



Prabha प्रभा

September 2022 | Issue 39

The Prabha Khaitan Foundation Chronicle

We owe everything to our motherland – the land of bravery and love. In this issue of *Prabha*, we look back on India's rich cultural, culinary and literary legacy. Through conversations, music, food, art and books, we celebrate being independent and free as a nation and as a people for three quarters of a century

Elixir of Freedom

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Prabha
प्रभा



MANISHA JAIN
Communications & Branding Chief,
Prabha Khaitan Foundation

Celebrating Our Nation

Paulo Coelho said, “Culture makes people understand each other better”, and nothing rings truer for a country like India than these words. Food, music, traditions, handicrafts and art have inspired and enriched all of us since our birth. Few other countries, perhaps, present such cultural and linguistic diversity, and **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, through its initiatives, has been promoting India’s culture, especially its local cuisines and craftsmanship. In this issue of *Prabha*, we shine a light on all the varied preparations of food unique to each region that are offered to our guests, and on the handcrafted gifts that become an indispensable part of the Foundation’s events.

Now, with India celebrating 75 years of Independence, the Government of India has taken this journey of pride further with its initiative, Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, which highlights India’s rich cultural heritage. The Foundation echoes this spirit. We hope you will read about how the Foundation and its associates celebrated this milestone, through festivals, art exhibitions and conversations.

Children, whose sound development becomes the cornerstone of a progressive society, are a precious part of the Foundation’s vision for progress. Not only does this issue feature several glimpses of the work done under **Muskaan**, which aims to popularise literature and culture among children, but also the announcement of the launch of the Muskaan Literature Festival, which would exclusively feature child authors.

The Foundation has always worked towards empowering women and this issue of *Prabha* features several trailblazing women such as Barkha Dutt and Susmita Mukherjee. Hospitality, too, is integral to the Foundation’s work, and we are happy to highlight our partnership with Taj Swarna, Amritsar, which upholds the unique essence of the Punjabi city — modern, cultural and full of history.

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!

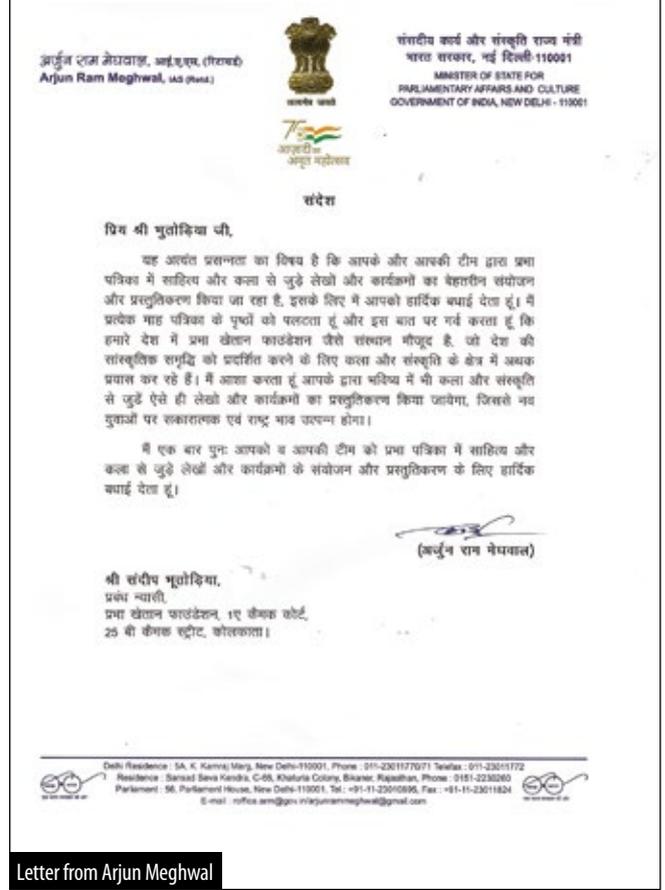
Manisha Jain

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]



Arjun Ram Meghwal, the Union Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs and Culture, reads an issue of Prabha



Letter from Arjun Meghwal

Happy Birthday

Prabha WISHES EHSAA'S WOMEN BORN IN SEPTEMBER

2nd September



Shweta Bansal

2nd September



Priyanka Kothari

4th September



Poonam Anand

7th September



Amita Munot

8th September



Kanika Agarwal

8th September



Pooja Khanna

9th September



Neelam Seolekar

11th September



Vidya Singh

17th September



Kirti Kirdatt

23rd September



Shalu Goel

29th September



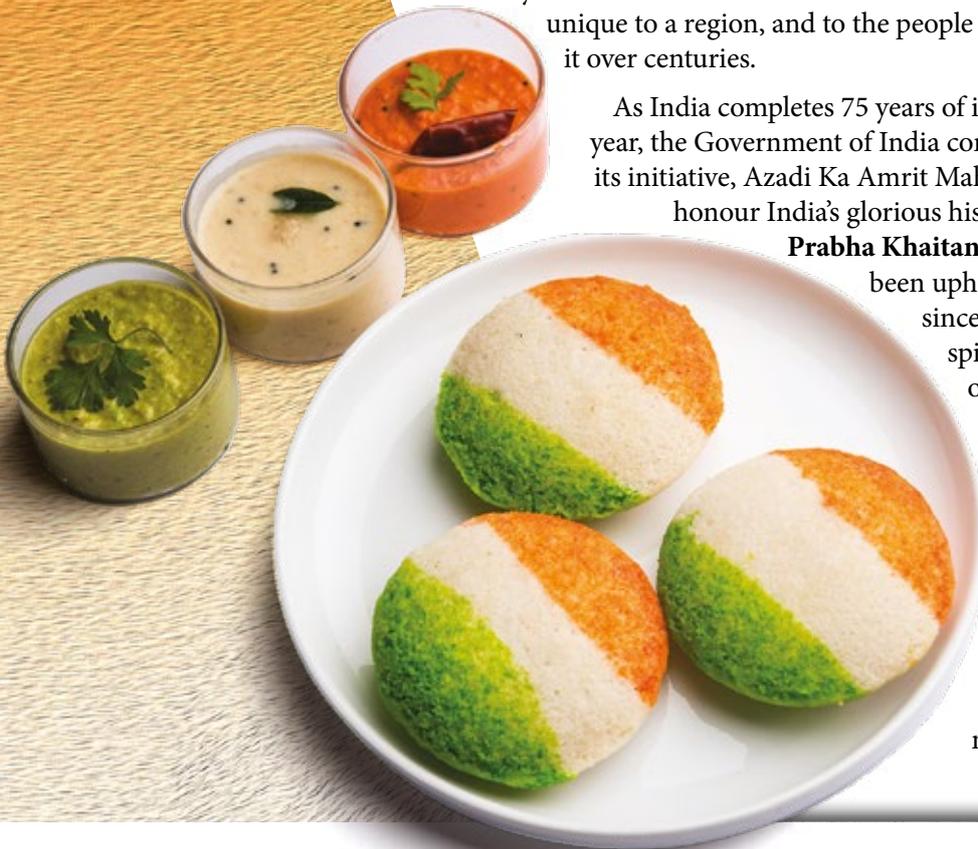
Pallavi Pahwa

Potpourri of Culture

When one thinks of India, one is inevitably met with the image of a country blessed with awe-inspiring diversity. Languages, cultures and cuisines change with every state, and if the sheer breadth of the different facets of the country are to be considered, they would hardly seem like they belong to the same land. From mountains, seas and deserts to plateaus and breathtaking valleys, India is a country like no other. Thus, it is only natural that it boasts rich cuisines and handicrafts, each unique to a region, and to the people who have preserved it over centuries.

As India completes 75 years of its independence this year, the Government of India commemorates it with its initiative, Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, which seeks to honour India's glorious history, culture and people.

Prabha Khaitan Foundation, which has been upholding India's cultural legacy since its inception, echoes the spirit of this initiative. Not only are local cuisines from various parts of the country featured in its events, but local handicrafts form the bulk of the gifts presented to guests and illustrious personalities who participate in these events. In this issue, we focus on the cuisines and handicrafts from different corners of the country, all of which lend to India much of its uniqueness.

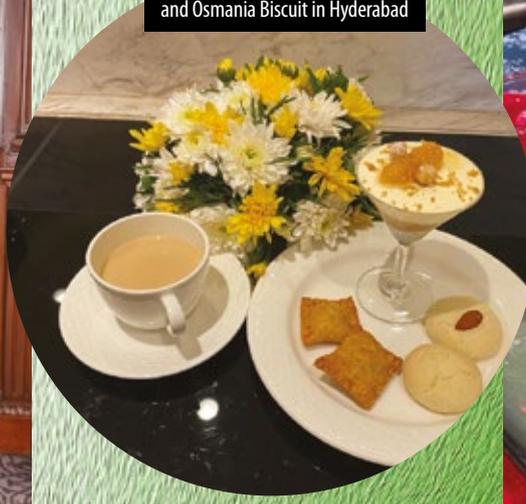


India's Top Dining

Irani *chai*, Qubbani custard, *luqmi* and Osmania Biscuit in Hyderabad



Jhal muri in Kolkata



Local kebabs and glasses of Rooh Afza in Lucknow



Pahadi arse in Dehradun

Pazham pori, filter coffee and sweet kozhukattai in Coimbatore



Local dhokla in Ahmedabad



A sumptuous Indian spread at a session of The Write Circle in Jaipur

अंतर्राष्ट्रीय खाद्य संस्कार



Bun tikki in Amritsar



A delicious chutney made from mint and coconut



Regional food in Ahmedabad



Delectable local fare being prepared at an event in Jaipur



India's Handicrafts



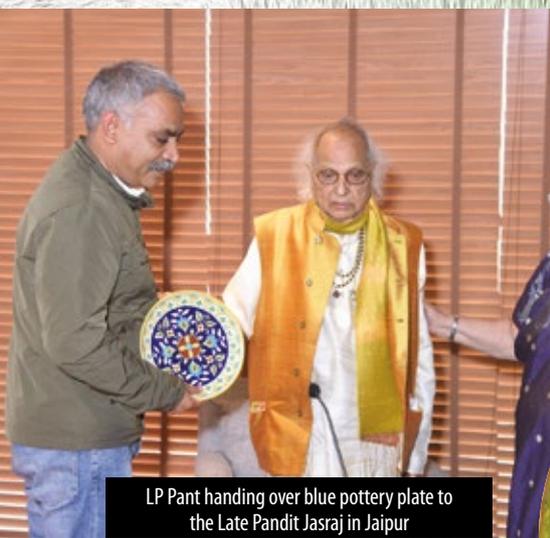
The author, Sundari Venkatraman, receives a local work of art in Ahmedabad



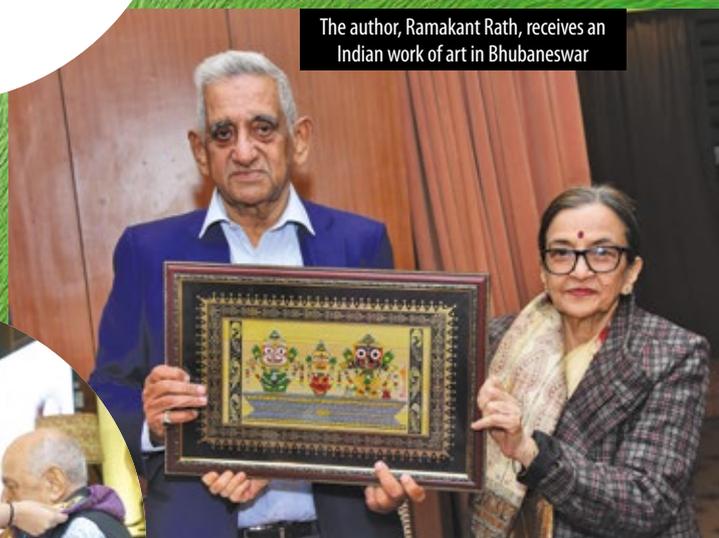
A kantha dupatta gifted at a Ranchi event



A dokra sculpture gifted at a Kolkata event



LP Pant handing over blue pottery plate to the Late Pandit Jasraj in Jaipur



The author, Ramakant Rath, receives an Indian work of art in Bhubaneswar



A Ponnadai stole from Coimbatore is used for felicitation at an Aakhar Kolkata event



A Madhubani dupatta gifted at an event in Agra



The author, Shivshankar Shukla, receives a local work of art in Chattisgarh



Local sculptures gifted in Jodhpur

A Festival for Child Authors and Readers





Here's something to make child authors smile!

The Muskaan Literature Festival for Child Authors, by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** and Education for All Trust, will take place in New Delhi over three days this winter.

This unique literary festival will feature around 25 child authors, aged 8-14 years, from different parts of the country. The festival is supported by Shree Cement Limited and would be held in collaboration with IGNCA (Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts), with Sahitya Akademi as the knowledge partner.

Ruskin Bond, the country's most loved children's author, unveiled the logo of the Muskaan Literature Festival for Child Authors earlier this month and said, "I applaud this noble and first-of-its-kind initiative for children. Literature festivals are held annually but this unique festival will showcase children and their writings, and we will get a chance to listen and engage with the young minds."

Held under the **Muskaan** initiative of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** and Education for All Trust, this platform will acknowledge and applaud the literary creations of young storytellers through a host of engaging sessions, interactive activities, workshops, story booths, crafts, games and more.

"I am happy that I will get a chance to discuss two books written and illustrated by me and my twin sister Shivaranjani at the Muskaan Literature Festival. The first book, *Sun Salutations* was published when I was eight years old," said Devyani Bharadwaj, 10, from Indore. This book on yoga for children got a wonderful letter of appreciation from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and was applauded by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and several others.

Muskaan had earlier showcased a number of children's authors – Sudha Murty, Roopa Pai, Khyrunnisa A, Shobha Tharoor Srinivasan to name a few – in an effort to popularise literature among children.

