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Prabha प्रभा

The Prabha Khaitan Foundation Chronicle



The Future is Bright and Young

The future of our country, our languages, our heritage — indeed, the future of the world — depends on how the minds, hearts and lives of our children are fostered. As we celebrate the wonderful literary creations of children's minds in this issue of *Prabha*, let us also bring into its ambit the incredible power of all artistic and human endeavour — music, art, food, cooking, the love of animals, and, of course, the love of fellow humans

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Prabha
खैतान



MANISHA JAIN
Communications and Branding Chief,
Prabha Khaitan Foundation

Our Children Are Our Culture

A society progresses only when its children are nurtured and given adequate opportunities for growth. But even in the 21st century, this remains a distant dream for many. Globally, children are growing up in poverty, violence and conflict, and waiving their chances at a fulfilling life. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** has always been aware of the role children play in the development of society. Among the Foundation's groundbreaking initiatives is **Muskaan**, which, among other things, aims to promote literature and cultural awareness among children. In this regard, the landmark, three-day Muskaan Literature Festival brought together child authors and students from different corners of the country to celebrate the art of writing. I hope you'll enjoy reading about the festival and how the children discussed their ideas with renowned writers and storytellers.

Truly, stories of individual lives help us to understand other communities and cultures better, thereby bringing us closer. Stimulating conversations with Nandana Dev Sen, Karen Anand, Rahul Rawail, Sadaf Hussain, Amar Mitra, Joy Goswami and others give us glimpses into the world of creative geniuses from diverse fields. We also look back on the time when the Foundation honoured another pioneering artist, Vidya Balan, for her contribution to Indian cinema.

Social welfare is at the heart of the Foundation's mission, and this issue highlights how it works with different organisations to help those in need. This love and honour extends to animals as well, who are an integral part of our environment and lives. Much of this has been possible due to the tireless efforts of our **Ehsaas Women**, and in these pages, you'll find how they are coming together to reach newer horizons!

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]



Managing Trustee of Prabha Khaitan Foundation, Sundeep Bhutoria, the Foundation's Honorary Convener of Rajasthan and Central India Affairs, Apra Kuchhal, and IAS officer Smita Bharadwaj meet the Governor of Madhya Pradesh, Mangubhai C. Patel, in Bhopal to discuss the Foundation's varied activities over the decades. The Foundation will be inaugurating its activities in Bhopal in April 2023



Anindita Chatterjee, Manisha Jain and Shazia Illmi meet the Union Minister of State for External Affairs and Parliamentary Affairs, V. Muraleedharan, in New Delhi to talk about the World Hindi Conference 2023. You can read about the conference in the next issue of Prabha

Happy Birthday — Prabha WISHES EHSAS WOMEN BORN IN FEBRUARY

4th February



Garima Mithal

6th February



Garima Tiwari

7th February



Riddhima Doshi

21st February



Karuna Goenka

25th February



Kanak Rekha
Chauhan

26th February



Surekha Prahlad



The Youngest Storytellers



True readers and lovers of literature will always acknowledge a fundamental truth: anyone, irrespective of age, can tell wonderful stories and imagine different worlds. This is why the literary worlds created by children are so precious; they not only act as a burgeoning network of shared imaginations with other children, but also provide adults — many of whom no longer remember what it is like to be, or think like, a child — a glimpse into the unique perspectives of young people.

These insights are invaluable, for they further cement the belief that literature is not just for children to read; it is also for them to write. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** has always explored different ways in which children can be honoured and their creativity highlighted — and these efforts have culminated in the landmark Muskaan Literature Festival, a celebration of the immense value that India's minor citizens can add to the literary world, with their fresh, imaginative, and often astute worldviews. Read on to witness a celebration of children's minds, hearts and words! After all, children aren't always the writers of tomorrow; often, they're the writers of today.

Celebrating Literature By And For Children

In a world that is digitalising faster than ever, the attention span of youngsters is plummeting steadily. Children are often initiated into digital content much earlier than books. But this is not to say that all of today's youth have strayed too far from books. Many immerse themselves in reading, enjoy every bit of the process that broadens their horizons, and some even put into words what they think about their surroundings and this world. To celebrate young minds that are beginning to explore the creative process, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation and Education for All Trust** organised the three-day-long Muskaan Literature Festival for child authors. It was inaugurated on January 10, 2023, at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts in New Delhi.

The inauguration festival took place in the august company of Priyank Kanoongo, the Chairman of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights. His speech underpinned the need to create environments conducive to the development of children's creative abilities. We must replace smartphones with books to stimulate a love for reading in children. K.N. Shrivastava, the Director of the India International Centre, stressed the need for a responsible acknowledgement of children's

literature as a creative powerhouse. Children constitute the foundation of any nation, as Dr K. Sreenivasrao, Secretary of the Sahitya Akademi, believes, and it is on us to pose creative challenges and hone these future leaders' skills. Many children are ready to take a flight to a world of limitless possibilities. What they need is a push. Events like the Muskaan Literature Festival will go a long way in encouraging many budding talents to take to writing.

Most litterateurs' journeys begin at a young age. One story or one poem, and on go their tales. Delightful poetry recitations by child authors Aviraj Singhvi and Saina Sarin touched everyone's soul in the inaugural ceremony. Renowned children's author, Ruskin Bond, lauded the Foundation's efforts in creating a space where children are being introduced to the art of reading and writing. Conceptualised by Shinjini Kulkarni, **Ehsaas Woman of Noida**, a cultural programme named *Udaan* left the audience spellbound and provided a befitting conclusion to the inaugural day of the **Muskaan Literature Festival**.

Here are a few glimpses of the inaugural day of the festival. Let our young keep writing!



Anindita Chatterjee, Sumitra Ray, Priyank Kanoongo, Sachchidanand Joshi, K.N. Shrivastava, Anant Vijay, Shobha Tharoor Srinivasan and Kiran Manral



Priyank Kanoongo



Sachchidanand Joshi



K.N. Shrivastava



K. Sreenivasrao



Shobha Tharoor Srinivasan



Kiran Manral



Sumitra Ray



Saina Sarin

Aviraj Singhvi



Saumya Kulshreshtha



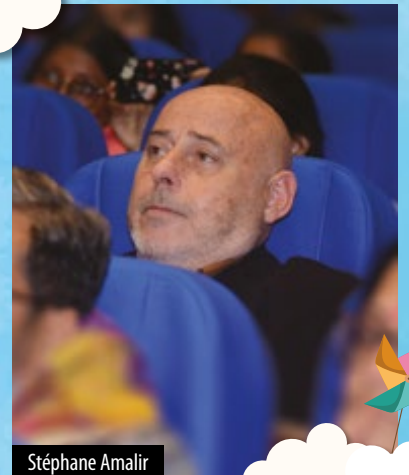
Ruhi Walia Syal, Kiran Manral, Neelima Dalmia Adhar, Shobha Tharoor Srinivasan, Archana Dalmia



Urvashi Butalia and Manisha Chaudhry



Anindita Chatterjee, Anant Vijay and Vandana Vijay



Stéphane Amalir



Saswati Sen, Karuna Goenka and Malavika Joshi



Apra Kuchhal



Shweta Aggarwal

The organisation, Prayas, is known for its care work and uplift of underprivileged girls and specially abled children in Kolkata. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** supports Prayas for several initiatives



Performance by Prayas



Shinjini Kulkarni



Huma Khalil



Unnati Singh

DAY ONE

The Art Of Storytelling

Storytelling is a way of communicating. A random thought can be a turning point in an artist's mind that interweaves imagination with facts so seamlessly that the readers cannot tell one from the other. The three-day-long Muskaan Literature Festival 2023 has created a space for children to learn the virtues of reading and writing, ideating and articulating. The first day of this festival invited us into the minds of several young writers from across the country who have many published books under their belt already. It was fascinating to hear what triggered their thoughts, how they began garnering information for their tales, who inspired them to write, when their ideas began to take shape in the form of stories or poems, and the joys and difficulties they are experiencing in their journeys.

A series of sessions addressing different areas made the first day very interesting. In the session, *Finding the Rhythm of the Rhyme*, the author, columnist and mentor, Kiran Manral, mentioned, "In our country, there is an obsession with science and the subjects that are worthy of further employment." Departing from this preoccupation with employable subjects, the festival has given young writers a platform to showcase their talents. Young authors read out excerpts from their books in this session.

Adults are often quick to assume that youngsters exploit social media, but we should learn that this is not always the case. The

young writer, Sampriti Agarwal, spoke about how she uses a digital platform to publish her writings. The session, *The Sky is the Limit or What?*, introduced us to young authors who believe in the limitless possibilities that writing has opened up for them. It was exciting to witness some young writers in the session, *Superpower at My Fingertips*, who have enlivened superheroes in their narratives.

Youngsters today are more aware of the world than the preceding generations. Karnav Rastogi has already written a series of seven books that highlight and offer solutions to many social issues. Considerable research goes into Arya Desai's books, which he fuses with his imaginative prowess. Last but not the least, in the session, *The Big Little World of the Short Story*, the award-winning children's author, editor and voiceover artist, Shobha Tharoor Srinivasan, said that the idea of sharing stories is endemic and inherent. It goes back to the oral tradition. While she recorded some of her experiences of writing stories, the young author, Aadya Jain, recalled how she started writing when she was studying in grade two.

Besides these insightful sessions, the first day of this festival also comprised many workshops that engaged children in different activities and quizzes. The first day set the tone for the Muskaan Literature Festival, which intends to make children and adults alike believe that only the sky's the limit.

Sessions of
the Day

The audience at the sessions

Finding the Rhythm of the Rhyme

Child authors Aviraj Singhvi, Sampriti Agarwal and Sia Gupta, in conversation with author, columnist and mentor, Kiran Manral.



Kiran Manral, Sia Gupta, Sampriti Agarwal and Aviraj Singhvi

The Sky is the Limit or What?

Child authors Ayaan Kapadia, Devisha Malhotra and Kahaan Keyur Patelvadodaria, in conversation with entrepreneur and writer, Aditty Nath.



Aditty Nath, Ayaan Kapadia, Devisha Malhotra and Kahaan Keyur Patelvadodaria

Superpower at My Fingertips

Child authors Arya Desai, Dhruv Dhakad and Karnav Rastogi in conversation with children's book writer, Shabnam Minwalla.



Shabnam Minwalla, Arya Desai, Dhruv Dhakad and Karnav Rastogi

The Big Little World of the Short Story

Child authors Aadya Jain, Priyal Prasad and Sara Agarwal in conversation with award-winning children's author, poet, editor and voice-over talent, Shobha Tharoor Srinivasan.



Shobha Tharoor Srinivasan, Priyal Prasad, Aadya Jain and Sara Agarwal

AN
IMPORTANT
BLESSING

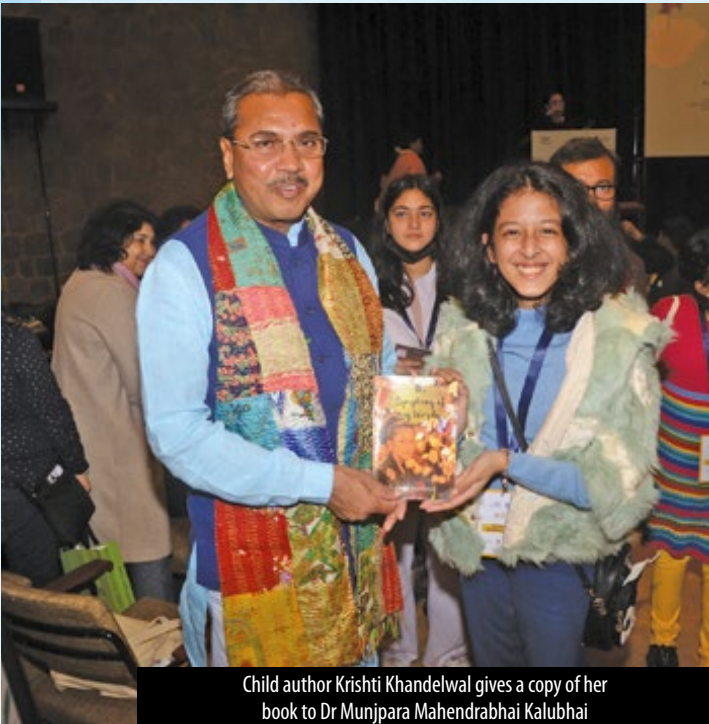
Shraddha Murdia, Archana Dalmia, Karuna Goenka, Unnati Singh, Neelima Dalmia Adhar, Apra Kuchhal and Vinti Kathuria with Dr Munjpara Mahendrabhai Kalubhai

Dr Munjpara Mahendrabhai Kalubhai, the Minister of State for Women and Child Development, Government of India, graced the first day of the Muskaan Literature Festival. He interacted with the child authors and was full of praise for these young talents. He believes it is important to harness children's creative abilities.

The Muskaan Literature Festival is a commendable effort of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** and **Education for All Trust** to enthuse young writers to exhibit their talents. This is a great way to inculcate the habit of reading in other youngsters. It is only when a child loves to read and learn that they might want to articulate their emotions and responses to various things in the form of essays, stories, poems, or even diary jottings. As adults, Munjpara believes, it is our responsibility to cultivate



curiosity and nurture creativity in young minds. A big house is always built on a strong foundation. The Minister also felicitated the participating child authors and gave them certificates. His presence at the festival was of great significance because institutional and infrastructural support from the government is required to channel children's energies towards something creative and productive. Lawmakers' acknowledgement of this need to hone youths' skills can pave the way for more developments in this realm. Everyone present at the event felt honoured to be joined and appreciated by Munjpara.



