



Prabha प्रभा

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The Prabha Khaitan Foundation Chronicle

हम सब एक हैं



The warmth of native tongues is unparalleled, no matter where in India one is from. In this issue of *Prabha*, we uphold the richness of India's linguistic diversity and cultural excellence through music, books, storytelling, theatre and stimulating conversations

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Prabha
प्रभा

MANISHA JAIN
Communications & Branding Chief,
Prabha Khaitan Foundation



The Stunning Beauty of Indian Languages

American novelist Amy Tan wrote, “I spend a great deal of my time thinking about the power of language — the way it can evoke an emotion, a visual image, a complex idea, or a simple truth.” This, perhaps, is most true of one’s mother tongue. There’s a plethora of emotions, expressions and visions that are unique to every language. It was a matter of tremendous pride for us as Indians when the translation of Geetanjali Shree’s Hindi novel, *Ret Samadhi*, won the 2022 International Booker Prize. It was an unprecedented feat. This issue of *Prabha* celebrates Shree’s triumph, highlights the richness of India’s diverse tongues, and documents stimulating discussions around the importance of literature written in regional languages.

Prabha Khaitan Foundation’s initiative **Aakh** has worked consistently to promote Indian authors who write in regional languages. The **Aakh** sessions, as recounted by the Foundation’s associates and **Ehsaas** Women, will help readers gauge the significant impact the initiative has had. We hope you will read about engaging conversations with stalwarts from different walks of life — from Javed Akhtar and Shabana Azmi to Usha Uthup and Deepti Naval.

The Foundation owes several significant achievements to the **Ehsaas** Women, who have stood like pillars to ensure the success of each and every event in their cities. As the Foundation extends its activities to the beautiful and bustling Indore, we welcome the dynamic **Ehsaas** Women of Indore into the fold.

With hospitality being instrumental to the smooth functioning of all programmes, we are proud to partner with Hotel Radisson in Jalandhar, which has changed the face of international tourism in the city. You will find more about the impeccable hospitality of the ‘Pride of Jalandhar’ in the pages of this issue.

We hope that you enjoy reading this edition of *Prabha*. Don’t forget to write to us with your suggestions and feedback at newsletter@pkfoundation.org!

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]



▲ An artistic piece created by **Sudipta Kundu**, the Foundation's in-house artist, which will be featured on the **Aakhar** website that will be launched soon

Happy Birthday

Prabha WISHES **EHSAAS** WOMEN BORN IN AUGUST

1st August



Kalpana Chaudhary

8th August



Huma Khalil Mirza

12th August



Anantmala Potdar

22nd August



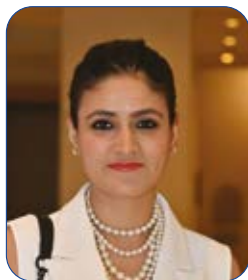
Dona Ganguly

23rd August



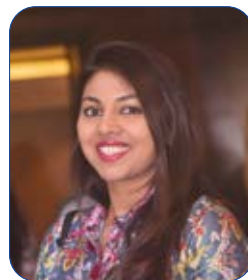
Ina Puri

23rd August



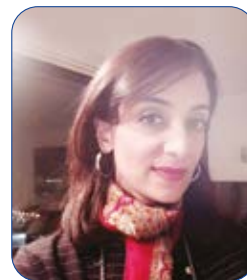
Chandni Chopra

27th August



Aakriti Periwal

29th August



Anjum Babukhan

मान, अभिमान, सम्मान



The practice of writing and recording events came to India more than 4,000 years ago, with the Indus Valley Civilization. Today, with 28 states, eight Union territories and a vast population, India has 22 scheduled languages, with several thousand others that are non-scheduled but just as rich.

With its unique initiative, **Aakhar, Prabha Khaitan Foundation** seeks to highlight the work of Indian authors in regional languages, and, in this way, cement its commitment to the preservation of India's linguistic and literary diversity. With the support of **Ehsaas Women**, the pan-India conversations under the **Aakhar** banner have enjoyed resounding success. Read all about it, in the words of the Foundation's associates and **Ehsaas Women** themselves.



Literature from the Land of the Mahatma

Aavo padharo are words of welcome in the Gujarati language, and it is here, in this state, that these words ring true.

Stretching out into the Arabian Sea, with a hint of the desert and with a coastline of 1,600 kilometres, is Gujarat: the home of Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation. It is renowned for its beaches, temples, towns and historic capital. Wildlife sanctuaries, hill resorts and natural grandeur are the gifts of Gujarat. Sculptures, handicrafts, arts and festivals also make the state rich. Gujarat is also among the most technologically advanced states, housing the largest petrochemical complex of the country.

The diverse, vibrant state of Gujarat has made a significant contribution to the cultural realm of India. In the arena of music, Sugam Sangeet, as a musical form, has been acclaimed the world over, and the varied use of instruments such as the turi, manjira, ektaro, jantar, zanz pot drum and so on makes the music melodious and unique. Similarly, in the arena of dance, we can see the four major forms: Dandiya, Garba, Garbi and Padhar. A number of languages are spoken in the state. The official language of Gujarat is Gujarati, which is the 26th most widely spoken language in the world. It is an Indo-Aryan language derived from Sanskrit. In addition to this, it has 11 dialects, spoken in different parts of the state.

The literary tradition in Gujarat is immense, in the form of folk songs, narratives, theatre and aphorisms. Tracing their origins back to the Sultanate period, the stories and messages evolved as they passed down the generations, leaving behind versions of myth and legends. The literary tradition in Gujarat is largely linked to the Bhakti Movement; it swept across most of India, a period which began with the poet, Narsinh Mehta, around the 12th century. The teachings of Ramanujacharya and Shankaracharya percolated into Gujarat and influenced the lives of the people. Mirabai, the foremost woman poet, dedicated her life to the worship of Krishna. *Akhyans*, a form of storytelling through verse, was popularized by Premanand.

The legacy of Gujarati literature is huge and everlasting, but the language is facing an uncertain future in this country. Different measures have been adopted by different organizations to promote and spread awareness about the Gujarati language and its rich cultural heritage. The foremost among them, and the most dedicated, is **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**.

The Foundation, founded by the late Dr Prabha Khaitan in the early 1980s, works tirelessly towards promoting literature and language by supporting authors and writers and engaging youngsters and creative minds. The **Aakhar** sessions and seminars conducted by the Foundation have taught us that it is our duty to preserve our varied languages and traditions that make India so diverse and unique.

— Priyanshi Patel

Karma Foundation

(Aakhar associate for the Gujarati language)

Ehsaas Woman of Ahmedabad

Writing for the Fearless Mind



The name of Prabha Khaitan is revered and respected all over India and abroad. Not only was she a novelist, poet and entrepreneur, but also a feminist, and every year, we celebrate the birth anniversary of this truly eminent personality.

As the people of West Bengal, we are honoured to be members of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, which is dedicated to the promotion of culture, performing arts, literature and women's empowerment. As a part of Purba Paschim, a renowned theatre group from Kolkata, we are on a mission to contribute to the success of the Foundation's **Aakhar** initiative under the tutelage of the illustrious theatre artist, Soumitra Mitra. Despite the pandemic, we have been successful in organising more than 10 literary sessions with distinguished personalities from varied fields, such as Manoj Mitra, Prem Prakash, Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay, Ranjan Bandyopadhyay, Pracheta Gupta, Joy Goswami, Subodh Sarkar, Ujjal Chattopadhyay and the representative of the new generation, the poet and lyricist, Srijato.

The most recent session of **Aakhar** welcomed the social activist, novelist and poet, Jaya Mitra, as the honourable guest. The journey for **Aakhar** Kolkata had started with the launching of *Dekhi Bismoye*, a book written by the eminent actor, director, writer, painter and poet, Soumitra Chattopadhyay, and edited by Soumitra Mitra. Similarly, the session with the beloved Bengali novelist, Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay, was one of the most memorable ones. The writer explained the difference between reportage and literature, and shared with the audience how he writes short stories.

Moreover, the launch of the Bengali version of Prem Prakash's book, *Reporting India*, was one such session that had the audience consistently engaged, as did another session, where Srijato recited Sankha Ghosh's poems. With every session enriching the literary and cultural ambience of the city, **Aakhar** Kolkata strongly believes that these interactions, along with the other initiatives of the Foundation in different parts of the

country, will help foster cultural synchronicity among people from different corners of India.

With the advent of consumerism, society is heading towards increased self-centeredness. People are becoming less sensitive towards the needs of others. With its plethora of cultural and literary initiatives, the Foundation is helping people rekindle their emotional and empathetic sides *via* cultural rejuvenation.

It is indeed historic how the Foundation, supported by Shree Cement Ltd, is continually engaging in these educational and intellectual exchanges across India. The day is not far when the Foundation becomes an archive of Indian culture and literature. It is helping to create the ideal world of Tagore's dreams, as encapsulated in his words:

"Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;

Where knowledge is free;

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;

Where words come out from the depth of truth;

Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;

Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake."

Thus, with **Aakhar** Kolkata, we hope to be able to achieve the vision and mission of the Foundation.

— Anup Bandyopadhyay

Purba Paschim

(**Aakhar** associate for the Bengali language)



The Warmth of the Marathi Tongue

Greetings in one's native language, more often than not, give people a sense of belonging. A familiar greeting can be an icebreaker, and can even be the beginning of a lasting friendship. At **Aakhar**, we aim to preserve these languages, as they are crucial to one's identity.

In 1999, UNESCO proclaimed February 21 as International Mother Language Day to promote cultural diversity and multilingualism across the globe. After the 1971 Census, the Indian government stated that any indigenous language that is spoken by less than 10,000 people would no longer be considered an official language of India. India may have lost 220 languages since 1961, but another 150 languages can vanish in the next 50 years. There are 600 potentially endangered languages in India. Whenever a language dies, what dies along with it is its unique perspective, as well as a piece of history and the culture of the speakers. The onus of saving a language is therefore on us.

"The disappearance of a language deprives us of knowledge no less valuable than some future miracle drug that may be lost when a species goes extinct," wrote Russ Rymer in the *National Geographic* in 2012. The disappearance of a language takes with it age-old medicinal remedies, wisdom about local biodiversity, and the ability to preserve nature and culture. This equation also gives local languages the key to eliminating climate change. Thus, for **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, languages are not just an assemblage of words and sounds. They are a proud repository of traditions, culture and roots, and we have succeeded in reviving the fondness for regional literature by starting the initiative **Aakhar**.

With English being considered the language of development, the younger generation of Marathi speakers have been distanced from Marathi literature. We're rapidly becoming, in author Pavan Varma's words, "a nation of linguistic half-castes, insecure in English and neglectful of their own mother tongue". Thus, with **Aakhar**, we strive to mitigate the effects of globalisation and celebrate the centuries-old rich history of fine literature, especially in the case of Marathi, where this history is more than 700 years old.

Having conducted its cultural activities across various states of the country, **Aakhar** has reached Maharashtra, since the Marathi language is spoken by more than 83 million people across the world. It is the third most spoken language in India. Marathi has some of the oldest literature, dating back even to the first century. Some famous Marathi authors who have been loved all across India include poets and playwrights like Vijay Tendulkar, Sane Guruji, Laxmibai Tilak, Anna Bhau Sathe, Shivaji Samant, Vishnu Khandekar and Ranjit Desai.

We started our **Aakhar** sessions with none other than Vishwas Patil. An eminent Marathi novelist, Patil has written 13 novels on many realistic issues and the adversities faced by the masses. At the age of 32, Patil became the youngest recipient of the coveted Sahitya Akademi award for his novel *Zadazadati: A Dirge for the Damned*. He has also been awarded the Jnanpith Award and the Priyadarshini National Award for literature. The author of critically acclaimed books such as *Not Gone with the Wind* and *Anna Bhahu: The Lion of Dalit Literature* has carved a niche for himself with his history writing. His luminous work, *Panipat*, has become a cult classic among history buffs. The session with Patil was delightful in every sense. The underlying emotions were pride and joy, which spurred people on to make a beeline for the event. Patil's humility won us all over. The tête-à-tête between the author and readers seemed like a conversation between friends. That day, Marathi bound us all together like no other.

The very next month, we launched the Marathi translation of Tuhin A. Sinha's book, *The Legend of Birsa Munda*. The event saw the presence of none other than Nitin Gadkari, Minister of Road Transport and Highways of India. He spoke at length about the need for encouraging regional languages and appreciated the efforts of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** towards this noble cause. The congratulatory messages that followed made all our efforts worth it. The **Aakhar** sessions were welcomed by the people of Nagpur as well, proving the success of the initiative!

— Priyanka Kothari

Ehsaas Woman of Nagpur

(Ehsaas Women of Nagpur are the Foundation's associates for **Aakhar** in the Marathi language)



‘कोस कोस पर पानी बदले चार कोस पर बानी’

‘अपनी भाषा अपने लोग’
की ध्वजा फहराते हुए
प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन ने
भारत की सभी भाषाओं एवं

बोलियों को सम्मान दिया है। उसके साहित्य को सर आंखों पर रखा है। चार द्रविड़ भाषाओं, तेलुगु, तमिल, मलयालम, कन्नड और आर्य भाषा संस्कृत के बाद यदि किसी भारतीय भाषा को ‘शास्त्रीय भाषा’ की मान्यता मिली है, तो वह है ‘ओड़िया भाषा’। ओड़िया भाषा एवं ओड़िशा की संस्कृति 2000 वर्षों से पुरानी है, जो पाली भाषा एवं साहित्य से जुड़ी हुई है। यह धरती भगवान बुद्ध की धरती है। यह वह धरती है जहां पर चंडाशोक धर्माशोक बने थे। यह वह धरती है, जहां बुद्ध की वाणी सम्राट अशोक के शिलालेखों के माध्यम से चारों तरफ प्रसारित हुई। यह शिलालेख भुवनेश्वर के पास धौली एवं ओड़िशा के अन्य जगहों में उपस्थित हैं और ओड़िआ भाषा की सांस्कृतिक मान्यता पर गर्व से सर ऊंचा किए हुए खड़े हैं। ओड़िआ भाषा ने अपने साथ कलिंग की संपूर्ण संस्कृति को समेटा है, चाहे वह महाप्रभु जगन्नाथ जी की रथ यात्रा की भक्ति भावना हो या भारतीय स्वतंत्रता संग्राम में पाईक वीरों की वीरता हो। चाहे यहां के मंदिर हो और यहां की हस्तकला हो। नृत्य हो, संगीत हो या फिर यहां का अपना विशिष्ट चंपू काव्य हो, सब में ओड़िआ भाषा की छाप दिखाई देती है। माँ लक्ष्मी के मान भंजन हेतु महाप्रभु जगन्नाथ द्वारा माँ लक्ष्मी को खिलाये जाने वाले रसगुल्लों की मिठास यहां की भाषा में मिलती है। पंचसखा, सारला दास, भीमभोई, गंगाधर मेहेर, फकीरमोहन सेनापति जैसे महान साहित्यकारों ने ओड़िआ भाषा एवं साहित्य को सारे विश्व में ख्याति दिलायी है।

‘प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन’ भाषा की इस सत्ता एवं प्रभुत्व को भली भाँति पहचानता है, और इसीलिये दिनांक 11/6/2019 को भुवनेश्वर में ‘आखर’ का प्रारंभ किया। प्रथम सत्र में लोक कविरत्न हलधर नाग जी पधारें। हलधर नाग जी ओड़िशा की पश्चिमी बोली कोशली में लिखते हैं। कोशली भाषा ओड़िआ के बराबर अपना स्थान बना रही है। अपने साहित्य के माध्यम से न सिर्फ अपनी भाषा, बल्कि ओड़िशा के स्थल पुराण तथा अन्य पौराणिक गाथाओं आदि का बहुत ही सुंदर प्रस्तुतीकरण किया है कवि ने आखर में। इसके साथ ही लगातार एक के बाद एक अब तक सात साहित्यकारों ने अपनी भाषा और साहित्य के माध्यम से दर्शकों के बीच भाषा एवं साहित्य के प्रति रुचि जाग्रत की है।

‘आखर’ प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन का एक ऐसा कार्यक्रम जो

स्थानीय बोलियों और भाषा के साहित्य को बढ़ावा देता है। भुवनेश्वर में ‘आखर’ ओड़िआ भाषा एवं साहित्य का पर्व मना रहा है। भुवनेश्वर में आयोजित सभी सत्रों का संक्षिप्त विवरण प्रस्तुत है।

1. ‘लोक कविरत्न’ हलधर नाग

ओड़िशा के बरगढ़ जिले में घेंस गाँव के एक गरीब परिवार में जन्मे हलधर नाग ओड़िशा के विख्यात कवि और लेखक हैं। हलधर नाग ओड़िआ की पश्चिमी बोली, संबलपुरी या कोशली में लिखते हैं, तथा ‘लोक कविरत्न’ के रूप में विख्यात हैं। संबलपुरी को संविधान की 8 वीं अनुसूची में शामिल करने हेतु वे संबलपुरी भाषा आंदोलन के पुरोधा रहे हैं। उन्होंने अपनी रचनाओं के माध्यम से सामाजिक क्रांति का शंख फूँका है। उन्हें 2016 में भारत सरकार द्वारा भारत के चौथे सर्वोच्च नागरिक पुरस्कार ‘पद्म श्री’ से सम्मानित किया गया है। उनकी रचनाओं का संकलन – ‘हलधर ग्रंथावली – दो भाग’, संबलपुर विश्वविद्यालय के पाठ्यक्रम का हिस्सा है। लोक गीत, संपरदा, कृष्णगुरु, महासती उर्मिला, तारा मंदोदरी आदि उनकी प्रसिद्ध रचनाएँ हैं।

2. प्रतिभा सत्पथी

प्रतिभा सत्पथी ओड़िआ साहित्य की एक प्रतिष्ठित कवयित्री हैं। आप देश के प्रमुख साहित्यकारों में मानी जाती हैं। आप चालीस से अधिक वर्षों से ओड़िआ साहित्य कोष को समृद्ध कर रही हैं। आपकी कविता मानवीय संबंधों और उनके रहस्यों का पता लगाने का प्रयास करते हुए गहरी मानवीय संवेदना को व्यक्त करती रही हैं। आप 25 वर्षों तक प्रमुख ओड़िआ पत्रिका ‘इस्तहार’ की संपादक रहीं तथा वर्तमान प्रसिद्ध त्रैमासिक काव्य पत्रिका ‘उद्भास’ की संपादक हैं।

प्रतिभा सत्पथी ने पर्ल एस. बक जैसे प्रसिद्ध अंग्रेजी लेखकों की कई साहित्यिक कृतियों का अनुवाद ओड़िआ भाषा में किया है। आपने अपनी कई रचनाओं का हिंदी में स्वयं अनुवाद किया है। अपने उल्लेखनीय साहित्य के लिए, आपने कई राष्ट्रीय और अंतर्राष्ट्रीय सम्मेलनों और संगोष्ठियों की शोभा बढ़ाई है, तथा कई पुरस्कारों और सम्मानों से सम्मानित होती रही हैं। वर्ष 2001 में प्रकाशित कविता संग्रह ‘तन्मय धूली’ के लिए आपको केंद्रीय साहित्य अकादमी पुरस्कार प्राप्त हुआ है।

3. जितेंद्र नारायण दाश

ओड़िआ साहित्य जगत में ‘दाश बेनहुर’ के नाम से विख्यात जितेंद्र नारायण दाश अपनी बहुमुखी प्रतिभा के लिए जाने जाते हैं। आपने लगभग 140 पुस्तकें लिखी हैं, जिनमें से 90 बाल साहित्य के अंतर्गत आती हैं। आपने साहित्य की लगभग हर विधा में अपनी लेखनी चलाई है। ग्रामीण परिवेश में पलने बढ़ने के कारण, ग्रामीण हास्य-व्यंग्य का

चुटीलापन, मुहावरे और लोकोक्तियों का सहज प्रयोग आपके साहित्य को समृद्ध एवं अनूठा बनाता है। आपने ओड़िशा एवं देश के विभिन्न विख्यात महापुरुषों पर पुस्तकें और प्रपत्र लिखे हैं। आप ओड़िआ एवं अंग्रेजी दोनों भाषाओं में समान दक्षता से लिखते हैं। आपको ओड़िशा साहित्य अकादमी, ओड़िशा विज्ञान अकादमी, बाल साहित्य के लिए एन सी ई आर टी एवं केंद्रीय साहित्य अकादमी पुरस्कार प्राप्त है।

बाल साहित्य के अलावा 'पगड़ी पुरुष', 'अभूला कहानी', 'अक्षर अरण्य' 'असरंति मेघ' आदि आपकी कुछ विशिष्ट रचनाएं हैं। आपके साहित्य का अनुवाद हिंदी, अंग्रेजी एवं बांग्ला भाषाओं में भी हुआ है।

4. रमाकांत रथ

13 दिसंबर 1934 को जन्मे, रमाकांत रथ ओड़िआ साहित्य के सबसे प्रसिद्ध आधुनिक कवियों में से एक हैं। टी. एस. एलियट और एजरा पाउंड जैसे कवियों से प्रभावित, रथ ने कविता की शैली के साथ बहुत प्रयोग किये। रहस्यवाद की खोज, जीवन और मृत्यु की पहलियाँ, व्यक्तिगत आंतरिक एकांतता एवं भौतिक आवश्यकतायें रथजी के पसंदीदा विषयों में से हैं। उनकी रचनाओं में पाए गए काव्यात्मक भाव जीवन की आध्यात्मिकता के प्रतीकात्मक संकेतों को लिये हुये हैं। सामान्य मानवीय क्षमताओं से परे, कवि पाठकों को तेज बुद्धिवाद के उच्च स्तरों पर पहुंचाते हैं। 'श्री राधा' काव्य में प्राचीन संस्कृत साहित्य की नायिका राधा की आधुनिकतावादी व्याख्या से लेकर 'समसा ऋतु' काव्य में मौजूद मृत्यु-चेतना तक विषयों में पर्याप्त विविधता है।

कटक के रेवेनशॉ कॉलेज से अंग्रेजी साहित्य में स्नातकोत्तर रमाकांत रथ ने वर्ष 1957 में भारतीय प्रशासनिक सेवा में शामिल होने के पश्चात भी अपना लेखन जारी रखा। वे ओड़िशा के मुख्य शासन सचिव के रूप में सेवानिवृत्त हुए। वर्ष 1977 में 'साहित्य अकादमी पुरस्कार', 1992 में 'सरस्वती सम्मान', 1990 में 'विशुभ सम्मान' और 2006 में भारत के तीसरे सर्वोच्च नागरिक सम्मान 'पद्म भूषण' से सम्मानित हुये। उनकी कई कविताओं का अंग्रेजी और अन्य भारतीय भाषाओं में अनुवाद हो चुका है।

5. प्रदीप कुमार मिश्रा

26 दिसम्बर 1958, अविभक्त पुरी (वर्तमान नयागढ़) जिले में जन्मे प्रदीप कुमार मिश्रा ओड़िआ साहित्य के विरल कथाकार हैं। प्रदीप ने पारंपरिक कथा साहित्य जगत से अलग अपनी कहानियों का संसार बसाया है। सरल, विचारशील और अपनी माटी से जुड़े प्रदीप की कहानियाँ ओड़िशा के परिवेश को परिपूर्णता के साथ चित्रित करती हैं। प्रदीप की संपूर्ण कहानियाँ 'छद्मघट' तथा 'कुहुडी खेल' में संगृहीत हैं। आपकी कहानियाँ भले ही संख्या में कम हैं, पर हर कहानी पाठकों के मानसपटल पर अंकित है। हिंदी एवं अंग्रेजी में अनूदित आपकी कहानियाँ व्यापक रूप से पढ़ी जाती हैं। राजनीति शास्त्र के अध्यापक प्रदीप ने अपने आस पास के सामान्य और सरल पात्रों को अपनी कहानियों के केंद्र में रखते हुये जो कुछ रचा है, वह लेखक के सूक्ष्म अवलोकन, मानव मन की गहरी परख और विलक्षण अभिव्यक्ति का परिचायक है। आत्मप्रेरणा को अपनी थाती मानने वाले प्रदीप अब संपूर्ण रूप से लेखन के प्रति समर्पित हैं तथा ओड़िआ साहित्य को समृद्ध कर रहे हैं।

6. सुजीत कुमार पंडा

प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन द्वारा 14 मार्च 2021, संध्या 5.30 बजे भुवनेश्वर के मेफेयर होटल में 'आखर' का सत्र आयोजित हुआ। इस सत्र में 'केंद्रीय साहित्य अकादमी' द्वारा प्रतिष्ठित 'युवा साहित्यकार पुरस्कार