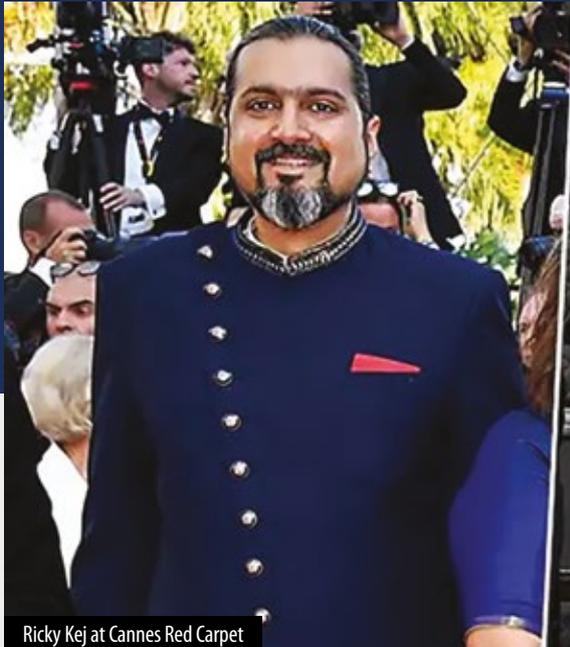
About Education for All Trust:

The Education for All Trust prioritises need above merit, with the belief that any child who wants to continue going to school has the right to do so. The Trust believes that problems plaguing the nation such as unemployment, crime, corruption and population explosion have all been created by a lack of basic education. Creating opportunities for children to be educated will help minimise, if not eradicate, such issues.

About Muskaan:

In June 2021, EFA initiated a new initiative titled '**Muskaan**' jointly with **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** aimed at promoting skill development among children through webinars, courses and workshops. **Muskaan** seeks to popularise and teach the arts, culture, heritage and literature among young children in India by weaving them into the formal and informal education system. This is done by engaging students in diverse activities like cultural programmes, story-telling, theatre, dance, music and the performing arts, which are organised in collaboration with our national and international institutes and associations. **Muskaan** also supports needy and marginalised students by providing them with tuition/coaching classes; stationery and study materials; distributing nutritious food and providing basic hygiene amenities.

#ReWear4Earth - An Initiative for Sustainable Fashion



Ricky Kej at Cannes Red Carpet



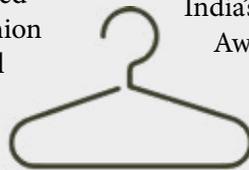
Ricky Kej at the Grammy Awards

Sustainability is recognising that our resources are limited and that they should be used conservatively for the benefit of our future generations and to safely co-exist with other life forms. However, the fashion industry is hardly sustainable. Fast fashion, especially, has devastating consequences for our planet. Fast fashion involves using less time to produce and distribute clothing so that consumers have access to a wide variety of finished products and lower prices. However, the fast fashion industry is responsible for 10% of the total global carbon emissions. BBC reports that the cotton required for the fashion industry uses about 2.5% of the world's farmland and synthetic materials like polyester require an estimated 342 million barrels of oil every year. It also reports that the dyeing of clothes requires 43 million tonnes of chemicals a year. The production of fibre requires large amounts of fresh water and the washing of clothes releases tons of microfibres into the oceans that are responsible for the death of countless marine animals and birds each year. Most fabrics today are not entirely biodegradable and end up in a landfill or

in the oceans. Despite such conditions the World Bank suggests that the global sale of clothes could increase upto 65% by 2030, underlining the need for immediate intervention.

To that effect, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, has always spearheaded initiatives to create awareness regarding sustainable development to help preserve India's ecosystems and biodiversity. When Grammy Award Winner Ricky Kej tweeted pictures of himself wearing the same outfit at two of the biggest events, at the events — the Grammy Awards in Las Vegas and the Cannes Carpet — with the hashtag #ReWear4Earth, the Foundation decided to collaborate with him

to launch an initiative that would encourage people to rewear their clothes instead of discarding them. This initiative, named after Kej's tweets, aims at changing the narrative that makes people switch up outfits for every event. The initiative is an effort aimed at making people realise that we need to buy fewer clothes, and wear them proudly several times because one is truly fashionable when helping the planet survive.



#ReWear4Earth



Rameshwar Vaishnav

स्वामी आत्मानंद के प्रवचन से बदल गया आत्महत्या का इरादा: रामेश्वर वैष्णव

प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन, अभिकल्प फाउंडेशन, होटल हयात के संयुक्त प्रयास से छत्तीसगढ़ी राजभाषा और प्रदेश की अन्य बोलियों के लिए साहित्यिक कार्यक्रम 'आखर' की दूसरी कड़ी में छत्तीसगढ़ के सुप्रसिद्ध गीतकार और कवि रामेश्वर वैष्णव ने शिरकत की। विजय मिश्रा अमित ने उनसे बातचीत की। होटल हयात में आयोजित आखर में रामेश्वर वैष्णव के छत्तीसगढ़ी साहित्यिक सफर पर चर्चा हुई। श्री सीमेंट्स इस कार्यक्रम के प्रस्तुतकर्ता हैं।

अभिकल्प फाउंडेशन के संस्थापक गौरव गिरिजा शुक्ला ने बताया कि आखर छत्तीसगढ़ी भाषा और यहाँ की विभिन्न बोलियों के संरक्षण के संदर्भ में बहुत ही सार्थक प्रयास है। इसका उद्देश्य हमारे प्रदेश की सभी क्षेत्रीय बोलियों एवं भाषाओं में लिखे साहित्य को लोगों तक पहुँचाना और युवा पीढ़ी से इसे अवगत कराना है। आखर कार्यक्रम की यह दूसरी कड़ी थी। गौरव गिरिजा ने बताया कि आने वाले दिनों में प्रति माह आखर के कार्यक्रम आयोजित किए जाएंगे।

सवाल जवाब में साहित्यकार रामेश्वर वैष्णव ने बताया कि 6वीं कक्षा में उन्हें पुरस्कार में दीवान ए गालिब भेंट में मिली। उस समय उनकी गजलों के



Vijay Mishra

मायने नहीं पता थे लेकिन बाद में इसी किताब से प्रेरणा मिली। उन्होंने बताया कि रायपुर में उन्हें अच्छे दोस्त मिले जिनके साथ वो गजल लिखने का अभ्यास करने लगे और उनकी लेखनी में धार आता चला गया। सन 1976 में उनकी लिखी छत्तीसगढ़ी गजल का पहली बार प्रसारण आकाशवाणी में हुआ जिसके बोल थे 'हम दूसरे के डहर बन गए हन, कोनो हमरो डहर बन जातिस, सब तुंहर मन, हमर बन जातिन,

अउ हमर ह तुंहर बन जातिस...

उन्होंने बताया कि सन 1964 में मैट्रिक परीक्षा मेरिट लिस्ट से उत्तीर्ण किया जिसके बाद उन्होंने इंजीनियरिंग में दाखिला लिया। लेकिन वहाँ परीक्षा में फेल होने पर आत्महत्या का विचार मन में आया और वे वर्तमान सरस्वती नगर रेलवे स्टेशन में ट्रेन के सामने कूदकर जान देने के इरादे से चले गए। वहाँ एक अनजान बुजुर्ग महिला ने उन्हें भगा दिया और उसके बाद उसी दिन स्वामी विवेकानंद आश्रम में जीवन-मृत्यु पर स्वामी आत्मानंद जी का प्रवचन सुनने के बाद उन्होंने आत्महत्या का इरादा बदल दिया।

रामेश्वर वैष्णव ने बताया कि उन्होंने छत्तीसगढ़ी कविता, गीत, दोहा, सोरठा, चौपाई, कव्वाली, भांगड़ा, रैप सॉन्गा, माहि एवं अन्य विधाओं में भी अनेक प्रयोग किए हैं जो कि बहुत ही लोकप्रिय हुए हैं। बातचीत में उनके सुप्रसिद्ध गीत तैं बिलासपुरहिन, मैं रायगढ़िया.... बने करे राम मोला अंधरा बनाएस.... झन भुलव माँ बाप ल... इत्यादि के बोल गुनगुनाए।

कार्यक्रम में शिक्षाविद गिरिजा शुक्ला ने रामेश्वर वैष्णव का सम्मान किया, वहीं शिक्षाविद स्मिता शर्मा ने विजय मिश्रा अमित का सम्मान किया। अहसास वुमेन बिलासपुर डॉ. गरिमा तिवारी ने सभी अतिथियों के प्रति आभार व्यक्त किया।

आखर छत्तीसगढ़ के प्रायोजक है श्री सीमेंट। अभिकल्प फाउंडेशन और हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर हयात रायपुर का सहयोग मिला



(L-R) Gaurav Girija Shukla, Shrishti Trivedi, Rameshwar Vaishnav, Girija Shukla, Garima Tiwari and Smita Sharma



Susmita Mukherjee



Never Afraid To Turn a Page



Priyanshi Patel

Baanjh is a collection of the author's diary entries. It's about her life outside the vanity van, her days as a young girl in Delhi, her experiences as a young woman in Mumbai and as a married woman in Bundelkhand, and the stories of women from all those places. "Most of us think we are incomplete," said Mukherjee. "This idea is almost ingrained in us. I don't know if it's in our culture, literature, or history, but we fail to recognise our

"I was the black sheep of the family. I carved my way because my journey was fraught with bitter struggles. There were tough rejections. But *Karamchand* brought me fame." These were the words of Susmita Mukherjee, who relentlessly pursued all her creative endeavours and her love for acting — a decision that collided with her family's traditional values. A screen actor, screenwriter and theatre worker, Mukherjee's claim to fame was her portrayal of Kitty in the popular Indian detective television series, *Karamchand*. The newest feat in her illustrious career is her book, *Baanjh: Incomplete Lives of Complete Women*. Prabha Khaitan Foundation organised a special session of **The Write Circle** at Radisson Blu Udaipur with Mukherjee as the guest of honour. The author shared several insights about her book and her journey.

Swati Agarwal, **Ehsaas** Woman of Udaipur, delivered the welcome note, and Priyanshi Patel, **Ehsaas** Woman of Ahmedabad, was in conversation with the author. Patel introduced Mukherjee's book thus: "*Baanjh* has eleven stories, each of a woman complete in her own way. I felt empowered reading stories of women progressing through life, braving difficulties and situations that wear them down, and how they evolve into being even stronger, like Durga. Imagine the strength we have within; imagine what is there to be explored within."



Swati Agarwal

best self. And, in my experience, women tend to suffer the most. They may be immensely talented and focused, but there is always something lacking. That's why I thought this title was apt for the book. The Hindi translation is titled *Stree Mann Ke Unkhule Pann* because a woman is frightened to open the unturned pages of her life. She fears the outcome as she wants safety and propriety. But she is Durga. She is Kali. She is Lakshmi."



Shraddha Murdia

Mukherjee revealed why she was inclined more towards theatre than screen acting. "It's true that I did not want to be typecast but I dabble in things that make me happy," she said. "I do not do it for somebody else. I was not a big entity in Bollywood, and in the 1980s the casting couch was a menace. There was no social media either. So I guess I never left that kind of mark." Towards the end, Mukherjee participated in a fun Q&A round, where she spoke some more about her book, the production house she runs, and the heritage village of Orchha that preserves the dying arts of Bundelkhand. The session concluded with Shraddha Murdia, **Ehsaas** Woman of Udaipur, delivering the vote of thanks and Agarwal felicitating the author on behalf of the Foundation.

*This session of **The Write Circle** was presented by Shree Cement Ltd in association with Radisson Blu Udaipur with the support of **Ehsaas** Women of Udaipur*

The Art of Frontline Journalism: Documenting Livelihoods During Covid

Barkha Dutt needs no introduction. A renowned journalist formerly with NDTV and a featured columnist for *Hindustan Times* and *The Washington Post*, she has told the stories of people living in distress. Her coverage of the Kargil War, the 2004 tsunami and the 26/11 Mumbai attacks are a testament to her dedication to her profession. Her new book, *To Hell and Back: Humans of COVID*, is a look into the suffering of the common people during the pandemic. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** organised a session of **The Write Circle** at Radisson Jalandhar, where Dutt shared some insights into her book and shed light on her chosen form of journalism. Sonia Aggarwal, **Ehsaas** Woman of Jalandhar, delivered the welcome speech, and Divya Kapoor Sardana, Director of Radisson Jalandhar, welcomed the author. The moderator was Ruhi Walia Syal, **Ehsaas** Woman of Jalandhar.

Dutt's inspiration behind her book and her journalism are intertwined. "I grew up hearing war stories from my mother," she said. "Kargil was not just an assignment; it was an early exposure to ideas of courage, valour and vulnerability. It solidified my desire to be the journalist who would go to places that other people aren't willing to go to, and tell stories that others won't tell. I wanted to be the bridge between my readers and viewers, and the places they couldn't visit. So, when Covid-19



Ruhi Walia Syal



Barkha Dutt

broke out, I felt that by staying home I would not be doing my duty as a journalist."

Dutt could empathise with the grief of those left bereaved by Covid, as she, too, lost a loved one to the disease: her father. But that wasn't what motivated her to travel thousands of kilometres to document the plight of ordinary people. It was her role model and India's first woman war correspondent, Prabha Dutt — her mother. "Frontline reporting is very different from armchair journalism. To feel what you are reporting, you have to experience what others are experiencing. Even though the book has accounts of death, struggle, and loneliness, it gives you hope. The characters are real: nurses, doctors, people who stood with others when we didn't know whom to approach for help, and accounts of complete strangers helping people online."

What would Dutt have done if she wasn't a journalist? "I would be a lawyer. Look at my Twitter bio! It reads 'Barkha Rani Jamke Barasti Hai!'" Her response had the audience in splits. "I am a true Punjabi. I feel deeply and I live every moment to its fullest. I am not scared of other people's opinions." Aggarwal concluded the session by delivering the vote of thanks as Gurjot Kaur felicitated the author on behalf of the Foundation.

Even though the book has accounts of death, struggle, and loneliness, it gives you hope. The characters are real: nurses, doctors, people who stood with others when we didn't know whom to approach for help, and accounts of complete strangers helping other people in the online space



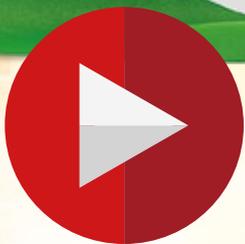
Sonia Aggarwal

Divya Kapoor Sardana

Gurjot Kaur

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

The Story of India at 75



Few milestones in a nation's history are as momentous as the milestone of having been a sovereign country for three-quarters of a century. India's independence was hard-won; in order to celebrate this freedom, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** along with Manjha House organised *Nation at 75*, a two-day festival of books and discussions to celebrate the idea of India's journey as a nation, 75 years after independence. The festival, which took place in Amritsar, witnessed the participation and attendance of some of the brightest minds of the country, including writers, poets, journalists and civil society thought leaders. It was a reminder of everything we enjoy today as Indians, as a result of the immense sacrifices made by our freedom fighters: dignity as citizens, an identity as a democratic nation, and the right to elect our own government. Read on to find out how the two days of inspirational conversations at *Nation at 75* played out.