Child author Krishti Khandelwal gives a copy of her book to Dr Munjpara Mahendrabhai Kalubhai



Child authors Devisha Malhotra from Delhi and Karnav Rastogi from Mumbai with Dr Munjpara Mahendrabhai Kalubhai



Dr Munjpara Mahendrabhai Kalubhai gives a certificate to child author Adeeba Riyaz from Kashmir



Child authors from Bhopal, Devyani Bharadwaj and Shivarjanji Bharadwaj give copies of their books to Dr Munjpara Mahendrabhai Kalubhai

LEARNING NEW THINGS

Accepting Diversity and Having Empathy for Disability

Conducted by Shweta Verma

This workshop taught children the virtue of patience and the need to acknowledge and understand differences and disabilities in children. While writing stories, we create different types of characters who have characteristics that might or might not be likeable to everyone. An acceptance of innate differences in human beings is the key to being a better person.



Shweta Verma conducts her workshop

The Art of Voice Over

Conducted by Shobha Tharoor Srinivasan

While watching a cartoon or any animated film, children associate the characters with the voices that they think belong to the characters. Do many know of the concept of voiceover? Children were very fascinated to know from Srinivasan how a voiceover artist gives voice to an otherwise inanimate character, and the different voice exercises they do to ace this. The children present in this workshop also recalled some of their favourite cartoon characters' voices and dialogues.



Shobha Tharoor Srinivasan conducts her workshop



Child authors with Shweta Verma after her workshop



Child authors with Shobha Tharoor Srinivasan

Tinkle Comic Creation

*Conducted by Savio Mascarenhas
from Amar Chitra Katha*

How familiar are today's children with *Tinkle* comics? Savio Mascarenhas began this workshop with a quick quiz on the cult comic books. The children were very enthusiastic to answer the questions. This workshop, like the others, introduced the children to something new. Here, it was the art of making a comic book. They learnt about the language of a comic book and how comic book illustrations express various emotions, thoughts and messages. Children coming up with their illustrations was the highlight of this workshop.



Savio Mascarenhas from
Amarchitra Katha
conducting his workshop



Child authors with Savio Mascarenhas after his workshop

Puppet and Stories: Fun Time

Conducted by Shreedevi Sunil

In this session, the storyteller, Shreedevi Sunil, engaged the children by telling old stories with a twist and an element of fun. She kept the children hooked till the last minute with her amusing puppetry.



Shreedevi Sunil conducts her workshop



The audience was fully engaged during Shreedevi Sunil's workshop

“**Prabha Khaitan Foundation** literally put its heart and soul into curating the Muskaan Literature Festival. Kudos to the entire team! We were elated to meet the child authors, each of whom was unique in their own way. I loved being a part of this festival. Even my younger child came away with such great inspiration and learning. I express my heartfelt gratitude.”

— Akshita Singhvi,
Parent of child author Aviraj Singhvi

“No words can truly suffice for the gratitude that we felt. We want to thank the entire team of the Muskaan Literature Festival for their tireless efforts, minutest planning and superbly detailed execution of this gala programme. More than anything, it was the realisation of a great vision of the Foundation, and that calls for true respect. We, as parents, are truly grateful for the entire on-ground team as well, who made this event a success. Our children, the budding authors, were given such an amazing platform at this young age. Learning from the greats of this field was an opportunity beyond the wildest dreams. The care and love that were displayed by each member of team **Muskaan** left us with wonder. We are touched and humbled to the core of our hearts. We are truly honoured. Thank you!”

— Ruchi and Meet Desai,
Parents of child author Arya Desai

DAY TWO

More Glimpses Into
Young Minds

Organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, the second day of the Muskaan Literature Festival for child authors turned out to be as exciting and fulfilling as the first. The day was peppered with multiple sessions, workshops and performances that proved enlightening for the audience.

One of the sessions, *What If...*, lined up multiple child authors who got to engage with journalist and author, Savie Karnel, to discuss character sketching and fantasy and adventure writing. Another session, *Did You Know?*, gave the children an avenue to not only talk about writing based on real-life stories with Malavika Joshi, but also discuss the themes of their own books and the experience of being authors at such a tender age.

Moreover, during the day, the authors also had the opportunity, during the session *My Heart Beats In Words*, to discuss the intricacies of poetry writing with Karnel, and how it served as a cathartic experience, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. Another session, *Of Monsters and Detectives*, created a space for the child authors to engage in a conversation with writer Lubaina Bandukwala, and speak about the act of writing adventure and detective stories.

But Day Two wasn't only about the sessions! Arranged for the children were three workshops to further their writing careers. These workshops, by Sonal Goyal, Ranjit Lal and Savie Karnel, explored Indian folk art, examined how one can write about the natural world, and even provided a masterclass on writing contemporary fiction. Finally, rapper and hip hop artist Feyago delivered an electrifying performance.

In this way, Day Two of the three-day festival turned out to be a beautiful balance of thought-provoking discussions and relaxing entertainment. At the close, the child authors were left better equipped to pursue their dream careers.

Sessions of
the Day



The audience on the second day of the festival

What If...

Child authors Debangana Sengupta, Dharman Sheth and Huzaifa Bohori in conversation with author Savie Karnel.



Savie Karnel in conversation with Huzaifa Bohori, Debangana Sengupta and Dharman Sheth

Did You Know?

Child authors Devyani Bharadwaj, Karnav Rastogi, Oshin Arora and Shivrani Bharadwaj converse with Malavika Joshi.



Malavika Joshi in conversation with Devyani Bharadwaj, Shivrani Bharadwaj, Karnav Rastogi and Oshin Arora

My Heart Beats In Words

Child authors Arshya Prinja, Dania Khan and Krishti Khandelwal speak to Savie Karnel.



Savie Karnel in conversation with Arshya Prinja, Dania Khan and Krishti Khandelwal

Of Monsters and Detectives

Child authors Ram Shrivastava, S. Sai Arun Prasad and Shreyan Garg converse with writer Lubaina Bandukwala.



Lubaina Bandukwala in conversation with Ram Shrivastava, Shreyan Garg and S. Sai Arun Prasad



LEARNING NEW THINGS



Indian Folk Art

Conducted by Sonal Goyal

Sonal Goyal from *Amar Chitra Katha* arrived armed with artistic skills to teach children the 'how-tos' of bringing folk art alive. As they learnt techniques over the course of the workshop, the beautiful characters from favourite folktales and fables became friends that the children themselves could create.

How to Write about Nature and Animals

Conducted by Ranjit Lal

For children regularly interacting with nature and the animals they love, it is of utmost importance that they learn how to express their feelings about those bonds. Author Ranjit Lal turned up to teach them exactly that! He showed the children how their ideas about, and love for, nature and animals can be expressed in writing.



Sonal Goyal from Amar Chitra Katha conducts her workshop



Ranjit Lal conducts his workshop



The children with Sonal Goyal after the workshop



The children listen to Ranjit Lal

Masterclass on Writing Contemporary Fiction

Conducted by Savie Karnel

Classes can be quite boring, right? Not so for the child authors, when author Savie Karnel undertook a quick masterclass on how to write contemporary fiction. For the young ones who want to continue writing, this session opened up their access to an avenue of different writing techniques.



Savie Karnel conducts her workshop



The children are engrossed in Savie Karnel's masterclass

Bringing The House Down

If you thought literature fests are meant to be boring, you thought wrong! Day 2 of the Muskaan Literature Festival for child authors was made even more enjoyable by rapper and hip hop artist Feyyago. His action-packed performance ensured that the children had the time of their lives!



Feyyago delivers an electrifying performance



The audience enjoys Feyyago's performance

GLIMPSES OF THE DAY



The participating child authors interact during dinner



GLIMPSES OF THE DAY



Shazia Ilmi, Ehsaas Woman of Delhi, with child authors Arshya Prinja, Krishti Khandelwal, Dania Khan and Aviraj Singhvi



Neelima Dalmia Adhar, Ehsaas Woman of Delhi, Amitabh Adhar and Vinti Kathuria, Ehsaas Woman of Agra

“The Muskaan Literature Festival was a wonderful experience for us and everyone who has been a part of the festival. I’m happy that my daughter, Adeeba Riyaz, has been a part of it all. Our whole family is filled with the utmost gratitude towards **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. Our kids got to learn about so many new, creative and innovative aspects of storytelling.

Above all, they got to meet their fellow writers and friends who belong to the same category and fulfil the same criteria. I, as a parent, am gratified to be one of the spectators of this auspicious festival. We look forward to more such precious meet-ups. Many thanks to the festival team for such heartwarming gestures. They hosted us in the best way possible. We owe a lot to their love, care and attention. Moreover, I thank all the parents, child authors, team members, school students, staff members, hotel management staff and photographers for their amazing kindness and love towards us.

We also pay our regards to all collaborators, sponsors, educational wings, offices, government officials, curators, moderators, thinkers, performers and teachers who made this festival more precious. I also pay homage to the host, Saumya Kulshreshtha, who hosted the sessions for three straight days with amazing skill.

At the end, I would like to thank everyone who has been a part of the festival in one way or the other. I wish all the young children an even brighter future and send them loads of love for their future endeavours. I also applaud the parents for their fruitful parenting, which is clearly visible to all of us now. I wish the administration, team members, management, child authors and parents good health. I send all my love, respect and regards.”

— Riyaz Ahmad,
Parent of child author Adeeba Riyaz

“Kudos and three cheers for the whole **Muskaan** team for giving us so much inspiration, love and happiness throughout the event. Each day of Muskaan Literature Festival gave us motivation, joy and new things to learn. The little authors are very happy and excited, and so are parents. I wish more power and success to the **Muskaan** team for working so tirelessly to make the event a huge success and bring so many smiles to our faces. What more can one say? Here’s wishing all the little champs the very best for their future, and sending them lots of love.”

— Nidhi Dhakad,
Parent of child author Dhruv Dhakad

DAY
THREEThe Promise of
More Stories

The third day of the festival was jam-packed with a number of sessions where the child authors discussed their ideas, creative processes and experiences with literary veterans such as Advaita Kala, Mudita Chauhan-Mubayi and Ruskin Bond.

Child authors Aarna Arora, Adeeba Riyaz, Anwitha Nivritti Ravishankar and Khanak V. Saboo were in conversation with author, screenwriter, and columnist Advaita Kala, in the session, named *I Believe In* ____. The session revolved around them discussing their favourite storytellers, the importance of reading for developing one's unique style and voice, and how they felt when they first saw their work in print.

Playing with Words saw child authors Adwiti Kumari, Anushka Dalal and Saina Sarin in conversation with author, writer, and editor, Mudita Chauhan-Mubayi. The discussion revolved around the experience of writing poetry. Additionally, the panellists recited some of their favourite poems much to the pleasure of the audience.

Another session with Chauhan-Mubayi called *Storify Me: What Makes a Story a Story?*, saw child authors Debangana Sengupta, Devisha Malhotra, Ram Shrivastava and S. Sai Arun Prasad discussing the intricacies involved in writing short stories. They elaborated upon how they draw inspiration from their other creative pursuits to build plots and characters. The special session with the beloved Ruskin Bond, was, of course, a highlight, as were the several enriching workshops with Sonal Goyal from Amar Chitra Katha, Rituparna Ghosh and Seema Wahi Mukherjee.

All in all, the final day of the festival was one that no one would forget! Here are a few glimpses of the final, power-packed day of the memorable Muskaan Literature Festival.



Sessions of the Day

I Believe In _____

Child authors Aarna Arora, Adeeba Riyaz, Anwitha Nivritti Ravishankar and Khanak V. Saboo in conversation with author, screenwriter, and columnist Advaita Kala, about the importance of developing one's unique voice.



Advaita Kala in conversation with Aarna Arora, Adeeba Riyaz, Anwitha Nivritti Ravishankar and Khanak V. Saboo

Playing with Words

Child authors Adwiti Kumari, Anushka Dalal and Saina Sarin talk to writer and editor, Mudita Chauhan-Mubayi, about the experience of writing poetry



Mudita Chauhan-Mubayi in conversation with Adwiti Kumari, Anushka Dalal and Saina Sarin

Storify Me: What Makes a Story a Story?

Child authors Debangana Sengupta, Devisha Malhotra, Ram Shrivastava, and S. Sai Arun Prasad discussed the intricacies of writing short stories with Mudita Chauhan-Mubayi



Mudita Chauhan-Mubayi in conversation with Debangana Sengupta, Devisha Malhotra, Ram Shrivastava and S. Sai Arun Prasad



School children who attended the festival take a picture with the Foundation's Student Programmes Advisor, Sumitra Ray and author Mudita Chauhan-Mubayi



The moderator of the festival, Saumya Kulshreshtha



The audience on the final day of the festival

A SPECIAL
SESSION

Ruskin Bond



An online, interactive session with Ruskin Bond was the highlight of the final day of the festival

The online session with Ruskin Bond was perhaps the one that the child authors and the audience had waited for the most eagerly – after all, which young storyteller would ever give up the chance to interact with the world-renowned children’s author? In the session, Bond elaborated on the strategies that he uses to capture his readers’ attention, how he innovates storytelling techniques, and how he comes up with new ideas for stories. He also shared insights on how he deals with challenges while writing, how he builds

characters, and how he creates a tale that will have a lasting impact. Bond also answered the children’s enthusiastic questions patiently, and told his young audience what some of his favourite books are. Most importantly, he shared his perspective on children’s literature. To conclude the session, he provided several writing tips for the student audience, such as the significance of discipline, working on building a strong vocabulary, and the importance of maintaining the quality of one’s work. This one was truly a session to remember!

LEARNING NEW
THINGS

Pattern Making

Conducted by Sonal Goyal

Sonal Goyal from *Amar Chitra Katha* was back on the final day of the Muskaan Literature Festival to equip the children with more artistic skills. This time, they learnt the techniques of pattern making, and bolstered their knowledge about this unique facet of art.



