



# Prabha प्रभा

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The Prabha Khaitan Foundation Chronicle

It has been a winter worth remembering. In this edition, we celebrate the joys of the little things we have missed over the past two years: in-person meetings, bonding over food and *adda*, talking about literature, performing arts, culture and diversity, and feeling hopeful about the future. We bring to you stories of healing, humour, new friendships, and the voices of **Ehsaas** Women from all over India as they discovered and re-discovered the City of Joy

## Kolkata Calling

Pg 4-28

अपनी भाषा अपने लोग

Hand scripted by Paresh Maity

Pg 29

# INSIDE

YOUNG VOICES  
FROM RAJASTHAN  
30

WHY DOES A  
WRITER WRITE?  
35

MICRO STORIES IN A  
MACRO WORLD  
36

A JOURNALIST'S  
PERSPECTIVE  
38

A NEW COLLABORATION  
40

LEAVING THE PAIN  
BEHIND  
44

THE MAGIC OF  
MALKAUNS  
47

OUR INTERNS HAVE  
SOMETHING TO SAY  
50

THE BEAUTY OF BANGLA  
52



Prabha  
खैतान

MANISHA JAIN  
Communications & Branding Chief,  
Prabha Khaitan Foundation



## A Meeting of Minds

"Bond is stronger than blood. The family grows stronger by bond."

— Itohan Eghide,  
*The Book of Maxims, Poems and Anecdotes*

The bond that **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** shares with its family of friends, associates, partners and well-wishers was palpable in the warmth that radiated in our first in-person meetings held after two long years—two challenging years of orchestrating and executing virtual events and meets amid devastating waves of Covid-19.

**Ehsaas** Women of India and our associates made their way to Kolkata from across the country, following all Covid protocols, to meet and greet, smile and share, talk and plan for the future. It was a fruitful exchange of thoughts and feedback, bringing to the fore predominant issues faced by the teams in each city, and planning for future endeavours and collaborations. This issue of *Prabha* offers a peek into a few such moments of work and leisure from the meetings.

The Foundation was happy to welcome three bright student interns, who worked with us, covering events organised by our student-focused initiative, **Muskaan**. Alongside showcasing their work, we also bring to you a glimpse of the seventh edition of the Apeejay Bangla Sahitya Utsob, India's first Bengali literary festival curated by Oxford Bookstore, Kolkata.

The sessions are just a page and a click away. And on the last page, we have a very special treat for all readers of *Prabha*!

As always, we look forward to your thoughts and feedback.

Happy exploring!

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 ]



त्वमेव माता च पिता त्वमेव

**Prabha Khaitan Foundation** celebrated Saraswati Puja at its Kolkata office recently, venerating the Goddess of learning and seeking blessings for all.

## Happy Birthday

Prabha WISHES EHSAA'S WOMEN BORN IN FEBRUARY

**1st February**



Srutimala Duara

**4th February**



Garima Mithal

**6th February**



Garima Tiwari

**7th February**



Riddhima Doshi

**11th February**



Aradhana  
Pradhan

**21st February**



Karuna Goenka

**25th February**



Kanak Rekha  
Chauhan

**26th February**



Surekha Prahlad



# Future Forward

Winter is a time to look back and plan ahead. It is also a time to meet friends and make merry.

With the Covid-19 situation improving in the recent past and allowing us a short window of travel and get-togethers, we decided to make the most of the opportunity.

**Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, which endeavours to promote, showcase and celebrate India's literary, cultural and social capital across the country and the world, got into stock-taking mode with the **Ehsaas Women of India** and associates, who travelled to Kolkata from all over the country for in-person meetings, following all Covid-19 protocols.

These exemplary women not only shoulder the responsibility of organising the Foundation's events, but are also regularly involved in social outreach programmes and other pursuits, including their own entrepreneurial ventures and passion projects.

With the onset of the pandemic in early 2020, the **Ehsaas Women** and our other associates took the Foundation's events online almost overnight, with unparalleled agility and alacrity. So, after two years, it was time to meet and talk, smile and share and plan ahead.

The joy felt by everyone in being able to meet one another in person was palpable. The meetings were both fruitful and enjoyable—the hosts and guests discussed various issues and challenges faced by each city, took feedback from one another, and envisioned a way forward. The warmth of an in-person experience was irreplaceable; it set the tone for many such future gatherings.

Here are a few glimpses from the days of work and leisurely get-togethers.







The stock-taking meetings began with the team in Kolkata. In picture, clockwise from left: Ehsaas Women of Kolkata Dona Ganguly and Malika Verma, Sundeep Bhutoria, Prabha Khaitan Foundation Executive Officer Mansi Kamdar Shah, Executive Trustee Anindita Chatterjee, Communications & Branding Chief Manisha Jain, and Ehsaas Women of Kolkata Gouri Basu and Esha Dutta



Days of work and meetings gave way to cheerful get-togethers with Ehsaas Women and friends, associates and guests of the Foundation. In picture, L-R: Malika Verma, Gouri Basu, Garima Tiwari (Ehsaas Woman of Bilaspur), Dipali Bhasin (Ehsaas Woman of Delhi), Ankita Khattry (Ehsaas Woman of Varanasi) and Shinjini Kulkarni (Ehsaas Woman of Noida)





Bishamber Newar (L) and Vikram Newar from Taaza TV, media partner of Kalam Kolkata



Soni Jain, President YFLO Kolkata (L), with Shefali Rawat Agarwal, Ehsaas Woman of Kolkata



Ramanjit Kaur (L) and Sandip Roy



Simi Gupta



### मेरी कोलकाता यात्रा की सुखद स्मृतियाँ- गौरव गिरिजा शुक्ला

11 नवंबर 2021 को प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन के बुलावे पर मैं कोलकाता पहुंचा। आमतौर पर व्यावसायिक गतिविधियों के चलते कोलकाता आना-जाना लगा रहता है लेकिन जब भी प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन का आमंत्रण मिलता है, तो यह शहर मुझे कुछ ज्यादा 'अपना' लगने लगता है। इसकी सबसे प्रमुख वजह तो संस्था के सभी लोगों से मुलाकात का आनंद है ही, साथ ही उनकी खातिरदारी, हर बार नए विषयों पर बातचीत और ज्ञानवर्धन है। संदीप भूतोडिया जी की यह बहुत बड़ी विशेषता है कि वह हर बार संस्था की साहित्यिक गतिविधियों में कुछ नयापन लाते हुए किसी नए आयोजन का जिक्र करते हैं, जो उस चर्चा के वक्त एक सुंदर संकल्पना की तरह लगती है, लेकिन जल्द ही वह एक सफल और सार्थक कार्यक्रम के रूप में अपने अंजाम तक पहुंच ही जाता है। शायद इसीलिए मैं सदैव फाउंडेशन के बुलावे पर कहीं भी जाने के लिए बहुत उत्सुक रहता हूँ।

हर बार की तरह इस बार भी कोलकाता यात्रा में एयरपोर्ट पर पहुंचने से लेकर निर्धारित होटल में ठहरने तक किसी तरह की कोई समस्या नहीं हुई। कोविड के इस दौर में लंबे समय के बाद मैंने किसी दूसरे शहर की यात्रा की थी। यात्रा के बाद की थोड़ी थकान दूर करने के बाद हम पूर्व निर्धारित समय से मुलाकात के लिए मीटिंग रूम में पहुंच गए। वहां अन्य शहरों की अहसास वूमन सुश्री शिंजिनी जी, सुश्री दिपाली जी, सुश्री अंकिता जी से मुलाकात बहुत ही सुखद रही। मैं तीनों सदस्यों से पहली बार रु-ब-रु मिल रहा था। अलग-अलग शहर के लोग अपने साथ उस शहर की तहजीब और परंपरा की महक लेकर आते हैं इसलिए भी इन मुलाकातों का आनंद कई गुना बढ़ जाता है।

मीटिंग में कलम के रायपुर एवं बिलासपुर में संचालित कार्यक्रमों की समीक्षा हुई। साहित्य, लेखकों, कलाकारों के लिए और बेहतर क्या हो सकता है इस पर गहन विचार विमर्श के बाद हमने 'किताब' कार्यक्रम की रायपुर में पहली कड़ी आयोजित करने का निर्णय लिया। कोविड के चलते सभी सत्र ऑनलाइन आयोजित हो रहे थे इसलिए मुझे बड़ी प्रसन्नता थी कि किताब कार्यक्रम के आयोजन में लंबे अंतराल के बाद अनेक साहित्यप्रेमियों से मुलाकात होगी।

दोपहर की सार्थक मीटिंग के पश्चात हम शाम को डिनर पर मिले। कोलकाता शहर की कई जानी-मानी हस्तियाँ, संस्था से जुड़े सदस्यों से मिलकर बहुत अच्छा लगा। मीडिया, शिक्षा, साहित्य, संगीत एवं कला की विभिन्न विधाओं के लोगों से परिचय होना, सार्थक बातचीत होना आपको समृद्ध बनाता है। हम नए विचारों, नए अनुभवों एवं नई ऊर्जा के साथ स्वयं को अपडेट कर पाते हैं। सुंदर संगीतमयी शाम, हंसते खिलखिलाते चेहरे, नए आयोजन की चर्चा इन सबने कोविड के अवसाद को कम करने का काम किया। कोलकाता अपने स्वाद के लिए जाना जाता है। डिनर के लजीज व्यंजनों का आनंद तो शानदार था ही लेकिन दिल जीतने का काम विशेषरूप से रंग बिरंगे गोल-गणों ने किया।

कोलकाता प्रवास की सुंदर स्मृतियों के साथ मैं वापस अपने शहर रायपुर आ गया। यह यात्रा मेरी अन्य यात्राओं से भिन्न रही। प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन का शुक्रिया सिटी ऑफ जॉय में आमंत्रित कर एक नई ऊर्जा प्रवाहित करने के लिए। दुखद स्मृतियों को भुलाकर उम्मीद की रोशनी देने के लिए...

शुक्रिया ... आपका

गौरव गिरिजा शुक्ला

संस्थापक, अभिकल्प फाउंडेशन



(L-R) Soumitra Mitra, Advisor, Bengali Language, Theatre & Film Programmes, Prabha Khaitan Foundation, Sourav Ghoshal, general manager of Taj Taal Kutir, and Vishal Sharma, general manager of Taj Vivanta. Taj is a hospitality partner for the Foundation's boutique events



Sujoy Prosad Chatterjee (L) and Satadru Ojha



(Clockwise from left) Ehsaas Woman of Jalandhar Simran Paintal, Ehsaas Woman of Amritsar Praneet Bubber, Ehsaas Women of Chandigarh Rishma Gill and Shalu Goel, Ehsaas Woman of Jalandhar Ruhi Walia Syal, Anindita Chatterjee, Sundeep Bhutoria and Manisha Jain



Even though the coronavirus played spoilsport every time we considered a Kolkata trip, we managed to pull off what seemed like an impossible feat, timed perfectly during the tiny window of relief offered up during the pandemic. Us ladies from the North—Chandigarh, Jalandhar and Amritsar—descended upon the culturally vibrant city of Kolkata. Needless to say, we were thoroughly spoilt by Sundeepji's legendary hospitality, where every lavish meal was accompanied by discussions on what the next meal would offer up!

Our meetings were deeply fruitful, with discussions about the various initiatives being conducted by the Foundation. The **Muskaan** project is an exceptional initiative reaching out to schools across the country, bringing to life the diverse culture of India in a lively and relatable manner for the youth. The importance of the financial aid provided by the Foundation to underprivileged students and children who were orphaned during the pandemic cannot be overemphasised. All of this is, of course, in addition to the Foundation's prolific country-wide events conducted by **Ehsaas** Women that put the spotlight on culture, the written word, performance art and music. Through our discussions, we are certain we can expand both the reach of the Foundation and the vibrant network of **Ehsaas** Women across the country.

The **Ehsaas** Women of Chennai also joined us for dinner. It was great to meet them, thereby forming connections that will certainly last a lifetime and talking about the fantastic platform that **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** offers women to connect with each other, prosper and feel empowered.

— Rishma Gill, Ehsaas Woman of Chandigarh



CHENNAI



(Clockwise from left) Ehsaas Women of Chennai Kaveri Lalchand and Vidya Gajapati Raju Singh with Anindita Chatterjee, Sundeep Bhutoria and Manisha Jain

This was my first ever trip to Kolkata. I didn't expect it, but the first breath I took outside the Kolkata airport was fresher than I thought! There were two of us from Jalandhar—Simran Paintal and I—and we were looked after extremely well right from our arrival to our departure. Everything was perfect! The next morning we had our meeting with Sundeep Bhutoria and his team, followed by an elaborate lunch. The evening was greatly entertaining with live music at a lovely restaurant at the hotel where we were staying.

Overall, I was overwhelmed with the warmth I received. It was such a learning experience. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** is doing everything in its power for the betterment of Indian communities. Hats off to Sundeep Bhutoria, his team and the Foundation. We look forward to better times in a post-Covid world, where we can physically welcome the Foundation to our own city. Thank you so much for your hospitality.

— Ruhi Walia Syal, Ehsaas Woman of Jalandhar



Ruhi Walia Syal set the mood for a night to remember by diving deep into Punjabi folk songs and retro Hindi classics. She got everyone present jamming and singing along





(L-R) Esha Dutta, Sundeep Bhutoria, Vidya Gajapati Raju Singh, Ruhi Walia Syal and Praneet Bubber



Shalu Goel



Ehsaas Women enjoy a laugh together



(L-R) Foundation members Mansi Kamdar Shah, Cathy Tongper and Anindita Chatterjee



Simran Paintal



Kaveri Lalchand



DELHI



(L-R) Anindita Chatterjee, Sundeep Bhutoria and Manisha Jain



(L-R) Ehsaas Women of Delhi Huma Khalil Mirza, Neelima Dalmia Adhar, Archana Dalmia and Anantmla Potdar



(L-R) Anantmla Potdar, Archana Dalmia, Sundeep Bhutoria, Neelima Dalmia Adhar and Huma Khalil Mirza





My first visit to Kolkata was an eye-opener for me. I am so happy to be associated with **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. It is involved in so many social activities that enrich the lives of countless children and women. Women's empowerment is one of the cornerstones of the Foundation, and education for the underprivileged forms the basis of many of its activities. As always, Sundeepji and the team were gracious hosts. The Foundation undertakes so many activities of social uplift under one banner; the selflessness is remarkable! It will be my pleasure to be involved with the Foundation's activities. Thank you.

— Anantmala Potdar, Ehsaas Woman of Delhi



Visiting the City of Joy had been on my wish list for quite a few years. Even though I have travelled all over the world and to most parts of India, I have somehow missed visiting Kolkata. However, an idea of the city had already taken shape in my mind through the various accounts I had read and from the stories I had heard of its colonial grandeur, artistic magnificence, vibrant culture, endearing language and the melodious rhythm of life—stories told to me by many of my friends in Delhi who hail from Kolkata. Thus, when

I was invited by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** for a meeting in Kolkata, I took the offer and thought it would be a great way to combine work and pleasure.

Weaving the vivid images of intrigue and romance from Dominique Lapierre's account of the city as well as imagining the lanes and bylanes of Kolkata from Sujoy Ghosh's film *Kahaani*, I was lost in a reverie. My mind moved back and forth as I got off the plane at Kolkata airport with other **Ehsaas** Women of Delhi, Neelima, Archana and Anantmala. The first glimpse of the city gave me an impression of a slightly unkempt, raw beauty carrying an old-world charm, and instantly reaffirmed my faith in the simple way of life in Kolkata.

The Foundation made arrangements for us to relish all the things that Kolkata has to offer on the culinary front. During the day-long meet, while intense planning on many of the Foundation's initiatives was underway, all our cravings for *chaat*, *jhal muri* and *sandesh* were fully satiated. Later on, I tried the high tea at Flurys and the *samosas* at Chai Point, a cute corner shop, on Sundeepji's recommendation. The next day I strolled through the city and experienced the smells emanating from fishmongers' shops and leather goods stores; then, for more perennial scents, I went to walk in the Botanical Gardens. The following day, a visit to the Marble Palace, the Victoria Memorial, and a drive on the Howrah Bridge completed my Kolkata itinerary during my short visit.

One of the kindest things we can do for ourselves is to travel and explore different cultures and cuisines. I felt refreshed by this charming city, although like all other Indian cities, Kolkata too has undergone many changes. While its old essence is lost in crazy traffic, haphazard city planning and incomplete construction projects, we can still be inspired by whatever remains. 'What though the radiance which was once so bright / Be now for ever taken from my sight, / Though nothing can bring back the hour / Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower; / We will grieve not, rather find / Strength in what remains behind.' (William Wordsworth, "Ode on Intimations of Immortality").

— Huma Khalil Mirza, Ehsaas Woman of Delhi

## GURUGRAM



(Clockwise from left) Sundeep Bhutoria, Anindita Chatterjee and Ehsaas Woman of Gurugram Ina Puri

NOIDA  
&  
VARANASI

(L-R) Ehsaas Woman of Varanasi Ankita Khattry, Anindita Chatterjee, Manisha Jain, Sundeep Bhutoria and Shinjini Kulkarni





### कला, संगीत और साहित्य के केंद्र कोलकाता में एक अहसास वूमेन का पहला अनुभव

कोलकाता का अपना एक जादू है। उस शहर की हवाओं में गीत, संगीत, साहित्य के कण बहते हैं। प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन के सौजन्य से ITC Royal Bengal में आयोजित कार्यक्रम में शामिल होने पहुंची तो उसका वैभव देखती ही रह गई। धवल मार्बल में वास्तुकला का उत्कृष्ट उदाहरण है यह होटल। उसी परिसर में स्थित ITC Sonar Bangla का अपना नैसर्गिक सौंदर्य है। कमल दल का तालाब और उसमें रहती मछलियों को दाना देने का कौतुक याद आते ही मुख पर स्निग्ध मुस्कान तैर जाती है।

संस्था से जुड़ने के बाद यहां मेरी संदीप भूतोड़िया जी से पहली मुलाकात हुई। साथ ही अनंदिता जी और नोएडा से आई अहसास वूमेन शिंजिनी कुलकर्णी एवं दीपाली से भी मिलना हुआ। एक प्रजेंटेशन के माध्यम से मनीषा जी ने विस्तार से प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की गतिविधियों से अवगत करवाया। जानकर अत्यंत हर्ष की अनुभूति हुई। कला, संगीत और साहित्य के साथ समाज सेवा के कार्यों में भी यह संस्था संलग्न है। बेहद सुरुचिपूर्ण ढंग से हर एक आयोजन को संपादित किया जाता है। अतिथियों को भेंट करने हेतु लोकल अर्टिफाक्ट्स लिए जाते हैं, जिससे स्थानीय कलाकारों को प्रश्रय मिले। ऐसे ही छोटे-छोटे किन्तु अत्यंत महत्वपूर्ण प्रयासों से यह संस्था पूरे भारत में महिलाओं को जोड़कर कार्य कर रही है।

रात्रिभोज में लाइव म्यूजिकल बैंड के साथ ही कोलकाता के गणमान्य जनों से मिलना हुआ। आपस में विचारों का स्वस्थ आदान-प्रदान करना सुखद लगा। अगली सुबह वापसी हुई यादों और नए इरादों के साथ।

— Ankita Khattry, Ehsaas Woman of Varanasi

LUCKNOW



(Clockwise from left) Ehsaas Women of Lucknow Deepa Mishra, Dimple Trivedi, Kanak Rekha Chauhan and Madhuri Halwasiya with Foundation members Anindita Chatterjee, Sundeeep Bhutoria, Manisha Jain and Sumitra Ray





Ehsaas Women of Lucknow at lunch



The trip to Kolkata, known as the City of Joy, was truly a joyous one for me in every aspect. Having been held captive by Covid, this was a trip I was able to make after a very long time along with friends. Making it even more important was the fact that I was finally going to meet the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** team in person!