The first day of the festival saw the acclaimed actor and theatre artist, Deepti Naval, launch her memoir, titled *A Country Called Childhood*, at the Thakur Singh Art Gallery. The former Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry, Kiran Bedi, was the chief guest at the launch. There was also an exhibition of Naval's never-seen-before paintings and photographs, a lot of which she donated to the gallery.

Both Bedi and Naval are Amritsar locals, and even went to the same school and college. "Deepti and I are quite close and have been friends for decades. I love her as an actress and for being the person she is," Bedi said. Preeti Gill, the founder of Majha House, and S. Rajinder Mohan Singh Chhinna, President of the Indian Academy of Fine Arts, Arvinder Chamak, Secretary, and writer-photographer Kishore Thukral were also present at the launch of *A Country Called Childhood*.

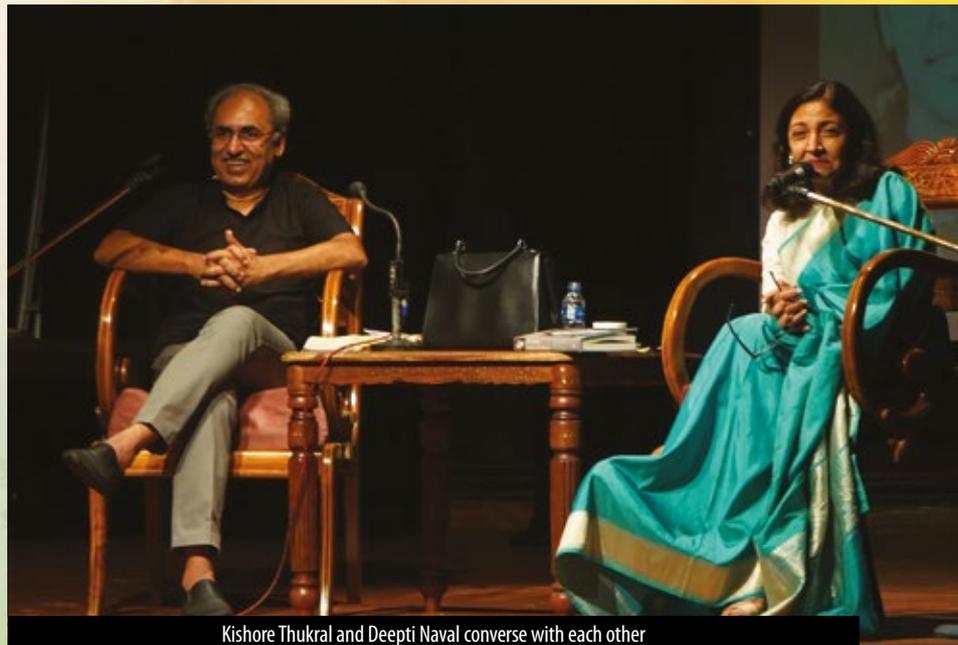
Gill introduced the guests before Naval and Thukral engaged in a riveting conversation. Naval shared her memories of her mother, her dream of becoming an actor, the post-Partition Amritsar of her childhood days, and, of course, the story of her escapade, when she ran away from home to visit Kashmir! "The book is about my childhood here, and it ends with me turning 18 and leaving the city," said Naval. A local artist was on stage drawing a portrait of Naval as the conversation carried on. Naval and the audience were elated to see the finished work as the artist was greeted with a deafening round of applause.

Naval participated in a Q&A session that lasted a while. She walked down memory lane and revealed stories and incidents that people from the audience were eager to know. Naval recounted her experiences during her growing up years in Amritsar, revealing intricate details that only a few were privy to.

Naval was extremely gracious and patient about signing books for people in the audience and clicking selfies at their request. Chamak delivered the closing statement and the vote of thanks to conclude the evening.



The inauguration of the exhibition of paintings



Kishore Thukral and Deepti Naval converse with each other

(L-R) Arvinder Chamak, S. Rajinder Mohan Singh Chhinna and Preeti Gill with Deepti Naval and Kiran Bedi



An English *Mushaira* with Shinie Antony, Mamang Dai, Ravi Singh and Sarbjot Behl

The second day of *Nation at 75* was held at the Punjab Naatshala. Jasmeet Nayyar welcomed the audience and guests for the evening. Gill delivered the opening address, speaking briefly about the Partition and Amritsar. The evening had three segments, the first of which saw Professor Sarbjot Behl, Dean, Academic Affairs at the Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, recite his iconic, evocative poem, *Main Gujranwala Chhod Aaya*. It is a powerful recounting of losing home and becoming a refugee in a new land, a story familiar to Partition survivors who still live with the pain and trauma they faced decades ago.

The recitation was followed by a discussion on the Constitution and its significance in protecting the rights of citizens. It was a commemoration of the freedom struggle and the path to the growth and development of India 75 years after independence. Hartosh Bal, the political editor of *Caravan*, and Valay Singh, journalist and author of *Ayodhya: City of Faith, City of Discord*, were on the panel. Ravi Singh, publisher and founder of

Speaking Tiger, was the moderator. Sensitive topics were discussed and difficult questions answered, as an excited audience actively took part in the conversation. Bal spoke about borders and boundaries, the notion of insiders and outsiders, and why art is crucial to protecting the well-being of the citizens of any nation.

The final segment was an English '*Mushaira*' with award-winning writers Jerry Pinto, Shinie Antony, Mamang Dai and Sarbjot Behl. Each of them treated the audience to a reading-out of their works as well as their translations in other Indian languages. The poets upheld the ethos of a '*Mushaira*' where people gather and sit on the floor to demonstrate their art.

Ravi Singh, who was instrumental in making *Nation at 75* a success, played an eight-minute snippet of *Revisiting Amritsar*, a documentary on the city by Munish Singh, who teaches history at DAV College, Amritsar. The evening ended on a high note, with everyone in attendance standing on their feet singing the national anthem as this momentous event came to a close.



Sarbjot Behl recites his poem



Jerry Pinto



Jasmeet Nayyar



Preeti Gill

Building Unbreakable Bonds



The importance of Raksha Bandhan in India needs no explanation: the bonds it builds between sisters and brothers have long been the stuff of legend. With the times, the significance of the festival has also evolved; today, Raksha Bandhan is about the promise to guard and take care of each other, irrespective of gender or familial bonds. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** has long observed the importance of the festival as well as the human calling to protect those who often cannot protect themselves. On the occasion of Raksha Bandhan, the Foundation, under its **Muskaan** initiative and along with **Education For All Trust**, collaborated with Prayas to organise a special programme with over 80 children from the Kalighat red light district. Gifts and food were distributed to those who took part, and the singer, Riddhi Bandyopadhyay, made a special appearance at the event.



*This session of **Muskaan** was presented by Shree Cement Ltd in association with Prayas*

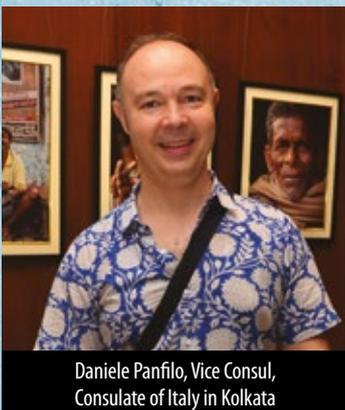


Eyes Within The Eyes

Cross-cultural connections form the basis of the Indian experience. In keeping with this was French-Costa Rican photographer Juan Carlos Rodriguez's first solo photo exhibition in the city of Kolkata – an exhibition that foregrounded cross-cultural diversity. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** along with Alliance Française du Bengale organised *Kolkata: Les Yeux Dans Les Yeux*, an exhibition of a visual essay conceived and curated by the artist, at a five-star hotel in the city. A part of a photo anthology named *The 4 Corners of India*, *Kolkata: Les Yeux Dans Les Yeux* is a collection of 48 photographs taken across West Bengal depicting the daily lives of the people who live in the state. Here are a few glimpses from the exhibition that was attended by city diplomats and members of the art and culture fraternity who mingled over wine, cheese and a shared appreciation of great art.



Nicolas Facino (Director, Alliance Francaise du Bengale), Nawal Ghedhaifi (Deputy Consul General of France in Kolkata), Manisha Jain (Communications & Branding Chief, Prabha Khaitan Foundation) and Anindita Chatterjee (Executive Trustee, Prabha Khaitan Foundation) with the photographer, Juan Carlos Rodriguez, whose work the exhibition showcases



Daniele Panfilo, Vice Consul,
Consulate of Italy in Kolkata



Daniel Sim, Deputy Consul General
of Australia in Kolkata



Maria-Claudia Marini, Deputy
Consul General of Italy in Kolkata



Seema Sapru, Principal, Heritage School



Rowan Ainsworth, Consul General of Australia in Kolkata, with her husband



Amy Pratt and Adrian Pratt, Director, American Center, Kolkata



Yemi Odanye, Deputy Head of Mission – East & Northeast India, British Deputy High Commission, Kolkata, with Isolde Aust, Deputy Consul General of Germany in Kolkata



Noémie Gicquelet and Adrien Blanchard from the Consulate of France in Kolkata



Sailesh Singhal



Nayantara Palchoudhuri

“We at the Foundation always endeavour to facilitate a cross-cultural showcasing of artists to promote cultural diversity. And what better way to do this than to have a French-Costa Rican photographer capturing and curating the different moods of Bengal?”

— **Manisha Jain**
Communications & Branding Chief,
Prabha Khaitan Foundation



Reena Dewan, Director, Kolkata Centre for Creativity



Esha Dutta, Ehsaas Woman of Kolkata



Preeyam Budhia with Massimo Belleri, Consulate of Italy in Kolkata



Natasha Ballal

For the Love of Mother Earth



Prabha Khaitan Foundation's initiative **Muskaan** aims to highlight and popularise India's culture and heritage through various educational activities hosted for students across India. On August 6, we had the wildlife and conservation educator and expert, Natasha Ballal, join us to conduct a short educational

and interactive session with children from all over the country. Having worked as a Senior Education Officer at the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), she has conducted similar educational sessions in schools, training camps and urban as well as rural centres.

Ballal's session focused on providing knowledge and inspiration to the children for protecting and conserving the invaluable biodiversity of India. The session included a presentation highlighting the topics to be discussed along with the Living Planet Index published by the WWF. She started by explaining the basic concepts of conservation and biodiversity before proceeding to shed light on the alarming statistics regarding the dwindling numbers of several species of animals. Among the tools used was a short video by Sir David Frederick Attenborough, graphs and

comprehensive diagrams. During the event, Ballal mentioned the four biodiversity hotspots in India, and the unique flora and fauna thriving in these places, before moving on to the topic of endemism and the different endemic species found in India.

Along the way, many interesting facts about the varied animals found in our country were shared. Informative discussions about albinism and leucism, which affect members of the cat family, and comprehensive slides mentioning the characteristics and important facts about two of the most popular big cats — the tiger and the common leopard — kept the students rapt. Videos were used to explain how carnivores are essential to maintaining the ecological balance and the dangers caused to them by human encroachment into their habitats.

The latter part of the session focused on the importance of biodiversity for the sustenance of the human species. The 4 'R's were discussed, with a special emphasis on 'rethinking'. The importance of reducing plastic and energy consumption, the conservation of essential resources, and the need for encouraging local and native afforestation were elaborated upon. Following this, the session moved on to a Q&A round with the children, which saw the students' active participation. The session was thus successful in inculcating in the students knowledge and awareness regarding these pressing issues that threaten the existence of our planet's biodiversity and that of our own species.

The Foundation's **Muskaan** initiative is therefore essential for imparting knowledge and awareness about many such social, cultural and environmental issues.

— Subhrajyoti Maitra
Class XII
Don Bosco, Park Circus

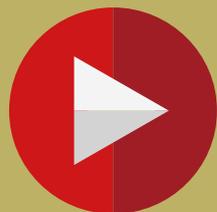


Gifting A Life

Blood saves life. A regular supply of safe blood is of paramount importance for reducing the demand-supply gap which kills millions of women experiencing pregnancy and childbirth complications, anaemic children, accident victims, and cancer patients.

Prabha Khaitan Foundation is not only committed to cross-cultural activities that empower citizens, but also to building a healthy nation. So, it was no surprise when it partnered with the Anon Club for a blood donation and health awareness camp, where blood was donated exclusively by women. It was a huge success — over 50 women donated blood that will go on to save precious lives in the future.





Documenting the Plight of the Humans of Covid

When India declared a sudden lockdown during the pandemic, Barkha Dutt went on to cover over 30,000 kilometres to tell the people of India about the crises that hit the poor. But for the renowned journalist, frontline reporting was not something new. Her extensive coverage and stories of the Kargil War, the 26/11 Mumbai attacks, and her YouTube channel *Mojo Story*, exemplify her excellence as a fearless journalist. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** recently invited Dutt to a session of **The Write Circle** in Meerut to discuss her journey and her book, *To Hell and Back: Humans of COVID*.

Anshu Mehra, **Ehsaas** Woman of Meerut, welcomed the guest and the moderator, Seema Sharma, an alumna of NIMHANS and a clinical psychologist. How did Dutt manage to brave the crisis and report during such turbulent times? “Courage is defined by how you manage the fear within,” Dutt said. “Once you feel something around you is going to be life-changing, your perspective changes. You must learn to survive the crisis and then face the challenge.” Explaining further, she said, “My intention, as a journalist, was to extensively cover the situation in India so that policies change and people get proper relief. It was no doubt overwhelming, but I intended



Seema Sharma

to manifest it into a powerful story. Sometimes being overwhelmed is good when reporting. It helps you feel the situation.”

“We cannot ignore the differential treatment people received during the pandemic, and how women bore the brunt of it. Girls had to sacrifice their education so their brothers could study, and several working women had to quit their jobs simply because they were expected to take care of household chores, their husbands, and their children. Middle-class women had a really difficult time; their ambitions and career went for a toss. We were already living in a society full of inequalities on multiple levels; Covid only aggravated it

” *To Hell and Back* not only highlights the plight of the poor and the common people in India, but it also exposes the deep-rooted inequalities of class, caste and gender in this country. “We cannot ignore the differential treatment people have received during the pandemic, and how women bore the brunt of it,” said the author. “Girls had to sacrifice their education so their brothers could study, and several working women had to quit their jobs simply because they were expected to take care of household chores, their husbands and their children. Middle-class women had a really difficult time; their ambitions and careers went for a toss. We were already living in a society full of inequalities on multiple levels; Covid only aggravated it.”