: 2015' से सम्मानित युवा ओड़िआ लेखक सुजीत कुमार पंडा से युवा आलोचक चंद्रशेखर होता ने बातचीत की। अर्थशास्त्र में स्नातकोत्तर, सुजीत ओड़िशा सरकार के वित्त विभाग के तहत एक सिविल सेवक हैं। वे समकालीन ओड़िआ भाषा के एक प्रख्यात कथाकार हैं। उनकी पहली कविता 'हेतला' (2003) सामाजिक और आर्थिक व्यवस्था पर कवि के असंतोष का प्रगतिशील प्रतिबिंब प्रस्तुत करती है। इसके बाद लेखक ने खुद कविता से अपना ध्यान कथा में स्थानांतरित कर दिया। 'फरुआ' (The mystery box) नाम की लघु कहानियों का उनका पहला संग्रह 2007 में प्रकाशित हुआ। 'फरुआ' की पांडुलिपि को 'राज्य युवा कल्याण परिषद, खेल और युवा मामलों के मंत्रालय' द्वारा वर्ष 2004-05 के लिए फिक्शन के लिए 'स्टेट यूथ अवार्ड' से सम्मानित किया गया, जो बाद में ओड़िशा साहित्य अकादमी द्वारा प्रकाशित किया गया था।

2014 में उनकी लघु कहानियों का दूसरा संग्रह 'मानसांक' (The brain teaser) प्रकाशित हुआ। इस पुस्तक को 'केंद्रीय साहित्य अकादमी' द्वारा प्रतिष्ठित 'युवा साहित्यकार पुरस्कार : 2015' का सम्मान मिला। उन्हें प्रतिष्ठित 'भारतीय भाषा परिषद (कोलकाता) युवा पुरस्कार' : 2014-15 से भी सम्मानित किया गया है।

7. तरुण कांति मिश्रा

उत्कल विश्वविद्यालय से एम.ए., भारत और इंग्लैंड के ईस्ट एंग्लिया विश्वविद्यालय से मानद डी. लिट प्राप्त तरुण कांति मिश्रा 1975 में आईएस में शामिल हुए। आप मुख्य शासन सचिव, ओड़िशा सरकार के पद से सेवानिवृत्त हैं, तथा एक उत्कृष्ट नागरिक के रूप में 'थिंक ओड़िशा लीडरशिप अवार्ड' के प्राप्तकर्ता हैं।

मिश्रा की साहित्यिक प्रतिभा कम उम्र में ही खिल उठी। स्कूल के दिनों से ही आपकी लघु कथाएँ प्रकाशित हो रही हैं। आपका पहला कहानी संकलन 1968 में प्रकाशित हुआ, जबकि आप एक स्नातक छात्र थे। अब तक आपकी लगभग 300 लघु कथाएँ प्रकाशित हुई हैं। उन्होंने दंडकारण्य की पृष्ठभूमि पर एक उपन्यास भी लिखा है। आपकी लघु कथाओं के 23 संकलन प्रकाशित हैं।

उनमें से निम्नलिखित हैं: भास्वती, आकाश सेतु, बिटांसा, कोमल गंधार, अजना तिथिरा जन्हा आदि हैं।

आप केंद्रीय साहित्य अकादमी पुरस्कार (2019) एवं ओड़िशा साहित्य अकादमी पुरस्कार (1997) आदि से सम्मानित हैं। मिश्रा के लेखन का अंग्रेजी, हिंदी, बंगाली, उर्दू, तेलुगु, मलयालम, मराठी और गुजराती सहित कई भाषाओं में अनुवाद किया गया है।

प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन के सौजन्य से 'अपनी भाषा अपने लोग' की ध्वजा फहराते हुए आगे भी इसी तरह के स्तरीय साहित्यिक सत्रों का आयोजन होता रहेगा।

— Vedula Ramalakshmi

Ehsaas Woman of Bhubaneswar
(Ehsaas Women of Bhubaneswar are the Foundation's associates for Aakhar in the Odia language)

Falling in Love With Punjabi

Aakhar Punjab was initiated by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** in collaboration with Majha House, a literary and cultural forum based in Amritsar. This prestigious venture was inaugurated by Punjab's leading poet and Padma Shri awardee, Surjit Patar, on December 18, 2019. In his inaugural speech, Patar spoke about the importance of preserving Punjabi as a language, and in his conversation with Amy Singh, he discussed his art, and the themes and motifs that frequent his poetry. He also recited many of his poems showcasing his concern for the environment and Punjab. Following this inaugural session, the Majha House team have successfully organized eight **Aakhar** sessions with leading exponents of Punjabi arts, literature and theatre.

The spoken word artist, Amy Singh, was invited to another **Aakhar** session, this time to read her poems from the *The Daak* series, a set of sensitive poems talking about communal harmony and ties that bind people across borders. With her initiative, Cross Connection Poetry, she aims to bring poetry into open spaces to make it accessible to all.

Similarly, the renowned Dalit writer, Des Raj Kali, was also a guest at the **Aakhar** session in February 2020. Des Raj is the author of short story anthologies like *Kath Kali (Stories of Kali)*, *Fakiri (Mendicancy)* and *Yahan Chai Achhi Nahi Banti (Good Tea is Not Served Here)*, and novels like *Antheen (Eternal)*, *Pratham Pauran (First Puran)*, *Shanti Parav* and *Shehar Vich Sahn Honn da Matlab (What It Means to be a Bull in the Town)*. Having also written plays like *Parmeshwari (Goddess)* and *Nar Natak (The Male Play)*, his writing focuses on the Dalit consciousness, and on the everyday struggles of the common people.

When Covid-19 hit the world, and India was in the midst of a raging pandemic, the **Aakhar** series went online. One of the first speakers during this period was former IAS officer, S. Bakhtawar Singh. Being a prolific poet, Singh's Sufi lyrics have been sung by many renowned singers across the world. In the two years of the government-mandated lockdown, several other online sessions were conducted with illustrious authors and poets such as Artinder Sandhu, who, apart from having 14 books of stories and prose to her credit, is also the editor of the Punjabi literary journal, *Ekam*, and the executive member of the Punjab Sahit Academy. Gurmeet Karyalvi, whose latest novel, *O Ikki Din (Those Twenty-One Days)*,

was inspired by the Covid-19 lockdown and the isolation of patients in hospitals, was also one of the most beloved writers to be invited to the sessions.

Some of our other guests during the online **Aakhar** sessions included the senior journalist, poet and writer, Nirupama Dutt, whose biography of the Dalit writer, Bant Singh, *The Ballad of Bant Singh*, had received much acclaim, and whose published volume of poetry, *Ik Nadi Sanwali Jehi (A Stream Somewhat Dark)*, won her the Punjabi Academy Award in 2000. Our session with noted playwright, actor and theatre personality, Kewal Dhaliwal, was greatly appreciated, as, other than being a playwright, Dhaliwal is also the director and president of the Chandigarh Sangeet Natak Akademi. An alumnus of the National School of Drama, Kewal was awarded the prestigious International Ford Foundation Fellowship for his contribution to the world of theatre.

In March 2022, the Foundation asked Majha House to curate a festival of young Punjabi writers, and we did! 'Punjabi Yuva Sanmelan: Sahit Ate Sabhyachar' was held on March 23, and we could showcase the writing of the younger crop of writers in the Punjabi language. With a mix of well known and upcoming writers like Jasbir Singh, Harwinder Bhandal, Neetu Arora, Jagwinder Jodha, Simran Aks, Shivraj Ludhianvi, Sarghi, Arvinder Dhaliwal, Jatinder Haans and Jasbir Mand, the festival struck a chord with the audience and was an immediate success. Students from different universities in Amritsar were invited to read to the audience from their favourite writers' works, and S. Bakhtawar Singh was the guest of honour at the festival.

The **Aakhar** series has enjoyed great popularity, and each time we have had an audience of more than fifty engaged and rapt listeners. Buoyed by the love that the series has generated, we are now all geared up to take this series to the three other cities of Punjab: Jalandhar, Ludhiana and Chandigarh. With the plans in place, the Majha House team, with the support of the Foundation, is all set to make people fall in love with the Punjabi language all over again!

— **Preeti Gill**
Majha House

(**Aakhar** associate for the Punjabi language)
Ehsaas Woman of Amritsar





क्षेत्रीय भाषाएं युगों के अनुभव की जागृत दीपशिखाएं

जयपुर लिटरेचर फेस्टिवल की शुरुआत में अंग्रेजी भाषा का ही

प्राधान्य था। राजस्थान में साहित्य

के इतने बड़े आयोजन में स्थानीय भाषाओं को शामिल न करने का लोगों द्वारा प्रबल विरोध हुआ। जिसके कारण आयोजकों को हिन्दी भाषा को भी इसमें शामिल करना पड़ा। अभी भी एक दो सत्र में स्थानीय भाषा के साहित्यकारों को बुलाकर खानापूर्ति कर दी जाती है।

वर्ष 2016 में जयपुर लिटरेचर फेस्टिवल में ही प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन के संदीप भूतोड़िया के साथ चाय पर संवाद के दौरान स्थानीय राजस्थानी भाषा के भी इसी तरह के आयोजन की संभावना पर चर्चा हुई।

प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन द्वारा इससे पूर्व अंग्रेजी के लिए "The Write Circle" एवं हिंदी के लिए "कलम" नाम से साहित्यिक संवाद के कार्यक्रम की रचना की जा चुकी थी। इसी विमर्श में राजस्थानी भाषा के लिए "आखर" का सुयोग बना।

भाषा मनुष्य की भावना को अभिव्यक्त करने का प्रबल माध्यम है। शिशु अपनी मां के दूध के साथ ही मातृभाषा को भी ग्रहण करता है। उस भाषा के अक्षर के नाद की ध्वनि सुनते-सुनते ही वह उसे आत्मसात कर लेता है।

एक मानव समूह के सुख-दुःख, आशा-आकांक्षा, चिंता और विचारों का प्रतिफलन ही साहित्य है। साहित्य की रचना केवल आनंद के लिए ही नहीं होती, अपितु यह लोक समाज को शिक्षित और संस्कारित भी करता है।

भारत की विभिन्न क्षेत्रीय भाषाओं में राजस्थानी, ओड़िया, बांग्ला, मराठी, गुजराती, तमिल, तेलगु, कन्नड़, मलयालम, असमिया, पंजाबी, मैथिली और भोजपुरी भाषा में विपुल साहित्य रचा गया। इनमें श्रेष्ठ और महान साहित्य है तो दुःख के उद्देग और सुख के संवेग से भरा हुआ लोक साहित्य भी। क्षेत्रीय भाषाएं युगों के अनुभव की जागृत दीपशिखाएं हैं।

भारत की सभी क्षेत्रीय भाषाओं में रचा गया विपुल और श्रेष्ठ साहित्य लोक के समक्ष पुनः प्रस्थापित हो। इससे प्रेरणा लेकर वर्तमान में भी इसमें सार्थक रचनाएं पाठकों के समक्ष आएँ, क्षेत्रीय भाषाओं के लेखकों को वही सम्मान मिले जो अंग्रेजी अथवा हिंदी के साहित्यकार को मिलता है।

इसके लिए आखर भारत की लगभग सभी प्रमुख भाषाओं में विभिन्न शहरों में नियमित अंतराल पर आयोजित किया जा रहा है। इससे विभिन्न भारतीय भाषाओं में अंतः संबंध की आत्मीयता सुवासित होगी। प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की पहल पर आखर के आयोजन में श्री सीमेंट का सहयोग और विभिन्न शहरों में स्थित प्रतिष्ठित होटल के द्वारा स्थान सहभागिता गरिमा प्रदान करते हैं।

भारत माता ग्राम वासिनी हैं। भारत के गांवों में लोकभाषाएं प्रचलित हैं। ये भाषाएं जनता की मातृभाषाएं हैं। मातृभाषाएं क्षेत्रीय भाषाएं हैं। उनका आंचलिक स्वरूप सीमित परिधि में स्थिर रखता है। लोकभाषाएं लोक जीवन में अविच्छिन्न और अविभाज्य हैं। लोक जीवन से इन्हें अलग कर देना कल्पनातीत है। जिस प्रकार शिशु जन्म लेते ही मां का दूध पीना जान लेता है, उसी प्रकार मातृभाषा की ध्वनि उसके मस्तिष्क में अंकित हो जाती है।

इस देश में अनेक क्षेत्रीय भाषाएं हैं परंतु उनकी उपेक्षा हो रही है, उनको न्याय और सम्मान मिलना चाहिए। इनके साहित्यिक विकास का हमें प्रयास और स्वागत करना चाहिए।

कवीन्द्र रवीन्द्र ने कहा था -

आधुनिक भारत की संस्कृति को एक शतदल कमल की उपमा दी जा सकती है। जिसका एक-एक दल प्रांतीय भाषा और उसकी साहित्य संस्कृति है। किसी एक को मिटा देने से उस कमल की शोभा की हानि होगी। हम चाहते हैं कि भारत की सब प्रांतीय बोलियां और भाषाएं जिनसे साहित्य सृष्टि हुई है, अपने घर में रानी बनकर रहें और आधुनिक भाषाओं के हार के बीच में हिन्दी विराजती रहे।

राहुल सांकृत्यायन ने लिखा है कि जनपदीय बोलियां सजीव भाषाएं हैं, उनके बोलने वाले कर्मठ किसान मजदूर हैं, आज भी उनमें लोक साहित्य की रचना हो रही है। अतः जब हम इस अंसख्य जनता को शिक्षित करने की बात करें तब हमें यह भी सोच समझ लेना चाहिए कि इन जनपदीय भाषाओं का विकास करना है ताकि वे भविष्य में संसद में बोली जाएँ, कचहरियों में लिखी जाएँ, प्राथमिक शालाओं से लेकर विश्वविद्यालय तक में शिक्षा का माध्यम बनें। उनमें पत्र पत्रिकाएं निकलें, फिल्म तैयार हो और अपने रेडियो सेशन हो। लोकभाषाओं के उन्नयन में अन्य भाषाओं से प्रतिद्वन्द्विता नहीं है।

लोकभाषाएं हिन्दी की बोलियां ही हैं। उनके व्याकरण में एक सौन्दर्य है, एक मिठास है जो उसी के साथ फबता है।

विविध भाषाओं की ओर ध्यान आकृष्ट होना राजनीतिक नहीं अपितु सारस्वत है। आधुनिक समय में जीवित भाषाओं के अध्ययन की ओर रुचि बढ़ी है।

भाषा बहती हुई नदी है जो आवश्यकतानुसार अपने पाट को कभी चौड़ा और कभी छोटा करती है और अनेक सहायक नदियों का जल लेकर अपने गंतव्य की ओर अनुप्राणित होती है।

— Pramod Sharma

Grassroot Media Foundation

Advisor - Rajasthani Language Programmes,
Prabha Khaitan Foundation

आखर
अपनी भाषा अपने छेव

CHHATTISGARHI



‘आखर’ हमें हमारी जड़ों से जोड़ने का एक सार्थक प्रयास

धरती के विभिन्न हिस्सों में अलग-अलग बोलियों और भाषाओं के

माध्यम से आपस में संवाद किया जाता है। इन भाषाओं का आविष्कार एक सतत प्रक्रिया के तहत हुआ और प्रत्येक बोली-भाषा में दूसरी अनेक भाषाओं का प्रभाव भी देखने को मिलता है। प्राचीन समय में विश्व के अलग-अलग हिस्सों में जिन मानव सभ्यताओं ने जन्म लिया, उन सभी ने अपनी भाषाओं का आविष्कार किया। इनमें से अनेक भाषाएं और बोलियां आज भी जीवित हैं लेकिन बहुत सी भाषाएं समय के साथ लुप्त होती गईं।

संपूर्ण विश्व में व्यापार-व्यवसाय हेतु अंग्रेजी का प्रयोग अधिक होता है इसलिए आज अंग्रेजी को वैश्विक भाषा का दर्जा प्राप्त है। अपने देश भारत की बात करें, तो नौकरी से लेकर व्यवसाय तक अधिकतर जगह अंग्रेजी भाषा का उपयोग बहुत ज्यादा बढ़ चुका है। अंग्रेजी भाषा में हमारे विद्यार्थी, युवा, जनता दक्ष हों इस बात से किसी भी तरह का एतराज नहीं है। लेकिन किसी भी परिस्थिति में अपनी मातृभाषा या बोलियों से नई पीढ़ी का दूर होना सही नहीं है। अगर हम अपनी क्षेत्रीय बोलियों को आने वाली पीढ़ी से दूर करते जाएंगे तो प्राचीन अनेक भाषाओं की तरह हमारी बोलियों का भी पतन होगा और यह लुप्त हो जाएगी।

कई बार लोग हिंदी जैसी सरल भाषा के भी क्लिष्ट होने की बात कहते हैं। कोई भी भाषा क्लिष्ट या कठिन नहीं होती। अगर भाषाएं इतनी कठिन होतीं तो वो जन्म ही नहीं ले पातीं, और उनका विकास ही नहीं हो पाता। हमें जिन शब्दों का ज्ञान नहीं वो शब्द हमारे लिए कठिन हो जाते हैं, चाहे वे किसी भी भाषा या बोली में कहे-सुने जाएं। आने वाले समय में अगर बच्चों को उनकी मातृभाषा और बोलियों से परिचय नहीं करवाया गया तो उन्हें भी अपनी बोलियां कठिन लगने लगेंगी और वे इससे दूर हो जाएंगे।

प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन द्वारा आखर- हमारी भाषा, हमारे लोग एक सुंदर और सार्थक प्रयास है। इसके दूरगामी परिणाम देखने को मिलेंगे। छत्तीसगढ़ में आखर कार्यक्रम के माध्यम से यहां की बोलियों के संवर्धन और संरक्षण में महत्वपूर्ण योगदान होगा। हमें खुशी है कि अभिकल्प फाउंडेशन इस भगीरथी प्रयास में प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन के साथ सहयोगी के रूप में शामिल है।

छत्तीसगढ़ में भी छत्तीसगढ़ी भाषा के साथ ही अनेक बोलियां बोली जाती हैं जैसे- हल्बी, गोंडी, भतरी, सदरी, उंराव-कुडुक, पंडो, दोरला, दंडामी, भुंजिया, सरगुजिया, बिरहोर, सौता, खड़िया इत्यादि। इनके अलावा और भी बोलियां हैं, जो कि हमारे प्रदेश के विभिन्न अंचलों में विभिन्न समुदायों के बीच प्रचलित हैं। इनमें से कुछ बोलियां कम कही-सुनी जा रही हैं क्योंकि बहुत से लोग अपनी मूल-मातृभाषा या बोली से दूर होते जा रहे हैं, या फिर उनके

समाज में अन्य भाषाओं का दखल बढ़ता गया और लोग अपनी जड़ों से दूर होते चले गए। छत्तीसगढ़ की अनेक बोलियां ऐसी हैं जिन्हें सिर्फ पुराने बुजुर्ग ही कहते-सुनते हैं, जबकि नई पीढ़ी ने हिंदी और अंग्रेजी की तरफ अपना रुख कर लिया है।

इन सभी बोलियों में साहित्य का सृजन हुआ है, और बहुत ही सुंदर सृजन हुआ है। उन साहित्यिक रचनाओं को आज की पीढ़ी के सामने लाना होगा। जिससे कि वो ये देख पाएं कि सुंदर कविता, कहानी, उपन्यास या कथा लिखना किसी भाषा विशेष का अधिकार नहीं है। छत्तीसगढ़ में कालिदास की अद्भुत रचना मेघदूत का छत्तीसगढ़ी में अनुवाद मुकुटधर पांडे ने किया। उनकी यह रचना सिर्फ एक भाषाई अनुवाद न होकर अपने आप में संपूर्ण ग्रंथ है। छत्तीसगढ़ी में अनुवाद करते हुए उन्होंने मूल रचना की आत्मा को जीवित रखा और छत्तीसगढ़ी भाषा की सुंदरता के साथ उसे आत्मसात किया। अब इस महान रचना के बारे में हमारे युवाओं को जानकारी न हो तो यह रचना लोगों के बीच से विस्मृत हो जाएगी।

ऐसी ही अनेक सुंदर साहित्यिक रचनाएं लिखी गई हैं यहां की विभिन्न बोलियों और भाषाओं में, जिसे सामने लाना, उन पर चर्चा करना बहुत ही आवश्यक है। किसी भी परंपरा को जीवित रखने का काम लोक का होता है। लोक के बीच से जो भी वस्तु या परंपरा दूर होगी, वह अंततः लुप्त हो जाएगी। ऐसा अतीत में हुआ भी है। अधिकतर लोग इन्हें बचाने के लिए हमेशा सरकारों के द्वारा किसी योजना या पहल करने की दुहाई देते हैं। जो कि गलत नहीं है, लेकिन मेरा मानना है कि लोक की चीजों को सहेजने में लोगों को स्वयं आगे आना चाहिए, और आखर इसका सबसे सुंदर उदाहरण है।

एक ऐसा प्रयास जिसमें हमारी पुरानी बोलियों को सहेजा जा रहा है, नई पीढ़ी को अपनी जड़ों से जोड़ा जा रहा है, अपनी बोली-भाषा में रचनाओं को तैयार करने का अवसर प्रदान किया जा रहा है, यह सब बहुत ही सुंदर और सार्थक कार्य है। लोक-भाषाएं जिंदा रहती हैं तो उनके मुहावरे, लोकोक्तियां, गीत, कविताएं, कहानियां, संस्कृति, परंपराएं सब जीवित रहती हैं।

मैं आखर की संकल्पना और इसके कार्यान्वयन के लिए प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन को साधुवाद देता हूं। मुझे विश्वास है कि आने वाले समय में आखर छत्तीसगढ़ की बोली-भाषा को सहेजने के साथ ही नई रचनाओं के लिए एक नई उम्मीद बनकर उभरेगा।

— Gaurav Giriya Shukla

Abhikalp Foundation

(Aakhar associate for the Chhattisgarhi language)



Priya Hajela



Writing To Leave Behind a Legacy



Aanchal Gupta

"My mother was bi-polar. I wanted to understand her life since we had a distant relationship." These were the words of Priya Hajela as she introduced her book, *Ladies' Tailor*. Hajela, a fiction writer who holds an MBA degree from Vanderbilt University, is known for her short stories such as *An Affair*, *The Tattoo Artist* and *Daughters' Revenge*. *Ladies' Tailor* is her first novel. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** organised a special session of **The Write Circle** with Hajela. The session was moderated by Aanchal Gupta, a digital marketing professional and a social media marketing and content manager who loves writing, travelling and yoga. The event saw Hajela talk about her book and her future plans as an author.

"*Ladies' Tailor* is a story of overcoming odds," said Hajela. "It is set in the Partition era, as I wanted to learn more about those times and understand how manic depression affected people back then and how they managed it. I accessed archives that had records of people migrating via land and the sea, all of whom were

uprooted from their homes. I especially wanted to learn more about Punjab during that time."

Gupta was curious to know why Hajela chose fashion as a subject for a story set in that troubled time. "It's because I wanted to be like [my character] Noor, who is strong, feisty and loves *khadi*," said Hajela. "In fact, the story establishes Noor's love for *khadi*!" Hajela spent an astonishing 22 years in the corporate field before switching careers to become a writer. She considers a literary pilgrimage to Goa, since the author, Amitav Ghosh, lives there. "I am a big fan of Ghosh's work," said Hajela. "I keep hoping to run into him but I still do not know what I'm going to say if I do!" The author reflected further on the positive effect that a corporate lifestyle has had on her writing. "My corporate life taught me to be structured and disciplined. This continued when I switched careers. I am a disciplined writer and have my own space to think and write. Getting published is great not because of the reviews or the followers, but because I get to leave behind a legacy."

My corporate life taught me to be structured and disciplined. This continued when I switched careers. I am a disciplined writer and have my own space to think and write. Getting published is great not because of the reviews or the followers, but because I get to leave behind a legacy

Hajela's next projects are a book about four generations from Punjab and a story on a financial scam. Before

concluding the session, she was happy to interact with the audience and talk about the Sikh people, the prevalence of *khadi* in Indian society and, of course, her admiration for Amitav Ghosh!



Mita Kapur



Narendra Singh

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

Paying Homage to an Evergreen Woman



Usha Uthup



Srishti Jha

As part of a series of new beginnings, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** put its imprint on Coimbatore by organising its first-ever book launch in the city under its **Kitaab** initiative. The event saw the unveiling of the translated biography of the legendary Indian pop singer, Usha Uthup. Initially written in Hindi by Vikas Kumar Jha and titled *Ullas Ki Naav*, the biography has been translated into English by Jha's own daughter, Srishti Jha, and titled *The Queen of Indian Pop: The Authorised Biography of Usha Uthup*.

For the first event of the Foundation's Coimbatore chapter, Anindita Chatterjee, the Executive Trustee of the Foundation, delivered the introductory note; Poonam Bafna, **Ehsaas** Woman of Coimbatore, moderated the event and helmed the conversation with the eminent

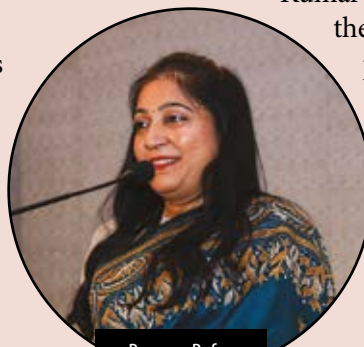


Anindita Chatterjee

singer and the translator. With a career spanning over 50 years, Usha Uthup's musical talent has mesmerised fans across generations. Etched into the minds of music aficionados are her evergreen hits such as 'Darling', 'Rambha Ho' and the iconic song 'Hare Rama Hare Krishna' from Dev Anand's eponymous film.