We had a very constructive dialogue with Sundeep Bhutoria and his team; they briefed us about the various initiatives that the Foundation was working on. A deeper understanding of the aims and objectives of the Foundation will help us play a more meaningful role. It was an absolute pleasure to meet Sumitra Ray, the Student Programmes Advisor for **Muskaan**. She briefed us about the unique and interesting activities conducted under the **Muskaan** initiative for children of all age groups, and we hope to collaborate and work with her in the near future.

I would like to thank Sundeepji and the entire team of the Foundation for their gracious hospitality. They treated us with so much love and respect, and it was a pleasure to meet everyone. I returned home rejuvenated and with beautiful memories.

— Deepa Mishra, Ehsaas Woman of Lucknow



(L-R) Dimple Trivedi, Madhuri Halwasiya, Sundeep Bhutoria, Deepa Mishra and Kanak Rekha Chauhan



Manisha Jain



Anindita Chatterjee



Sumitra Ray

PATNA



(Clockwise from left) Ehsaas Women of Patna Anubha Arya and Anvita Pradhan with Foundation members Anindita Chatterjee, Sundeep Bhutoria and Manisha Jain



### कोलकाता! कला के शहर, प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन मुख्यालय की एक यात्रा

कोलकाता कहें या पूर्व का मोती, नाम सुनते ही साहित्यिक और कलात्मक धरोहरों की याद आ जाती है। कोलकातावासियों के बीच सदा से ही कला और साहित्य का विशेष स्थान रहा है, इसीलिए तो इस शहर को 'सिटी ऑफ प्यूरियस, क्रिएटिव एनर्जी' कहा जाता है। कला के क्षेत्र में कोलकाता का अतुल्य योगदान रहा है। मुझे बहुत ही हर्ष हुआ जब प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन ने मुझे आमंत्रित किया, अपने शहर कोलकाता। मुझे और सह-अहसास वूमेन अन्विता प्रधान को लेखक, राजनेता शशि थरूर की नई प्रकाशित पुस्तक *Pride, Prejudice and Punditry* के विमोचन पर। हमने उसे सहर्ष स्वीकार किया। मैं बहुत हर्ष में थी, उल्लसित थी, हमारे लेखक, सांसद थरूर को सुनने और मिलने के लिए, इसके साथ ही संदीप भूतोड़िया जी से मिलने का भी आकर्षण था, फिर मैं कोलकाता अहसास वूमेन की साथियों से पहली बार व्यक्तिगत रूप से आपने-सामने मिल रही थी। 18 जनवरी, 22 को दोपहर में हमारा वायुयान समय से कोलकाता उतरा, लेकिन ट्रैफिक जाम के कारण हम पुस्तक विमोचन के दौरान समय से नहीं पहुंच सके। पर सौभाग्य से पुस्तक विमोचन के पश्चात थरूर और शिंजिनी कुलकर्णी जो वार्तालाप कर रहे थे, उसको सुन सके। यह वार्तालाप बहुत ही दिलचस्प और प्रेरणादायक था, इससे बहुत कुछ सीखने को मिला। मैं धन्यवाद देना चाहूंगी, प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन और कोलकाता अहसास वूमेन

टीम का, जिन्होंने बहुत बड़े पैमाने पर कार्यक्रम को सफलतापूर्वक परिपूर्ण कराया। पुस्तक विमोचन के बाद हम आमंत्रित थे रात्रि भोजन पर, जहां हम व्यक्तिगत रूप से शशि थरूर, संदीप भूतोड़िया, मंजरी भूतोड़िया तथा कोलकाता अहसास वूमेन की सहयोगियों से मुलाकात की और वार्तालाप किया।

अगले दिन हमें मौका मिला कोलकाता शहर घूमने का, जिसमें हमने न केवल कोलकाता शहर के ऐतिहासिक पुरास्थलों को देखा, बल्कि वहां के विशेष खानपान का आनंद लिया और शॉपिंग भी की। मैं इन सभी के लिए धन्यवाद देना चाहूंगी प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन टीम का जिन्होंने हमारे लिए बेहतरीन प्रबंध किया। हमारी औपचारिक मीटिंग संदीप भूतोड़िया और प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन टीम के साथ हुई, जो कि काफी प्रभावशाली रही। हमने बहुत सारे विषयों पर चर्चा की और अपने विचार साझा किए। हमने पटना में जल्द ही होने वाले 50वें कलम कार्यक्रम के बारे में चर्चा की, फिर हमने प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की नई वेब साइट को भी देखा, और जाना कि फाउंडेशन कैसे काम करता है। यह हमारे समाज को कैसे बहुमुखी कार्यक्रमों और अपने अभियानों से प्रभावित कर रहा है। ये 2 दिन कैसे गुजरे पता ही नहीं चला। बहुत सारे यादगार पलों को मन में संजोए तथा प्रेरणा लिए हम अपने शहर पटना लौट आये।

धन्यवाद

अनुभा आर्या, अहसास वूमेन पटना



DEHRADUN  
&  
LUDHIANA

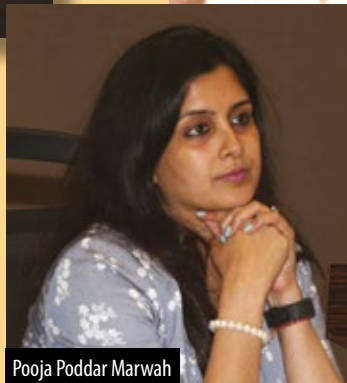
Shefali Agarwal



Pooja Khanna



Zarqa Jain



Pooja Poddar Marwah



Sundeep Bhutoria addresses the meeting



(L-R) Shom Datta, Sangeeta Datta and Malika Verma



As an enthusiast of literature and culture, it was nothing short of an honour for me to be invited by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** to partake in their activities as an **Ehsaas Woman**. We got a detailed presentation that gave us an in-depth understanding of the different kinds of work the Foundation undertakes to empower women and children. I enjoyed the personal interaction we had with the core team and Mr. Sundeep Bhutoria himself, who patiently dealt with the innumerable questions we women had.

It is always about the experience; one always remembers the way one was made to feel. All I remember is feeling like a princess! In an impish gesture—because I wished to savour the *jhal muri* of Kolkata—all I really did was ask, and it was served in its true, authentic style. From the after-hours visits to the Victoria Memorial to the people we met, the City of Joy that is home to the Foundation truly lived up to its name.

I have always aspired to bring intellectual, interactive programmes to Dehradun; through the Foundation, this wish is going to materialise. It is a great privilege to be a part of change—the kind of change that is inspiring, intriguing and enchanting.

— Pooja Poddar Marwah, Ehsaas Woman of Dehradun



(L-R) Zarqa Jain, Pooja Khanna, Pooja Poddar Marwah, Anindita Chatterjee, Sumitra Ray and Shefali Agarwal



Musicians

I was introduced to **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** by a very dear friend. Having been involved in and associated with teaching women and children in order to inculcate the habit of reading, this was a step forward in the right direction.

Our journey to Kolkata was both unforgettable and adventurous, to say the least. We literally had to run to catch our flight! When we reached Kolkata, a city I had only seen in pictures, it was so much more than what I had imagined. It is a literal representation of its illustrious past, because the city unfolds itself like a book.

Mr. Sundeep Bhutoria and his team were extremely generous hosts, and welcomed us with immense warmth. I was impressed with the presentation we were given, as it helped me understand that **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** is truly the biggest platform for budding and established artists. After a long and informative session, we were invited to a wonderful evening to meet more members of the organisation. This was the perfect platform to get to know each other in an informal setting. The dinner was followed by a mesmerising visit to Victoria Memorial, which we captured in our minds as well as in the photos that we could not resist taking. I have carried back with me a piece of Kolkata and memories that I will cherish forever. I am looking forward to sharing and experiencing the journey with **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** and its activities, and launching it in Dehradun very soon.



— Pooja Khanna, Ehsaas Woman of Dehradun



After having been huddled up inside our homes in our respective cities for almost two years owing to the pandemic, 2022 has provided some respite. The third wave of Covid-19 has been milder, thus allowing a degree of normality to return to some extent, enabled by the new guidelines.

My first opportunity to travel this year came knocking a few weeks ago when I received a phone call from **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** asking me to visit their headquarters in Kolkata. I was thrilled with the invitation and excited about the trip, as re-visiting the City of Joy had been on my agenda for a long time.

Every travel detail, from my flight arrangements and my pick-up and drop to hotel accommodation, was meticulously taken care of by the Foundation. I landed in Kolkata at night and was driven to the ITC Sonar, one of the finest luxury hotels in the city. A good night's rest had me all refreshed and excited about my meeting with the team of **Prabha Khaitan**

**Foundation**. On my way to the conference room, I got acquainted with two other prospective

**Ehsaas Women** who were from Dehradun. We were warmly greeted by some of the Foundation's members over an informal cup of tea before Mr. Sundeep Bhutoria, the trustee of this dynamic Foundation, joined us. The meeting started with a brief introduction by all the members who were present, followed by an in-depth presentation about **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, its work, its various verticals, its other off-shoots and the **Ehsaas** community, which is the backbone of this organisation.

While the lunch menu was designed to appeal to our North Indian palate, our hearts were won over by a delectable variety of the best *sandesh* I have tasted. And if this wasn't enough, after a short Q&A session, where our doubts and roles as **Ehsaas Women** were clarified, we were served some mouth-watering *jhal muri*—the essence of Bengali street food. After this, a short siesta was inevitable.

Over dinner and drinks, we got an opportunity to mingle with some of the **Ehsaas Women** of Kolkata and other organisations affiliated to **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. Our taste buds were satiated with Kolkata's famous *phuchkas* and *kachoris*, and the heartwarming conversations made the evening truly memorable. I, along with the two ladies from Dehradun, decided to take a quick one-hour tour of the city before the night curfew started. The drive over Howrah Bridge to reach the beautifully illuminated Victoria Memorial was worth the effort. After taking a few selfies, we returned to the hotel and bid farewell to each other since most of us had early-morning flights to catch.

I returned from this beautiful city with my soul feeling completely overwhelmed by the splendid hospitality showered on us by the members of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. It was a wonderful learning experience and I feel grateful for having become a part and a torch-bearer of this esteemed organisation in my own city.

— Zarqa Jain, Ehsaas Woman of Ludhiana





(L-R) Ehsaas Woman of Coimbatore Poonam Bafna with Sundeep Bhutoria and Manisha Jain



I would like to begin by thanking Sundeep Bhutoria and Madhuri Halwasiya for introducing me to **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. My visit to Kolkata, the headquarters of the Foundation, was very enriching and a great learning experience. I was happy to see the kind of work the Foundation is engaged in and was elated to meet the team associated with the organisation. The hospitality was splendid and we were made to feel so comfortable. I would like to extend my appreciation and thank Sundeepji, who made sure I had the most comfortable stay, complete with home-cooked meals, which made the trip even more heartwarming. I was surprised—rather, overwhelmed—to receive a beautiful *kantha sari* and *gur sandesh* to take back with me, along with great memories.

With the insights I gained into the philanthropic work done by the organisation, I am looking forward to working with the Foundation's great minds, who exude humility. There shall be many more engagements in the near future.

— Poonam Bafna, Ehsaas Woman of Coimbatore

INDORE



(L-R) Sundeeep Bhutoria, Manisha Jain and Ehsaas Woman of Indore Unnati Singh



On December 14, I reached Kolkata for my first in-person meeting with the members of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. Until then, we were a virtual family. I walked into the office of the well-known Foundation, which has worked extensively in the spheres of literature, social welfare, culture and women's empowerment. It is my privilege to be part of such a focused group which believes in quality over quantity. No Foundation programme has more than 30 invitees; this 'thrifty thirty' principle works like magic and each invitee feels important and relevant. This is the way in which **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** works; it believes in meticulous planning, maintaining a high level of programme management and choosing the best authors from all over the world.

The social outreach of such work by the Foundation must cover a wider audience, including schoolchildren, with challenging topics like wildlife conservation, environmental problems and urban issues. Much like the persona of *Prabhaji*, the Foundation thrives on creativity, credibility, concern, conviction, connection and a cognisance for culture. The future belongs to the youth who are rooted in Indian traditions and values while also being open to a new world without losing their Indian identity.

I am extremely privileged to be part of this group. My contribution as an **Ehsaas Woman of Indore** is to be a positive force who promotes the cause of this Foundation.

— Unnati Singh, Ehsaas Woman of Indore





(Clockwise from left) Ehsaas Women of Agra Shweta Bansal and Vinti Kathuria with Sundeep Bhutoria, Anindita Chatterjee and Mansi Kamdar Shah



An email pops up on my screen, and it's from **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. Voila! It's an invitation to go to Kolkata for a meeting with the team of the Foundation! My heart skipped a beat. "Oh my god!" I think. "It's finally happening! I will soon be in the city I have dreamt of being in since I was a kid." The city of culture, heritage, theatre... the city of Rabindranath Tagore.

My experience started right from the minute I landed in Kolkata and spotted a yellow taxi outside the airport. It brought back memories of how we had seen Kolkata in the movies. The ITC Sonar greeted us with the finest, melt-in-the-mouth *kacha golla sandesh*, and thus began my gastronomic journey.

I was bombarded with all kinds of flavours, from the *mirchi* of *jhal muri* to the tanginess of *phuchkas*, from the peri-peri flavour of spiral potato to the sweetness of *nolen gur kulf*, from the *masaledaar* Shibuji *shikanji* to the spicy *vada* sold outside Vardaan Market. Even after my stomach was full, the greedy part of me went weak in the knees at the mere mention of the famous Kusum *kathi* rolls. Through this gourmet journey, I did not miss witnessing the most iconic landmarks of the city, Victoria Memorial, Eden Gardens, the High Court and Howrah Bridge.

My second day in the City of Joy started with an interactive session with the team of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. I was overwhelmed by the presentation showcasing the Foundation's various verticals in the different fields the organisation has envisioned. I was also deeply impressed by all the philanthropic work that the organisation did during the pandemic.

My culinary journey wouldn't have been complete without a quick trip to the famous Flurys and my favourite Kookie Jar. These were mandatory before I headed back home with a full stomach and memories to cherish for a lifetime.

— Shweta Bansal, Ehsaas Woman of Agra



Vinti Kathuria

## RAIPUR



(Clockwise from left) Ehsaas Women of Raipur Kirti Kirdatt, Aanchal Garcha, Kalpana Chaudhary and Shrishti Trivedi with Sundeep Bhutoria and Anindita Chatterjee

**Prabha Khaitan Foundation** has always been known to curate invigorating sessions on literature and socio-cultural issues for the public, but a lesser-known fact, a hidden gem of the Foundation, is the series of meets they organise within the Foundation's family. These meets become melting pots of thoughts, cultural exchanges and creative ideas, and witness the mingling of **Ehsaas** Women from all walks of life and from various parts of India.

This time, our annual review meet in Kolkata proved to be one such insightful event. There was an implosion of ideas that led to a crucial turning point for the Foundation and paved the way ahead for us.

We, the **Ehsaas** Women of Raipur, were at a juncture in our journey where we were looking for more opportunities for self-exploration. This meet gave us exactly that. It inspired us, mentored us and offered us further opportunities for expanding our horizons through the Foundation's various verticals.

The presentation of the Foundation's marvellous graph of growth and the seamless transition it made to the online medium despite the endless challenges of the pandemic have been a source of inspiration for us all. With his signature style, Sundeepji patiently walked us all through the Foundation's journey, including every major or minor milestone during this critical period of a global crisis.

This meeting was an absolute eye-opener. It filled us all with the zeal to create spaces and events for the people of Chhattisgarh which would help start dialogues on various socio-cultural and literary topics, thereby creating more awareness.

It is said that all work and no play can make anyone a dull person. This is what Sundeepji sincerely believes, and to that end, we spent two days going in and out of boardrooms, dining rooms and various locations around the city, all organised and arranged by our host and his diligent team. Such is the nature of our association.

Every time, our appreciation for the warm hospitality and the dedicated teamwork of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** increases manifold. Their thoughtfulness and attention to the minutest of details is unmatched. Such meets also give us opportunities to connect with fellow **Ehsaas** Women from different chapters and learn from the unique perspectives that each one brings to the table. These meetings are just as crucial for women's empowerment as they are for strengthening the literary backbone of the country, from the capital cities to the furthest nooks and corners of India.

Apart from the incentive of self-growth, we also discover a great deal about how **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** endeavours to infuse artistic expressions of all kinds into every little aspect of their functioning, which then culminate in distinct and memorable experiences. Who knew that **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** constantly strives to get on board the best minds and the greatest artists across the country to collaborate for a cause? Together, these brilliant artists and their genius set a movement in motion—a movement to create ripples in the collective consciousness of the audience.

Understanding the different cultures and the diversity of our country is another highlight of these meetings. The vision and values that **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** holds dear are of paramount importance to us. Keeping these values and goals in our minds, we go back motivated and all geared up to bring enriching experiences to our own state. With our hearts full of love and heads full of dreams, we return to give Chhattisgarh its most epic years ahead.