In the concluding segment of the session, Dutt engaged in a Q&A round with the audience. The vote of thanks was delivered by Garima Mithal, **Ehsaas** Woman of Meerut. Umang Mittal felicitated the author and Azhar Iqbal felicitated the moderator on behalf of the Foundation.

The Write Circle Meerut is presented by Shree Cement Ltd and with the support of **Ehsaas** Women of Meerut



Anshu Mehra



Garima Mithal



Umang Mittal



Barkha Dutt

The Story of an Activist



Joya Mitra



Kallol Lahiri

The 13th session of **Aakhar Kolkata**, organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** in association with Purba Paschim, was graced by the presence of Joya Mitra, a renowned writer, philanthropist and environmental and human rights activist. She was in conversation with Kallol Lahiri, an acclaimed screenwriter.

A Sahitya Akademi awardee, Joya Mitra has presented her story as a human rights activist in all her works, which are nothing short of inspirational. An indomitable soul who consciously rejected the comfort of a happy home, Mitra has been devoted to the cause of the people since her school days. Born with a keen interest in rhythm and sound, she spent her childhood days in the city of Benaras. Her political quest started in the mid-60s, when she started writing short stories, and later gained momentum during her college days, when Bengal witnessed a wave of young revolutionaries responding to pressing political issues and fighting for change. Her tryst with politics led to her being imprisoned for four-and-a-half years, at the conclusion of which she found herself moving closer to her destiny as an activist.



Saiful Islam

After her imprisonment, Mitra found herself being drawn towards environmental activism, and the Bhopal gas tragedy and Chernobyl only reaffirmed her resolve to be on this path. During the 80s, she became involved in the *Ganga Mukti Andolan*, which set out to free an 80-kilometre stretch of the River Ganga from the practice of *panidari*, which gave *zamindars* exclusive rights to fish and run boats over the particular stretch. The GMA saw the participation of peasants, boat owners and even fishermen, and her involvement made her fall in love with water. This resulted in her book, *Joler Naam Bhalobasa*. Her environmental activism also led to her visiting some remote villages of Rajasthan, where the rainfall is negligible. However, much to her surprise, Mitra found out that the inhabitants never run out of water to drink because they preserve an old lake, thus exemplifying the need for people to be associated with nature.

However, her first love had always been writing. Her Ananda Puraskar-winning novel, *Hanyaman*, talks about the pain of human beings languishing, while her other novels often talk about nature through their characters. Indian mythology has also acted as a source of inspiration for her, as has the journalist, Gour Kishore Ghosh. Also intrigued by linguistics, Mitra's research work led her to learn about Indian iconology in detail.

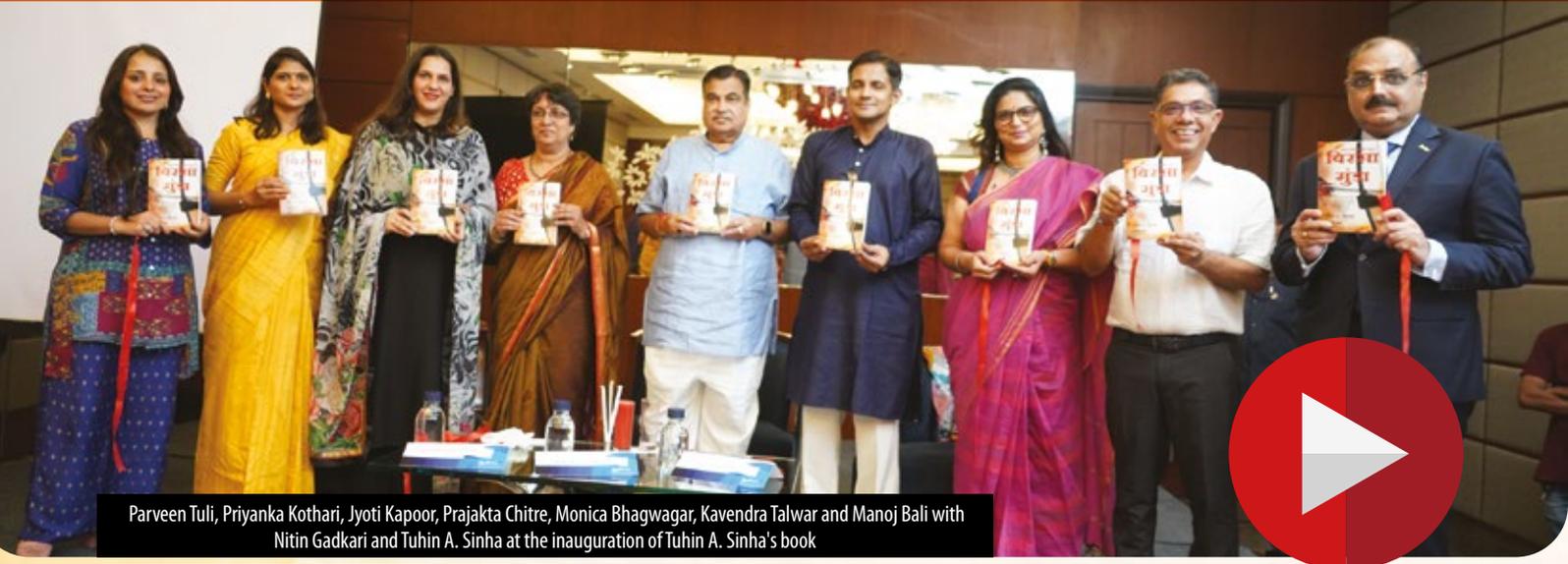
Keen on painting the real picture of India, Mitra pointed out that there is a religio-political ambivalence regarding India's history. The stimulating session ended with the author quoting Leslie Siko, and saying, "True history is portrayed through novels and stories. I always attempt to inspire book-lovers with the key of words. As an author, I accept it as my responsibility to weave the history through my literary works." Saiful Islam delivered the welcome note and vote of thanks on behalf of the Foundation.



The audience listens to Joya Mitra

Aakhar Kolkata was presented by Shree Cement Ltd in association with Anandabazar Patrika and Purba Paschim

Writing the Life of a National Hero



Parveen Tuli, Priyanka Kothari, Jyoti Kapoor, Prajakta Chitre, Monica Bhagwagar, Kavendra Talwar and Manoj Bali with Nitin Gadkari and Tuhin A. Sinha at the inauguration of Tuhin A. Sinha's book

As Saussure says, “Psychologically our thought, apart from its expression in words, is only a shapeless and indistinct mass”, our consciousness is shaped by the languages that we speak. From our infancy till our adulthood, the languages we learn help us to communicate our thoughts and shape us as individuals. In a country like India, which boasts of thousands of languages – 22 of which are scheduled – it becomes imperative that our regional languages are preserved so that our children too are enriched by them. The Foundation organised a session of **Aakhar Pothi** in Nagpur to inaugurate the Marathi version of Tuhin A. Sinha's book *The Legend of Birsa Munda*, which had been translated by Prajakta Chitre.

Birsa Munda's name has gone down in the annals of history as a fierce tribal leader who stood up to the unjust policies of British rule in India. A national hero who is remembered for his rebellion, his story has inspired countless people across the country. It thus becomes imperative that his story is preserved for future generations. Tuhin A. Sinha's book, *The Legend of Birsa Munda*, chronicles the life of this young rebel, who passed away at the young age of 25 in Ranchi jail.

The chief guest for the session, Nitin Gadkari, the Minister for Road Transport and Highways in the Government of India, agreed that “Birsa Munda is not only an icon for the tribal community, but for the entire community”. Priyanka Kothari, **Ehsaas** Woman of Nagpur, initiated the event, while Jyoti Kapoor, **Ehsaas** Woman of Nagpur, delivered the welcome note on behalf of the Foundation.

During the period between 1886 and 1890, Birsa Munda resided in Chaibasa, which was close to the area of the Sardars' agitation. This inspired Birsa to bring the tribal community together and fight the British policies. He even succeeded in forcing the British government to protect the rights of the tribal communities. During the session, Gadkari spoke about the contribution of the tribal community to the growth and development of India, and also discussed the socio-economic reforms that have been introduced by the government for the development of the community. Sinha and Prajakta Chitre, who translated the book into Marathi, discussed the relevance of the principles of the life of the tribal leader even today.

The session came to an end with Kavendra Talwar from Hotel Radisson Blu and Monica Bhagwagar, **Ehsaas** Woman of Nagpur, felicitating the guests. Parveen Tuli, **Ehsaas** Woman of Nagpur, delivered the vote of thanks on behalf of the Foundation.



Prajakta Chitre and Tuhin A. Sinha



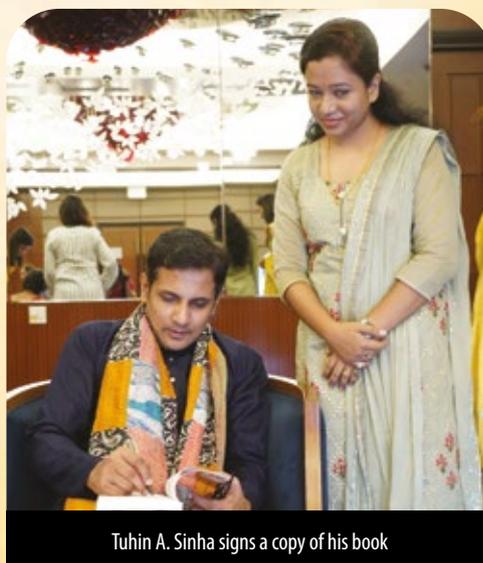
Parveen Tuli, Priyanka Kothari, Monica Bhagwagar and Jyoti Kapoor with Nitin Gadkari



The anthem of Prabha Khaitan Foundation appears on the screen



Kavendra Talwar, the owner of Radisson Blu, Nagpur, felicitates Tuhin A. Sinha



Tuhin A. Sinha signs a copy of his book



Manoj Bali, General Manager, Radisson Blu, Nagpur

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



Urvashi Warman



A Rendezvous with the Author



Prabha Khaitan Foundation hosted an interactive session with Urvashi Warman, Principal of The Palace School in Jaipur and author of a series of EVS and General Awareness books for primary school children. Mrs. Warman also recently published another book, *A Camel With A Japi*, which is an

illustrated narrative of Rajasthan and Assam. The book received a letter of commendation from Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, the Honourable Minister of Education in India.

The anthem of the organisation appeared on the screen as soon as the clock struck 5 pm. The session began with Mrs. Warman being introduced and then taking the stage to talk about her book. She started with a presentation. The first slide showed a colourful artwork, which had a camel wearing an Assamese 'japi' towards the left and a rhinoceros wearing a Rajasthani turban towards the right. "The book is a tribute to the 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' programme," said Mrs. Warman, while talking about the inspiration behind the book. She mentioned that the concept was adopted from the Art-Integrated learning projects issued by the Central Board of Secondary Education, where they paired two states together; the idea behind the projects was to blend different cultures. "I realised that there's so much we don't know, and there's so much that the children don't know," added Mrs. Warman, while talking about why she wrote the book.

As she began talking about the story, her words took everyone on a mesmerizing journey — from the jars of Sarvatobhadra in the City Palace of Jaipur to the Ahom Raja's Palace in Assam; from the pink flamingos at the Sambhar lake to the Sun City of Jodhpur; from the Venice of the East, Udaipur, to the Switzerland of the Northeast, the Dima Hasao district in Assam. Narrating stories and legends about how the city of blood, Tezpur, and the oil

city of Assam, Digboi, came to be called so, Mrs. Warman even read the audience her favourite passage from her book. The excerpt, from the chapter named 'Hail Mewar', recalled the stories of those who lived in the land of unmatched courage and bravery, and left everyone awestruck.

The author eventually moved on to give the young ones with a passion for writing some of her best tips. "I think it is very important to know your reader," she began. "You need to keep in mind the age group you're writing for." She went on to outline other important factors, such as knowing whose perspective one is writing from, deciding the format of one's narrative (a short story or a novel, fiction or non-fiction), setting the timeline (present, past or future), deciding the setting of one's story and doing justice to the traits of one's characters. She added more points about how the title should keep in mind the context of the story, how one should plan the journey of one's characters, and how it is advisable to include interesting factors — a method often achieved by depicting conflict, be it internal or external.

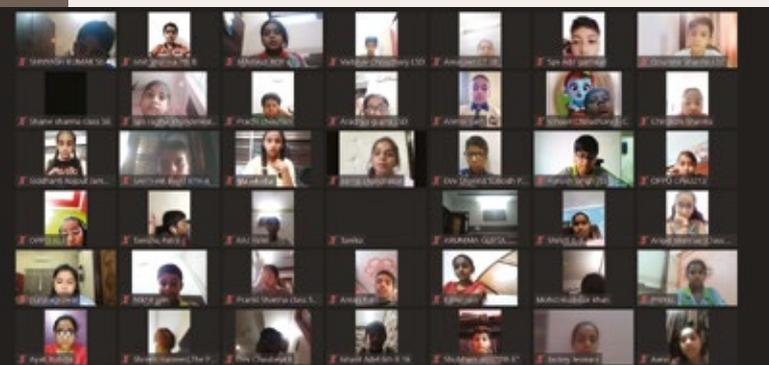
Furthermore, Mrs. Warman emphasised certain things, especially mentioning how essential it is to be mindful of the culture one chooses to write about. She explained the way one should conduct research for their book, and how important it is to share a draft of one's story with neutral readers. She elaborated on the same by mentioning how it is necessary to talk to people and to leave room for interpretation.

Eventually, Mrs. Warman went back to what she had mentioned before — the importance of being sensitive to the culture one writes about, and how one should enjoy the journey of writing one's stories. "It is very important to enjoy the process of writing," concluded the author.

The session then witnessed a few questions from the audience, accompanied by compliments and appreciation. The informative yet fun session finally ended with the host thanking Mrs. Warman, Shree Cement Ltd, the **Education For All Trust**, and all the viewers.