So what led to her Hindi biography? "I do not believe in coincidences; everything happens in a planned way," said Uthup. "My meeting with Vikas Kumar Jha, this talented writer from Bihar, was the kind of affair where everything fell into place like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle."

Elaborating further, she added that the daughter of one of the people in Vikas Kumar Jha's book *McCluskieganj* happened to be friends with the singer's daughter; this acted as an impetus to the creation of the book. Praising Vikas Kumar Jha's literary



Poonam Bafna

“

I grew up with the immense level of affection that my father, Vikas Kumar Jha, had for Usha Uthup as an icon and as a person. When I was a child, and my father used to read out the chapters, I felt that I had a celestial connection with the woman in the book. Her biography is the extraordinary tale of a personality who always insists that she is ordinary”

— Srishti Jha

”

abilities and his photographic memory, Uthup proudly asserted that *Ullas ki Naav* shattered stereotypes by being the first-ever biography of a pop artist to be written in Hindi.

As for Srishti Jha, being Vikas Kumar Jha's daughter inspired her admiration for Uthup, which ultimately drove her to translate the book into English. “I grew up with the immense level of affection that my father had for [Uthup] as an icon and as a person,” she explained. “When I was a child, and my father used to read out the chapters, I felt that I had a celestial connection with the woman in the book. Her biography is the extraordinary tale of a personality who always insists that she is ordinary.”

When asked about her signature style, Uthup remarked, “Wearing a saree was never a marketing strategy. In South India there was an immediate acceptance about the way I looked and what I sang.” Even though there were predefined ideas about singers who performed at nightclubs, her talent spoke for itself and the naysayers soon became passive bystanders to her meteoric rise as a pop icon in India. She was also widely accepted by the audience in Bengal and her rendition of Tagore's “*Purano Sei Diner Kotha*” was well received, despite her legal tussle with the state government. “Music is purity and the song is always bigger than the artist,” said Uthup.



Erine Louis



Anusha Ravi



Kamal Haasan's virtual speech for the event

Speaking about the book, Srishti Jha admitted that she did not have a target audience in mind while writing the book. “The idea was to reconnect the audience with [Uthup's] vibe and to keep the essence of the original book alive so as to adequately pay homage to Usha Uthup both as the woman and as the artist,” she said. For the singer, too, the purpose of the book was “for people to know where it all started.” Srishti also read an excerpt from the chapter ‘Never Know How Much I Love You’ during the session. It kept the audience riveted.

The event drew to a close with a Q&A session with the audience, which allowed them to interact closely with the legendary personality, who loves to call herself a true ‘*Bharatbasi*’. Erine Louis, the General Manager, Welcomhotel by ITC, delivered the formal vote of thanks while Geetha Padmanabhan (Secretary of GRD Institutions) felicitated Uthup, and Anusha Ravi (CEO of Park Group of Institutions) felicitated Srishti Jha on behalf of the Foundation.

Kitaab Coimbatore was presented by Shree Cement Ltd in association with Welcomhotel by ITC and with the support of **Ehsaas Women of Coimbatore**



The audience at the event

Voices From The City

Dedicated to the promotion of art and culture, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** took its activities to the charming city of Coimbatore. The **Ehsaas Women** who are integral to the Foundation, were at the forefront of executing the launch. Here's what they had to say.



As the old adage goes, “well begun is half done”. The spectacular launch of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation's** activities in Coimbatore with legendary singer Usha Uthup cemented our organisation's presence in this beautiful valley city. Words of appreciation for the event

poured in from a veritable list of homegrown celebrities, including top-ranking officers from the Indian Army and Navy, and other business magnates. These truly made us feel like we have made a mark on the cultural hub of the city.

The presence of the heads of several major educational institutions, such as Geetha Padmanabhan (Secretary, GRD Institutions) and Anusha Ravi (CEO, Park Group of Institutions), and several other literary enthusiasts added a special touch to the event, as did Erine Louis, General Manager of ITC Welcomhotel, who hosted the event. The highlight of the event was a special message from veteran actor Kamal Hassan, who conveyed his best wishes.

The city of Coimbatore, with its eclectic mix of residents and their fondness for the performing arts, was thrilled with the addition of the Foundation's activities to its cultural ambience. Moreover, the interaction with a bonafide celebrity like Usha Uthup — the 74-year-old, inimitable vocalist who has been singing for 53 years in 17 languages — and hearing the tales of her journey as a ‘people's singer’ left us enthralled and excited to read her upcoming biography *The Queen of Indian Pop*. The book is authored by Shrishti Jha, who also shared her insights and experiences with us. The audience loved the humour and honesty of the entire interaction.

The true ethos of the Foundation came alive in Coimbatore, which boasts of several connoisseurs of art who are always eager for more such events. The seamless organisation of the event by ITC Hotels and their constant support as our hospitality partner made it a cakewalk and an occasion of absolute euphoria for all of us. It was truly an exciting beginning, and we are eager for more amazing things to come in the days ahead.

— **Poonam Bafna**
Ehsaas Woman of Coimbatore



The launch of the biography of Usha Uthup — a person who has earned the love and admiration of people across generations and who has been a representative of India's diverse heritage and culture — as the first-ever event organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** in

Coimbatore was as enthralling as it was

fitting. Uthup, in her signature way, is an embodiment of the values and vision of the Foundation, which continually pushes ahead in its mission to promote the performing arts, culture, education, literature, gender equality and women's empowerment. Coimbatore has a discerning community, one which is thoughtful in its associations, and it has been a matter of pride for my

fellow **Ehsaas** Woman, Poonam Bafna, and me to have been the representatives of an organisation as prestigious and empowering as the Foundation.

The event and the ensuing interaction drew a crowd, and everyone thoroughly enjoyed the conversations, the singing and the infectious spirit of Uthup. It also showcased the Foundation's ethos, setting the tone for its activities in the future. We have received amazing feedback and requests for information on the upcoming lineup of events. Not only the people of the city but also the **Ehsaas** Women of Coimbatore are eagerly awaiting the next set of enriching events to be held here in association with the Foundation.

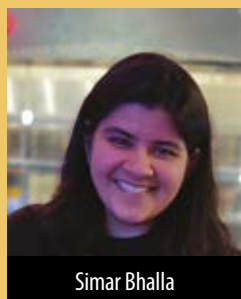
— **Roopa Mohandas**
Ehsaas Woman of Coimbatore



Daisy: The Rescue Pup



Daisy



Simar Bhalla

Daisy's Story

Daisy was only a couple of days old when the guards of my office building rescued her. Initially everything was alright, until, one day, it wasn't. There were a few people in the office building complex who had a problem with

Daisy being around, as she was kept tied and fed from time to time. Daisy was fed, loved and cared for by many people in the building, and would often be seen playing with someone or the other. She was given her vaccines regularly and bathed as well. She truly has a wonderful soul.

But my friend and I decided that Daisy deserved more than this — she needed a loving home. So we circulated her story day and night, hoping someone would reach out. In the meantime, we needed another alternative, and had to place her in a pet boarding facility for her to be safe from the toxic environment of the office complex. At the boarding facility, she thrived. She used to be a dog who wouldn't get along with any dogs; however, within two weeks of staying at the boarding house and subsequently

being spayed, she made tonnes of new friends!

For Daisy to be able to stay at the boarding facility till we found a potential adopter for her was difficult, but **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, with its **Karuna** initiative, came to our rescue. It helped us in a critical time of need. I will forever be grateful to the Foundation for its efforts.



All dogs, no matter what their breed is, deserve a chance at love and a family



Daisy's Adoption

Daisy has found her forever human, and is happy and settled with her new family. I am glad to be able to finally write this as a successful adoption story, because, at one point, it didn't look like we would find a family for Daisy. I have not seen her so happy with a human, despite everything she has gone through.

All dogs, no matter what their breed is, deserve a chance at love and a family.

— Simar Bhalla

Editor's Note: More kind-hearted and animal-loving individuals like Simar Bhalla are needed in our country, and in the world.

The Diamond Comes Home

Priti Rathi Gupta needs no introduction, having made India proud not just with her contributions to women's economic uplift but also with her success on the global stage. Gupta is the founder of a women-first financial platform that focuses on reducing the gender-based economic disparity in India. Started in 2020, the fintech startup has inspired over 1,00,000 women to start building their financial acumen and make their small savings grow. That is not all; Gupta then went on to be recognised as the only woman icon from India as part of the Platinum Jubilee Pageant of Queen Elizabeth II. **Ehsaas Women of Prabha Khaitan Foundation** hosted a meet-and-greet event in honour of Gupta at the ITC Royal Bengal in Kolkata. Here are a few glimpses from the evening.

Priti Rathi Gupta holds the decorative plate she was felicitated with. It was designed by the Foundation's in-house artist, Sudipta Kundu, and bears the inscription *Apni Bhasha Apne Log*



Rowan Ainsworth



Madhu Neotia



Yemi Odanye



Esha Dutta, Shefali Rawat Agarwal and Malika Varma



Nayantara Pal Choudhuri and Tanusree Shankar



Sunira Chamaria



Mohua Chatterjee and Sangeet Kothari



Priti Rathi Gupta and Nidhi Jalan



Mansi Agarwal, Shraddha Saraf and Kavita Agarwal



Mayanka Singhal



Shabana Azmi

Javed Akhtar

An Evening Full of Poetry

It was an evening worth remembering as **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** collaborated with Baithak UK to host a special session of **Ek Mulakat** at St James' Court, A Taj Hotel, London. As one of the Foundation's most dynamic boutique initiatives, **Ek Mulakat** allows the Foundation's patrons a glimpse into the lives of stalwarts from different walks of life. The guests for the session were the renowned poet-lyricist, Javed Akhtar, and the iconic actor, Shabana Azmi. The audience were enthralled as Akhtar's Urdu poems were read out in English, French, Italian and Bengali.

Sangeeta Datta, from Baithak UK, a not-for-profit cross-art organisation that celebrates the performing arts, literature and cinema from South Asia and offers a platform for dialogue, debate and collaborations, delivered the formal welcome address, while



Sangeeta Datta

Mehrnavaz Avari, Area Director UK and General Manager, St James' Court, also addressed the audience. Present in the audience, all the way from India, were **Ehsaas** Women of Delhi, Archana Dalmia and Neelima Dalmia Adhar, and **Ehsaas** Woman of Jalandhar, Ruhi Walia Syal. In the course of the gathering, Dalmia and Syal also greeted Akhtar and Azmi with *kantha uttoriyas* brought all the way from India.

The event began with the launch of a video from Baithak UK entitled *Megha*. It was a soulful translation by Akhtar of Rabindranath Tagore's *Megher Pore Megh Jomechhe*, sung by Datta, and it featured the Kathak artist Shivani Bhandari, who was also present at the session. The video also featured Murad Ali Khan and Rekesh Chauhan on the sarangi and piano respectively.

The conversation began with the lyricist reciting some of his poems, such as *Mera Aangan Mera Ped*,

Dushwari and *Uljhan*, the translated versions of which — entitled *My Courtyard*, *My Tree*, *Dilemma* and *Perplexity* respectively — were read out by Azmi. “Translating poetry is like pouring perfume from one bottle into the other; some of the fragrance is bound to be lost,” said Azmi, before reading out the translations. “But, in this way, the works are at least made accessible.”

Akhtar then recited *Yeh Khel Kya Hai?*, a poem that revolves around the game of chess, and posits it as a metaphor for life. The translation, *What Is This Game?*, was then recited by Azmi. After the recitations of the first four poems (both in Urdu and English), the session moved forward with the reading of Akhtar’s poems, which were to be followed by readings of translated versions in English, French, Italian or Bengali.

Woh Kamra Yaad Aata Hai was the title of the poem that started the three-in-one readings. French writer Anne Chataigne read out the translated version of the poem in French, and Azmi recited the English version, titled *I Remember the Room*. The second poem, *Mele*, was recited by Akhtar, and was followed by the Italian rendition by actor Valentina Marciano and the English translation, *Fairs*, by Azmi.

Before reciting *Teardrop*, the English translation of Akhtar’s *Aansoo*, which has also been translated in Bengali as *Chokher Jol* by the poet Srijato, Azmi remarked that this poem was her absolute favourite because of its sensitivity. “As an actor, I feel artists all over the world depend heavily on emotional memory,” said Azmi. “That is why this poem resonates with me.”

The first long poem, *Humsafar*, centred on migrants. Hence, Azmi dedicated the recitation to renowned journalist Barkha Dutt, who was present among the audience. Dutt had

I had the advantage of drawing inspiration from the last seven generations of my family. They were poets whose works are mentioned in any Urdu poetry anthology. Besides, I was born in a family where poetry was revered. I was taught that it was glamorous to be a poet. By the time I was 10 or 12, I remembered hundreds of couplets by heart. By the time I was 16, I remembered over a lakh

— Javed Akhtar

summed up the essence of the mesmerising recitations in multiple languages.

So how did poetry happen to Akhtar? “I had the advantage of drawing inspiration from the last seven generations of my family,” he said. “They were poets whose works are mentioned in any Urdu poetry anthology. Besides, I was born in a family where poetry was revered. I was taught that it was glamorous to be a poet. By the time I was 10 or 12, I remembered hundreds of couplets by heart. By the time I was 16, I remembered over a lakh.”

Akhtar went on to add that being born into a family of poets helped him develop his sense of rhythm and understand the weight of poetry. There are certain words that involve the tongue touching the palate, while others don’t involve any contact with the palate,” he said, while commenting on poetic techniques.

“These words are pronounced through the control of your breath, such as ‘ehsaas’ and ‘mehsoos’. Phrases like ‘taal dena’ or ‘toota huya’ hit the palate. Balancing these words happens subconsciously, more so when you are trained in poetry and you read the masters. Balance comes gradually, as a reflex.”

What about his writing process? “Most of the time, my poem is in my mind,” said Akhtar. “I keep on

Because my father was a member of the Communist Party, until the age of nine I lived in a commune where eight families co-existed in a single room. I used to see my father sitting at a desk and writing. He never went to the office, and I was told he is a poet. So I thought that a poet was some sort of euphemism for somebody who did no work!

— Shabana Azmi



Ruhi Walia Syal



Archana Dalmia and Neelima Dalmia Adhar

improvising, as I try to write the poem from an angle which has not yet been tackled in Urdu. I believe the idea should be new. I allow the germ of an idea to grow in my mind”

For Azmi, however, the initial experience with poetry was different. “Because my father was a member of the Communist Party, until the age of nine I lived in a commune where eight families co-existed in a single room,” she revealed. “I used to see my father sitting at a desk and writing. He never went to the office, and I was told he is a poet. So I thought that a poet was some sort of euphemism for somebody who did no work!”

In response to Azmi’s question about whether poets can bring about revolutions, Akhtar had an interesting response. “No poem in the world has brought about a revolution, but it can be a symbol for the revolution,” he said. “The poet or artist can give that intangible feeling a face, a voice, a shape. I don’t think that a poem can change the history of the world, but it can be the anthem of a procession to bring about social change.”

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— Javed Akhtar

”

AUDIENCE COMMENTS:

“I was in awe of Javed Akhtar’s ability to recite such intense, poignant poetry by heart. The luxurious and spacious ballroom at the St. James’ Court in London provided the perfect backdrop for complementing his artistic talent. *Mele*, in particular, was a testament to his profound analysis of the complexities of the human condition.”

— Bindia Malhotra Ram

“The evening was truly soulful. I remember buying a copy of Javed Akhtar’s *Tarkash* in the mid-1990s, when I lived in Bombay. One of my favourite poems in it was *Waqt*, which, to my delight, Javed Saab recited, while the inimitable Shabana Azmi read the English translations of his poems. It was mesmerising to watch them both perform. There were also Bengali translations of Javed Saab’s poetry read by Sangeeta Datta, as well as French and Italian translations read by Ann Chataigne and Valentina Marciano. It was beyond beautiful to see poetry cross borders, even more so in these times of increasing insularity.”

— Nayanika Mahtani

Lightening up the conversation with a snippet from their lives, Azmi shared that despite having written the lyrics for chart-topping romantic hits such as *Ek Ladki Ko Dekha Toh Aisa Laga*, Akhtar “does not have a single romantic bone in his body.” When the conversation moved to the Q&A session with the audience, the first question was asked by none other than Dutt, who was curious to know the most serious point of difference or disagreement between Akhtar and Azmi, who have been married for 37 years. “We do not have disagreements; rather, we agree on most things,” responded Azmi. “When people meet me separately, they say that I am echoing my husband’s words!” Akhtar had the audience in splits when he said, “When your wife loses her keys every second day, that can be a serious issue.”

Sharing his thoughts on hope, Akhtar said, “There is no scope for pessimism. Things will keep on changing with time, society will evolve, and life is worth living only if you have some *ishq*. Writing is easy when you have many words at your disposal or a repertoire of phrases, but the idea is difficult.”

The session drew to a close with Akhtar reciting a poem written for his beloved wife. Datta delivered the formal vote of thanks on behalf of the Foundation and Baithak UK.

“

There is no scope for pessimism. Things will keep on changing with time, society will evolve, and life is worth living only if you have some *ishq*. Writing is easy when you have many words at your disposal or a repertoire of phrases, but the idea is difficult

— Javed Akhtar

”

Ek Mulakat London was in association with Baithak UK, Taj 51 Buckingham Gate and St. James' Court, London



Mehrnavaz Avari



Amish Tripathi



Rachel Dwyer



Anne Chataigne and Valentina Marciano



Onir

Author, Filmmaker, Gay and Proud: The Rebel Named Onir



Sandip Roy

Onir is an Indian filmmaker, screenwriter, editor and producer. Some of his critically acclaimed works include his debut film *My Brother... Nikhil*, *Bas Ek Pal* and *I Am*. Onir came into the limelight right after *My Brother... Nikhil*, as the film dealt with the stigma attached to AIDS and showed how the Goan government treated HIV-positive patients in the 1980s. The award-winning *I Am*, which is reportedly the first film in South Asia to have been crowd-funded through social media, deals with child abuse, LGBTQ rights and single motherhood. Onir is also a columnist for *The Hindu* and has written for the *New York Times*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *The Times of India* and the BBC. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** hosted a special literary session of **An Author's Afternoon** with Onir to learn more about his book, *I am Onir and I am Gay*. Esha Dutta, **Ehsaas** Woman of Kolkata, introduced the guest and the moderator, author Sandip Roy.

Roy was eager to know about Onir's early days in Kolkata. "Since I hail from a small town, coming to Kolkata constituted a big change," said Onir. "The first two years were quite difficult. The culture was different from what I had seen growing up, especially when it came to how women were treated. I had to

deal with men who would harass my sister on the streets. And since I had come from Bhutan, the city air turned my eyes red. This was the reason why people often mistakenly thought that I was on drugs! I had to change about 13 paying accommodations and hostels. But things changed when I joined Jadavpur University. There, my professors and friends helped me settle down. That university changed my life."

Onir told Roy that he believes in fluid sexuality. "You can connect with people irrespective of their gender," he said. "That's when I realised that I was also attracted to guys. But I did not explore this at the time, as I was too occupied with cinema, literature and having a great time with my friends. My dream was to become a filmmaker." "So, when did you realise you wanted to become a filmmaker?" asked Roy. "It started with a Shyam Benegal movie that I watched when I was in Class 8," replied Onir. "At that age, it was not the technicalities but the visuals that moved me. Then, thanks to my sister, who took me to film screenings, I was exposed to works like *Charulata* and *The French*



Anupama Saxena



Arnab Chatterjee



Shayan Munshi and Lana Munshi

Lieutenant's Woman. Once I was absolutely sure where I wanted to be, all my decisions and steps were to reach that goal.”

Roy asked Onir when he realised that he was gay, and how things changed around him. “It didn’t happen one fine day,” mused Onir. “I was doing the usual things, hanging out at bars, escaping the police raiding gay bars and telling these thrilling stories to my friends. People close to me always accepted me the way I am, and I was always true to them. But at the workplace, it was a little different. I remember a time when we were on location; one evening we all sat together talking. Everyone was revealing whom they had a crush on; when my turn came, they skipped to the next person as though I didn’t exist and my love life didn’t matter. I realised that day that I may be comfortable with who I am, but others are not.”

Roy steered the conversation towards Onir’s book, which contains significant passages about his sister. “I told my sister

to not get shocked and not to judge me — and she didn’t,” said Onir. “We have been each other’s support systems, so even if she learns something new about me she will stick by my side.” Apart from chronicling

his journey, does the book also reveal how his perception about relationships has changed? “While writing the book, I realised that I had let go of the negatives and cherished the beauty of every relationship I have had,” said the filmmaker. “So while my perception about relationships hasn’t really changed, I no longer worry about where a relationship will take me.”

Before the session concluded, Onir spoke to the audience about social issues and films. Arnab Chatterjee, the General Manager of Taj Bengal, delivered the closing speech before Shayan Munshi and Anupama Saxena handed out mementos to the guests.

An Author’s Afternoon was presented by Shree Cement Ltd in association with Taj Bengal Kolkata and The Telegraph Online—My Kolkata

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The audience at the event



Kshama Sharma



जीवन के अधिकार की बातें हों विकास के केंद्र में: क्षमा शर्मा



Poonam Anand

समन्वय और संवाद से ही हर समस्या का हल निकल सकता है। मेरा मानना है कि समाज के विकास में सभी की भूमिका है।" यह कहना है लेखक, संपादक क्षमा शर्मा का, जो प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की ओर से आयोजित कलम पटना में बतौर अतिथि वक्ता अपने विचार व्यक्त कर रही थीं। अहसास वूमेन पटना अन्विता प्रधान ने शर्मा का विस्तार से परिचय और धन्यवाद दिया। उन्होंने बताया कि लेखक, अनुवादक, संपादक शर्मा हिंदी से स्नातकोत्तर हैं। आपने पत्रकारिता में डिप्लोमा, साहित्य और पत्रकारिता में पीएच.डी. की डिग्री हासिल की है और प्रचुर लेखन किया है। आपकी कई दर्जन पुस्तकें प्रकाशित हैं, जिनमें कहानी-संग्रह, उपन्यास, स्त्री-विमर्श, पत्रकारिता, बाल साहित्य के अलावा संपादन और पटकथा लेखन भी शामिल है। आप कई महिला संगठनों और पत्रकार यूनियन से भी जुड़ी रही हैं। लगभग 37 वर्षों तक हिन्दुस्तान टाइम्स की बाल पत्रिका 'नन्दन' से सम्बद्ध रहने और कार्यकारी संपादक के पद से सेवानिवृत्ति के बाद आप पूरी तरह स्वतंत्र लेखन कर रही हैं। आपकी चर्चित प्रकाशित पुस्तकों में काला कानून, कस्बे की लड़की, घर-घर तथा अन्य कहानियाँ, थैक्यू स्ट्राम हुसैन, लव स्टोरीज, इक्कीसवीं सदी का लड़का, नेम गेट, रास्ता छोड़ो डार्लिंग, लड़की जो देखती पलटकर और बात अभी खत्म नहीं हुई शामिल है। आपकी 'परांठा ब्रेकअप' हाल ही में प्रकाशित हुई है। आप भारतेन्दु हरिश्चन्द्र पुरस्कार और हिन्दी अकादमी, दिल्ली द्वारा तीन बार और कई अन्य पुरस्कारों से भी सम्मानित हैं। शर्मा से आगे के संवाद के लिए प्रधान ने अहसास वूमेन पटना सुश्री पूनम आनंद को आमंत्रित किया।

शर्मा ने सबसे पहले पटना से अपने दिली जुड़ाव के क्रम को याद किया, जिसमें फाउंडेशन के अलावा रत्नेश्वर सिंह का बुलावा, उनका बचपन, पिताजी, लीची, भाई, जेपी आंदोलन, दिनकर जी, लालू जी और बहू की ननिहाल के साथ ही उषाकिरण खान के साथ सारिका के एक ही अंक में अपनी रचनाओं का प्रकाशन शामिल था। आनंद ने शर्मा से पूछा कि आपकी पहली रचना कौन सी थी, और लिखने की पहली प्रेरणा किससे मिली? शर्मा ने कहा कि पहली रचना बहुत दिलचस्प है, पर वह कहानी नहीं है। यह 1975 की बात है। अंतर्राष्ट्रीय महिला वर्ष के बारे में डायरी से पन्ना फाड़ा और

एक लेख लिखा। किसी तरह से ढूँढ़ कर अमर उजाला अखबार का पता निकालकर उन्हें भेज दिया। यह छप गया था। उस समय दस रुपए मिले थे। वहां से लिखने की शुरुआत हुई। उस लेख का एक अंश यह था कि लोग यह क्यों सोचते हैं कि महिलाएं हमेशा रोती कूढ़ती रहेंगी। उसका शीर्षक था अंतर्राष्ट्रीय महिला वर्ष एक और विकल्प।

आनंद ने अगला सवाल 'परांठा ब्रेकअप' के बारे में पूछा। शर्मा ने कहा कि मैं बीस-तीस की उम्र में उग्र नारीवादी हुआ करती थी। तब मैं हर चीज का जिम्मेदार आधी आबादी के दूसरे पक्ष को मानती थी। पर अब मुझे लगता है कि संवाद सबसे जरूरी है। जिन्हें सताया गया है उन्हें न्याय मिलना चाहिए, चाहे

