



Prabha

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प्रभा

The Prabha Khaitan Foundation Chronicle

The Power of Helping Hands

In this issue of *Prabha*, we celebrate the fundamental tenet of human existence — that all people, irrespective of their physical or mental abilities, are equal, and deserve to be valued. For what are we, if not brothers and sisters in the larger cosmos? So come, dive into these pages to get swept up in the power of acceptance and love, and see the beauty of life played out in music, books, art and conversations

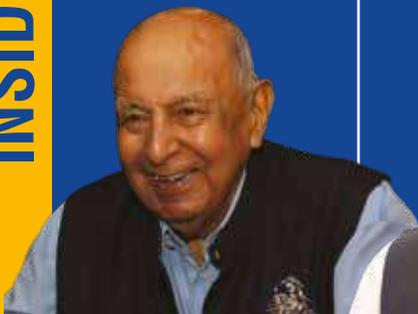


Pg 4-12

INSIDE

AFGHANISTAN'S
STORY

20



ODE TO
INNOCENCE

22



ETHEREAL
NOTES

28



OUTSIDE
THE LINES

64



INSIDE

FARMERS' TUNES	13
YOUNG HOPE	14
JOURNEY BEYOND WORDS	26
LONDON DAYS	32
KEEP IT REAL	38
SPEAKING OF HOME	42
CASTRO IN CALCUTTA	44
A GREEN FUTURE	56
A WAR TO REMEMBER	60
A CHILD'S BRILLIANCE	62
A FRIEND WRITES	68



MANISHA JAIN
Honorary Chief Operating Officer
Prabha Khaitan Foundation



A World for All of Us

Equality is a non-negotiable right guaranteed by the Constitution of India. But to provide a level playing field for everyone, we must take cognizance of all our differences without discrediting any person's intellectual capabilities or functional skills. In spite of laws, true equality remains elusive to the most marginalised groups, including people with special needs. Bringing them into the mainstream should be a priority for organisations, both private and public. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** is deeply committed to forging an inclusive world where every individual is afforded the chance to excel. Thus, the organisation has warmly embraced Samik Sen and Sromona Das, both of whom possess unique talents and special needs. They are not only learning valuable skills at the Foundation, but also utilising them at Taj Bengal Kolkata. I hope you'll enjoy reading more about Samik, Sromona, Manish Kumar Khute and others.

The Foundation thrives when it celebrates India's diverse culture and heritage. Our conversations with Nila Madhab Panda and Vani Tripathi Tikoo at the launches of their books were some of the highlights of the past few weeks, as were the stimulating discussions with other literary stalwarts, all of which you will find in these pages. Musical soirees with legends such as Shubha Mudgal also enchanted us. All of this would have been tough to achieve without the tireless efforts of our **Ehsaas Women**. A special shout out to them!

But the lifeblood of our country is our youth; they are the greatest resource driving India forward. As a result, celebrating International Youth Day is important for the Foundation, as we pledge to continue our support of our brilliant young minds, including gifted individuals such as Aviraj Singhvi and Harsh V. More, whom you can also read about in these pages. The success of our initiatives must also be attributed to the brilliant contribution of our hospitality partners. The ITC Grand Chola stands as a beacon of distinction and top-class hospitality, and the Foundation is proud to partner with their team.

Lastly, in a bittersweet note to all our readers, I would like to say that my journey with you all, as the Editor of *Prabha*, shall come to a close in a few months' time. But exciting things await us in the future, and we shall be together for a few more editions to come. Most importantly, we will always be connected, as *Prabha* will always be a precious part of my life and yours! We hope that you enjoy reading this edition. Don't forget to write to us 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.

[SNAPSHOTS OF THE MONTH]



At a wonderfully stimulating evening at The Tollygunge Club in Kolkata, the great 13th-century Sufi mystic, theologian, jurist and poet of the Persian language, Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Balkhi (1207-1273), popularly known as Mevlana Rumi or just Rumi, was remembered and celebrated. The veteran Indian actor, Kabir Bedi, known for his captivating voice, recited a selection of Rumi's most ethereal poetry to an appreciative audience



← Glimpses of a regular day at the Prabha Khaitan Prashikshan Kendra in Sikar, Rajasthan, where women from underprivileged backgrounds are empowered with creative skills. At the centre, they learn how to embroider, stitch and create garments, among other things. Here are some women at the centre busy with their hands, creating magic!

KALAM-O-UTSAV

15 OCTOBER 2023
LONDON



Exciting things are coming up in October. Stay tuned!



Worthy, Loved and Wanted

The crux of human existence is learning — learning about the world, about one another, about the complexities, ugliness and beauty of the human experience, and, of course, about the severe challenges that too many of our fellow human beings face. And sometimes, the challenges that nature and life throw at them are exacerbated even further by us — when we make them feel unworthy, unloved and unwanted.

The truth is that every single human being, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, religion, education or physical ability, is precious. And everyone has something to contribute to the world, to make it better — for themselves, and for others. This is why **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** lays such great emphasis on inclusivity, acceptance and love — there is no other way to exist. To take tangible and significant steps forward in this direction, the Foundation has welcomed some wonderful people with special needs into the fold, who are learning skills on the job at the organisation, and also, with the Foundation's blessings, extending their skills to the hospitality sphere at Taj Bengal, Kolkata. The Foundation gained inspiration from the wonderful work done by the team of Taj Lakefront, Bhopal, who not only employ individuals with special needs, but also celebrate them. Read on to find out the inspirational stories of the specially abled members of the Foundation, and a peel into the Taj Lakefront team!

Sparkling Gems, Shining Bright



Sromona Das and Samik Sen at the office of Prabha Khaitan Foundation

What is this world, if it is not for everyone? If there are two principles in the human experience that must apply unequivocally to all people, they are kindness and inclusivity — both of which are inextricably tied to each other. People can only lead better lives when they create an inclusive world that is accepting of diversity and empathy for one and all. The need of the hour is to exercise emotional intelligence and open our arms wide to embrace people who face the worst odds of life with great courage and confidence.

It is, however, deeply unfortunate when we consider the reality on the ground in India today. According to a report brought out by the Ministry of Statistics in 2021 on persons with disabilities, nearly 64 per cent of persons with special needs in India do not have jobs. These are disheartening statistics. India has almost 3 crore people with special needs, but only 34 lakh out of the 1.3 crore employable persons with disabilities have found jobs. To make matters worse, fewer women with disabilities are employed as opposed to their male counterparts. And even as more and more companies resort to affirmative action and promise to uphold the spirit of diversity in their workforces, analyses show that even in the top places, only three persons with disabilities are hired for every 1,000 employees on the payrolls.

It is, however, heartening that companies have been actively trying to offer employment to more and more persons with disabilities and attempting to make

workplaces more accessible, mapping appropriate jobs for the roles that would bring out the best in employees with special needs, and so on. It is a matter of time before these measures start taking effect and begin to show reliable and meaningful impact on the actual numbers of people with disabilities finding fulfilling employment in regular workplaces across the country.

Prabha Khaitan Foundation has always strived towards creating such an inclusive world; the organisation believes beyond a shadow of a doubt that every individual deserves an equal opportunity to shine. In its quest for a beautiful and better tomorrow, the Foundation has welcomed into its fold two sparkling gems of our society — Samik Sen and Sromona Das, both of whom have special needs. Both Samik and Sromona engage in a diverse range of tasks, from pasting stickers to taking on packing and administrative responsibilities. Through their dedication, they break barriers and destroy stereotypes.

As Samik and Sromona became a part of the workforce, the Foundation took a cherished first step towards creating an all-inclusive environment and equal opportunities. Our mission is to provide a balanced and fulfilling life for differently abled people and help them show the world, and themselves, that 'Even They Can'. There is no doubt that Samik and Sromona will contribute immensely to the organisation with their talent, skills and hard work. Let's meet them!

Meet Samik



Samik Sen

Samik Sen is a gifted individual who is dealing with what is called autism spectrum disorder. Even though he could not pursue his school education at Delhi Public School, he went on to learn a lot from Manovikas Kendra. His positive traits include being focused and having a calculative mind. His memory retention skills are amazing, and he takes a keen interest in the epics, *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata*. His vocabulary is good, and his sense of time, responsibility and interest in following a work routine show his discipline and dedication. He is continuing his life skills development at the Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy. He is also a part of the Prayas team — a community for differently-abled children. He is an asset to the Foundation!



Meet Sromona



Sromona Das

Sromona Das is a jovial person who loves to converse and be friendly with everyone. She has never shied away from living life to the fullest, even though she deals with a condition called intellectual disability. When she was born, she fell victim to medical negligence, and lost seven critical minutes of oxygen supply to the brain, resulting in lifelong repercussions. Nonetheless, she faces her challenges with a smile and never stops doing her daily work with perfection.

Sromona loves to dance, cook and sing Rabindra Sangeet. This young woman has many strengths — she has speedy visual recognition skills, and she is a disciplined person. She started her education at Mentaid, and is continuing her journey towards improving her skills at the Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy and Prayas. The Foundation is proud to have her on the team!



A Warm Welcome at Taj Bengal



Ricky Kej and Geetanjali Shree with the Foundation's new team members with special needs at Taj Bengal

The training that Samik and Sromona have received at the office of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** has also enabled them to use their learning in the hospitality sector, at the prestigious Taj Bengal, Kolkata. They have been working at Taj Bengal part-time, extending a warm welcome to guests at the hotel lobby. Their hospitality

skills were evident ahead of a recent reception dinner at Taj Bengal which was attended by the International Booker-winning author, Geetanjali Shree, and the multiple Grammy Award-winning musician, Ricky Kej, both of whom are well-wishers of the Foundation.

Geetanjali Shree, novelist and short-story writer, made history and rendered India proud in 2022 when *Tomb of Sand*, the translation of her 2018 Hindi novel, *Ret Samadhi*, won the International Booker Prize. The author, who wrote her first story, *Bel Patra*, in 1987, has five novels to her credit and many collections of short stories; her work has been translated into many languages, including Gujarati, Urdu, English, French, Siberian, and Korean. The English translation of *Ret Samadhi* was done by Daisy Rockwell, while Annie Montaut rendered it into French. A longtime friend of the Foundation, Shree shares a strong bond with the values of the organisation, and this was evident in her interaction with Samik and Sromona. She shared a laugh with them, and they welcomed her with their characteristic warmth.



Geetanjali Shree is offered a welcome drink by Samik Sen



Geetanjali Shree receives a warm welcome by Sromona Das



Geetanjali Shree and Ricky Kej share a laugh with Samik and Sromona

Ricky Kej, like Shree, has built a legacy of making the nation proud on the world stage, not only with his Grammy-winning musical compositions but also with his love and relentless advocacy for the environment and the natural world. The UNCCD Land Ambassador has dedicated his life and music to creating awareness on the environment, and performed at prestigious venues in over 30 countries, including at the United Nations Headquarters in New York and Geneva. Closely associated with the Foundation, Kej has not only

composed the organisation's official caller tune, but has also composed 12 ethereal pieces of music for the Foundation to use across its communications. Like Shree, Kej got along like a house on fire with Sromona and Samik, and shared warmth and light-hearted moments with them. Both Shree and Kej were deeply impressed by Samik and Sromona, and, in turn, it was a privilege for the two young people to meet two such renowned personalities who advocate for inclusivity. Kej and Shree offered them both inspiration and validation.

Also deeply moved was K. Mohanchandran, Senior Vice President, Operations, IHCL, who had heartfelt words of praise for Sromona and Samik, and for the drive to create an inclusive and equitable work environment for more people like them. Life often throws unexpected odds and challenges at us. What matters is how bravely one fights them. The journeys of the two remarkable young people with special needs are inspirational, and make us understand the true beauty of life. May we be able to empower many more like them!



Sromona and Samik pose for a photo with Ricky Kej



Samik and Sromona greet a guest at Taj Bengal



Arnab Chatterjee and K. Mohanchandran (right) with Sromona Das and Samik Sen

“ The young people with special needs at Taj Bengal are part of our diverse team. We at Taj Bengal are very proud to have them with us — their presence, warmth and spirit are helping us learn and grow together.

*Arnab Chatterjee
General Manager, Taj Bengal*

“ Genuine diversity, equity and inclusion are key elements in IHCL's strategic focus. We would very much like to eventually have this model spread holistically across the organisation at all levels. A small beginning has been made at our flagship unit in the East, at Taj Bengal; we are really proud that our team members have embraced their new, differently abled colleagues who assist them on a part-time basis in welcoming guests at our lobby. We will grow this initiative across the region speedily and meaningfully.

*K. Mohanchandran
Senior Vice-President, Operations, East & Northeast, IHCL*

Spreading the Love



The team of Nukkad, the Foundation's catering partner at the Aakhar Chhattisgarh Festival



Manish Kumar Khute with the Ramnami group and Usha Barle at the Aakhar Chhattisgarh Festival

The quest for inclusivity goes well beyond the borders of the City of Joy; it has reached the magical state of Chhattisgarh. The Foundation must mention its amazing catering partner, Nukkad, whose delicious food was served at the recent **Aakhar** Chhattisgarh Festival, and which employs people with special needs, like Manish Kumar Khute, on its team. Read on to know about the wonderful work being done at the Taj Lakefront in Bhopal as well!

A Drive Of Determination

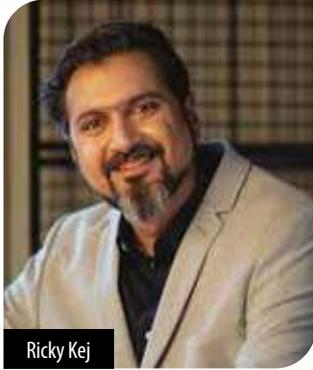


Kanika Hasrat with the team of specially abled employees of the Taj Lakefront, Bhopal, at the hotel's first-year anniversary celebration

Taj Lakefront, Bhopal, has employed specially abled youth as part of its workforce. The hired individuals engage in varied tasks, from the traditional Taj welcome and baggage handling to making coffee and setting up service trays for in-room dining. The team comprises bright individuals such as Rahul (19), Kumkum (19), Rita (20), Stuti (20) and Lokesh (30), all of whom have special needs. This team greet visitors with beaming smiles

and the iconic Taj *namaskar*. They have grown to become independent and confident individuals. This project originated from a conversation between Anil Mudgal, founder of the NGO, Arushi, which caters to individuals with special needs, and Kanika Hasrat, Area Manager and General Manager of Taj Lakefront. These efforts to create an inclusive workspace have been a massive influence for **Prabha Khaitan Foundation!**

We are One with the Earth



Ricky Kej

It is time to celebrate the next sublime piece of music composed by the multiple Grammy-winning musician, Ricky Kej, for **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. This song is part of a range of 12 songs that are kaleidoscopic in their expanse: they explore the rivers Ganga and Cauvery, the mighty Himalayas, the Earth, Mahatma Gandhi, and the official Land Anthem of the United Nations Convention to Combat

Desertification. Each composition is a reflection of Kej's awareness of the natural world. His music calls attention to the urgency for implementing more sustainable practices in our lives and the impact of climate change. For the month of August, the musical piece, called *One With Earth Song*, is the result of a collaboration between Kej and the hard-working Indian farmers from the nation's rural and tribal belts, all of whom form the backbone of our great country. Most fascinatingly, their songs and musical traditions have been passed down through the generations. These farmers practise the most honest forms of agriculture, and their songs, too, are reflective of that — they are the purest forms of music.

Hailing from Bangalore, the association between Ricky Kej and the Foundation has been a long and precious one. With shared values and a similar vision for the good of the nation and of the planet as a whole, it was only fitting that the bond would be a warm and fulfilling one. A regular guest at many of the Foundation's panel discussions, talks and events, Kej's musical relationship with the Foundation predates the Music of the Month series — the accomplished musician is also the creative brain behind the organisation's official caller tune. Stay tuned to experience more of his musical magic in the coming months!

ARTWORK BY **SUDIPTA KUNDU**



Sudiptakundu/2023

The Young are the Future of the World

"Youth is the hope of our future"

- Jose Rizal

This statement has never been more true than now. It emphasises the important role that young people play in shaping their nation's future. The development, progress and ultimately the prosperity of a country mostly depends on its youth population. This is why International Youth Day is of great importance.

The idea of an International Youth Day was proposed during the United Nations' World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth in Lisbon, Portugal, in 1998. The conference led to the adoption of the Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes, which emphasised the need for an international day dedicated to young people. The official declaration happened on December 17, 1999, when the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution proclaiming August 12 as International Youth Day. The date was chosen to commemorate the first International Youth Year held in 1985. International Youth Day was first celebrated

on August 12, 2000. Since then, it has been observed annually on the same date.

International Youth Day is observed in honour of the youth, who are poised to take over in various sectors. As the current generation of leaders ages, the youth will eventually take over key positions in government, business, academia, and mostly everywhere else. They will bring fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and the energy needed to tackle new challenges effectively. Investing in the education, health and well-being of the youth can lead to a more skilled and productive workforce. A productive and educated youth population contributes to economic growth and social progress. Young people are often at the forefront of social movements and activism. They are more likely to advocate for positive change, fight for justice, and address issues such as climate change, human rights violations, and inequality. The youth of today has grown up in the digital age, and they are more adept at utilising technology. Their familiarity with modern tools

and technologies can drive innovation and accelerate progress in various fields. As the future generation, young people have a long-term interest in ensuring the sustainability and prosperity of their country. They are more inclined to make decisions that consider the long-term consequences rather than short-term gains.

The youth in India have their own share of problems, however. There are a number of issues that plague the young populace, from gender inequality to substance abuse. It would be prudent to highlight some of the problems that the Indian youth face. The nation itself has, over the decades, faced several challenges that impacted its youth population. While some of these issues might have evolved or changed over time, others have been among the more prominent problems plaguing youth in India.

First, there is unemployment. This has been one of the most pressing issues. The lack of job opportunities, especially for the educated youth, led to a significant number of young people being unable to find suitable employment. Then there is education: despite significant improvements in recent years, access to quality education remained a concern for many young Indians. Issues such as inadequate infrastructure, the shortage of teachers, and disparities between urban and rural areas were prevalent.

Mental health looms large. Problems related to mental illnesses were on the rise among Indian youth, often exacerbated by academic pressure, societal expectations and economic stress. Tied to this is substance abuse, including alcohol and drug addiction. This continues to be a growing problem among the youth, leading to numerous health and social consequences.

Poverty plays a key role in all of this. A large proportion of India's youth lived in poverty, which has affected their access to education, healthcare, and other basic necessities. Then there are the downsides of living in a digital age, such as cyberbullying and the lack of safety online. With the increasing use of technology and social media, cyberbullying and online harassment were becoming more prevalent, impacting the mental well-being of young people.

Then, of course, there is climate change and environmental degradation. The youth in India were concerned about environmental issues and global warming, and they have often expressed the need for more substantial actions to tackle these challenges. The prospect of growing up in an increasingly unlivable world is a dreadful legacy that the previous generation have bequeathed to the young.