— Anushka Sachdeva
(Class XI, The Palace School, Jaipur)

Muskaan is presented by Shree Cement Ltd



The Dance Of A Nation Awakened

India's struggle for independence is an integral part of its history. It is in keeping with the milestone of 75 years of independence that the Government of India decided to celebrate 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' — an initiative that not only pays homage to our freedom fighters but also honours the nation's people and those who have been instrumental in the evolution of independent India. To mark 75 years of being a free nation, Sampad Arts, along with **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** organised *Utsav*, a spectacular event at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre that featured the renowned danseuse, Dona Ganguly, who showcased the cultural heritage of Indian dance. The performance put up by Ganguly and her group symbolised everything that the Mahotsav initiative stands for — it was an 'elixir of the energy of independence, inspirations and struggles of freedom warriors, new ideas and pledges and *aatmanirbharta*'.



Piali Ray, Director of Sampad Arts





Rituparna Chatterjee



A Journey From Darkness to Hope

Rituparna Chatterjee is an award-winning author, journalist, editor and columnist. A former correspondent and columnist for The Economic Times, her first book, *An Ordinary Life*, was about the life of acclaimed actor Nawazuddin Siddiqui. Published in 2020, her second book, *The Water Phoenix: A Memoir of Childhood Abuse, Healing and Forgiveness* is a magical realism memoir on how she dealt with childhood abuse. The book was recognised by the United Nations Population Fund (UNPF) and awarded the Laadli Media and Advertising Awards for gender sensitivity.

Prabha Khaitan Foundation recently invited the author as a guest to a session of **An Author's Afternoon** to speak about her book, and her motivation behind writing it, since Chatterjee believes that there is an intimacy involved in reading as we go deep into an author's personal space. Esha Dutta, **Ehsaas** Woman of Kolkata, introduced the guests and delivered the welcome note. The author was in conversation with journalist and columnist Sreemoyee Piu Kundu.



Sreemoyee Piu Kundu

“The book was born out of a dark place, like the birth of a child from the darkness of the womb,”

Chatterjee replied when asked what had inspired her to write something so personal. “I was suffering from severe postpartum depression when I conceived the novel. It wasn't long before I realised that this suffering was due to the emotional baggage I've been carrying since childhood. I had to let it out to relieve myself, and it manifested in a memoir that I completed in a span of five weeks.”

Chatterjee was overwhelmed when people reached out to her because the book helped them deal with issues they had long kept buried. “It's after the book was published when I realised that the book had become bigger than what I could have imagined, when people told me how it helped them deal with emotional health. I genuinely believed that even though I wrote the story, it wasn't just about me. As storytellers, we have a greater purpose: to create something that will help others. That's what my book does.”

“

Families must realise how important compassion is. Being compassionate is the only way we can protect our children from abuse. Respecting their boundaries, listening to them attentively, understanding their vulnerabilities and being empathetic will let you know if they are hurt or if something is hurting them. All abuse is abuse, we cannot rank it. Don't shut down your children if you want to protect them from sexual predators

”

When Kundu asked why Chatterjee chose magic realism to tell the story of an abused child and how she grew up to find herself, the author replied, “I discovered magic realism when I was studying in college. I lacked self-confidence and a sense of self-worth back then. I was reading a lot of Gabriel Garcia Marquez and poetry. Although I did not consider Salman Rushdie's writing to be anything special, I did find his work empowering. There was something about Rushdie that made me believe that I can write my story too. Magic realism is my natural state of being as a writer. Our reality is secondary. It's our inner world, our thoughts and fantasies that live in our minds almost forever.”

For the author, the book is about self-love, and it goes beyond materialistic needs. “Do not abandon yourself. Collect your thoughts and confront your emotions instead of pretending that they don't exist. Dealing with your issues will help you attract healthier relationships,” she explained. She further added, “My experience has taught me that although we are divided by our individual differences, we are united



Gayatri Sabharwal

by the beauty of our imperfections. For society to change and be more accepting of these differences, everyone must be willing to undertake the journey of self-love and set on the ultimate path to healing. Healing is a life-long journey, but I have managed to love myself radically, be comfortable in my own skin and speak the truth through my works.”

When asked about child abuse and the role of guardians, Chatterjee responded, “Families must realise how important compassion is. Being compassionate is the only way we can protect our children from abuse. Respecting their boundaries, listening to them attentively, understanding their vulnerabilities and being empathetic will let you know if they are hurt or if something is hurting them. All abuse is abuse, we cannot rank it. Don't shut down your children if you want to protect them from sexual predators.”

The last segment of the evening saw an interesting Q&A session between the author and the audience. Gayatri Sabharwal concluded the event by felicitating Chatterjee and Kundu on behalf of the Foundation.

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



Esha Dutta

Preserving Our Languages and Literature

The **Prabha Khaitan Foundation's** Book Rack holds pride of place in cities across the country. Nitin Gadkari, the Minister for Road Transport and Highways in the Government of India, inaugurated the Foundation's Book Rack to be placed permanently at Radisson Blu to promote India's languages and literature.



Nitin Gadkari addresses the audience at the launch of the Book Rack



The Foundation's Book Rack

The Book Racks showcase titles of authors hosted by the Foundation at their exclusively curated sessions. The leather-bound volumes are signed by the respective authors and are available to patrons and hotel guests for reading.

The first Book Rack was set up in 2015 at Taj Bengal, unveiled by the then governor of West Bengal, Keshari Nath Tripathi. Since then Book Racks have been set up in Jaipur, Jodhpur, Patna, Udaipur, Raipur, Bhubaneswar, and many more such Book Racks are on the cards in the other cities where the Foundation holds literary events. The idea behind instituting Book Racks was, of course, to celebrate the joy of reading, but also to preserve and treasure books as valuable keepsakes, especially signed editions. For a literature lover, the pleasure of holding a beautifully bound book that has been signed by the author is unparalleled. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** is committed to spreading awareness and empowerment through the path of literature, and the Book Racks have become a milestone on this literary journey.

After inaugurating the Foundation's Book Rack, Gadkari shared a few words of appreciation and also lauded the efforts of the Foundation in promoting local languages and culture. The event saw the presence of many dignitaries and eminent personalities of the city.



Aravind Kukde, a senior member of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, and Nitin Gadkari, Union Minister, at the event

“

The Book Rack event is yet another attempt of the Foundation to promote our languages and literatures which will have far reaching consequences in our future

— Apra Kuchhal,
Honorary Convener, Rajasthan and
Central India Affairs,
Prabha Khaitan Foundation

”



Nitin Gadkari inaugurates the Book Rack



Tuhin A. Sinha puts a book on the Book Rack



Kavendra Talwar, owner of the Radisson Blu in Nagpur, where the Book Rack stands



Manoj Bali, General Manager,
Radisson Blu, Nagpur



Monica Bhagwagar,
Ehsaas Woman of Nagpur



Parveen Tuli, Ehsaas Woman of Nagpur



Jyoti Kapoor, Ehsaas Woman of Nagpur



Priyanka Kothari, Ehsaas Woman of Nagpur

*This event was presented by
Shree Cement Limited in
association with Lokmat,
Radisson Blu Nagpur and
with the support of Ehsaas
Women of Nagpur*

Towards a Better Future

In this day and age, it becomes imperative for the youth of the country to participate in discussions pertaining to important issues such as climate change, the economic crisis and the recent health crisis brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic. Moreover, the vision of the youth is important to ensure the success of any initiative that aims to be sustainable, and it requires the investment and knowledge of committed individuals with expertise to take this vision forward. To this end, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** organised meetings with Apra Kuchhal, Honorary Convenor of Rajasthan & Central India Affairs of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, and Sailesh Singhal, the Siliguri-based global youth activist and the co-founder of Youth For Green Hydrogen, to discuss the future initiatives of the Foundation. Here are a few glimpses from the discussions.



(L-R) Mansi Kamdar Shah, Sailesh Singhal, Sundeep Bhutoria, Manisha Jain and Cathy Tongper



(L-R) Mansi Kamdar Shah, Apra Kuchhal, Sundeep Bhutoria and Manisha Jain

कौन हूँ मैं ?



Kanak Rekha Chauhan,
Ehsaas Woman of Lucknow

कौन हूँ मैं ?

क्या कहूँ मैं

गर पूछता है कोई पहचान मेरी

बड़े गर्व से कह देती हूँ मैं

'उनकी' पत्नी हूँ मैं,

इतने बरस हुए 'उनसे' ब्याही हूँ मैं

कौन हूँ मैं, गर पूछता है कोई,

बड़े प्यार से कह देती हूँ मैं,

अपने बच्चों की माँ हूँ मैं

देखके उनको जीती हूँ,

उन पर ही तो मरती हूँ मैं

दूर हों, करीब हों उनके साथ हूँ मैं

पूछता है हर कोई जब मिलता है, कौन हूँ मैं ?

क्या किसी दफ्तर, या किसी व्यवसाय से जुड़ी हूँ मैं ?

आखिर क्या करती हूँ मैं ?

पीछा करते सवाल

और कस्तूरी से जवाब

बहुत हुआ अब तो सिर्फ परेशां हूँ मैं

जहाँ जाऊं, जिस से मिलूँ

आखिर यही तो सब कहते समझते हैं

कि एक संपूर्ण औरत हूँ मैं, किसी की पत्नी, किसी की माँ हूँ मैं

फिर भी मन है कि बहलता नहीं,

बहुत सोचा, बहुत परखा है अपने आपको

बरसों बीते सुलझा न सकी इक छोटी सी बात को,

छोटी थी बात,

पर शायद कुछ गहरी

अब कुछ-कुछ समझने लगी हूँ मैं

कि आखिर हूँ ही क्या मैं ?

होती ही क्या हूँ मैं ?

वजूद ही क्या है मेरा ?

एक बेरोजगार, अधेड़ औरत

हर सड़क, हर गली,

हर कूचे-महल्ले में मिल जाती है जो,

किसी दुकान, किसी घर में दिख जाती है जो,

एक आम सी साधारण औरत होती हूँ मैं

एक आम सी साधारण जिंदगी जीती हूँ मैं

लेकिन कुछ बदल गया है अब

आखिर समझ गयी हूँ मैं क्या कहना होगा मुझे

जब पूछेगा कोई पहचान मेरी

एक आम सी साधारण औरत नहीं हूँ

हर गली हर मोहल्ले में मिल जाती हो जो

अब तो एक 'अहसास वुमेन' हूँ मैं

कुछ खास हूँ मैं ! कुछ खास हूँ मैं !



Praveen Kumar Jha

रस गीत सीखना बड़ा ही धैर्यपूर्ण और आरंभ में कुछ हद तक नीरस अनुभव है। मुझे याद है हारमोनियम लेकर एक संगीत शिक्षक आँख बंद कर शुरू होते, 'भगवान! ओ दुनिया के रखवाले सुन दर्द भरे मेरे नाले'। यह गीत मैं इतना बेसुरा गाता कि लगता संगीत मेरे वश की नहीं। यह गाना राग दरबारी पर आधारित है।

इस राग से संगीत शिक्षा का प्रारंभ करना कुछ यूँ है कि तैरने के लिए सीधे गहरे पानी में उतार दिया जाए। यह इतनी गंभीर प्रवृत्ति का है कि इसे गाने के लिए संगीतकार भी हर माहौल में सहज नहीं होते। इसका स्केल और मंद्र सप्तक का उपयोग कुछ ऐसा है कि महिलाओं के लिए यह राग सहज नहीं। अगर हम यूट्यूब पर तलाशें तो लगभग हर प्रमुख पुरुष गायक की आवाज में दरबारी मिल जाएगी, लेकिन शीर्ष महिला गायकों की आवाज में भी दरबारी मिलनी कठिन है। किस्सा है कि ऊपर बताए गीत को गाते हुए मोहम्मद रफी को भी मशक़त करनी पड़ी और उनके गले से खून आ गया था।

किंवदंती है कि तानसेन कार्नाटिक शैली के राग कन्नड़ा पर प्रयोग कर रहे थे जब उन्होंने कोमल गांधार (ग) और धैवत (ध) को आंदोलित किया और इस राग ने जन्म लिया। जब अकबर के दरबार में यह राग गूँजी, तो इसने अद्भुत वातावरण बना दिया। यह राग ही दरबारी कहलाने लगा। जो भी संगीत के सुनकार हैं, वे इस राग के कोमल गांधार को पहचानते हैं, क्योंकि यह अतिकोमल है। आंदोलित होते हुए यह ऋषभ (रे) या मध्यम (म) का कण ले लेता है। एक बार यह स्वर मिल जाए तो सहसा मन में निकलता है- 'वाह!'

अगर उस्ताद विलायत खान जैसे को सितार पर यह राग बजाते हुए देखेंगे तो उनके चेहरे में भी वही चमक दिखायी देगी। जब वह सितार से अतिकोमल गांधार बजाते हैं। विलायत खान इसलिए याद आए क्योंकि उन पर लिखी एक किताब का शीर्षक ही है- कोमल गांधार। यह राग उन्हें प्रिय था। प्रिय तो खैर किसे नहीं ?

