses in the form of dowries. This is one of the reasons why sex-selective abortions are still at large in India despite the illegality of the practice. The State of World Population 2020 report published by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) says India accounts for 45.8 million of

the world's 142.6 million "missing females" over the last 50 years. "Missing females" are girls missing from the population at given dates as a result of the collective effect of postnatal and prenatal sex selection. The report adds, "...India has the highest rate of excess female deaths, 13.5 per 1,000 female births, which suggests that an estimated one in nine deaths of females below the age of 5 may be attributed to postnatal sex selection."

To raise awareness about the inequalities faced by girl children in India and address gender-based discrimination, violence and bias, the Ministry of Women and Child Development celebrated January 24 as National Girl Child Day in 2008. Ever since then, this day is observed every year in India to bring about a change in the attitude of society towards girls, champion their rights and underscore the importance of education, nutrition and health for their well-being. The National Girl Child Day 2021 focused on the issue of the declining child sex ratio (CSR) in the country and celebrated the anniversary of the government of India's Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao scheme.

What can we do to support our girls and help them transform into strong, confident and empowered young women? Invest in their education, postpone marriage beyond legal age, focus on their health and nutritional needs, help them pick up and nurture foundational skills and encourage them to realise their full potential. Nafissatou Diop, a UNFPA expert in the area of harmful practices and culture, said: "Beyond providing information and creating spaces for discussion, there is a need to collectively deliberate and explicitly agree to improve the health and well-being of girls and communities, which will support the movement to end the harmful and discriminatory norms..." We see how the behaviour of one person can make a difference, how groups of people adopting a certain behaviour influences others. We are seeing community influencers from different walks of life, not just political leaders and prominent figures, leading change. Not

only does this give us hope, it also proves that collective decisions to shift behaviours can transform norms quickly."

Prabha Khaitan Foundation extends its support to every girl child in the country and calls upon everyone to bring about lasting positive change. Together, we can make a difference. Together, we can BE the change.

What can we do to support our girls and help them transform into strong, confident and empowered young women? Invest in their education, postpone marriage beyond legal age, focus on their health and nutritional needs, help them pick up and nurture foundational skills and encourage them to realise their full potential



ARTWORK BY
SUDIPTA KUNDU

Prabha Khaitan Foundation strives to bring to the fore pertinent social issues that permeate Indian society and the world at large through its Cause of the Month endeavour. Be it championing the rights of the girl child, repudiating gender-based violence, campaigning against tobacco abuse, fighting rampant child labour or highlighting the urgency of climate change, our Cause of the Month initiative has always sparked interesting and important conversations. The first step in eradicating any ill and bringing about lasting positive change in society is generating awareness, followed by rallying forces and resolving to fight together for a better tomorrow. With this aim in mind, every month artist **Sudipta Kundu**, who was awarded Best Artist in the professional category of Contemporary Art by the Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR), Government of India, creates a poignant and topical artwork exclusively for **Prabha**. We have selected some of the best works and compiled them in the form of a notebook. We look forward to gifting you the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** Notebook soon.



REACH US AT

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