At the root of most problems is gender inequality. Young women in India (and, indeed, the world) continue

to face various challenges related to gender bias, including limited access to education and employment opportunities, early marriage, and societal norms that restrict their freedom. Exacerbating this problem is the lack of political participation by the youth: while they constitute a significant portion of India's population, their political participation and representation remain relatively low. This, coupled with inter-religious and inter-caste tensions, sometimes leads to violence, which affects the youth who are susceptible to radicalisation and polarisation. Above all, there is the question of health; challenges related to nutrition, access to water, and the lack of access to healthcare facilities in remote (and sometimes even urban) areas continue to plague the youth.

Governments, organisations, and individuals continue to work towards finding solutions to these challenges to improve the prospects of India's youth. But to harness the potential of the youth effectively, it is essential for societies and governments to invest heavily in their education, health, and overall well-being. By providing opportunities for skills development, access to quality education, and a supportive environment, India and other countries can empower their youth to become active, engaged, and responsible citizens who contribute positively to their own, and their nation's, development.



The Ehsaas Family Grows



Since its inception, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** has believed in and promoted women's empowerment through cultural, literary, artistic and social initiatives. Named after the legendary feminist writer, Prabha Khaitan, the Foundation's activities often revolve around her vision and interests, including promoting cross-cultural understanding and social change. Emerging from the Foundation's dedication to empowering women, **Ehsaas** brings together women from diverse backgrounds across India, united in their commitment to enhancing society and inspiring others to follow suit. The Foundation holds the conviction that the women of today are the driving force behind the transformative changes of tomorrow. Thus, it is an absolute pleasure to have two dynamic women from Mussoorie and Shimla join the **Ehsaas** family and enrich the Foundation's work with their contributions!



Isha Gupta Vaish

Ehsaas Woman of Mussoorie

I am Isha Gupta Vaish, an environmentalist by calling, residing in the tranquil uplands of Mussoorie. Born in Haryana and raised in parts of Haryana and Chandigarh, I'm the daughter of a devoted homemaker and a diligent high-ranking official in the Government of Haryana. Driven by

my fascination for urban life, I studied at Lady Shri Ram College for Women, Delhi University. However, feeling homesick, I returned to Chandigarh to pursue an MBA in marketing. Currently, I'm close to completing my Master's in Human Rights with a focus on Environment, driven by my belief in nature's

emotional depth.

Keen to explore various fields, both in academics and professional life, I ventured onto paths that were uncommon for Baniya girls at the time. While my classmates pursued lucrative jobs, I embarked on an enriching journey in the captivating world of film production. Working with a production house based in Mumbai and Delhi, I gained hands-on experience collaborating with organisations like UNICEF, UNDP, NACO, IMA and Network18, addressing sensitive issues such as AIDS, drug abuse, trafficking, the right to education and more.

The serenity of the highlands beckoned me, and, in 2009, I married my soulmate, who hails from a family of hoteliers in Uttarakhand. Since then, I've been assisting my husband's hospitality business while embracing marriage and motherhood. We presently manage a 100-room inventory in Mussoorie and are soon launching a luxury villa for rent in Dehradun. With a long-standing eco-conscious mindset, I celebrate festivals mindfully, prioritise plastic reduction, and have a deep connection with nature. Despite my work with various developmental organisations, it took time to realize that I was inching closer to my dream vocation. I am now the founder/director of an NGO named Hriday Green Living, dedicated to environmental uplift in various ways. My core values as an environmentalist revolve

around sustainability, preservation, conservation and saving. Over the past five years, our efforts have focused on spreading environmental awareness through exhibitions, school programmes, print campaigns and social media. In 2019, we creatively repurposed used *rakhis* — collected across 10 Indian cities — into around 1,000 decorative pieces for Diwali.

Currently, we engage in grassroots projects with agencies like Nagar Palika Parishad Mussoorie, Mussoorie Hotels Association, and Mussoorie Dehradun Development Authority. Our initiatives encompass water conservation, discouraging single-use plastics, stirring the packaged water market, waste segregation at source, and upcycling reusable waste. Beyond my environmental passion, I'm a thalassophile who has explored beaches in eight countries and a bibliophile who initiated an organic book exchange club in Mussoorie, fostering discussions over coffee on books and life's meaningful subjects. My journey led me to become an **Ehsaas Woman of Mussoorie** under the aegis of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. I firmly believe in contributing positively to society, recognising the importance of literature and culture in development. Collaborating with the Foundation and a dynamic team of like-minded **Ehsaas Women** nationwide promises to nurture my *avant-garde* spirit.



Neha Desai

Ehsaas Woman of Shimla

Neha Desai, a devoted reader and a sociable person, finds joy in travelling, adventure, fashion and acting. She actively participates in theatre through her membership in the Amateur Dramatics Society in Shimla, contributing to annual performances at the Gaiety Theatre.

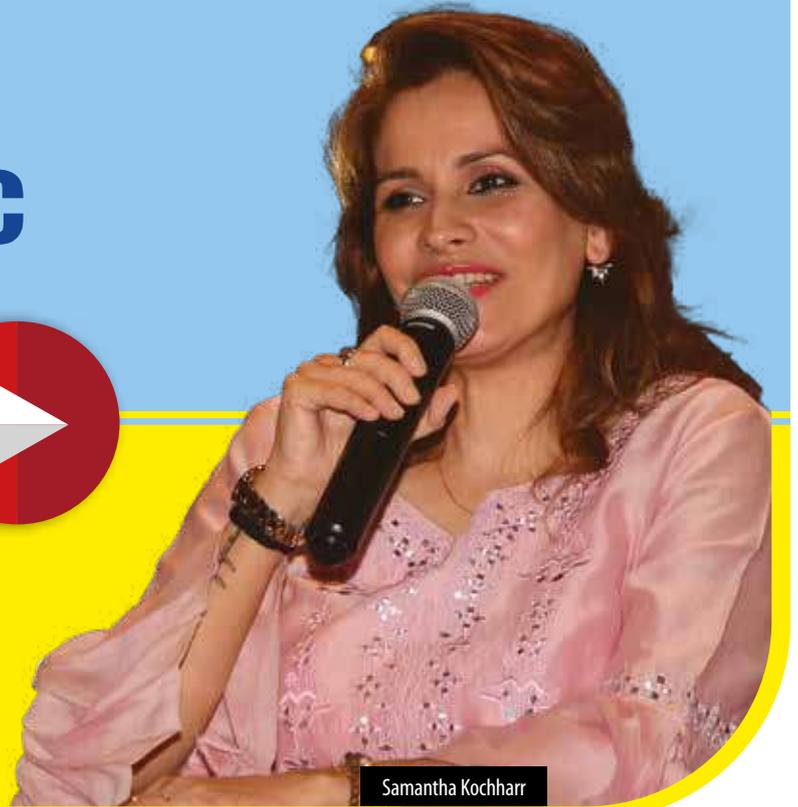
With a Master's degree in advertising and marketing from the University of Leeds, she

previously held the role of brand manager at Mudra Communications, where she successfully introduced Volkswagen to the Indian market. Later, she contributed her expertise to Wrigleys, India, working on brands like Boomer, Doublemint and Orbit. Neha also founded and was the personal stylist at STYLE 4 THOUGHT. Currently, she co-owns the Daojidhaar Estate in Shimla, managing a luxury vacation rental in collaboration with her husband.

The Power of Shamanic Healing



Shruti A. Juwarkar



Samantha Kochharr

As a writer, a significant part of oneself is reflected in one's book. With growth, certain reactions become ingrained, influenced by teachings and experiences from the earliest stages of life. This ongoing process, extending from the prenatal stage to the present, shapes us. However, a pivotal moment arrives when introspection compels us to question if our actions genuinely define our essence. Samantha Kochharr reached this juncture after her father's passing.

At **An Author's Afternoon** organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** at Taj Bengal, Kochharr — hair stylist, dresser and practitioner of Shamanism — shared her journey from being an accomplished stylist to an author with her debut work, *Arribada: The Arrival*. In conversation with Shruti A. Juwarkar, **Ehsaas** Woman of Goa, Kochharr, who is the daughter of the eminent Blossom Kochhar, bridged the gap between the ordinary and extraordinary. Esha Dutta, the Foundation's Honorary Convenor of North-East Affairs and **Ehsaas** Woman of Kolkata, welcomed the speakers.

Shamanism, an ancient energy healing practice, is integral to Kochharr's life. Hailing from a 300-year-old lineage of Shamans, she emphasises the importance of

dedicated prayer and practice. *Arribada* emerged as a "pure download", a story not planned but compelled by a call to write. This creative process required changes in her prayer routine, with 1.5 hours dedicated to praying and writing. "As I always say, *Arribada* is a pure download," said Kochharr. "It wasn't like I had a story to share or something that had to be written. I was just asked to write the book, and I did that."

Arribada is a pure download. It wasn't like I had a story to share or something that had to be written. I was just asked to write the book, and I did that

Kochharr perceives herself to be a conduit for the Universe's message, believing her book has a healing purpose for those who will encounter it when the time is right. Amidst personal challenges, including business struggles during the pandemic, intensified spiritual practice became her solace. She encourages all readers to recognise their role as "chosen ones" of the

Universe to make a positive impact. "I failed in English in school," she said, "and yet, the Universe 'chose' me to write a book."

Intriguingly, Kochharr's writing took her to Tanzania, a place she knew little about. Through transcendental meditation, she visualised the country, later discovering that its accurate depiction aligned with her trance experience. Kochharr had unearthed

her path to Shamanism after scepticism. Post her father's death, a pivotal moment of transition, Kochharr assumed leadership of her family business and gradually embraced Shamanic practices, leading to powerful healing experiences. "I was never a believer of Shamanism, to be honest," she said. "Looking at those beads and crystals that my parents used to practice, I thought they were useless and all for nothing. It was only after my father's death that I began to take these things seriously." Today, she is the managing director of Blossom Kochhar Aroma Magic.

Kochharr also unveiled the nature of Shamanic healing, where presence alone can mend. She highlighted the mind's potency in undoing occult influences and emphasised the interconnectedness between personal healing and the transformation of external situations. Throughout the conversation, she reiterated the Universe's guidance and the significance of listening to and acting upon it. She recounted her role in helping the dying find solace and transition, emphasising the importance of releasing grief through tapping techniques. "We human beings are very *dheeth* (stubborn) and we don't want to listen to others. We think we are right," she said.

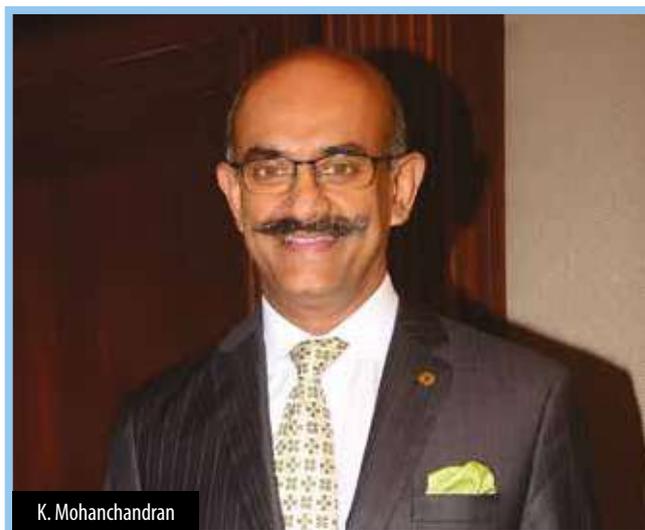
Kochharr's perseverance in taking over her father's business reflected in the unwavering support of loyal employees. Her daily motivation arises from her commitment to improving lives, more than the brand she represents. "There were so many people from the company who had taken crores worth of products and the money was stuck," she recalled. "I remember, when

the time came to give salaries to the employees, I did not have enough to pay them." But the old employees stood by her, saying, "*Aapke company ne 15 saal se humara ghar chhalaya hai, bachon ko school bheja hai, hum bas 20 din aur wait nahi karenge?*" Those words stuck with Kochharr, and the respect from her employees got her going.

The event culminated in a Q&A session with Kochharr, leaving the audience inspired and curious about Shamanism's ancient art and its transformative potential. The session concluded with a formal vote of thanks by Esha Dutta, and the author was felicitated by Anita Gurbaxani.

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

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K. Mohanchandran



Esha Dutta



Anita Gurbaxani felicitates Samantha Kochharr

A Journalist's Lens on Afghanistan



Archana Dalmia, Anantmala Potdar, Anindita Chatterjee, Karuna Goenka and Ina Puri with Pavan K. Varma and Prem Prakash as they launch the veteran journalist's book

Today, when we say 'journalism', we think of a profession in danger. We live in an age in which the internet is brimming with information, easy to compile into a copy. Thus, hard-nosed reporters who have always operated on the ground, routinely putting their life at stake, are to be appreciated and honoured.

Prem Prakash has been one such journalist. The author and chairman of ANI, a leading news channel, was present at the launch of his book, *Afghanistan: The Quest for Peace, The Path of Wars*, organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** under its **Kitaab** initiative, at ITC Maurya, New Delhi. Archana Dalmia, **Ehsaas** Woman of Delhi, greeted everyone at the event, and Pavan K. Varma — diplomat, politician and author who served a term as an ambassador to Bhutan and Cyprus — was the guest of honour.

After a short felicitation, the evening proceeded with Varma unveiling the book. He was joined by the **Ehsaas** Women of Delhi. A panel discussion followed the event, moderated by Ina Puri, **Ehsaas** Woman of Gurugram. Varma was called upon to say a few words about the veteran journalist. He praised the book, saying that Prakash had the best insight and insider's view of the occurrences in Afghanistan. "The book is based entirely on his work, vision, dedication, sacrifice and *ekagrata*," said Varma. "And at this point in his life, when he is not required to work with the same zeal as he did when he was younger, it is also a time to reflect on him as an individual and what his contribution has been."

Varma also commented on the research-heavy nature of today's journalism that depends on information from the internet. Prakash's style of reporting involved



Prem Prakash

Ina Puri

being on the ground, sometimes even risking his life. Once, his car took two bullets. Another time, he was advised not to travel to Ghazni, but he did, and met Mohammed Najibullah (the former President of Afghanistan) there. Rounding off, Varma urged everyone to read the book, saying that it focuses less on abstruse scholarly analysis and presents a more reader-friendly version of how the situation in Afghanistan has evolved over different periods.



Pavan K. Varma

Prakash's journalistic career began right after college. His debut report, on the launch of the National Students' Union of India, was praised by his teachers. His travels to Afghanistan began when he got to know of Ranjit Singh, a Maharaja in Afghanistan, known to be quiet and very intelligent. "None of the Western writers would talk about the Afghans' defeat anywhere," said Prakash. "Ranjit Singh was very smart and he did defeat and win over the British. After that, the Afghans wanted their land. Even though Peshawar went to Pakistan during the war, I personally think that the day is not so far when the Afghans will lay a claim to take back Peshawar."

Puri, who wanted to know more about his close interactions with Afghans, asked with genuine curiosity about the lives of the people living there. Prakash, who saw the Afghans during their golden age, said that they loved India. He also said that the Afghans were clever merchants, having been the first people to deal with money.

A mass-migration of Afghan students in 1978 to the Soviet Union turned them into hardened communists. The Soviets were training the Afghan Army. "This is when the Americans enter the picture," said Prakash. "The Afghans were part of a non-aligned movement and so was the Shah of Iran, who pressed Mohammad Daud Khan, the president of Afghanistan, to hold a meeting of the foreign ministers in Kabul in April 1978."

The Soviet Union did not take well to this; a coup was orchestrated by the Afghan Army, and Daud Khan and many of his family were killed by members of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan. Prakash immediately landed up to get the first scoop, thanks to his friend S.K. Singh, who was the ambassador. Singh helped Prakash get to the Presidential Palace, where most of the family members lay murdered. Thus began the tragedy of the Afghans. Prakash was arrested with four others upon his return.

Elaborating on Russia's relationship with India, Prakash said that the Indian government is a *baniya* government. "We do help our neighbours, but sometimes we hold back," he said. "There was a time when Najibullah wanted me to convey a message to the Ambassador. A sudden payment had to be made to Abdul Rashid Dostum (a warlord and former Vice-President of Afghanistan). When the money was not delivered, Dostum withdrew from the Pakistan border. That is when the Taliban entered." Prakash witnesses all of this.

Prakash is considered the most travelled person in Afghanistan from India. He would travel to many empty cities with his camera guy and soundman. He recalled the assassinations of Najibullah and Ahmad Shah Massoud, and said that Najibullah had warned the Europeans that there would be a major attack on American soil. Massoud was killed on September 9, 2001, and two days later, the 9/11 attack occurred.

The captivating session moved on to an interaction with the audience, with insightful questions from the guests, leading to enlightening discussions regarding Afghanistan and the role India will play in the long run. Archana Dalmia delivered the final vote of thanks.

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



The audience at the event



Vandana Singh, Garima Mithal, Neelima Dalmia Adhar and Ritika Kochhar with Kailash Satyarthi, Nila Madhab Panda, Amar Patnaik, Makarand Deshpande and Alex Ellis at the launch of *Return to Innocence*

Innocence is the Need of the Hour

Children, women and climate are issues that have featured frequently in Nila Madhab Panda's films. A filmmaker noted for works such as *I Am Kalam*, *Kadvi Hawa*, *Jalpari* and *Kaun Kitne Pani Mein*, among others, Panda's movies have placed him among the few directors who consciously try to speak of social issues affecting the material reality of thousands across the country. In his recent memoir, *Return to Innocence*, he writes of the urgency to revisit an ethos which wasn't driven solely by the present need for constant profiteering.

A special session recently, held at the British Embassy in New Delhi, saw the launch of Panda's book, where Panda also discussed his greater artistic vision. The event was attended by the social

reformer and Nobel laureate, Kailash Satyarthi, the British High Commissioner to India, Alex Ellis, and the actor, Makarand Deshpande. Neelima Dalmia Adhar, the Honorary Convenor of Delhi NCR Affairs for **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, welcomed Panda and the guests on behalf of the Foundation.

Speaking of Panda and his enormous talent, Satyarthi pointed out that the book is imbued with the richness of rural Odisha. "When Madhav talks, you can feel the songs of rural Odisha, you can smell the flowers and the soil of the Mahanadi because they are so very well documented in the book", he said. A similar sentiment was echoed by Ellis, as he noted that the book is about the threat that confronts the natural physicality of India

owing to unmindful human action. The book, therefore, is a response to that threat. “Art throughout humanity has been a response to enormity and an attempt to distil it all. Just as, for the Romantic poets, art was a reaction to education and how it distorts our view of the world, Panda’s book is an attempt at returning to that world of innocence,” said Ellis.

For Satyarthi, too, Panda’s book tries to go back to the world of unbridled innocence of childhood. “I have said that the biggest sin that we adults commit is that we rob our children of their dreams and their innocence,” he said. “People think that innocence means stupidity, foolishness and a lack of knowledge. But it has a deep spiritual meaning. Childhood is not merely an age. It is simplicity, originality, truthfulness, forgiveness, and the quest for learning and loving. That is innocence. We teach our children to be Hindus, Muslims or Christians. We teach our children that we are Indian, Pakistani or Sudanese. Children are not responsible for creating any boundaries. This book tries to capture that innocence.”