वह स्त्री हो या पुरुष। आज जीवन के अधिकार की बातें होनी चाहिए। किसी का भी जीवन हो सकता है, स्त्री का, पुरुष का, बच्चों का, बुजुर्गों का, नदियों और वृक्षों का भी। आज हम जिसे विकास कहते हैं उसका हाल क्या है? उसके चलते नदियों का क्या हुआ? ग्लोबल वार्मिंग का क्या हाल है। अपने को विकसित कहने वाले देश, अमेरिका जैसे देश क्या कर रहे हैं। इसके लिए हमें संवाद चाहिए।



Anvita Pradhan



Usha Kiran Khan



Justice Mihir Jha

शर्मा ने अपने जन्म से जुड़ी घटना भी सुनाई कि कैसे उनका जन्म अस्पताल में हुआ और वे बदल गई थीं। उन्होंने मां से जुड़ी याद को शेयर करते हुए कहा कि मेरी मां ने मुझे खाना पकाना भी नहीं सिखाया था कि यह सोचकर कि मेरी बेटी यहां भी खाना पकायेगी और वहां भी पकायेगी। शर्मा ने खाना बनाने से जुड़ी यादों को शेयर करते हुए कहा कि मुझे जिंदगी में बहुत अच्छे पुरुष मिले। उन्होंने इस क्रम में शादी से पहले अपने बड़े भाई द्वारा पढ़ने और लिखने के लिए प्रेरित करने और शादी के बाद पति द्वारा लेखन और मनमुताबिक काम करने देने के प्रोत्साहन का उल्लेख किया। परिवार से जुड़े एक सवाल के उत्तर में शर्मा ने कहा कि हेल्प एज की रिपोर्ट को देखें या ओल्ड एज होम की बात करें यह सवाल मन में उठता है कि जिन मां-पिता ने हमें जन्म दिया, उनके प्रति हम विरक्त कैसे हो सकते हैं। कई बार स्त्रियां अपनी बातचीत में कहती हैं कि इससे तो अच्छा है कि लड़कियां ही हों। कोई इसमें महानगर को दोष देता है, तो कोई इसके पीछे पूंजीवाद को दोष देता है। आज संयुक्त परिवार टूट रहे हैं। आज देश में दस करोड़ से अधिक बूढ़े हैं। 'अगले जन्म मोहे लड़का न दीजें' की सोच के पीछे यही वजह है। शर्मा ने युवाओं को बदलाव का वाहक बताते हुए कहा कि उनका मार्गदर्शन जरूरी है। उन्होंने शिक्षा के निजीकरण, बाजारवाद, पूंजी के एकतरफा विकास, उदारीकरण के बीच युवाओं के लिए रोजगार के अवसरों के साथ ही दोस्त और दोस्ती पर अपने विचार रखे।

शर्मा ने 'नंदन' में नौकरी के अपने अनुभव, अपनी लेखन प्रक्रिया, बाल साहित्य से लगाव, पेशेवर आवश्यकता आदि से जुड़ी यादें साझा की। शर्मा ने शायदियों के बाजार को खत्म करने की बात कही और सवाल-जवाब सत्र में दर्शकों के सवालों के उत्तर दिए। शर्मा ने बच्चों को प्राथमिकता दिए जाने पर बल दिया। पद्मश्री से सम्मानित लेखिका उषा किरण खान ने स्मृति चिन्ह प्रदान कर अतिथि वक्ता का अभिनंदन किया।

अहसास वूमेन के सौजन्य से आयोजित कलम पटना के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट। हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर होटल चाणक्य, मीडिया पार्टनर दैनिक जागरण और नवरस स्कूल ऑफ परफॉर्मिंग आर्ट्स का सहयोग मिला।



The audience



Ajit Pradhan



‘राज कपूर: द मास्टर एट वर्क’ उनके काम पर लिखी गई एकलौती पुस्तक: राहुल रवैल



Rahul Rawail

हमेशा वही करो जो तुम्हारा दिल मानता है। यह राजकपूर से मुझे मिली सबसे बड़ी सीख है।” कलम जोधपुर में यह कहना है निर्देशक, लेखक राहुल रवैल का। सुषमा नीरज सेठिया ने अपनी सहयोगियों प्रीति मेहता और शैलजा सिंह के उल्लेख के साथ फाउंडेशन और अहसास वूमेन की ओर से अतिथियों का स्वागत और धन्यवाद किया। उन्होंने देश और दुनिया भर में संचालित फाउंडेशन की विविध गतिविधियों के साथ ‘कलम, अपनी भाषा अपने लोग’ की संक्षिप्त चर्चा की और अतिथि वक्ता बॉलीवुड के निर्देशक, संपादक रवैल का विस्तार से परिचय दिया। उन्होंने बताया कि रवैल ने प्रख्यात निर्माता, निर्देशक राज कपूर के सहयोगी के रूप में अपना करियर शुरू किया। ‘लव स्टोरी’, ‘बेताब’, ‘अर्जुन’, ‘डकैत’, ‘अंजाम’ और ‘अर्जुन पंडित’ जैसी कई सफल फिल्मों का निर्देशन किया है। आपने कुमार गौरव और विजयेता पंडित को ‘लव स्टोरी’ में, सनी देओल और अमृता सिंह को ‘बेताब’ में, परेश रावल को ‘अर्जुन पंडित’ में, काजोल को ‘बेखुदी’ में, ऐश्वर्या राय को ‘और प्यार हो गया’ में बड़े परदे पर इंट्रोड्यूस किया। आपने सत्रह फिल्म और दो टेलीविजन सीरीज का निर्देशन किया है। निवर्तमान उपराष्ट्रपति एम. वेंकैया नायडू ने रवैल द्वारा लिखित पुस्तक ‘राज कपूर: द मास्टर एट वर्क’ का विमोचन किया, जिसकी चर्चा इस सत्र में हुई। ताज हरी महल की ओर से प्रबंधक सचिन ने औपचारिक स्वागत किया।

संवाद अहसास वूमेन जोधपुर शैलजा सिंह ने किया। उन्होंने रवैल के बचपन और पारिवारिक परिवेश के बारे में जानना चाहा। रवैल ने बताया कि मेरे पिता एच एस रवैल भी जानेमाने फिल्म निर्माता थे। मेरी मां लेखिका थीं। वे बंगाली थीं। उनके नाना बिपिन चंद्र पाल थे। तो क्रिएटिविटी का यह एक सिलसिला चला आया। मुझे न्यूक्लियर फिजिसिस्ट बनना था। मैं फिल्म मेकर नहीं बनना चाहता था। ऋषि कपूर ‘चिटू’ मेरा



Shelja Singh

बचपन का दोस्त था। हम नर्सरी स्कूल से साथ थे। मेरे पिता चाहते थे कि मैं फिल्मों में काम करूं। एक दिन मुझे चिटू का फोन का फोन आया, तब मैं पंद्रह साल का था, कि तेरे इजाम खत्म हो गए हैं छः महीने की छुट्टी भी है तो पापा ‘मेरा नाम जोकर’ के सर्कस की शूटिंग कर रहे हैं। वहां चलते हैं। रशियन लड़कियां आई हुई हैं, छोटे-छोटे कपड़े पहने हुए हैं, तो उन्हें देखने में मजा आया। मैं चिटू के साथ गया और वहां राज साहब को देखा काम करते हुए। वहां मैं देखा कि एक आदमी कैसे पांच हजार आदमियों को एक साथ निर्देशित कर रहा है। लड़कियों को तो मैं भूल ही गया और तब से आज तक मैं यही कर रहा। पापा का कहना था कि काम करना है तो किसी और निर्देशक के साथ काम करना है।

सिंह ने अगला सवाल राज कपूर की फिल्मों के संगीत और संगीत को लेकर उनकी समझ के बारे में पूछा कि कैसे। रवैल का उत्तर था, “राज साहब का संगीत पर जो ध्यान था, उसे ऐसे समझिए कि जब मैंने 1968 में उनके सहयोगी के तौर पर काम किया था तो दो गाने वे रैंडम दो गाने सुनाते थे। मेरा नाम जोकर में ये गाने थे नहीं। एक गाना था ‘झूठ बोले कौआ काटे’ और दूसरा गाना था ‘सुन साहिबा सुन...’ ये कहां के गाने थे, पता नहीं। किस फिल्म में ये गाने आएंगे, इसका भी पता नहीं था। उनकी बेटी रीतू पियानो बजाती थी, तो बाप-बेटी यही करते रहते थे, धुन बनाते रहते थे। बाद में जब ‘बॉबी’ बनाई तो ‘झूठ बोले कौआ काटे’ और ‘राम तेरी गंगा मैली’ में ‘सुन साहिबा सुन...’ का इस्तेमाल हुआ। जहां तक कहानी की बात है तो ‘राम तेरी गंगा मैली’ से पहले राज साहब एक शादी में गए थे, जहां रवींद्र जैन गा-बजा रहे थे। वहां उन्होंने एक गाना सुना ‘एक राधा और एक मीरा...’ वे तुरंत उनके पास गए। जब से पैसे निकाल कर दिए और बोले, यह गाना आज से मेरा हुआ। मेरी अगली फिल्म में म्यूजिक तुम दोगे और मैं इस कहानी पर फिल्म भी बनाऊंगा। उस समय किसी को समझ में नहीं आया। कहानी तो थी नहीं। पर सबने पूछा, कहानी तो उन्होंने राम चरित मानस का जिक्र किया।”

रवैल ने राज साहब के जीवन से जुड़े कई रोचक किस्से सुनाए। जिसमें 1972 में रात के दो बजे उनके घर आने, बस स्टैंड पर खड़े होने, रवैल पर पत्थर फेंकने का वाकिआ सुनाया। रवैल ने खाने को लेकर राज कपूर की दीवानगी का किस्सा भी सुनाया। इसी तरह ‘बॉबी’ के एक डिस्ट्रीब्यूटर रामू के घर देर रात पहुंच कर उसका प्रॉफिट मांगने और उसका लुंगी खोलकर ले जाने की घटना सुनाई। रवैल ने म्यूजिक स्टूडियो से जुड़ी एक मजेदार घटना भी सुनाई, जो ‘मेरा नाम जोकर’ के गीत रिकॉर्डिंग के दौरान राजकपूर, शंकर, जयकिशन, हसरत, शैलेंद्र और मुकेश की उपस्थिति में बनाई गई टयुन के डमी वर्ड्स से जुड़ी थी। रवैल ने राजकपूर की फिल्मों को लेकर, उनके निर्देशन, शूटिंग, परफेक्शन को लेकर दीवानगी के किस्से सुनाए। रवैल ने ‘सत्यम शिवम सुंदरम’, ‘प्रेम रोग’, ‘लव स्टोरी’, ‘अर्जुन’, प्रेमनाथ, लता मंगेशकर से जुड़े किस्से भी सुनाए और कहा कि यह एकलौती पुस्तक है जो केवल राजकपूर के काम की बात करती है। रवैल ने सवाल-जवाब सत्र में भी हिस्सा लिया और फिल्मों के स्वरूप में आए बदलाव पर भी अपने विचार रखे। अतिथि और संवादकर्ता का स्मृति चिन्ह देकर भी अभिनंदन किया गया।



Sachin



Sushma Sethia, Vidhi Shah and Rajshree Choudhary

अहसास वूमेन के सौजन्य से आयोजित कलम जोधपुर के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट।
हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर ताज हरिमहल जोधपुर का सहयोग मिला।



Vishwas Patil

Prabha Khaitan Foundation has always been committed in its efforts to promoting art and culture. Among its many initiatives is **Aakhar**, a unique venture that promotes regional languages across the country to preserve the ethos of Indian literature for future generations. This time, the Foundation organised a special **Aakhar** session in Nagpur with the intent to bring the importance of Marathi literature to the forefront. Marathi author and retired IAS officer Vishwas Patil was the guest of honour.

Before handing over the proceedings of the evening to the event moderator, Sonali Nakshine, Apra Kuchhal, the Foundation's honorary convenor of Rajasthan & Central India Affairs, delivered the introductory speech. "It is a privilege to host this event in Nagpur," she said. "After successfully promoting regional languages in eight states, we have finally come to Maharashtra. We couldn't stop the journey after focusing on Odia, Punjabi, Bhojpuri, Maithili, Tamil, Kannada, Gujarati, Magahi, Rajasthani and Bengali. We had to direct our efforts towards creating a platform to honour Marathi literature for its immense contribution to Indian culture. If the people of Nagpur come together in this effort, they can



Preserving a Culture and the Wealth of Marathi Literature



Sonali Nakshine

conserve and protect this beautiful language, and subsequently help our culture thrive."

Patil, who holds a Master's degree in English as well as a degree in law, is also a film director and has served as the chairman and managing director for the Maharashtra

Airport Development Company during his tenure. He is the author of the popular work of historical fiction, *Panipat*. His extensive research for the book led him to trace the expenses of war that rulers incurred at the time. *Chandramukhi*, *Lust for Lalbaug*, *Ranangan*, *Zadazadati*, *Mahanayak* and *Sambhaji* are some of Patil's other notable and award-winning works.



Apra Kuchhal

Patil is also a great admirer of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, and considers him to be a key figure in Indian history for the role he played during the freedom struggle. The author has won several awards such as the Priyadarshini National Award, the Bharatiya Bhasha Parishad Award, the Nath Madhav Award, the Sahitya Akademi Award, the Vikhe Patil Award and the Gadkari Award.

Some of the oldest works in modern Indian languages are in Marathi, which is an Indo-Aryan language. In fact, Marathi literature was one of the major motivating factors in fuelling social and political change in India, especially during the freedom movements. “Stalwarts like Prahlad Keshav Atre, Ram Ganesh Gadkari and Krushnaji Prabhakar Khadilkar set the stage for political playwriting,” said Patil. “Modern poets like Govindaraj, Keshavsuta, Balakavi, Ram Kiran Mandal and Madhav Julian were influenced by romantic Victorian poetry, which was reflected in their wonderful works.” Patil also mentioned the rebellious writers who inspired the youth of the nation to fight the British and the abundance of prose and poetry that not only Marathis but all Indians should read, even if in translation.

With great pride, Patil spoke extensively on the richness of the Marathi language, its literature, history and the writers’ whose works have been immortalised. “If you see Marathi literature’s history, Tukaram still enjoys an unbeatable and unique stature,” said Patil. “He was a genius, a radical reformer. His poems were terse and reflected earnestness, clarity and vigour. Then there are Vaman Pandit, Shridhar Pandit and Raghunath Pandit, eminent 18th-century poets, who wrote some of the most

exquisite poetry in Marathi literature. Sane Guruji was a poet who represented the progress in Marathi literature through his writings for children. *Shyamchi Aai* and *God Goshti* are two of his most famous works. Vishnu Sakharam Khandekar is another celebrated modern Marathi writer who wrote some wonderful novels, essays and short stories. He wrote *Sukhacha Shodh*, *Don Dhruwa*, *Jalalela Mohar*, *Amrutawel*, *Ulka*, *Kraunchawadh* and *Yayati*, for which he won the Jnanpith Award in 1975.”

Jyoti Kapoor, Parveen Tuli, Monica Bhagwagar and Priyanka Kothari, all **Ehsaas** Women of Nagpur, took the stage to close the ceremony. “The fact that this initiative promotes Indian regional languages is thrilling,” they said. “It is a fantastic endeavour that needs to continue.” Rajesh Sonkusare, the director of sales and marketing at Radisson Blu, expressed his love for the Marathi language before thanking the event partners for encouraging and promoting the initiative.

Aakhar Nagpur was presented by Shree Cement Ltd in association with Radisson Blu, Lokmat and with the support of Ehsaas Women of Nagpur



Parveen Tuli



Priyanka Kothari



Jyoti Kapoor and Monica Bhagwagar



Parinita Fuke



Pallavi Pingre



Pravin Mudholkar

साधारण लोगों की महिमा का आख्यान है यह कृति: गीतांजलि श्री का सम्मान और रेत समाधि पर परिचर्चा



Shah Alam Khan, Mridula Garg, Ashok Vajpeyi, Geetanjali Shree, Sachchidanand Joshi and Kumud Sharma

मिलान कुंदेरा ने कहा था कि उपन्यास ईश्वर का अटूटहास है। ईश्वर स्वयं अपनी सृष्टि को देखकर इतना चकित होता है कि हंसने लगता है। कई बार हंसी भी एक विलाप है। ये विलाप बहुत सारी सरहदों पर है, जिसे बहुत दिलचस्प ढंग से कही गई एक कहानी के माध्यम से कहा गया है। इसे अलक्षित और अनसुना नहीं रहना चाहिए।" रेत समाधि पर यह कहना है अशोक वाजपेयी का, जो इंडिया इंटरनेशनल सेंटर में प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की ओर से आयोजित अंतर्राष्ट्रीय बुकर पुरस्कार से सम्मानित गीतांजलि श्री के सम्मान और इस उपन्यास पर पैनल डिस्कशन की अध्यक्षता करते हुए बोल रहे थे। इस दौरान मंच पर गीतांजलि श्री के साथ मृदुला गर्ग, डॉ सच्चिदानंद जोशी, डॉ कुमुद शर्मा, डॉ शाह आलम खान उपस्थित थे।

आयोजकों की ओर से अपरा कुच्छल ने गीतांजलि श्री का स्वागत करते हुए फाउंडेशन की गतिविधियों की जानकारी दी। उन्होंने बताया कि प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन, सामाजिक और सांस्कृतिक कल्याण और मानवीय सरोकारों के प्रति समर्पित एक गैर लाभकारी और गैर सरकारी संस्था है। कोलकाता से संचालित फाउंडेशन कला, संस्कृति, शिक्षा, साहित्य, लैंगिक समानता और महिला सशक्तीकरण के क्षेत्र में कार्यरत है। संस्थापक डॉक्टर प्रभा खेतान के उल्लेख के साथ उन्होंने फाउंडेशन के कार्यक्रमों का विस्तार से जिक्र किया और कहा कि हमें अपने आयोजनों में बेहद स्थापित व प्रतिष्ठित नामों के साथ पूर्व राष्ट्रपति और पूर्व प्रधानमंत्री जैसी सम्मानित हस्तियों की मेजबानी का अवसर हासिल है।

अतिथि वक्ताओं के संक्षिप्त परिचय के साथ उषा मुंशी ने मंच पर उपस्थित गीतांजलि श्री को 'रेत समाधि' के लिए बधाई दी और उनके 'माई', 'हमारा शहर उस बरस', 'तिरोहित', 'खाली जगह' नामक उपन्यासों की चर्चा की। उन्होंने कहा कि अंग्रेजी और फ्रेंच सहित विश्व की कई भाषाओं में श्री की रचनाओं के अनुवाद हो चुके हैं। श्री को मिले राष्ट्रीय और अंतर्राष्ट्रीय सम्मानों और फेलोशिप की चर्चा करते हुए उन्होंने पर सबसे पहले पैनल डिस्कशन की अध्यक्षता कर रहे अशोक वाजपेयी को आमंत्रित किया।

वाजपेयी ने 'रेत समाधि' की चर्चा करते हुए कहा कि इस उपन्यास में

गीतांजलि श्री ने जो परिक्रता अर्जित की है, वो दो-तीन किस्म की है। एक तो औपन्यासिक कल्पना में एक परिकल्पना है, दूसरा दृष्टि में है, तीसरा रूपाकार में है। ये तीनों मिलकर उनको ये लाइसेंस सा देते हैं कि वे अब भाषा के साथ मनमाना खिलवाड़ सा करें और इस उपन्यास में उन्होंने बहुत आत्मविश्वास के साथ, बहुत बतकही के अंदाज में यह किया है। यह उपन्यास हदों-सरहदों के बारे में है। आजकल हम लोग सरहदें बनाने में बहुत व्यस्त हैं। जो सरहदें बनाते हैं वे यह भूल जाते हैं कि वे खुद किसी दूसरे की सरहद के घेरे में हैं। इस उपन्यास से अगर हम कोई सबक लेना चाहें तो ये होगा कि अंततः कोई नायक या पौराणिक-ऐतिहासिक चरित्र नहीं, साधारण लोग ही सरहदों का उल्लंघन करते हैं और उसके पार जाते हैं। ये साधारण की महिमा का भी आख्यान है।

उपन्यास और इतिहास में होड़ का उल्लेख करते हुए वाजपेयी ने कहा कि उपन्यास छूटे हुआ की गाथा कहता है। ऑक्टोवियो पाज ने कभी कहा था, कविता एक दूसरा इतिहास है। मैं उपन्यास के बारे में यह बात मानता हूँ। इस उपन्यास के चरित्र मनुष्य तो हैं ही, धूप, कौवे, दरवाजा भी चरित्र हैं। यह मेरी समझ से पहला उपन्यास है जिसमें शुरु में भी कहा गया है कि यह कहानी है और आखिर में भी लिखा गया है कि कहानी है। वाजपेयी ने रजा के चित्रों के उदाहरण के साथ अपनी बात के पक्ष में उपन्यास के कुछ अंश भी पढ़े और कहा कि जो इतिहास में दर्ज नहीं हो पाया उपन्यास उसे दर्ज करता है। इस उपन्यास की जो भाषा है वह हद को पददलित करता है।

गीतांजलि श्री ने कहा कि ये जो भोला सा इतिहास हुआ है इसका फायदा यह होगा कि आईआईसी में अब अंग्रेजी के अलावा हिंदी और दूसरी भारतीय भाषाओं की पुस्तकें भी रखी मिलेंगी। श्री ने बताया कि निर्मल जी ने एक बार मेरी लेखन शैली की तारीफ किया था। बुकर मुझे बदलेगा नहीं। मिलने से अच्छा लग रहा है, पर मैं उससे पहले भी लिख रही थी, आगे भी लिखूंगी, आजाद होकर लिखूंगी। इस उपन्यास को लिखते समय मुझमें एक आवेश था, जिससे मैं जरा भी भयभीत नहीं थी। मुझे लगा था कि इसकी पाठक शायद मैं अकेले ही रहूंगी। आप सोचिए कि असफल होने में कितनी आजादी है। आप किसी कोने में लिख रहे हैं और

आपको कोई फिक्र नहीं है कि इसे कोई पढ़ेगा नहीं। मैं हैरान हुई कि यह कहाँ से कहाँ पहुँच गया। मैं यह चाहूँगी कि इस बात को भी याद रखा जाए कि मेरी कृतियों के इर्द-गिर्द भी बहुत सी कृतियाँ हैं।

श्री ने कहा कि मैं अपनी कृतियाँ घर में सबसे पहले अपनी माँ को देती थी और घर से बाहर कृष्णा सोबती जी को देती थी। मैं तब बनारस में थी, जब कृष्णा जी ने बहुत अच्छी बातें कही थीं। मैंने उन्हें धन्यवाद कहा, तो उन्होंने कहा कि यह मैं आपको नहीं कह रही हूँ यह मैं 'रेत समाधि' को कह रही हूँ। मैं इस समय इसे अपने हाथ में रखी हूँ और मुझे यह अहसास है कि मैंने कुछ थाम रखा है। मैं हिंदी साहित्य को लेकर आश्वस्त हूँ। अपने अंदर और बाहर की दुनिया का उल्लेख करते हुए श्री ने कहा कि आजकल मुझे लगता है कि मैं भी 'रेत समाधि' को धन्यवाद कहूँ। मुझे उम्मीद है कि यह शायद मुझसे अलग है और मुझसे आगे है।

मृदुला गर्ग ने कहा कि मैं गीतांजलि श्री को बधाई नहीं दूंगी, रेत समाधि की कोई तारीफ नहीं करूँगी, यह बहुत हो चुकी। मैं इस किताब में जहाँ-जहाँ मैंने एकात्म महसूस किया उसकी चर्चा करूँगी। सबसे पहले तो शीर्षक 'रेत समाधि'। मैं रेत समाधि की करीब-करीब प्रत्यक्षदर्शी हूँ। मेरे गुरुजन ने जीवित रेत समाधि ली थी। आप समझ सकते हैं कि जीवित रेत समाधि लेने के लिए कितनी निष्ठा, कितनी आस्था, कितनी हिम्मत, कितना आत्मविश्वास चाहिए। फिर उसे देखना किस कदर रोमांचक और हौलनाक होगा। वह एक ऐसा एहसास था, जो मुझे कभी नहीं भूला। जब मिट्टी उनके हाथों तक पहुँची तो उन्होंने एक रुद्राक्ष मेरे अजीज को दिया और कहा कि वे मुझे दे रहे हैं और मुझसे कहें कि वे कहीं गए नहीं हैं, और जब भी मैं परेशान होऊँ उन्हें बुलाऊँ। अपने गले की माला में लटके रुद्राक्ष को हाथों में लेते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि यह वही रुद्राक्ष है। ये जो एहसास था वह बहुत आध्यात्मिक है। हम इससे सहमत हों या नहीं वह अलग बात है।