उस्ताद हाफिज अली खान (अमजद अली खान के पिता) को जब राष्ट्रपति राजेंद्र प्रसाद पद्म विभूषण दे रहे थे तो पूछा, "खान साहब! आपको कोई तकलीफ हों तो बताएँ।"

जब अकबर के दरबार में गूँजा राग दरबारी

उन्होंने कहा, "हज़ूर! हो सके तो दरबारी को बचा लें।"

राजेंद्र प्रसाद ने कहा, "मैं समझा नहीं।"

उन्होंने कहा, "आजकल लोग राग दरबारी के साथ बहुत छेड़खानी कर रहे हैं। आप तो आलाकमान हैं। आप कुछ संविधान लाएँ कि दरबारी तरीके से ही गायी-बजायी जाए।"

यह मालूम नहीं कि उस्ताद को शिकायत किनसे थी, लेकिन फिल्मों और गजलों में दरबारी का जम कर उपयोग हुआ। जैसे इस राग में गुलाम अली की प्रिय गजल है- 'हंगामा है क्यूँ बरपा'। लोकप्रिय फिल्म 'साजन' के गीत 'देखा है पहली बार' में भी दरबारी की छाप है।

वहीं दूसरी तरफ़ इस राग में भक्ति रस भी है और कई भजन इस राग में बने हैं। मैं ISKCON के युवा विंग से कुछ समय जुड़ा रहा था। वहाँ सुबह-सुबह झूमते-नाचते हुए गाते- 'जय राधा माधव, कुंज बिहारी'। बीटल्स के जॉर्ज हैरिसन ने भी यह भजन ठीक-ठाक गाया है। मुझे बाद में ज्ञात हुआ कि इसे राग दरबारी में गाया जाता रहा है। आशा भोंसले ने इस राग से मिलते-जुलते स्वरों और चलन में 'मोरा मन दर्पण कहलाए' गाया है।

इस राग में प्रस्तुतियाँ तो कई हैं, और एक से एक हैं; कुछ हट कर रोशन आरा बेगम का गाया 'परदेसवा न जाओ सजनवा' बंदिश का जिक्र करता हूँ। इसको सुन कर उस इकहरे तान की याद आती है, जो अब्दुल करीम खान साहब की पहचान थी। स्त्री-स्वर में दरबारी गाने के लिए आवाज़ में कुछ भारीपन या पौरुष स्वर की जरूरत पड़ सकती है। रोशन आरा बेगम बहुत सहजता से सप्तक (ऑक्टव) बदल पाती हैं।

इसी तरह किराना घराने की गंगूबाई हंगल की आवाज़ एक टॉन्सिल ऑपरेशन के बाद भारी हो गयी। इसे अंग्रेज़ी में बैरीटोन कहते हैं, जो उषा उत्थुप जैसी गायकों में मिलता है। गंगूबाई हंगल ने भी दरबारी बखूबी निभाया है।

पुरुष गायकों में तो लगभग हर किसी ने दरबारी गाया है। उस्ताद अमीर खान की दरबारी जितनी बार सुनी जाए, उतनी कम है। उनका गाया 'किन बैरन कान भरे' और उसके बाद का तराना एक अद्भुत अनुभूति है। इस संबंध में एक किस्सा है कि उन्होंने यह बंदिशें छुप-छुप कर उस्ताद अब्दुल वाहिद खान को गाते हुए सुन कर सीखी थी। उन्होंने स्थायी तो सीख लिया, लेकिन हर बंदिश का अंतरा नहीं सुन पाए (या उस्ताद ने नहीं सुनाया)। यह यूट्यूब पर सुन कर देखा जा सकता है कि अमीर खान दरबारी की कुछ बंदिशों में अंतरा नहीं गाते।

(प्रवीण कुमार झा एक संगीत प्रेमी और 'वाह उस्ताद' नामक पुस्तक के लेखक हैं। वह सम्प्रति नाँवें में चिकित्सक हैं)

In the Lap of Splendour and Comfort



Paramveer Singh,
General Manager, Taj
Swarna, Amritsar

Vacationing at the Taj Swarna in Amritsar assures all its guests a delightful experience. Built at the heart of Amritsar Basant Avenue, Taj Swarna has become the city's newest irresistible spot. This stylish and contemporary five-star hotel is known for its large rooms, endless dining options, a contemporary bar, exquisite conference rooms, its health club, and the famous niu&nau salon.

Characterised by modern equipment and top-of-the-line products, niu&nau is a state-of-the-art salon famous for offering patrons a unique experience. Taj Swarna's ingenious architecture includes an area for men's grooming and several private treatment rooms. Guests can unwind over cups of freshly brewed coffee, and have get-togethers while being pampered by our stylists, all of whom are fully committed to clients' beauty and skincare needs.

Taj Swarna's Jiva Spa is a hub for urban rejuvenation. It offers the best Indian rejuvenation therapies that range from Indian aromatherapy massages to body scrubs, wraps and facials. Jiva is also a retreat for yoga and meditation.

Taj Swarna has 157 rooms, each having the amenities for the convenience and comfort of guests. Its restaurants offer diverse menus and are designed luxuriously for the finest dining experience. Grand Trunk is an all-day diner with a variety of international and local cuisines

that leave an unforgettable impression. The Chinese Room is famous for its authentic Chinese menu, and The Peg is a high-energy bar frequented by visitors for its distinctive mood, vibrant ambience and amazing music.

With mood lighting and drop-down projectors, Taj Swarna's gigantic banquet hall is an ideal venue for all kinds of events. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** proudly hosts all its events in the city at the Taj Swarna Amritsar, known for its exquisite hospitality.



Afternoon tea at the Taj Swarna



The gorgeous interiors of the hotel



An evening view of the Taj Swarna

Honouring the First Lady of Indian Cinema

A stalwart of Indian Cinema, Devika Rani needs no introduction. Known as the First Lady of Indian cinema, Devika Rani's prowess as an actor and film producer is credited for the development of cinema in the country. A fearless personality, Devika Rani was educated in England and then went on to marry Himanshu Rai, a noted producer at the time. The couple established Bombay Talkies, a studio which consequently produced several successful films over the years. Devika Rani's talent as an actor gained renown after she starred in several of those films, and her pairing with Ashok Kumar became popular.

To pay homage to the actor, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** organised, as part of the **Chalchitra Rangmanch** festival, a performance of the play, *Devika Rani*, in Raipur. The story is written by Kishwar Desai and is directed by Lillete Dubey, and the show was presented in association with Oorja Raipur and with the support of **Ehsaas** Women of Raipur. Starring acclaimed actors like Ira Dubey, Rishi Khurana, Nandita Dubey, Jignesh Kataria, Kashyap Shangri and Joy Sengupta, the play focused on the personal and professional life of the actor, and drew a large crowd of passionate theatre lovers. Here are a few glimpses from the evening.



A moment from the play *Devika Rani*



(Clockwise) Nandita Dubey, Pranav Sachdev, Rachit Bahal, Mark Bennington, Akansha Kadre, Joy Sengupta, Rishi Khurana, Shrishti Trivedi, Kirti Kirdatt, Lillete Dubey, Ira Dubey, Kalpana Choudhary and Aanchal Garcha



The audience watches the play



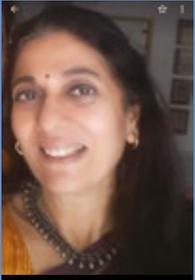
Aanchal Garcha, Ehsaas Woman of Raipur, welcomes the guests and the cast and crew of *Devika Rani*



(L-R) Harman Garcha, the President of Oorja, Aastha Khanuja, the Vice-President of Oorja, and Harshita Shah Nihichlani, a member of Oorja

Chalchitra Rangmanch was presented by Shree Cement Ltd in association with Oorja Raipur and with the support of Ehsaas Women of Raipur

Souls Divided by a Border : Visiting Pakistan and Journeying Within



Payal Singh Mohanka

It's the world's most dramatic border demarcating a nation cruelly divided by the British. Portraits of the founding fathers of the two nations, India and Pakistan – Mahatma Gandhi and Muhammad Ali Jinnah – witness the crossover as visitors walk the few steps between Attari on the Indian side and Wagah on the Pakistani side.

Overwhelmed by the agonizing scars of history and myriad emotions of pain, loss and oneness, it's a coming home moment for many. Their ancestors had crossed the border during Partition – the most traumatic event in the history of the subcontinent.

A co-ordinated retreat parade by soldiers of both nations takes place at the border each day at 5pm. The weekends see over 20,000 from India turning up to watch this grand spectacle and several thousands from Pakistan.

Today, the two countries, ruthlessly divided by the Radcliffe line that pierced their very heart, grapple with the political challenges of the present. Yet, when friendships develop there are no borders. There is a seamless overflow of huge affection and trust; all-encompassing brotherhood that respects the other's faith. We (my husband, daughter and I) crossed the border to attend the wedding of our friend's daughter in Faisalabad, a place two and a half hours from Lahore. The bride and our daughter had studied together in England.



Attari border and Wagah border

It is very common to hear Pakistanis and Indians talk about their friendships that blossomed while they were studying either in the US or the UK. These friendships are nurtured and cherished even when they return to their respective countries. Stitched together with a common heritage, ugly political divisions are non-existent and religion is a purely personal matter in the academic institutions where these friendships are forged. A young lady who had done her graduation and post-graduation in the UK confided, "There are some friendships across



Lahore Fort

Guru Nanak Handprint



The birthplace of Shaheed Bhagat Singh



the border that are even more precious to me than my childhood ones in Pakistan. We are the same people.” For me too it was like a coming-home moment.

My mother was born in Sargodha, about three hours away from Lahore. The family moved to India during Partition. While she taught us our Sikh prayers and quoted Portia’s ‘quality of mercy’ speech from *The Merchant of Venice* with ease, interestingly Urdu quotations sprinkled her conversation. Her favourite lines still ring in my ears, “*Allah khidmat karne ka mauka naseeb walon ko deta hai*” (God gives the blessed an opportunity to serve) and this is a sentiment that echoes in Sikh scriptures too.

Across the border, each time I mentioned my mother was born in Sargodha, I heard “Oh my *ammi* was born in Amritsar”, “My *abbu* was born in Delhi”, “My *khala* (aunt) was born in Jalandhar”, or that “My grandmother was born in Ambala.” The line the British drew sliced the very soul of a region. “We still hang on to a fragile link,” says a Pakistani lady. “We love the people and the culture. We don’t want to be separated. We are Rajputs. We migrated from India. We consult our relatives there for all marriage customs.”

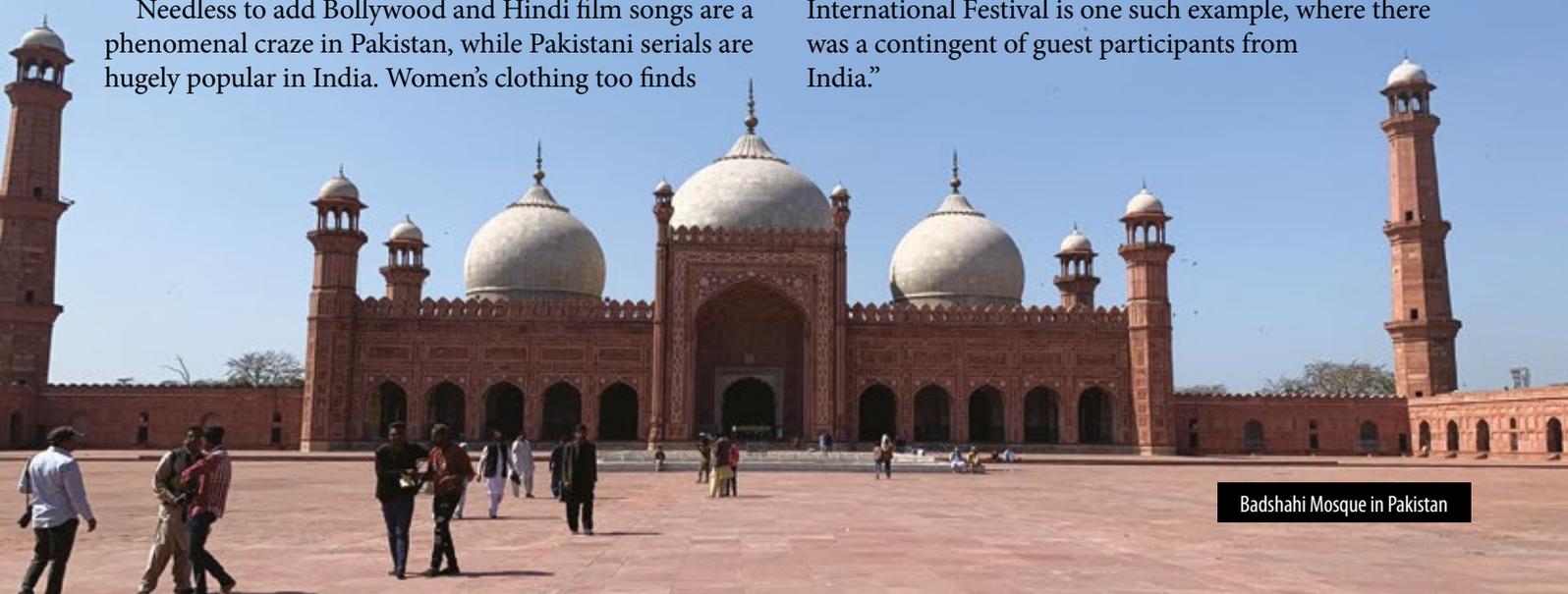
Needless to add Bollywood and Hindi film songs are a phenomenal craze in Pakistan, while Pakistani serials are hugely popular in India. Women’s clothing too finds

a huge appreciation on both sides of the border and there are always excess baggage issues, as visitors carry back tangible reminders of their glorious stay!

However, some haven’t yet had a chance to visit India. Saba Faisal, National Director, SOS Children’s Village, says, “While I have never been to India, over the years I have met some amazing people. Gracious and kind, they make great friends.”

Through our journey the oft-repeated common refrain, “Our roots are the same”, “We are one people”, “Our cultures are the same”, played out everywhere. And sadly there is the unanimous belief that politics and governments have over the years deepened the chasm and forcibly kept apart siblings with a common ancestry by making travel across the border a huge challenge.

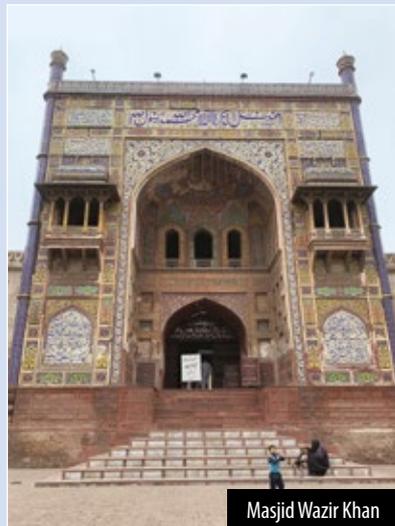
As Mira Hashmi, a writer, a teacher of film and media studies for over two decades and grand-daughter of the legendary poet, Faiz Ahmad Faiz says, “After my last visit to India in 2015, visas to Pakistani citizens stopped being granted. Pakistan on the other hand is issuing visas for conferences and festivals among other categories. The paperwork is extensive and of course it helps to have contacts in high places. The recent Faiz International Festival is one such example, where there was a contingent of guest participants from India.”



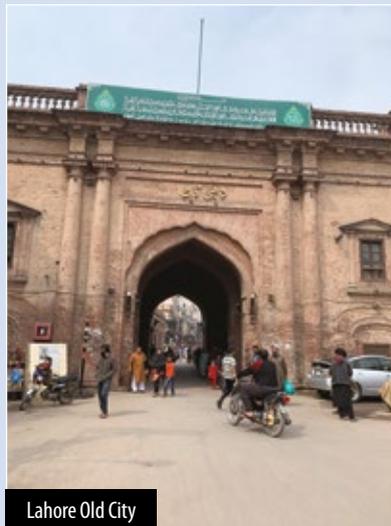
Badshahi Mosque in Pakistan



Gurudwara Dehra Sahib



Masjid Wazir Khan



Lahore Old City



Sri Krishna Temple in Lahore

Since Partition, each time there has been tension across the LoC, both the countries have sealed their borders, shut down trade and had brought dialogue to a halt.