In conversation with Panda was Ritika Kochhar, author, journalist and communications specialist. When asked what led him to writing a book after having found success as a filmmaker, Panda opined

I grew up in a world where everything was about emotions and relationships. The world has changed rapidly over the past five decades and is at a point of no return. This angst for having left behind a world where there was no *len-den* (give and take) made me make films focusing on social issues like women’s rights, climate and children, to bring back the essence of those days to the present world. Development is not wrong, but we need to be cautious of its adverse effects

that it is his passion for storytelling that drives all his artistic endeavours. “I grew up in humble circumstances,” he said. “A boatman who used to ferry me across the Mahanadi would tell me the village’s history through stories which nobody knew of. To hear those stories, I would even skip school sometimes.” As storytelling evolved into a profession, he realised he didn’t have the time or resources to make as many films as there are stories.



Ritika Kochhar talks to Nila Madhab Panda

He therefore decided to foray into the world of writing.

The world of innocence that Panda had left behind was his childhood in rural Odisha – a world which wasn't infested with materialistic desires.

This is what forms the basis of the message in his art. "I grew up in a world where everything was about emotions and relationships. The world has changed rapidly over the past five decades and is at a point of no return. This angst for having left behind a world where there was no *len-den* (give and take) made me make films focusing on social issues like women's rights, climate and children, to

bring back the essence of those days to the present world. Development is not wrong, but we need to be cautious of its adverse effects," he observed.

In an age where meaning is construed by the cultish following of self-fashioned heroes and celebrities parading as messiahs, the real heroes for Panda are the one who are striving to make a real impact on the life of others. Elaborating upon the relationship that he shared with his paternal uncle, or *Baba*, who is also referred to in the book, Panda said that *Baba* was a true hero. "The definition of heroes has changed now. In Hollywood films, somebody sending out a spaceship or somebody taking over your brain or owning social media is considered a

The definition of heroes has changed now. In Hollywood films, somebody sending out a spaceship or somebody taking over your brain or owning social media is considered a hero. *Baba* was a hero because he planted thousands of fruit trees, and we are still reaping the fruits, literally, of his years of dedication. For me, he was, is, and will always be a hero

hero. *Baba* was a hero because he planted thousands of fruit trees, and we are still reaping the fruits, literally, of his years of dedication. For me, he was, is, and will always be a hero," remarked Panda. But Satyarthi as well has been an inspiration for him. "When I started working professionally... year after year I would visit the *ashram* (where rescued children lived) even when *Kailashji* wasn't there. This was a place which is what one would call '*swarg* (heaven)'. Some of those children may have died or may have been drug addicts, but *Kailashji* saved them. He is a real hero, not Spider-Man".

The book also features stories about the author's mother, who struggled with her mental health throughout her life. While that experience had been traumatic for the author, he only healed from it after working with children. No amount of artistic expression could exorcise the hurt or heal the wound of having to look after a mother who could hardly be present for her son. "I was, in a sense, a father to my mother, as she struggled with mental health," he recalled. "This was something that I found extremely difficult to heal from. It was by working with children that I could heal from it. Today I can talk about it or portray it in a film, or write about it in a book. There are so many

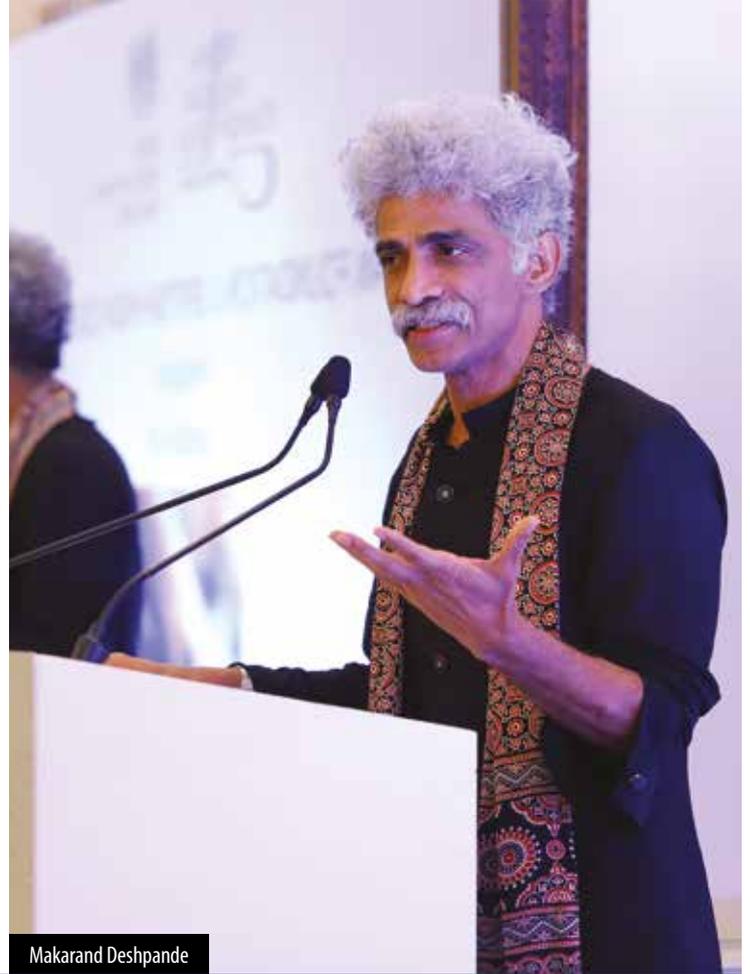


Kailash Satyarthi

Mr Nila Madhab Panda



Alex Ellis



Makarand Deshpande

women who go through that struggle with their mental health and never talk about it.”

But Panda isn't limiting his messages to just the book. His series, *The Jengaburu Curse*, which is to be released in August, is also a clarion call for saving the planet before it is too late. The series revolves around the struggles of a tribe to protect a precious source of uranium when the world's most powerful people want to use it to make a profit. “It is about destroying your own home and not realising that there is no second home,” Panda said. “This is being hailed as India's first cli-fi (climate fiction) thriller series. It is a very powerful series because of the amount of research that has gone into it, and how SonyLIV

“
The only way that planet Earth has survived for all these years is because of that innocence and simplicity of human emotions and life, untainted by materialistic aspirations. We are the only creatures with a brain that can change the world, but we are also the ones destroying it. This book is now out there in the world for people to read, so that they can do something about it
”

has supported the series. Through the story, I thought of talking about what we are going through and what we are eventually going to face.”

So what, then, does returning to innocence mean to Panda? “The only way that planet Earth has survived for all these years is because of that innocence and simplicity of human emotions and life, untainted by materialistic aspirations. We are the only creatures with a brain that can change the world, but we are also the ones destroying it. This book is now out there in the world for people to read, so that they can do something about it.”

This special book launch was organised in collaboration with the British High Commission, New Delhi



(L-R) Arshia Sattar, Urvashi Butalia and Rita Kothari

Translation: The Essence of India's Diversity

Translating a book is more than just converting language; it's a journey beyond words on pages. *Translation as Exploration*, exemplified by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** in association with Zubaan, expands into supporting overlooked literature. Together, they've released 35 translated books, exploring Indian languages.

Anindita Chatterjee, the Foundation's Executive Trustee, introduced the joint programme and its goals. Launched in 2021, it focuses on uplifting translators, often overlooked, by providing fair pay and recognition, along with promoting women authors and feminist works from Zubaan in Indian literature, reaching new readers. The initiative has led to the translation of books into various languages like Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, Bengali, Punjabi, Kannada, Odia and Konkani.

Manisha Chaudhry, coordinator of the PKF-Zubaan series, highlighted some examples of the projects undertaken; for instance, the work done by the Tamil translator, Panmugamedai, in translating Zubaan books from the Northeast into Tamil. Five hundred copies per book were published, sparking interest in Tamil Nadu scholars. Moreover, Insight Publica translated young adult titles into Malayalam. Chaudhry then introduced the panellists for the evening — Arshia Sattar, writer, translator, founder and co-director of the Sangam

House programme, and Rita Kothari, translator, founder and co-director of the Ashoka Centre for Translation, both of whom were in conversation with the founder-director of Zubaan, Urvashi Butalia. Their discussion on feminist translations set the stage for an insightful conversation.

Butalia shared her surprise at the vast language ecosystem nationwide. Both large and small independent publishers joined the translation project, driven by a strong belief in the subject. She noted the diverse paths books take when published in various languages. Sattar shared her translation journey, initially aspiring to work for the UN but then pursuing it differently. A.K. Ramanujan advised her to translate books. She emphasised the importance of reading original texts when translating, and viewed translation as political and pleasurable, urging everyone to be aware of its underlying politics. Kothari, a Sindhi in Gujarat, unconsciously learned languages like Gujarati and Hindi, and also Marathi owing to having studied in Pune. Multilingualism led her to translation as a career and passion.

Translation's realm, its esteem, academia, discourse and creation have evolved, now exceeding expectations. Once minimal, it now blooms, transforming Indian languages into English. This era counters shallow narratives, revealing intriguing regional politics.



Anindita Chatterjee, Arshia Sattar, Manisha Chaudhry, Urvashi Butalia and Rita Kothari with some of the books translated as part of the translation series

Intellectual richness often emerges from non-English parts, not the Anglophone sphere. “The publication of the English language is somewhat leaving us tired; it’s an over-rehearsed, repetitive, and very often a very mediocre field,” she said. “What is happening of interest lies in other languages.... Translation is a very important part of re-orienting and reminding people that teaching and learning can come in different forms.”

Sattar and Kothari, both translators, make distinct translation selections. The translation path sometimes arises from requests, aligning with their interests. Sattar focuses on classics, viewing translations as never final, and needing updates owing to evolving times and contexts. She delves into translating time and contextual relevance. “I translated the *Ramayana* when I was in my mid-30s,” she said. “I was a complete outsider to the epic, but, of course, had heard stories from here and there. I imagined that the *Ramayana* was entirely a part of my culture.” Later, when she knew that wasn’t the case, she would never have translated it.

Sattar finds Valmiki’s Ravana and *Ramayana* contemporary, noting his radical candour, evident in her 2018 book *Valmiki’s Ramayana*. Kothari’s eclectic choices echo diverse voices, embracing unfinishedness that lingers hauntingly. Stories stick, leaving an enduring impact. Her selections arise from personal connections, not strategy for expertise. “Sometimes, it is all over the place,” she said. “Sometimes, some things would have triggered, and I think that this story has not been told, and I end up going to that narrative. It is a journey.

They say, ‘*kisi kitaab se ek mehfil thodi aur khulti hai, phir doosri kitaab se thodi aur khul jaati hai, phir koi naya sehra khul jaata hai*.’”

While translating, Kothari adopts an academic mindset, considering history, questions, and overlooked narratives. This intellectual journey enhances her work. Sattar adds that translators must find balance, allowing their focused minds to settle, much like sand, to achieve clarity during the process. “*Uske baad jab saans lete hai, toh sochte hai ki arrey, yeh tha uska matlab*,” she said. Regarding The Yali Project by Sangam House, Sattar highlighted its mentorship for young translators, providing two language mentors, often native speakers. They aim to publish these translations, shedding light on untapped young talent capable of producing multiple books annually. Kothari noted students’ latent desire for translation, forming the Ashoka Centre for Translation, a platform for sharing tribal stories through talks and meets. The centre has published works in languages like Persian and Sindhi, empowering students to contribute to literature.

The discussion offered fresh perspectives on Indian literature’s narratives and importance. The audience engaged in a Q&A session with the trio, gaining valuable insights.

The Prabha Khaitan Foundation Zubaan Translation Series — Translation as Exploration was presented by Shree Cement Limited in association with Zubaan Books

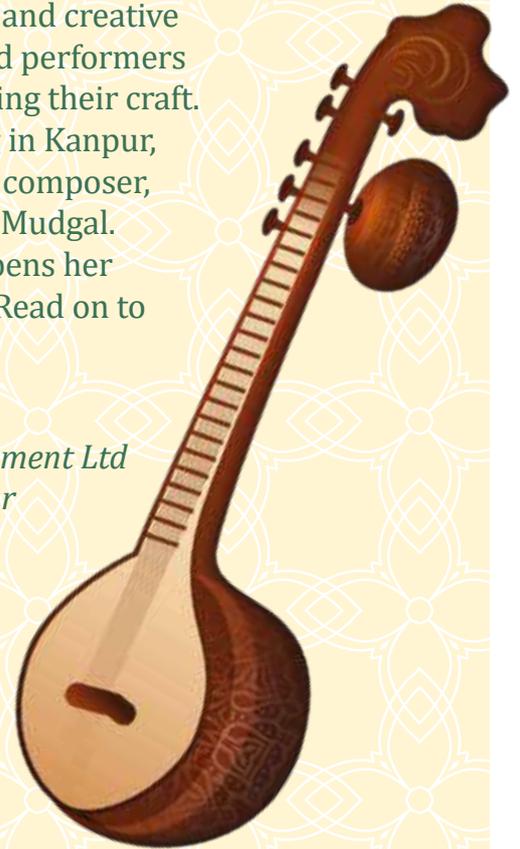
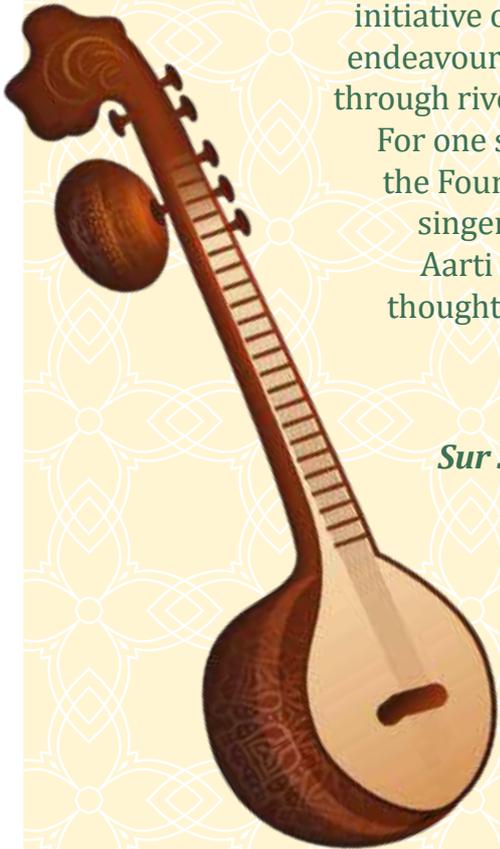
The Enchantment of Music



Indian classical music is said to have originated in Vedic times; that the ancient text, *Samveda*, which contains organised music, was arranged into melodic themes using rhyme and harmony. Therefore, music has been an integral part of the rich cultural heritage of the country for millennia. The complex amalgamation of musical notes, with *taal* or rhythms has been in existence since time immemorial. While Hindustani music is most prevalent in the northern parts of India, Carnatic music is prevalent in the Southern part of India. Though a divergence occurred in the 13th century, both systems of music have survived and thrived over the years owing to the sheer dedication of artists, musicians and organisations.

Prabha Khaitan Foundation has worked tirelessly to uphold India's cultures and values. Its initiative, **Sur Aur Saaz**, aims to not only promote the works of traditional Indian artists, but also their larger musical philosophy. This initiative offers an understanding of the lives and creative endeavours of gifted traditional musicians and performers through riveting dialogues while also showcasing their craft. For one such magical **Sur Aur Saaz** evening in Kanpur, the Foundation hosted the noted musician, composer, singer and Padma Shri awardee, Shubha Mudgal. Aarti Gupta, **Ehsaas** Woman of Kanpur, pens her thoughts about the ethereal performance. Read on to share in the experience!

*Sur Sur Saaz was presented by Shree Cement Ltd
in association with Ficci Flo Kanpur*



Nurturing Cultural Roots: The Significance of Promoting Classical Music in Indian Cities

Aarti Gupta
Ehsaas Woman of Kanpur



Shubha Mudgal gives an electrifying performance



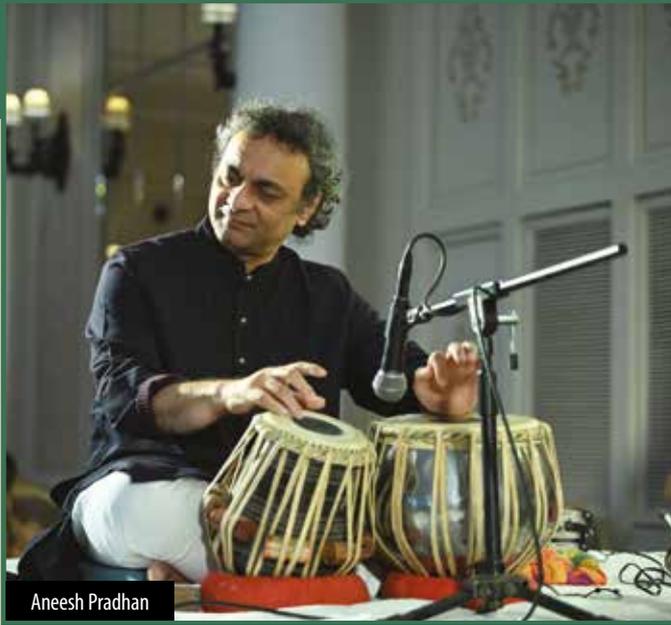
The timeless art form of classical music weaves a vibrant tapestry within India's cultural heritage, resonating deeply with the soul of the nation. In the midst of our modern era, where contemporary influences

often take center stage, the profound legacy of classical music in Indian cities risks being overshadowed. Recently, as a proud member of the organising team for **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, I had the privilege of hosting the illustrious Shubha Mudgal in Kanpur. This remarkable event not only brought immense enjoyment to the audience, but also underscored the vital importance of championing classical music in our cities. Such endeavours hold immense significance, not just for the current generation, but as a means to safeguard our cultural heritage for generations to come.

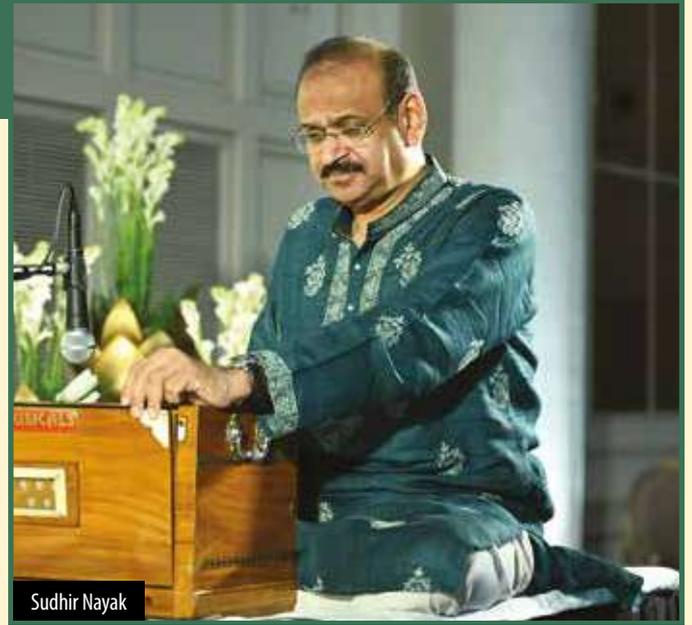
India's classical music is deeply rooted in

the traditions of the past, spanning centuries. It stands as a repository of stories, emotions, and philosophical depth, mirroring the diverse tapestries of our nation's ethos. The melodies, ragas and compositions sung by Shubhaji during the event encapsulated the very essence of India's history, forging a bridge that connects generations. The captivating live performance, witnessed by over 250 attendees, served to cultivate a heightened appreciation for the nuances of art. It reminded us that such musical experiences are not just moments of leisure, but platforms that bring people from all walks of life together, transcending boundaries and fostering unity in diversity.