— Ehsaas Women of Raipur





(L-R) Aanchal Garcha, Anindita Chatterjee, Kalpana Chaudhary, Kirti Kirdatt, Sharmita Bhinder (Ehsaas Woman of Chandigarh) and Shrishti Trivedi



Shazia Ilmi, Ehsaas Woman of Delhi (L), and Shweta Bansal



A live food counter served up hot favourites



Musicians



(L-R) Ehsaas Women of Kolkata Gouri Basu, Esha Dutta and Nilisha Agarwal



Shinjini Kulkarni



Vinti Kathuria



Deepak Menezes, Complex Manager, ITC Royal Bengal (L) and Nitin Bahl, Hotel Manager, ITC Sonar



MUMBAI  
&  
UDAIPUR

(Clockwise from left) Shraddha Murgia, Ketki Bhatia, Karishma Mehta, Swati Agarwal, Mumal Bhandari, Anindita Chatterjee, Sundeep Bhutoria, Manisha Jain and Mansi Kamdar Shah

**Prabha Khaitan Foundation** hosted the **Ehsaas Women of Mumbai and Udaipur** in Kolkata with sheer elan and class. The time we spent with the founders of the organisation was socially, emotionally and mentally stimulating. Listening to Mr. Sundeep Bhutoria's vision and seeing the incredible work being done by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** was uplifting and motivating. The platform being provided to **Ehsaas Women** across the globe is emancipating and empowering for women, while also creating a ripple effect. The synergies of this group help in breaking the glass ceiling and creating an ecosystem that enhances art and culture. Having worked with the Foundation for the last eight years, one can't help but feel satisfied with the social and cultural impact it's making in today's fast-paced world.

During our stay in Kolkata, the meetings were so well-planned and the meals were so thoughtfully curated that the memories have become deeply etched in our hearts. We celebrated language, culture, inclusivity and togetherness. This immersive experience of knowing the Foundation and seeing its trajectory of growth felt empowering. There could not have been a more apt name for Kolkata and its people than the 'City of Joy'. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Sundeep Bhutoria, Anindita Chatterjee, Manisha Jain, Mansi Kamdar Shah and the entire team. This trip to Kolkata wasn't just a visit, it was an experience.

— Swati Agarwal, Ehsaas Woman of Mumbai & Udaipur

UDAIPUR



Discussion with Ehsaas Women of Udaipur on the upcoming theatre festival. (Clockwise from left) Shraddha Murgia, Swati Agarwal, Mumal Bhandari, Mansi Kamdar Shah, Anindita Chatterjee, Sundeep Bhutoria and Manisha Jain



MUMBAI



(Clockwise from left) Mansi Kamdar Shah, Anindita Chatterjee, Sundeep Bhutoria, Manisha Jain, Karishma Mehta, Swati Agarwal and Ketki Bhatia

I must express my deepest gratitude for the hospitality we were shown during our visit to Kolkata. We enjoyed everything about our stay in the city. From the moment of our arrival to the very last second of our trip, we were treated like royalty. It was very inspiring to learn about the incredible work that **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** is doing in the varied fields of art, literature and social welfare. The meetings were very thoughtfully planned, and they gave us an insight into the work that happens behind the scenes. This learning experience has empowered me and given me direction for the future. A lesson we take back with us from this visit is that teamwork, precise planning and an eye for perfection are all needed for an event to be successful. We are proud and honoured to be a part of the **Ehsaas** initiative and look forward to working closely with **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** in the future. We are deeply grateful for the generosity we received and the time taken out for us. We hope that we get the opportunity to return this hospitality someday.

— **Karishma Mehta, Ehsaas Woman of Mumbai**

After a long wait of two years on account of Covid-19, we finally made it to the headquarters of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** in the City of Joy. After a warm welcome at the ITC Royal Bengal, we met Mr. Sundeep Bhutoria and his wonderful team. Our discussions and interactions gave us deep insights into the Foundation's work across multiple verticals, including social welfare. In addition to the joy that the Foundation has brought to so many people during the difficult lockdown period through their various literary and cultural online programmes, we also learned about the Foundation's commendable projects to help families affected by Covid. At meal times, we were treated to delectable, mammoth-sized spreads accompanied by some beautiful live music. Mr. Bhutoria is an extraordinary host, and we could see the great attention and care that went into every little detail. The trip to Kolkata was short but delightful, and it ended with us going home with a gift of delectable goodies and sweet memories.

— **Ketki Bhatia, Ehsaas Woman of Mumbai**



(L-R) Swati Agarwal, Ketki Bhatia and Karishma Mehta



Esha Dutta

In the midst of the unprecedented situations caused by Covid-19 and the newly opened travel zones, our trip to Kolkata, the City of Joy, was quite impulsive. The excitement of planning the upcoming theatre festival in Udaipur was palpable. The care showered upon us by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, from even before we arrived right up till our departure, was superlative. The hospitality never faltered. Every detail, from observing Covid protocols to the food menus, from the music to the parting gifts, was immaculate. It is remarkable to witness the wonderful and comfortable work culture that has been developed at the Foundation's workplace; it was a true reflection of women's empowerment to see an all-women working gang.

I take this opportunity to thank all the members of the management and administrative wings of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** for their time and amazing company. It was lovely to meet all the other **Ehsaas Women** who were present at the meeting. A sense of companionship and togetherness was upheld. I also extend my gratitude to the ITC hotel for their warm gesture. It was a real treat to be a guest of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**.

— Shraddha Murdia, Ehsaas Woman of Udaipur



Shraddha Murdia (L) and Mumal Bhandari





Sundeep Bhutoria with Laura and Stephane Amalir, Director, Alliance Francaise Delhi, discussing the framework of the fourth edition of the Festival of France in India, Bonjour India. The Foundation looks forward to future collaborations with Alliance Francaise across India and signing an MoU with them and The French Institute in India

An evening get-together of friends, associates and guests to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of Indian Independence and the Foundation's continuing work with Alliance Francaise . In picture, L-R: Stephane and Laura Amalir with Maj. Gen. S.S. Kahlon, GOC Bengal Sub Area



Daniel Sim, Deputy Consul General of Australia in Kolkata

Lopamudra Lahiri and Amy Pratt



Nilufer Bose and Alan Archment





Maj. Gen. S.S. Kahlon, GOC Bengal Sub Area along, with his wife Rupali Kahlon



Nakamura Yutaka, Consul General of Japan in Kolkata, with his wife Yuko Nakamura



Arijit Dutta and Sundeep Bhutoria



Nilufer Bose with Adrian Pratt

Debanjan Chakrabarti, Director, British Council, East and Northeast India



Tanusree Shankar

(L-R) Nilanjana Sengupta, Mahua Chatterjee and Esha Dutta





# Art is the language of the people



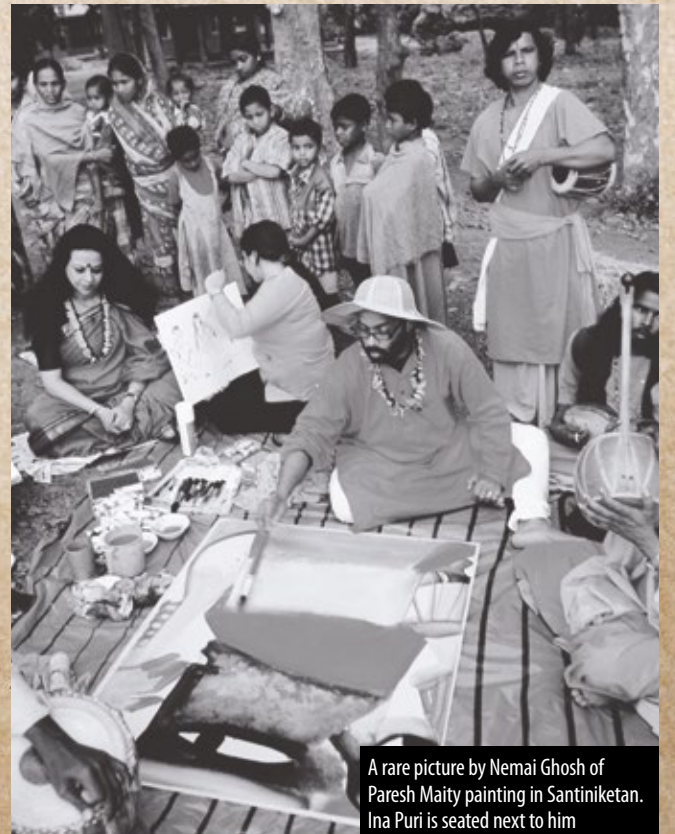
## अपनी भाषा अपने लोग

Hand scripted by Paresh Maity

“Art is a language, an instrument of knowledge, an instrument of communication.”

— Jean Dubuffet

Art and language are inextricably linked. It's a relationship that has always brought people together: the artist and the muse, the painter and the viewer, the author and the reader. With the celebration of Indian languages, literature, music and art as one of its primary objectives, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** values this bond. This is reflected in the Foundation's motto, *Apni Bhasha Apne Log*, which has now been scripted by hand and rendered into a gorgeous logo by the renowned painter and sculptor, Paresh Maity. The Foundation's association with the artist has been facilitated to a large extent by art curator and **Ehsaas** Woman of Gurugram, Ina Puri. *Apni Bhasha Apne Log* celebrates the confluence of India's languages, literature and culture; it reflects the beliefs, ideals and philosophy of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**.



A rare picture by Nemat Ghosh of Paresh Maity painting in Santiniketan. Ina Puri is seated next to him



## शानदार पहल: युवाओं, महिलाओं की भागीदारी से गुलजार रहा 'राजस्थानी युवा लेखक महोत्सव'



Kavi Sammelan

यह राजस्थान की रंग-रंगीली माटी में पैदा हुए शब्द शिल्पियों का एक अनूठा मेला था, जिसकी बातें यहां जुटे लोगों के मानस-पटल पर लंबे समय तक अंकित रहेंगी। जयपुर के जवाहर कला केंद्र में दो दिवसीय राजस्थानी युवा लेखक महोत्सव का आयोजन हुआ, जिसमें राजस्थानी भाषा से जुड़े, लिखने-पढ़ने वाले साहित्यकार और युवा लेखक एकत्रित हुए। इस अवसर पर उपस्थित साहित्यकारों, लेखकों और भाषाप्रेमियों ने राजस्थानी में सृजन करने की प्रवृत्ति को अपनाने और अपनी भाषा और साहित्य को आगे बढ़ाने पर चर्चा की।

दो दिवसीय राजस्थानी युवा लेखक महोत्सव की सबसे खास बात यह रही कि साहित्य और भाषा से लगाव रखने वाली महिलाओं ने भारी संख्या में भागीदारी निभाई। महोत्सव के विभिन्न सत्रों में जहां राजस्थानी भाषा में



Chief guest Gopal Krishna Vyas, Chairman, Rajasthan State Human Rights Commission

उपन्यास, अनुवाद, शब्दकोश, संस्मरण, व्यंग्य आदि पर शोधपत्र पढ़ने के साथ चर्चा और संवाद हुए, वहीं सांस्कृतिक और कला की भी झलक मिलती रही, जब लोकगीतों और स्वरचित रचनाओं की अभिव्यक्ति से माहौल सरस बनता रहा। खास बात यह कि इस महोत्सव के स्थान चयन को लेकर भी अतिथियों ने आयोजकों की भूरी-भूरी प्रशंसा की और कहा कि यह जयपुर ही नहीं बल्कि राजस्थान के कला और साहित्य का प्रमुख केंद्र है। यह खुशी की बात है कि जवाहर कला केंद्र भी इस महोत्सव का प्रमुख सहयोगी है।

जवाहर कला केंद्र के कृष्णायन सभागार में राजस्थानी युवा लेखक महोत्सव के उद्घाटन सत्र में प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन के राजस्थान एंड सेंट्रल अफेयर्स क्षेत्र की मानद सचिव अपरा कुच्छल, पर्यटन विशेषज्ञ



Reciting traditional geet at the opening ceremony





Rajesh Kumar Vyas, Joint Director, Governor House, Rajasthan, welcomed by Apra Kuchhal of Prabha Khaitan Foudation at Jawahar Kala Kendra



Farooq Afridi, OSD at Chief Minister's Office, welcomed by Anuradha Gogiya, ADG, at Jawahar Kala Kendra

ठाकुर दुर्गासिंह मंडावा और साहित्यकार एवं कला समीक्षक डॉ. राजेश व्यास अतिथि रहे। सत्र का प्रारंभ राजस्थानी में गणेश वंदना 'रणतभंवर से आओ हे रिद्धि सिद्धि रा भरतार' और 'छोटो सो विनायक डगमग चाले' से हुआ। उद्घाटन सत्र को संबोधित करते हुए कुच्छल ने कहा कि **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** साहित्यिक, सांस्कृतिक विकास और महिला सशक्तीकरण के लिए कार्य कर रहा है। यह हिंदी में **कलम**, अंग्रेजी में **द राइट सर्किल**, उर्दू-अरबी में **लफ़्ज** और क्षेत्रीय भाषाओं में **आखर** के नाम से लेखकों को संवाद का मंच उपलब्ध कराता है। **आखर** वर्तमान में राजस्थान में बड़ी पहचान बन गया है और राजस्थानी भाषा को प्रोत्साहित करने के लिए निरंतर कार्यक्रम आयोजित कर रहा है। युवा लेखक महोत्सव भी इसी क्रम में नई कड़ी है। इससे राजस्थानी में सृजनरत युवा लेखकों का मनोबल बढ़ेगा।

साहित्यकार और कला समीक्षक डॉ. राजेश व्यास ने कहा कि राजस्थानी हमारी मातृभाषा है। इस को आगे बढ़ाने के लिए लिखना, पढ़ना और बोलना होगा। जब हम स्वयं अधिक से अधिक राजस्थानी बोलेंगे, पढ़ेंगे और लिखेंगे तो भाषा का विकास होगा और प्रभाव पड़ेगा। भाषा का अपना सौंदर्य होता है और हमारी भाषा किसी से कम नहीं है। कला, साहित्य के केंद्र **जवाहर कला केंद्र** में हो रहा यह आयोजन हमारी भाषा के विकास को भी आगे बढ़ाएगा। सम्मेलन में उपस्थित युवा

लेखकों को सुझाव देते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि अपने भाषायी कौशल बढ़ाने के लिए अधिक से अधिक स्वाध्याय करने के साथ ही वर्तमान परिवेश का अवलोकन भी करना होगा। राजस्थानी के माने हुए साहित्यकारों कन्हैयालाल सेठिया, विजयदान देथा बिज्जी आदि से प्रेरणा लेते हुए अपनी भाषा को अपनी रचनाओं से समृद्ध करना होगा।

पर्यटन विशेषज्ञ और कई भाषाओं के जानकार दुर्गा सिंह मंडावा ने कहा कि राजस्थानी को आगे बढ़ाने के लिए हमें अपने बच्चों से भी राजस्थानी में ही संवाद करना चाहिए। इससे वे धीरे-धीरे अपनी भाषा के शब्दों का परिचय जान सकेंगे। राजस्थानी के लिए इतनी बड़ी संख्या में युवाओं का एकत्रित होना गौरव की बात है। अपनी भाषा को जीवित रखने के लिए युवाओं को एकत्र कर अधिक से अधिक राजस्थानी बोलने का अभ्यास करना होगा। राजस्थानी भाषा में युवा रचनाकारों को प्रोत्साहन मिलना प्रसन्नता की बात है। **राजस्थानी युवा लेखक महोत्सव** इस दिशा में एक बड़ी पहल साबित होगा। आयोजकों की ओर से **ग्रासरूट मीडिया** के अंकित तिवाड़ी ने इस सत्र में धन्यवाद ज्ञापित किया, संचालन अभिलाषा पारीक ने किया।

इसके बाद मोहन आलोक सत्र आयोजित हुआ। इस सत्र में शोधार्थियों जगदीश चंद गुर्जर ने उपन्यास और रावलराम पंवार ने संस्मरण विधा पर



Gathering at the inauguration



Durga Singh Mandawa



Pramod Sharma



Gajadan Charan

अपने शोध-पत्रों का वाचन किया। इस अवसर पर साहित्यकार कुंदन माली, डॉ. राजेश व्यास और विजय जोशी मंचासीन रहे। वरिष्ठ सृजनकारों ने युवा साहित्यकारों का मार्गदर्शन किया। डॉ. शक्तिदान कविया के नाम से हुए दूसरे सत्र में किशन प्रणय, डॉ. अंजू योगेश यथार्थ और अब्दुल लतीफ उस्ता ने शोध-पत्रों का वाचन किया। इसमें विमला महरिया ने 'जिण घर जन्मी लाडली' गीत प्रस्तुत किया। इस सत्र में डॉ. घनश्याम नाथ कच्छावा, चेतन औदित्य और मोनिका गौड़ मंचासीन रहे।

#### कवि सम्मेलन में मंत्रमुग्ध हुए श्रोता-गण

राजस्थानी युवा लेखक महोत्सव के प्रथम दिन शाम को आयोजित कवि सम्मेलन ने राजस्थान के जाने-माने कवियों ने अपनी प्रस्तुति से लोगों को अभिभूत कर दिया। श्रोताओं ने उनकी रचनाओं पर जमकर तालियां बजाई और दिल खोलकर प्रशंसा की। अपनी सांस्कृतिक विरासत से जुड़े हुए कवि संगम ने श्रोताओं पर अमिट प्रभाव छोड़ा। कवि सम्मेलन का आरंभ अभिलाषा पारीक ने किया और देवीलाल महिया ने मंत्रमुग्ध कर दिया। छैलू चारण छैल ने राजस्थान की वीर परम्परा पर, प्रहलाद सिंह झोरड़ा ने ग्रामीण जनजीवन की महक 'झीणा झीणा धोरिया रे, बीच म्हारो गांव है...', राज बिजारणियां ने बेटी पर, डॉ. शारदा कृष्ण ने बेटी की विदाई पर अपनी रचनाएं प्रस्तुत की। इसी तरह प्रीतिमा पुलक, नहुष व्यास, किशनलाल वर्मा, डॉ. गजादान चारण ने अपनी कविताओं से श्रोताओं की दाद पाई। कवि सम्मेलन का संचालन डॉ. गजादान चारण शक्तिसुत ने बेहद उम्दा ढंग से किया।