Sonal Goyal from Amar Chitra Katha conducted another workshop on the festival’s final day



Child authors learnt a lot from Sonal Goyal’s workshop

The Art of Storytelling

Conducted by Rituparna Ghosh

With an entire festival dedicated to the unique storytelling abilities of children, it was only natural that there would be a workshop in which the young participants would be given further tools to hone their skills to tell engrossing tales. This workshop was conducted by the leading storyteller, Rituparna Ghosh, and the children thoroughly enjoyed it.



The child authors after Rituparna Ghosh's workshop

Rituparna Ghosh conducts her workshop

Character Creation

Conducted by Seema Wahi Mukherjee

The building of character – both of fictional people, and of one's own – is imperative to the growth of imagination and, of course, good writing. The ability to flesh out well-rounded characters plays a huge role in storytelling.

To help the children with this crucial aspect of their authorial journeys was experiential education consultant, storyteller, and puppeteer, Seema Wahi Mukherjee, who conducted a brilliant workshop.



Seema Wahi Mukherjee conducts her workshop



Seema Wahi Mukherjee conducts her workshop with the child authors

The Rasa of Nonsense

All good things must come to an end... but it helps if they end with good things! The Muskaan Literature Festival, which captured so many hearts and formed so many new friendships, concluded with an open house session called *The Rasa of Nonsense*, where students and child authors shared their experiences of the festival, their poetry and prose creations and even put up musical and dance performances. The one-of-a-kind festival provided the students with the opportunity to gain new experiences and memories that will stay with them forever.



Aarna Arora

Arshya Prinja

The Rasa of Nonsense



Debangana Sengupta



Shreyan Garg with Shivranjani Bharadwaj



Sampriti Agarwal



Anwitha Nivritti Ravishankar



Ram Shrivastava



S. Sai Arun Prasad

“Selfless contributions are the best and greatest assets of our society, as proved by what the Muskaan Literature Festival did for us and our young artists! I express my deepest gratitude towards the festival and **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** for this wonderful platform provided to our children. It is so fascinating to know that our children learned from people of their category so that they can upgrade themselves in the future. Words cannot express what this festival meant to all of us, especially our children. We hope for more events and opportunities like this for our kids, so that they can continue to enhance themselves in the best possible way.”

— Jaspreet Kaur
and Amit Arora,
Parents of child author
Oshin Arora

“I want to give a big shout-out to Team **Muskaan**. To everyone on the team – the organisers, curators, mentors, facilitators and every single person associated with this event, including parents, guardians and participants – I express my heartfelt gratitude for the wonderful way the festival was curated. It was an enthralling experience for the kids to be recognised for something which was just a hobby for them, but now has now transformed into a passion. The kind of exposure they received through the workshops and the panel discussions have given wings to their dreams. The best part of it all was the opportunity to connect and interact with so many like-minded people. I think my daughter, Devisha, has found some good friends for life! Do keep planning events like this, and find us standing right next to you to support this purpose.”

— Geetanjali Malhotra,
Parent of child author Devisha Malhotra

नई दिल्ली में तीन-दिवसीय 'मुस्कान साहित्य महोत्सव', बाल रचनाकारों को मिला मंच



The child authors at the Muskaan Literature Festival

“साहित्य महोत्सव तो हर साल आयोजित किए जाते हैं, लेकिन अपनी तरह के इस अनूठे ‘मुस्कान साहित्य महोत्सव’ की मैं सराहना करता हूँ, जिसमें बच्चों ने अपनी लेखकीय प्रतिभा को प्रदर्शित किया, जिससे हमें इन युवा दिमागों को सुनने और उनसे जुड़ने का मौका मिला।” यह बात देश में बच्चों के सबसे चहेते लेखक रस्किन बॉन्ड ने प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन और एजुकेशन फॉर ऑल ट्रस्ट द्वारा नई दिल्ली के इंदिरा गांधी राष्ट्रीय कला केंद्र (आईजीएनसीए) में बाल लेखकों के लिए आयोजित तीन दिवसीय मुस्कान साहित्य महोत्सव के दौरान ऑनलाइन संदेश में कही।

प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन और एजुकेशन फॉर ऑल ट्रस्ट की मुस्कान पहल के तहत आयोजित इस महोत्सव के 15 से अधिक सत्रों में देश भर के 30 से अधिक बाल लेखकों ने भागीदारी की। तीन दिन तक इस साहित्य महोत्सव में समाज के सम्मानित व्यक्तियों और बुद्धिजीवियों ने इन बाल कहानीकारों की साहित्यिक मेधा, इंटरैक्टिव गतिविधियों, कार्यशालाओं, कला प्रदर्शन और अन्य गतिविधियों को देखा और उनको सराहा।

महोत्सव का उद्घाटन राष्ट्रीय बाल अधिकार संरक्षण आयोग (एनसीपीसीआर) के अध्यक्ष प्रियंक कानूनगो ने किया। इस अवसर पर कानूनगो ने कहा कि साहित्य समाज का दर्पण होता है। उन्होंने कहा कि साहित्य को बढ़ावा देने के लिए बाल लेखकों को सही माहौल और परवरिश देना जरूरी है। एनसीपीसीआर के अध्यक्ष ने जोर देकर कहा कि बच्चों को सोशल मीडिया के बजाय लेखन और साहित्य में अधिक रुचि लेनी चाहिए। इस अवसर पर आईजीएनसीए के सदस्य सचिव, कार्यकारी और शैक्षणिक प्रमुख डॉ सच्चिदानंद जोशी, आईआईसी के निदेशक के.एन. श्रीवास्तव और साहित्य अकादमी के सचिव के. श्रीनिवासराव भी



Sia Gupta signing her book for Saumya Kulshreshtha

उपस्थित थे।

रचनात्मक गतिविधियों से भरी इस शाम को बच्चों के चहेते लेखक रस्किन बॉन्ड के एक ऑनलाइन भाषण और भी दिलचस्प बना दिया। उन्होंने कहा कि **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** ने **मुस्कान लिटरेचर फेस्टिवल** की शुरुआत कर देश के बच्चों में पढ़ने की आदत को बढ़ावा देने के लिए सराहनीय प्रयास किया है।

इस महोत्सव में बच्चों के लेखक सेवी कार्नेल, लुबैना बंदूकवाला, शबनम मिनवाला, शोभा थरूर श्रीनिवासन, किरण मनराल, आदित्य नाथ, अद्वैत कला, मुदिता-चौहान-मुबाई और कई अन्य लेखक भी मौजूद थे। उदयपुर के बाल लेखकों अविराज सिंघवी और गुरुग्राम की साइना सरिन ने दिल को छू लेने वाला काव्य पाठ भी किया।

प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की **अहसास** वूमन शिजिनी कुलकर्णी द्वारा परिकल्पित सांस्कृतिक कार्यक्रम 'उड़ान' की प्रस्तुति ने इस शाम को यादगार बना दिया, जिसमें दिल्ली की **अहसास** वूमन हुमा खलील मिर्जा और इंदौर की **अहसास** वूमन उन्नति सिंह की सहभागिता ने चार चांद लगा दिए।

बाद में, नर्तक और कोरियोग्राफर अविर्षु सेनगुप्ता, जो दिव्यांग बच्चों के साथ काम करते हैं, ने एक मोहक प्रस्तुति दी। फाउंडेशन दिव्यांग बच्चों के लिए कोलकाता में काम करता है।

'**मुस्कान साहित्य महोत्सव**' में केंद्रीय महिला एवं बाल विकास राज्य मंत्री डॉ. मुंजपरा महेंद्रभाई कालूभाई ने भाग लिया और बाल लेखकों के साथ बातचीत कर उनकी कड़ी मेहनत की सराहना की और उनके उज्वल भविष्य के लिए शुभकामनाएं दीं। उन्होंने कहा कि '**मुस्कान लिटरेचर फेस्टिवल**' युवा प्रतिभाशाली लेखकों को उनकी रचनाओं को प्रदर्शित करने के साथ ही भविष्य की प्रतिभाओं को प्रेरित करने के लिए एक मंच प्रदान कर रहा है। यह **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** और **एजुकेशन फॉर ऑल ट्रस्ट** का एक शानदार प्रयास है।

मंत्री ने प्रतिभागी बाल लेखकों को प्रमाण पत्र भी प्रदान किए। इस अवसर पर बाल साहित्य पर आधारित **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** की समाचार-पत्रिका 'प्रभा' के नवीनतम अंक का विमोचन भी किया गया। जैसा कि बच्चों के साथ वर्चुअली बातचीत करते हुए ने कहा भी कि मैं बच्चों के लिए इस तरह की नेक और अपनी तरह की पहली अनोखी पहल की सराहना करता हूं।



Garima Mithal, Dipali Bhasin and Anshu Mehra



Karuna Goenka

इस अनूठे महोत्सव में बच्चों के मनोरंजन के लिए कई कार्यक्रम और विशेषज्ञों द्वारा कई कार्यशालाओं का आयोजन हुआ। बाल लेखकों में से ही किसी बाल रचनाकार ने कार्यक्रम की अध्यक्षता और उसका संचालन किया, जहां उन्होंने अपनी पुस्तकों और लेखन पर चर्चा की।

श्री सीमेंट लिमिटेड की सीएसआर पहल के तहत आयोजित **मुस्कान साहित्य महोत्सव** में आईजीएनसीए, संस्कृति मंत्रालय- आजादी का अमृत महोत्सव, इंडिया इंटरनेशनल सेंटर (आईआईसी) ने सहयोगी और साहित्य अकादमी ने नॉलेज पार्टनर के रूप में सहयोग किया।



Team Muskaan with Neelima Dalmia Adhar

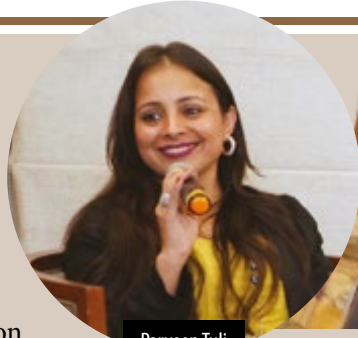


The Allure of Food Histories

Food evokes memory and often fills us with a sense of nostalgia. It elicits an emotional response from us, making eating an individual and personal experience. Foods are bearers of history: of families, communities and geographical spaces. For the celebrated food writer and television personality, Karen Anand, curating food stories has been analogous to writing history. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** organised a special session of **The Write Circle** where Anand engaged in an appetising conversation with Parveen Tuli, **Ehsaas** Woman of Nagpur, and recorded her remarkable culinary journey.

“My curiosity came from within,” mused Anand, when asked if she hailed from a family of food connoisseurs. “My mother did not enjoy cooking because she deemed it burdensome, but my grandmother was a great cook.” Anand has been collecting recipes in her notebook since she moved to Paris as an 18-year-old. Madhur Jaffrey’s food recipes initiated her into this journey that introduced her to global food and took her down many alleys in India on her quest for food stories. To Anand, the joy of sharing her recipes is second to none.

Extensive travel experience, a passion for cooking and innate creativity were the ingredients with which Anand created her tales. Her book, *Masala Memsahib: Recipes and Stories From My Culinary Journey In India*, is an “adventure in itself”. “We have never seen a culinary memoir in India. My book has recipes, stories of food and my stories,” observed Anand. Recipes collected over thirty years from almost all the nooks of India as well as pictures of food from kitchens and streets formed this book, which celebrates the culinary diversity of the country. The book is a visual treat, blended with food (hi)stories. Anand was happy to share that cookbooks still sell well in a world where digital content is consumed more than ever.



Parveen Tuli



Karen Anand

Anand’s delicious anecdotes were the highlights of the session. She recalled how her maternal grandmother kept many recipes like secrets. Those recipes are preserved like heirlooms in her book. She reminisced about her interaction with the renowned chef, Imtiaz Qureshi – the man behind Bukhara and the revival of Dum Pukht – who introduced her to *kainchi kebab*. “The process of writing [this book] was not difficult, but getting all the recipes together was tough,” she said.

Our tastes have evolved and become globalised. Anand loves to give an Indian *tadka* to Western recipes to satiate her palate. She believes cooking and eating are experiences one must savour. The thinking, love and energy that go into cooking can make any dish delectable. She highlighted the essential difference between cooking as a profession and a personal task in the domestic space. The audience learnt about some of her food choices in the rapid-fire round.

Following a brief question-and-answer session, Priyanka Kothari, **Ehsaas** Woman of Nagpur, delivered the vote of thanks. After being felicitated by Payal from the Radisson Blu Nagpur team, Anand joyously autographed copies of *Masala Memsahib* for the guests.

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



Priyanka Kothari, Ishika Saraf, Monica Bhagwagar, Meen Asuryavanshi, Dr Maya, Jyoti Kapoor and Ushma Minas

For the Love of Phuchka and Panch Phoron



Karen Anand

A food writer and restaurant consultant, Karen Anand is renowned in the culinary world. The noted columnist has authored 20 books and hosted three talk shows. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** organised a special session of its boutique initiative, **Choupal**, with Karen Anand at the house of Shamlu Dudeja, the founder of SHE (Self-Help Enterprise). Anand was in conversation with Malika Varma, **Ehsaas** Woman of Kolkata. Esha Dutta, **Ehsaas** Woman of Kolkata, initiated the session with a formal welcome speech.

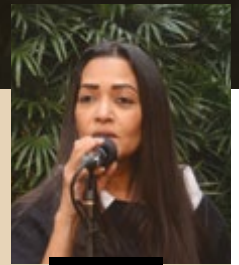
“Bengali food is executed with much care to detail, served course-wise, and can be compared with French sophistication,” said Anand, while speaking of the essence of Bengali food. “For me, it is a new moment of learning every time I come to Kolkata. I find new dishes. Everyone’s a foodie here, and this is something exciting and special about the city.”