Shubha Mudgal's enchanting recital in Kanpur is a poignant reminder of the imperative to promote classical music in our Indian cities. Beyond the sheer auditory pleasure it imparts, classical music is an enriching force that contributes to the preservation of our cultural



Aneesh Pradhan



Sudhir Nayak

heritage. It is a conduit through which the legacy of our past is carried forward, with each note echoing the wisdom of our forebears. Moreover, classical music possesses the remarkable ability to nurture a sense of unity among the diverse communities that make up our nation. By celebrating and advocating for classical music, we contribute to a cultural fabric that not only enriches lives but also reinforces the ties that bind us as a collective whole.

As stewards of this magnificent legacy, it is our collective responsibility to ensure that classical music remains an integral part of the cultural landscape in our cities. The echoes of classical melodies should reverberate through our concert

halls, public spaces and hearts, forging a lasting connection between the past, present, and future. Through these efforts, we lay the foundation for a more harmonious tomorrow, where the generations to come can continue to draw inspiration, wisdom, and solace from the timeless beauty of classical music.

In a personal note of gratitude, I am deeply thankful for the opportunity to have been part of the organising team for this memorable event. The experience not only enriched my understanding of the significance of classical music, but also reaffirmed my commitment to preserving our cultural heritage for the enrichment of future generations.



Chandni Kanodia, Geeta Malhotra, Anindita Chatterjee, Aarti Gupta and Sneha Gupta



The True Meaning of Independence

Pooja Khanna

Ehsaas Woman of Dehradun

Independence Day in India is a momentous occasion, celebrated every year on August 15. It commemorates the day in 1947 when India gained freedom from British colonial rule after years of struggle and sacrifice. This day holds immense significance in the heart of every Indian, as it symbolises the triumph of unity, resilience, and the spirit of nationalism.

However, even as India celebrates its independence, it is important to remember that the journey towards true freedom and equality continues. The country still faces challenges, and incidents like the Manipur tragedy remind us of the need to remain vigilant and committed to upholding the principles of justice for women.

The Manipur incident serves as a sombre reminder that despite the progress made since independence and thereafter, there are instances when the rights and dignity of women are compromised. The crime underscored the importance of addressing issues such as regional tensions, social inequalities, and the need for accountability in governance.

Amidst the celebrations and festivities of Independence Day, it is crucial to reflect upon such incidents and reiterate the commitment to ensuring justice and equality for all citizens. The collective spirit of the Indian people should not only be a source of celebration but also a force for

positive change, pushing the nation to address its shortcomings and build a more just and inclusive society.

As the tricolour national flag is hoisted across the country, it serves as a reminder of the sacrifices made by freedom fighters and the ongoing struggle for justice. Cultural programmes and parades should not only highlight India's diverse heritage but also emphasise the importance of unity and empathy, transcending regional and cultural differences.

Independence Day is a time for introspection, an opportunity to honour the sacrifices of the past and recommit to building a better future. The spirit of patriotism should not only be about celebrating achievements but also about recognising the responsibilities we carry as citizens to ensure that incidents like the Manipur tragedy do not recur.

While Independence Day is a celebration of India's journey towards freedom, it is also a day to acknowledge the challenges that persist and the need to address them collectively. The Manipur incident reminds us that the fight for justice, equality, and human rights is ongoing, and, as responsible citizens, we must uphold principles to truly honour the spirit of independence.

Finally, I would like to ask: "Are we truly independent?" We must all ponder this question and give it deep thought.

Fostering Warm Bonds

Prabha Khaitan Foundation has always worked towards promoting culture, the performing arts, and women's empowerment. Since its establishment in the early 1980s, it has also been committed to socio-cultural and humanitarian causes. Our brilliant team and associates have consistently worked on collaborating with like-minded individuals and organisations to execute various cultural, educational, literary, and social welfare initiatives throughout India. To that end, Sundeep Bhutoria, Managing Trustee of the Foundation, recently visited London to meet stalwarts from various fields, including longtime well-wishers and associates of the Foundation. The meetings aimed to facilitate the broadening and stellar functioning of the Foundation's projects and initiatives in the United Kingdom. Here are a few glimpses from the meetings!



Sundeep Bhutoria with Stephen Ball, chairman of the Queen's Commonwealth Trust in London



Sundeep Bhutoria with H.E. Vikram Kumar Doraiswami, the High Commissioner of India to the United Kingdom, at the India House in London



Music in the Air

Glimpses from a meet-and-greet for Sundeep Bhutoria hosted by New Era of Music, an organisation of London's non-resident Bengali community, at the Taj 51 Buckingham Gate in London



New Era of Music, a non-resident Bengali organisation, hosted a meet and greet for Sundeep Bhutoria at the Taj 51 Buckingham Gate in London
(L-R) Soumilya Datta, Sangeeta Datta, Chiranjib Chakraborty, Sundeep Bhutoria, Soumitra Mitra, Sharmistha Guha and Shreya Wadhwa



(L-R) Sanjoy Dey, Sundeep Bhutoria and Chiranjib Chakraborty



(L-R) Sundeep Bhutoria, Millie Basu Roy and Urmee Mazher



(L-R) Gouri Choudhury, Sundeep Bhutoria, Madhu Chanda Sarkar and Sanjoy Dey



(L-R) Shalini Grover, Joy Joby and Sundeep Bhutoria

India Shining in London

Heartwarming catch-ups were the order of the day with **Ehsaas** Women and creative luminaries such as Javed Akhtar, Shabana Azmi and Shekhar Gupta in the capital of the UK



Sundeep Bhutoria with Sangeeta Datta (Ehsaas Woman of London), Shekhar Kapur, Shabana Azmi, Javed Akhtar, Suhel Seth, Abhishek Khaitan and Soumilya Datta in London



Sundeep Bhutoria with Ritu Chhabria, Ehsaas Woman of London



Sundeep Bhutoria with Manisha Jain, Ehsaas Woman of Chandigarh, in London

Lubna's London

The eminent Saudi writer, Lubna Hidayat Hussain, hosted a get-together in London in honour of Sundeep Bhutoria and the philanthropist, Ronald Gunnell



Sundeep Bhutoria at a get-together hosted for him and Ronald Gunnell by Lubna Hussain in London

Making Strong Bonds Stronger

The London sojourn for Sundeep Bhutoria also involved the warmth and camaraderie of meetings with some of the Foundation's most treasured friends and associates from the fields of academia, hospitality, journalism and many more



Sundeep Bhutoria and Padmesh Gupta



Sundeep Bhutoria with Lubna Hussain in London



Sundeep Bhutoria with Mira Kaushik OBE, Shikha Varshney and Divya Mathur from Vatayan



Sundeep Bhutoria with Mehrnavaz Avari, UK area director and general manager of Taj 51 Buckingham Gate and St James' Court, London



Sundeep Bhutoria with members of the Indian journalists' association in London
(L-R) Suresh Gupta, Naresh Kaushik, Prasun Sonwalkar, Sundeep Bhutoria, Danish Khan, Ruhi Khan, Namrata Bansal and Yasser Usman

The Power of the Fourth Pillar

With **Prabha Khaitan Foundation's** respect for the field of journalism and its importance in upholding democracy, it was fitting that in-depth interactions with journalists would be a significant part of Sundeep Bhutoria's London visit



Sundeep Bhutoria with Urmee Mazher and Sanjoy Dey at the ATN Bangla studio in London

Time for Tennis!

Can any visit to London be complete without witnessing the magic at the Mecca of tennis? Wimbledon is one of the four annual Grand Slams that take the world by storm, and is the only one that is still played on natural grass. Here are glimpses from a sunny day at Wimbledon!



Sundeep Bhutoria with Suhel Seth at Wimbledon 2023



Sundeep Bhutoria at Wimbledon



Kamna Rajawat

समय भले बदल रहा है, साहित्य की मूल संवेदना नहीं बदलेगी: कृष्ण कल्पित



Krishna Kalpit

राजस्थानी भाषा को आगे बढ़ाने के लिए हमें इसमें और अधिक साहित्य लेखन और विषय का विस्तार करना होगा। दूसरी क्षेत्रीय भाषाओं और विदेशी भाषाओं का अनुवाद करना होगा। पाठकों की संख्या बढ़ाकर ही हम राजस्थानी भाषा को आगे बढ़ा सकते हैं।" यह कहना है कवि, लेखक, समीक्षक कृष्ण कल्पित का, जो आखर पोथी में बतौर अतिथि उपस्थित थे। कार्यक्रम में वरिष्ठ आईएएस राजेश्वर सिंह, अध्यक्ष, राजस्व मंडल, राजस्थान सरकार ने कल्पित की पुस्तक 'बावड़ती बेळां' का विमोचन किया। कल्पित की साहित्य यात्रा और सृजनधर्मिता पर कामना राजावत ने चर्चा की। आरंभ में राजावत ने कल्पित का परिचय देते हुए बताया कि आपका जन्म फतेहपुर शेखावाटी में हुआ। राजस्थान विश्वविद्यालय से आपने हिंदी साहित्य से प्रथम श्रेणी में एमए के बाद आपने फिल्म और टेलीविजन संस्थान पुणे से फिल्म निर्माण का अध्ययन किया। भारतीय प्रसारण सेवा में प्रवेश के बाद आकाशवाणी और दूरदर्शन के कई केंद्रों पर दायित्व निर्वहन के बाद 2017 में दूरदर्शन महानिदेशालय से अपर महानिदेशक के पद से सेवानिवृत्त हुए। आपके कविता-संग्रहों में 'भीड़ से गुजरते हुए', 'बढ़ई का बेटा', 'कोई अछूता स्वर', 'वापस जाने वाली रेलगाड़ी', 'रेखते के बीज और अन्य कविताएं' आदि शामिल हैं। इनके अलावा 'हिन्दनामा', हिन्दी का प्रथम काव्य शास्त्र- कविता रहस्य, 'छोटा परदा बड़ा परदा' और उपन्यास 'जाली किताब' भी प्रकाशित हैं। कल्पित अनुवादक भी हैं। राजस्थानी भाषा में यह आपका पहला कविता-संग्रह है।

राजावत ने कल्पित की साहित्य सृजनधर्मिता और उसकी शुरुआत के बारे में पूछा। उन्होंने बताया कि घर पर बचपन से ही चित्रकारी और साहित्य का माहौल था। मेरे पिताजी बहुत अच्छे चित्रकार थे। इसलिए चित्रकारी की तरफ रुझान था। मैंने 1970 में कक्षा 7 में पढ़ते समय ही पहली कविता अकाल के दिनों में कालाबाजारी पर व्यंग्य करते हुए लिखी थी। महाविद्यालय में पढ़ते समय गुरु विश्वनाथ विमलेश की कविता 'बीनगी उघाड़ें मूंडें आई' बहुत प्रसिद्ध हुई। आलोचना पर धूमिल का अंक पढ़ने को मिला तो मुझे कविता की क्षमता के बारे में मालूम हुआ। घर पर किशोर कल्पकांत, गजानन वर्मा, सीताराम महर्षि सहित प्रसिद्ध चित्रकारों व साहित्यकारों का आना लगा रहता था। मेरे दादाजी ने गीता का राजस्थानी में अनुवाद किया था। घर पर पत्र-पत्रिकाएं आती थीं, इसलिए उनमें छपने के लिए रचनाएं भेजने लगा और वे नियमित रूप से छपने भी लगीं। इसके बाद साहित्य सृजन में ही मन लग गया और चित्रकारी छोड़ दी।

राजावत ने पूछा कि आप राजस्थानी कवियों की संगत में रहे, फिर भी आपकी पहली पुस्तक हिंदी में आई? कल्पित का उत्तर था कि उस समय राजस्थानी के बड़े विद्वान रावत सारस्वत जी मरुवाणी पत्रिका निकालते थे। वे केंद्रीय साहित्य अकादमी के संयोजक भी थे। मेरे पिताजी के वे अभिन्न मित्र थे तथा मेरी रचनाएं मरुवाणी में छापते थे। उन्होंने कहा था कि तू राजस्थानी की किताब छपवा में तुझे पुरस्कार दिलवाऊंगा। लेकिन मैंने तय किया था कि केवल पुरस्कार के लिए अपनी पुस्तक प्रकाशित नहीं करवाऊंगा। राजावत ने कल्पित की पुस्तकों के अलग नाम पर सवाल किया तो उनका उत्तर था, "यह अनुभव पर आधारित है। जीवन में जो देखा उसी से प्रेरणा लेकर पुस्तकों के नाम रखने का प्रयास किया है।"

कल्पित ने बताया कि पुस्तक 'बागो बेदिल' में उन्होंने हिंदी साहित्य संसार में गुटबाजी की आलोचना के साथ ही हिंदी कविता को बचाने का प्रयास किया है। उन्होंने कहा कि कविता गद्य और पद्य दोनों में हो सकती है, इस बात को संस्कृत कवियों ने भी लिखा है। जब हजार साल पहले हमारे पूर्वजों ने इस बात को लिख दिया तो इस विवाद में न पड़कर साहित्य लेखन और कविता लेखन पर ही ध्यान देना चाहिए। क्योंकि कविता मन से निकलती है। हृदय से सृजित हो हृदय में उतरने वाली कविता ही सच्ची कविता कहलाती है। संस्कृत, हिंदी और राजस्थानी के कई कवियों ने ऐसा सृजन किया है जो अमर है। इसलिए हिंदी कविता को दोहा सहित अपनी अन्य परंपरागत लेखन को भूलना नहीं चाहिए। 'कविता रहस्य' से जुड़े सवाल पर उन्होंने कहा कि मैं बचपन से ही संस्कृत पढ़ता रहा हूँ। संस्कृत में काव्यशास्त्र लिखने की पुरानी परंपरा है। पहले कविता होनी चाहिए फिर शास्त्र लिखना चाहिए। आश्चर्य की बात है कि हिंदी में हमारे पास एक भी पूर्ण काव्यशास्त्र नहीं है, इसलिए मैंने यह काव्यशास्त्र लिखने का दुस्साहस किया। इसमें मैंने लिखा है कि इसे शास्त्र नहीं मानकर मेरे विचार ही मान लें। संस्कृत के कवि राजशेखर ने भी 'काव्य मीमांसा' लिखी है। इसी तरह कालिदास और भर्तृहरि को पढ़ कर देखिए कि वे क्यों श्रेष्ठ कवि हैं।

कल्पित ने कहा कि पुस्तक 'हिन्दनामा' को मैंने कविता ही बताया है लेकिन उसमें गद्य भी है और कहानी-किस्से भी। यह भारत के पिछले 5 हजार साल के इतिहास का अंश है। यह आइडिया ऑफ इंडिया है। इस विषय पर लगभग 50 प्रमुख पुस्तकें लिखी गई हैं। यह कविता के रूप में है और जल्द ही इसका दूसरा भाग भी प्रकाशित होगा। इसे पाठकों का बहुत प्यार मिला है। इसे तैयार करने में परिश्रम भी बहुत लगा। उन्होंने श्रोताओं के अनुरोध पर 'बावड़ती बेळां' से कुछ कविताएं भी पढ़ीं और अपनी अन्य पुस्तकों 'जाली किताब', 'रेखते के बीज' आदि पर भी चर्चा की। उन्होंने दावा किया कि भले ही वर्तमान समय बदल रहा है लेकिन साहित्य की मूल संवेदना नहीं बदलेगी। ग्रासरूट मीडिया फाउंडेशन के प्रमोद शर्मा ने धन्यवाद ज्ञापित किया। संचालन प्रदक्षिणा पारीक ने किया।

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



Rajeshwar Singh, IAS (Chairman, Revenue Board, Government of Rajasthan), Krishna Kalpit, Kamna Rajawat and Pramod Sharma



Souvik Guha Sarkar

Writing From The View Of Reality



Binayak Bandyopadhyay

Intended to establish a platform to celebrate homeland authors, **Aakhar** has always been a prized initiative of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. A special session of **Aakhar** was organised to host Binayak Bandyopadhyay, a contemporary realistic poet and short story writer with several accolades to his name. The session provided a glimpse into the author's life and work as he engaged in an enriching conversation with fellow author Souvik Guha Sarkar. Soumitra Mitra, the Foundation's Advisor for Bengali Language, Theatre and Film Programmes, delivered the welcome note.

Bandyopadhyay revealed that it had never been his intention to become a poet; he had spent his childhood being engaged in the dream of being a footballer till an injury knocked him out. Involved in a scuffle with a friend over a piece of writing, Bandyopadhyay was asked what is to be done with excess emotions; a statement that spurred him on to his literary career.

Bandyopadhyay's realistic writings are an outcome of his staunch principle of respecting his commitments. When he was a schoolboy, as remuneration, Bandyopadhyay's tuition teacher had asked for a commitment instead of money, saying "give me all the lies of your life." Ever since then, Bandyopadhyay has

found himself unable to utter falsehoods, elucidating that it causes him physical and mental discomfort to do so. "My writing is a byproduct of my commitments... no one can make me say anything about what I don't believe in."

His life's experiences have shaped him as an author. Bandyopadhyay fondly recalled spending a vacation with a relative who was a hermit, and accompanying him everyday to beg for alms. As a beggar he was able to speak to a multitude of people and glean a variety of experiences because people found it easier to open up to him. It's a learning experience he has carried with him for a lifetime.

Bandyopadhyay also spoke about how his short stories like *Pashmina* were inspired by actual events; and incidents like these are why, he commented, "I believe that my audience will be able to discover me in whatever I have written." His dedication to truth is reflected in all his literary works.

The visual elements of Bandyopadhyay's works are heavily influenced by his stint as a scriptwriter for TV serials. He refuses to give in to mass opinions, preferring to stand out by giving space to his own unique voice. It is also his belief that any form of art and culture that differs from reality can never be a mainstream of literature, and that every creative form should express and celebrate real life.

The invigorating session drew to a close with the audience learning that Bandyopadhyay believes a poet's creation is a resonance of the pain of a soul. The conversation ended with a vote of thanks.

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



Soumitra Mitra



Saiful Islam



Anindita Chatterjee, Binayak Bandyopadhyay, Goutam Halder, Subodh Sarkar and Souvik Guha Sarkar

Exploring Journalism and Communication

The city of Ahmedabad witnessed a thought-provoking **Aakhar** event recently, as **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** organised an insightful session with the young writer and skilled communicator, Kishan Kalyani, who spoke about journalism and communication. With the session taking place at the Ahmedabad Management Association, the renowned writer was joined by another young literary enthusiast, Vishal Pittalia, who moderated the session.

Devang Shah gave a warm and inviting speech to get the event started. Guiding the event's core conversation, Pittalia introduced Kalyani and navigated various facets of his literary journey. Pittalia delved into Kalyani's distinctive career of interviewing writers and transforming those interactions into a compelling book. Kalyani's profound insights into and anecdotes about his experiences with literary veterans added depth to the session, keeping the audience thoroughly engaged. "It is the duty of young journalists to take note of every senior person working for the mother tongue," he said, while revealing ideas for today's journalism and tomorrow's digital journalism. "Interviewing is an art of communication; this art is embedded in every one of our lives."