#### लोकगीतों के मूल में है जीवन की संवेदना

राजस्थानी युवा लेखक महोत्सव के दूसरे दिन आयोजित कमला कमलेश सत्र में सहभागी बजरंगलाल ने मंगलाचरण किया। डॉ. अनिता जैन विपुला, सुमन पडिहार ने अपने शोधपत्रों का वाचन किया। इस सत्र में विमला नागला, डॉ. हरिमोहन सारस्वत रंख, कुंदन माली मंचासीन रहे। बीकानेर की कवयित्री मोनिका गौड़ ने अपनी कविता प्रस्तुत की। छत्रपाल शिवाजी सहित अन्य सहभागियों ने भी अपनी प्रस्तुतियां दी। संतोष चौधरी ने इसका संचालन किया। इस सत्र में हिंदी से राजस्थानी में अनुवादित बाल कथा 'माशी री जीत' का विमोचन भी किया गया।

इसके बाद आयोजित समापन सत्र के अतिथि राज्य मानवाधिकार आयोग अध्यक्ष गोपाल कृष्ण व्यास थे। उन्होंने अपने उद्बोधन में कहा कि राजस्थानी केवल मान्यता के भरोसे नहीं है। यह आमजन की भाषा है। मान्यता से तो केवल नौकरियों में लाभ मिल जाता है। राजधानी में इतनी बड़ी संख्या में युवाओं और साहित्यकारों का इस महोत्सव में जुटना ही राजस्थानी को मान्यता है। व्यास ने अपने शिक्षक और साहित्यकार धनंजय वर्मा एवं अन्य का स्मरण करते हुए कहा कि राजस्थानी भाषा, साहित्य और लोकगीत अपने आप में अनूठे हैं। राजस्थान के लोकगीतों के सृजन के मूल में लोक जीवन की संवेदना है, जो सभी के मन को छूते हैं। इस पर शोधार्थियों को शोध करने की आवश्यकता है। उन्होंने विभिन्न लोकगीत 'लड़ली लुमा लुमा...', 'भलो रे जमानो दियो तू विधाता...', 'संदेशों लेती जाइजे...', 'बोले म्हारी मीठा मीठा बोल...' और कई भजन सुनाकर भी सहभागियों को राजस्थानी में सृजन और संवाद के लिए प्रेरित किया।



Ghanshyam Nath Kachhawa addressing the session



Prahlad Singh Jhorda reciting a poem



Audience members



Singing of the folk song, Geet Badhao, at the closing session

मुख्यमंत्री कार्यालय में विशेष अधिकारी फारुख आफरीदी ने इस सत्र को संबोधित करते हुए कहा कि राजस्थानी हमारी स्वाभाविक भाषा है। यह खुशी की बात है कि नई पीढ़ी अपनी भाषा को अपना रही है। इसी बलबूते राजस्थानी भाषा आगे बढ़ेगी। विदेश गए बहुत से राजस्थानी अभी भी यही भाषा बोलते हैं। वर्तमान में तो राजस्थानी की बहुत सी पुस्तकें भी आ रही हैं। आखर जैसे कार्यक्रमों से ही हमारी मातृभाषा को मजबूती मिलती है। **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** और **ग्रासरूट मीडिया फाउंडेशन** इसके लिए दिल लगाकर काम कर रहा है। **जवाहर कला केंद्र** की अतिरिक्त महानिदेशक अनुराधा गोगिया ने कहा कि इस महोत्सव में काफी अच्छे सत्र आयोजित किए गए और यह महोत्सव विविधतापूर्णता से ओतप्रोत रहा। इसमें महिलाओं की उत्साहपूर्ण भागीदारी प्रशंसनीय है। राजस्थानी भाषा संस्कारों में है और पीढ़ी दर पीढ़ी चलती रहेगी। **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** राजस्थानी भाषा को आगे बढ़ाने के लिए नींव के पत्थर का कार्य कर रहा है।

समापन समारोह को संबोधित करते हुए आयोजकों की तरफ से **ग्रासरूट मीडिया** के प्रमोद शर्मा ने विस्तार से अपनी बातें कहीं। उन्होंने कहा कि वर्ष 2016 में औपचारिक रूप से **आखर** कार्यक्रम की शुरुआत

हुई और अब इसने राजस्थान में बड़ी पहचान बना ली है। जून 2022 में **राजस्थानी महोत्सव** के नाम से हमारी एक और बड़ा आयोजन करने की योजना है। हमारी राजस्थानी भाषा को मान्यता मिलना तय है। यह तो होकर ही रहेगा। भविष्य में संभाग स्तर पर भी राजस्थानी भाषा के शिविर आयोजित किए जाएंगे। **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** की पहल पर यह आयोजन आप सभी के सहयोग से यह संभव हुआ है। समापन सत्र का संचालन प्रदक्षिणा पारीक ने किया। इस महोत्सव में उपस्थित सभी अतिथियों और सहभागियों को पुस्तकें भेंट की गईं। इसमें राजस्थान के विभिन्न जिलों से साहित्यकारों, कवि, कवयित्रियों, शोधार्थियों और राजस्थानी भाषा प्रेमियों ने भाग लिया। सभी प्रतिभागियों को स्मृति चिन्ह और प्रशस्ति पत्र देकर सम्मानित किया गया। महोत्सव का समापन राजस्थानी 'बधावो' गान से हुआ।

**प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** और **ग्रासरूट मीडिया फाउंडेशन** की ओर से आजादी का अमृत महोत्सव के दौरान आयोजित **राजस्थानी युवा लेखक महोत्सव आखर** के प्रायोजक हैं **श्री सीमेंट**। **जवाहर कला केंद्र** का सहयोग मिला।



Kamal Kishore Piplawa

## सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक जीवन का गुलदस्ता है पुस्तक 'रोळी मोळी'



राजस्थानी भाषा के पाठ्यक्रम में इस पुस्तक का कोई एक निबंध अवश्य शामिल किया जाएगा।

पुस्तक की प्रस्तावना में किशन प्रणय ने कहा कि समृद्ध गद्य परंपरा से राजस्थानी भाषा की निबंध परंपरा का जन्म हुआ है। इस पुस्तक के कई निबंध गांव की पृष्ठभूमि से जुड़े हुए हैं। इनमें सांस्कृतिक विषयों के साथ वर्तमान विषमताओं पर भी व्यंग्य किया गया है। विकास की अंधी दौड़ में अपनी संतान, जीवन मूल्य और परंपराओं में आई विकृतियां, प्रकृति की अवमानना, परिवार जैसी संस्था और विवाह जैसे संस्कारों में आये भौंडेपन को दर्शाती है और मनुष्य की दशा पर सोचने को मजबूर कर देती है। यह निबंध लोक जीवन की अच्छी जानकारी देते हैं।

लेखक पिपलवा ने कहा कि इसमें कुल 15 निबंध हैं। राजस्थान के सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक एवं प्राकृतिक जीवन की जानकारी और विश्लेषण शामिल हैं। इनमें प्रमुख रूप से हथाई, पंचायती, हाण्डीहेत, मौखाण, मिमझर, मूरखता, चुगली, मरुथल रा जीव जिनावर, मरुथल री प्रकृति, वनराय अर रंख, ब्याव, रणतभंवर सू आयो विनायक, धेनड़िया, बिलोवणो, छातीकूटो, थुथकारो आदि हैं। उन्होंने निबंधों के कुछ अंश भी सुनाए और कहा कि हथाई आपस की बातचीत है, जिसमें जाति धर्म का भेद नहीं है। उन्होंने कहा कि राजस्थानी भाषा बहुत मजबूत है और संस्कृति के मामले में भी हमारी विशिष्ट पहचान है। इसी तरह मौखाण में भावों का उतार चढ़ाव है। मनोवैज्ञानिक, सामाजिक संप्रेषण का माध्यम, नाते रिश्तों का जोड़ आदि शामिल हैं। चुगली में किया गया व्यंग्यात्मक लेखन पढ़ते ही बनता है, जैसे चुगली गद्य कम पद्य ज्यादा है। एक अन्य निबंध रणतभंवर सू आयो विनायक में विवाह में आई हमारी सांस्कृतिक परम्परा, रीति रिवाज और संस्कारों का वर्णन किया है। हमारे यहां विवाह दो दिन का इवेंट मैनेजमेंट नहीं है। इसमें हमारी पूरी सांस्कृतिक छटा देखने को मिलती है। इसमें गीतों का गायन, मान

राजस्थानी जनजीवन का हिंदी और अन्य भाषाओं में वर्णन तो है लेकिन अपनी मायद भाषा में लोक साहित्य, लोकंजन, लोक जीवन, लोक परम्परा और मान्यताओं का जिस तरह से सुंदर वर्णन 'रोळी मोळी' किया गया है, वह इस पुस्तक को सामाजिक, सांस्कृतिक, प्राकृतिक जीवन का गुलदस्ता बना देता है।" वरिष्ठ साहित्यकार डॉ. ज्योतिपुंज ने प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन और ग्रासरूट मीडिया फाउंडेशन की ओर से आयोजित आखर पोथी में कमल किशोर पिपलवा की पुस्तक रोळी मोळी पर चर्चा सत्र की अध्यक्षता करते हुए यह बात कही। उन्होंने कहा कि यह पुस्तक एक आनंद उत्सव है, जिसमें भाषा का ठहराव, मस्ती और गायन बहुत रोचकता पैदा करता है। लेखक ने इस पुस्तक में हथाई, थुथकारो निबंध लिखते समय इतिहास के झरोखे में देखा है। ऐसा बिम्ब, ऐसा स्नेहपूर्ण जीवन, जो विकास के नाम पर लुप्तप्राय हो गया है। इस संकलन के मनोविश्लेषणात्मक निबंधों में वे अपनी परंपराओं का गहन विवेचन करते हुए विचार के लिए प्रेरित करते हैं।

रोळी मोळी की समीक्षा करते हुए सूरतगढ़ से डॉ. हरिमोहन सारस्वत 'रंख'



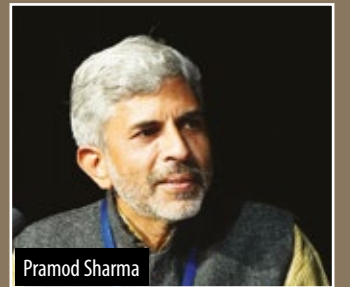
Harimohan Saraswat



Jyoti Punj



Kishan Pranya



Pramod Sharma

ने कहा कि इस पुस्तक में राजस्थानी संस्कृति का सुंदर चित्रण तो है ही, साथ में विवाह, मंगल कामना सहित अन्य पक्षों का भी वर्णन किया गया है। इसमें संस्कृति, प्रकृति, पशु पक्षी तक समाहित हैं। हथाई दिल से होती है, इसका बारीक विश्लेषण किया है। सापां रे ब्याह में जीभां री लपालप जैसी सटीक टिप्पणी की है तो मौखाण में अर्थों तक का भी चित्रण किया है। मुहावरों का उपयोग, पंचायती, रेगिस्तानी क्षेत्र की वनस्पति आदि पर भी चर्चा हुई है, तो निबंध के नियमों का भी पूरी तरह से पालन किया गया है। सारस्वत ने कहा कि इस पुस्तक में जो विषय उठाए गए हैं, वह सब अनूठे हैं। इसके सभी निबंध राजस्थानी संस्कृति और समाज का सुंदर चित्रण प्रस्तुत करते हैं। इसमें ऐतिहासिक तथ्यों को भी जोड़ा गया है। आने वाले समय में

मनुहार, प्रकृति के साथ संबंध आदि का उल्लेख है। इससे मालूम चलता है कि रात्रि जागरण के ही लगभग 35 गीत हैं, जो हमारी लोक संस्कृति की समृद्धि को दर्शाते हैं।

आयोजकों की ओर से धन्यवाद ज्ञापित करते हुए प्रमोद शर्मा ने कहा कि इस पुस्तक का अन्य भाषाओं में अनुवाद होना चाहिए ताकि राजस्थानी जनजीवन से अन्य लोग परिचित हों।

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



# Writing for the Love of Writing

Pracheta Gupta feels a writer doesn't write to get published—they write out of their love for writing. They write to assess their own work and understand its inherent meaning. A writer and journalist himself, Gupta shared many more such interesting insights in a virtual session of **Aakhar**, organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**.

Gupta is among the most prominent contemporary writers in Bengali literature. A recipient of the Kishore Sahitya Academy Award 2021, Gupta's first story was published in *Anandamela*, a popular Bengali periodical for children, when he was only 12 years old. His story *Chander Bari* was adapted into a Bengali film by noted film director Tarun Majumdar. Gupta was in conversation with eminent author, Shamik Ghosh. Veteran theatre personality Soumitra Mitra introduced and welcomed the guests to the session.

Gupta's parents, Kshetra Gupta and Jyotsna Gupta, were stalwarts in the field of academics, owing to which the writer spent his growing years in an ambience of learning and education. Did such an intellectually stimulating atmosphere at home inspire him to start writing? Apparently not. Writing was a form of escape for Gupta from the world of academics and studies. The writer said, "My parents' writing was mostly academic. I was different. I used to write to express my thoughts and feelings... I remember my parents getting a small cupboard for us back when we were children. My mother told me it was meant for books. I was horrified at the thought of owning another cupboard full of school books! But thankfully this cupboard was meant for non-



Soumik Ghosh



Soumitra Mitra



Pracheta Gupta

academic books. It became a space full of stories, novels, science, fairy tales, magazines and translations. If you ask me who inspired me to write, I'd say this cupboard did!"

For a long period of time, none of Gupta's writings was published. It was only in 2001 when his story *Bibhram* was published in a special Durga Puja edition of *Anadabazar Patrika* that his life as a writer turned around. Sharing the story behind the publication of *Bibhram*, Gupta said, "When I went to submit the story for the Durga Puja edition of a well-known magazine, the editor didn't even touch my story. He told me one needs to be invited to write for such an edition for their work to be published... Without giving it much thought, after I left their office, I posted the envelope containing the story to *Anandabazar Patrika*'s Sunday supplement. Quite some time had passed before an editor from *Anandabazar* called me and reprimanded me for sending them a 3,000-word story for a Sunday supplement. But they also asked me not to send the story to anyone else. And lo and behold! In a few months, the story appeared in the special Durga Puja edition of *Anadabazar Patrika*."

Each of Gupta's stories has a character that shares certain similarities with him. The writer said he writes for himself and never for publicity. What advice would he give to young aspiring writers? "If you think you can write and want to write, then you have to write regularly without fail. Nirendranath Chakraborty, eminent Bengali poet, once told me, 'Sit and write every day, like how you do your homework for school,'" Gupta added.

*Aakhar is presented by Shree Cement, in association with Anadabazar.com and Purba Paschim*



# 'Inadvertent positive thinking'

— The extraordinary life of Abbas Kazerooni

Abbas Kazerooni

At eight years old, Abbas Kazerooni travelled by himself from conflict-ridden Iran to Turkey. His father, increasingly aware of the worsening circumstances, sent him off to Istanbul with the idea of going to England. But his mother was stopped at the airport and "... I had to put myself on a plane to Istanbul to meet a relative who was allegedly going to look after me," Kazerooni recalled. He was deserted at the airport and spent four months alone in Istanbul, working a few jobs and trying to get a UK visa to go to England to live with a relative.

His troubles did not end there. He did get to England, but the relative he lived with was not the nicest, and he ended up living a double life. In the mornings, he went to a prestigious English school, but at nights he was working in a kitchen, that too illegally. He had truly become the boy with two lives. Slowly, however, Abbas Kazerooni became better at English, and through the language, he found a space in a world where he had not fit in before. What had been a barrier to entry became a key, enabling him to do things, to write books and change lives in courts of law.

He was adopted by another, kinder relative, did his Master's in acting, took the LSATs, and



Venita Coelho

eventually started his own law firm. From being stranded with nowhere to go to now becoming a successful lawyer, bestselling writer and actor, Abbas Kazerooni's life has been a roller-coaster ride. In a session of **The Universe Writes**, Kazerooni, in conversation with author and screenwriter Venita Coelho, gave his

audience a glimpse into his journey and motivations after a warm welcome by Mita Kapur of Siyahi.

**The Universe Writes** is a literary initiative of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** that virtually connects non-Indian international writers with a select Indian audience with an abiding interest in quality literature.

His two books, *On Two Feet and Wings* and *The Boy With Two Lives*, which are about Kazerooni's own life, were not written for children as such, but as he said, "I could not do justice writing about my life from an adult's

perspective. My memories are from the perspective of a child because I lived through that. When you are a child everything seems so much bigger, faster, enormous, everything is exaggerated because you are a child. I tell a micro story in a macro world."

Kazerooni's character and approach were undoubtedly crucial, but he does not discount the strangers and favours that helped him through. He says, "If it were not for the random acts of

I could not do justice writing about my life from an adult's perspective.

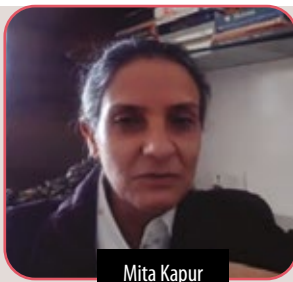
My memories are from the perspective of a child because I lived through that. When you are a child everything seems so much bigger, faster, enormous, everything is exaggerated because you are a child. I tell a micro story in a macro world



kindness, I would not be sitting here today". These were people with no connection to him, no duty towards him, but they still helped him. This comes through in his writing too, and a major theme in both of his books is that people are more good than they are bad.

His first motivation to write was to preserve his mother's memory; he owes an unpayable debt to her, and if he wrote, there would be a published copy somewhere narrating her sacrifices; it would be a dedication to posterity, so someone someday would unearth her legacy. Beyond that, Kazerooni also says that he wrote because there was a story that needed to be told. These weren't just people that had helped him, they were people from the Middle East. While people from that region have been ill-portrayed in the media, the grains of salt cover a bag of sugar. Another reason Kazerooni wrote was to show the world what sugar exists.

His writing was influenced by the stories he heard from his grandmother, and also from the select movies, most of them Bollywood, that he could watch when they were smuggled into Iran. He went back to the storytelling tradition and is currently working on a book series for children aged five to seven that will introduce them to the basic concepts of business, especially since his family's conversations about business were meaningful for him.



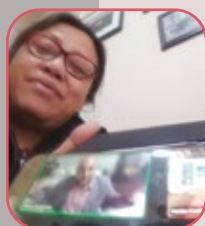
Mita Kapur

His advice to aspiring writers is simple—don't overthink the writing process. "Just write," he says, "as bad as it may be, at least you have a product, which distinguishes you from 99% of the populace." He repeatedly stressed the value of discipline. One can be very talented, but nothing can come out of that if no product is created. In his opinion, discipline

is more important than talent for this very reason—if someone is hoping to write a book, they must sit down and write. He himself plays many roles, and it is this discipline that has enabled him to strike the balance.