रेत समाधि में शामिल अवसाद का जिक्र करते हुए गर्ग ने कहा कि बहुत सी स्त्रियाँ पति की मृत्यु के बाद दुनिया की तरफ पीठ कर लेती हैं। यह केवल मोह के चलते नहीं, बल्कि नैतक्य के अचानक चले जाने से उपजे खाली जगह, खोने की वजह से भी हो सकता है। मैं अवसाद की भी भुक्तभोगी हूँ, पर वह निकटतम के जाने से नहीं था, जीवन के केंद्र बिंदु के जाने से था। अवसाद की भी एक मियाद होती है। एक समय आता है जब आप उससे उबरते हैं। 'रेत समाधि' की माँ जैसे उबरती है। जब आप उससे उबरते हैं तो पहले से ज्यादा शरीर, शोख, बुतशिकन, कहीं ज्यादा बिंदास होकर जीते हैं। गर्ग ने इसके बाद 'रेत समाधि' के मुख्य पात्र माँ से जुड़ी ढेर सारी बातें कीं और कहा कि लेखक ने इस उपन्यास में बहुत कुछ भारतीय परंपरा के अनुकूल भी किया है और बहुत कुछ प्रतिकूल भी किया है।

डॉ शाह आलम ने कहा कि मैंने यह किताब *Tomb of Sand* अंग्रेजी में पढ़ी। मैं डॉक्टर हूँ, मैं सभी डॉक्टरों से माफी मांगते हुए कहता हूँ कि हम बड़े जाहिल कौम हैं। इसकी वजह यह है कि हम जब पढ़ कर निकलते हैं तो हमारे पास जो पहला मरीज आता है, वह हमें भगवान कहता है। हम आर्ट फार्म से दूर जाते हैं।

चेखव ने कहा था कि हम कहानी के शुरू और आखिर में झूठ बोलते हैं। उन्होंने मजाकिया अंदाज में कहा कि गीतांजलि श्री ने भी इसमें झूठ बोला। यह कहानी किसी विधा विशेष में नहीं है। हालांकि यह मैजिकल रियलिज्म के करीब है। आप लेखक का हाथ पकड़कर आगे चले जाते हैं। मूलतः यह किताब रिश्तों की किताब है। खास बात यह कि इन रिश्तों की कोई सीमा नहीं है। माँ के बाद सबसे अच्छा चरित्र रोजी का है।



Apra Kuchhal



Aradhana Pradhan

डॉ आलम ने पाकिस्तान सीमा से जुड़े एक अनुभव का भी उल्लेख किया। रेत समाधि की एक खासियत यह भी है कि यह उपन्यास 'पितृ सत्ता' के टुकड़े-टुकड़े कर देता है। इस उपन्यास में मेटाफोर यानी रूपकों का भी बहुत उम्दा इस्तेमाल किया गया है। श्री ने विभाजन से जो तबाही हुई उसका दर्द पेज दर पेज इस पुस्तक में है। आलम ने इस पुस्तक के चरित्र, शैली, इसकी अनिश्चितता, भाषा की विशेषता के साथ इसके दार्शनिक पहलू और उठाए गए सवाल को भी विस्तार से जिक्र किया और इस शेर से अपनी बात खत्म की-

जो हम पे गुजरे थे रंज सारे जो खुद पे गुजरे तो लोग समझे
जब अपनी अपनी मोहब्बतों के अजाब झेले तो लोग समझे।

कुमुद शर्मा ने कहा कि इस सम्मान का परिणाम दूर तक जाएगा। इस सम्मान से पहले साहित्य की स्थिति एक रिटायर शिखर पुरुष की तरह थी। जिसके सम्मान का दिखावा तो था पर प्रवृत्ति उससे कतराने की हो गई थी। शर्मा ने इस सम्मान के बाद इसे लेकर लोगों में जो उत्कंठा है, उसका उल्लेख किया। उन्होंने इस पुस्तक से जुड़े संवाद, विवाद का भी जिक्र किया। शर्मा ने कहा कि अगर आपको इस कृति पर बात करनी है तो आपको इसे हिंदी-अंग्रेजी दोनों में पढ़ना होगा। उन्होंने कहा कि इससे जो बहस हुई उससे कुछ बीज शब्द निकले हैं, जैसे अनुवाद, पाठक, भाषा, कला और यथार्थ। शर्मा ने अपनी बात को काफी विस्तार से रखा और कहा कि इस कृति में सृजनात्मक साहित्य के बीच आलोचनात्मक साहित्य भी दिखता है। लेखिका पर सोबती का बहुत प्रभाव है। यह उपन्यास ग्लोबल स्त्री को सामने रखता है। इसे पढ़ने के लिए बहुत एकाग्रता की जरूरत है।

डॉ सच्चिदानंद जोशी ने कहा कि इस उपन्यास पर इतना कुछ कहा, लिखा जा रहा है कि कुछ नया बोल पाना बहुत मुश्किल है। उन्होंने उपन्यास पर लिखित एक काव्यात्मक टिप्पणी पढ़ी और उपन्यास के कथा, शिल्प, गति, इसमें शामिल लोकतंत्र, विभाजन, विभाजन की त्रासदी, औरतों की स्थिति, विस्थापन और डेजी रॉकवेल के अनुवाद कौशल की भी चर्चा की। उन्होंने कहा कि आश्चर्य होता है कि रॉकवेल ने ध्वनि और विंबों का अनुवाद कैसे किया होगा। जोशी ने उपन्यास को भारत की संस्कृति, परंपरा के संदर्भ में पढ़े जाने और सार्थक संवाद पर बल दिया और पीठ, धूप और सरहद अध्याय की चर्चा की।

अंत में अहसास वूमेन की आराधना प्रधान ने अशोक वाजपेयी और डॉ शाह आलम, गरिमा मित्तल ने डॉ सच्चिदानंद जोशी, अमिता मुनोत ने प्रोफेसर कुमुद शर्मा, प्रीति गिल ने मृदुला गर्ग, अपरा कुच्छल ने गीतांजलि श्री का अभिनंदन स्मृति दुशाला पहना कर किया।



The audience at the event

A Toast to Excellence

Indian authors have long done the country proud on the international stage, whether they have written in English or in their mother tongues. It would be fitting to remember Rabindranath Tagore, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature for the English translation of his seminal book of poems, *Gitanjali*. Over a century later — 109 years, to be precise — another Indian author has made the nation proud on the world stage, and she bears the same name as Tagore's unforgettable work. Geetanjali Shree, the renowned Hindi novelist and writer of short stories, became the first Hindi author to win the International Booker Prize for her novel *Ret Samadhi*, which was translated by Daisy Rockwell into English as *Tomb of Sand*. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, which has always championed women's stellar contribution to literature, recently organised a meet-and-greet reception for Shree at the India International Centre in Delhi. Here are a few glimpses from the evening.



Ehsaas Women Preeti Gill, Garima Mithal, Aanchal Garcha, Neelima Dalmia Adhar, Archana Dalmia, Dipali Bhasin, Shinjini Kulkarni, Amita Munot and Anantimala Potdar, and the Foundation's honorary convenor of Rajasthan & Central India Affairs, Apra Kuchhal, felicitate Geetanjali Shree with a decorative plate designed by the Foundation's in-house artist, Sudipta Kundu, and bearing the inscription *Apni Bhasha Apne Log*



Anant Vijay



Malvika Joshi



Vandana Singh



Karuna Goenka



Suspects and Scapegoats: The Muslim Experience

The renowned journalist Ghazala Wahab, who is well known for her incisive coverage on national security, terrorism and communalism in India, has been known to speak about the marginalisation of the Muslim community, and the effects that such marginalisation has on their lives, thoughts and practices. These thoughts are detailed in her book, *Born a Muslim: Some Truths about Islam in India*. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** recently organised a special session of **The Write Circle** in Wahab's hometown, Agra, to highlight her book. Vinti Kathuria, **Ehsaas** Woman of Agra, and Samir Jilani, General Manager of ITC Mughal, opened the event with their welcome speeches. Shweta Bansal, **Ehsaas** Woman of Agra, was in conversation with Wahab.

"I was fortunate to have lived in an environment which was not divisive or prejudiced," said Wahab, while introducing her book. "There was room for different ideas and opinions, which encouraged me to think independently. *Born a Muslim* is a reminiscence of my childhood, a memoir of my experiences, observations and anecdotes, and my understanding of Islam as I was never formally initiated into the religion."

Born a Muslim highlights Wahab's experiences with Islam, its evolution over the decades and her interpretation of it. When asked about the socio-political context that the book encapsulates, Wahab replied, "We live in a highly polarised society. Ever since the 1990s and early 2000s, terrorism has been forcefully associated with Islam. But I haven't forgotten the communal riots of November 1990 either, when



Shweta Bansal



Ghazala Wahab

my family was humiliated and only the poor suffered. I felt the need to reach out to a wider audience and reiterate that Islam does not perpetuate terrorism and a Muslim isn't automatically a terrorist. They are stigmatised and kept marginalised for political gains. Through this book, I tried to explain the source of their insecurities by understanding their mindsets."

Wahab clarified that she has rarely faced prejudice or felt discriminated against. "Overplaying your religious identity hides who you really are. Every individual is above smaller aspects of their lives like class, caste and religion. Communal violence is sporadic and sponsored and we should not let it succeed in dividing the people of India based on their religious identity."

In the end, Wahab interacted with the audience that included a lot of her friends and batchmates who were eager to hear from her. Kathuria delivered the formal vote of thanks before Anupama Bohra concluded the session by felicitating the author.

The Write Circle Agra was presented by Shree Cement Ltd in association with Dainik Jagran, ITC Mughal and with the support of Ehsaas Women of Agra



The audience



Anupama Bohra



Vinti Kathuria



Samir Jilani

मेरे पास शब्द ही थे, यही मेरे हथियार हैं: क्षमा कौल



Kshama Kaul

अगर हमें अपनी भारतीय संस्कृति एवं सभ्यता को जीवित रखना है, तो 10वीं कक्षा तक संस्कृत अनिवार्य रूप से पढ़ानी चाहिए।" यह कहना है क्षमा कौल का, जो प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की ओर से आयोजित 'कलम फरीदाबाद' में बतौर अतिथि वक्ता मौजूद थी। आरंभ में यशिका त्रिपाठी ने अतिथियों का स्वागत किया और फाउंडेशन की कला, साहित्य, संस्कृति और महिला सशक्तीकरण से जुड़ी गतिविधियों की चर्चा की। 'कलम, अपनी भाषा अपने लोग' में अतिथि वक्ता का परिचय देते हुए त्रिपाठी ने कहा कि कौल कश्मीर के विस्थापित साहित्य की सबसे सशक्त आवाजों में से एक हैं और कवयित्री, कथाकार, अनुवादक के रूप में देश भर में जानी जाती हैं। 17 जुलाई, 1956 को कश्मीर के श्रीनगर में आपका जन्म हुआ। आपने धूमिल पर एमफिल किया और हिंदी की युवा-कविता पर पीएचडी की उपाधि हासिल की। त्रिपाठी ने कश्मीर पर आधारित कौल के उपन्यास 'दर्दपुर', 'समय के बाद', 'बादलों में आग', 'आतंकवाद और भारत', 'निक्की तवी पर रिहर्सल', '19 जनवरी के बाद' और 'No Earth Under Our Feet' आदि कृतियों के साथ विस्थापन, जलावतनी, आतंकवाद, साहित्य, संस्कृति, राजनीति, मानवाधिकार पर उनके नियमित लेखन और व्याख्यान का किया और आगे के संवाद के लिए दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय की सहायक प्रोफेसर डॉ दीप्ति तनेजा को आमंत्रित किया।

तनेजा ने कौल से उनकी कृतियों की चर्चा की और उनके लेखन में विस्थापित कश्मीरी पंडितों के दुःख और परेशानियों के बीच उनके खुद के अनुभव के बारे में पूछा। कौल ने कहा कि मैं कश्मीर में जन्मी और जब से होश संभाला हमें यही समझ आया कि हम त्रास के उत्तराधिकारी हैं। इस्लामिक जिहाद से जुड़े दर्द के उत्तराधिकारी। पिछले छः, सात सौ या हजार वर्षों से हम इसे भुगत रहे हैं। जब मैं चार साल की थी, तो मैंने गांव के खंडहर देखे। यह मेरे मां और पिता के गांव में थे। मैं सोचती थी कि यह हमारे खेलने की जगह हैं। इसका जिक्र दर्दपुर में किया है। मेरी नानी ने बाद में बताया कि ये खंडहर हैं। कबायलियों, पाकिस्तानी आर्मी ने इनके घरवालों को एक पंक्ति में खड़ा कर भून दिया और उनकी स्त्रियों को लेकर चले गए। आप समझ सकते हैं कि जब एक बच्चे ने यह सुना, तो पूछा कि क्यों? पाप क्या था नानी? उत्तर मिला क्योंकि हम हिंदू थे। वहां से मुझमें इस त्रास और दर्द की शुरुआत हुई। उन्हीं बुजुर्गों से मैंने सुना इस दर्द को जाना। बाद में जब मैंने राजतरंगिणी पढ़ी, कल्हण की नहीं, क्योंकि उसमें सनातन का विलास और वैभव ही है, जोनराज की राजतरंगिणी से मैंने उस नरसंहार को जाना तो फिर मैं सामान्य नहीं रह पाई।

कौल ने 1990 की घटना का जिक्र करते हुए बताया कि 1989 में उन्होंने बड़े शौक से रावलपुर में एक नया घर बनाना शुरू किया। हमने अपने पूरे जीवन की जमापूंजी, एक-एक ढेला उसे बनाने में लगा दिया। 7 मई को हमें उसमें गृह प्रवेश करना था। कफरू लगा हुआ था। पर उसके निर्माण के दौरान ही अंदर से जैसे कोई बोल रहा था कि हमने इसमें कुछ दिन जी लिया तो जी लिया, हमारे बच्चे इसमें नहीं जी सकेंगे। हमें क्या पता था कि खुद हमें भी उस घर में एक दिन भी रहने का सौभाग्य



Deepti Taneja



Priya Vashishth



Yashika Tripathi



Shweta Aggarwal

नहीं मिलेगा। एक साल में वह स्थितियां बनीं। पहले बम फटे, जिहाद के नाम पर निर्दोषों को मारा गया। फिर 19 जनवरी को रात को हर मस्जिद से यह ऐलान किया कि अपने स्त्रियों को आप यहीं छोड़ दो और खुद भाग जाओ, वरना

मारे जाओगे। उन्होंने सरला भट्ट की दुखद घटना का जिक्र किया। उन्होंने बताया कि हमारे पास पैसे नहीं थे, हम सोचते थे कि आखिर हम जाएंगे कहां? पर एक रात उन्होंने इतना डराया कि हमें भागना पड़ा।

एक सवाल के जवाब में कौल ने कहा कि कश्मीर से पंडितों के विस्थापन की मुख्य वजह सरकार रही हैं। आज की सरकार भी इसके लिए जिम्मेदार है। सरकारें चाहतीं तो कश्मीर पंडितों को अपना घर नहीं छोड़ना पड़ता। सरकारों ने कश्मीर को अलग राष्ट्र बनाने वाली ताकतों का सदैव सहयोग किया। सरकार चाहती, तो उस समय सर्जिकल स्ट्राइक करके नरसंहार और पंडितों को विस्थापित होने से रोक सकती थी। 19 जनवरी, 1990 हमारे लिए कलंक का दिन है। सच तो यह है कि चरमपंथियों को बढ़ावा दिया गया और कश्मीरी पंडितों की उपेक्षा की गई। कौल ने कहा कि हम नाम मात्र के लिए स्वतंत्र हुए हैं। असल में आज भी परतंत्र हैं। हमारा स्वाभिमान समाप्त हो चुका है और संस्कृति व सभ्यता को समाप्त करने का प्रयास लगातार हो रहा। उन्होंने कहा कि हर हिंदू में एक समझ होनी चाहिए। दर्दपुर मैंने अपने खून से लिखा है। मेरे पास शब्द ही थे। यही हमारा हथियार है।

कौल ने बताया कि कश्मीरी पंडित शैव दर्शन को मनाने वाले हैं और संस्कृत सभी भाषाओं की जनक हैं। उन्होंने हिंदी की मात्राओं पर प्रकाश डालते हुए कहा कि सभी मात्राएं हमारे शरीर के चक्रम में विद्यमान हैं। इसके सही उच्चारण से कई बीमारियां दूर रहती हैं। इनका वर्ण ऋग्वेद में भी मिलता है। उन्होंने न्याय प्रणाली के कुछ निर्णयों पर कड़ी आपत्ति जताते हुए कि सभी सामाजिक कुरीतियों को देश में कानून बना दिया। लिव इन रिलेशनशिप इसका जीवित उदाहरण है। यह हमारी सभ्यता को घूमिल कर रहा है। कौल ने सवाल-जवाब सत्र में भी हिस्सा लिया। अंत में प्रिया वशिष्ठ और श्वेता अग्रवाल ने स्मृति चिन्ह देकर अतिथि और संवादकर्ता का अभिनंदन किया।

कलम फरीदाबाद के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट। हुमैने फाउंडेशन और मीडिया पार्टनर दैनिक जागरण का सहयोग मिला।



Vidya Chowdhury

भाषा का निर्माण व्यक्ति के द्वारा नहीं बल्कि प्रकृति प्रदत्त: डॉ विद्या चौधरी



Sudha Verma

बिना भाषा का कोई समाज नहीं बनता है। भाषा समाज के एकीकरण का जरिया है।” **प्रभा खेतान** फाउंडेशन और मसि इंक की ओर से आयोजित मासिक कार्यक्रम ‘आखर’ में बज्जिका की लेखिका डॉ विद्या चौधरी ने यह बात कही। आयोजकों की ओर से अतिथियों का स्वागत और धन्यवाद ज्ञापन आराधना प्रधान ने किया। उन्होंने बताया कि आखर में बज्जिका भाषा पर चर्चा की यह पहली कड़ी है। हमें खुशी है कि हम आखर में बिहार की चौथी भाषा पर चर्चा कर रहे हैं। बज्जिका भाषा की जानकार चौधरी का प्रधान ने परिचय भी दिया और बताया कि बिहार सरकार के कला, संस्कृति एवं युवा (पुरातत्व) विभाग में पदाधिकारी रहीं चौधरी ने ‘वैशाली जिले के अनान्वेषित एवं अनुत्खनित पुरातात्विक स्थल एवं वहां से प्राप्त पुरावशेषों का विश्लेषण’ विषय पर पीएचडी की उपाधि हासिल की। आपके लिखे, संपादित, अनूदित प्रकाशित ग्रंथों में ‘वैशाली जिला: नवान्वेषित पुरातात्विक स्थल एवं पुरावशेष’, ‘बज्जिका बिआह संस्कार गीत’, बज्जिका लघुकथा संग्रह ‘आ हम्मर घर?’, बज्जिका कविता संग्रह ‘दुनिया भेलई उदास’ और ‘चीख में चिन्तन’ आदि शामिल हैं। उनसे संवाद का दायित्व रंगमंच के क्षेत्र से जुड़ी सुधा वर्मा ने किया।

वर्मा ने चौधरी की संपादकीय गतिविधियों और राष्ट्रीय बज्जिका भाषा परिषद पटना के उपाध्यक्ष के रूप में उनकी गतिविधियों का जिक्र करते हुए पूछा कि बज्जिका भाषा की तरफ आपकी रुझान कैसे हुई? चौधरी ने बताया कि बज्जिका मेरी मातृभाषा है, इसलिए रुझान तो बचपन से है, ये बात अलग है कि इसका नाम मुझे नहीं मालूम था। मैं सात साल की थी तब मेरे भाई का जनम हुआ। गीत लिखने का शौक बचपन से रहा। मैं लिखती रही। लेकिन बज्जिका भाषा नाम जानकर दस वर्ष से मेरे सामने आया, जिसका श्रेय डॉ श्याम तिवारी को जाता है। जब उनके सामने मेरी पुरातत्व की कोई किताब या आलेख जाए, तो उन्होंने बज्जिका में लिखने को कहा। इसी दौरान एक बार जब मैं विवाह के दौरान गांव गयी, तो वहां गीत गाने के लिए मनिया दीदी को बुलावा गया। मेरे मन में विचार आया कि जब मनिया दीदी नहीं रहती तो यह गीत कौन बताता? मैंने तब हिंदी में गीत लिखना शुरू किया। चौधरी ने बताया कि इस पर तिवारी जी ने फिर टोका, तो मैंने बज्जिका विवाह गीत लिखना शुरू किया। इस तरह बज्जिका में मेरी लेखन-यात्रा शुरू हुई। ठेठ बज्जिका की विशेषता बताते हुए वर्मा ने कहा कि इसमें संयुक्ताक्षर का प्रयोग नहीं मिलता है। सीधा-सीधा शब्द मिलता है, जैसे हम आपस में बातचीत करते हैं।



Aradhana Pradhan



Vibha Rani Shrivastava



Poonam Sinha



Ram Naresh Mishra



Sanjay Paswan

होनहार बिरवान के होत चिकने पात...का जिक्र करते हुए वर्मा ने बज्जिका के सुहावने संस्कार गीत की चर्चा करते हुए उनका पसंदीदा गीत सुनाने का अनुरोध किया। चौधरी ने बज्जिका भाषा में विवाह से जुड़ा एक परंपरागत गीत सुनाया, जिसे उन्होंने अपने दादी लोगों से सुना है। जितना याद है, सुनाती हूं। ‘कतेक दिन आहें बाबा... कतेक दिन रखबै गुमान....’ सुनाया कि विवाह तय हो जाने के बाद बेटी के मन में कैसे-कैसे विचार आते हैं। वर्मा ने बज्जिका भाषा में उनके लघु कथा संग्रह ‘आ हम्मर घर’ की चर्चा की और पूछा कि आपके दिमाग में यह शीर्षक देने विचार कैसे आया? चौधरी ने कहा कि यह संग्रह स्त्री विमर्श पर है। स्त्री के जीवन में तरह-तरह की घटना घटती है, कई तरह की त्रासदी होती है। कुछ घटना ऐसी होती है, जिसमें उसे लगता है कि अरे ऐसे ये क्यों बोल रहे हैं? इस लघु कथा-संग्रह में दर्शाई गई सभी कहानियां वास्तविकता पर आधारित हैं, भले ही पात्रों के नाम बदल दिए गए हैं। इनमें बेटी को समझाने की भी बात है कि ससुराल में कैसे रहना है, यहां कैसे रहना है। कल भी बात हो रही थी कि ‘चुप रह, ज्यादा न बोल’। लड़के को चुप रहने को नहीं कहा जाता है। लड़की से कहा जाता है कि ज्यादा बोलेगी तो ससुराल में वास नहीं होगा। पहले से ही लड़की को ऐसी धोंस दे दी जाती है कि कैसे बोलना है, कैसे चलना है, कैसे रहना है? ससुराल में उसकी बात, मुंह, चालचलन सभी बंधा है और यह ट्रेनिंग उसे घर में ही दे दी जाती है। उन्होंने ‘आ हम्मर घर’ लघु कथा-संग्रह में से अपनी पसंद की मार्मिक कहानियां भी दर्शकों को सुनाई। एक कथा पांच वर्ष की बेटी की शादी, गौना, दोगा से जुड़ी परंपरा से जुड़ी थी, जिसमें बेटी को इस परंपरा से जुड़ी भावनाओं और जुदाई का भी पता नहीं होता।

भाषा से जुड़े सवाल पर चौधरी ने कहा कि कोई भाषा व्यक्ति के द्वारा उत्पन्न नहीं हुई है, बल्कि अनुभूति परक है और यह प्रकृति प्रदत्त है। उन्होंने बताया कि आदर्श बज्जिकांचल क्षेत्र हाजीपुर, मुजफ्फरपुर, समस्तीपुर है। वर्तमान में बज्जिका साहित्य की स्थिति पर बात करते हुए चौधरी ने कहा कि आजकल बज्जिका भाषा में हर विधा में लोग कलम चला रहे हैं। लघु कथाएं भी खूब लिखी जा रही हैं, कविताएं भी लिखी जा रही हैं। बिहार सरकार में पुरातत्व विभाग में कार्यरत रही चौधरी ने इस क्षेत्र से जुड़े सवालों का भी उत्तर दिया। कार्यक्रम के अंत में अपनी लघु कथा ‘आ हम्मर घर?’ से ‘शिवकुमारी का बेटा’ शीर्षक नामक कहानी दर्शकों को सुनायी। कार्यक्रम में संजय पासवान, जय प्रकाश, राजेंद्र कुमार चौधरी, उमा शंकर शर्मा आदि गणमान्य लोग उपस्थित थे।

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

Building Bonds Beyond the Lines

Few things are more wonderful than the blossoming of friendships borne out of professional or organizational associations — especially if such friendships transcend geographical borders. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** takes pride in the camaraderie and sense of fraternity that thrive among its members and associates. This bonhomie

has been evident every time **Ehsaas** Women from different cities have met one another outside of their Foundation-related work. The Foundation cherishes such bonds, and here we offer you some glimpses into the fun-filled meetings of **Ehsaas** Women from Indore, Ahmedabad, Dehradun, Udaipur, Bhubaneswar and Chennai as they visit one another's cities.