Elaborating more about how she loves Bengali food, Anand said that she adores the taste of *phuchka* and *panch phoron*. “When I go abroad, I carry my masalas in small *potlis*,” she said. “Out of the many spices, I make sure to carry *panch phoron* which tastes amazing with any vegetable.”

Anand’s tryst with food started when she came back to India but could not find a job suited to her academic qualifications. When she started being appreciated for her cooking at home, she decided to take the plunge and embark upon a career of cooking professionally. “It was



Malika Varma



Esha Dutta



Shamlu Dudeja

my trip to Paris which did it for me,” said Anand. “My urge came from my liking for restaurants. My mother never liked cooking, but she loved buying things from Marks and Spencer and setting a great table. I remember the dishes cooked by my maternal grandmother (and some of them are in the book).”

For Anand, Madhur Jaffrey and Claudia Roden are two of the most significant food icons. But despite having been exposed to the cuisines of the world, she keeps coming back to the food of her homeland. “Indian food is all about taste,” declared the food writer. “Spice, especially chilli, is getting more important in Indian and Western food. We need to put this flavour more in food.”

What about maintaining the authenticity of cuisines to cater to the ever-changing, global palate? For Anand, the notions of tradition and authenticity have to change with time. “Indian food has to evolve and get a little bit lighter,” said Anand, in conclusion.

The conversation ended with a quick rapid-fire round and a QandA session with the audience. The session ended with Esha Dutta delivering the vote of thanks on behalf of the Foundation and Anand being felicitated by Shamlu Dudeja with a *kantha uttoriy*.

Choupal Kolkata was presented by Shree Cement Ltd, with the support of **Ehsaas** Women of Kolkata

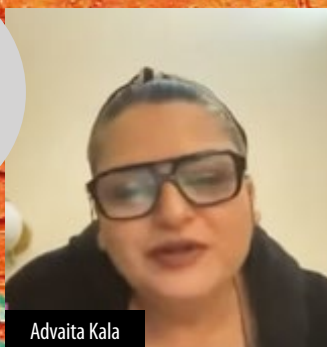
The audience at the event



The Food of India: A Chef Speaks



Chintan Pandya



Advaita Kala



Deepa Mishra

A special **Tête-à-Tea** session is exactly what a discerning virtual audience needed, as screenwriter Advaita Kala engaged in a 'delectable' conversation with the James Beard award-winning chef, Chintan Pandya. Organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, the virtual session, introduced by Deepa Mishra, **Ehsaas Woman of Lucknow**, provided a rare glimpse into what it is like to be an Indian chef in New York.

Pandya's restaurant, Semma, in New York became the first ever and only Indian restaurant to win a Michelin star in October 2022. For an achievement so massive, Pandya is surprisingly humble about it, merely glossing it over. What is the reason behind his reticence? "I feel that too much involvement in these achievements could cause one to deviate from their focus," he revealed. "My job is to create memories with Indian food in people's minds, and do more and more towards it. If we start celebrating small achievements or really small milestones, I believe everybody wavers in their focus."

Addressing concerns about Indian food abroad being restricted to curries, Pandya clarified that this is a constructed perception. His Bengali food restaurant, Masalawala and Sons, has several non-Indian customers who are aware of Indian cuisine. "The



Abhijit Iyer-Mitra

onus is on us to open up and offer Indian regional cuisine to the world," he insisted. "In the country itself, high-end regional cuisines are restricted because affluent people would rather have someone prepare it at home for them instead of ordering it at a restaurant."

Pandya went on to add that we are to be blamed for Indian cuisine not being associated with luxury. "People don't

mind splurging on other cuisines made with the best ingredients, but are reluctant to do so for Indian cuisine, even if the ingredients cost more," Pandya said. How can we ensure that regional cuisine is not just a fad? "For a cuisine to last long and not become a fad, you need

multiple people doing a very specific task for that cuisine," Pandya replied. "There should be people focusing exclusively on the regionality of food."

The audience learnt about Pandya's favourite spots in New York and India, and his future plans of opening Kebabwala to provide kebabs at a "phenomenal price", amongst other ideas. The session had a massive surprise in store, with Abhijit Iyer-Mitra making a special appearance. As the discussion dissolved into friendly banter, Mishra's vote of thanks wrapped up the conversation.

“People don't mind splurging on other cuisines made with the best ingredients, but are reluctant to do so for Indian cuisine, even if the ingredients cost more... For a cuisine to last long and not become a fad, you need multiple people doing a very specific task for that cuisine. There should be people focusing exclusively on the regionality of food”

This session of Tête-à-Tea was presented by Shree Cement Ltd in association with Kahalli



Celebrating the Poet, One Verse at a Time



Nandana Dev Sen



Debnita Chakravarti

Some poetry strikes a chord with readers and revives long-lost emotions, while some initiates people into new beliefs and ideas. Nabaneeta Dev Sen was a poet who created both with equal finesse. Her works have a visceral understanding of pain, negotiations with the self, feminist anger and resistance to patriarchy. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** organised a memorable session of **An Author's Afternoon** with the award-winning actor, writer and editor, Nandana Dev Sen. Through a light-hearted yet profound conversation with Debnita Chakravarti, an associate professor of English at Shri Shikshayatan College, Sen took a jaunt down memory lane and recorded the trajectory of her mother's literary career, offering all a peek into the departed poet's mind.

To "invoke the music of our mother tongue", Sen began the session by reciting Nabaneeta Dev Sen's poem '*Madari*', which Sen has translated into English as '*Acrobat*' – the title poem in the collection, *Acrobat*. It discusses how women segue into many roles with aplomb as if they are born for this. Second in this collection is 'The Year's First Poem', written in Bengali

as '*Bochhorer Prothom Kobita*', which is a complex mixture of emotions. Both these poems are from Nabaneeta Dev Sen's last collection of new Bengali poems, *Tumi Monosthir Koro*, and her gifted daughter translated it as *Make Up Your Mind*, a surprise reward for the mother on her seventy-fifth birthday.

Nabaneeta Dev Sen was "completely bilingual", as Sen put it. Her readers have often been baffled by questions such as, why did she write only in Bengali? Didn't she want her art to communicate with a wide readership? As a woman who always stood her ground, writing in Bengali was Nabaneeta Dev Sen's "political" choice, a choice to not forsake the language she was born into. With a hundred books to her name, Nabaneeta Dev Sen's untouched sadness was palliated when a copy of *Make Up Your Mind* grabbed the attention of a New York-based publisher called Archipelago Books. "We signed [*Acrobat*] exactly two weeks before Maa passed away," Sen remembered. "Maa was so delighted about it. The very last column [a weekly column that Nabaneeta Dev Sen wrote] was about this book coming out. In those two weeks, we started choosing poems for *Acrobat*."

On being asked how she took her pick from the myriad gems her mother wrote, Sen mentioned that she wanted to strike a balance with her choice of poems for *Acrobat* so that there were poems from all the phases of the former's life as a writer and woman. Sen incorporated poems that exhibit a playfulness with language and experiment with styles. To represent the artist's complete *oeuvre*, her joyous, poignant and political poems went into this collection. *Acrobat* took birth as a compilation that beautifully knits the banalities of life, body politics, human relationships, intimacy, politics and womanhood together – only that the artist did not live long enough to experience the love and praise readers showered on the collection.

Sen found her mother “unbreakable and invincible”. Her honesty, brutal and relentless, pervaded her life and art. The session was interspersed with Sen's recitation of her mother's poems. She addressed the question of self-effacement as a translator. The process was not easy, the pain of losing her mother was fresh in her mind. She grasped her mother's art more deeply only after the latter's death. She felt she was rebirthing the poems through her translations. Sen did not just translate, she recreated many of the verses. She believes, “Bengali is a very precise and economical language. There is a lot that you can express in a few words.” Language is evasive, more so when one is translating. Sen's profession as an editor helped her choose the right words.

We signed [*Acrobat*] exactly two weeks before Maa passed away. Maa was so delighted about it. The very last column [a weekly column that Nabaneeta Dev Sen wrote] was about this book coming out. In those two weeks, we started choosing poems for *Acrobat*

Sen is an inheritor of a “matrilineal legacy”. Her grandmother was a celebrated Bengali feminist poet, her mother was a staunch supporter of women's rights. Nabaneeta Dev Sen rewrote typical patriarchal narratives from a woman's perspective: the reason she was an artist who challenged and never preached. Sen feels rooted in this heritage. As an activist, her works concern children and women exposed to gender-based violence. All her children's books have female protagonists to establish equality and equity.

Delighted, the audience asked engaging questions, alongside appreciating the “amazing playfulness” of Sen's translations. Sen wrote a letter to her mother on her seventy-fifth birthday and kept adding to it on her subsequent birthdays until it took the shape of a daughter's parting letter to her mother. With a tear-moistened voice, she read, “This obstinate daughter of yours kept saying to her mother in the last few weeks, ‘*Ekkhoni naa, ekkhoni naa*’ [Not yet, not yet].”

A vote of thanks by Malika Varma, **Ehsaas** Woman of Kolkata, concluded this mesmerising session. Pabitra Sarkar and Samik Bandyopadhyay felicitated Sen and Chakravarti respectively.

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



Pabitra Sarkar felicitates Nandana Dev Sen



The audience at the event

Behind the Picturesque Food: The Story of a 'Home Cook'



Karen Anand

Indian-born food guru, iconic food writer and restaurateur, Karen Anand was part of a special session of **The Write Circle** in Chennai, organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, for a cosy conversation on food and more. In conversation with Anand was Kaveri Lalchand, **Ehsaas** Woman of Chennai. Formally introduced by Vidya Gajapathi Raju Singh, **Ehsaas** Woman of Chennai, the session turned out to be an intimate discussion of Anand's *Masala Memsahib: Recipes and Stories from My Culinary Adventures in India*.

Anand, a prolific writer with several books to her name, has played a significant role in influencing people

I am a home cook who learned from wherever I could. . . My book is an attempt to connect recipes with their roots. My children often complained that they had never seen Indian cities, as plenty of others have. The recipes carry visuals that situate each city culturally. The narrative and prose of my book are more important than the recipes

in the way they eat and perceive food in India. All of this has been the result of her turning her passion for home cooking into a path-breaking career. Anand, however, refuses to define herself as a chef, since she didn't toil in professional kitchens for years while facing the negative side of hierarchy and rude behaviour. Instead, she declares, "I am a home cook who learned from wherever I could."

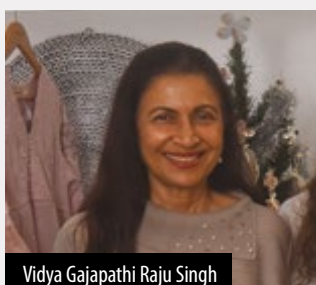
What is unique about her latest book? It captures "culinary stories behind classic and lesser-known dishes from Goa, Gujarat, Kerala, Maharashtra and West Bengal". On being asked about her book, Anand explained that it was an attempt to connect recipes with their roots. Her children often complained that they had never seen Indian cities, as plenty of others have. The recipes carry visuals that situate each city culturally. "The narrative and prose of my book are more important than the recipes," said Anand. "It is nice to know what that place looks like because it situates not only the food but also the way we eat."

Anand has had the recipes for the last 30 years; she underwent the cumbersome process of narrowing down the number to a hundred and fifty. She also disclosed that the pictures in her book had been collected from people she knew across different states in India. Although it was launched on Amazon, Anand found it apt that the book was first released in Goa – after all, she is Goan by heritage, and the first chapter of the book features Goa.

The session that saw Anand relate the stories behind the recipes wrapped up with a QandA session. The vote of thanks was delivered by Singh, with Anand being felicitated by Kumudhini Yogaratnam, CEO and country manager at the Bank of Ceylon.



Kaveri Lalchand



Vidya Gajapathi Raju Singh



Kumudhini

The Write Circle Chennai was presented by Shree Cement Ltd, with the support of **Ehsaas** Women of Chennai

The Inspirations Of A Filmmaker



Rahul Rawail

Stories of Rahul Rawail's tryst with filmmaking and his association with Raj Kapoor came alive at an enlightening **Ek Mulakat** session organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. With Esha Dutta, **Ehsaas** Woman of Kolkata, giving the welcome address, Rawail was joined in conversation by Shefali Rawat Agarwal, also an **Ehsaas** Woman of Kolkata. What followed was an enchanting account of how someone who wanted to become a nuclear physicist went on to become a renowned filmmaker.

Rawail revealed that even though his father, H.S. Rawail, was a filmmaker, his interests had been academic until his friend, Rishi Kapoor, insisted on taking him to the sets of *Mera Naam Joker*. It is here that Rawail would meet his eventual mentor, Raj Kapoor, whose tutelage would shape Rawail. Rawail reconstructed the magic of meeting Raj Kapoor. "When I saw Kapoor working, it was something different," said Rawail. "He was like a symphony conductor."



Shefali Rawat Agarwal

Instead of learning directorial skills from his father, Rawail worked as an assistant director at Kapoor's R.K. Studios. It had been his father's idea, Rawail revealed; working on his father's set would have inevitably caused him to be favoured for being the boss's son, something that would have hampered his training.



Ekavali Khanna

Rawail's enthusiasm for working with newcomers was also influenced by Kapoor. His decision to stop making films was influenced in part by the failure of *Jo Bole So Nihaal* and partly because he did not wish to compromise by having to agree to conditions laid down by actors.

What is his book, *Raj Kapoor: The Master at Work*, about? "The book is not a biography," Rawail happily clarified. "It is about a young boy who discovers who Raj Kapoor was, and how his way of working – the way he conceived stories, songs, sound, and the colour palette for his films – was an inspiration."