Kazerooni's trajectory, from being born in pre-revolution Iran to getting where he is now, has naturally not been easy. But what has kept him going, he says, is his perspective. As a child, he was engaging in "inadvertent positive thinking"—he was simply not old enough to consider that acquiring the visa was hard, so he visualised it, believed it, and achieved it. When asked if he has any complaints about his life, he said no. After spending some time in Malawi, he realised the extent of hardship people go through. Kazerooni's positivity, despite having faced so much in his life, was inspirational, and his words on perspective are unforgettable, "Perspective is this—whatever rough time you're having, I guarantee there is somebody that would wish they're in your situation."

*The Universe Writes is held in association with  
Shree Cement and Siyahi*



Brilliant! So much positivity, sincerity, perseverance, and, most of all, compassion and resilience. Manipur being in a conflict zone, this conversation is absolutely inspirational for our folks... to move on in spite of very tough odds. Thank you and keep it up, as always.

— Jina Thongram



Fantastic journey of Abbas so far! Thanks The Universe Writes, for bringing Abbas on your stage.

— Prem Kumar Kaku



Deepa Mishra



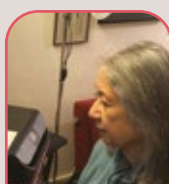
Girish Goyal



Neha Bhagia



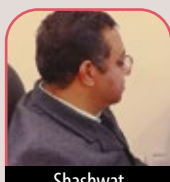
Rajeev Bagharatta


Kshetrimayum  
Ranjana Devi


Manjul Mandawa



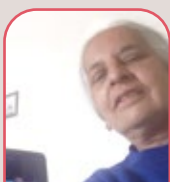
Maya Khandelwal


Shashwat  
Kulsreshtha


Shilpa Mehta



Sunita Pant Bansal



Suniti Sharma



Suryakant Jodha



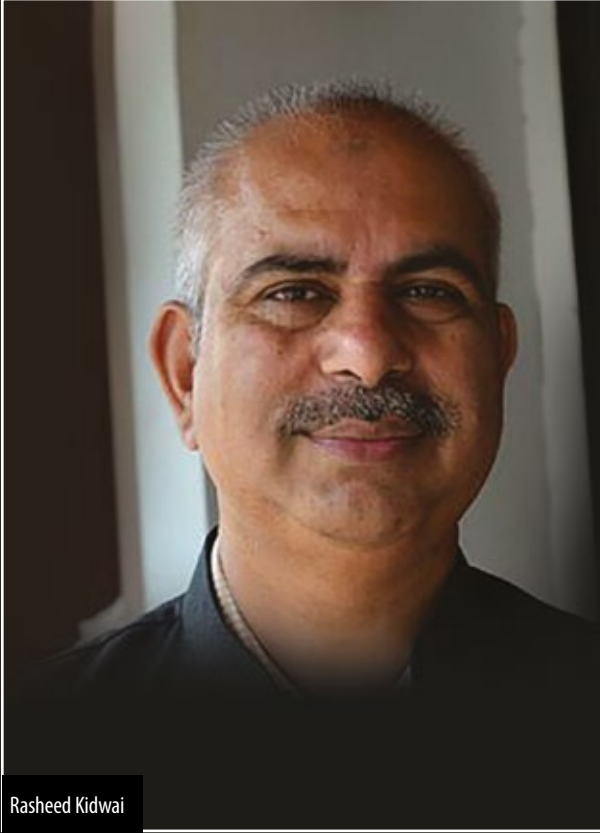
Shivadatta Padhi



Teresa Wahengbam



Vandana Mehta



Rasheed Kidwai

## हमें अपनी सभ्यता, संस्कार नहीं खोने चाहिए: रशीद किदवई



Naghma Sahar

समाचार की दुनिया ऐसी दुनिया है जहां बहुत सारी बातें रिपोर्ट होती हैं, पर बहुत सी बातें रह जाती हैं। खासकर हमारे देश में जो गुजर जाते हैं, उनके बारे में खूब लिखा जाता है, पर जो लीविंग हैं उनके बारे में नहीं लिखा जाता। जो लिखा जाता है वह वही लिखा जाता है, जो वे चाहते हैं।" लेखक-पत्रकार रशीद किदवई ने यह बात प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन द्वारा आयोजित कलम इंदौर में अपनी पुस्तक 'भारत के प्रधानमंत्री: देश, दशा और दिशा' पर चर्चा के दौरान कही। आयोजकों की ओर से अहसास वूमेन की उन्नति सिंह ने उनका स्वागत और धन्यवाद दिया। कोरोना की तीसरी लहर का जिक्र करते हुए सिंह ने कहा कि हमें इस समय को देखते हुए इस कार्यक्रम को वर्चुअल करना पड़ा। सिंह ने फाउंडेशन द्वारा कला, संस्कृति, शिक्षा, साहित्य, लैंगिक समानता और महिला सशक्तीकरण की दिशा में चलाए जा रहे कार्यक्रमों की जानकारी दी और अतिथि वक्ता किदवई के साथ ही एंकर, पत्रकार संवादकर्ता नगमा सहर का भी परिचय दिया। सहर ने किदवई की लिखी 'सोनिया गांधी', 'नेता-अभिनेता'

जैसी पुस्तकों का उल्लेख करते हुए पूछा कि प्रधानमंत्रियों पर लिखते हुए वे शुरू से अब तक के बदलाव को कैसे देखते हैं? किदवई ने जवाब दिया कि हमने बहुत सारी बातों के बारे में भ्रांतियां कायम कर रखी हैं। मुझे केवल जवाहरलाल नेहरू और लालबहादुर शास्त्री को देखने का मौका नहीं मिला। बाद के सभी प्रधानमंत्रियों को मैंने देखा। जो लोग यह समझते हैं कि राजनीति पहले व्यक्तिवादी नहीं थी, उन्हें जानना चाहिए कि पहले लोकसभा चुनाव में नारा था 'वोट फॉर कांग्रेस इज अ वोट फॉर

नेहरू'। इसी तरह नेहरू के खिलाफ जिसने चुनाव लड़ा वे कुछ बोलते नहीं थे, केवल लिखते थे। वे गौ-रक्षा को लेकर नेहरू के खिलाफ उतरे। यानी दक्षिणपंथी सोच और व्यक्तिवाद उस समय भी था, जो आज भी है।

सहर का अगला सवाल था कि शास्त्रीजी की ईमानदारी की बात सभी जानते हैं, पर आपकी किताब में हर प्रधानमंत्री के बारे में कुछ नई बातें पता चलती हैं। जैसे प्रोटेस्टर्स के ऊपर 'वाटर कैनन' की शुरुआत उन्हीं के जमाने में हुई। उनके बारे में कुछ बताएं? किदवई का उत्तर था कि शास्त्री जी बड़े महान व्यक्ति थे, इसमें कोई शक नहीं है। लेकिन राजनीतिक महत्वाकांक्षा उनके अंदर भी थी और यह बात उन्होंने छिपाई भी नहीं। किदवई ने कहा कि जितने भी प्रधानमंत्री थे, सबके व्यक्तित्व की अपनी विशेषता थी। इंद्रकुमार गुजराल को ही ले लें, तो सभी समझते हैं कि वे बहुत नरम थे। उनके विदेश मंत्री रहने के दौरान का एक किस्सा है। इंदिरा गांधी और रूसी राष्ट्रपति ब्रेझनेव की शिखर बैठक के दौरान ब्रेझनेव की नजर बार-बार गुजराल की घड़ी की तरफ जा रही थी। बैठक खत्म होने के बाद इंदिरा गांधी ने कहा कि आप उन्हें यह घड़ी दे क्यों



नहीं देते। गुजराल ने कहा मैं भारत का विदेशमंत्री हूँ। यह स्वाभिमान की बात है और उन्होंने घड़ी नहीं दी।

किदवई ने इंदिरा गांधी को लेकर कामराज की इस टिप्पणी कि 'वे एक बड़े आदमी की बेटी और छोटे आदमी की गलती हैं,' के जिक्र के साथ अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी की अगुआई में पहली भाजपा सरकार और अबकी भाजपा सरकार के बीच अंतर से जुड़े सवाल का उत्तर देते हुए कहा कि वाजपेयी खुले दिल से लोगों के योगदान को स्वीकारते थे। जैसे उन्होंने परमाणु विस्फोट की तैयारियों में नरसिंह राव सरकार के योगदान की बात मानी थी। इसी तरह अपनी बीमारी के दौरान राजीव गांधी से मिली मदद की बात भी स्वीकारी थी। उन्होंने दुख जताते हुए कहा कि लोकतंत्र में आज शिष्टाचार की कमी है। जबकि हमें अपनी राजनीतिक संस्कृति पर गर्व होना चाहिए। लोकतंत्र की मर्यादा पर काम होना चाहिए। सियासी प्रतिद्वंद्विता को दुश्मनी की तरह नहीं देखना चाहिए। चर्चा के दौरान उन्होंने डॉ मनमोहन सिंह के गठबंधन सरकार चलाने और उनके द्वारा किए कई कठिन फैसलों का भी जिक्र किया।

किदवई ने क्रिकेट, राजनीति, सिनेमा के लिए भारतीयों की दीवानगी की चर्चा करते हुए सिनेमाई हस्तियों के अपने पक्ष में इस्तेमाल को लेकर पंडित नेहरू और प्रधानमंत्री मोदी में एका बताते हुए स्टालिन और नेहरू की मुलाकात के दौरान 'आवारा' फिल्म की लोकप्रियता और राजकपूर

का जिक्र किया। अपनी पुस्तक 'नेता-अभिनेता' से जुड़े सवाल पर उन्होंने कहा कि फिल्मी सितारे जब राजनीति में, सार्वजनिक जीवन में आते हैं तो वे बहुत अच्छा काम करते हैं। इस किताब में कई दिलचस्प कहानियां हैं। सोनिया गांधी, राहुल गांधी और प्रियंका गांधी की अगुआई में कांग्रेस के भविष्य से जुड़े सवाल पर किदवई ने कहा कि कांग्रेस ने अपने आपको वक्त के साथ बदला नहीं। पार्टी के पदाधिकारियों को कोई तनख्वाह नहीं मिलती। यह भ्रष्टाचार की एक वजह हो सकती है। सांसद विधायक छोड़कर किसी के पास आय का साधन नहीं है। वोट लाने की जिम्मेदारी केवल इस परिवार पर छोड़ दी गई है। कांग्रेस को नया सामाजिक आर्थिक एजेंडा सामने रखना चाहिए।

श्रुति अग्रवाल के सवाल के उत्तर में हिंदी में अपनी पहली पुस्तक को भूल सुधार बताते हुए किदवई ने कहा कि पहले मैं सोचता था अंग्रेजी ही सबकुछ है। इस किताब से मेरी मंशा थी कि तथ्यात्मक ढंग से अपनी बात रखूं ताकि भावना की बजाय लोग सही बातें जान सकें। नेहा द्वारा पूछा गया कि सबसे पसंदीदा प्रधानमंत्री कौन है और क्यों? किदवई का उत्तर था, "इंदिरा गांधी, क्योंकि उन्होंने पुरुष प्रधान समाज में अपनी जगह बनाई। भारत की महिलाओं को एक स्थान मिला। वह इकलौती नेता थी जो हारने के बाद भी वापस आईं। आपातकाल लगाने के बावजूद वे लोकतांत्रिक भी थीं। उनकी उपलब्धियां भी बड़ी थीं। वे देश के आत्मसम्मान के लिए अमेरिका के सामने भी खड़ी हुईं।"

सहर के नेटवर्क में दिक्कत आने पर अहसास वूमेन अपरा कुच्छल ने चर्चा की कमान संभाली। किदवई ने अपनी आने वाली किताब पर कहा कि मैं चाहता हूँ कि ऐसी चीजों के बारे में बताया जाए जिसके बारे में लोगों को नहीं पता है, जैसे कश्मीर कांस्परेसी केस। इसी तरह राजनेताओं के बारे में एक किताब होनी चाहिए। उन्होंने फूलन देवी से जुड़ा एक रोचक प्रसंग भी सुनाया। महिलाओं और महिला पत्रकारों पर हमले के बारे में किदवई ने कहा, "यह गलत है। महिला को हम कमोडिटी की तरह समझते हैं। यह एक सभ्य समाज के लिए शर्मनाक बात है। लोकतंत्र की यह खूबी है कि यह आपको व्यापक आजादी देता है। ऐसे मसलों को हमें राजनीति से अलग हट कर देखना चाहिए। जैसे निर्भया कांड ने देश को हिला दिया था। सरकार का साथ और विरोध एक अलग बात है। यह हमारा संवैधानिक अधिकार है कि हम सरकारों के बारे में अपनी बात राय रखें।" उन्होंने कहा कि देश में बहुत सारी चुनौतियां हैं। पर हमें अपना आपा नहीं खोना चाहिए। हमें अपनी सभ्यता, संस्कार नहीं खोने चाहिए। चाहे जो हो हमें आपसी कटुता नहीं लानी चाहिए। किताबें पढ़ने से हमें मानवीय भावनाओं की गहराई का पता चलता है। हमारा जो मूल्य है हमें उससे पीछे नहीं हटना चाहिए। किताबें हमें बेहतर मनुष्य बनाती हैं। उन्होंने कहा कि पितृसत्तात्मक सोच को हम जितना जल्दी बदल सकें वह ठीक होगा।

कलम इंदौर का आयोजन अहसास वूमेन के सहयोग से हुआ। प्रायोजक श्री सीमेंट और मीडिया सहयोगी नई दुनिया हैं



Unnati Singh

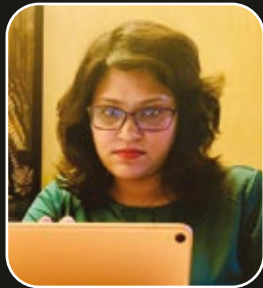


A big thanks to Prabha Khaitan Foundation for the virtual session with Rasheed Kidwaiji and a chance to interface with journalist Naghmaji.

It was a much-needed session on the current situation of journalism and Kidwaiji's new book was also discussed.

— Supriya

कलम इंदौर हर बार साहित्य के सागर से अनमोल मोती चुनकर लाता है। इस बार राशिद किदवई साहब को सुनना नई दुनिया के दरवाजे खोलने की तरह था। उनकी किताब भारत के प्रधानमंत्री के बारे में उनसे जानना एक अविस्मरणीय अनुभव था।



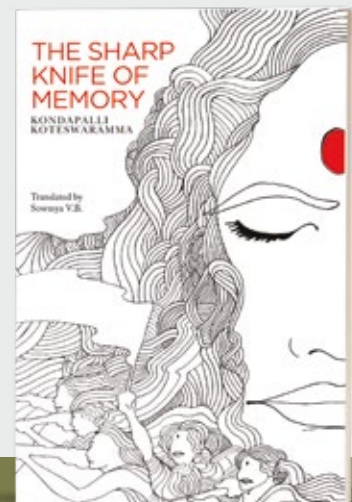
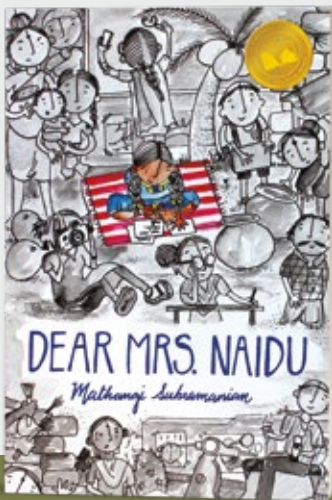
— Shruti Agarwal

# The Zubaan-Prabha Khaitan Foundation Translation Project: A New Collaboration

By Urvashi Butalia and Manisha Chaudhry



Urvashi Butalia



Many years ago, Prabha Khaitan Foundation (PKF) and Zubaan came together in a unique collaboration — the translation of Prabha Khaitan's powerful autobiography, *Anya se Ananya*, into English. This three-way collaboration, involving not only PKF and Zubaan but also the translator, Ira Pande, resulted in the English book, *A Life Apart*, which was released to a hall packed with hundreds of people at the Jaipur Literature Festival. Doing the honours and releasing the book to high praise was the well-known actor, Sharmila Tagore. No sooner had the event ended than the people made a beeline for the bookstore and copies of the book began to fly off the shelves.

This collaboration, with its focus on translation, has today come full circle with another unique partnership between PKF and Zubaan. The year 2021 saw the beginnings of the Zubaan-PKF translation programme for women's literature. As publishers with a focus on women's writing, we at Zubaan have, over the years, built a formidable collection of books on a wide range of subjects to do with women and gender. These are today used in courses in India and across the world; they're also read by a wide range of readers, and their presence in the literary marketplace proves how important it is to have all kinds of voices to be able to build a bibliodiverse universe in the world of reading and publishing.

Translation has always been a part of the human experience. Its beginnings may have been political but today, it has become a part of every aspect of our lives... When we speak of literature and translation, we are speaking of something that is the responsibility of every society, every culture... It is through such translation that we learn about each other; we learn from each other. Translation enables words and thoughts to travel through time, and these journeys are evidence that we are human. In countries like India, where people speak thousands of languages, translation is an urgent need. Especially for those who are not only serious about the importance of translation but are also committed to it. Such people have energy but no financial resources, so if an organisation understands the seriousness of this work and provides financial assistance... this will be a revolutionary thing, not only for the present but also for the future.