Shraddha Murdia, Ehsaas Woman of Udaipur, hosted Priyanshi Patel, Ehsaas Woman of Ahmedabad, at her Udaipur residence



Unnati Singh, Ehsaas Woman of Indore, met Ehsaas Women of Dehradun Pooja Khanna and Pooja Poddar Marwah in their city



During her trip to Ahmedabad, Unnati Singh, Ehsaas Woman of Indore, met Ehsaas Women of Ahmedabad Shanel Parekh and Priyanshi Patel



Nidhi Garg, Ehsaas Woman of Bhubaneswar, met Kaveri Lalchand, Ehsaas Woman of Chennai during her trip to the latter's city



Shraddha Murdia, Ehsaas Woman of Udaipur, and Priyanshi Patel, Ehsaas Woman of Ahmedabad, dine with the actor, Susmita Mukherjee, at Udaipur's Taj Lake Palace



Looking Deep Into Nature



A performance by the students of The BSS School on tiger conservation

Prabha Khaitan Foundation in association with the Society for Heritage and Ecological Researches (SHER) and The BSS School recently celebrated Global Tiger Day 2022. The objective of the event was to spread the message about the importance of conservation and to acknowledge individuals, organisations and institutions that are working tirelessly towards it. The Principal of The BSS School, Sunita Sen, delivered the welcome speech before the filmmaker and Chief Advisor of SHER, Arindam Sil, spoke eloquently about the pressing need for conservation today. He also spoke about how SHER is contributing to the cause.

SHER introduced the Padma Shri P.K. Sen Memorial Award



Arindam Sil talks about Global Tiger Day



Joydip Kundu, general secretary of SHER



Sabysachi Chakrabarty talks about the P.K. Sen Memorial Award

this year. Wildlife photographer and actor Sabyasachi Chakrabarty applauded this initiative and its significance. Biplab Kumar Bhowmick, Nilratan Guha, Samir Banerjee and Subrata Palchowdhury were the four individual recipients for this year. The Howrah Jela Joutho Paribesh Mancha, which works to protect lesser-known species, was also awarded. Among institutions, the Scottish Church College was recognised for its pro-environment measures on campus and its eco-friendly activities. The chief guest of the evening, Debal Roy (IFS), Sen's daughter Richa Prasant, Tapas Das (IFS), Chief Conservator of Forests & Field Director, Sundarban Tiger Reserve, and Ajoy Kumar Das (IFS), Chief Conservator of Forests & Joint Director, Sundarban Biosphere Reserve, handed out the awards.



Raj Chakraborty

To increase awareness about biodiversity, filmmaker and member of the West Bengal legislative assembly, Raj Chakraborty, unveiled a special motion-poster made by SHER called 'The Best Habitat for Wildlife is the Human Heart'. The guest of honour at the event was West Bengal Vigilance Commissioner Pradeep Vyas (IFS, retired), who holds a DPhil in Wildlife Science and is a former member of the Public Service Commission, West Bengal, and the former Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Wildlife & Chief Wildlife Warden, West Bengal. He unveiled the poster-map series on agro-ecological distribution in West Bengal and handed it over to the 29 participating schools.

Six representatives from 10 ranges of the Sundarban Biosphere Reserve were felicitated with the Professor

Ratanlal Brahmachari Memorial Award in acknowledgement of their work in protecting tigers and the mangrove ecosystem. Actor Mainak Banerjee, social worker Priyadarshini Ghosh Bawa, photo-journalist Lopamudra Talukdar, and artists Suman Chowdhury and Shibsankar Das honoured the recipients. Eminent wildlife photographer and author, Shivang Mehta, surprised the audience by presenting his first ever photo-story in Kolkata called *Cats of India*. The event concluded with a skit called *Bagh* performed by the students from The BSS School.

With this event, SHER was successful in its attempt to spread the message of tiger conservation and the need to protect biodiversity.


Shivang Mehta presents *Cats of India*


Pradeep Vyas, with students of The BSS School, releases a special conservation poster conceptualised by Professor Arijit Chottopadhyay



Debal Roy and Richa Prasant hand over the P.K. Sen Memorial Award to the Howrah Jela Joutho Paribesh Mancha

For The Love Of The Stage: Knowing The First Diva Of Indian Cinema

Devika Rani is known as the first lady of Indian cinema. She and her husband, Himanshu, founded Bombay Talkies, which launched actors such as Madhubala, Ashok Kumar and Dilip Kumar. They were the first to use international filmmaking technology in India. Rani's contribution to Indian cinema, and her bold, charming persona remain unmatched. To honour her life and achievements, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** and **Ehsaas Women of Lucknow**, as part of the 'Chalchitra Rangmanch' festival, organised a play, *Devika Rani*, at the Sant Gadge Maharaj auditorium of UP Sangeet Natak Akademi. Previously staged in Udaipur during the 'Chalchitra Rangmanch' festival there, the play is written by Kishwar Desai and directed

by veteran actor Lillete Dubey. Set in the 1930s and starring actors like Ira Dubey, Joy Sengupta, Rishi Khurana and Mark Bennington, among others, the play traces the life of Rani as she went from being an architecture student to a famous actress. It tells the stories of her highs and lows, personally and professionally, the setting up of Bombay Talkies and her life after her husband's demise. It's a play that truly honours the Indian diva. Here are a few glimpses from the wonderful evening.

This session was presented by Shree Cement Ltd in association with Ficci Flo Lucknow and with the support of Ehsaas Women of Lucknow



A moment from the play *Devika Rani*

The cast of *Devika Rani*



Kanak Rekha Chauhan, Professor Raj Bisaria and Mrs Bisaria



Madhuri Halwasiya and Jyotsana Habibullah



Nita Modi, Anil Modi and Manoj Kumar Singh (Agriculture Production Commissioner, Government of Uttar Pradesh) with other eminent personalities at the play



Ehsaas Women with members of the cast of *Devika Rani*



Ashok Bhatia and Anu Bhatia



Aparna Mishra and Mini Bajpai with Lillete Dubey



Sangeeta Banerjee and Jyoti Dhawan



Nishith Kapoor and Kiron Chopra



Lillete Dubey and Ira Dubey with Ehsaas Women and guests



Meenu Pandey



Tara Goel and Mrs Halwasiya



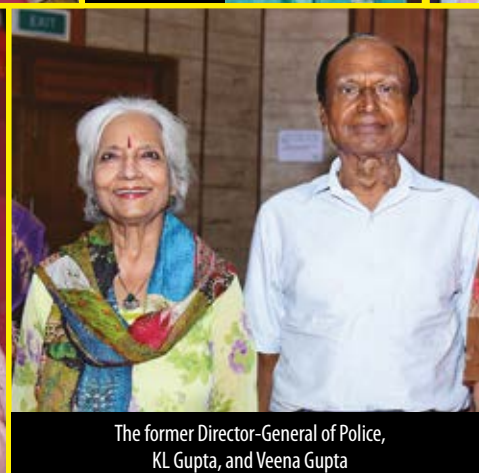
Vandana Sehgal



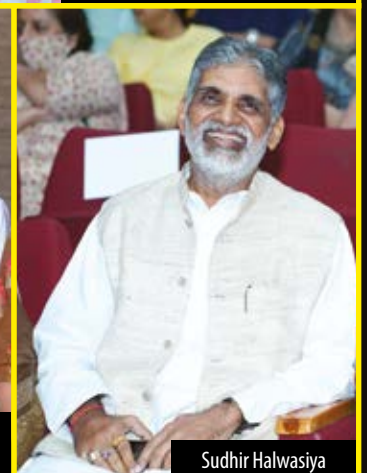
Renu Bhargava and Jaya Singh



Rashmi Agarwal and Rashmi Vaid



The former Director-General of Police,
KL Gupta, and Veena Gupta



Sudhir Halwasiya

रामायण, महाभारत मिथ नहीं, इतिहास है: आशा प्रभात



Asha Prabhat

मैंने उर्मिला को देवी और अलौकिकता के आवरण से निकाल कर मानवी के रूप में रचा है। मानवी होंगी तो उनके अंदर सब कुछ होगा।” कलम गुरुग्राम में यह कहना था लेखिका, अनुवादक आशा प्रभात का। आयोजकों की ओर से अहसास वूमेन आराधना प्रधान ने अतिथि वक्ता और आमंत्रित अतिथियों का स्वागत और धन्यवाद किया। प्रधान ने बताया कि आशा प्रभात हिंदी, उर्दू की समर्थ रचनाकार हैं। आपने हिंदी और उर्दू में कविता, कहानी, उपन्यास विधाओं में प्रचुर लेखन किया है। दोनों भाषाओं में अब तक आपकी 17 पुस्तकें प्रकाशित हैं, जिनमें 6 उपन्यास ‘धुंध में उगा पेड़’, ‘जाने कितने मोड़’, ‘मैं और वह’, ‘गिरदाब’, ‘मैं जनक नंदिनी’ तथा ‘उर्मिला’; 4 कहानी संग्रह, 2 काव्य संग्रह के अलावा साहिर लुधियानवी के समग्र रचनाओं का हिंदी अनुवाद ‘साहिर समग्र’ शामिल है। हिंदी से उर्दू तथा उर्दू से हिंदी अनुवाद की 5 पुस्तकें भी प्रकाशित हो चुकी हैं। हिंदी-उर्दू की स्तरीय पत्र, पत्रिकाओं में आपकी रचनाओं का निरंतर प्रकाशन हुआ है। आकाशवाणी और दूरदर्शन से प्रसारण के अलावा आपकी रचनाओं के अनुवाद भारत की लगभग सभी मान्यता प्राप्त भाषाओं में हो चुके हैं। आप साहित्य महोपाध्याय की मानद उपाधि और बिहार राष्ट्र भाषा परिषद् के साहित्य सेवा सम्मान सहित कई अवार्ड से सम्मानित हैं। आपसे



Aradhana Pradhan



Bhagwandas Morwal



Malvika Joshi

संवाद करेंगी प्रतिभाशाली आलोचक डॉ सुनीता।

सुनीता ने रामचरित मानस, रामायण और मैथिली शरण गुप्त की साकेत के उल्लेख के साथ प्रभात की नई पुस्तक उर्मिला का जिक्र किया और कहा कि मिथ का इतिहास नहीं है, पर वह घिसकर इतिहास में जगह पा लिया है। आपने उर्मिला का चयन कैसे किया? प्रभात का उत्तर था कि यह मेरे प्रकाशक अशोक माहेश्वरी का आग्रह था कि मैं उर्मिला पर लिखूं। यह बहुत कठिन विषय था। वाल्मीकि रामायण में उनका थोड़ा जिक्र है और साकेत में विरह की बात है। किंवदंतियों में यह बात मिलती है कि चौदह साल वह सोती रही थी, तो मुझे यह बड़ा आश्चर्यजनक लगा। यह उस समय की बात थी जब आयों की एक भूमिका बन रही थी, सभ्यता एक मोड़ ले रही थी। ऐसे समय में अगर राजभवन में उर्मिला हैं, लक्ष्मण नहीं हैं तो मैंने सोचने पर यह पाया कि सीता से अधिक उर्मिला के जीवन में मोड़ हैं। सीता पति के साथ अगर वन में जाती हैं, तो जानबूझकर वन के दुखों को पति के साथ अपनाने गई हैं, लेकिन उर्मिला अचानक लक्ष्मण जी द्वारा त्याग दी जाती हैं, विरह, वियोग होता है। भवन में उथलपुथल है, शोक का, दुख का वातावरण है वन जाने के बाद, दशरथ जी की मृत्यु के बाद, यह सब उर्मिला भोगती हैं। फिर लक्ष्मण द्वारा मांगे गए वचन कि इस भवन में तुम उर्मिला नहीं लक्ष्मण हो। वह कहती हैं कि लक्ष्मण होना बहुत कठिन है। भाई के प्रति, घर के प्रति, सगे संबंधियों के प्रति दायित्व निभाना बहुत कठिन है। मैंने इन्हीं बातों को लेकर इस पुस्तक की रचना की है।

सुनीता ने विस्तार से उर्मिला के चरित्र की चर्चा करते हुए कहा कि आपकी उर्मिला भावात्मक नहीं हैं, वह तर्क करती हैं? पर जब आपकी उर्मिला लक्ष्मण के परित्याग के संदर्भ को लेकर राम से तर्क करती हैं, तो वहां एक और तर्क की गुंजाइश बनती है, आपने उसे क्यों छोड़ दिया? प्रभात का उत्तर था कि वाल्मीकि रामायण मेरे लेखन का आधार रहा है। ‘मैं जनक नंदिनी’ और ‘उर्मिला’ का भी। बाद में जितने भी रामायण रचे गए, सबका कथ्य वही था, आदि वाल्मीकि रामायण। शब्द अपने लोगों के थे, विचार और ख्यालात भी उनके अपने थे। लक्ष्मण के त्याग का संदर्भ वाल्मीकि रामायण में मिलता है। उर्मिला उतनी भावुक, सोकर रहने वाली नहीं हैं। वह राजा जनक की औरस पुत्री हैं। वह शोख, चंचल और अधिकार पूर्वक रहती हैं। लक्ष्मण के जाने के बाद वह लोगों के सामने विरह के भाव में न रहकर दायित्व का भार ग्रहण करती हैं और तर्क करके अपना समय काटती हैं। उनके अंदर अपने दुख और विरह को मारने की दृढ़ता है, पर उनके अंदर कुछ स्त्रीयोंचित कमजोरियां हैं। आप राम द्वारा लक्ष्मण को त्यागने के बाद उनकी जलसमाधि के जिस संदर्भ का जिक्र कर रही हैं उसमें उनके मन में यह भाव आता है कि राम तो पहले आए और राज्य में पीढ़ी पहले नहीं जाती, तो राम के रहते लक्ष्मण चले कैसे गए। बाद में वह अपने को इस तुच्छ विचार पर कोसती भी हैं।

प्रभात ने कहा कि रामायण, महाभारत मिथ नहीं है। यह इतिहास है। प्रभात ने जनक नंदिनी, सीता द्वारा धनुष उठाने, साहिर समग्र, हिंदी-उर्दू अनुवाद, शब्द संतुलन, लेखक और अनुवादक के रूप में देशकाल की भाषा में सृजन, उर्दू से अपने लगाव से जुड़े सवाल का उत्तर दिया। प्रभात ने कहा कि आज परिवेश भले ही बदला हो, पर रहना हमें पुरुष के साथ ही है। आज हम सामंजस्य की बात करेंगे, सहभागिता की बात करेंगे। धीरे-धीरे रुढ़ियां टूट रही हैं। यह झंडा उठाकर नहीं होगा, विचारों से होगा। उन्होंने बताया कि पाकिस्तान के लोग भी हिंदी के ऐसे शब्दों का उपयोग कर रहे हैं, जिन्हें अब हम भी भूलने लगे हैं। भ्रमण से अधिक अनुभव साहित्य सृजन से मिलता है। साहित्य पढ़ने से अधिक जानकारी मिलती है। प्रभात ने अपने द्वारा अनूदित ‘दूसरी बाबरी मस्जिद’ कहानी का जिक्र भी किया। उन्होंने सवाल-जवाब के सत्र में श्रोताओं के सवालों के भी उत्तर दिए। मालविका जोशी ने स्मृति चिन्ह देकर प्रभात का और भगवानदास मोरवाल ने सुनीता का स्मृति चिन्ह देकर स्वागत किया।

अहसास वूमेन के सहयोग से आयोजित कलम गुरुग्राम के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट, हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर होटल रेडिसन ब्लू प्लाजा, दिल्ली एयरपोर्ट और मीडिया पार्टनर दैनिक जागरण।

Of Puppets, Grandmothers, Foxes and Dragons

Shreedevisunil is the most sought-after performing storyteller today. Her unique method of combining elements from theatre and storytelling makes her performances exhilarating and impactful. She is a professional puppeteer and the founder of Talking Turtles Storytellers, which hosted the inaugural Tale Train Story Festival in 2019. Sunil facilitates workshops for people of all ages with the aim of encouraging the art of storytelling. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, under its initiative **Muskaan**, organised a puppet storytelling session with Sunil. Sumitra Ray, the Student Programmes Advisor of the Foundation, delivered the welcome speech and vote of thanks.

Sunil and her team enacted several stories to entertain the young audience. She explained the different forms of storytelling. "Storytelling can involve music, expressions, hands or funny voices and sounds," she said. "Storytelling through expressions is quite interesting as feelings of happiness, sadness, anger, boredom, or other emotions can often be enacted easily." She kept the children engaged by assigning them a new action to enact at all times.

"Time for a puppet show!" she soon exclaimed. She then used her puppetry skills to tell amazing stories. She introduced the kids to the Talking Turtle, who told them



The puppets used during Sunil's storytelling session



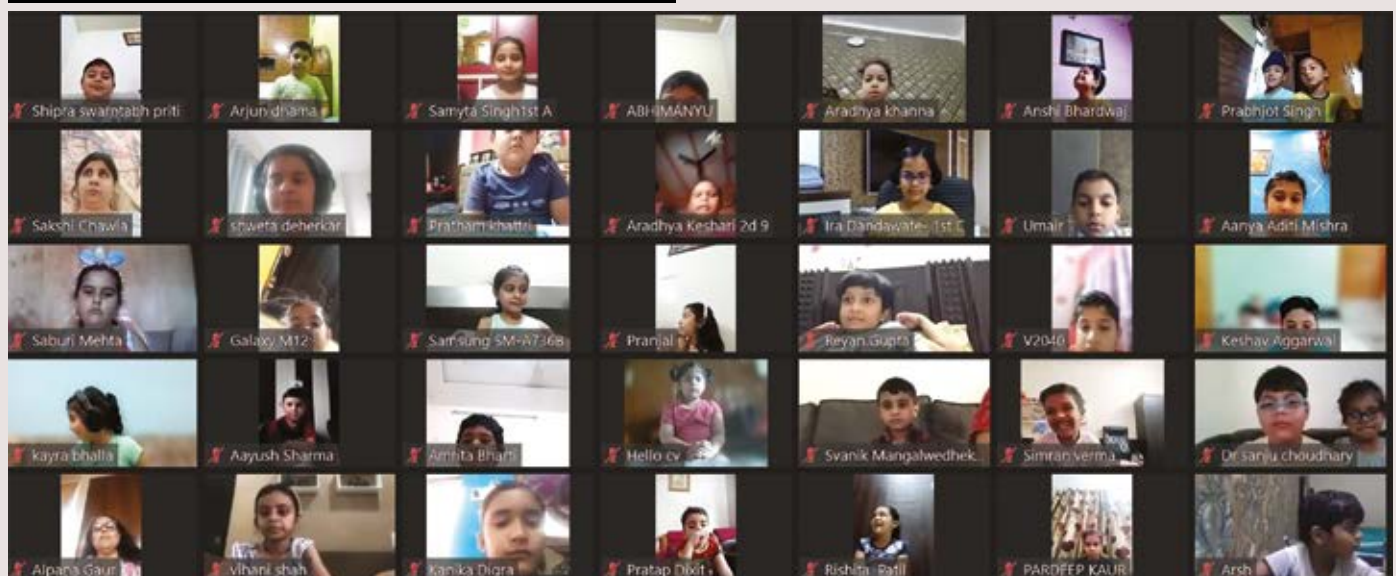
Shreedevisunil

a few interesting stories. He started with *The Fox and the Sour Grapes*. A hungry fox chances upon delicious, juicy grapes hanging from a tree. They are at a height, but the fox makes every attempt to get a hold of them. However, he fails. He asks for help from different animals, but no one is able to get him the grapes. In the end, he gives up and consoles himself by believing that the grapes are sour.

In the second story, an aged grandmother (called *babushka* in Russia) owns an enormous turnip. The story revolves around *babushka* and her granddaughter who, with the help of every animal on the farm, finally succeed in pulling out the turnip and making soup for everyone. The final story was about a Chinese emperor who loved dragons. He looks for an artist to paint images of dragons on his palace walls. When months pass by and he doesn't find anybody for the task, he sets out on a journey to look for the best dragon artist in the world. The adventures of his travels were enacted during the session, as the storyteller used sketches on a piece of paper and vivid visualisations to narrate the tale of the emperor's journey.

The session concluded with Sunil interacting with the young audience who were eager to satiate their curiosity about this art form.

Muskaan is presented by Shree Cement Ltd





Visiting Fantasy Land: A Film Festival



Creative storylines, unforgettable characters and a simple presentation are the reasons why children love animated movies. With the intention of entertaining young audiences belonging to kindergarten and Classes 1 and 2, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** presented a series of German animated films titled 'Buut & Wild: Anima für Kids' under its **Muskaan** initiative and in association with **Education For All Trust**. Cathy Tongper, the Overseas Affairs Officer of the Foundation, opened the event and delivered the concluding speech.

The children were treated to six amazing German animations during the session. *Steinfliegen*, by Anne Walther, is about a stonefly Ferdi, who lives on an island with his parents. Stoneflies cannot fly, but Ferdi wishes to fly one day. He sets out on an adventure to fulfil his dream to

learn how to fly. When his quest fails and all hopes die, he meets a girl who makes his dream come true. *Ralle & Bolle — fernsehsüchtig*, by Winfried Bellmann and Doreen Schweikowski, revolves around Ralle and Bolle, two hamsters who want to experience the fun of watching television. So when they find themselves alone at home, they risk it all to reach the living room, where the TV is, unaware of the challenges that lie ahead.



Cathy Tongper



Mansi Kamdar Shah

In Falk Schuster's *Kleider Machen Freunde*, a hedgehog and a bird develop an unlikely bond as they realise they can help each other with their problems. The bird fears heights and thus often goes hungry. The hedgehog helps the bird out and finds solutions to its own problems in the process. Ralf Kukula's *Meine Erste Hochzeit* follows what happens when a five-year-old girl tries to unravel the secret of love. The film tells the story of one such girl and how her mother deals with her daughter's curiosities.

Based on a short story by Eugene Ionesco, Izabela Plucinska's *Josette und Ihr Papa* depicts a father-daughter relationship. The little girl's mother is not home. Her dad has to go to work, but she wants to play. So he gives her the exciting task of searching for him. Raphael Wahl's *Lauf Jäger Lauf* shows why hunting is bad and that animals can strike back. Moose scares the hunter with his snort and emerges victorious.

The delightful session ended with two short films that tell the stories of little children overcoming their fear of shadows in the night.

This session of Muskaan was presented by Shree Cement Ltd in association with Goethe Institut Max Mueller Bhavan



The Art Of Storytelling Through Performance



Priya Muthukumar



Prabha Khaitan Foundation's initiative **Muskaan** aims to focus on national culture and heritage through various educational activities and programmes organised for students across India. In July, the Foundation hosted an interactive storytelling session conducted by the educationist and

founder of *Storipur*, Priya Muthukumar. She is an avid storyteller who has been practising her craft for more than eight years. Her passion for storytelling and the joy it brings her are the reasons why Muthukumar agreed to conduct this session, where she could teach children of various age groups across India the value of connecting through stories.

The online session saw the participation of over 700 children belonging to Classes III to V from all over India. Ms Muthukumar began the session with fun activities to establish a bond with the children. The one-hour session was divided into three parts: two for short stories and one for the concluding message. The activities included an imaginary boat race and various games with magic words and phrases. Both the stories she told emphasised the importance of conserving our natural environment and wildlife. The first story revolved around a village with a

magical fruit tree, which only gave fruit when a few magic words were uttered. When the villagers failed to recall and say those magic words, a little girl called Minu came to their rescue. She repeated the spell and prayed to the tree for kindness. During her session, Ms Muthukumar used various objects and cut-outs as props, and even sang a special folk song to entertain the enthusiastic audience. She concluded the first part by talking about the need to conserve trees and forests, and the importance of loving, exploring and respecting nature.

The second story was about friendship and love. It involved a group of animals including a puppy, a firefly, an owl, a bat and a fox, all of whom set off one night on a small adventure in the forest. Ms Muthukumar invited the participation of the children by asking them to fetch coloured objects from their rooms and perform activities related to the story. She concluded the session by speaking about regional and local languages, dialects, how every language is beautiful and unique, and why children should learn about their cultural and linguistic heritage. The event ended on a high note, as the children were visibly ecstatic.

Muskaan touches the lives of children across the country, involving them in similar educational and cultural programmes. These are conducted by pioneers in teaching, social work, environmental conservation and other fields to educate children about social, cultural and environmental issues. People can always follow the Foundation and its channels on social networking platforms for updates and more details.

— Subhrajyoti Maitra
Class XII, Don Bosco Park Circus

Muskaan is presented by Shree Cement Ltd



Honouring the Roots of Incredible India

Prabha Khaitan Foundation has always been committed to all 'Vocal for Local' initiatives, with several of its endeavours dedicated precisely to the uplift of India's local and regional treasures. From upholding the beauty of local languages from every region of India to highlighting the importance of local handicrafts and artwork and the delicious varieties of cuisine from various parts of our country, the Foundation believes that nurturing a love for our local treasures will contribute directly to the preservation of our syncretic culture.

It was in celebration of this that the Foundation hosted two enchanting events in Jaipur recently.

The first event, on the evening of July 26, involved the maestro of the nagada, Nathulal Solanki, who conducted an icebreaker and team-building exercise titled 'The Nagada Jamming'. Shri Solanki, who has performed with many national and international artists, hails from the prestigious Pushkar Sangeet Gharana and has innumerable musical achievements to his name. He has mastered the Kuchamani *khayal* and performed it all over the world. His presence lit up the evening.