When I saw Raj Kapoor working, it was like watching a symphony conductor. *Raj Kapoor: The Master at Work* is not a biography. It is about a young boy who discovers who Raj Kapoor was, and how his way of working – the way he conceived stories, songs, sound, and the colour palette for his films – was an inspiration

The session was peppered with snippets and anecdotes from Rawail's foray into Indian cinema. Recalling working with Aishwarya Rai Bachchan in her debut Bollywood movie, *Aur Pyaar Ho Gaya*, he quipped about how it was like "expecting a doll to perform" and how he went about encouraging her to improve. Working with Shah Rukh Khan and Madhuri Dixit Nene in *Anjaam* was a "director's dream".

The conversation concluded with an engaging QandA session with the audience. The vote of thanks was delivered by Dutta, with Rupa Halim felicitating the guest.



Rahul Rawail with students who attended the session

Ek Mulakat Kolkata was presented by Shree Cement Ltd with the support of **Ehsaas** Women of Kolkata

Telling the Tales of Food



Sadaf Hussain

We all have memories attached to food,” said Syed Sadaf Hussain. The MasterChef India finalist, food consultant and TEDX speaker was the guest at a session of **The Write Circle** in Jaipur, where he discussed his book, *Dastan-e-Dastarkhan: Stories and Recipes from Muslim Kitchens*.

Hussain, who is a trained animator, worked in the development sector before shifting to a career in food when he moved to New Delhi and chose travel as a lifestyle. A passionate storyteller, he was in conversation with Mita Kapur, CEO of Siyahi, who also delivered the welcome note.

In a country like India, does food help to unite and equalise? “Eating is constant,” said Hussain. “We all have different preferences for food. *Kadhi chawal*, for instance, is something that everyone’s mom makes best! I love *paani puri*; every city has its own version of it. In my mind, that’s how food acts as an equaliser.”

But food can also divide. “People often have polarising views on the food that they grew up eating,” said the author. “But it is important to realise that food creates dynamic spaces. For instance, I recently made *aloo posto*, which is a Bengali dish, and I had it with *luchi* in the morning. People were displeased with me because you’re supposed to have *aloo posto* in the afternoon, and only with rice!”

Speaking about his aspirations and his career, Hussain confessed that he never wanted to have a mainstream career. “When people are young, the most common goals are to become doctors and engineers,” he said. “I had no such hopes.



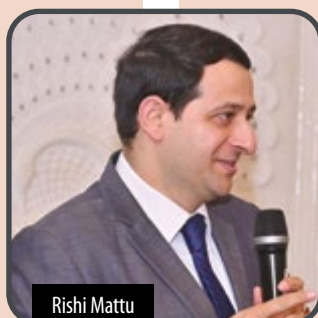
Mita Kapur

I just wanted to be the fattest kid on Earth because I loved food so much!”

Having grown up in Ramgarh, a town in Jharkhand, he was surrounded by different communities with their own unique cuisines. This ultimately led to him developing an interest in making food. However, it was his success with his food pop-up in Delhi that made him confident enough to audition for MasterChef and change his career trajectory.

Why did he decide to write *Dastan-e-Dastarkhan*? “While chefs have the knowledge, they often don’t have the chance to write it down,” Hussain explained. “I wanted to fill in that gap. Everyone can Google recipes, but not stories revolving around food.” The extensively researched book started as thirty-odd pages that he later fleshed out. “I don’t want to bring out the food that people already know. I wanted to find beautiful food stories, which must be factually correct to an extent. But the focus was on the readers enjoying the stories, because I wanted to keep the romance of food alive.”

The session concluded with some anecdotes from the author and a lively QandA session with the audience. Rishi Mattu, General Manager, ITC Hotels, delivered the vote of thanks and felicitated the guests.



Rishi Mattu

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



अनूठे चमत्कारिक किस्सों से भरा है स्ट्रेस-बस्टर राग बागेश्री



Praveen Kumar Jha

सं गीत में कई किस्से ऐसे हैं जिनमें अतिशयोक्ति है। कोई कह सकता है कि ये चीजें असंभव हैं। लेकिन इन किस्सों का इरादा नेक ही है। यह 2003 की बात है, जब मुझे एक अविश्वसनीय किस्सा सुनाया गया। यह कलकत्ता की कहानी थी जब एक कैदी को फांसी दी जा रही थी।

उन दिनों भारत में फांसी कम ही होती थी। नाता मलिक नामक एक जल्लाद हुआ करते थे, जो फंदे में साबुन का घोल लगाते ताकि कैदी को कम पीड़ा हो। वहां कैदी से आखिरी इच्छा पूछी गयी।

उन्होंने कहा, 'आमि सीतारे निखिल बनर्जीर राग बागेश्री सुनते चाई' (मैं सितार पर निखिल बनर्जी का राग बागेश्री सुनना चाहता हूँ।)

मेरे मन में कौतूहल जगा कि आखिर ऐसा क्या होगा निखिल बनर्जी के सितार में? जो मुझे यह किस्सा कह रहे थे, उन्होंने मुझे इसे सुनाने का इंतजाम भी कर रखा था। उनके पास बॉस का एक छोटा स्पीकर था, जिस पर निखिल बनर्जी का बागेश्री बजाया गया। वह मुझे समझा भी रहे थे - 'इस स्वर समूह को पहचानो- ग म ध म ग, म ग रे सा!'

कुछ पंद्रह मिनट के आलाप के बाद जैसे ही गत (कम्पोजिशन) की ओर बढ़े, तो जैसे मैं पूरी तरह सम्मोहित हो गया। लगा कि वाकई यह किसी की आखिरी इच्छा हो सकती है। इससे बेहतर शांति से नींद क्या होगी!

अतिशयोक्ति की कड़ी में दो एक जैसी कहानियां दर्ज हैं। पंडित जसराज की जीवनी 'रसरज पंडित जसराज' में एक संस्मरण है कि वह एक चिड़ियाघर में बैठे थे। वहां एक बाघ अचानक बेकाबू होकर अपने नाखून कंटीले तारों पर मार रहा था। उस समय पंडित जी ने ध्यान लगाया और राग बागेश्री का आलाप लेना शुरू किया। जैसे-जैसे वातावरण में बागेश्री की ध्वनि गूंजी, वह बाघ शांत होता गया। लगभग ऐसी ही कहानी पंडित ओंकारनाथ ठाकुर के विषय में भी वर्णित है।

इन कथाओं का प्रभाव यह पड़ा कि जब मन तनाव में या क्रोध में होता है, अक्सर अपने स्पीकर पर बागेश्री बजा देता हूँ। हम तो खैर बाघ नहीं मनुष्य हैं,

हमारा क्रोध तो अवश्य शांत हो जाता है। बागेश्री के तो अर्थ में ही सरस्वती है। इसमें मधुरता कैसे नहीं होगी? कौशिकी चक्रवर्ती एक बंदिश गाती हैं जिसे स्कूल-

कॉलेजों में सरस्वती पूजा के अवसर पर बजाया जा सकता है-
'याद करुं ध्यान धरुं माता सरस्वती,
तू ही हमारी गति माता सरस्वती!'

कहा जाता है कि यह राग पहली बार तानसेन ने गाया था। संभव है उनसे पहले भी मौजूद हो। हमारे समय में शायद ही कोई ऐसा बड़ा मंच हो, जहां बागेश्री न गायी या बजायी है। आयोजन अक्सर शाम को होते हैं, तो इस राग का समय भी होता है। अन्यथा भी यह लोग गाना पसंद करते हैं क्योंकि इसमें विस्तार (इम्प्रोवाइजेशन) का स्कोप बहुत है। मंजे हुए संगीतकार घंटे भर बागेश्री का विस्तार कर सकते हैं, वह भी सभी सप्तकों में।

यह बहुत ही सुकून देने वाला राग है। इसमें भक्ति भी है, शृंगार भी, और एक तरह की वेदना भी। जैसे कोई अपने प्रेमी को बुला रहा है। फिल्म मधुमती का एक गीत लता मंगेशकर ने इसी राग में गाया- 'आ जा रे परदेसी, मैं तो कब से खड़ी इस पार'। इस गीत पर उन्हें फिल्मफेयर पुरस्कार भी मिला। संगीतकार सी रामचंद्र को यह राग बहुत प्रिय था, और उन्होंने इसमें कई गीत कंपोज किए। जैसे लता मंगेशकर का गाया ही गीत है- 'राधा ना बोले, ना बोले, ना बोले रे' इस राग में कुछ बेहतरीन गजल भी गाए गए। जैसे गुलाम अली की गजल है- 'चमन में रंग बहार उतरे तो मैंने देखा'।

बागेश्री में कबीर भजन सुनने का भी सौभाग्य मिला। यह मल्लिक बंधु की प्रस्तुति है- 'बीत गए दिन भजन बिना रे' यूट्यूब पर भी उपलब्ध है।

इस राग में कोमल गांधार और निषाद हैं, जिन्हें आंदोलित करने से इसकी खूबसूरती निखरती है। जैसे अवरुह में उतरते हुए 'म ग रे सा' अन्य रागों में भी है, लेकिन बागेश्री की छटा अलग है। यह बार-बार सुन कर महसूस किया जा सकता है और उसके बाद यह मन में दर्ज हो जाती है।

बागेश्री उन रागों में है जो कार्नाटिक संगीत में भी हिंदुस्तानी के माइंड-सेट के साथ सुनी जा सकती है। एम एस सुबुलक्ष्मी की इस राग में 'गोविंद गोपिकानंद' प्रस्तुति सुन कर इस बात की ताकदी की जा सकती है। म्यूजिक थैरेपी में कुछ लोग तनाव या अनिद्रा के इलाज के लिए इस राग का प्रयोग करने लगे हैं। अगर हमारे कान इसकी अलग-अलग प्रस्तुतियां सुन कर तैयार हो जाएं, तो शायद यह सहायता करे।

प्रवीण कुमार झा, संगीत प्रेमी और 'वाह उस्ताद'
नामक पुस्तक के लेखक हैं। सम्प्रति नावें में चिकित्सक हैं।



Immortalizing India's Unsung Heroes



(L-R) Shiv Aroor, General Manoj Pande, Air Chief Marshal V.R. Chaudhari, Admiral R. Hari Kumar and Rahul Singh

Not all heroes wear capes; some choose to sacrifice their lives to keep us safe. In order to highlight these heroes, the book, *India's Most Fearless 3: New Military Stories of Unimaginable Courage and Sacrifice*, by Raul Singh and Shiv Aroor was recently released at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts (Delhi), at a **Kitaab** session organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. The book offers a first-hand account of the fearlessness and sacrifice of the soldiers during the 2020 Galwan Valley conflict between India and China.

The book launch took place in the presence of eminent chief guests from the Indian Armed Forces such as Air Chief Marshal V.R. Chaudhari PVSM AVSM VM ADC, Admiral Radhakrishnan Hari Kumar, PVSM, AVSM, VSM, ADC, the Chief of Naval Staff, and General Manoj Pande, PVSM, AVSM, VSM, ADC, the Chief of the Army Staff.

Shiv Aroor, a senior executive director and anchor at India Today TV with extensive reporting experience from conflict-riddled zones such as Kashmir, India's Northeast, Sri Lanka and Libya, and Rahul Singh, senior associate editor at *Hindustan Times*, who has reported from Kashmir, the Northeast, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, were in conversation with Neelima Dalmia Adhar, **Ehsaas** Woman of Delhi.

Aakriti Periwal, the Foundation's Honorary Convenor of Overseas Affairs, delivered the welcome note and introduced the authors and the chief guests from the armed forces.

Before starting the conversation with the authors, Adhar read out a few lines from Lord Byron's poem, *The*

Prisoner of Chillon, and introduced the family members of the martyrs present for the book launch such as Mandeep Singh, elder brother of Lance Naik Sandeep Singh, who sacrificed his life in the Tangdhar sector, and army veteran Prakash Singh, the brother of Naik Deepak Singh, who was awarded a posthumous Vir Chakra. Colonel and Mrs K.P. Singh, parents of Group Captain Varun Singh, the sole survivor of the tragic helicopter crash in which General Vipin Rawat perished, only to lose his life a week later, were also given a standing ovation. Aroor also introduced the

parents of Major Mohit Sharma, posthumous awardee of the Ashoka Chakra, whose story was written down in *India's Most Fearless 2*.

What struck the authors the most in their journey of writing the books? "The stoicism and fortitude of the families of the fearless soldiers," said Singh. In fact, Singh was surprised by Colonel K.P. Singh and his wife's

“
How do the soldiers manage to perform these incredible feats of bravery? The incredible thing is that I have always got the same answer. The answer is, and has always been, 'I happen to be in that situation at that time. Anyone with my training and ethos of the armed forces would do the same thing'”

— Shiv Aroor

stoicism on the first death anniversary of their son, Group Captain Varun Singh. Instead of lamenting, they spoke about what they had planned in memory of their son.

But how do the soldiers manage to perform these incredible feats of bravery? “The incredible thing is that I have always got the same answer,” explained Aroor. “The answer is, and has always been, ‘I happen to be in that situation at that time. Anyone with my training and ethos of the armed forces would do the same thing.’”

Even for Milee Ashwarya, the editor of the book, the editing process was not easy. “The stories are visual, and readers feel that they are in the middle of the action,” said Ashwarya. “Editing has been difficult because it made me emotional to edit the chilling tales of bravery.”

The stoicism and fortitude of the families of the fearless soldiers are what struck me the most in the process of writing the book. I was surprised by Colonel K.P. Singh and his wife’s stoicism on the first death anniversary of their son, Group Captain Varun Singh. Instead of lamenting, they spoke about what they had planned in memory of their son

— Rahul Singh

However, for readers, the gap caused by the ignorance of civilians about the sacrifices made by the military has been bridged by the books. “Writing about them gives them immortality,” concluded Aroor. “Their stories live on forever.”