It is the duty of young journalists to take note of every senior person working for the mother tongue. Interviewing is an art of communication; this art is embedded in every one of our lives

Amidst the insightful discussions, Kalyani's words resonated deeply: "Today we see on TV that the interviewer has started to have a psychological influence on the person giving the interview, which is dangerous for the field of journalism. Everyone



Devang Shah



Vishal Pittalia



Kishan Kalyani

has a story, everyone who brings out that story is an interviewer. But the art of the interviewer will only be seen when it becomes a story, a story-telling."

Kalyani's journey, nurtured by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** and the Karma Foundation, is a testament to the impact of platforms that enable young voices. His approach, as he puts it, is to gather life experiences from the seasoned, contributing to personal development and society's welfare. His commitment to preserving the mother tongue and documenting history illustrates a holistic perspective on journalism.

The session culminated in an interactive Q&A round with the audience, followed by **Ehsaas** Woman of Ahmedabad, Priyanshi Patel, bestowing a memento upon Kalyani, acknowledging his contributions to the realms of literature and communication.

Aakhar Gujarat was presented by Shree Cement Limited in association with Karma Foundation



Priyanshi Patel felicitates Kishan Kalyani

‘पारा पारा’ में मैं एक स्त्री के मन को एक्सप्लोर करना चाहती थी: प्रत्यक्षा



Vedula Ramalakshmi

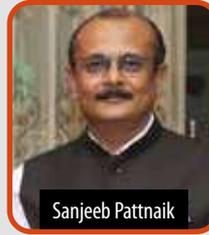


Pratyaksha

भाषा क्या है? संप्रेषण का माध्यम है। जब हम भाषा की बात करते हैं, वह नदी की तरह है। शब्द कहीं न कहीं से आते रहते हैं। हमें इसे खुले दिमाग से लेना चाहिए। भाषा का स्वरूप ही ऐसा है कि वह बदलेगी।” यह बात प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की ओर से आयोजित कलम भुबनेश्वर में अतिथि वक्ता प्रत्यक्षा ने कही। अहसास वूमेन निधि गर्ग ने आयोजकों की ओर से अतिथियों का स्वागत और धन्यवाद किया। उन्होंने कला, साहित्य, संस्कृति और महिला सशक्तीकरण के क्षेत्र में फाउंडेशन के कार्यक्रमों और गतिविधियों की विस्तार से चर्चा की। उन्होंने बताया कि हमारे कार्यक्रम भारत और दुनिया के चालीस से भी अधिक शहरों में लगातार संचालित हो रहे हैं। उन्होंने ‘कलम’ के अलावा ‘किताब’, ‘लफ़्ज’, ‘एक मुलाकात विशेष’, ‘द राइट सर्कल’, ‘सुर और साज’ तथा ‘आखर’ जैसे कार्यक्रमों की चर्चा की और अतिथि वक्ता प्रत्यक्षा का भी विस्तार से परिचय दिया।



Pratyaksha and Nidhi Garg



Sanjeeb Pattnaik

गर्ग ने बताया कि प्रत्यक्षा हिंदी और अंग्रेजी दोनों भाषाओं में लिखती हैं। आपकी अब तक कुल 11 पुस्तकें, उपन्यास और कहानी संग्रह प्रकाशित हो चुके हैं, जिनमें ‘जंगल का जादू तिल तिल’, ‘पहर दोपहर तुमरी’, ‘एक दिन मराकेश’, ‘तुम मिलो दोबारा’, ‘तुम्हारा घोड़ा किधर है’, ‘बारिशगर’, ‘ग्लोब के बाहर लड़की’, ‘नैनो बीच नबी’, ‘Rain Song’, ‘Meet me tomorrow’, ‘जाल’ और ‘पारा पारा’ शामिल हैं। कई अंथॉलॉजी और पत्र-पत्रिकाओं में आपकी कहानियां और कविताएं लगातार प्रकाशित होती रहती हैं। राष्ट्रीय-अंतरराष्ट्रीय कार्यक्रमों में सहभागिता के साथ-साथ आप कई फेलोशिप और सम्मान पा चुकी हैं और आपकी नई पुस्तक ‘मिस्ट्रेस ऑफ फूलपुर’ शीघ्र प्रकाशित होने वाली है। गर्ग ने प्रत्यक्षा से आगे की बातचीत के लिए अहसास वूमेन भुबनेश्वर डॉ वेदुला रामालक्ष्मी को आमंत्रित किया और उनका भी परिचय दिया।

रामालक्ष्मी ने पूछा कि आपके साहित्य में इतनी विविधता कैसे है? आपने दो भाषाओं के लेखन के लिए कैसे चुना? प्रत्यक्षा ने उत्तर में अपने घर के साहित्यिक परिवेश के बारे में विस्तार से बताया। उन्होंने कहा कि हम जब बच्चे थे, तभी बड़ों की चीजें भी पढ़नी शुरू कर दी थी। हमारे घर में हर तरह की पत्र-पत्रिकाएं आती थीं। पिताजी बाहर से लौटते थे तो साथ में किताबें होती थीं। उससे दिमाग में हर तरह के साहित्य का एक्सपोजर शुरू हो गया। मेरे मन में था कि कभी फुर्सत का समय आया तो लिखूंगी। इसीलिए मैंने जब लिखना शुरू किया तो अलग-अलग

विधा में लिखना शुरू किया। पहले मैंने कविता लिखना शुरू किया, फिर ब्लॉग लिखा, फिर कहानियां, फिर पत्र, साइंस फिक्शन आदि लिखा। कल्पना अंतहीन होती है। मेरा खुद से डायलॉग होता है कि इससे इतर और क्या? भाषा से जुड़े एक सवाल पर प्रत्यक्षा ने विस्तार से अपनी बात कही। उन्होंने कहा कि मैंने बचपन में जो भाषाएं सुनी थीं, जिस माहौल में रह रही थी, परिवार और कॉलेज के दिनों में जो कुछ भी शब्द सुने थे, जिन्हें मैं भूल सी गई थी, लेखन के दौरान वे सभी वापस आ गए।

प्रत्यक्षा ने विविध भाषाओं के प्रति अपने लगाव के बारे में भी विस्तार से बताया। उन्होंने बहुत सारी भाषाओं को सीखने की अपनी ललक के बारे में भी बताया। उन्होंने सभी भाषाओं के महत्व को स्वीकारते हुए यह भी कहा कि अंग्रेजी बाजार की भाषा है, अर्थव्यवस्था, साइंस और टेक्नॉलॉजी की भाषा है, कंप्यूटर की भाषा है। चूंकि हम इसका इस्तेमाल करते हैं, इसलिए वह हमारे लेखन में आ जाती है। प्रत्यक्षा ने ‘पारा पारा’ में स्त्री-विमर्श से जुड़े सवाल पर खुल कर बात की और कहा कि स्त्री को अपने अधिकार के साथ अपने कर्तव्य के बारे में भी समझना होगा। कामकाजी स्त्रियों को लेकर स्टोरियो टाइप सोच को तोड़ने का जिम्मा स्त्री का ही है। प्रत्यक्षा ने बताया कि कैसे उन्होंने नौकरी और घर दोनों ही जगहों पर अपने काम से इस बात को स्थापित किया। मेरा नारीवाद ऐसा ही है, और मैंने अपने विचारों को अपने इस उपन्यास में खुल कर लिखा है। एक सवाल के उत्तर में उन्होंने बताया कि हमारा परिवार बहुत प्रगतिशील था, फिर भी एक कंडीशनिंग तो थी ही।

‘पारा पारा’ की नायिका इरा के अपने पति से प्यार के बावजूद उसके जीवन में एक अन्य पुरुष के आगमन से उपजे आकर्षण और दुविधा से जुड़े सवाल पर प्रत्यक्षा का कहना था कि इसके बीज मेरी मां से अपनी नानी के सुने किस्से थे। भले ही मैंने इरा की कहानी लिखी, पर स्त्रियों का मन सौ साल पहले से अब तक जस का तस है। स्थितियां भले बदल गई हों। यह यात्रा एक औरत की वह यात्रा है कि अगर वह अपने मन को देखे, पूरी ईमानदारी, पारदर्शिता से देखे, नैतिकता आदि को परे उठाकर देखे तो सबमें इरा मिलेगी। प्रत्यक्षा ने इस उपन्यास के कथानक, पात्रों की सच्चाई, स्त्री-पुरुष के संबंधों, रिश्तों के बीच प्रेम से जुड़े सवाल का भी उत्तर दिया। उन्होंने बताया कि मैं एक स्त्री के मन को एक्सप्लोर करना चाहती थी। क्या कोई पात्र आपकी पकड़ से कभी छूट गया है? प्रत्यक्षा का उत्तर था कि ऐसा होता है, तब मैं उसे खुला छोड़ देती हूँ। एक सवाल के उत्तर में उन्होंने कहा कि मेरी कोशिश है कि मैं अपने समय को दर्ज करूँ। प्रत्यक्षा ने सवाल-जवाब सत्र में भी हिस्सा लिया और दर्शकों के सवाल का उत्तर दिया। अतिथि वक्ता का अभिनंदन मेफेयर के एवीपी होटल ऑपरेशंस संजीब के. पटनायक ने किया।

अहसास वूमेन के सौजन्य से आयोजित कलम भुबनेश्वर के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट। हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर मेफेयर होटल & रिसोर्ट्स का सहयोग मिला



The audience

मैंने सुकन्या को स्त्री-पुरुष से अलग एक मानव के रूप में रचा: सिनीवाली शर्मा



Nidhi Jindal Gupta



Siniwali Sharma



बेमेल शादियों की समस्या यह है कि बहुत बार वह दर्द दिखता नहीं है, क्योंकि पति-पत्नी बाहर तो उसे मेंटेन कर लेते हैं, लेकिन उनके भीतर का जो कष्ट है, उनमें कोई एक अंदर ही अंदर पक्का मर रहा होता है। बेमेल शादी की यही समस्या सुकन्या के साथ घटी थी।" यह बात प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की ओर से आयोजित 'कलम' फरीदाबाद में अतिथि वक्ता सिनीवाली शर्मा ने कही। आरंभ में आयोजकों की ओर से प्रीति शुक्ला ने अतिथियों का स्वागत और धन्यवाद किया। उन्होंने प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन गतिविधियों की जानकारी दी और 'कलम' के साथ 'किताब', 'लफ्ज', 'एक मुलाकात विशेष', 'सुर और साज', 'द राइट सर्कल' और 'आखर' जैसे आयोजनों की चर्चा की। उन्होंने अतिथि वक्ता शर्मा का परिचय कथाकार, अनुवादक, व्यंग्यकार के रूप में दिया।

शुक्ला ने बताया कि मनोविज्ञान से एमए की डिग्रीधारी शर्मा अपने परिवार में तीसरी पीढ़ी की रचनाकार हैं। आप अद्भुत कथा शैली में लिखे अपने उपन्यास 'हेति- सुकन्या: अकथ कथा' के चलते साहित्य जगत में धूम मचाए हुए हैं। यह उपन्यास अपनी भाषा, कथानक, वर्णन के साथ ही पौराणिक काल की एक सुंदर स्त्री के संघर्ष और नैतिक विजय की अकथ कथा कहता है। शर्मा के कहानी संग्रह 'हंस अकेला रोया' और 'गुलाबी नदी की मछलियाँ' की चर्चा करते हुए उन्होंने बताया कि आपने व्यंग्य भी लिखे हैं, और कुछ अनुवाद भी किया है। आगे शर्मा से संवाद के लिए उन्होंने निधि जिंदल गुप्ता को आमंत्रित किया और उनका भी परिचय अध्यात्म प्रेमी के रूप में दिया।

गुप्ता ने अपनी एक कविता के अंश-पाठ के साथ कार्यक्रम की शुरुआत की, जिसकी कुछ पंक्तियाँ हैं -

सब उतना ही अधूरा है तेरे बिना
जितनी कि तू खुद है अपने सपनों के बिना
बुझा दिया रौशन नहीं करता
यह खुद को याद दिला
आज जब मिलेगी न तू उससे शीशे में...

उन्होंने हेति को पहचान की तलाश और खुद को खोकर खुद को ढूँढ लेने की कहानी बताते हुए, शर्मा को उनके उपन्यास के लिए शुभकामनाएं दी और उनकी लेखन यात्रा के बारे में जानना चाहा। शर्मा ने कहा कि जब मैंने अपनी आंखें खोलीं तो मेरे आसपास साहित्यिक वातावरण ही था। मेरे दादा आचार्य बालक राय ने वाल्मीकि रामायण पर पहली आलोचनात्मक पुस्तक लिखी। दिनकर, कबीर, जायसी, तुलसी पर उनकी कई किताबें हैं। वे जब भी कुछ लिखते थे मुझे सुना दिया करते थे, जबकि मेरी उम्र चार-पांच साल थी। मेरे पिताजी उनसे पूछते कि इसे क्या समझ आ रहा होगा? तो उनका उत्तर होता, इसे सुनने दो, जितना भी इसके दिमाग में जा रहा जाने दो। इसी तरह वे अपनी किताबों के चार-पांच

शीर्षक मुझे सुनाते और जो मुझे सुनने में अच्छा लगता, उसे ही शीर्षक बना देते। गांव, छोटे, बड़े शहर सब जगह मेरा रहना हुआ। किसान के जीवन को मैंने बहुत करीब से देखा था। शर्मा ने बारिश से किसानों को हुए नुकसान का अपने जीवन पर पड़े प्रभाव का अपने लेखन पर असर और उन पर आधारित कहानियों के बारे में विस्तार से बताया।

शर्मा ने 'हेति- सुकन्या: अकथ कथा' से जुड़ी कहानी प्रक्रिया के बारे में विस्तार से अपनी बात बताई। इसके शीर्षक से जुड़े सवाल पर उन्होंने कहा कि हेति का अर्थ होता है 'आग की लपट'। सुकन्या की प्रतिभा अग्नि की लपट बन कर उभरती है। राज्य, पिता, राजा, प्रजा, महर्षि कोई उसके साथ नहीं है। उसके पास अगर कुछ है तो केवल उसका आत्मबल है। उस आत्मबल के सहारे वह सबसे बड़ी बनती है। शर्मा ने सुकन्या से जुड़े सवालों का भी उत्तर दिया। उन्होंने कहा कि सुकन्या ने बतौर राजकुमारी बचपन में ही आंवला के गुणों से प्रभावित होकर वैद्य की थोड़ी-बहुत शिक्षा ली थी। बाद में ऋषि से विवाह के बाद जंगल के हालातों में उसके अंदर का मानवीय गुण, वैद्य धर्म के पालन की भावना जगती और विस्तार पाती है। शर्मा ने वैवाहिक जीवन में स्त्रियों की स्थितियों, भारतीय वैवाहिक परंपरा में कुंडली मिलान की स्थिति आदि से जुड़े सवाल का भी उत्तर दिया और कहा कि अब हालात बदल रहे हैं।

पौराणिक आख्यान 'महाभारत' की सुकन्या और आपकी सुकन्या में क्या अंतर है? शर्मा का उत्तर था कि पूर्व के आख्यान में सुकन्या की कोई आवाज नहीं है, जबकि मेरी सुकन्या बोलती भी है, हर किसी से सवाल भी करती है, और जहां उससे सवाल होता है, उसका उत्तर भी देती है। शर्मा ने पौराणिक कथानकों पर आधारित लेखन को चुनौतीपूर्ण बताया और सुकन्या की पूरी कहानी बताई। यह रूप पर आसक्ति से इतर मानमर्दन की बात है। शर्मा ने एक स्त्री के लिए अपनी दिशा निर्धारित करना कितना आवश्यक है? का उत्तर भी सुकन्या की कहानी से ही दिया। उन्होंने सुकन्या, उसकी सहेली उर्मा, आयुर्वेद, लेखकीय कल्पना, उसके पात्र, पात्रों से अपने जुड़ाव, उपन्यास की भाषा, उससे जुड़े श्रम आदि के बारे में खुलकर अपनी बात कही। उन्होंने सवाल-जवाब सत्र में श्रोताओं, दर्शकों की जिज्ञासा का भी समाधान किया। उन्होंने कहा कि मेरा यह मानना है कि सकारात्मकता आपको कहीं न कहीं ले जाती है। आज हमारी स्त्रियां ऐसी सोच के चलते ही कहीं पहुंची हैं। मैंने सुकन्या को स्त्री-पुरुष से अलग एक मानव के रूप में रचा है। शर्मा के पति ने भी कुछ सवालों के उत्तर दिए। श्वेता अग्रवाल और प्रिया वशिष्ठ ने अतिथि वक्ता और संवादकर्ता का अभिनंदन किया।

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



Preeti Shukla



Shweta Aggarwal



Karuna Goenka, Vandana Singh, Neelima Dalmia Adhar, Anindita Chatterjee and Archana Dalmia with Atul Tiwari, Pavan K. Varma, Ashutosh Bharadwaj and Tripurari Sharan

यह घरों के टूटने, दरकने और विस्थापन की कहानी: किताब में 'माधोपुर का घर' का लोकार्पण



शब्दों के सफर में खोए रहते हैं हम

इस किताब के साथ खुला है एक नया सफर... गुलजार की इन पंक्तियों के साथ अर्चना डालमिया ने प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन द्वारा आयोजित 'किताब' कार्यक्रम में अतिथियों का स्वागत किया। यह आयोजन राजधानी दिल्ली में इंडिया इंटरनेशनल एनेक्सी में पूर्व नौकरशाह, कलासेवी, बिहार के मुख्य सचिव पद से सेवानिवृत्त और वर्तमान में राज्य सूचना आयुक्त त्रिपुरारी शरण के पहले उपन्यास 'माधोपुर का घर' के लोकार्पण और चर्चा पर केंद्रित था। इस अवसर पर डालमिया ने कला, साहित्य, संस्कृति और नारी सशक्तीकरण के क्षेत्र में भारत और दुनिया भर के 40 से भी अधिक शहरों में चल रही फाउंडेशन की गतिविधियों की चर्चा की। उन्होंने बताया कि फाउंडेशन 'किताब' के अलावा 'लफ्ज', 'एक मुलाकात विशेष', 'सुर और साज', 'द राइट सर्कल' और 'आखर' जैसे आयोजन भी करता है, जिनमें हम शब्दों का उत्सव मनाते हैं।

डालमिया ने आरंभिक परिचय के बाद लोकार्पित हो रही पुस्तक के लेखक शरण, विशेष अतिथि पवन के वर्मा, अतुल तिवारी और आशुतोष भारद्वाज; और उनके अभिन्नंदन के लिए अहसास वूमेन की सहयोगियों को मंच पर आमंत्रित किया। तत्पश्चात विशिष्ट अतिथियों, डालमिया, अहसास वूमेन करुणा गोयनका, नीलिमा डालमिया अधर, फाउंडेशन की कार्यकारी न्यासी अनिदिता चर्जी और संस्कृति मंत्रालय की सीनियर रिसर्च फेलो वंदना सिंह द्वारा 'माधोपुर का घर' का लोकार्पण हुआ। इस अवसर पर पूर्व राजनयिक, राजनेता और लेखक पवन के वर्मा ने कहा कि वे पूना फिल्म इंस्टीट्यूट के दिनों से शरण को जानते हैं, और चाहते हैं कि वे पूर्णकालिक लेखक और फिल्मकार बन जाएं। वर्मा ने 'ये गलियां मेरा बचपन यहां से गुजरा है, कहानियां जो सुनी थीं यहां पे सोती हैं' के साथ लोकार्पित पुस्तक के बारे में अपने विचार रखे। उन्होंने कहा कि इस पुस्तक में कुत्ते की मार्फत