On the evening of July 27, the Foundation hosted a sumptuous dinner that saw Jaipur's most illustrious names meet and interact with the **Ehsaas** Women of Agra, Indore, Goa and Nagpur. The evening also witnessed the birthday celebrations of the Padma Bhushan awardee and mohan veena maestro, Pandit Vishwa Mohan Bhatt, and a special dance performance by the Padma Shri awardee, Gulabo Sapera.

Here are several glimpses into the two fun-filled and star-studded evenings.

Day 1



Manisha Jain, Priyanka Kothari, Surbhi Dhupar, Unnati Singh, Chandni Chopra, Vaishali Joshi, Parveen Tuli, Suchitra Sajid Dhanani, Monica Bhagwagar, Apra Kuchhal and Jyoti Kapoor



Nathulal Solanki performs with his troupe

Day 2



Manisha Jain, Priyanka Kothari, Unnati Singh, Suchitra Sajid Dhanani, Pandit Vishwa Mohan Bhatt, Padma Bhatt, Surbhi Dhupar, Vaishali Joshi, Chandni Chopra and Apra Kuchhal



Rukshmani Kumari



A performance by the Padma Shri awardee, Gulabo Sapera



Vishal and Pranav Virmani, Deepti and Puneet Kapoor, Megha Mattu, Nupur Kapoor, Moncrief Aviet and Rishi Mattu



Kulsum Mallik, Sunita Shekhawat and Richa Rathore



Kunal Kuchhal and Vishal Gupta

Vinnie Kakkar and Saurabh Kakkar



Dilip Shekhawat and Rajeev Arora

Growing Wings

India is massive, magical and multi-faceted; it is thus imperative to highlight the wealth of culture, literature and art present in every city. **Ehsaas**, one of the most prized initiatives of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, is identified with numerous accomplished and passionate women who have been instrumental in conducting the Foundation's activities in their own cities. In a memorable turn of events to mark the expansion of new initiatives in more Indian cities, members of the Foundation were recently in Jaipur to welcome into the **Ehsaas** family several distinguished women from Goa, Indore and Agra. Taking this story of growth even further, the Foundation members met Bashabi Fraser — the director of the Scottish Centre of Tagore Studies at Edinburgh Napier University — in Kolkata to discuss exciting collaborations in Scotland. They also met Sujata Sabnis, Neelam Seolekar and Amita Munot, all of whom are valued **Ehsaas** Women of Pune. Here are a few glimpses from the meetings in Jaipur and Kolkata.



PRABHA
KHAITAN
FOUNDATION

Kolkata

(L-R) Mansi Kamdar Shah, Bashabi Fraser, (Director, Scottish Centre of Tagore Studies at Edinburgh Napier University), Neil Fraser (Trustee, ScoTs), Manisha Jain, Sundeep Bhutoria and Cathy Tongper

Pune



(L-R) Sujata Sabnis, Neelam Seolekar and Amita Munot from Pune with Manisha Jain, Sundeep Bhutoria and Anindita Chatterjee

Goa



(L-R) Vaishali Joshi from Goa with Manisha Jain, Sundeep Bhutoria and Apra Kuchhal

PRABHA
KHATTA
FOUNDATION
आपले भाव, आपले नेत्र

Jaipur

Indore



(L-R) Surbhi Dhupar, Suchitra Sajid Dhanani and Unnati Singh from Indore with Manisha Jain, Sundeep Bhutoria and Apra Kuchhal

Nagpur



(L-R) Priyanka Kothari, Jyoti Kapoor, Monica Bhagwagar and Parveen Tuli from Nagpur with Manisha Jain, Sundeep Bhutoria and Apra Kuchhal

Agra



(L-R) Chandni Chopra from Agra with Manisha Jain, Sundeep Bhutoria and Apra Kuchhal

To Help Others is to Be Human



The world has never been in a greater humanitarian crisis than it is in now. The data published by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 2021 point out that the picture has indeed become grimmer over the last ten years. But before delving deeper into the minute details of the humanitarian crisis plaguing our world, it is important to understand what a humanitarian crisis is and why World Humanitarian Day is observed every year in August.

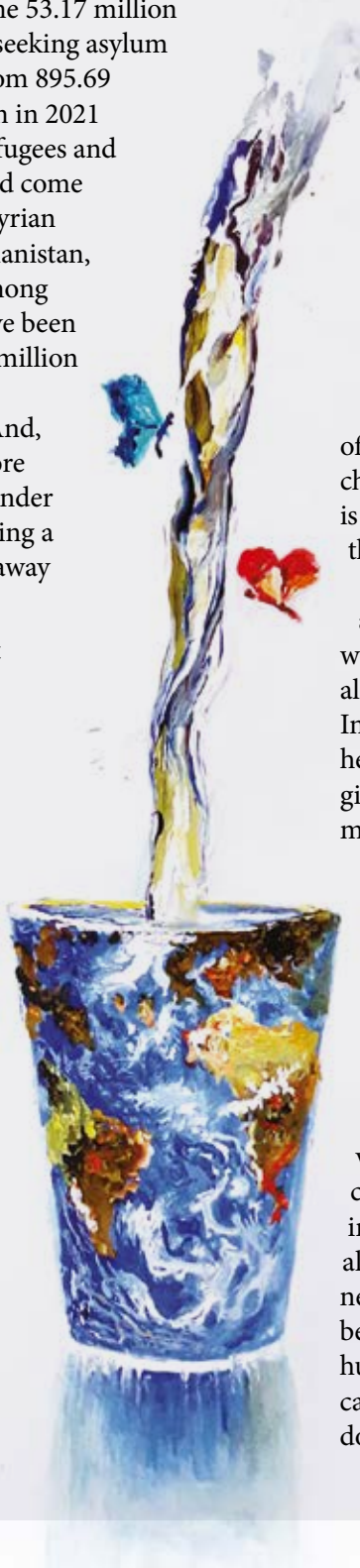
The United Nations defines a humanitarian crisis as “a singular event or a series of events that are threatening in terms of health, safety or well-being of a community or large group of people”; this may also be “an internal or external conflict and usually occurs throughout a large land area”. A humanitarian emergency, again, is defined as “an event or series of events that represents a critical threat to the health, safety, security or well-being of a community or other large group of people, usually over a wide area”.

A humanitarian crisis, thus, is not a new phenomenon. Wars, plagues and natural disasters have, time and again, thrown humanity into the throes of disease, death and destruction. The greatest

crises of the 20th century, the two World Wars, necessitated the formation of the UN itself and gave the world a stark picture of the atrocities that humankind is capable of inflicting on itself. This led to more and more people volunteering to help other people in need. However, things changed when, on August 19, 2003, a bomb attack on the Canal Hotel in Baghdad, Iraq, killed 22 humanitarian aid workers, including the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Sergio Vieira de Mello. Five years later, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution designating August 19 as World Humanitarian Day. However, despite all manner of preventive and preemptive measures, humanitarian crises around the world have not declined. If anything, there has been a steady increase, and the big picture now is nowhere close to the peaceful world envisaged a decade — or even two years — ago.

According to the UNHCR, the number of people who have been forcibly displaced as a result of “persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order” increased from 38.54 million in 2011 to 89.32 million in 2021. The number of refugees all over the world has increased from 15.2 million in 2011 to 27.12 million in 2021. While the number of internally displaced people in 2011 was 22.44 million, it has doubled to become 53.17 million in 2021. The number of people seeking asylum across the world has gone up from 895.69 thousand in 2011 to 4.63 million in 2021 across the world. Most of the refugees and the displaced people of the world come from just five countries — the Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan and Myanmar. Among the 89.3 million people who have been forced to flee their homes, 27.1 million are refugees seeking shelter and sustenance in other countries. And, in a shocking state of affairs, more than half of those refugees are under the age of 18. The chance of having a secure future has been wrested away from them.

In the light of these figures, it becomes imperative for global citizens to come together to help those in need. Mercifully, among overwhelming reports of people in dire situations, there are accounts of the stupendous rehabilitation work being done by organisations and individuals across the world in their own capacities. For instance, Neema Kaseje, a paediatric surgeon associated with the humanitarian organisation Doctors Without Borders, has dedicated her life to building paediatric surgical care delivery systems in Kenya, Congo, Liberia, the Central African Republic and Haiti. She even trained junior doctors in paediatric care, as a result



Each year, World Humanitarian Day focuses on a theme, and the theme for 2022 is ‘It Takes a Village’. This highlights the contributions of thousands of volunteers and professionals who deliver urgent health care, shelter, food, protection, water and so on to people in crisis-affected areas. Thus, keeping the theme for 2022 in mind, it also becomes our responsibility as Indians to help our fellow humans in our own ways. As Mother Teresa said, ‘If you can’t feed a hundred people, feed just one’

of which her team was able to double the number of children gaining access to life-saving surgical care. Similar is the contribution of Islam Iqbal, a social change leader in the Global Shapers community in Kabul, who is working for the protection of women’s rights in Afghanistan and providing emergency assistance to Venezuelan women living as migrants and asylum seekers. They are also helping displaced Ukrainian women find good jobs. In India, the Global Shapers are leading community health and humanitarian initiatives to ensure that women, girls and other people who menstruate have access to menstrual products. Then there is the story of Ayesha Vera Yu, CEO and Co-Founder of Advancement for Rural Kids (ARK), who left her lucrative career as an investment banker to help rural communities fight against hunger by co-investing with them to secure a self-sustaining future.

Each year, World Humanitarian Day focuses on a theme, and the theme for 2022 is ‘It Takes a Village’. This highlights the contributions of thousands of volunteers and professionals who deliver urgent health care, shelter, food, protection, water and so on to people in crisis-affected areas. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** has always worked tirelessly towards the uplift of people in need; thus, keeping the theme for 2022 in mind, it also becomes our responsibility as Indians to help our fellow humans in our own ways. As Mother Teresa said, “If you can’t feed a hundred people, feed just one.” We pledge to do our part in making the world a better place to live in.



Naveen Choudhary

हमारी सहभागिता के बिना राजनीति चेंज नहीं हो सकती: नवीन चौधरी



Aradhana Pradhan

मैं उस पर ह्यूमर लिखता था। सटायर लिखता था। उस दौरान दोस्तों से किस्से-कहानी शेयर करता था तो किसी दोस्त ने कहा ब्लॉग लिखा करो। महाराष्ट्र से उस दौरान बिहार के लोगों को भगा रहे थे, तो उस पर मैंने पहला ब्लॉग लिखा। मुझे जितने शब्द याद थे सब लिख दिए। उस समय उसे केवल तीन लोगों ने पढ़ा। उस समय मेरे जो बॉस थे उन्होंने कहा कि जिस भाषा में तुम बात करते हो उसी में लिखो। 2009-2014 के बीच हजारों लोग लिखने लगते थे। इसके बाद वेबसाइट पर आ गया। यहां से कान्फिडेंस आया। राजनीति में रुचि थी। राजस्थान की छात्र राजनीति पर लिखा। युवाओं के लिए लिखा। उस समय राजनीति को नीरस विषय माना जाता था।

राजनीति की विडंबना यही है कि यहां ट्रेनिंग नहीं होती, जबकि कायदे से बाकी जगह जैसे ट्रेनिंग की व्यवस्था है, यहां भी दी जानी चाहिए, क्योंकि एक राजनेताओं के हाथ में देश का भविष्य होता है।" यह कहना है लेखक नवीन चौधरी का। चौधरी **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** की ओर से आयोजित **कलम** रांची में बोल रहे थे। कार्यक्रम का आरंभ **अहसास** वूमेन की पूनम आनंद के स्वागत वक्तव्य से हुआ। उन्होंने फाउंडेशन की गतिविधियों की विस्तार से जानकारी दी और बताया कि कोलकाता में 1980 के दशक में स्थापित **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** देश और दुनिया के तैंतीस से भी अधिक शहरों में अपनी साहित्यिक और सांस्कृतिक गतिविधियों के साथ ही महिला सशक्तीकरण अभियान से जुड़ा है। '**कलम**' के अलावा फाउंडेशन '**किताब**', '**लफ़्ज़**', '**एक मुलाकात विशेष**', '**द राइट सर्कल**', '**सुर और साज**' तथा '**आखर**' जैसे कई कार्यक्रम आयोजित करता है। 'अपनी भाषा अपने लोग' की सोच से संचालित '**कलम**' लेखकों को उनके प्रशंसकों, पाठकों से सीधे जोड़ता है और संवाद का अनोखा मंच देता है। फाउंडेशन अब तक 600 के करीब ऑनलाइन इवेंट और 1500 से अधिक जमीनी इवेंट कर चुका है।

अतिथि वक्ता चौधरी को नई पीढ़ी का चर्चित लेखक, व्यंग्यकार और ब्लॉगर बताते हुए आनंद ने पुलिस, मीडिया एवं राजनीति के गठजोड़ पर आधारित उनके दूसरे उपन्यास '**ढाई चाल**' की चर्चा की और उनके पहले उपन्यास '**जनता स्टोर**' का भी जिक्र किया। चौधरी की पुस्तकों की लोकप्रियता, स्तंभ लेखन, प्राप्त सम्मान, मार्केटिंग कंसल्टेंसी, ओटीटी प्लेटफॉर्म के लिए उनके लेखन और सोशल मीडिया पर उनकी उपस्थिति का विस्तार से जिक्र करते हुए आनंद ने उनसे संवाद के लिए गुरुग्राम से पधारी **अहसास** वूमेन आराधना प्रधान को आमंत्रित किया। प्रधान ने चौधरी से पूछा कि आप अपनी स्मृति के सहारे बताएं कि सबसे पहले क्या लिखा था? आपके लेखन की शुरुआत कैसे हुई? चौधरी ने मजाकिया अंदाज में कहा सबसे पहले '**माई बेस्ट फ्रेंड**' निबंध लिखा था। लेकिन यह तय है कि कॉलेज के दिनों में ही इसकी शुरुआत हो गई थी। स्कूल में मैं पढ़ाई से थोड़ा दूर भागता था, इसकी वजह थी कि घर में पढ़ाई का माहौल अधिक था। पढ़ने से कोई हिचक नहीं थी।

चौधरी ने स्कूल-कॉलेज के दिनों के अपने अनुभवों को याद करते हुए कहा कि मैं सोशल मीडिया वाला राइटर हूं। मेरे लेखन की शुरुआत फेसबुक से शुरू हुई। फेसबुक जब नया-नया आया था तो

चौधरी के उपन्यास '**जनता स्टोर**' का जिक्र करते हुए प्रधान ने कॉलेज राजनीति में युवाओं को कैसे ट्रेड किया जाए यह सवाल पूछा। चौधरी का उत्तर था कि हमारे यहां ऐसा नहीं है जबकि विदेशों में कई जगह पब्लिक पॉलिसी के क्षेत्र में काम करने वालों को अवसर मिलता है। प्रधान की इस बात पर कि आंदोलन से नेता निकलते हैं, चौधरी ने कहा कि शायद पहले होता रहा हो पर अब ऐसा नहीं है। चौधरी का कहना था कि छात्र राजनीति कि वजह यह बताना था कि छात्र कॉलेज में जाने के बाद लोकतंत्र के सिस्टम को समझ सकें। जेपी आंदोलन के समय छात्रों की ताकत को समझा गया और बाद में सबने इस दिशा में काम किया गया। और फिर जाति इसमें घुस गई। चौधरी ने इंदिरा गांधी और नेरेन्द्र मोदी का भी उल्लेख किया और राजनीति में विजन को महत्त्व देने पर जोर दिया।

राजस्थान में बिहारी के सवाल पर चौधरी ने विस्तार से बताया कि मुझे चुनाव लड़ने के दौरान इसका अनुभव हुआ। उन्होंने बताया कि 2016 की घटना ने मुझे **जनता स्टोर** लिखने के लिए प्रेरित किया। उन्होंने कहा कि आज लोगों को गलत दिखाने की दौड़ जारी है। राजनीति आज विभाजन की वजह है। मैंने इसी को अपना विषय बनाया। चौधरी ने कहा कि राजनीति में समय का बहुत महत्त्व है। **जनता स्टोर** के पात्रों से जुड़े सवाल का उत्तर देते हुए चौधरी ने कहा कि यह मेरा पहला उपन्यास था। उस समय मैंने पाठक के नजरिए से नहीं सोचा था। लेकिन '**ढाई चाल**' में मैंने इसका ध्यान रखा।

चौधरी ने भाषा से जुड़े सवाल का उत्तर देते हुए कहा कि मेरा पात्र जिस इलाके का है, जिस परिवेश में है, वही भाषा बोलता है। **जनता स्टोर** और **ढाई चाल** की भाषा में यह अंतर है। उन्होंने कहा कि राजनीति में महिलाओं की कम रुचि इसलिए है कि इसे नकारात्मक शब्द माना जाता है। चौधरी ने सवाल-जवाब के सत्र में भी दर्शकों की जिज्ञासा का जवाब दिया और कहा कि हमारी सहभागिता के बिना राजनीति चेंज नहीं हो सकती। मीना सिन्हा ने प्रधान का और आनंद ने चौधरी का अभिनंदन किया और स्मृति चिह्न भेंट किया। सीमा सिंह ने धन्यवाद प्रकट किया।

अहसास वूमेन के सौजन्य से आयोजित **कलम** रांची के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट। हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर हैं चाणक्य बीएनआर और मीडिया पार्टनर हैं दैनिक जागरण



Poonam Anand



Seema Singh



Meena Sinha



Rashmi Sharma

Knowing Naval: The Childhood And Journey Of A Celebrated Actor



Deepti Naval



Simran Paintal

Sangam, Guide and Mera Naam Joker, to name a few.” When asked about her favourite films as an actor, she replied, “Yeh Ishq Nahi Asaan is my favourite simply because of the strong character that I had to portray. Mirch Masala and Main Zinda Hoon are some of my other works that I like.”

Naval credited her parents for the lessons they had taught her, all of which ultimately shaped her into the person she is, both professionally and personally. She shared some words of wisdom, which she had learned from her mother and hasn't forgotten yet. “Never extend a hand for

anything in life. Accept and get what is right for you.” Paintal requested Naval to offer some advice to ambitious girls today. “Stay strong!” declared Naval. “If you're strong in your head and you have conviction, hold on to that and do not, at any cost, give up on your dreams.”

“People think I was cut out for cinema even though I used to write a lot as a young girl. I am identified by the roles I have played, but that's not the person I am. I realised I can change that by writing. That's why, in my book, you'll find out what my childhood was like and who I went on to become. You'll feel what has nurtured me.”

Seema Chopra felicitated Naval as Syal ended the session with her closing note of thanks to the author and the moderator.

“I have an entire chapter in my book on enjoying womanhood, not because I'm a flagbearer of feminism but because I value being a woman,” said Deepti Naval, author of *A Country Called Childhood: A Memoir*. Naval was the guest at a special session of **The Write Circle** organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** in Jalandhar. The book is a chronicle of her life, detailing an unforgettable childhood, the experience of living through the tumultuous 1950s and 1960s, and an early love affair with cinema. She was in conversation with Simran Paintal, **Ehsaas** Woman of Jalandhar. Ruhi Walia Syal, **Ehsaas** Woman of Jalandhar, delivered the welcome speech and introduced the guests for the evening.

Apart from being a celebrated actor, Naval is also a director, writer and theatre artiste. Her iconic performances in award-winning films raised the bar for women in Indian cinema. Born in Ambarsar, now Amritsar, Naval began garnering accolades ever since her debut play, *EK Mulaqaat*, and quickly became a stalwart in theatre. After reading out a poem from her book, Naval went on to reveal details about its prologue, titled ‘Dance of the Songs’. “Only pure entertainment never fascinated me,” said Naval, while talking about her influences while growing up. “I was really moved by films like *Chhoti Behen*, *School Master*, *Jis Desh Mein Ganga Behti Hai*,



Ruhi Walia Syal



Seema Chopra



Gayatri



The audience at the event

The Write Circle Jalandhar was presented by Shree Cement Ltd in association with Dainik Jagran, Radisson Jalandhar and with the support of Ehsaas Women of Jalandhar



Love Letter to the Act of Growing Up



Sharmila Tagore



Deepti Naval

Deepti Naval's prowess as an actor is well known and her autobiography, *A Country Called Childhood: A Memoir*, bears testament to her skills as an author. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, under its **Kitaab** initiative, organised the launch of Naval's book at the India International Centre, Delhi. Dipali Bhasin, **Ehsaas** Woman of Delhi, introduced the guests, and the welcome note was delivered by Anindita Chatterjee, Executive Trustee of the Foundation. Kaveree Bamzai, an Indian journalist, author and critic, was in conversation with Naval.



Kaveree Bamzai

The legendary actress, Sharmila Tagore, and David Davidar of Aleph Book Company were the chief guests at the launch. They graced the occasion with their kind words for the author. Tagore, who has worked closely with Naval, remarked that it was "an honour and a privilege" to be launching this book, especially since it, at the very outset, "makes one wonder who Deepti Naval really is and what she will be like when she grows up". "Deepti Naval, being a gentle, soft-spoken yet a gritty person with a clear vision who constantly expands her boundaries, delves into her childhood with admirable honesty and artistic vision," observed Tagore. "This results in a mesmerising kaleidoscope of evocative vignettes".

Davidar was all praise for the author. "The sustained

gestation effort shows the beauty of the stories, insights and descriptions in the book," he said. "It is rare for someone who excels at one form of creative endeavour to be able to do so in another, but Deepti Naval has been able to do so effortlessly."

The session commenced with Bamzai reading out a paragraph from the memoir, which underlined how being an actor had always been Naval's destiny, given that cinema had been embedded in her family life. How did the memoir help Naval discover herself? "My writing gave me a perspective that I did not have earlier," said Naval. "I tried to write about my childhood as candidly as possible, which gave me a chance to look at and observe myself, and be able to trace where I was going. It was a realisation about myself as well as the people around me. The process was almost cathartic."

The book is, in fact, "a love letter to Amritsar", a place Naval fondly remembers as an admixture of the volatile atmosphere of the 1950s and the 1960s as well as all the sights and sounds that made up the experience of her childhood. Not only was the memory of her childhood informed by the knowledge of significant events — the uprooting of her grandparents' families owing to the Partition and the Second World War — but also by other facts, such as how her paternal grandfather, a criminal

lawyer, would watch a few scenes of a movie every day to unwind after a long day at work.

“For me, the migration of people from Burma through the forests of Manipur after the Japanese invasion was an event not spoken about enough,” said Naval. “Neither was the Jalalabad incident, where 300 Hindus were massacred. This had an impact on my grandfather. I also remember the story of the Muslim *tongawalla* who saved the lives of three girls, including that of my mother. These stories demonstrate the sorrow and tragedy on both sides.”

But these stories are also juxtaposed with Naval’s memories of being a little girl who enjoyed talking to a hatstand and who felt great triumph in being able to see her face in the mirror. These stories, of a young girl whose adulation for actresses like Sadhana, Sharmila Tagore and Meena Kumari would lead her to embody the traits of the characters she watched on screen, reminded the audience

My writing gave me a perspective that I did not have earlier. I tried to write about my childhood as candidly as possible, which gave me a chance to look at and observe myself, and be able to trace where I was going. It was a realisation about myself as well as the people around me. The process was almost cathartic

that *A Country Called Childhood* is essentially a tale of growing up. Bamzai observed that Naval’s “visual memory is highly powerful”; it encourages the participation of the reader in enjoying a glimpse into her life. Despite dealing with difficult issues, *A Country Called Childhood*, at its heart, is a book that is “full of life, where one can sense Amritsar and the joys and sorrows of a family”.

The session concluded with an engaging Q&A round with the audience. Anvita Pradhan, **Ehsaas** Woman of

Patna, felicitated Tagore, while Preeti Gill, **Ehsaas** Woman of Amritsar, felicitated Naval. Anantmala Potdar, **Ehsaas** Woman of Delhi, delivered the formal vote of thanks on behalf of the Foundation.

*This session of **Kitaab** Delhi was presented by Shree Cement Ltd in association with Aleph and with the support of **Ehsaas** Women of NCR*



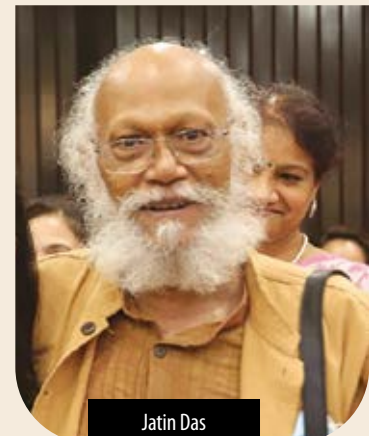
Karuna Goenka, Dipali Bhasin, Anantmala Potdar, Anindita Chatterjee, Preeti Gill and Anvita Pradhan



Kiran Bedi



David Davidar



Jatin Das

A Memoir Of An Extraordinary Childhood



Celebrated actor and worker Deepti Naval did not want her career as an actor to be her only identity. She chose to pursue her love for writing and tell the story of her journey that begins from her childhood — a journey to reveal who she really is. Naval now believes that writing her book, *A Country Called Childhood: A Memoir*, was the best thing that happened to her.