The session ended with the three chiefs of the Armed Forces unveiling the cover of the box set containing all three books of the *India’s Most Fearless* series, and the vote of thanks being delivered by Anindita Chatterjee, Executive Trustee of the Foundation.

Kitaab Delhi was presented by Shree Cement Ltd in association with the Indira Gandhi Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) of the Ministry of Culture, Govt of India, Penguin India and with the support of Ehsaas Women of Delhi



Pratapanand Jha, Director (Cultural Informatics), IGNC A



Neelima Dalmia Adhar



Milee Ashwarya



The audience at the event

Living a Life Less Ordinary



The Hindi translation of Prem Prakash's book, Reporting India, is launched by the chief minister of Goa, Pramod Sawant, and other eminent personalities

The veteran journalist and founder of Asian News International, Prem Prakash, is a household name in India. His extensive coverage of several politically significant events in India, such as the 1962 Indo-China war, the 1965 war against Pakistan and the Emergency, has established him as a trailblazer in the field of journalism.

His book, *Reporting India: My Seventy-Year Journey as a Journalist*, is an intriguing account of his life as a pioneering scribe in India. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** formally launched the Hindi translation of his book, titled *Reporting India: Patrakarita Ki Meri 70 Varsho Ki Anvarat Yatra*, at a **Kitaab** session in Goa. The occasion also marked the beginning of the Foundation's literary and cultural initiatives in the state.

Pramod Sawant, the chief minister of Goa, was the chief guest for the occasion. He officially released the

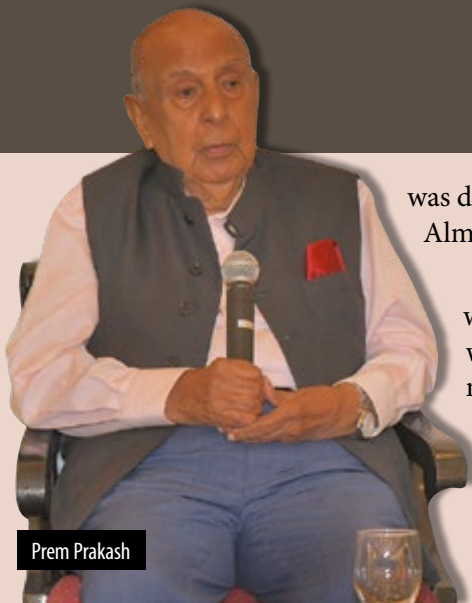
book in the presence of Apra Kuchhal, the Foundation's Honorary Convenor of Rajasthan and Central India Affairs, and the **Ehsaas** Women of Goa.

Vaishali Joshi, **Ehsaas** Woman of Goa, was the moderator for the session, while Kuchhal delivered the welcome address. Shruti A. Juwarkar and Gaurapriya Atul Pai Kane, both **Ehsaas** Women of Goa, expressed their excitement about being an integral part of the Foundation's activities in the state.

If you are presenting anything on television, you can't do it without being there. I had to take risks, but I took whatever protection I could take. The rest was dependent on the Almighty

Being a journalist in the public eye is not easy, especially when one reports on politically volatile situations. Elaborating on the dichotomy existing in a journalist's life, Prakash explained that despite being highly visible, the threat to one's life only arises in the case of a war or a riot. "If you

are presenting anything on television, you can't do it without being there," he said. "I had to take risks, but I took whatever protection I could take. The rest



Prem Prakash

was dependent on the Almighty.”

As a journalist who has interacted with every prime minister of India, he recalled how, at the beginning of his career, when he was just 21, he had to write a report on the former

prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. “For three months, I used to go to Nehru’s house and spend time there,” said Prakash. “I became a household person there.” However, despite holding Nehru in high regard, he admitted that the former premier was shortsighted when it came to the 1962 Indo-China War. “This was one unfortunate, negative side of Panditji. He somehow believed that after World War II, nations wouldn’t fight wars after seeing so much horror on a global scale,” he opined. “He believed nations wouldn’t wage wars to settle political battles. He had done so much to China that he did not expect the Chinese to do what they did to India ultimately.”

What kind of relationship did he share with Pakistani politicians? “My relationship with Pakistani prime ministers was that of a politician and journalist,” replied Prakash. “I was very friendly with General Ayub Khan, the second President of Pakistan. During his tenure, I travelled to places like Swat and Khyber – places that people were barred from accessing. As far as the former Pakistani prime minister Benazir Bhutto is concerned, I knew her from London. She was a great human being and it is sad that she went back to Pakistan. She knew that she would be killed.” Expressing his reservations about Pakistani politics, Prakash said that it is “not



Pramod Sawant

transparent”. “Terror groups that were encouraged on Pakistani soil are now biting the country from the inside,” he lamented. “That’s the story of Pakistan and I prefer not to go there anymore.”

When asked whether he found similarities

between Indira Gandhi and Narendra Modi, Prakash described both as “action-oriented”. “Narendra Modi does not come from a dynasty,” he explained. “He has risen to his current status by sheer dint of his hard work. Indira Gandhi rose to premiership on account of being a part of the Nehru family, but also because she was smart and intelligent.”

The absorbing session came to an end with the Goa CM sharing a few words on Prakash’s book. Ralph De

Souza, Chairman of the De Souza group and president of the Goa Chamber of Commerce and Industry, felicitated Sawant. Pai Kane felicitated Prakash while Juwarkar delivered the vote of thanks on behalf of the Foundation. The event concluded with the author signing copies of his books for the guests at the event.

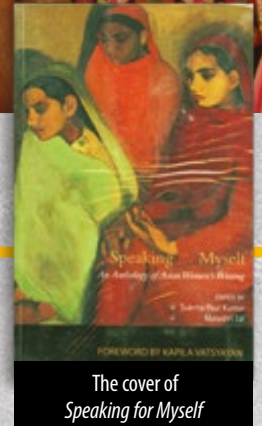
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Kitaab Goa was presented by Shree Cement Limited in association with Cidade de Goa and with the support of Ehsaas Women of Goa



Kavita Sharma, Kapila Vatsyayan, Mrinal Sen, Sunil Gangopadhyay, Nabaneeta Dev Sen, Kishwar Naheed and Malashri Lal on stage at the launch of the anthology, *Speaking for Myself: An Anthology on Asian Women's Writings*

Representing Women's Voices



The cover of *Speaking for Myself*

January 31, 2010 marked the launch of the first-ever anthology featuring women writers from 34 Asian countries. The launch of *Speaking for Myself: An Anthology on Asian Women's Writings*, edited by Sukrita Paul Kumar and Malashri Lal, was organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** in collaboration with India International Centre (IIC) Delhi. It was held at the ICCR, Kolkata.

The anthology, containing writing from nations such as Iraq, Palestine, Indonesia, Burma, Cambodia and Sri Lanka, among others, had its Foreword written by the noted academic, Kapila Vatsyayan. The book was officially launched by the late film director, Mrinal Sen, and the event, moderated by the late activist and writer Mahasweta Devi, was a tribute to Rabindranath Tagore.

The day began with a round table discussion with women writers such as Kishwar Naheed from Pakistan, Donia Gobar from Afghanistan, Manju Kanchuli Tiwari from Nepal, Kunzang Choden from Bhutan,

Putsata Reang from Cambodia, Agnes Lam from Hong Kong and Rizia Rahman from Bangladesh. The writers discussed the anthology and the challenges they face as Asian women.

Some of the noted guests at the event included the late writers Nabaneeta Dev Sen and Sunil Gangopadhyay as well as Joy Goswami, Kirron Kher, Bharati Ray, Javed Akhtar, Indrani Haldar, Mamata Shankar, Bratya Basu, Arindam Sil and Ina Puri, among others.

"For the first time, Kolkata will host so many Asian women writers," remarked Sundeep Bhutoria, Trustee, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. "It is a privilege to host this event in collaboration with IIC and a real honour to meet some of the great writers of Asia. It is our endeavour to provide a platform for a cultural and intellectual debate." Here's looking back at a few moments from the event.



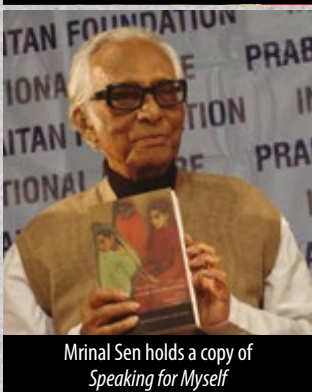
The conclave underway



Indrani Haldar with Javed Akhtar and Kirron Kher



Mahashweta Devi, along with Bharati Ray and Nabaneeta Dev Sen, among others, take part in the event



Mrinal Sen holds a copy of *Speaking for Myself*



Sundeep Bhutoria with Bratya Basu



Sundeep Bhutoria with Pandit Jasraj



Mrinal Sen, Sunil Gangopadhyay, Nabaneeta Dev Sen and H.M. Bangur



Sukrita Paul, Nabaneeta Dev Sen, Mahashweta Devi, Bharati Ray, Kishwar Naheed, Krishna Bose and Malashri Lal

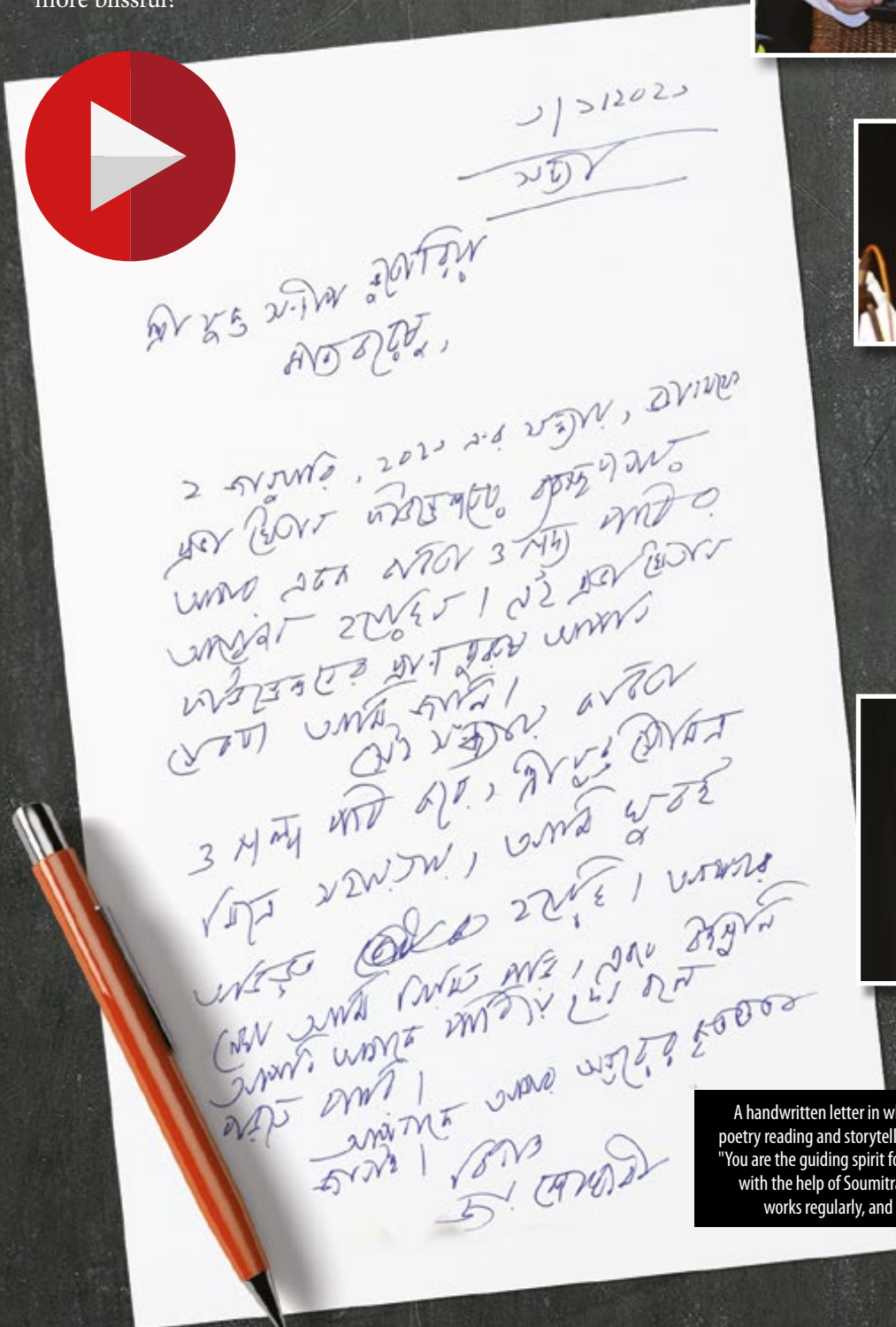


Poetic Melody: An Evening

The year 2023 was ushered in to the tune of poetic cadence, as the audience warmed up to poet Joy Goswami's voice on a winter evening at Gyan Manch. The session was introduced by elocutionist Swarnavo Roy, followed subsequently by a felicitation ceremony. Among the poems Goswami recited were the famed 'Mohanogor', 'Laal Pencil', 'Malyodaan' and 'Auditorium'. A prose extract reading from Goswami's 'Amulyo Mukhujjyer Avinoy' turned out to be the highlight of the session. The evening took a melodious turn with renowned vocal artist, Rahul Mitra, taking the stage with a medley of rare songs, drawn mostly from Rabindranath Tagore's *Puja Porjay*. Could January have been any more blissful?



Joy Goswami



Rahul Mitra



Saiful Islam



Soumitra Mitra

A handwritten letter in which Joy Goswami thanks Sundeep Bhutoria for the poetry reading and storytelling session organised by Prabha Khaitan Foundation. "You are the guiding spirit for the Foundation," the poet writes. "On that evening, with the help of Soumitra Mitra, I felt elated and overwhelmed. I read your works regularly, and feel very obliged when you send them to me."