विस्थापित होने का दर्द है। वर्मा ने कहा कि बिहार को मैं दो स्तर पर पाता हूं। एक बिहार बिल्कुल आधुनिक है, और एक बिहार सदियों पीछे छूटा हुआ है। इस बदलते बिहार का सबसे अधिक प्रभाव परिवार पर पड़ा है। लोग परिवार छोड़कर पलायन कर चुके हैं।

डालमिया के अनुरोध पर लेखक-अभिनेता, विधु विनोद चोपड़ा की फिल्म 'मिशन कश्मीर' से चर्चित और राष्ट्रीय एकता पर नरगिस दत्त अवार्ड फॉर द बेस्ट फीचर फिल्म 'नेताजी सुभाष चंद्र बोस: फॉरगॉटन हीरो' से जुड़े अतुल तिवारी ने अस्वीकरण के साथ अपनी बात शुरू की। उन्होंने कहा कि मैं कोई विशेषज्ञ या आलोचक नहीं हूं, फिल्मी दुनिया का आदमी हूं, एक पाठक और हिंदुस्तानी हूं, इसलिए हर विषय पर मेरी अपनी एक ओपिनियन है। उन्होंने कहा कि मैं उस शरण का फैन हूं, जो एक जमाने में दो बार भारतीय फिल्म एवं टेलीविजन संस्थान पुणे के निदेशक थे। एक कला संस्थान के निदेशक के रूप में इन्होंने जिस खुलेपन का, खुले मन का और खुले दिमाग का परिचय दिया था, वह बहुत लोकतांत्रिक कदम था।

डालमिया ने द्विभाषी पत्रकार, लेखक, आलोचक आशुतोष भारद्वाज, जो लगातार 4 वर्षों तक रामनाथ गोयनका पुरस्कार से सम्मानित एकलौती शख्सियत हैं, से भी कुछ शब्द कहने का अनुरोध किया। भारद्वाज ने आलोचकों को लेकर दो तरह के विचारों का उल्लेख करते हुए कहा कि उपन्यास पश्चिम की विधा है, और इसे गढ़ने में आलोचकों का बहुत बड़ा योगदान रहा है। कई उद्धरणों के साथ उन्होंने कहा कि आलोचना दरअसल सभ्यता की आलोचना है, दुर्भाग्य से हम भक्त लोग हो गए हैं और अपने समय की आलोचना नहीं कर रहे हैं। लोकार्पित पुस्तक पर चर्चा करते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि यह किताब अपने आपको मनुष्येत्तर प्राणी की दृष्टि से देखती है। जॉर्ज ऑरवेल की 'एनिमल फार्म', फ्रांज काफ़्का की लघु कथा 'इनवेस्टिगेशंस ऑफ़ ए डॉग'

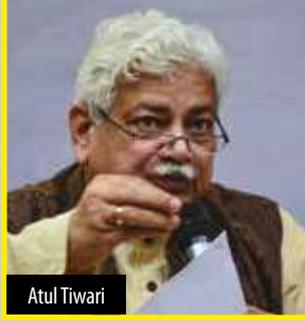


Tripurari Sharan



Pavan K. Varma

और वर्जीनिया वुल्फ के उपन्यास 'क्लश' का उल्लेख करते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि यहां गद्य में मुलायमियत आ जाती है, गद्य बदल जाता है, भाषा बदल जाती है, पर 'माधोपुर का घर' उपन्यास में लोरा या दादी की भाषा बदलती नहीं है। मैं इस बात का उत्तर उपन्यासकार से जानना चाहूंगा।



Atul Tiwari



Ashutosh Bharadwaj

के आगे बढ़ने, जीतने और फिर भी हार जाने की कहानी है। यह एक खानदान के उत्थान और पतन की कहानी तो है ही। भारद्वाज ने कहा कि आख्यान की यह शक्ति है कि आप एक झलक दिखाते हैं, उसके बाद उसका विकास करते हैं। इस कृति की एक बड़ी बात यह है कि यह एक बड़े कालखंड को समेटने का सपना देखता है। इस तरह से यह बहुत महत्वाकांक्षी उपन्यास है। इसमें बहुत सूक्ष्म समाजशास्त्रीय अध्ययन भी है कि किस परिवार में कैसा कुत्ता होगा।

लेखक और अतिथियों की प्रारंभिक टिप्पणियों के बाद सूत्रधार की भूमिका में नीलिमा डालमिया अधर ने संवाद शुरू किया। शरण ने कहा कि अतिथियों की आरंभिक टिप्पणियों में कुछ महत्वपूर्ण मुद्दे उठे हैं। जैसे भारद्वाज ने कहा कि लोरा के माध्यम से आख्यान रखने की क्या वजह थी? मेरा मत है कि इस किताब को अगर आप सूक्ष्मता से देखेंगे, तो पाएंगे कि यह महज कोई कहानी भर नहीं है। जब आप कहानी के धरातल से उठकर किसी समाज पर, व्यक्ति पर टिप्पणी करने जाते हैं, तो यह प्रश्न आपको बहुत गहराई से झकझोरता है। ऐसे में एक जीव, जो मूक गवाह रहता है, न सिर्फ किसी परिवार बल्कि आसपास घटने वाली घटनाओं का, उसके माध्यम से अगर आप अपनी बात कहें, तो मेरी समझ से ज्यादा गंभीरता से, ज्यादा निष्पक्षता से और ज्यादा प्रभावी ढंग से अपनी बात रख सकते हैं।

शरण ने कहा कि श्वान के माध्यम से अपनी बात कहने का विचार मेरे दिमाग में छत्र जीवन से ही था। अमेरिकी लेखक जैक लंडन के लघु उपन्यास 'द कॉल ऑफ द वाइल्ड' का जिक्र करते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि इसका केंद्रीय पात्र बक नामक कुत्ता है, वह नरेटर नहीं है, लेकिन यह मनुष्य के जीवट की अनूठी कहानी है। जब आप 'माधोपुर का घर' को पढ़ेंगे तो पाएंगे कि यह एक प्रेम कथा है। यह प्रेम क्या है, किसके लिए है, इस पर मैं टिप्पणी नहीं करूंगा। लोरा के इसमें होने के कारण मैं कभी अपनी जमीन से हटा नहीं। इसे लिखने के दौरान गंतय बहुत स्पष्ट था। हम सब जहां पहुंचे हैं, यह यात्रा कहां से गुजरी है, यह बताना मेरा उद्देश्य है।

तिवारी ने कहा कि शरण के उपन्यास की कहानी को दो पंक्तियों में नहीं सुनाया जा सकता। इसकी खूबसूरती उस पुष्प गुच्छ में है, न कि उस माला में जिसमें किसी धागे से फूलों को क्रम से गुंथा गया हो। शरण ने कहा कि उद्देश्य मेरे सामने बहुत स्पष्ट था। इतिहास, समाज-शास्त्र और साहित्य इन तीनों की दुनिया से मेरी वाकफियत है। इसलिए मेरी कोशिश थी कि जब भी मैं कुछ कहूँ तो वह किसी संदर्भ को उजागर करे। तिवारी ने कहा कि इस उपन्यास में विस्थापन न केवल स्थान से है, बल्कि परिवार से है। सभी चरित्र बहुत सक्षम हैं, बड़ी जगहों पर हैं। पर सभी लूजर्स हैं। माधोपुर के घर का दरकना बड़ी बात है। शरण ने कहा कि इसकी कहानी के माध्यम से घर की अवधारणा पर प्रकाश डालने की मैंने कोशिश की है। घर क्या होता है? घर गारे और सीमेंट से बना केवल भौतिक ढांचा होता है, या कुछ और होता है। वह बनता कैसे है और बिखरता कैसे है? टूटने की बात मैं नहीं कर रहा। दो संततियों के समय-काल में और एक परिवार के समय-काल में घर की अवधारणा पर मैंने मंथन करने की कोशिश की है।

तिवारी ने 'माधोपुर का घर' उपन्यास की अवधारणा का उल्लेख करते हुए अकर्म और पुरम शब्दों का प्रयोग किया और कहा कि 'माधोपुर का घर' की कहानी केवल किसी घर की, परिवार की, डॉक्टर साहब की संततियों की कहानी, केवल अकर्म की नहीं बल्कि पूरे एक पुरम की कहानी है। एक युग, राजनीति, नगर, प्रदेश और देश की कहानी है। एक उपनिवेशवादी भारत और सामंतवादी भारत के आजाद होने और नई व्यवस्थाओं से समझौते की कहानी है। यह लोगों

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एक सीमित जिंदगी थी, जिसके नुकसान थे, बहुत फायदे भी थे। अब आदमी सोचता है कि उस तरह के घर में हम कैसे वापस जा सकते हैं। घर की परिभाषा अब बदल गई है। अब जो आधुनिकता है, कभी-कभी उसकी खोज में हम अपने अस्तित्व को खो देते हैं।”

भारद्वाज ने कहा कि हमारे यहां पंचतंत्र सहित मनुष्येत्तर प्राणियों के माध्यम से कथा कहने की एक दीर्घ परंपरा है। उन्होंने शरण से जानना चाहा कि क्या आपमें परंपरा के कुछ सूत्र थे? क्या आपने ऐसी अन्य कहानियां पढ़ी थीं, जिनमें कुत्ते का मानवीकरण किया गया हो? शरण ने कहा कि जैक लंडन के उपन्यास ने मुझे प्रभावित जरूर किया है। लेकिन इस उपन्यास को लिखने के दौरान मैं यह स्पष्ट था कि किसी के प्रभाव को मैं अपने दिमाग में नहीं आने दूंगा। शरण ने बताया कि फिल्म इंस्टीट्यूट में स्क्रीन राइटिंग का कोर्स मैंने शुरू कराया था। कभी-कभी मैं वहां स्टूडेंट के रूप में स्टोरी टेलिंग, स्टोरी राइटिंग, स्क्रीन प्ले के कुछ अवयव को सीखने की कोशिश भी की थी। अगर आप ऐसी रचना चाहते हैं, जो लोगों को बांध सके, उसके लिए स्क्रीन प्ले राइटिंग की तकनीकें बहुत महत्वपूर्ण हैं। शरण ने रॉबर्ट मैक्की की पुस्तक 'स्टोरी' का भी उल्लेख किया। उन्होंने कहा कि अचेतन में बहुत सारी बातें तो रहती ही हैं।

वर्मा ने छत्र जीवन में फिल्म समीक्षक होने, स्क्रीन प्ले लिखने, पूना फिल्म इंस्टीट्यूट में पढ़ने की इच्छा के बारे में बताया और कहा कि यह घर-घर की कहानी है। मैं गाजीपुर का हूँ। तब छुट्टियों में परिवार एक साथ जुटता था। तब रिश्ते भी बहुत गूढ़ होते थे। तरक्की तो हुई पर उसका घाटा भी हुआ। अब अगर मैं गाजीपुर जाऊँ, तो जाने की इच्छा नहीं होती, क्योंकि जो हवेली थी, जमीन थी, वह या तो बिक गई है, या बंट गई। पिताजी के चार भाई थे, सबने अच्छा किया। मेरे पिताजी उस जमाने में जब आईसीएस हुए तो उन्हें सीपी एंड बरार कैडर मिला, जो आज का मध्य प्रदेश और महाराष्ट्र है। तब लोगों ने उनसे कहा था कि तुम कहां, कितना दूर जा रहे हो भाई। एक सीमित जिंदगी थी, जिसके नुकसान थे, बहुत फायदे भी थे। अब आदमी सोचता है कि उस तरह के घर में हम कैसे वापस जा सकते हैं। घर की परिभाषा अब बदल गई है। अब जो आधुनिकता है, कभी-कभी उसकी खोज में हम अपने अस्तित्व को खो देते हैं। वर्मा ने सुनाया, 'पलट रहे हैं गरीबुल वतन, पलटना था। वो: कूचा रूकश-ए-जन्नत हो, घर है घर, फिर भी। हजार बार जमाना इधर से गुजरा, नई नई है मगर कुछ तेरी रहगुजर फिर भी।'

तिवारी ने 'माधोपुर का घर' के कथानक में तरह-तरह के घरों का उल्लेख करते हुए कहा कि इन घरों का क्षय और क्षरण अनायास नहीं होता बल्कि शनैः शनैः होता है। विशनपुर का घर, रमनपुर की कोठी, सबका क्षरण धीरे-धीरे होता है। जितनी भी मृत्यु होती है वह भी इसी तरह होती है। इसमें कुछ भी ड्रामेटिक नहीं है, यह भी इस उपन्यास का एक सशक्त पक्ष है। भारद्वाज ने भी उपन्यास को पढ़ते समय मृत्यु के आदी होते जाने के विचार पर अपनी बात कही। तिवारी ने मनुष्येत्तर माध्यम से कहानी कहने की पाश्चात्य और भारतीय परंपरा पर विस्तार से अपनी बात कही। अतिथियों ने सवाल-जवाब सत्र में भी हिस्सा लिया।

अहसास वूमन एनसीआर के सौजन्य से आयोजित
किताब दिल्ली के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट



Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, Sundeep Bhutoria, Sitaram Yechuri and Miguel Angel Ramirez Ramos look at Satya Sen's photographs of Fidel Castro on display

Looking Back Through Satya Sen's Lens

Keeping the work of many talented artists from the city alive is mandatory to ensure that the culture and knowledge of Kolkata always remain at their peak. This is why **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, in collaboration with Nandan and the Cuban Embassy in India, hosted a photography exhibition titled *Fidel in Kolkata*, which serves as a tribute to Cuban President Fidel Castro's visits to Calcutta in 1973 and 1976. The exhibition featured nearly 30 blow-up black-and-white photographs of Castro, taken by Satya

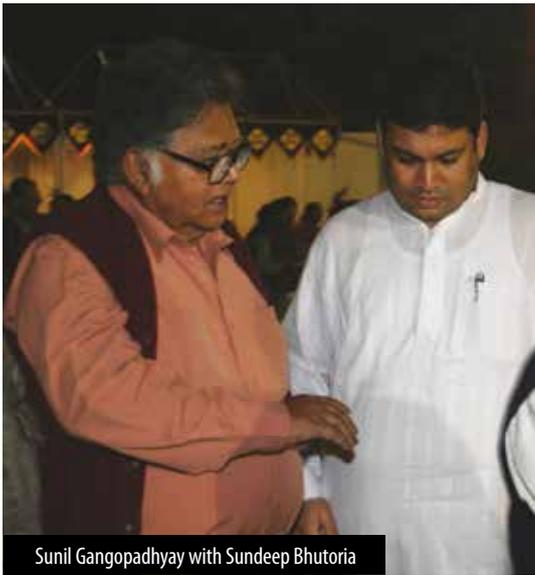
Sen. The exhibition was inaugurated on December 26, 2008, by the then chief minister of West Bengal, Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee.

The showcased photographs capture President Castro's arrival at the Calcutta airport, his reception in the city, and meetings with prominent Left leaders, representatives from women's organisations, Soviet consulate representatives and government officials. During his arrival speech at the airport, President Castro lauded Calcutta's tradition of anti-imperialist struggle against British colonial rule, which contributed to India's victorious fight for independence.

These evocative images of Fidel Castro in Calcutta were captured by the renowned photojournalist, the late Satya Sen, who passed away in 1982. Known for his dedication to documenting people's struggles for equality, Satya Sen was a photographer with a mission. He bravely used his camera as a tool to further the political causes he believed in, even working for the communist party's daily newspaper *Swadhinata*. His enduring commitment led him to capture poignant moments, such as the faces of martyrs during the historic Food Movement of 1959, where he secretly photographed them inside a city morgue.



T.C. Daga, Miguel Angel Ramirez Ramos, Mrinal Sen, Bharati Ray, Biman Bose, Sitaram Yechuri, Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee and Sundeep Bhutoria inaugurate the exhibition



Sunil Gangopadhyay with Sundeep Bhutoria



Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya

The then police commissioner of Kolkata,
Gautam Mohan Chakraborty

Sen's contributions extended beyond photography. He was an early convert to the communist movement, engaged in writing poetry and producing plays by Anton Chekov and Clifford Odets, as well as dramatising stories by Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay and Samaresh Basu. He maintained a close association with the cultural figures of his era, including Ritwik Ghatak. Sen's involvement with the progressive journal *Parichay* and the IPTA movement further underscored his dedication to his beliefs.

Unfortunately, many of Satya Sen's negatives from that period were lost owing to atmospheric humidity, highlighting the challenges of preservation. However, even with limited facilities, efforts were made to restore and showcase a small but impactful selection of his photographs. These images not only paid homage to Fidel Castro's visits but also reflected the enduring spirit of those who

participated in the struggles for justice and equality. The exhibition marked the 35th anniversary of Castro's visit, and the 50th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution. On for five days at Nandan, the exhibition was attended by several notable guests, including the then chief minister, Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, Biman Bose, Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya, Prakash Karat and the then Cuban ambassador to India, Miguel Angel Ramirez Ramos. Among the attendees were also figures such as the late Mrinal Sen, Goutam Ghose, the late Sunil Gangopadhyay, Bharati Ray, Mohammed Salim, Gautam Mohan Chakraborty (the then police commissioner), Agnimitra Paul and the late Wasim Kapoor. These images, made accessible through the efforts of photographer Aranya Sen (the son of Satya Sen), provided a glimpse into a pivotal moment in history, capturing not only Fidel Castro's presence but also the shared spirit of resilience and determination.