Prabha Khaitan Foundation, under its initiative **Kitaab**, collaborated with Phulkari Women of Amritsar to launch Naval's book in Amritsar. The star-studded event saw well-known personalities eagerly waiting for the unveiling of yet another masterpiece by Naval. Sheetal Khanna, **Ehsaas** Woman of Amritsar, moderated the event and Praneet Bubber, **Ehsaas** Woman of Amritsar, delivered the welcome note.

A Country Called Childhood was launched in the presence of actor Richa Chadha, who was also the chief guest at the event. Also present were Paramveer Singh, General Manager of Taj Swarna, Inderbir Singh Nijjar, a member of the Amritsar legislative assembly from the Aam Aadmi Party, and Tina Aggarwal, President of Phulkari Women of Amritsar. "Deepti Naval has had a great artistic influence on me as an actor," said Chadha. "*Main Zinda Hoon* reshaped my perspective to help me understand my mother better. That's how art influences you and your relationships. I love the title of the memoir, and it is an absolute honour for me as a fan to launch a book by Deeptiji. She is



Richa Chadha



Deepti Naval

I was born at a time when India was highly unsettled owing to Partition and the Second World War, so I delved deep while writing about my childhood, where a huge four-storey house in Amritsar had become my entire world. The Partition era affected my entire family. My grandfather was a criminal lawyer who was getting displaced, my father studied in Lahore and my mother fled Burma after the Japanese invasion during the Second World War. She travelled through jungles to reach India

a national treasure, a consummate artiste, actor and author."

Jaspal Singh Sandhu, Vice-Chancellor of Guru Nanak Dev University, felicitated Chadha before Preeti Gill, **Ehsaas** Woman of Amritsar, took the stage to converse with the guests. Gill defined the book as "Deepti Naval's love affair with Amritsar". "I was born at a time when India was highly unsettled owing to Partition and the Second



Preeti Gill

World War,” remarked Naval. “So I delved deep while writing about my childhood, where a huge four-storey house in Amritsar had become my entire world. The Partition era affected my entire family. My grandfather was a criminal lawyer who was getting displaced, my father studied in Lahore and my mother fled Burma after the Japanese invasion during the Second World War. She travelled through jungles to reach India.”

Gill asked Naval to reveal a little more about her mother. “We had a special bond,” responded the actor. “She used to tell me stories of Burma, its Buddhist influence and a simple lifestyle, all of which fascinated me. She taught me how to sketch, noticed the little things in life and showed empathy. From her, I learned how to observe people and how to put myself in others’ shoes to understand how they feel. I believe that this greatly helped me as an actor. I still remember what she told me when I was young. She said, ‘You’ll get what’s rightfully yours. Do not extend your hand for more.’”

What about Naval’s ‘runaway story’? “I was tired of my image as a sweet, innocent girl,” revealed Naval. “At the same time, I admit that it was stupid of me to run away from home to go see the mountains in Kashmir. I was drawn to Kashmir because I saw several movies and songs that were filmed there. But what can you expect when a student runs away in her school uniform? The police caught me at Pathankot station because they smelled



Tina Aggarwal, Praneet Bubber and Sheetal Khanna

something fishy. I enjoy being a woman and don’t hold back, but in hindsight I realise that it could have been disastrous. It was my parents I felt bad for. I shouldn’t have put them through that kind of mental trauma. I urge no daughter to do that.”

On her passion for films, Naval said, “My love affair with films began at home. My family had nobody who didn’t love cinema. My grandfather would watch movies to unwind after a hectic day in court. I loved Meena Kumari; maybe I was obsessed with her! I used to study her intricately, watching her every move on screen. The way she expressed emotions really inspired me. That’s why I always want to play characters that let me connect with people emotionally.”

In the concluding segment, the author interacted with the audience during a Q&A session. Sandhu felicitated Naval before Aggarwal brought the event to a close with the vote of thanks.



Deepti Naval calling upon Babulal, who is from the ‘Mochistaan’ she mentions in her book



Jaspal Singh Sandhu and Inderbir Singh Nijjar

*This session of **Kitaab Amritsar** was presented by Shree Cement Ltd in association with Phulkari Women of Amritsar, Aleph, Dainik Jagran, Taj Swarna Amritsar and with the support of **Ehsaas Women of Amritsar***



Paramveer Singh, Kanika Mehra, Aarti Khanna with Richa Chadha and Deepti Naval



Makarand Deshpande, Shabana Azmi and Deepti Naval with Naval's book

A Childhood That Made Strong Woman

It was an evening of childhood reminiscences and a look into the journey of a renowned screen actor, theatre artiste and writer. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, under its **Kitaab** initiative, organised a special session with the legendary Deepti Naval to launch her book, *A Country Called Childhood: A Memoir*, which chronicles her childhood days and experiences, all of which shaped her into the person she is today. The chief guest for the evening was veteran actor Shabana Azmi, who joined Naval on stage to unveil the book. Ketki Bhatia, **Ehsaas** Woman of Mumbai, moderated the proceedings, and Manisha Jain, the branding and communications chief of the Foundation, delivered the welcome note. Veteran actor and theatre stalwart Makarand Deshpande was in conversation with Naval. He is renowned for his work in

theatre as well as his films in Hindi, Marathi, Malayalam, Telugu, Tamil and Kannada.

The event was attended by eminent personalities like Poonam Dhillon, Zarina Wahab, Divya Dutta, Mita Vashisht, Kirti Kulhari, Varsha Usgaonkar, Sonali Kulkarni, Aparna Sen, Kanwaljit Singh and Anoop Soni. As an actor, Naval is known for her scintillating performances in movies such as *Yeh Ishq Nahi Asaan*, *Chashme Baddoor*, *Mirch Masala*, *Kamla*, *Leela* and *Firaq*. Even in theatre, she caught everyone's eye right from her stage debut and established herself as a versatile theatre artiste.

Deshpande set the tone for the evening when he said, "Music may not need words, but words are all that books

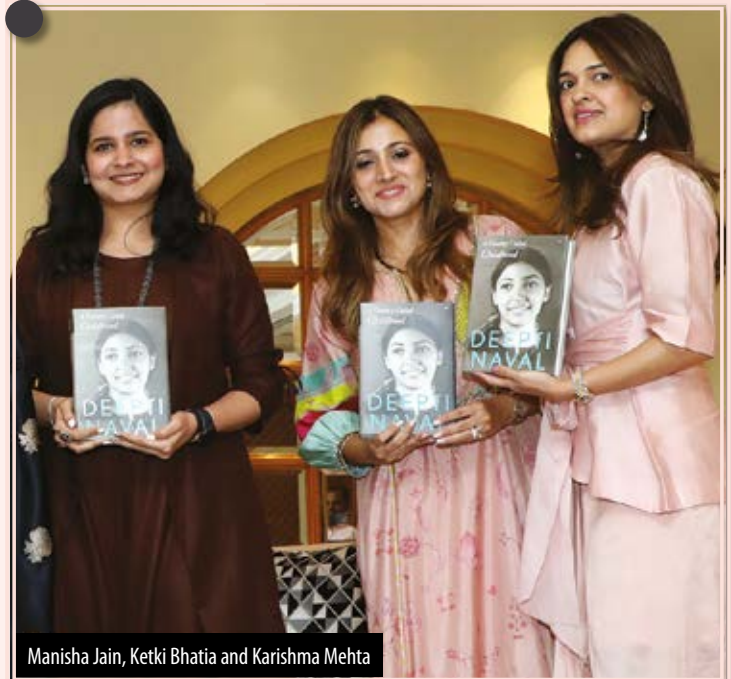
have, and the title of this book resonates with the words written inside. With experience, our understanding changes and we learn to analyse emotions better. This can create marvels, and while reading *A Country Called Childhood*, I felt the same emotions. It made me laugh and cry.” He went on to read a few lines from a poem in the book, after which Azmi read the prologue of the book, titled ‘Dance of the Songs’. Naval then read out an excerpt from a chapter about a stormy night in 1952 — the night she was born.

“I have a lot of stories to tell; stories that nurture me,” said Naval, when asked about her life. “I have found a safe place in my own inner world. I remember the stories my mother used to tell me about Burma. She fled and came to India when the Japanese invaded Burma during World War II. And I remember trying to experience what she must have experienced, as if it was my story.”

The chapter titled *Crack in the Picture-Perfect Frame*



Anup Soni and Ritu Babbar with Deepti Naval



Manisha Jain, Ketki Bhatia and Karishma Mehta

Music may not need words, but words are all that books have, and the title of Naval’s book resonates with the words written inside. With experience, our understanding changes and we learn to analyse emotions better. This can create marvels, and while reading *A Country Called Childhood*, I felt the same emotions. It made me laugh and cry

– Makarand Deshpande



Aparna Sen and Mita Vashisth



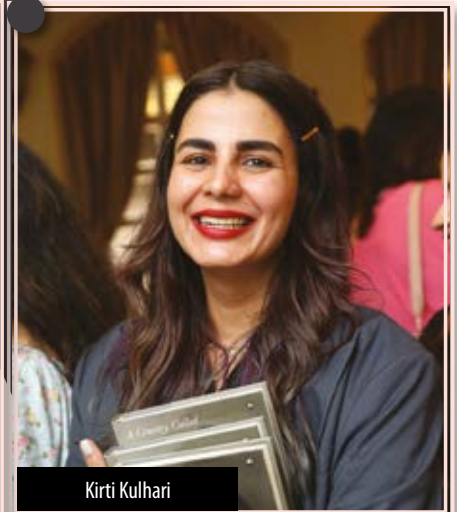
Shabana Azmi, Makarand Deshpande and Deepti Naval in conversation

was discussed. The stories recounted in the chapter were the result of Naval witnessing a tumultuous period in the relationship between her parents — a phase that scarred her deeply. As a child, Naval failed to find security in any relationship. “It was childhood trauma,” she said. “That’s why writing down my memories has been profoundly exhilarating and liberating for me. But recording the painful experiences of my parents’ lives meant that I was reliving those moments, and that was a little unpleasant.”

On the subject of her acting career, Naval revealed how disappointed she



Zarina Wahab



Kirti Kulhari

I was very disappointed with the way in which the industry had typecast me. I believe that this took away my real identity. It’s writing that helped me trace and redefine my true identity. Given that I started writing well before I started acting, it was extremely important for me to nurture my internal creative process

– Deepti Naval



Divya Dutta

was with the way the industry had typecast her. She believed that this took away her real identity. “It’s writing that helped me trace and redefine my true identity,” she said. “Given that I started writing well before I started acting, it was extremely important for me to nurture my internal creative process.”

Naval gleefully shared the story of running away from home to visit Kashmir. She had watched movies and songs filmed in Kashmir and had fallen in love with the place. But her adventure didn’t last long as she was stopped by the police, who suspected that something was wrong, when they saw a young girl in a school uniform wandering around alone. Naval acknowledged the trauma

her parents went through for the few hours that she went missing, and urged everyone to resist the urge to make the same mistake.

The session concluded with the author interacting with the audience and answering questions about her book, her career and her experiences. Karishma Mehta, **Ehsaas** Woman of Mumbai, delivered the vote of thanks and joined Bhatia in felicitating the author, the chief guest, and the moderator.

*This session of **Kitaab** Mumbai was presented by Shree Cement Ltd in association with Aleph and Lokmat and with the support of **Ehsaas** Women of Mumbai*



Poonam Dhillon



Kanwaljit Singh



Susmita Mukherjee



Varsha Usgaonkar



Sonali Kulkarni



Eminent personalities in the audience



Priya Malik

A Trip Down Memory Lane



The resplendent actor, Deepti Naval, was the star of the evening when **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** organised a special session of **The Write Circle** to build a conversation around Naval's autobiography, *A Country Called Childhood: A Memoir*. Zarqa Jain, **Ehsaas** Woman of Ludhiana, welcomed Naval and the guests while Deepika Bhalla, a jewellery designer, traveller, photographer and writer, moderated the event.

When asked to read out an excerpt from her book, Naval read from the preface, titled 'Dance of the Songs'. This gave the audience a glimpse of the rich imagery Naval has used to paint a vivid picture of her childhood. "In my book, I reproduce the images just the way I remember them," said Naval. "I have tried to remain accurate to my memory." While talking about her childhood, Naval recounted the first time she felt empathy: it was when she saw a small boy ask for milk from Naval's mother, who used to distribute milk periodically. She went on to draw from this experience during her career as an actress, especially when she needed to empathise with characters to portray them faithfully. "I was putting myself in the place of somebody else and feeling what they could have been feeling at the time," explained Naval. "This went a long way for me in my acting career."

Naval also talked about how she was born on a stormy night in a waterlogged hospital ward, and how, when she was a child, her father would have to accompany her with a lamp during her nightly trips to the washroom. Recalling her days at a convent and all the memories associated with that time, she spoke candidly about adolescent crushes and how she eventually came to admire the colour green. "I have written the book, not from the perspective of what I am now, but what I felt back then," she said, highlighting the innocence of the stories in the book. "I have put down all my childhood



Deepika Bhalla

moments with full honesty."

Naval also shared some of the more difficult moments from her childhood — for instance, she would find herself getting anxious when her parents argued, because she believed their relationship to be ideal. She also spoke about how her mother never really moved on from the death of an eight-month-old boy (one among the triplets; the two others did not survive after birth) and how she and her friends were the victims of incessant street sexual harassment. "I wanted

to write my book like a screenplay, recreating the scenes for all of you to read and feel what I was feeling," said Naval. She promised her readers a journey into the age of innocence.

The evening came to an end with an enriching Q&A session with the audience. Pallavi Pahwa, **Ehsaas** Woman of Ludhiana, delivered the formal note of thanks on behalf of the Foundation, after which Naval and Bhalla were felicitated.

The Write Circle Ludhiana was presented by Shree Cement Ltd in association with Radisson Blu Ludhiana and with the support of Ehsaas Women of Ludhiana



Pallavi Pahwa



Zarqa Jain



Divya Oswal



The audience at the event



Deepti Naval

A Collection of Vivid Childhood Memories

“You’re a brilliant storyteller because you bring out pain, love and passion in your work.” These were the words of Vivek Atray, who was the moderator at another memorable session of **The Write Circle** organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** at Taj Chandigarh to honour the legendary **Deepti Naval**.

Sharmita Bhinder, **Ehsaas** Woman of Chandigarh, delivered the welcome note before introducing the renowned Naval — who has written her memoir, *A Country Called Childhood: A Memoir* — and Atray, a former IAS officer, author, and motivational speaker. Naval and Atray spoke at length about *A Country Called Childhood*.

When asked about her motivation behind her storytelling — both as an author and as an actor — Naval responded that the best part of her childhood was listening to stories about Burma from her mother every night. “It was a ritual,” said Naval. “She used to tell me about Mandalay, where she lived, and her experiences, especially of how she came to India. Those stories stayed with me and played a huge role in me being a storyteller, or even an actor.”

So what lends to her skills as an actor and her excellent understanding of characters? “Actors draw inspiration from their own lives, their memories, and their emotions. As a creative person, one tends to interpret life and reproduce what the mind retains. When I was young, my sister used



Vivek Atray



Deepti Naval



Sharmita Bhinder



Manisha Jain



Shalu Goel



Nirupama Dutt

to force me to playact roles as she pleased. Later, I realised that these were nothing short of acting workshops that indirectly helped me hone my acting skills,” said the author.

Before Naval took questions from the audience, Atray asked her about actors who inspired her as when she was a child. “I was a fan of Asha Parekh. The songs of her films turned out to be my biggest inspiration,” replied Naval. “Waheeda Rahman was another actor whom I looked up to. Her film *Teesri Kasam* had a huge impact on me and my desire to become an actor. Most of their films showed the journey of life, which is something that resonates in my stories.”

The session drew to a close with Manisha Jain, **Ehsaas** Woman of Chandigarh, delivering the formal vote of thanks and Shalu Goel, **Ehsaas** Woman of Chandigarh, felicitating Naval and Atray on behalf of the Foundation.

*The Write Circle Chandigarh was presented by Shree Cement Ltd in association with Taj Chandigarh and with the support of **Ehsaas** Women of Chandigarh*



Deepthi Naval



A Tale 25 Years In The Making

Deepthi Naval wears many hats. Apart from being a legendary actor, she is also director, writer, painter and photographer. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** organised a special session of **The Write Circle** in Raipur with Naval as the guest. Aanchal Garcha, **Ehsaas** Woman of Raipur and the founder of Budding Bookworms and co-founder of Oorja Ladies Society and Literati, welcomed Naval and the moderator of the event, Kalpana Choudhary, **Ehsaas** Woman of Raipur.

Naval's prowess as a writer was evident in her first collection of poems, *Black Wind and Other Poems*, which was published in 2004. Her latest literary venture, *A Country Called Childhood: A Memoir*, bears further testament to her literary acumen. "The memoir is a metaphor for the childhood I experienced in Amritsar," said Naval. "It was a childhood filled with love, adventure, mystery, tragedy, and joy."

The conversation centred around Naval's writing process. "I started writing the book 25 years ago," confessed Naval. "After completing four chapters, I realised that the book required more research. This



Kalpana Chaudhary



Aanchal Garcha



Shrishti Trivedi

made me trace my journey from Lahore to Amritsar. While doing my research, it dawned on me that the stories of the women in my family would need to be prominently featured." Naval also said that the influence of the stories of her mother, and her two grandmothers proved essential in the conception of the book. The tales of the hardships these women bore and the strength they displayed moulded Naval into the spirited woman she is known to be

Naval also spoke about her upbringing and her family. "My father, Uday Naval, was a professor of English at the City College of New York," said the author. "As a literature enthusiast, he also wrote short stories. My mother, on the other hand, was a painter, and her wide-ranging interests included dance and theatre. In fact, my initiation into the world of art happened in my own home: I was exposed to paintings, literature, classical music and Kathak."

Apart from being a chronicle of Naval's life, the book also focuses on Partition, the Japanese invasion of Burma and the Jalalabad massacre. However, it also brings to life the picture of Naval's Punjabi family, the unique smells, sights and sounds that made up her childhood. The session came to an end with Shraddha Trivedi, an educator and businesswoman, felicitating Naval, and Shrishti Trivedi, **Ehsaas** Woman of Raipur and a lawyer-turned-entrepreneur, delivering the vote of thanks.



Neha Shri Shimal and Harman Garcha

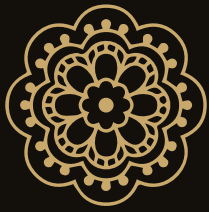


Amit Sharma and Sushil Agarwal

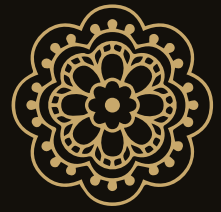


Karan Kapoor

The Write Circle Raipur was presented by Shree Cement Ltd in association with Hyatt Raipur and with the support of **Ehsaas** Women of Raipur



Partnering With the Pride of Jalandhar



Arun Kaul, General Manager,
Radisson Jalandhar

Gautam Kapoor, the visionary entrepreneur, conceived the idea of a 5-star hotel in Jalandhar as early as 1996. After joining hands with the United States's Carlson Group of Hotels in 1998, Kapoor's dream was finally realised when Hotel Radisson started operations in Jalandhar in 2001. A part of the Radisson Hotel Group, Radisson

Jalandhar massively boosted international tourism in the city owing to its impeccable hospitality, top-notch service, and world-class amenities. Today, it has become the 'pride of Jalandhar'. The Radisson Jalandhar is where **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** hosts its Jalandhar events under its initiatives.

The Radisson Jalandhar likes to look after its guests' wellness. The health club Evolve allows guests to remain active by exercising in the gym, or relax by taking a dip in the swimming pool. The hotel also has massage and spa services, a men's salon, and a beauty parlour. Famous for its gourmet meals, Tiffany's 24 Hours Coffee Shop serves both Indian and international cuisines, prepared by the finest chefs. Find a glass of sparkling wine, innovative cocktails as well as refreshing mocktails for teetotallers at JD's, a sports bar.

The restaurant Noble House is an Asian cuisine hub not only for guests from outside the city but also for local residents of Jalandhar who frequent



The gorgeous interiors of Radisson Jalandhar

the hotel. Radisson Jalandhar's The Great Kabab Factory is immensely popular and sought after for its kababs and curries, and a menu that changes every day, curated by top chefs. There are also banquet facilities for business meetings and social events. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, which works tirelessly for humanitarian causes and the uplift of arts and culture, hosts all its Jalandhar-based events at Radisson Jalandhar.

The aesthetically designed Radisson Jalandhar is constantly reinventing and upscaling itself. Thanks to General Manager Arun Kaul's expertise and Sunil Vij's financial acumen, Radisson Jalandhar has been maintaining the highest standards of hospitality in the city, making it the most attractive destination for visitors.



The beauty of Radisson
Jalandhar as dusk falls

Directorspeak

It is an honour for Radisson Hotel, Jalandhar to collaborate with **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. **The Write Circle** has been an outstanding platform and an exceptional initiative for writers, journalists and novelists to bring substantial knowledge to, and encourage interaction with, the people. Our very first association with the Foundation began on May 25 this year. We had the splendid opportunity of hosting the renowned author, Kiran Manral, followed by the legendary actor, Deepti Naval and the eminent journalist, Barkha Dutt, recently. This collaboration has strengthened into a great mix of knowledge and entrepreneurship: a stepping stone for the invited guests to explore their minds.

We are thankful to Ruhi Walia Syal for initiating this collaboration. This alliance between Radisson Jalandhar and the Foundation will always facilitate a constant exchange of ideas and thoughts, which, in turn, will help us achieve a better future for our fellow citizens of Jalandhar. We look forward to many engaging sessions with well-known and esteemed personalities from different walks of life. We at Radisson Jalandhar offer our guests an experience of a lifetime; experiences that we hope will resonate with your dreams.

— **Sabina Kapoor and Divya Kapoor Sardana**
Directors, Radisson Jalandhar



Sabina Kapoor and Divya Kapoor Sardana



Barkha Dutt and Divya Kapoor Sardana



Kiran Manral and Divya Kapoor Sardana

Onwards & Upwards

When it comes to promoting art, culture and education as well as providing a platform for the performing arts in India, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** has always looked to push its own boundaries. But it had also been the vision of the founder, the late Dr Prabha Khaitan, to empower women and provide them with the opportunity to define their own identities. That dream has taken shape with **Ehsaas**, an initiative that brings together talented women from different cities and backgrounds who work for societal good. Over the years, **Ehsaas** Women have become indispensable to the Foundation with their creativity, drive and dynamism. As the Foundation seeks to expand its horizons, let us meet our **Ehsaas** Women from Indore, who shall be launching the Foundation's initiatives in their beautiful city soon!

Suchitra Sajid Dhanani



Born and brought up in Vadodara, Suchitra Sajid Dhanani is a hotelier by profession. She founded the Barbeque Nation chain of restaurants with her husband, Sajid Dhanani. With a Bachelor's degree in home science and a Master's degree in social work from the erstwhile Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Dhanani had the freedom to choose her own path. She was born to parents who cherished the birth of a girl child.

As the daughter of a painter and a sculptor, Dhanani was exposed to several art forms. She is a self-taught potter; alongside pottery, hand embroidery, gardening and working with Indian textiles are her passions. A feminist at heart and a lover of nature and cleanliness, Dhanani's motto in life is to stop the wastage of limited natural resources such as water and electricity. Having conducted Maati festivals several times under the aegis of her pottery studio Akira, she wants to promote studio and professional pottery that the people of Indore are interested in.

A permanent trustee of the Indore Institute of Head and Neck Oncology, Dhanani works closely with Dr Digpal Dharkar to serve poor cancer patients at the Indore Cancer Foundation Charitable Trust. With her administrative skills, she contributes to the smooth running of the cancer hospital.



Surbhi Dhupar

A postgraduate degree holder in marketing and management, Surbhi Dhupar provides sports and fitness solutions to clients across India. A founder-member of the Indore Management Association's Professional Women Forum and an active member of FICCI FLO's Indore chapter, Dhupar is a keen learner and wants to work for the preservation of art, culture and literature. For her, art and culture are the means through which anyone can express themselves safely, an avenue that also shapes society's beliefs and aspirations.



Unnati Singh

Unnati Singh is the director of UNNATI SINGH Beauty Academy & Salon. Having run her academy for more than 29 years and trained over half a million students and professionals, she has played an important role in shaping the grooming industry in India. A trusted advisor, mentor and creative expert, Singh is a sought-after international beauty specialist and an educator. An industry expert, she has been a Brand Ambassador (Education) with Wella Professionals and L'Oréal Professionnel, represented in 21 countries. She is currently associated with Framesi Italy as a Brand Ambassador (Education). She has also mentored students of Calyx Academy of Professional Hair Designing, Mumbai, who are beginning to make their mark in the hair designing industry.

Having mentored students from the transgender community, Singh has been tirelessly engaged in educating and promoting new talents and introducing them to the industry. She has been part of several beauty pageants and Fashion Week events such as the Times Fashion Week, and has graced award shows such as the Indian Television Academy Awards in 2019. She is an avid reader who spends her leisure time writing poems.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE



Barkha Dutt



Dona Ganguly



Joya Mitra



Natasha Ballal



Nitin Gadkari



Rameshwar
Vaishnav



Rituparna
Chatterjee



Susmita Mukherjee



Tuhin A. Sinha



Urvashi Warman

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