Teaching Children What They Need To Know



Three days at the beginning of the year restored faith in humanity as a massive number of people came together to give back to children in need. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, under its **Muskaan** initiative and in association with **Education For All Trust**, organised a spate of events designed to lend a helping hand. These included a clothing drive, a distribution programme and skill development workshops that involved several fun and stimulating activities for underprivileged children in various parts of Kolkata.

It remains true that children are the future of the nation, and, as such, must be provided with the best opportunities to reach their full potential. As a nation and society, therefore, it is of greatest significance that focus is put on the rights and skills development of children, especially those from marginalised communities. These values were upheld under **Muskaan**.

As part of these activities, winter clothes and other basic necessities were distributed amongst children from the Kalighat area. A lunch was also organised for



the children at Maya Foundation, an NGO that carries out work in different districts of West Bengal. To ensure development of their cognitive skills, provisions were made for board games like carrom and chess.

In keeping with the Foundation's continuing efforts to help marginalised children, a skills development workshop was arranged for children from various NGOs across the city, with the number of excited and eager participants being logged at more than a hundred. The day-long workshops focused on building skills that would be of use to the children in daily life. Each workshop was conducted by experts, followed by fun activities. It was fascinating to see the educational shift from conventional books to these enriching life skills, in which the children learnt theatre, pottery, arts, photography and more.



Understanding Cancer Beyond Fear

Every two seconds, someone is diagnosed with cancer, as stated by Global Cancer Statistics 2020. Global cancer incidence continues to surge rapidly every decade. Diseases, unlike human beings, know no barriers of geography, race, class, gender, space or time. Millions of cancer cases every year across the globe exert tremendous strain on the physical and mental health and resources of the affected, and its repercussions extend to families and even communities. Divides become conspicuous when it comes to medical care. Systemic inequalities, compounded with socio-economic factors, stand like hurdles before cancer detection and prevention. While the first world nations, with their access to enormous resources, have accelerated action to detect, prevent and cure cancer, the disease has taken a severe toll on low-income or middle-income countries, where cancer mortality remains high.

Held every February 4, World Cancer Day is a global uniting initiative led by the Union of International Cancer Control since 2000. By mobilising action throughout the year, this movement seeks to reinforce people's understanding of the disease, filter out myths and misinformation surrounding it, and ensure that

biological, economic and socio-political differences do not stand in the way of cancer care. Every year, World Cancer Day revolves around a theme to address particular areas, and this year's concern is 'Close the Care Gap'. "Closing the cancer care gap will require a united effort that goes beyond raising awareness — we must act, and we must do so with urgency. By working together, across borders, we can dismantle systemic barriers to care through strategies as varied as the root causes themselves," says Suneet Varma, Global Oncology and US President at Pfizer. 2023 marks the intermediate year of this three-year-long campaign, and this year zooms in on the need to unite our voices and initiate action because the work cannot and must not wait.

With many popular names like Yuvraj Singh, Sonali Bendre and Manisha Koirala making the news as cancer survivors, and other personalities like Irrfan Khan or Steve Jobs succumbing to the disease, a common misconception that prevails about cancer is that it started plaguing us only recently. Cancer has blighted the bodies of humans and animals and baffled humankind for thousands of years. The oldest credible evidence of cancer includes tumours found in fossilised dinosaurs and

human bones from prehistoric times. *Edwin Smith Papyrus*, written between 1600 and 1500 BC, is the earliest written record that describes human cancer. It mentions tumours of the anterior chest and the process of cauterising open wounds. The Greek physician of the Classical period, Hippocrates, regarded as the Father of Medicine, used the word *karkinos* to refer to ulcerating and non-healing lumps. He is among the first to comprehend the relentless progression of the *karkinomas*, named so because the enlarged veins of cancerous tumours resembled a crab.

For centuries, physicians, the church and spiritual healers have tried to understand cancer and performed many trials and errors to root out this intimidating illness. Eighteenth-century physicians emphasised that tobacco consumption invites cancer. Different hypotheses came to the fore – the local origin of cancer and its spread through lymphatic channels, cancer's genetic associations, the link between microorganisms and cancer – out of which some were productive, many unproductive and a drain on human talent and resources. Through the nineteenth century, the discovery of X-rays by Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen, uranium by Henri Becquerel, and radium and polonium by Marie Skłodowska-Curie and Pierre Curie marked a breakthrough in therapeutic radiology and nuclear

The pieces of the puzzle called cancer are still falling into place, but scientists and doctors insist on the necessity and benefits of early detection and the peril of intervening too late. Lifestyle changes alone could avert many types of cancer. Tobacco, alcohol, prolonged exposure to ultraviolet radiation, chemical dyes and toxic substances and a sedentary lifestyle spell bad news for our health and increase the risks of getting cancer. Fast fact: the WHO states that tobacco takes eight million lives every year and accounts for at least 25% of all cancer deaths

medicine, signalling a new dawn in cancer research. The twentieth century was an age of rapid changes, be they in world politics or scientific discoveries. Exposure to mustard gas (2-chloroethane) during the First World War opened doors to experiments on the anti-cancer activity of nitrogen mustard gas and the use of chemotherapy.

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Cancer care moves from the personal to the local and global levels. Maintaining an active and healthy lifestyle, getting vaccinated against chronic infections, routine check-ups and seeking medical help immediately after sighting any symptoms to ensure faster diagnosis are some options within individuals' reach to prevent and cure cancer. While educational institutions can create awareness about cancer and promote healthy living, governments and leaders should take accountability for making policies that safeguard equitable cancer treatment and palliative care. As alienating and overwhelming as it can get, cancer diagnosis and treatment take a severe toll on people's mental health. Professional help should be extended to those grappling with the emotional flux engendered by this disease, whose very name is fear-inducing.

World Cancer Day is not meant to remain restricted to the calendar as yet another date. It is on us all to collaborate and act so that cancer does not remain incurable. Cancer survivorship is increasing, thanks to advanced medical technologies. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** expresses solidarity with individuals at different stages in their journey to be cancer-free. There is light at the end of the tunnel, regardless of how long the tunnel seems.

ARTWORK BY **SUDIPTA KUNDU**





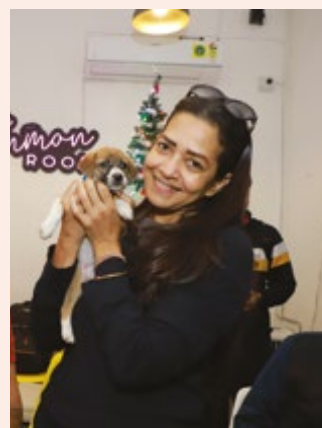
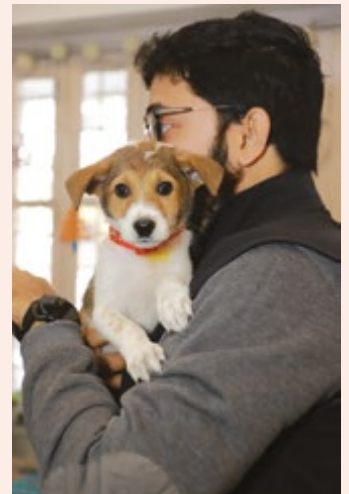
Finding Forever Homes



Through its novel initiative, **Karuna, Prabha Khaitan Foundation** strives to promote animal welfare by setting up fundraising events, immunisation campaigns and adoption fairs. It focuses on fostering compassion for animals, especially strays that are in need of homes, with the overarching objective of avoiding animal cruelty. True to its vision, it organised an adoption camp, 'Adopt-a-Pet', with FurrFolks, a Kolkata-based non-profit organisation dedicated to the rehabilitation and vaccination of stray animals.

The third edition of 'Adopt-a-Pet' attracted a number of pet owners eager to add a new furry member to their family as well as those seeking to get their pets' check-ups and vaccination completed. "I have been associated with FurrFolks for quite some time," said actor Anindya Chatterjee, who was present at the camp and is a pet parent himself. "Whenever I find a stray dog or a kitten, they are always so helpful. This is a great initiative. I want to tell people that Indies are a 'no-nonsense' breed and perfect for the Indian climate. I have two of them. The breed is very Indian so why not love them too?"

The adoption camp was a success, with eight Indie puppies and kittens finding their forever homes. For S.K. Basit, "rescue, treatment, and adoption" are the most important aspects of animal welfare. "A successful adoption plays a significant role in the process. Foster homes and shelters will have no space for further accommodation otherwise. We are delighted to be associated with **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** for our third chapter of 'Adopt-a-Pet'. Everyone is invited to attend the camp and welcome the fur babies into their families, warm-heartedly."



Esha Dutta and Anindya Chatterjee attended the adoption drive

Karuna in Kolkata was presented by Shree Cement Ltd in collaboration with FurrFolks and with the support of Ehsaas Woman of Kolkata



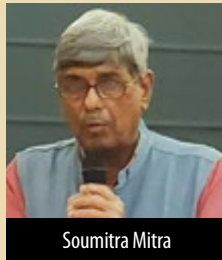
A Journey Into The Mind Of A Writer



Amar Mitra



Arindam Basu



Soumitra Mitra

Realism in literature often produces the finest tales where fiction melts into reality. The writer performs self-effacement like a rite of passage to listen to and write about people who would not have any voice or representation otherwise. Veteran Bengali writer Amar Mitra weaves the banalities of human existence into all-consuming narratives while remaining committed to bringing to light the plight of the dispossessed and marginalised. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** organised a session of **Aakhar** where Mitra engaged in a blithe conversation, best described as an *adda*, with the writer of short fiction, Arindam Basu. The speakers were welcomed by veteran theatre personality Soumitra Mitra, who is also the Foundation's Advisor for Bengali Language, Theatre and Film Programmes.

Hailing from metropolitan Kolkata and recording the lives of people in the remotest villages in Bengal – what was Mitra's fount of inspiration? It was a job in the Land Reforms department of West Bengal that took him into the heart of Bengal. The flavour of the soil, the run-of-the-mill lives of people, some strange, unheard tales left a palpable impression on the writer's creative process. Completing more than half a century of his literary career, Mitra lets his pen run its course when he begins to write.

Mitra's 1977 story, *Gaonburo*, translated into English as *The Old Man of Kusumpur*, won him the prestigious O. Henry Award, representing the riches of Bengali literature on an international platform. The tale is self-reflexive – an old man listens to many stories from different people

on his way to *boro babu* (a police officer), with whom he shares everything. Mitra reads his life as a journey that introduced him to hundreds of people and their narratives and expanded his consciousness. "For a journey fraught with uncertainties, I had to give up on many things. I did, wrote, and am still writing. I cannot understand what course a story will take and how I will end it before beginning to write. Everything is unforeseeable, like the journey to *boro babu*."

Mitra did not sugarcoat his life in the rural districts of Bengal, like the Adivasi villages in Medinipur. But this life initiated him into the rawness of human existence *sans* pretensions. Mitra felt at home among these people who live close to nature. "What I saw and received became worthy as my content," contemplated Mitra.

Bordering on magic realism, his novel *Ashwacharit* is about a mysterious horse that he came across during his stay at Digha. The Sahitya-Akademi award-winning *Dhrubaputra* is an anachronistic narrative that fuses history, mythology and metaphors. A sense of pity for the helpless pushed him to write about the ramifications of land acquisition. While this issue entered common parlance in the first half of this century with the Singur and Nandigram land acquisition turmoil, Mitra wrote about it long back in his books, *Ekhon Mrityur Ghran* and *Dhanapatir Char*.

A sibling of the renowned thespian Manoj Mitra, Mitra tried acting in childhood only to realise his calling lies in literature. Staying true to oneself forms the essence of his writing philosophy. The session ended on the note that *Gaonburo* still continues his journey into the self.

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

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The idol of goddess Saraswati at the Foundation

An Ode To The Goddess of Learning

the arts of all forms. Saraswati Puja has not survived just as a tribute to learning; it is also sung of as the harbinger of spring. The sun shines softly after months of barren winter, new flowers blossom, and nature writes poetry as Saraswati is worshipped.

Prabha Khaitan Foundation worshipped the goddess of the arts, poised on her swan with grace and a *veena* by her side, at their office in Bhawanipore, Kolkata. Literature and the arts are intrinsic to the vision of the Foundation, which is why a day dedicated to celebrating these confers meaning to the organisation. “The warmth and hospitality with which **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** conducts its events in Mumbai through Swati Agarwal, **Ehsaas Woman of Mumbai**, is remarkable,” observed Mudit Jain, a businessman, a promoter of his family-owned chemical manufacturing company, and a regular part of the Foundation’s initiatives in Mumbai. “This is what characterised the Saraswati Puja celebrations this

*“How can my muse want subject to invent,
While thou dost breathe, that pours’t into
my verse
Thine own sweet argument...”*

Thus begins Shakespeare’s Sonnet 38. For thousands of years, artists have sought divine inspiration for a sudden outburst of creativity. Traditionally, the arts are considered sacred and the artist is a facilitator, through whom the Muses sing. In Hinduism, Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge, wisdom and the arts, is often invoked for divine inspiration. Vasant Panchami, observed every year on the fifth day of the Hindu lunisolar calendar month of *Magha*, is a celebration of this feminine deity who embodies and inspires



Ustad Rashid Khan performs at the Saraswati Puja celebrations

year”.

An ode to the goddess of learning, besides honouring the cultural and religious plurality of the country on the occasion of Republic Day, was the highlight of Saraswati Puja this year. Some prominent personalities of the city, including the **Foundation's** Executive Trustee, Anindita Chatterjee, joined in the festivities. They gathered to offer flowers to Saraswati during *pushpanjali*. With folded hands, everyone sought blessings from the goddess. Thereafter, the guests were given *prasad* and treated to a scrumptious *bhog*.