Parminder Singh Shonkey, Rethink Foundation, Punjab

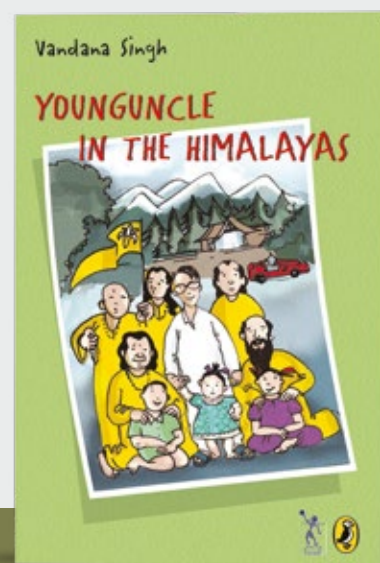
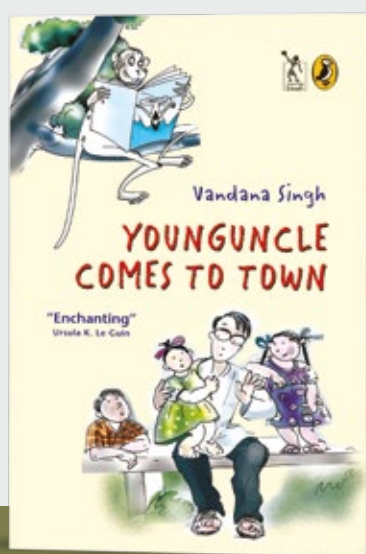
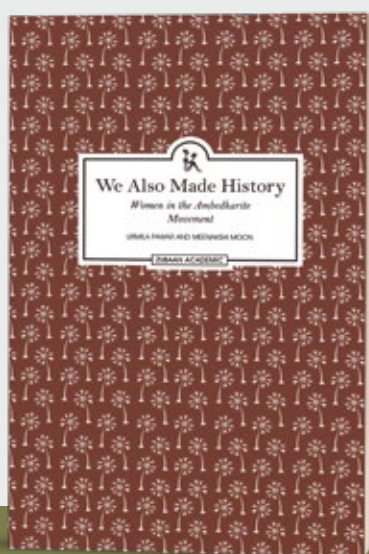


But one of the questions that has remained a constant is why is so little of this material available in Indian languages? Zubaan publishes in English, and while the English market is substantial, it is also limited. If we are to take bibliodiversity seriously, it is our responsibility as activists and publishers to start to build an inclusive and diverse publishing culture. The rich linguistic diversity and the multiple traditions of writing in the country are a resource that has much potential to seed diverse ideas.

While this project helps us to take works published by us into Indian languages, it has already, even at this early stage, begun to lead us in new directions. Our interactions with publishers in various languages, for example, are helping us to see and appreciate the variety of books being published in India and to develop a better understanding of different language markets. We hope that this will lead to greater synergies across languages.

“We're a small feminist publishing house in Tamil Nadu, bringing out books on gender and caste issues. *We Also Made History* is a phenomenal book that documents the history of women's participation in the Ambedkarite movement. Thanks to this generous translation programme by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** and the leading feminist organisation, Zubaan, we have this wonderful opportunity to get this book to the Tamil readers. It will strengthen our publishing house and it feels very good to be working with a feminist publisher.

Revathi, Maitri, Tamil Nadu



It is here that PKF steps in. With its vast network of literary activists, its regular meetings, discussions, book launches and commitment to translations, PKF is the perfect partner in the translation project that both organisations have jointly conceptualised. Through this collaboration, PKF will support the translation, into Indian languages, of feminist content from the vast amount Zubaan has published in recent years. The translation grants are meant to ensure that translators are paid for their work, that good translation practices are encouraged and that publishers have an incentive to take on translated works on women and gender. The support for the translation can go to the translator or the publisher. In the latter case, the publisher must provide

evidence that the funds have been paid to the translator, and in both cases, a small amount can be kept aside as editorial costs.

The project has got off to an excellent start, with many Indian language publishers showing interest in women's/feminist content. Currently, we have an interest from publishers in Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Bengali, Hindi, Punjabi and more such languages, and we hope to build on this in the coming years. If the initial experiment goes well, there's much to look forward to, including workshops on translation. At Zubaan, we're delighted to be collaborating with PKF, an organisation that is committed to literature and translation, and we look forward to a long and fruitful association.



Geet Chaturvedi



## दोस्तियां और प्रेम अपरिभाषित हैं: गीत चतुर्वेदी

"मैं किसी भी तरह के सेंसर के खिलाफ हूँ। किसी को भी रोकना नहीं चाहिए। सबको पढ़ने की आजादी होनी चाहिए। आपको वह चेतना विकसित करनी होगी कि लोग गंभीर, चिंतन परक, जीवन की गहरी समझ वाले साहित्य की तरफ बढ़ें।" यह कहना है कवि-लेखक गीत चतुर्वेदी का, जो **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** की ओर से आयोजित **कलम** अहमदाबाद के आभासी सत्र में बोल रहे थे। आयोजकों की ओर से मनीषा शर्मा ने चतुर्वेदी का स्वागत करते हुए फाउंडेशन की साहित्यिक, सांस्कृतिक और महिला सशक्तीकरण से जुड़ी गतिविधियों की चर्चा की और चतुर्वेदी का भी विस्तार से परिचय दिया। 'न्यूनतम मैं' और 'खुशियों के गुप्तचर' नामक पुस्तकों, चतुर्वेदी की रचनाओं के 22 देशी-विदेशी भाषाओं में अनुवाद, 'पेन-हैम ट्रांसलेशन ग्रांट', अमेरिका के छह विश्वविद्यालयों के प्रकाशनों में उनकी रचनाओं को स्थान का उल्लेख करते हुए शर्मा ने आगे के संवाद के लिए नीता व्यास को आमंत्रित किया।

व्यास ने कोरोना काल की त्रासदी की चर्चा के साथ चतुर्वेदी की *खुशियों के गुप्तचर* पुस्तक में शामिल 'यह दुनिया अब भी रहने लायक है' कविता को पढ़ा, तो चतुर्वेदी ने कहा कि यह कविता कोरोना से पहले लिखी गई थी, पर इन तीन वर्षों में इस कविता का महत्त्व और बढ़ जाता है। यह सकारात्मक अनुभूति और भाव लेकर लिखी गई है। कविता जिस समय लिखी जाती है, केवल उसमें नहीं बल्कि अपने तमाम समय के साथ खड़ी होती है। कई पाठकों ने कहा कि जब वे उदासी के क्षणों में आत्महत्या करने की सोच रहे थे, तब इन कविताओं ने उनको बचाया। चतुर्वेदी ने दो पक्षियों के प्रेम की कथा सुनाई और कहा, "दुनिया की सारी सहकारिता वाले साहित्य की अनुभूति यही है। साहित्य का अर्थ ही है सहित होना। मैं खुशी को साहित्य में, कविता में, प्रेम में पकड़ना चाहता हूँ।"

चतुर्वेदी ने 'अधूरी चीजों का देवता' से कुरिजी के फूल से जुड़े सवाल पर कहा कि ये फूल वेस्टर्न घाट पर खिलते हैं। जब वे खिलते हैं तो पूरी पहाड़ी लगता है इन्हें ओढ़कर सो गई है। उन्होंने कहा, "फूल मुझे हमेशा प्रिय रहा, ये मुझे आकर्षित करते हैं। मुझे संस्कृत साहित्य से प्रेम है। उसमें फूलों पर बहुत कुछ लिखा गया। आज का सबसे जानामाना



Neeta Vyas

फूल है गुलाब। पर संस्कृत में इस फूल का जिक्र नहीं है। कालीदास, भवभूति ने भी इसका जिक्र नहीं किया। जरूरी नहीं कि इतिहास वैसा ही हो, जैसा हम आज देख रहे हों। भास ने कमल के फूल का जिक्र किया है। कालीदास का कहना है कि राजा को जितना ध्यान अपनी प्रजा का रखना चाहिए, उतना ही उसे फूलों का भी रखना चाहिए। किसी राजा के चरित्र को समझना हो तो उसके बगीचे में चले जाना चाहिए। कुछ लोग आस्तिक हो सकते हैं, कुछ नास्तिक भी। कोई किसी से प्रेम कर सकता है और नहीं भी, पर फूलों से प्रेम धर्म, जाति, प्रकृति से परे है।"

आप किसके लिए लिखते हैं? और युवा पीढ़ी का ध्यान अश्लील साहित्य की ओर क्यों जा रहा है? के उत्तर में चतुर्वेदी ने कहा, "श्लील-अश्लील का मसला हमारी नजरों पर निर्भर करता है। यह प्रश्न बहुत जटिल है। हर दौर में, हर दौर के साहित्य में यह रहा। कभी कालीदास पर भी अश्लीलता का आरोप लगा था। कुमार संभव को पढ़ते हुए हमें पता चलता है कि किस तरह उन्होंने दो महाचरित्रों की प्रणय लीलाओं का वर्णन करते हुए एक अद्भुत सौंदर्य का चित्रण किया था।" चेखव, टॉल्स्टॉय के लेखन और लोकप्रिय साहित्य को मानसिक विकास



से जोड़ते हुए चतुर्वेदी ने जोर दिया कि हमें वह संस्कृति विकसित करनी चाहिए, जो पीढ़ी दर पीढ़ी जीवन मूल्यों को साथ लेकर चलने वाली रचनाओं की ओर प्रेरित करे। इन दिनों क्या लिख रहे हैं के उत्तर में उन्होंने पिंच पर प्रकाशित हो रही एक रुहानी प्रेम कथा का जिक्र किया, जो जीवन के इस पार और उस पार दोनों तरफ समांतर चलती है और दोनों तरफ के जीवन को प्रभावित करती है। उन्होंने बताया कि जल्द ही यह प्रिंट में भी आएगा।

व्यास के अनुरोध पर गीत ने खुशियों के गुप्तचर से कुछ कविताएं सुनाई, जिनमें 'चार वचन' की कुछ पंक्तियां यों थीं—

जब मुश्किल समय आए  
सब कुछ बेकाबू हो जाए  
तुम उससे और प्रेम करना  
जिससे अब तक तुम करते आए...

यकीन

तुम मुझसे कहना, मैं कहूंगा तुमसे।  
मुझे यकीन है,  
कहने से, सुनने से  
कम हो जाते हैं दुख।  
जैसे बचपन में  
फूंक मारने से दूर हो जाते थे बादल।

तलाशी

नींद में मुस्कराओगी  
तो फरिश्तों को रश्क होगा  
वे तुम्हारे सपनों की तलाशी लेंगे  
और मैं पकड़ा जाऊंगा

पेपरवेट

कितनी तेज हवा चल रही थी उस समय.  
अगर तुम्हारा एक आंसू  
इस कागज पर न पड़ा होता  
तो यह कब का उड़ चुका हो

कविता पंत के एक सवाल पर चतुर्वेदी ने कहा कि उभरते हुए लेखकों को खूब पढ़ना चाहिए। वर्जीनिया वुल्फ कहती थी अगर तुम एक हजार किताब पढ़ जाओ तो तुम्हारे शब्द नदी की तरह बहने लगते हैं। मेरे पिता जी भी कहते थे कि तुम एक पंक्ति लिखने के लिए एक हजार पंक्ति पढ़ो। लेखक को किसी भी तरह की जल्दबाजी में नहीं पड़ना चाहिए। गालिब के शेर 'आह को चाहिए एक उम्र असर होने तक' का जिक्र करते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि अगर आह को समय चाहिए तो हमारे शब्दों को भी तो समय चाहिए, कभी भी अधीर, बेसब्र नहीं होना चाहिए। उन्होंने चेतना अग्रवाल, वृंदा पंड्या, मनीषा शर्मा, विनिता कुमार, प्रीति अज्ञात, पिकी सोलंकी आदि के सवालों के उत्तर में प्रेम और दोस्ती के अंतर को अपने



Manisha Sharma



Priyanshi Patel

अंदाज में समझाया और यह बड़ा कठिन सवाल है। लोगों का पूरा जीवन निकल जाता है इसे समझने में। जो आपके जीवन में एक युनानी कहानी सुनाई कि जब हम धरती पर आए तो हमारे चार हाथ, दो सिर, चार पैर थे। उस समय हम बहुत शैतानियां, गलतियां करते थे, तो हमें देवता ने अलग-अलग कर दिया। तब हम जोड़े में थे, युग्म थे, युगल थे। अब इस दुनिया में हम अकेले आकर उस युग्म को ढूँढ रहे हैं। दोस्तियां और प्रेम अपरिभाषित हैं।

चतुर्वेदी ने अपने प्रिय लेखकों का नाम बताया और अपनी बचपन की दोस्त, प्रेमिका और अब पत्नी का भी जिक्र किया। अनुवाद से जुड़े सवाल पर उनका उत्तर था, "अनुवाद से जो गुम जाता है, उससे अधिक मिल जाता है। आकार और भाषा का स्वाद गुम जाता है, पर अनुभूति बनी रहती है। यह पानी की तरह है। आकार गुम हो जाता है, स्वाद गुम हो जाता है, पर दूसरा आकार और स्वाद मिल जाता है।" लिखने की प्रेरणा पर उन्होंने कहा कि भाषा के साथ मेरा एक सहवास है। लिखने और छपने के बीच एक संतोष है। हम सभी एक लापता लोग हैं। कहने के लिए हम एक देश में हैं, एक घर में रहते हैं, पर हम सब अपना पता तलाश रहे हैं। मुझे मेरा पता लिखे हुए शब्दों के बीच मिल गया था, और मैं समझ गया था कि यही वह जगह है, जहां मुझे रहना है। एक सवाल के उत्तर में उन्होंने कहा कि जिसमें दिल लग जाए वह पढ़ना चाहिए, पर हमें क्लासिक से शुरुआत करनी चाहिए। अंत में अहसास वूमन प्रियांशी पटेल ने धन्यवाद किया।

कलम अहमदाबाद का आयोजन अहसास वूमन के सहयोग से हुआ।  
कर्मा फाउंडेशन, हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर द हाउस ऑफ एमजी, मंगलबाग  
और दिव्य भास्कर मीडिया पार्टनर रहे।

# Making a Choice to Leave Suffering Behind

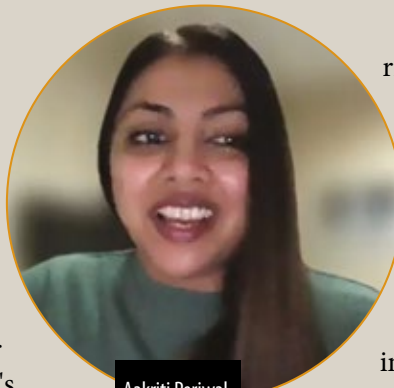


Desiree Punwani

Advaita Kala

**D**esiree Punwani's contributions to the field of mental health, well-being and social work are well-known. The counsellor and therapist has often spoken about the deeply powerful personal experiences that led her into the field of wellness and spiritual health. In the last 18 years, she has been a lead facilitator for workshops with corporates and people's groups on topics such as kindness, loving, forgiveness, joy and gratitude. In India, she works extensively with cancer patients from low-income backgrounds with the NGO Sanjeevani... Life Beyond Cancer, VCare and the Gunvati Jagan Nath Kapoor Foundation.

Punwani is also an author, Her book, *In High Spirits: From Hopeless Self to Shining Self*, is a straightforward account of her descent into and



Aakriti Periwal

rise out of alcoholism. Having transformed her life completely, Punwani now shares her experiences and insights openly, embracing her journey with alcoholism while being aware of the need to heal.

**Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, in association with Kahalli, organised a special virtual **Tête-à-Tea** session with Punwani. The session, titled "Finding the calm within in an uncertain time", was introduced by the Foundation's honorary convenor of overseas affairs, Aakriti Periwal, and moderated by author and screenwriter Advaita Kala, who had created the platform Kahalli.

Kala called the online meet a "landmark session" as this was the first time she was engaging with someone like Punwani, especially in this time



of collective suffering that the pandemic has brought upon the world. "Most of us recognise the need for healing in our lives and in our societies," observed Kala. "So where do you start and how do you recognise that this is the time to go on this journey?"

"Often, when you take on the stresses of daily life, you realise you have to create a balance to maintain equilibrium," replied Punwani. "But more often than not, many of us have to reach a degree of suffering before we realise we need to do something, so as to avoid a life lived on the edge of that kind of suffering. I had to go through a lot of suffering before realising that I needed to get out of it."

"Moreover, oftentimes when we are unhappy, we're not aware that what we are experiencing is unhappiness. For me, on the outside, everything seemed okay; I had a good marriage, a good job and so on. It was my mother who started telling me I had stopped laughing; later, when I looked back on my life, I realised that I had not laughed for about 10 years."

"You've discussed your experiences with alcohol very candidly... This is important at a time when it's used as a quick fix by people to get over situations and bad experiences. How did you realise you had a problem?" Kala asked.

"I wish I had interacted with alcohol," confessed Punwani. "My husband is a regular drinker but he never had a problem because he interacted with it; I drowned in it. My timing was bad as well, since my children were young. That was my wake-up call; I realised that I would black out, not remember things the next morning while having two young children. This told me things were out of control and I needed to do something about it. I prayed and asked for help, and was guided towards the right path. I am certain there was a divine power that helped me transform my life; this is why I want to be of help to anybody who may be going through something similar."

How did Punwani go from

But more often than not, many of us have to reach a degree of suffering before we realise we need to do something, so as to avoid a life lived on the edge of that kind of suffering. I had to go through a lot of suffering before realising that I needed to get out of it

being a social drinker to an alcoholic as a woman, in a society where such afflictions are associated mostly with men? "Such addictions in men are tolerated or permitted; in women, they're not," pointed out Punwani. "We must understand the concept of the mind getting addicted; addiction can be anything that gets in the way of a person's normal functioning, and the inability of the person to stop even after knowing this fact.

This can be an addiction to anything, from alcohol to computer games. After alcohol, I had to give up cigarettes, as the two go hand in hand; coffee and Red Bull followed, as did computer games. The path my life has taken has been akin to walking down a very steep slope, as there have been many times I've tried and failed to quit. Six years after conquering addiction, I was diagnosed with cancer. But I believe the divine, including my spiritual teacher, was able to guide me through the journey. My mother, who was also in the last stages of her own cancer, is a source of learning for me."

"My solution for everything is three-pronged. First is to remove all triggers that cause you to engage in your addiction; stay physically fit by pursuing any form of exercise; and avoid negative thoughts and news so that the mind can stay positive and inspired. Most important is the ability to be kind to oneself. If we can perform a kind act or say a kind word; then we can end up balancing out the negative aspects of our lives that pull us down. And with that balance comes an equilibrium."

Most important is the ability to be kind to oneself. If we can perform a kind act or say a kind word; then we can end up balancing out the negative aspects of our lives that pull us down. And with that balance comes an equilibrium

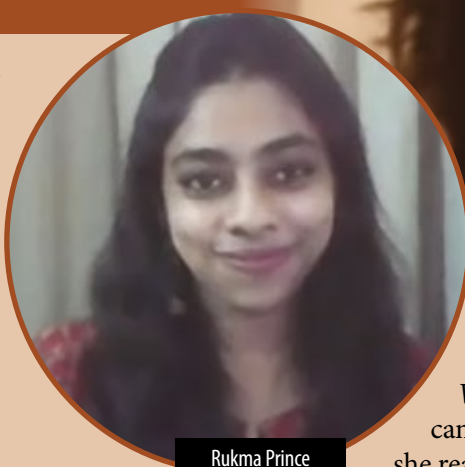
"The importance lies in knowing that what I'm doing is right, and I must therefore continue doing it," said Punwani in one of the most important takeaways from this illuminating session. "Only when we realise the cost of suffering is not worth it can we put restrictions on ourselves and change our lives around."