Mohammed Salim

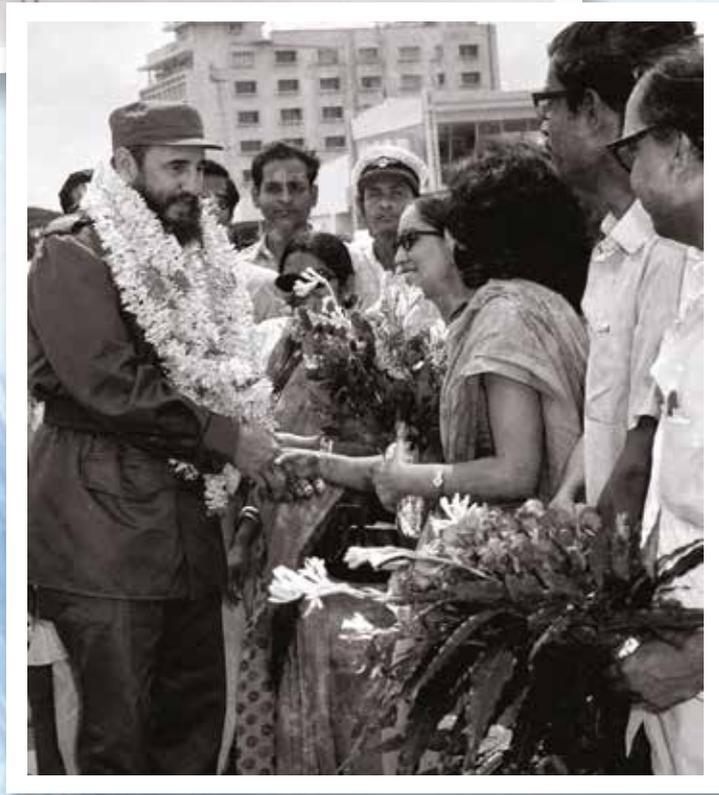


Aranya Sen, son of the late Satya Sen, with Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee

Glimpses of a Leader



From Cuba to Calcutta





Ajay Brahmattaj

सच्ची खबर गॉसिप से ज्यादा रोचक होती है: अजय ब्रह्मात्मज



Preeti Mehta

मेरी राइटिंग में एक पॉलिटिक्स है... यह पॉलिटिक्स प्रगतिशील मूल्य, उन्नत विचार, समदर्शी विचार, जो सभी के हित में है, वही मेरे लेखन, विचार और मेरे फिल्मी पाठ में भी हैं।" यह बात फिल्म समीक्षक, पत्रकार अजय ब्रह्मात्मज ने प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की ओर से आयोजित कलम जयपुर में बतौर अतिथि वक्ता कही। आयोजकों की ओर राजस्थान और मध्य भारत की मानद समन्वयक अहसास वूमन अपरा कुच्छल ने स्वागत और धन्यवाद वक्तव्य दिया। उन्होंने हिंदी भाषा को प्रोत्साहित करने की फाउंडेशन की पहल, 'कलम' की चर्चा की और ब्रह्मात्मज का परिचय दिया। आगे का संवाद अहसास वूमन जोधपुर प्रीति मेहता ने किया।

मेहता ने पूछा कि आपका बचपन कहां बीता और आप लेखक कैसे बने? ब्रह्मात्मज ने जयपुर को प्रिय शहर बताते हुए अपनी बात शुरू की। उन्होंने कहा कि मेरा बचपन भी आम मध्यमवर्गीय परिवारों के बच्चों जैसा ही था। पिता ट्रांसफरबल जॉब में थे, तो जहां उनका ट्रांसफर होता रहा। मेरा स्वभाव सुशील बच्चों वाला नहीं था। बिहार के चम्पारण, सारण और सुपौल में रहा। दरभंगा से स्नातक किया। लिखने का शौक बचपन से था। मेरे पिता थोड़ा साहित्यिक रुचि के थे। शिक्षा विभाग में थे। तीन पत्रिकाएं तब घर में आती थीं, दिनमान, सारिका और धर्मयुग। थोड़ा बड़ा हुआ, तो माधुरी आने लगी। 1972 में दिनमान के मत-सम्मत स्तंभ में मेरी दो पंक्तियां छपी थीं। ग्रेजुएशन के दिनों में स्थितियां बनीं। मेरे जीवन में दो अमिताभ बच्चन हैं। एक को पूरी दुनिया जानती है और दूसरे मेरे मित्र हैं, हिंदी के कवि हैं। ग्रेजुएशन के दिनों में अमिताभ और मेरे शिक्षक रामधारी सिंह दिवाकर मेरे गुरु, मोहनदास और अजय वर्मा की संगत ने सही रास्ते पर ला दिया, मुझे नाथ दिया। इसके बाद पढ़ाई में अच्छा हुआ, तो पूरा बिहार ही मेरे लिए बहुत छोटा हो गया। इसके बाद मैं दिल्ली आ गया।

आपके लेखन पर किसी का प्रभाव? के उत्तर में ब्रह्मात्मज ने कहा, "आज मैं जहां हूँ, जिस विधा में काम कर रहा हूँ, वहां मेरे लिए आदर्श जैसी कोई चीज नहीं थी। अपने स्तर से प्रयास करके मैंने एक टैपलेट गढ़ा है, जिस पर चल कर कई लोग अच्छा काम कर रहे हैं।" उन्होंने कहा मुझ पर दूसरों के लेखन से ज्यादा राजनीतिक विचारों का असर रहा है। इसीलिए जो मैं लिखता हूँ उसका जहां असर होना है, होता है। ब्रह्मात्मज ने यह माना कि फिल्मी लेखन के प्राथमिक विद्यालय का मैं टीचर हूँ। उन्होंने बताया कि जेएनयू में मैं हिंदी की पढ़ाई कर रहा था। मुझे वजीफा मिलता था, पर कम पड़ जाता था। इसके लिए मैं अनुवाद का काम कर रहा था। बाद में मेरे जीवन में एक ट्विस्ट आया, उससे यह तय हो गया कि मैं टीचर नहीं बन पाऊंगा। उसी में मेरे किसी दोस्त ने कहा कि चीन में नौकरी है, जाओगे। गया

था मैं एक साल के लिए पर मैं वहां रह गया छः साल के लिए। मैंने आज तक कोई जिम्मेदारी नहीं महसूस की। लौट कर जब मैं आया तो खुद को हाउस हसबैंड कहता था।

ब्रह्मात्मज ने पेइचिंग से लौटने के बाद के अपने अनुभवों को विस्तार से साझा किया और कहा कि वामपंथ से उनके लगाव चलते जब राजनीतिक लेख छपने बंद हो गए तब उन्होंने बहुविध विषयों पर लिखा। पर धीरे-धीरे फिल्मों पर ही लिखने लगा। इरफान से मेरी पहचान 91 की है। वे आज वाले इरफान नहीं थे। उस जमाने में मेरे बहनोई ईशान त्रिवेदी और इरफान ने जब मुझसे कहा कि आप फिल्मों पर ही लिखिए, तो मैंने कहा था कि तब तो सुनील शेट्टी पर लिखना पड़ेगा। इरफान का उत्तर था कि फिल्म-इंडस्ट्री में भी पढ़े-लिखे लोग हैं। उन्होंने

बासु भट्टाचार्य से मेरी मुलाकात कराई। 99 में चालीस की उम्र में मैंने पहली बार जॉब किया। ब्रह्मात्मज ने फिल्म जर्नलिज्म के बारे में अपना अनुभव साझा किया। उस जमाने में हिंदी अखबारों, पत्रकारों को कोई नहीं पूछता था। एक समय ऐसा भी था कि पांच-छः घंटे वैनिटी वैन के पास इंतजार करने के बाद भी इंटरव्यू नहीं मिला, और एक समय ऐसा भी आया कि अगर पहुंचा नहीं तो प्रेस कांफ्रेंस शुरू नहीं हुई।

ब्रह्मात्मज ने कहा कि दैनिक जागरण और दैनिक भास्कर के लिए लिखने के चलते मैंने ऐसी भाषा इजाद की, जो रिवशे वाले से लेकर प्रोफेसर तक की समझ में आ जाए। सच्ची खबर

गॉसिप से ज्यादा रोचक होती है। ब्रह्मात्मज ने बताया कि मेरे पास लगभग चार हजार से अधिक लेख लिखे। उन्होंने 'इरफान...और कुछ पत्रे कोरे रह गए' से जुड़ी कई बातें बताईं। उन्होंने कहा कि इसकी कोई योजना नहीं थी। इसमें 36 लोगों के संस्मरण और मेरे द्वारा लिए गए कई साक्षात्कार हैं। मैंने जीवनी इसलिए नहीं लिखी क्योंकि उसे सुतापा शायद लिखेंगी। उन्होंने बताया कि इरफान की साहित्य में बहुत रुचि थी। उनकी कथाकार उदय प्रकाश से गहरी दोस्ती थी। वे उनकी कहानी तिरिछ पर फिल्म बनाना चाहते थे। ब्रह्मात्मज ने एयरपोर्ट लुक को लेकर श्रीदेवी के साक्षात्कार से जुड़ी बात भी बताई। उन्होंने कहा कि जो लोग गॉसिप लिखते हैं उनकी निजी जिंदगी तबाह है। पाठकों को जागरूक होना होगा।

ब्रह्मात्मज ने सवाल-जवाब सत्र में वामपंथ, चीन, बॉलीवुड, नेपोटिज्म, इरफान, सुशांत सिंह राजपूत आदि पर श्रोताओं की जिज्ञासा का उत्तर दिया। लेखक रामकुमार सिंह ने भी ब्रह्मात्मज के मानवीय गुणों की तारीफ की। आयोजकों की ओर से डॉ फैंजा अब्बासी ने स्मृति चिह्न दिया।

अहसास वूमन के सौजन्य से आयोजित कलम जयपुर के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट। हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर आईटीसी राजपूताना और वी केयर का सहयोग मिला



Apra Kuchhal



Faiza Abbasi felicitates Ajay Brahmattaj



Discover Thy Calling

For your purpose is only yours
Nothing ever will break your doors,
Enjoy the ride before it's late
For fading is in everyone's fate.

The legacies you can take along
Are only if you find where you belong,
To manifest the noble objective
Your potential should be effective.

In death when you see yourself falling
At that point, if you've found your calling,
You will be content and meaningful
You'll be proud, for your life is not pitiful.

There is a man who had a flight
He was the one who didn't sleep at night,
The sights that matter are unsung
We should do what we say with tongue.

What makes a person prosperous?
What makes a soul tremendous?
Is the inner calling they discover
Indeed they are not used to shudder.

If something fills your nerves with bliss
This is the proof you're about to kiss,
Your very own personal calling
This thing will never be appalling.

Where art thou? Are you below my toes?
So why don't you fly? Or above my nose?
Oh my inner calling, when will I find thee?
Oh unachieved, listen to my plea.

The 12-year-old Adeeba Riyaz is the youngest author from Jammu and Kashmir to publish a book. When she published her first book, Zeal of Pen, in September 2021, she was just 11, and in Class VII. Adeeba's achievement has been recognised and awarded by the India Book of Records. She has also won several awards at the district and state levels



Rooted to the Soil



The first hotel of its kind, ITC Grand Chola is rooted to the soil, and takes inspiration from the Chola dynasty. A glowing tribute to the splendour of Chola architecture, the hotel defines the destination with its uniquely carved and textured exteriors that reflect the influence of Chola temple design, particularly its finest examples: the Brihadeeswara, the Gangaikondacholapuram and the Airavateswara temples.

Indescribably grand and conceived to recreate the awe-inspiring interiors of the palatial Chola temples and royal durbars, the beauty of the lobby, Sangam, is enhanced by the flamboyant sweep of the intricately carved balustrade, the engraved steps to the ornate landing, the friezes and the symmetrically arranged pillars finished in elegant white stucco, reminiscent of the temples of South India. The wheel design on the Grand Staircase symbolizes the Wheel of Life and is the most photographed venue in the city of Chennai! The ceiling is dressed in a spectacular expanse of shimmering crystal chandeliers in the shape of domes interspersed with deeply carved motifs of flowers, to enhance the feeling of being in a timeless space.



Stretching across eight acres, the hotel has 600 rooms and 10 dining venues, as a tribute to the remarkable vision of a memorable era and to the state of Tamil Nadu. For over a decade, ITC Hotels has pursued the path of responsible luxury where every action has been in harmony with the environment and society. Embedded in their services, products and systems is a unique set of features which allows them to demonstrate their ethos. All the practices implemented by ITC Grand Chola are embedded in this core philosophy and are visible and measurable; this alignment of philosophy and practice has manifested in the coveted LEED Platinum and LEED Zero Carbon rating for the hotel. These recognitions underscore ITC Grand Chola's commitment to sustainability with energy-efficient green buildings, utilisation of renewable energy, conservation and recycling of water and concrete measures to preserve the ecosystem. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** is proud to hosts its Chennai events at ITC Grand Chola, and is especially grateful to Zubin Songadwala (Area Manager South, ITC Hotels, and General Manager, ITC Grand Chola) and Sanjukthaa Roy (Head of PR for ITC Hotels, South), both of whom have been instrumental in setting up the Foundation's events in Chennai.



A view of the porte-cochere at dusk



The splendid Sangam lobby at the ITC Grand Chola



The Madras Pavilion at the ITC Grand Chola



Zubin Songadwala

From Blogger to an Eminent Author



Vidya Singh

Kiran Manral

Each decision you take, opens up another life and another pathway.” This simply means that while we live on this planet, there are different versions of us, different lives that run simultaneously. According to the eminent author Kiran Manral, we live on the shore looking at the ships of our ghost lives passing us by, not knowing where they might take us. Our journey may take us anywhere; the path may also be a surprise. Manral’s books are generally horror-based, dark and have elements of psychological thrillers. But in the book, *All Those Who Wander*, she has experimented with science fiction for the first time – and that experiment has borne significant results. While sci-fi is a genre that requires a lot of accuracy, Manral’s latest book is “soft, gentle and nice”. She explores the possibilities of what could have been and what could have happened.

Manral was in conversation with Vidya Gajapathi Raju Singh, **Ehsaas** Woman of Chennai, at another session of **The Write Circle** organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** at WelcomeHotel by ITC, Coimbatore. Poonam Bafna, **Ehsaas** Woman of Coimbatore, welcomed the gathering, with the evening being full of engaging conversation and cheerful banter.

Life itself has a habit of placing us at various vital crossroads, where we make particular decisions of our own free will. This isn’t a destiny but a choice. Manral has been efficient in adopting the concept of past, present and future themes. Like many authors,

she leaves much to the reader’s imagination. The concept of time, as it has been addressed, was always a circular parameter, but the Western world has identified it as linear. It does not exist in a flat plain – you need a multi-dimensional plain, as it is multifaceted. What would happen if they all collided at the same time?

According to a certain theory, each decision you take opens up “another life and another pathway”. This implies that as long as we inhabit the planet, and we will be doing so for the foreseeable future, there will be different versions of us. The author stressed upon the point that it is important to live life without any regrets, because regrets cause excess emotional baggage, which doesn’t have a place in anyone’s life.

Not all mothers are meant to be mothers... I wanted to highlight that not all mothers are making *samosas* and keeping their child happy, and it’s not that it is always nice to come home to a mother who is waiting for you at home. So, I take the mothers off the pedestal. Emotional abuse is really what needs to be spoken about in today’s time

Singh blazed through *All Those Who Wander*, a work that she claims needs a fair bit of concentration. Manral was asked how she used the concept of temporal slippage as a literary device, thus building an engaging and dynamic story. She went on to explain time travel, pop culture and more. She explained how each is related to the other, while also shedding some light on her writing process. Manral said that when she finally shared the book, it was only after 4-5 drafts, so that the reader gets the time travel sequence right. In Manral’s books, time is an illusion and is used as a metaphor. Manral plays a lot with time, and follows the tenet laid down by Shakespeare — time is always out of



Poonam Bafna



Roopa Mohandas

time. Shakespeare also said that time is too slow for those who wait, implying that procrastination could be man's biggest enemy.

Manral started her literary journey as a “mommy blogger”, authoring blogs about motherhood, parenting and more, and her books about parenting, such as *Karmic Kids: The Story of Parenting Nobody Told You*, did well. Readers could resonate with the easy language and the thoughts that flowed in a consistent pattern. According to Manral, motherhood should not be put on a pedestal. Reading an excerpt from *Karmic Kids*, she describes the relationship that the protagonist Anna had with her parents. “Not all mothers are meant to be mothers,” she said. “Some have a biological function and some may have an emotional function, if a child is adopted. In the book, I wanted to highlight that not all mothers are making *samosas* and keeping their child happy, and it's not that it is always nice to come home to a mother who is waiting for you. So, I take the mothers off the pedestal. Emotional abuse is really what needs to be spoken about in today's time.” By touching upon emotional abuse, Manral highlighted a point that does not get enough limelight and is often brushed under the carpet.

The conversation with

Manral was an important reckoning, as it presented a unique take on motherhood. A lot of conversations have happened around the subject, but few have been as enlightening as this one. The absorbing and empathetic discussion was followed by an interesting Q&A session in which the audience asked pertinent questions and got their doubts cleared. Roopa Mohandas, **Ehsaas** Woman of Coimbatore, delivered the closing speech, and Manral was gifted a beautiful *dokra* memento.

The Write Circle Coimbatore was presented by Shree Cement Limited in association with WelcomHotel by ITC and with the support of

Ehsaas Women of Coimbatore



The author signs copies of her book for the audience

The Trials of Being Women and Mothers



Anindita Chatterjee, Vinti Kathuria and Anshu Mehra with the author



Koral Dasgupta

Homemaker, mother, writer, painter, teacher, author, and entrepreneur — is there anything the multi-talented Koral Dasgupta cannot do? She believes that being a mother encompasses everything. “Motherhood is the essence of a lot of things that I do,” she says. To talk more about this, Dasgupta was the guest at a special session of **The Write Circle** organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. She was in conversation with Vinti Kathuria, **Ehsaas** Woman of Agra. After Anshu Mehra, **Ehsaas** Woman of Meerut, welcomed everyone, the fascinating discussion began.

The evening kicked off with Dasgupta talking about love, the common theme that runs in the storylines of most of her books. “We as girls build a fairytale dream that Prince Charming will come and something beautiful will happen to our lives,” she said. “And when you grow up and that dream doesn’t come true, you create a parallel universe where it does happen.” Dasgupta thus writes to create a parallel universe, where the writer plays god. The *Sati* series has been the focus of Dasgupta’s work for the past five years. In this series, we learn about the compassionate but independent voices of five legendary women from the ancient Hindu philosophical pieces of literature known as the *Panchakanyas*. The five prominent women from the epics are Ahalya, Draupadi, Sita, Tara and Mandodari.

Dasgupta also discussed ‘Tellmemyourstory’, a platform to encourage and assist budding writers and storytellers. Started in 2006, its main aim was to explain to the academic world the need for global connectivity where people worldwide can share their stories. Overcoming a slow start, it soon garnered the attention of professors, tutors and more. Then, shifting gears to talk about god and religion, Dasgupta said that she believes that when it comes to these two factors, people tend to go into self-conflicting mode.



Garima Mithal

Dasgupta also elaborated on her life as a homemaker, but not before flinching for a moment. However, she quickly went on to cite the example of Draupadi, who was a commendable homemaker. Her hospitality used to attract people from far-flung lands. Furthermore, she said Draupadi was a woman with strong opinions and wasn’t scared to voice them. Busting certain myths around Indian mythology, she says that the kings or queens that we hear of could be any kind of leader. It is a person’s decisions that determine their leadership potential.

According to Dasgupta, women’s stories deserve more comprehension. “Women’s stories are not just women’s stories,” she said. “There is more to comprehend.” In a way, we are all Draupadi, she explained. In our personal journeys towards success, we face resistance, and suffer breaches of trust by our own family or close circles. “It is said that Draupadi is the cause of the Kurukshetra War. But that isn’t the case. People have just let an erroneous perception thrive, especially about Krishna. When Draupadi was in trouble, Krishna was actually her *‘antaraatma’*. When we are in trouble, it is our *antaraatma* that helps us. We have to fight for ourselves; no one else will do it for us.”

The inspiring conversation wound up with a Q&A session with the audience. Dasgupta’s book, *Mandodari*, talks about Ravana’s wife, who, according to the author, is the secret creator of Lanka, having designed it in Ravana’s likeness. “He obviously did not know the design and the details; it was Mandodari that designed everything because she was a qualified architect herself,” rounded off Dasgupta. The evening concluded with a vote of thanks by Garima Mithal, **Ehsaas** Woman of Meerut, and Punit Gagar felicitated the author.