In the summer of 2019, Hashmi was invited by her publishers, Harper Collins, to attend the launch of her book on Gulzar's film *Ijaazat*. "They were blissfully unaware that it was actually impossible for me to be there, and were genuinely taken aback when I informed them that as a Pakistani I no longer qualified for an Indian visa. I sent a video message in which I lamented the fact that a mere seven decades of separation had trumped millennia of togetherness, to the point that this 'bad blood' continues to be exploited by those for whom power is of far more value than peace."

It is not just the elite circles that believe that we are one but even the common man. We had an interesting experience at the Shahi Hammam, built by Wazir Khan, the Governor of Lahore. The board near the ticket counter of the 17th century Royal Bath said the fee to enter was 50 Pakistani rupees for locals and 400 Pakistani rupees for foreigners. Since there were three of us we handed over 1200 Pakistani rupees to the gentleman at the ticket counter. He looked at us quizzically and asked where we were from. "India," we replied. He looked at his senior, "*India se aaye hain* (They are from India)." Prompt came the reply: "Local rate." The gentleman at the counter returned 1050 Pakistani rupees to us. The senior smiled

and added, "We are one people. How is your trip going? I hope you are enjoying yourself here in Pakistan?" Truly touched and overwhelmed, we nodded our heads and told him we were delighted to be here. When we shared this anecdote with a Pakistani friend in Islamabad, he said he had had the same experience at the Taj Mahal in Agra!

Outwardly, it's sometimes hard to differentiate and one could just merge in. Physically and emotionally, it is not easy to put the 'foreigner tag' on people from the subcontinent.

Interestingly, I found that for north Indian women it was the *bindi* on the forehead which was the giveaway. And it was the *bindi* that was often a conversation starter, "Aah, you are from India?" Sometimes there would be an expression of a deep desire to visit India and on one occasion a salesman at a textile store greeted me warmly, reconfirmed my Indian identity and then in a soft voice added, "*India ko boliyey na thoda compromise karey* (Tell India to compromise a bit)." Just then a group of customers walked in and the unfinished conversation hung in the air. His angst was evident but its cause was unclear. Was it the hijab controversy that was raging in India I wondered? But any kind of real or perceived persecution of the minority community in both countries tends to get magnified across the



Nankana Sahib, birthplace of Guru Nanak

border.

As Shandana Gulzar, a trade lawyer by profession who joined the then ruling party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf in 2018, and is a member of the national assembly, the Pakistan parliament, says, “There are two Indias that a regular Pakistani can see. There is Nehru’s India and there is Modi’s India. Today what we see happening in India against minorities is cause for concern. While each one of us wants peace, it is hard to see the subjugation of one particular religious order.”

Gulzar believes the easiest way to ruin relations is to close borders, “You impose a physical bar that destroys trade, checks income flows and forces nations into poverty. To open up borders, trade has to be the number one priority. What is this senseless violence and bullying going to come to if neighbours are that intertwined?”

For an Indian tourist seeking a glimpse into an undivided past, the Punjab province of Pakistan is a veritable treasure trove. It’s a journey deep within. The province’s superlative roads make movement easy. The Mall Road of Lahore is reminiscent of Delhi, as you drive past the Sir Ganga Ram Hospital the tour guide points out he is the architect of modern Lahore. Reminders of a bygone age are everywhere: The 142-year-old Faletti’s Hotel where Nehru once stayed, the grandeur of the Lahore Fort, the awe-inspiring Badshahi Mosque, which has a capacity for one lakh worshippers, and the tomb of Iqbal, who wrote *Saare jahan se achcha Hindustan hamara*. We visited the Sri Krishna temple, the only surviving temple in Lahore and Gurdwara Dehra Sahib, where

Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s ashes are interred. A little over an hour away from Lahore is Nankana Sahib, the birthplace of Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith. Close to Islamabad is the Dharmarajika stupa, a Buddhist monument at Taxila built by the Mauryan King, Asoka, and the Punja Sahib Gurdwara in Hasan Abdal, which has Guru Nanak’s handprint on a boulder. We drove through sugarcane fields in the Punjab province’s Faisalabad district to reach Bangay village, the birthplace of Shaheed Bhagat 2rty44 who fought for freedom from British rule. The list is endless.

As we cross the border back to India, heady with memories of warmth, lavish hospitality of a stunning wedding, Rahat Fateh Ali Khan’s mesmerising music add to an adrenaline-charged walk down the lanes of shared history. Shandana Gulzar’s words echo in my ears, “The world is on a mad downward spiral everywhere. The old and the rigid have failed. It’s time for young blood to step in and decide what kind of world they want to see in the next 50 years.”

Hopefully, India and Pakistan too will soften their stance and issue visas with ease to visitors and tourists to walk across the border. An answer to a prayer for those nursing a palpable yearning for oneness and a deep desire to celebrate their common ancestry.

Payal Singh Mohanka is a prolific freelance journalist. She has been a regular at the Foundation’s initiatives in Kolkata for several years.



Dharmarajika stupa in Taxila

Battling the Vice-Grip of Hate



The words, “I can’t breathe,” still ring in our ears as we are reminded of the brutal lynching of the 46-year-old George Floyd by a police officer in Minneapolis in the United States of America on May 25, 2020. Similarly, unforgettable are the murders of Breonna Taylor, who was shot by the police in Louisville, Kentucky, and that of Ahmaud Arbery, who was killed by self-fashioned vigilantes in Glynn County, Georgia. Moreover, imprinted in public consciousness is the Black Lives Matter movement, which was started in 2013 but gained renewed momentum after George Floyd’s murder. Indeed, the instances of systemic racism by white supremacists targeting members of different races have overwhelmingly increased over the past couple of years. In such circumstances, it becomes imperative that peace is upheld as the primary requisite for fostering relationships between different communities.

To that effect, the International Day of Peace, also officially known as World Peace Day, is a United Nations-sanctioned holiday observed annually on September 21. Dedicated to promoting world peace and the mitigation

of war and violence, the occasion was first celebrated in 1981. Several nations and groups of people observe the event. The day starts with the ringing of the UN Peace Bell, made of the coins donated by children from all countries at the UN Headquarters in New York City, with an inscription on the side which reads, “Long live absolute world peace”. This year’s theme for World Peace Day is “End Racism, Build Peace”. While the theme upholds the resolve, it is a truth known to all that world peace is still an ephemeral dream, and racism is a disease that has reared its ugly head time and again.

The history of racism is long and convoluted. Racism is the belief that some races are inherently superior than others by virtue of a group of people having different physical traits. Racism is also the belief that people who have different skin colours have different traits, personalities, intellectual capabilities and morality. Racism is also observed when institutions perpetuate these beliefs, and professional, legal and healthcare systems become extremely divisive. Judgement on the basis of one’s physical features is not only discriminatory

but also unfair with respect to one's ability to contribute to the progress of society. In fact, since the late 20th century, it has been found that the concept of race is a cultural invention without any scientific basis. But one can hardly forget British colonial rule, which rested on the belief that the colonised countries were inferior and the inhabitants deserving less than their white counterparts owing to their cultural differences and the colour of their skin.

Likewise, Germany's defeat in World War I instigated the country's anti-Semitic sentiments, which led to the persecution and mass murder of the Jewish population. This has come to be known as the Holocaust, and is still deemed to be one of the worst crimes committed against humanity. The transatlantic trade resulted in the slavery of more than 10 million Africans in the Americas in the 16th and the 18th century. The slave trade adversely affected the economy of Africa, and the fear of captivity made agricultural development close to impossible. Colonialism destroyed the economies of the colonies, and the Holocaust is still mourned by people all over the world. The crimes against indigenous communities in the US and Australia are being acknowledged in the 20th century, with members of these communities openly defying practices that seek to wipe out their culture.

The consequences of these actions have been far and wide. A direct result of the slave trade has been the brutality against the African American population, which has continued till today. Reports by Equal Justice Initiative — a nonprofit that tries to address the United States's racist legacy through activism and education — suggests that between 1877 and 1950, more than 4,400 black men, women and children were lynched by white mobs. Not only were they murdered, but also tortured before being killed. One can hardly forget the writings of stalwarts such as Olaudah Equiano, who detailed the horrors of slavery, and later writers such as Phillis Wheatley, W.E.B. Du Bois, Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, Booker T. Washington and others who brought to the fore the horrors committed against

the black population. In fact, it is also suggested that the brutal police murders and vigilante murders are a direct consequence of America's history of slave trading, which did not consider the black population as human beings, but rather as commodities which could be disposed of at will. The Indian subcontinent, too, has a troubled legacy of hate crimes; while practices like untouchability have been outlawed, discrimination against minorities across South Asia continues.

The impunity that the perpetrators of such crimes enjoy is an example of racial, religious and class prejudice plaguing the systems which are supposed to be protecting human rights and sovereignty. Discrimination against Southeast Asians had been rampant until they started gaining important offices in the US and the United Kingdom. More recently, Asians were subjected to racist and xenophobic hate during the Covid-19 pandemic owing to the misconception that they were somehow responsible for the spread of the virus. Thus, despite technological advancements bringing the world closer and

information being available at the fingertips of those who seek it, it is indeed strange that these crimes still exist and that people are still prejudiced. However, as has been seen, misinformation and the easy availability of xenophobic content has led to several hate crimes being committed against people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds.

Therefore, it becomes our responsibility to be conscious in our practices and to be mindful about the kind of information we choose to consume and expose our children to. It is our obligation to counter hatred with love and understanding, and to stand up against unjustified violence with peace as our weapon.

As António

Guterres, the Secretary-

General of the UN, points out, "Peace is a noble and necessary pursuit, and the only practical pathway to a better, fairer world for all people." **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** echoes this belief.

This International Day of Peace, let us reaffirm our vows as citizens to work for a world where peace is an undisputed right of every human being.





Surendra Mohan Pathak



हिंदी ने मेरी औकात बनाई, लेकिन हिंदी के लेखक से मैंने कुछ नहीं सीखा: सुरेंद्र मोहन पाठक

अतीत के झरोखे से

यह रायपुर के लिए एक विशेष शाम थी। अवसर था प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की ओर से आयोजित कलम की आठवीं कड़ी का। साल था 2016 महीना था अगस्त और अतिथि वक्ता के रूप में मौजूद थे अपराध लेखन की दुनिया के बेताज बादशाह सुरेंद्र मोहन पाठक। उनसे संवाद का दायित्व वरिष्ठ पत्रकार देवेंद्र कुमार ने उठाया। आयोजकों की ओर से गौरव गिरिजा शुक्ला ने अतिथियों का स्वागत किया और 'कलम' के बारे में जानकारी दी। उन्होंने बताया कि कलम साहित्यकार और पाठक के बीच एक पुल का काम करता है। इसका उद्देश्य दोनों को एक-दूसरे से जोड़ना है। अतिथि लेखक पाठक और सूत्रधार का परिचय साहित्यप्रेमी छात्रा प्रथा ने दिया। पाठक के लेखकीय सफर के बारे में प्रथा ने बताया कि आपकी लेखन यात्रा की शुरुआत छः दशक पुरानी है। आपकी पहली कहानी '57 साल पुराना आदमी' वर्ष 1959 में 'मनोहर कहानियां' में प्रकाशित हुई थी, जबकि पहला उपन्यास 'पुराने गुनाह नये गुनाहगार' 1963 में प्रकाशित हुआ था। आपने अब तक 275 से अधिक उपन्यास, 45 से अधिक कहानी संकलन और 26 चुटकुला पुस्तकें लिखी हैं।

संवाद की शुरुआत में कुमार ने पूछा कि आप विज्ञान के छात्र थे, लेखन की शुरुआत कैसे हुई? पाठक का उत्तर था, "संयोग से हुई। कोई योजना बनाकर नहीं आया। विज्ञान का विद्यार्थी भी मैं संयोग से ही बना था। जिस जमाने में मैं कॉलेज में भर्ती होने वाली उम्र में पहुंचा था, उस जमाने में छात्र को इतनी अकल ही नहीं होती थी कि वह विचार कर कोई फैसला कर सके। पिता ने फैसला किया कि ऐसा होना चाहिए और हो गया। इसका मेरे पर्सनल इंटरैस्ट से कुछ लेना-देना नहीं था। यह एकेडमिक बात थी, मैंने एकेडमिकली किया। न उस समय मेरी कोई ऐसी रुचि थी, न ही मेरा कोई प्लान था कि यह करूंगा तो यह होगा, मेरी कोई हैसियत बन जाएगी। एक काम था, जो मैं घर वालों के लिए कर रहा था। इसलिए उसका कोई रोल जो मैं हॉबी की तरह कर रहा हूँ, उसमें कोई भूमिका नहीं थी।" कुमार के फिर से कुरेदने पर कि आखिर शुरुआत कैसे हुई? पाठक का उत्तर था, "वो मेरी किस्मत में लिखा था। पढ़ने की आदत ऐसी थी कि ओवरफ्लो कर गया। ऐसा कुछ दीवानगी का दौर था। मैं उस दौर में उनकी कहानी पढ़ कर खुद उसी कहानी को लिखने लगता था, और फिर उसे चेक करता था कि मैंने जो लिखा

उसे कैसा लिखा है। उसमें कौन सी बात छूट गई है या कौन सी मैंने छोड़ दी। फिर अगर ओरिजनल से अच्छा लिखा होता तो एक तरह की खुशफहमी भी होती थी। यह एक तरह की ट्रेनिंग हुई। फिर ऐसे ही मेरे मन में यह जागृत हुआ कि मैं खुद ही क्यों न लिखूँ। मैंने उसे मैगजीन में भेज दिया और संयोग ऐसा हुआ कि वह छप गया। छप गया तो जोश आ गया।"

आपका बचपन पाकिस्तान में बीता। इसका आपके लेखन पर कितना असर पड़ा? इस सवाल के उत्तर में पाठक ने बताया, "उस समय मुझे सपना भी नहीं था कि मुझे क्या करना है, कैसे करना है? पर इसका जो सबसे बड़ा फायदा हुआ वह यह हुआ कि मुझे उर्दू आ गई। उस वक्त शिक्षा का माध्यम उर्दू था। उर्दू ही पढ़ाई जाती थी मदरसों में। तीन जमातें मैंने उर्दू पढ़ीं तो बहुत काम आई मेरे और आज भी काम आ रही है। मेरा अंदाजे बयां जो है उसकी कोई कॉपी इसीलिए नहीं कर पाता कि ऐसी मैंने उर्दू, हिंदी, पंजाबी की शैली बना ली है, कि उसे कोई और नहीं बना पाता। उसमें जो मेजर शेयर है वह उर्दू का है। बाकी और पाकिस्तान का क्या रोल रहा? मैं 1947 में केवल आठ साल का था। आठ साल के बच्चे की क्या ही समझ होगी?"