*This session of Tête-à-Tea is presented by Shree Cement in association with Kahalli*

# Healing with Humour



With an MBA from a leading Indian business school and experience as an advertising professional, nobody would have expected Jane De Suza to become a writer. But as she says, "You never say no to an open door". Armed with a passion for words and a refreshing sense of humour, De Suza has been changing mindsets one book at a time.



Rukma Prince

Having moved to Singapore before the pandemic, her metaphorical plunge into the unknown became real as an unprecedented crisis hit the world. Her latest book, *When the World Went Dark*, is about loss in such a time—it is a foray into the disrupted worlds of children and an attempt to address these issues through laughter. In a session of **The Write Circle** organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, De Suza, who was in conversation with Rukma Prince, discussed her latest work as well as her philosophies of writing.

Rather than a fully autobiographical perspective, De Suza takes on myriad roles and embodies various voices in her books. From several kinds of teens—those who are misunderstood, those living for others, those who are written off because of their privilege—to mothers navigating parenting, De Suza writes books with strong characters and meaningful motivations. Particularly close to her heart is *Flyaway Boy*, a critically acclaimed story of a boy who doesn't fit into the boxes that society has created for him. What has surprised and delighted De Suza most of all is that whether they are the characters of her book *Midnight Years* or the faceless flyaway boy, readers have found a little bit of themselves in her characters. This knowledge



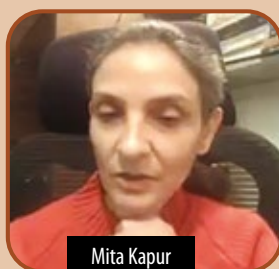
Jane De Suza

has been particularly nourishing for her.

De Suza's books have always been people-centric. The author presented an excerpt from one of her stories, *The Spy Who Lost Her Head*, and a vibrant character came to life even through the couple of pages she read out. This is a book set in a small town in North India, where she spent much of her childhood. She noticed that the women there, even though they were confined to their roles, lived colourful lives. People only saw the side of these women that was oppressed, but De Suza realised the women were feisty, with a raunchy sense of humour. They lived lives far beyond what was usually discussed, and this is what she translated into her writing.

De Suza said she enjoys "writing about ordinary people—ordinary people deserve to be listened to". The author is also working on a feature film, which is to be a psychological thriller, a genre she has long wanted to experiment with. She believes humour is how she and others cope with the world—it is a great way of putting people's defences down. "I am a habitual eavesdropper—I pick up conversations with all sorts of things," she added.

A talented writer who "writes in bursts of passion and frenzy", De Suza's conviction is evident from her words: "Don't be afraid. Do what you're doing, and you'll get where you have to go."



Mita Kapur

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





Praveen Kumar Jha

"मालकौश ऐसा राग है जिससे कोई कलाकार अपने जीवन में अछूता नहीं रह जाता।"

—रामाश्रय झा 'रामरंग' (राजन परिकर की रिकॉर्डिंग से)

हाल में अतुल जटायु मर्चेंट की अन्नपूर्णा देवी पर नयी पुस्तक-चर्चा में बाबा अलाउद्दीन खान से जुड़ा एक किस्सा सामने आया। एक रात उन्हें ऐसा महसूस हुआ जैसे कोई प्रेत उनके प्रांगण में है। उन्होंने तलब की तो पता लगा अन्नपूर्णा देवी राग मालकौश का रियाज़ कर रही थी। ऐसा इस राग के विषय में मैंने पहले भी सुना है कि यह राग अकेले रात में नहीं गाना चाहिए, अन्यथा ऐसे मायावी दृष्टिभ्रम हो सकते हैं। हालाँकि मैं विज्ञान से जुड़ा व्यक्ति हूँ, तो ऐसी बातों पर सहज विश्वास नहीं करता। किंतु इस राग के इस अद्भुत प्रभाव को कभी महसूस करना जरूर चाहता हूँ।

मालकौश का अर्थ ही है 'कौशिक (साँप) की माला' पहनने वाला। साक्षात् शिव। जब सती के मृत शरीर को लेकर शिव अपने रुद्र रूप में विचरण करने लगे, तो सती पार्वती उन्हें शांत करने के लिए 'राग मालकौश' गाने लगी। उनके तांडव को यह राग ही शांत कर पाया। यह वीर रस का राग है, लेकिन तलवारबाजी वाला वीर रस नहीं, हमारे अंदर के दुर्भावनाओं के अंत का। जब क्रोध हावी हो जाए, सर पर खून सवार हो, राग मालकौश सुन कर शांति मिलेगी। यह आज की विश्व-स्थिति और बढ़ते तनाव के समय में उपयुक्त राग है। कभी-कभी सोचता हूँ, इस पाँच स्वरों के राग में इतनी शक्ति कहाँ से आती है?

## मायावी राग मालकौश

कहते हैं कि यही राग जब स्वामी हरिदास के मुख से अकबर ने छुप कर सुना तो कहा, "सुभानअल्लाह! मौसिकी खुदा से रू-ब-रू हो रही है।"

प्राचीनतम छह रागों में एक मालकौश भी माना जाता है। अन्य पाँच राग हैं — भैरव, दीपक, श्री, मेघ और हिंदोल। कुमार प्रसाद मुखर्जी मुगलकालीन 'राग दर्पण' और 'मान कुतूहल' का संदर्भ देकर लिखते हैं कि यह प्रातःकालीन राग है। लेकिन, वर्तमान प्रचलित रूप में इसे देर रात या अर्धरात्रि के बाद ही बहुधा गाया जाता है। इंद्रकिशोर मिश्र (बेतिया घराना) के साक्षात्कार में सुना कि उन्होंने पटना रेडियो स्टेशन में मालकौश सुबह में गा दिया तो हंगामा हो गया।

इसमें वीर रस तो है, ऊर्जा भी बहुत है, किंतु इसकी प्रवृत्ति गम्भीर है। मालकौश गाने के लिए एक विशेष मानसिक अवस्था और शुद्धता अनिवार्य है। इसके विषय में एक फ़िल्मी किस्सा है कि जब नौशाद साहब मोहम्मद रफ़ी से राग मालकौश में एक गीत गवाने वाले थे, तो उन्होंने पूरे सेट पर सबको कह दिया कि स्नान कर, पवित्र होकर आएँ। मोहम्मद रफ़ी ने उसके बाद राग मालकौश में वह मशहूर गीत गाया — *मन तड़पत हरि दर्शन को आज!*

इस किस्से को सुनने के बाद मैं भी जब मालकौश सुनने बैठता हूँ तो पवित्र होकर, इस मन से देर रात बैठता हूँ कि बीच में कोई खलल न पड़े। प्रस्तुति के मध्य उठ कर कहीं जाना न पड़े। जो भी तनाव मन में हो उसे तिलांजलि दे दी जाए। शायद ही कोई संगीत श्रोता हो जिन्होंने मालकौश न सुना हो, भले उन्हें इसका इल्म न हो। मुझे निजी तौर पर यह एक रूमानी राग भी लगता है, जिसे बार-बार सुनने का दिल करे।

ऐसे कोई संगीतकार भी शायद ही मिलें जिन्होंने यह राग नहीं गाया या बजाया हो। यह एक कठिन राग है, लेकिन इसमें एक सुविधा यह है कि किसी भी स्वर पर न्यास लिया जा सकता है। पाँचों स्वरों में कहीं भी सुस्ताया जा सकता है, विस्तार दिया जा सकता है। मैं दो प्रस्तुतियों का जिक्र करूँगा, जो लोग यूट्यूब

पर सुन सकते हैं। पहली प्रस्तुति में ओंकारनाथ ठाकुर गा रहे हैं, और वाइलिन पर उन्हीं की शिष्या एन राजम हैं। उन्होंने 'पग घुँघरू बांध कर नाची रे' गाया है। दूसरी प्रस्तुति सलामत-नज़ाकत अली खान की है, जिसमें उन्होंने खूबसूरती से तान लेकर 'तोरे बिना मोहे चैन नहीं आवे' बंदिश गायी है। ध्रुपद में अगर मालकौश को अपने मूल प्राचीन अवतार में सुनना चाहें तो पंडित रामचतुर मल्लिक और अभय नारायण मल्लिक की प्रस्तुति उपलब्ध है। उन्होंने इस प्रस्तुति में अंत में धमार में एक सुंदर प्रस्तुति सुनाई है — *आयो कहाँ से हो गोपाल!*

नए श्रोताओं के लिए मालकौश पहचानना कुछ आसान हो जाता है, क्योंकि उनके मन में मोहम्मद रफ़ी का गीत — 'मन तड़पत हरि दर्शन को आज' पहले से अंकित है। मंजे हुए सुनकारों के लिए तो मालकौश का विस्तार असीमित है।

**प्रवीण कुमार झा**

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



# A Special Republic Day celebration

To mark India's 73rd Republic Day, Prabha Khaitan Foundation, along with Education For All Trust and Muskaan, organised a week-long outreach and support programme for underprivileged members of our society in January. Cakes, food hampers, clothes and essentials were distributed to children with special needs at various locations in Kolkata.

Blankets were also distributed to the needy. Aroop Biswas, Hon'ble Minister of Power, Sports and Youth Affairs, Government of West Bengal, tabla maestro Bickram Ghosh and Anindita Chatterjee, Executive Trustee of Prabha Khaitan Foundation, were present for the blanket distribution drive. Bickram Ghosh performed a special number at the request of the audience present.



(L-R) Anindita Chatterjee, Aroop Biswas and Bickram Ghosh



Manisha Rampuria,  
who supported  
us in blanket  
distribution



Anindita Chatterjee distributing blankets



Performance by Bickram Ghosh







## Calling bright young minds!

**Prabha Khaitan Foundation** is deeply committed to helping children discover and explore their interests, creativity and talents. With this aim in mind, the Foundation welcomed three bright young minds—Anitej Mukhopadhyay from La Martiniere For Boys, Urvi Agarwal from Modern High School for Girls and Suchismita Majumdar from South City International School—as interns for three months starting November 2021. They worked diligently, covering events organised by the Foundation's student-focused initiative, Muskaan. The Foundation looks forward to offering more such internship opportunities in the future to students across the country to help them on their journey of uncovering their true potential and excelling in all their endeavours.



### Children's Day 2021: Expression, Rhythm and Collectivity

November 14 is a day every child looks forward to—a day to celebrate youth and vitality. The pandemic has obstructed children's access to social gatherings and collectivity. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation's** event for Children's Day 2021 overcame this obstruction.

In a virtual setup, more than 200 children from classes VII to XII interacted with Feyago, an Indian rapper and winner of the Best Hip Hop Act at the VH1 SoundNation Awards. Through melodious amalgamations of rap styles from across the country, Feyago delivered a number of sequences in different languages—Bengali, Hindi and English.

Throughout the duration of the programme, every child was bobbing their head to the rhythmic arrangement of the songs and picking up certain lyrics to sing along with Feyago. Not only was individual participation enthusiastic, but the guest musician also made sure to listen to every child wishing to ask him a question about rap.

The highlight of the programme was a mashup of rap and Queen's *We Will Rock You*. While Feyago rapped to the underlying bars of music, the audience unmuted and sang along to the chorus. They carolled, "We will, we will rock you", and although it was slightly uncoordinated, it encapsulated the true meaning of music and programmes like this—our collective voice and unity.

The event introduced children—many of them being aspiring artistes—to a new genre of music. Concurrently, Feyago's experience with pursuing music and creating his own sound motivated the audience to go after their dreams and interests. His final message to the gathering was to stay true to themselves and always do their best to achieve everything that they aspire to be.

Ultimately, Children's Day 2021 was more than singing along to songs. It was a celebration of unity and inspiring impetus for young minds.

— Urvi Agarwal, Modern High School for Girls



### Puppet Show

Did December 22 get us all glued to our books? Well, not really—I would say virtual screens! Wow, what a puppet show it was! Yes, the evening brought us a wonderful puppet show presented by Shreedevi Sunil for little children from classes II to IV. There was a spark in the eyes of both the children and the event organisers when Ms Shreedevi started the evening show.

She began with the classic Christmas tale of *The Gingerbread Man*, and every child got engrossed in the story. The characters of the story, such as Grandpa, Grandma, the frog, the dog, the pig and the gingerbread man, felt so real. They were all floating in front of our eyes—what a treat it was! You couldn't take your eyes off the lovely, colourful puppets. The evergreen story of the naughty yet funny gingerbread man, dear to the hearts of many, killed time very soon and left behind glum faces wanting to watch more of these lively puppets.

To the joy of the little ones, Ms Shreedevi didn't let them go after the gingerbread man's tale. She went on to narrate another famous Christmas tale, *Mr. Willowby's Christmas Tree*, yet another spicy story that left the children glued to their screens. The best part was that it felt so real. Every detail of the story felt like an insight. The puppets portrayed the impression of being real living things! Oh, how wonderful it was!

This story made all the children laugh. They didn't seem to stop. The dialogues of the puppets and the voice modulation of Ms Shreedevi was so beautiful that it seemed almost unreal.

Well, after the story, Ms Shreedevi didn't let the eager minds go. Instead, she came up with an engaging activity for all of them to draw to their heart's content. She instructed the children to find a bunch of colour pens or crayons and a white sheet of paper. She then helped them draw the gingerbread man with her careful and precise instructions, which were as lucid as phonetics. Every child had their own gingerbread man by the end of the show, and it was surely a delight to see these little ones all happy and cheerful. Soon, it was time for Ms Shreedevi to leave. No one wanted her to go, but as a wise man says, "Not all good things stay forever". Ms. Shreedevi also had to leave, but she left the children behind to ponder on when they would see her next.

— Suchismita Majumdar, South City International School





## Kindness Superheroes

'Locked up in lockdown' is probably the best way to describe our current status. Though work from home norms and online studies have helped us save a lot of time, we are majorly missing out on a lot as well. Children, especially, are missing out on the fun of school and being with friends while walking around. Their lives are now confined to the four walls of their home, and they have to substitute their schools with phones, laptops or computers. Though they are slowly adapting to this tectonic change that's taking place, they have to send their mental development and emotions for a toss in exchange. Online studies have significantly increased stress levels, fatigue, anger and anxiety among children.

Yet again, Muskaan presented us with another exceptional event, "Kindness Superheroes", with Suchita Maheshwari, for students in the second standard of Garden High School. The event aimed to educate children on emotional intelligence and help them inculcate necessary values. No wonder, it was highly successful in accomplishing its goal. The event began with Ms Maheshwari showing the children a chart full of various emoticons similar to the ones used on social media. Then she asked the children to choose the ones that could correctly pinpoint their emotions at present. The children eagerly participated in the activity and got completely

involved in what was going on. The show progressed with the host telling everyone about how we feel anxious, worried and angry nowadays. She went on to teach everyone an activity that could act as a coping mechanism in times of stress.

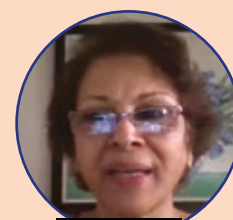
Ms Maheshwari further showed us an animated story depicting a jungle and how the animals inhabiting it learned to express gratitude and find a reason to be happy in all circumstances. This taught us the importance of gratitude in our lives and also showed that we don't always need others to make us happy—we can create our own happiness. Before concluding, Ms Maheshwari asked the children to take a few pieces of paper and write down the things they were grateful for in life. Then she asked them to fold the pieces of paper and put them in a jar. A few children read out the things that made them grateful. This activity ensures that whenever children feel low or disheartened, they will have something with them that will remind them of the treasures in life.

Mental health development and emotional intelligence are not topics that children are introduced to at a young age, despite these turning out to be the most important things they require to go through and overcome the adversities in life. Thankfully, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation's** venture helped educate young ones on the need of the hour.

— Anitej Mukhopadhyay, La Martiniere For Boys



Suchita Maheshwari



Sumitra Ray







# For the Love of Bangla



(L-R) Nrisingha Prasad Bhaduri, Roy Choudhury, Soumyaditya Mukherjee, Parambrata Chattopadhyay, Rupa Majumdar, Bani Basu and Shuvaprasanna at Oxford Bookstore, Kolkata, for the in-person sessions of Apeejay Bangla Sahitya Utsob 2021

Over seven years, India's first Bengali literary festival, Apeejay Bangla Sahitya Utsob, has become a household name among lovers of Bengali literature and culture, both in India and overseas. The seventh edition of the festival, curated by Oxford Bookstore, Kolkata, was a mix of online discussions and in-person meets. The festival was supported by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**.

As the Executive Trustee of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, Anindita Chatterjee, pointed out, the Foundation has united lovers of literature in different languages all over the world, and now, by partnering with Apeejay Bangla Sahitya Utsob, the voice of Bengali literature can reach even further.

The three-day festival was held from December 10 to 12, 2021; the sessions of the first two days were conducted online, while the last day was all about in-person *addas* at Oxford Bookstore, Kolkata. The discussions were streamed live on the festival's social media platforms, Facebook and YouTube, and have opened an important window for conversation to readers and speakers of

Bengali, not just within India but also abroad.

Conceptualised in 2015 at Oxford Bookstore, Kolkata, Apeejay Bangla Sahitya Utsob was a pioneer as the nation's first Bengali literature festival. Over the years, it has explored the trends and changes in Bengali literature through discussions on a vast array of topics—from literary fiction and non-fiction to history, society, translations, audiobooks, graphic novels and poetry. The seventh edition of Apeejay Bangla Sahitya Utsob witnessed 16 discussions featuring eminent speakers from across the world—writers, poets, playwrights, journalists, cultural icons and recipients of major literary awards. These included Nrisingha Prasad Bhaduri, Bani Basu, Shuvaprasanna, Parambrata Chattopadhyay, Subodh Sarkar, Anindya Jana, Pracheta Gupta, Himadrikishore Dasgupta, Saikat Mukhopadhyay, Prasun Banerjee, Binod Ghosal, Gaurav Chakrabarty, Subhankar Dey, Indrani Chakrabarti, Yashodhara Ray Chaudhuri, Dipanwita Roy, Raja Bhattacharjee, Debjyoti Bhattacharyya and Abhijnan Roychowdhury. This edition also highlighted new voices in Bengali writing while celebrating global literary voices.