Jain was particularly impressed with how the Foundation welcomed them.

“My wife, Malti, and I were very warmly received by Anindita Chatterjee, thanks to the kind invitation of Mr Sundeep Bhutoria. We were garlanded and bowed before Goddess Saraswati, whose *mandap* area was beautifully decorated with flowers and *rangoli*. After exchanging pleasantries with Anindita and others, we ate *prasad* and drank tea. The Foundation's hospitality made everything taste sweeter.”

What better way to worship the goddess of the arts than with artists? Geetanjali Shree, the winner of the International Booker Prize 2022, and Ustad Rashid Khan, a recipient of both the Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan, graced the event. The day would have remained incomplete without the Ustad's heartfelt *bhajan* recital that blended the religious and artistic notes of the day. On this, Jain said, “We were also invited to a musical performance that was to follow later on, but sadly, we could not stay for that as we had come from Mumbai to attend a wedding in Kolkata. When we were departing,

Anindita gave us *prasad* and bid us adieu.”

Our lives are rooted in our cultures, and it is hard to find an example better than this festival. Vasant Panchami is a quintessential part of the Bengali cultural ethos. It is mostly associated with youngsters, draped in yellow, enjoying themselves on this day of learning, love and laughter. Jain was quick to observe the beauty of Vasant



Flowers are distributed for *pushpanjali*



Mudit Jain



Malti Jain



Soumitra Mitra, the Foundation's Advisor for Bengali Language, Theatre and Film Programmes



Geetanjali Shree, winner of the International Booker Prize 2022, with Anindita Chatterjee at the Saraswati Puja celebrations

Panchami. “We experienced the joys of this Bengali festival of Saraswati Puja on the streets of Kolkata, where we saw many women gaily dressed in their traditional attire to celebrate Goddess Saraswati. We also took some photos with the beautifully bedecked women in their traditional sarees, as we purchased *gur sandesh* from a renowned Kolkata shop. All in all, it was a very moving and happy experience. We witnessed the entire city of Kolkata come alive, and we felt the city's microcosm embrace Malti and me on the Foundation's premises.”

As an organisation working towards developing the cultural landscape of the community, the Foundation takes great pleasure in paying homage to the goddess, who symbolises the strength of learning and scholarship. Singing the praises of the Foundation, Jain's parting remark was, “May Goddess Saraswati always bless the Prabha Khaitan family with her wisdom.”

Taking a Look Ahead

Since its inception, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** has been committed to advancing arts, culture, education, and literature. The Foundation promotes cultural, educational, literary, and social welfare programmes throughout the country with the help of supporters, dedicated individuals, and organisations with similar goals. One of its primary aims has also been to work towards and advocate for gender equality and women's empowerment. In this regard, **Ehsaas** brings together women from several walks of life, all of whom are working towards the betterment of their communities and inspiring others to do the same. With their intellect, compassion and drive, they have been at the helm of several projects undertaken by the Foundation, and have been integral to their success. Working towards this overarching goal, the Foundation organised two get-togethers in Bhopal to discuss new initiatives and projects, as it gears up to launch its activities in Bhopal in April 2023. The get-togethers, hosted with the support of **Ehsaas** Women of Indore, were attended by eminent personalities, and reaffirmed the Foundation's vision of cultural and educational advancement. Here are a few glimpses into the gatherings!



(L-R) Bharti Singh, Smita Bharadwaj, Mumtaz Khan, Mrs Khan, Nikita Delouri, Pragya Srivastava, Apra Kuchhal, Mrs Shrotriya and Vivek Shrotriya



Cathy Tongper, Dr Farah Kidwai and Shilpi Diwakar



Surbhi Dhupar, Unnati Singh, Vandana Dhupar, Suchitra Dhanani and Apra Kuchal



Shiv Shekhar Shukla, Rajendra Kotharli, Sanjay Mishra, Brajesh Rajput, Abhishek Varma and A. Moeed Faruqi



Jagdish Sharma and Bharat Agarwal



Rashmi Bhargava, Neelkamal Kapoor, Amita Singh, Asma Rizwan, Rasheed Kidwai, Sarabhjeet Singh, Preeti Bawa and Rakesh Agarwal



Rasheed Kidwai and Dr Farah Kidwai



Bhaju Shyam



Urmila Sirish



Geet Chaturvedi



Kanika Hasrat and Apra Kucchal



Meeta Wadhvani and Shilpi Diwakar



Mr Suleman and Pragya Srivastava



Sudeep Singh



Vivek Shrotriya and Mrs Shrotriya



Laxmi Singh, Suchitra Dhanani, Bharti Singh, Seema Suleman, Unnati Singh and Surbhi Dhupar



Mrs Khan



Mumtaz Khan



Nikita Delouri



Kunal Choudhary



Sudhir Azad



Devilal Patidar and Manoj Kulkarni



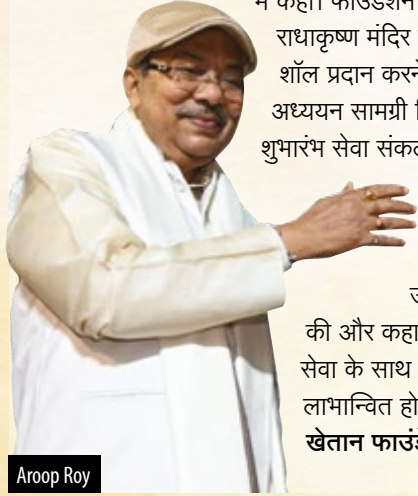
Smita Bharadwaj



Unnati Singh, Surbhi Dhupar, Vandana Dhupar, Atul Dhupar and Manu Srivastava

प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन ने कंबल, शॉल और अध्ययन सामग्री किया वितरित

“नववर्ष के स्वागत में जरूरतमंदों की सहायता कर उनके चेहरे पर खुशी बिखरने से बढ़कर नए साल का जश्न और क्या हो सकता है।’ यह बात पश्चिम बंगाल के समवाय मंत्री अरूप राय ने प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की ओर से आयोजित कंबल, शॉल और अध्ययन सामग्री वितरण कार्यक्रम में कही। फाउंडेशन ने हावड़ा के मल्लिक फाटक राधाकृष्ण मंदिर सैकड़ों लोगों को कम्बल-शॉल प्रदान करने के साथ ही विद्यार्थियों को अध्ययन सामग्री वितरित की और नववर्ष का शुभारंभ सेवा संकल्प के साथ किया।



Aroop Roy

मंत्री राय ने सभी को नए साल की शुभकामनाएं और छात्र-छात्राओं के उज्ज्वल भविष्य की कामना की और कहा कि नए साल की शुरुआत सेवा के साथ हो रही है। इससे सैकड़ों लोग लाभान्वित हो रहे हैं, जिसके लिए प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन निश्चित ही साधुवाद

का पात्र है। गणमान्य लोगों की उपस्थिति में कार्यक्रम का संचालन वरिष्ठ समाजसेवी राजकुमार शर्मा ने किया। उन्होंने बताया कि इस कार्यक्रम में जरूरतमंदों को कंबल, शॉल और माध्यमिक परीक्षार्थियों को उनकी जरूरत की अध्ययन सामग्री और मिठाई वितरित की गई। कार्यक्रम की सफलता में फाउंडेशन की टीम के साथ ही शेखर साव, लकी शर्मा, रोहित साव सहित अन्य सदस्यों का सहयोग रहा।

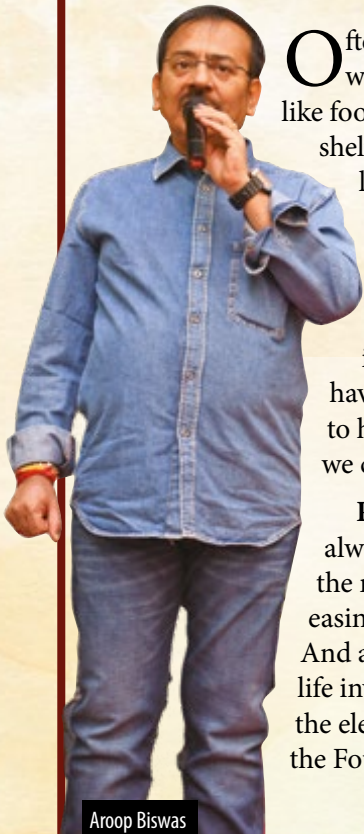


The Joy of Sleeping Warm

Often, we do not realise how blessed we are to be able to take resources like food, clean water, clothing and shelter for granted. Many of us are lucky to have never known what it feels like to go hungry, thirsty, or cold. Thus, while making the world a better place is a slow and gradual process, it is imperative for those of us who have been blessed by the Almighty to help the less fortunate in any way we can.

Prabha Khaitan Foundation has always keenly focused on helping the needy and taking steps towards easing their troubles and suffering. And a large part of leading a peaceful life involves being warm and safe from the elements of climate. To this end, the Foundation, in association with

the Tollygunge Cultural Association, and in the presence of Aroop Biswas, the Minister of Power, Housing, Youth Services and Sports, Government of West Bengal, distributed blankets to those in dire need. It is the Foundation's hope that a few more people in the city will now sleep warm and safe... one more step towards making life easier for all citizens of this beautiful country.



Aroop Biswas

The Joy of New Beginnings

A significant part of the success of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** are the strong, accomplished women in its fold and among its associates — women who hold their heads high and make the Foundation, and the nation, proud. Leading the charge among them are the inimitable **Ehsaas Women**, who have played a wonderful role in the Foundation's story and its vision of touching lives in all corners of the country. It is, thus, only fitting and these women and their contributions are celebrated and appreciated. The Foundation recently hosted a brunch at the Taj Mansingh, Delhi, to celebrate **Ehsaas Women**, Shinjini Kulkarni and Huma Khalil, as they embark on new beginnings. Here are a few glimpses from the event and the warmth that filled the occasion.



Neelima Dalmia Adhar, Surbhi Dhupar, Suchitra Dhanani, Sanjiv Saraf, Shinjini Kulkarni, Huma Khalil, Sagar Rajpal, Rashmi Malik, Unnati Singh, Archana Dalmia, Apra Kuchhal and Anoop Bhargava



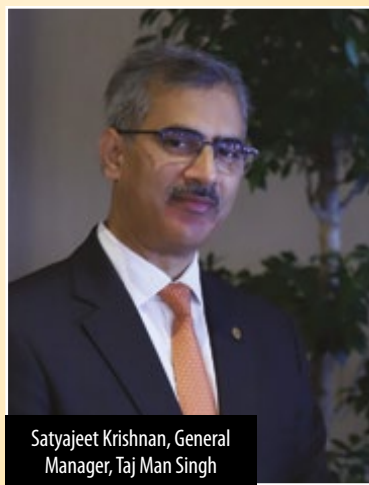
Sharmila Tagore



Suchitra Dhanani, Unnati Singh and Surbhi Dhupar



Sanjiv Saraf and Amitabh Adhar



Satyajeet Krishnan, General Manager, Taj Man Singh



Stephane Amalir



Gurnad Sodhi



Anindita Chatterjee, Ruhi Walia Syal, Manisha Jain, Alaknanda Dasgupta and Rachna Seth



Sachchidananda Joshi
and Sanjoy Roy



Shinjini Kulkarni, Sagar Rajpal
and Neelima Dalmia Adhar



Huma Khalil and Sanjiv Saraf
with friends and family



Neelam Misal and Karuna Goenka



Anoop Bhargava



Anant Vijay, Sanjiv Saraf, Huma Khalil and Vandana Singh



Shweta Aggarwal



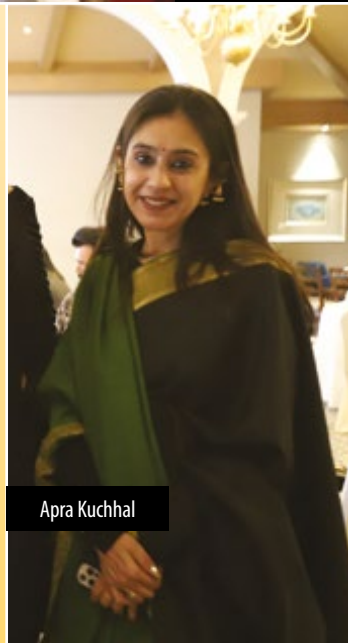
Sunita Kohli



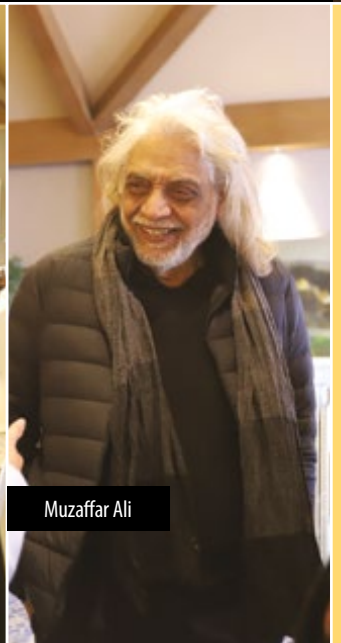
Unnati Singh, Suchitra Dhanani, Archana Dalmia and Surbhi Dhupar



Sundeeep Bhutoria, Shazia Illmi and Suhel Seth



Apra Kuchhal



Muzaffar Ali

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE



Amarjit Singh Dulat



Goutam Dutta



Kishan Pranay



Koral Dasgupta



Krishna Kalpit



Nandu Rajasthani



R K Sharma



Rahul Rawail



Rashmi Bhardwaj



Rituparna Ghosh



Rudra Shankar



Sandip Ghose



Sonam Kalra



Vijay Joshi

The digital version of the newsletter is available at pkfoundation.org/chronicles