उर्दू के लेखकों में एक बात है कि उनके अंदाज-ए-बयां में एक रवानगी है। बांग्ला के लेखकों में कथा की ही प्रधानता होती है। हिंदी के लेखकों में लफ्फाजी ज्यादा होती है। उनमें कथा से भाषा की चाशनी अधिक होती है। जिस बात के लिए वह बात लिखी जा रही वह सेकेंडरी हो जाती है

आप आत्मकथा लिख रहे हैं? उसमें पाठकों के लिए नया क्या होगा? के उत्तर में पाठक ने कहा कि मेरे पब्लिशर का दबाव है कि मैं आत्मकथा लिखूँ। उसे बहुत उम्मीदें हैं कि मेरी जीवनगाथा में लोगों की रुचि होगी। मैंने न तो इसके बारे में सोचा था, न ही यह खयाल आया था। पब्लिशर के दबाव में कोशिश तो कर

रहा हूँ, पर यह भी हो सकता है कि मैं एक पन्ना लिख कर छोड़ दूँ। तो अभी इसके बारे में बात करना प्रीमेच्योर होगा। यहां यह याद रखने की बात है कि बाद के सालों में कलम के एक सत्र में पाठक ने यह बताया था कि 2017 के आसपास आत्मकथाओं का चलन सा निकला था। तब खूब आत्मकथाएं छपी थीं। तब आत्मकथा लिखना मेरे लिए मुश्किल ही नहीं, असंभव सा था। मैं सोचता था कि मेरे जीवन में भला किस को रुचि होगी। लेकिन शुरुआती हिचकिचाहट के बाद भी जब मेरे प्रकाशक हार्पर कॉलिस ने दबाव बनाए रखा और ज्यादा पैसे देने की बात कही, तब मैंने सोचा था कि कोशिश करूंगा। हालांकि तब भी मुझे लगता था कि पचास पेज के बाद मैं हाथ खड़े कर दूंगा, मना कर दूंगा। पर मैंने एक ही बैठकी में तीन महीनों के दौरान 1200 पेज लिख दिए।

ऐसे भी ज्यादा मिले।

आप अपने प्रशंसकों की राय को किस तरह से लेते हैं? के उत्तर में पाठक ने कहा था कि आज तक तो कोई ऐसा प्रशंसक मिला नहीं। जिसका काम उसी को साजे वाली बात है। ढोल मेरे गले पड़ा है तो मुझी को बजाना है। जो छोटे-मोटे लोग हैं जो उनके दिमाग की बातें हैं कि ऐसे लिख लो वैसे लिख लो, उसका कोई मायने नहीं है। पर जो सेंसिबल लोग हैं वे ऐसी सलाहें नहीं देते। यह दूसरे की टेरिटरी में जाना है। यह राय जरूर आती है कि आपका यह नॉवेल बहुत अच्छा था, बहुत पसंद आया, ऐसे और भी नॉवेल लिखो। पर फरमाइशी नॉवेल लिखना हर किसी के वश की बात नहीं होती है। पाबंदिया लगाकर कहे कि यह लिखना है तो यह उचित बात नहीं, जो लेखक की मर्जी है उसे वही लिखना चाहिए।

श्रोताओं में से एक के इस सवाल पर कि हम सब तो आपके फैन हैं? आप किसके फैन हैं? आपके पसंदीदा लेखक कौन से हैं और आपको कौन सी किताब पसंद है? पाठक का उत्तर था, “मेरा वश चले तो दुनिया में जितनी किताबें हैं मैं उन्हें ले लूँ। मुझे तो केवल पढ़ना है। जो पसंद आए उसको फिर पढ़ लूँगा। जो नहीं पसंद उसे छोड़ दूँगा। यह तो एक अथाह सागर है, सारी उमर आप इसमें से एक बूंद नहीं निकाल लें, तो अपने आपको खुशकिस्मत समझें। इसका तो कोई ओर-छोर नहीं है। अब तो मैं ज्यादा नहीं पढ़ता। पहले महीने में छः-सात किताबें नहीं पढ़ता था, तो चैन नहीं मिलता है। अब तो साल भर में इतनी किताबें पढ़ता हूँ। अब उम्र हो गई है, अपना ही काम इतना हो गया है। पर जब पढ़ता था तो बेतहाशा पढ़ता था। सरकारी नौकरी के दौरान यही काम किया। कोई भी राइटर नहीं छोड़ा। विदेश के लेखकों को पढ़ा। उर्दू के, बांग्ला के लेखकों को पढ़ा। हिंदी के लेखकों को भी पढ़ा, तारीफ भी की, पर उनसे कुछ सीखा नहीं। पर उर्दू के लेखकों से सीखा कि बात को सजाकर कहना चाहिए। उर्दू के लेखकों में एक बात है कि उनके अंदाज-ए-बयां में एक रवानगी है। बांग्ला के लेखकों में कथा की ही प्रधानता होती है। हिंदी के लेखकों में लपफाजी ज्यादा होती है। उनमें कथा से भाषा की चाशनी अधिक होती है। जिस बात के लिए वह बात लिखी जा रही वह सेकेंडरी हो जाती है। कहते हुए मुझे अफसोस हो रहा है कि हिंदी ने मेरी आँकात बनाई, लेकिन हिंदी के लेखक से मैंने कुछ नहीं सीखा।”

गंभीर साहित्य और लोकप्रिय साहित्य की चर्चा करते हुए एक श्रोता के लुगदी साहित्य से जुड़े सवाल पर पाठक का कहना था, “लुगदी साहित्य वर्ड या टर्म उस कागज की वजह से बना, जिस पर वह छपता था। वह कागज लुगदी से ही बनता है। वह जो स्क्रेप है गत्ता, कपड़ा, टुकड़ा उससे वह कागज बनता है। उस पर छपी किताब को लुगदी साहित्य कहते हैं। लेकिन वे इस बात की तारीफ नहीं करते कि आखिर उस कागज पर वह किताब क्यों छपती है। उस कागज पर वह किताब इसलिए छपती है कि तभी उसकी कीमत एक रुपया रखी जा सकती है। अब आप ये बताइए कि जिसने किताब पढ़नी है, जिसे टेक्स्ट से मतलब है, वह एक रुपए वाली किताब खरीदना पसंद करेगा या दस रुपए वाली किताब खरीदेगा। साहित्यकारों ने ये जो शब्द थोपा हुआ है लुगदी साहित्य, लुगदी साहित्य शब्द इसलिए है कि उसका पेपर इंफिरियर होता है। अब उन्होंने उस पर छपी राइटिंग को ही पेपर को इंफिरियर करार देने के चलते ऑटोमैटिकली अनुमान लगाना शुरू कर देते हैं, कहने लगते हैं कि यह रद्दी है। यह कोई इंसाफ है। आपको चांदी की प्लेट में खाना परोस दिया तो वह बढ़िया है, उम्दा है; और पत्तल में परोस दिया वही सेम खाना तो वह घटिया है, खराब है। लेखक का क्या जोर है कि वह प्रकाशक को बाध्य कर दे कि वह इस पेपर पर किताब छापे।”

एक श्रोता के यह कहने पर कि यह सही है कि किताबें अभी उस मात्रा में बिक नहीं रही हैं, पर किताबें कभी अजायबघर में नहीं जा सकती हैं। नया जो पाठकवर्ग आ रहा है, वह लेखकों की किताबें खरीदना चाहता है। पाठक का उत्तर था कि ऐसा करने वाली अंग्रेजी रीडर है। अंग्रेजी की किताबें स्टेटस सिंबल हैं। जबकि हिंदी की किताब से आपकी हेठी होती है। हिंदी की किताब के साथ यह कैसा डिस्क्रिमिनेशन है। हवाई जहाज का यात्री हिंदी की किताब पढ़ने में अपनी हेठी समझता है, जबकि अंग्रेजी का नॉवेल पढ़ने में उसे कोई दिक्कत नहीं है। हिंदी किताब से आप ऑटोमैटिकली नीचे हो जाते हैं। अंग्रेजी पाठक के पास खरीदने की क्षमता है। हिंदी तो विपन्नता से आगे बढ़ती है। अंग्रेजी की बहुत सारी किताबें खरीद ली जाती हैं, पर पढ़ी नहीं जाती। अरुंधती



Surenra Mohan Pathak felicitated by Javed Ali Khan



Gaurav Girija Shukla and Surenra Mohan Pathak



Surenra Mohan Pathak and Devendra Kumar

रॉय की किताब जिसे अंग्रेजी का बुकर मिला था ‘द गॉड ऑफ स्माल थिंग्स’, उसे न खरीदना इज्जत खराब करने जैसा था। वह किताब खरीद सबने ली, पर पढ़ी सभी ने नहीं। यह सुविधा हिंदी में नहीं है। अंग्रेजी किताब इसलिए भी खरीद ली जाती है कि घर में लगाएंगे, सजावट के काम आएगी। बाहर से कोई मेहमान आएगा तो आपको ऑटोमैटिकली लिटरेट मान लेगा कि इनके यहां इतनी किताबें रखी हैं। किताबों का जो बुरा हाल हमारे यहां है, वैसा दुनिया में कहीं नहीं है। वहां लेखक किताबें लिखकर बहुत समृद्ध हैं। किताबें पचास-पचास भाषाओं में अनूदित हो जाती हैं, अपने यहां क्षेत्री भाषाओं तक में अनुवाद नहीं हो पाता। हमारे यहां इस तरह की कोई संस्कृति नहीं है। कोई इच्छुक नहीं है, कोई चाहत नहीं है। पढ़ने का कोई रिवाज नहीं है। फिल्म इंडस्ट्री में पढ़ने का रिवाज नहीं है। वे कहते हैं सुनाओ। पढ़ना तो बड़ा पिछड़ा हुआ कारोबार है। अंत में आयोजकों की ओर से अतिथि वक्ता और संवादकर्ता का अभिन्नंदन किया गया।

Shining the Light of Inspiration

Central to **Prabha Khaitan Foundation's** vision has been empowering women and helping them realise their tremendous potential. The Foundation's **Ehsaas** initiative, which brings together women from varied professional and social backgrounds, has been a catalyst in ensuring the success of this vision. Not only have they proven themselves to be integral to the Foundation's functioning, but they have also inspired countless other women to walk in their footsteps. Through their determination, creativity, and persistence, they have succeeded in becoming the pillars on which the Foundation has thrived over the years. Inspiring and inspirational, through their lives they have encouraged women to fearlessly follow their passions whether that be personal, professional or spiritual. As the Foundation forays into newer and more exciting horizons, we have our **Ehsaas** Women to thank for their steadfast support. With the Foundation increasing its activities in the city of Agra, we are excited to present to you our dynamic **Ehsaas** Women of Agra!

Chandni Chopra



Chandni Chopra is an author and a writer. Most of her work explores the themes of love, displacement and questioning the conventional. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Creative Writing and a Master's Diploma in Mass Communication from the University of Delhi. She has worked as a freelance writer for a lifestyle magazine and has undertaken various writing projects. Her keen sense of reason finds expression in creating complex characters for her stories and composing poetry. She is an avid reader and traveller, and finds books and travel to be great sources of inspiration for her own literary compositions. She is also actively engaged in social work and has volunteered with various NGOs. Her aim is to uncover the many layers of societal conditioning in order to promote tolerance and inclusivity.

Shweta Bansal



Danny Kaye says, “Life is a great big canvas and you should throw all the paint on it you can.” Shweta Bansal has lived by this quote by constantly enriching her life. An ardent reader, she started training in Kathak from the age of seven and was awarded by the former President, Shankar Dayal Sharma, for her proficiency in the dance form. However, despite her passion for dance, she decided to study microbiology and biochemistry at Sophia College, Mumbai. After marriage, which required her to move to Agra, she took every opportunity to relive her passion for the arts. She did so by directing plays, choreographing dance performances, and even by organising literature meets. After trying her hand at interior designing, teaching, and travelling to satiate her soul, she started a literature society, LitAgra, which organises book meets, engaging sessions and small literature fests. As an entrepreneur, she runs a boutique travel company called Holiday 3 Sixty to help people make indelible memories that last a lifetime.

Vinti Kathuria



Born and brought up in Delhi, Vinti Kathuria, an alumnus of Delhi Public School and Venkateswara College, holds a diploma in PR and Event Management from Amity University. Growing up in a Radha Soami household, serving those in need had been an integral part of her life, a facet which brought her a sense of belonging. After the birth of her two children in 2010, Kathuria has always been keen to inspire her young ones to grow up with the same principle of helping others.

In 2015, Kathuria, with her keen eye for fashion trends, good food and music, started Flavour Fusion Events in Agra along with her mother-in-law. They invited household names from the culinary world from all over the country to teach tantalizing recipes to the women of Agra.

With a penchant for travelling, Kathuria, during one of her trips, started hand-picking pieces of clothing for women from boutique stores. The overwhelming response to her initiative at one exhibition led her to create her own initiative: A-square. In 2018, she opened her first store in Delhi with pieces directly sourced from manufacturers. However, Covid-19 led to the store being shut down, but social media helped to keep her venture alive. Currently, she is working on a footwear line for children which she hopes to launch by the end of the year. Being a part of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** as an **Ehsaas Women** of Agra has been an unforgettable journey and an exhilarating eye-opener for Kathuria.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE



Aalok Shrivastav



Aanchal Malhotra



Alpana Mishra



Ashish Vidyarthi



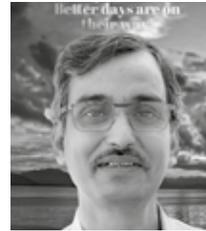
Barkha Dutt



Bhawana Somaaya



Bibek Debroy



Dr. Shrikrishna
'Jugnu'



Dwarika Uniyal



Gagan Gill



Geet Chaturvedi



Himanshu Bajpai



Maitreyi Pushpa



Meghnad Desai



Parul Khanna
Parashar



Pratyaksha Sinha



Rasheed Kidwai



Ricky Kej



Shrayana
Bhattacharya



Suchita
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