## Day 1

Day 1 of Apeejay Bangla Sahitya Utsob was filled with memories of three departed doyens of Bengali literature. The first session, *Hridkamalay Chittapriya*, began with a discussion about the poet, Sankha Ghosh. Introducing the moderator and speakers was the festival's curator, Roy Choudhury. In conversation with Professor Gopa Datta, who moderated the discussion, were eminent names in Bengali literature, Yashodhara Ray Chaudhuri and Subodh Sarkar. "Sankha *babu* had often started the proceedings of this festival," reminisced Sarkar. "When you read his translations of different poets, whether from Andhra Pradesh or Cuba, you realise his mind was not restricted to one place." "Ghosh taught his students how to think," said Ray Chaudhuri. "This world of deep thinking was his gift to readers."

The second session, *Holud Basantake Chithi*, was moderated by the director of Dev Sahitya Kutir, Rupa Majumdar, and celebrated the Bengali fiction writer, Buddhadeva Guha. In conversation with Majumdar were authors Himadrikishore Dasgupta and Suman Goswami, and publisher Subhankar Dey. "Guha was the Ernest Hemingway of Bengali literature," declared Dasgupta. "Whether or not you liked his literary creations, you couldn't deny his power." "Through his writing, he expressed

complex human emotions," observed Majumdar. "We published a manuscript of Guha's around 10-12 days before Durga Puja," recalled Dey. "Just one advertisement was sent out at the time of publication; even before the Pujas started, we had sold 7,000 copies. Even in this age of social media, can we imagine selling so many copies of a work within such a short time?" "Women found special solace in Guha's writing," Goswami observed. "Passion was his capital."

The final session of the day, *23 Ghanta 60 Minute*, was about remembering the Bengali science

fiction writer, Anish Deb. The discussion was moderated by Dip Ghosh, founder-editor of *Kalpabhiswa*, an online Bengali science fiction magazine. In conversation with Ghosh were authors Debjyoti Bhattacharyya, Abhijnan Roychowdhury and Sumit Bardhan. This was the first time that science fiction was the subject of an Apeejay

Bangla Sahitya Utsob session. "Science fiction is still considered 'niche' in Bengali literature, so such discussions are even more important," said Ghosh. "Anish Deb's work is pioneering." "Deb regretted that such few young writers seemed dedicated to writing science fiction," revealed Roychowdhury. "Good science fiction requires a sense of wonder as well as foresight," said Bardhan. "And for the genre to attain a consummate wholeness, more women writers need to be published."

[Buddhadeva] Guha was the Ernest Hemingway of Bengali literature. Whether or not you liked his literary creations, you couldn't deny his power

— Himadrikishore Dasgupta



Subodh Sarkar



Roy Choudhury



Anindya Jana



## Day 2

The second day of virtual *addas* started with *Tonger Ghorer Dos*, which asked an important question: are Premendra Mitra's 'Ghanada' stories only tall tales? In conversation with moderator Roy Choudhury were authors Prasenjit Dasgupta, Samudra Basu and Debajyoti Guha. "Do readers of Ghanada stories see beyond the humour and realise that the tales married genres like science fiction, history and so on?" wondered Choudhury. "It was only when I grew up and read the stories again that I noticed how different subjects were deftly connected and presented to readers," said Basu. "Ghanada, when viewed through the lens of science fiction, was well ahead of his time," agreed Guha. "In *Poka*, not only was environmental warfare addressed, but also the issue of an antidote," observed Dasgupta. "Such an approach was heavily science-based. Ghanada stories were so much more than just humorous tales."

The next session, *Comics Katha*, centred on the future of Bengali comics. Moderated by Roy Choudhury, it featured editor Debkumar Mitra, graphic novelist Harsho Mohan Chattoraj, and illustrator Sujog Bandopadhyay. "Comics have a flow, like any other art form," said Mitra. "But Bengali comics have been stuck because we still believe that comics are only for children. There is very little scope for financial growth for artists of Bengali comics." Chattoraj agreed that for there to be a change, publishers would have to back artists. "Artists like me really want to work in Bengali comics, but face several

roadblocks." "In Korea, webtoons are hugely popular," said Bandopadhyay. "If we, too, can make good use of digital media, we can take Bengali comics to newer heights."

Session 3, titled *Boi Shonaboi*, explored the growing phenomenon of 'listening' to books. Moderated by Rupa Majumdar, the discussion featured the conceptual brain behind the *Sunday Suspense* audio series, Indrani Chakrabarti, author Avik Sarkar, and actor Gaurav Chakrabarty. "Who doesn't love listening to stories?" asked Chakrabarti. "The idea of *Sunday Suspense* originated from the decreasing reading habits of children. What if the same stories could be presented

to them in a modernised, attractive audio format?" "If we want to get youngsters engrossed in Bengali literature," observed Sarkar, "we must find newer ways to tell stories, including audiobooks."

The final session of Day 2, *Pore Likhi*, dwelt on the fact that authors must do their research before they write. Moderated by Somen Sengupta, the session

featured three eminent names in Bengali literature: Saikat Mukhopadhyay, Binod Ghosal and Raja Bhattacharjee. As Sengupta observed, every writer must first be a voracious reader. "Several factors contribute to becoming an author," said Mukhopadhyay. "However, study builds a vision." "The question of what to read is also huge," offered Ghosal. "We don't just read books; we also read our surroundings, people, and situations." Bhattacharjee opined that what we ultimately want from literature is to laugh and cry. "If literature merely informs us, and does nothing else, that's not the kind of literature I would believe in," he said.

Comics have a flow, like any other art form... but Bengali comics have been stuck because we still believe that comics are only for children

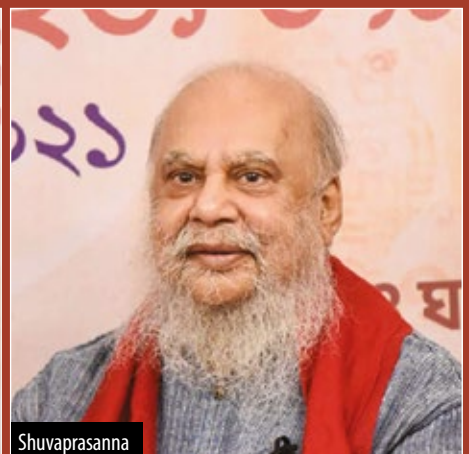
— Debkumar Mitra



Nrisingha Prasad Bhaduri



Prasadrangan Ray



Shuvaprasanna



## Day 3

After two days of sessions exclusively on a virtual platform, Day 3 of Apeejay Bangla Sahitya Utsob, December 12, 2021, saw the first physical sessions of the festival at Oxford Bookstore, Kolkata. An array of topics exploring the many facets of Bengali literature and culture were taken up for discussion and debate. Each session was streamed live on the festival's social media handles.

Speaking on Apeejay Bangla Sahitya Utsob, Anindita Chatterjee said, "This is the second year **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** got associated with Apeejay Bangla Sahitya Utsob. In our endeavour to promote regional languages, we have the literary initiative **Aakhari**, which is present in more than 10 cities in India. Through this association, we wish to promote Bengali literature on various platforms. I sincerely hope that this association will help both organisations reach their goals. I wish Apeejay Bangla Sahitya Utsob all the success."

The day opened with *Social Media-y Sahityacharcha* (Literary Leaps on Social Media), a session that explored the world of literary analysis and discussion on social media platforms. Members of prominent Facebook groups and pages were invited to speak on the subject and presented diverse perspectives on the same. There were representatives from LaughaLaughi, Antarik, Dolchhuter Kolom, Kalpurush and Golpo Kutir, who sparked interesting conversations on the relevance of literary discussions on social media, whether literary analysis was actually taking place on digital platforms, the issue of trolling on social

media, the importance of constructive criticism from an aggressive Facebook audience and the future of all such literary groups and pages.

A festival special 'Pick-char Katha' followed, organised by Surojit o Bondhura Kobita Club, an online club formed in 2012 inspired by a line from Surojit Chatterjee, musician, songwriter and lead singer of Bengali band Bhoomi. Representatives from the club announced the winners of the Utsob-special Pick-char Katha, an online competition where participants had to compose a four-line poem or a 20-word story from a picture they were shown. Almost 150 entries came in, out of which five people—Partha Mukherjee, Samir Pramanik, Polash Porel, Laboni Pal and Amlaan Bagchi—were chosen as winners. Swagata Sengupta, director of Apeejay Bangla Sahitya Utsob, and members of the Kobita Club gave certificates and gift vouchers to winners present at the event. The awardees were also invited on stage to recite their prize-winning entries.

The next session of the day, *Bhalobeshhey Likhi, Nibhrite Jotone* (The Passionate Penners), turned the spotlight on eminent personalities who are not writers by profession but write out of their passion for writing. Prasun Banerjee, an IPS officer, Abhirup Sarkar, researcher and professor of economics, and Jayanta Narayan Chatterjee, a criminal lawyer, were in conversation with Rupa Majumdar. The discussion that followed highlighted how Banerjee and Chatterjee's professions had opened the door to diverse experiences, thoughts and observations that prompted them to pen them down and share them with the world. It further brought to the fore the way Sarkar's first story saw the light of day inspired by



Bani Basu



Debashis Mukhopadhyay



Jayanta Narayan Chatterjee



his father-in-law, noted Bengali poet Nirendranath Chakraborty. "It's very important to create a proper ambience in fiction... Equally important is the plot, because no one will read a story otherwise. I've always tried to incorporate these two elements in my work," said Sarkar.

Speaking on how journalism and literature are often inextricably linked to one another in the next session, *Columnbajder Kolombaji* (Journa-listed Authors), writer and journalist Pracheta Gupta said a journalist is also a writer from within, nurturing and developing a story. "Similarly," he added, "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." Journalists Anindya Jana and Dipanwita Roy were also speakers at the session along with Gupta and explored the ins and outs of the two professions, the elusiveness of excellence and how journalistic stories can act as seeds of future plots for a writer. The guests were in conversation with Rupa Majumdar.

Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* inspired Sukumar Ray to write his iconic story *Haw Jaw Baw Raw Law*, at a time when he was suffering from black fever. The next session,

*Haw Jaw Baw Raw Law Shaw* (CentenaRAY of Mumbo Jumbo), celebrated 100 years of *Haw Jaw Baw Raw Law*, a household classic in Bengal, the characters of which have attained cult status. Prasadrangan Ray, retired civil servant, writer and member of the Ray family, and Debashis Mukhopadhyay, retired journalist and Ray researcher, were speakers on the occasion. They were in conversation with Roy Choudhury. Were there political undertones in *Haw Jaw Baw Raw Law*? What are the differences between *Alice in Wonderland* and *Haw Jaw Baw Raw Law*? These and many more such insightful questions were explored in a session that eventually evolved into a celebration of the genius of Sukumar Ray and the relevance of

his work even today.

Cinema or theatre adaptation differs from an author's perception—this was the topic of the next session, *Lekhok Bonam Porichalok* (Author vs.



When a writer is writing, they're nurturing news within themselves, whether of love, relationships, separation, reunion or anything else for that matter

— Pracheta Gupta



Soumyaditya Mukherjee



Rupa Majumdar



Saheli Roy



Director). Actor-director Parambrata Chattopadhyay and Rupa Majumdar were in conversation with journalist Soumyaditya Mukherjee in a session that delved into diverse issues such as the three-act structure of cinema, creative liberty, selling of rights, storytelling in cinema, scriptwriting and authorship. 'Adaptation' is a modern term that has come about in the last 50 to 60 years. Talking about how both authors and film directors are independent creators, Chattopadhyay said, "There's a paradigm shift in the word 'adaptation'. I'm adapting it—I'm not copying it or transcribing it for the screen... Just like literature is an independent literary medium, cinema is also an independent creative medium. It has its own set of rules—rules that an author doesn't need to follow while writing a literary piece. Often, when I'm adapting a literary piece into a film, it doesn't fit into the grammar of cinema. A director has to allow himself a certain degree of liberty to fit a literary piece into the norms of cinema." Author Bani Basu was also invited on stage to share her thoughts. A

cake-cutting ceremony followed, as the seventh edition of Apeejay Bangla Sahitya Utsob neared its end.



Just like literature is an independent literary medium, cinema is also an independent creative medium... A director has to allow himself a certain degree of liberty to fit a literary piece into the norms of cinema

— Parambrata Chattopadhyay

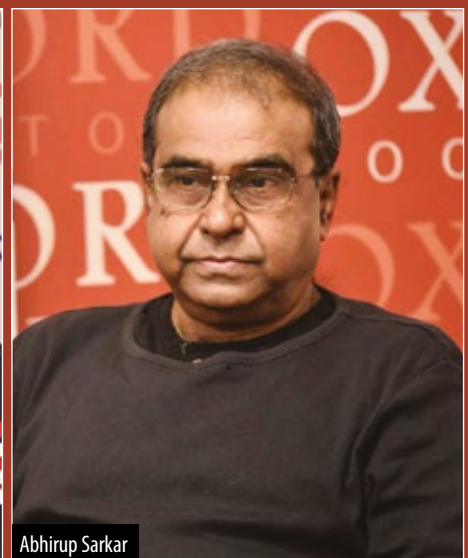
The final session of Day 3, *Pichhu Hete Kichhu Katha* (15, Down Memory Lane, Kolkata), witnessed eminent historian Nrisingha Prasad Bhaduri, artist Shuvaprasanna and Bani Basu travel back in time with moderator Rupa Majumdar. As the conversation flowed from the Naxalite Movement and the romanticism of Bengal to lesser-known facts about celebrated poet Shakti Chattopadhyay, and pioneering sculptor, Ramkinkar Baij, many untold stories of the bygone era came to light. Reminiscing on the days of her childhood, Basu said they had neither cinema nor enough playgrounds to keep them engaged. "Life was very different back then. We used to wait for two special books during Durga Puja every year—Dev Sahitya Kutir and Sarat Sahitya Samagra—there was a unique bond between us readers and the writers of those times. If that golden age of writers and readers return, there can be nothing better than that," she added.



Dipanwita Roy



Prasun Banerjee



Abhirup Sarkar





# Close the Gap in Cancer Care

**Y**uvraj Singh's debut book *The Test of My Life* poignantly lays bare the deepest fears that ripped him apart when he was diagnosed with a cancerous tumour in his lung, shortly after India's World Cup victory in 2011. After extensive treatment and three chemotherapy cycles in the US, he returned to India in April 2012 and rejoined the national cricket team, eventually stepping forward to share his story with the masses. He said in an interview, "Simple things like breathing, enjoying food, the small pleasures of life that we take for granted, become precious. The bodily suffering, when I was choking while trying to breathe, when I couldn't digest anything each time I had chemo, when I would be a mental and physical wreck, made me realise that living a normal life is a blessing and should not be frittered away by fretting over things which are beyond your control."

Cancer is a malaise claiming millions of lives across the globe every year. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), cancer accounted for almost 10 million deaths in 2020. Breast cancer emerged as the most common form of cancer in 2020, accounting for

2.26 million cases, followed by lung cancer with 2.21 million cases. The American Cancer Society says almost eight out of 10 (81%) deaths from lung cancer in 2022 are expected to be caused by smoking cigarettes. The risk of cancer can be lowered by making healthy choices and actively implementing cancer prevention strategies. Medical practitioners have time and again emphasised early detection and screening as one of the best ways of reducing cancer mortality worldwide. Minimising delays and ensuring proper access to treatment, especially in low-income countries, can go a long way in reducing the cancer burden of the world.

On February 4, 2000, at the World Summit Against Cancer for the New Millennium in Paris, the then General Director of UNESCO Kōichirō Matsuura signed the Charter of Paris Against Cancer along with the then French President Jacques Chirac. The Paris Charter was a document comprising 10 articles that laid down a commitment to investing in and promoting cancer research, improving patient services and mobilising the community by raising awareness. Ever since then, February 4 is observed every year as World





ARTWORK BY  
SUDIPTA KUNDU

Cancer Day. It is a "global uniting initiative" led by the Union of International Cancer Control (UICC), an international cancer organisation "dedicated to taking the lead in convening, capacity building and advocacy initiatives that unite the cancer community to reduce the global cancer burden".

The theme of the 2022–2024 World Cancer Day Campaign is 'closing the gap in cancer care'. Despite groundbreaking advancements in cancer diagnosis and treatment, many cancer patients across the world are denied proper care and timely diagnosis. According to the UICC, "This is the equity gap—and it's costing lives. People who seek cancer care hit barriers at every turn. Income, education, geographical location and discrimination based on ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability and lifestyle are just a few of the factors that can negatively affect care. The most disadvantaged groups are also more likely to have increased exposures to a host of other risk factors, like tobacco, unhealthy diet or environmental hazards".

Reports show the five-year survival rate for cervical cancer is 71% for white women in the US but only 58% for black women. The childhood cancer survival rate in low-income countries is 20% whereas the same is more than 80% in high-income countries. There's evidence of discrimination on the part of healthcare professionals, which is why cancer screening has been found to be lower among transgender people compared to the rest of the population. These are only some of the "inequity" gaps that the UICC intends to address through their 2022–2024 World Cancer Day Campaign.

To do away with the cancer care gap completely, it's imperative to come together and lend our voices to the fight against inequity in society. By raising collective consciousness, we can not only challenge public stigma but also prompt governments to look into such gaps, take action and acknowledge cancer as an important health issue requiring urgent attention. Developing and implementing country-specific cancer care and prevention plans, strengthening primary healthcare services and educating the masses to renounce cancer-causing lifestyles are only some of the steps that can help tackle cancer at the roots. As Barack Obama said, "Change will not come if we wait for some other person or if we wait for some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek." Let's close the cancer care gap.



## TUNES OF OUR TIMES



Over the years, internationally renowned Indian music composer and environmentalist **Ricky Kej** has used his music not only to bring happiness to countless aficionados but to meaningfully convey the importance and urgency of climate change to a wider audience.

A Grammy Award-winning US Billboard #1 and GQ Hero 2020 artist, Ricky has performed at prestigious venues in over 30 countries, including the UN Headquarters in New York and Geneva and received over a hundred music awards in 20 countries.

His vast repertoire includes 16 studio albums released internationally, over 3,500 commercials and 4 feature films, including the natural history documentary *Wild Karnataka*, narrated by the legendary Sir David Attenborough.

Ricky is the man behind the Foundation's signature caller tune and it is an honour for us to be associated with him.





Readers of *Prabha* can download 4 of his albums by visiting this link: [RickyKej.com/pkf](http://RickyKej.com/pkf) or by clicking the button below.



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