The Write Circle Meerut was presented by Shree Cement Limited in association with Crystal Palace with the support of Ehsaas Women of Meerut

Unmasking The True Human Behind Raj Kapoor

What do the films like *Love Story*, *Betaab*, *Arjun*, *Dacaat*, *Anjaam* and *Arjun Pandit* have in common? Rahul Rawail is behind them all. Prabha Khaitan Foundation hosted a session of The Write Circle with the film director who is renowned for his remarkable contributions to the silver screen. Rawail, who has now ventured into the realm of literature, has authored *Raj Kapoor: The Master at Work*. In this book, he takes a nostalgic journey down memory lane, chronicling his cherished experiences as an assistant director to Raj Kapoor, who is considered a luminary of Indian cinema. Vaishali Joshi, Ehsaas Woman of Goa, delivered the opening address on behalf of the Foundation; guiding the conversation was Priyanka Kothari, Ehsaas Woman of Nagpur.

“I’ve known Chintu (Rajiv Kapoor, Raj Kapoor’s son) since kindergarten,” said Rawail. “We stayed in touch constantly. Before embarking on my higher studies, I had the chance to witness the shooting of Raj Saab’s movie *Mera Naam Joker*, and that was the turning point in my life.” Witnessing Raj Kapoor’s commanding presence, overseeing a crew of 5,000 individuals on the set, left a profound impact on him. Rawail marvelled at Raj Kapoor’s ability to manage technicians, Russian and Indian circus personnel, along with an audience of nearly 3,000 spectators in the stands. It was evident that Raj Kapoor possessed a deep understanding of his craft, which Rawail likened to a “conductor of a symphony”.

Reflecting on Raj Kapoor’s personality and his devotion to cinematography, Rawail remarked, “He had no sense of humour. We were in awe of him, and humour was absent around him. He was wholly dedicated to his work and his work was his everything.” Rawail also noted that Raj Kapoor did not consider any task to be beneath him, a principle that greatly influenced Rawail during their collaboration.

Raj Kapoor’s films were distinguished by their uniqueness. “He was a man of unconventional thinking,” said Rawail. “He firmly believed that if you convincingly adopt a different perspective, censorship will not impede you. He never encountered issues with censorship for any of his films. His take on modern films is that they are ‘nonsensical’ and not true filmmaking.” Rawail recounted an anecdote from *Betaab*, where a kissing scene was

expected to be censored, but Rawail was confident it would remain due to its context.

Raj Kapoor played a pivotal role in shaping Rawail’s filmmaking journey. From the depths of producing *Mera Naam Joker* to crafting *Bobby*, featuring a non-star cast and centered around teenage romance, Raj Kapoor’s audacity paid off. Rawail introduced several actors to the industry, including Sunny Deol and Kajol. Raj Kapoor’s idiosyncrasies left an indelible mark on Rawail’s methods and choices, influencing a new generation of directors. But what inspired Raj Saab himself? “Raj Kapoor drew inspiration from everyday life occurrences. His senses were always attuned.”

The session concluded with an interactive Q&A round, after which Gaurapriya Atul Pai Kane delivered the closing address. Vikram Batra, representing Cidade de Goa, honoured the author with a *dokra* item.

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



Shruti A. Juwarkar, Priyanka Kothari, Gaurapriya Atul Pai Kane and Vaishali Joshi with Rahul Rawail



The audience





Rohan Chakravarty

Arijit Banerjee

Not too long ago, the planet was overflowing with flora and fauna. There was an abundance of life that slowly began to deplete as we moved towards modernisation and globalisation. Naturally, conservation efforts followed, but how much is enough, really? The prevalence of a communication gap between the citizenry and the government has hampered the process of wildlife conservation in our country. It is art and creation that can bring about balance.

Standing at the cusp of a relationship between art, creation and wildlife, Rohan Chakravarty is the creator of *Green Humour*, a series of cartoons on wildlife conservation. Cartoons can often drive home a very powerful point. That is exactly what seems to have happened, as Chakravarty's illustrations on wildlife conservation bring to light certain environmental issues which have rattled our society to the core. His art contains pop culture references so readers from all age groups can be interested in his comics, like Pugmarks and Carbon Footprints.



Mita Kapur

Chakravarty was the guest at a compelling session of **The Write Circle** organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. He was in conversation with Arijit Banerjee at the ITC Rajputana. Mita Kapur, CEO of Siyahi, started the proceedings for the evening by introducing Chakravarty and Banerjee to the audience, and Prerna Singh, PR Executive, ITC Rajputana, extended a warm welcome to all in attendance.

India has a rich culture of illustrations. Chakravarty's inspiration behind his series comes from his love for cartoons and wildlife, which his work reflects. *Green Humour*, his baby, makes its readers aware about the problems that wildlife conservationists in our country face. Contemporary environmental issues are also part of the discussion on conservation of wildlife on social media. Art is great for bringing awareness and lending a creative touch to the issues in question so as to reach a wider audience.

It is only when humans approach ecology from a technological lens that ecology is in danger. "Colonialism is the primary driver for climate change," said

Chakravarty. Using humour, creators can close the gap between policy and science, in the realm of conservation. Community conservation in India has been happening for aeons. It takes inspiration from folklore and tradition to promote a harmonious existence of future generations with the environment.

The thought-provoking session went into a Q&A round with the audience. Rounding off the proceedings, Deependra Rana, General Manager of ITC Rajputana, felicitated the speakers.

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



Deependra Rana felicitates Rohan Chakravarty and Arijit Banerjee

The Significance of Ancient Narratives

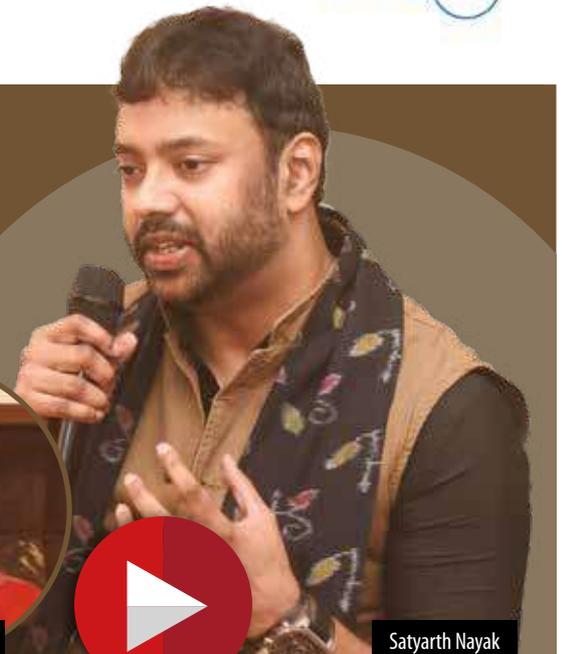
Author-screenwriter Satyarth Nayak has many accomplishments to his name. He is renowned for his bestsellers like *Mahagatha: 100 Tales from the Puranas*, and is an award-winning former SAARC correspondent. Nayak's literary prowess transcends genres, including the scripting of web series. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** organised a special session of **The Write Circle** in Chennai to talk about Nayak's life, his literary passion, mythological narratives, modern relevance, and the biography of Sridevi. The author was in conversation with Praneet Bubber, **Ehsaas** Woman of Amritsar, who bridged the gap between the two cities to converse with Nayak. Vidya Gajapathi Raju Singh, **Ehsaas** Woman of Chennai, warmly welcomed Nayak and Bubber, initiating an engaging evening. Nayak's exploration of the universe's natural laws, central to his book *Mahagatha*, shed light on Karma's significance in notions of good and evil. The author, who embraces myth, fiction, and biographies, emphasised the universality of these laws, applicable to both gods and humans.

Nayak's discourse delved into the cyclical concept of time in the *Puranas*, embodying Creation, Preservation, and Destruction. He noted that each Puranic narrative echoes this cycle, with a past, present, cause, and effect. *Mahagatha* prompts readers to interpret stories, fostering epiphanies about Karma's role as a binding thread. Nayak's modern perspective on the *Puranas* highlighted their emphasis on wisdom, fairness and counter-narratives, vital for evolution.

Transitioning seamlessly, Nayak discussed his experience balancing book writing and screenwriting, the former giving autonomy, the latter requiring collaboration. The spotlight then turned to his biography, *Sridevi: The Eternal Screen Goddess*, commemorating the legendary actress. Nayak recounted Sridevi's enthusiasm for the book, cut short tragically before the release of her daughter's debut film. Nayak's determination



Praneet Bubber



Satyarth Nayak

to honour her led to the biography's creation, featuring interviews and conversations that captured her profound impact on Indian cinema.

The *Puranas'* celebration of gender parity, women's nurturing roles, and themes touching upon LGBTQ+ subjects showcased the timeless and progressive nature of these ancient texts. Examples like Tara's story exemplified empowerment. The session concluded with Nayak's insights into his debut book, *The Emperor's Riddles*, and the distinctions between the *Vedas* and the *Puranas*. Audience queries found eloquent responses from Nayak, whose captivating insights rejuvenated ancient narratives' significance, inspiring fresh contemplation on their enduring impact. Deepika Goyal, **Ehsaas** Woman of Chennai, delivered the vote of thanks on behalf of the Foundation. Anita Ratnam's felicitation added a final touch.

The Write Circle Chennai was presented by Shree Cement Limited in association with ITC Grand Chola and with the support of **Ehsaas** Women of Chennai



Kaveri Lalchand, Praneet Bubber, Anita Ratnam, Deepika Goyal and Vidya Singh with the author, Satyarth Nayak



Malika Varma, Sabyasachi Chakrabarty and Joydip Kundu felicitate Subbiah Nallamuthu

Celebrating Wildlife Warriors



Launched on April 1, 1973, Project Tiger has been in existence for 50 years. The project had been initiated by the former Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi, in response to the declining Bengal tiger population in the country caused by poaching and loss of habitat. Some of the core objectives of the initiative included engaging the local communities in the preservation of tigers and helping combat poaching along with conducting research and fostering public awareness. The initiative has been a considerable success, and one that warrants greater recognition, since it has gone on to serve as a global model for conserving endangered species and their habitats.

Recently, the Society For Heritage & Ecological Researches (SHER), in association with the

Nature Club of La Martiniere for Girls School, was aided by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** in commemorating Global Tiger Day, which is celebrated worldwide on July

29. The objective of the evening was to felicitate the forest guards of Sundarban Biosphere Reserve and acknowledge the stupendous conservation work done by a few individuals. “The best habitat for the Tiger is the human heart” was the slogan of the day, and this was reiterated among an overflowing audience, with about 550 occupied seats.

The event commenced with a song composed by the students of M.P. Birla Foundation Higher Secondary School. The principal of La Martiniere for Girls, Rupkatha Sarkar, welcomed the enthusiastic gathering. The chief guest of the evening was the wildlife



Pradeep Vyas and Arindam Sil

filmmaker of global repute, Subbiah Nallamuthu, who flew in from Mumbai exclusively for the programme. His *Tiger Anthem* films, created on the occasion of 50 years of Project Tiger, were introduced to the audience by renowned actor Sabyasachi Chakrabarty through an informative speech. Nallamuthu enthralled the audience with visuals that he has been shooting for almost 20 years. He was felicitated by Malika Varma, **Ehsaas** Woman of Kolkata, on behalf of the Foundation and by Chakrabarty on behalf of SHER, with an exclusive art piece created especially for him by the artist Ashish Ghosh, of Santiniketan's Mrittika.

This was followed by Pradeep Vyas IFS (Rtd), Vigilance Commissioner of West Bengal, speaking on the importance of preserving the Sundarbans ecosystem. The Working President of SHER, Priyanka Pal, presented a showreel on the conservation footprints of SHER that received overwhelming applause. He thanked the Foundation for extending its unwavering support to their efforts. Following this, the Chief Advisor of SHER, the filmmaker, Arindam Sil, spoke at length about the importance of conservation in today's pressing times.

The P.K. Sen Memorial Award by SHER, named after the Padma Shri awardee and former director of Project Tiger who passed away in 2021, was presented to eight individuals and an organisation who are making positive contributions to ecological conservation. Among the recipients were Subrata Maity, Anil Maity and Sanjoy Seth from Howrah district, who are doing meaningful work for the conservation of wetlands; Mathur Kauri, Honorary Wildlife Warden, Bankura District, and Bappa Pratihar from Bishnupur under the Panchet Division of the Forest Department, who are working

towards the mitigation of human-elephant conflicts; Anirban Chaudhuri, a reptile ethologist who is working on human-snake conflict mitigation in North Eastern India; Nilanjan Mishra, working on sustainable rural livelihood and pollination ecology; and Rabindranath Banerjee, a retired forest ranger, who was recognised for his life's work to protect wildlife such as tigers, crocodiles, dolphins and so on during his career spanning over three decades. The Bon Foundation, a group of young people working to rescue and rehabilitate backyard wild species in districts like Coochbehar, Alipurduar, Malda, Murshidabad, Paschim Bardhaman, Nadia, South 24 Parganas and North 24 Parganas, was also awarded.

An exclusive tiger poster created by the artist, Sourish Mitra, was released by Soumitra Dasgupta, Principal Chief Conservator of Forest and Head of Forest Force. The full-length documentary on West Bengal's state animal, the fishing cat, made by Kaushik Mukhopadhyay, the adventure and wildlife filmmaker and photographer, was released onstage by Saurabh Chaudhuri IFS, Chief Conservator of Forests, South West Circle, West Bengal, and Raju Das IFS. Dasgupta applauded the organisers for putting up such an important conservation programme that acknowledges the foot soldiers who are relentlessly working in the Sundarbans.

Teams from eight tiger ranges of the Sundarban Biosphere Reserve were given the Professor Ratanlal Brahmachari Memorial Award as an acknowledgment of their relentless work in the conservation of wild fauna. A special felicitation was also conducted to honour the entire batch of officers who are managing the Sundarban Tiger Reserve and the South 24 Parganas Forest Division, which was a first-of-its-kind initiative in the history of conservation in West Bengal.

The audience at the event



Revisiting the Bangladesh Liberation War



Meena Sinha



Ushinor Majumdar

The Bangladesh Liberation War is often hailed as the Third India-Pakistan War. It forever changed the South Asian scene and had significant political and humanitarian implications. While several narratives have emerged since the war, not many have acknowledged the role that India's Border Security Force (BSF) played. Ushinor Majumdar, who is an award-winning investigative reporter and has written in publications like *Outlook*, *Tehelka*, *Confluence Media*, and *Hindustan Times* among others, in his book *India's Secret War: BSF and the Nine Months to the Birth of Bangladesh*, speaks about the BSF, who have remained largely unacknowledged.

At a recent session of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation's** boutique initiative **The Write Circle** held in Ranchi, Majumdar discussed the inception of the book and the process of writing it. Seema Singh, **Ehsaas** Woman of Ranchi, delivered the welcome note on behalf of the Foundation, while Meena Sinha conversed with Majumdar.

So what led to Majumdar writing the book? "It was in 2013 that I met Gary J. Bass, the American author who wrote *The Blood Telegram: Nixon, Kissinger, and a Forgotten Genocide* which talked about the USA's involvement in backing Pakistan at that time of the war. The book spoke about India supporting the Mukti Bahini (the Bangladeshi troops) and East Pakistan, although, officially it was never acknowledged," said the author. This led to him investigating what happened in the period between March 26, 1971 (when Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declared independence) and the actual start of the war.

But the war still has ample relevance for the present. "If we are not clear about history, we cannot be sure of what we are doing in the present and how we look at the future. For every policy that is formulated, one must know the past to prepare for the future," opined the author. Speaking about the process of researching for his book, Majumdar pointed out that he found out about the critical role that the BSF played in the war. "I approached the BSF and the army and found out that the BSF were the ones who were running the operations,"

he said. "I went to the then Director General of the BSF, Pankaj Kumar Singh, to investigate further. Initially, there was some resistance, but Singh was supportive and immediately agreed to share the story." While dealing with a sensitive topic like this one, ensuring veracity becomes important; and that is why Majumdar followed the rule of three. "Every fact must be verified by three independent sources," he said.

The Indian Army, in fact, joined the war because they could empathise with what was happening in Bangladesh. There was considerable soft support as well. "Pandit Ravi Shankar along with George Harrison organised the Concert for Bangladesh, where they raised funds for the refugees," said Majumdar. The plight of the refugees has also been documented in the Bangladesh Liberation War Museum where photos of refugees living in concrete pipes in Kolkata's Salt Lake have been preserved.

Despite being a journalist, Majumdar found it easy to structure the book because he remained objective and critical. Emphasising the need for journalists to read other works, Majumdar advised young scribes to never be ignorant. "You can't say *mujhe nahi aata. Nahi aata toh seekhna padega*," concluded the author. The session came to a close with a lively round of Q&A with the audience. The vote of thanks was delivered by Rashmi Sharma. Majumdar and Singh were felicitated by Poonam Anand, **Ehsaas** Woman of Ranchi.

The Write Circle Ranchi was presented by Shree Cement Limited in association with Chanakya BNR and with the support of **Ehsaas** Women of Ranchi



Poonam Anand, Meena Sinha, Rashmi Sharma and Seema Singh

When Was The Last Time You Counted The Simple Joys Of Life?



Sumitra Ray



Suchita Maheshwari

Learning how to appreciate the simple blessings in your life might be the first step towards self-awareness. Expressing your feelings is something else that we don't do often. Well, **Muskaan** is here to change just that. Under the umbrella of this initiative of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, a session on 'Kindness Superheroes' was conducted by Suchita Maheshwari, which left a deep impact on students from Classes III and IV across the country. The Student Programmes Advisor of the Foundation, Sumitra Ray, introduced Maheshwari, setting the stage for an immersive and metamorphic experience.

Maheshwari's session began by fostering a safe and open environment, encouraging kids to express their feelings. She used an emotional chart, to compare the emotions that the young participants shared, and discussed effective coping mechanisms. This exercise taught them the importance of acknowledging and managing their emotions, and ensuring good emotional health and tenacity. She also had an interactive and thought-provoking presentation which helped the students strengthen their connection with their emotions. There were visuals and relatable examples, which helped the students earmark different emotions and understand that experiencing them is an integral part of life. Through this activity, kids developed empathy towards themselves and others, fostering their emotional intelligence.

To explain the concept of gratitude, Maheshwari shared a warm story about a gratitude jar. She invited the students to participate actively, goading them to create their

own gratitude jars and jot down what they were grateful for, on small pieces of paper. Through this exercise, students learnt the importance of acknowledging the simple joys and blessings of life. The children learnt how to express their gratitude, sharing what they were thankful for. They took turns to talk about their personal reflections, thanking their family, friends, nature and other positive influences in their lives. Thanks to this sharing exercise, a sense of unity and appreciation was created, a sort of ripple effect of kindness and gratitude.

As the session began to wind down, Ray delivered a heartfelt vote of thanks on behalf of all those who took part. She was grateful to Maheshwari for the intuitive and inspiring session, and realised the positive impact it had on young minds. As the students departed from the session, they had a deeper understanding of kindness and gratitude and were ready to become the agents of positive change.

*A joint initiative with **Education for All**, this session of **Muskaan** was presented by Shree Cement Limited*

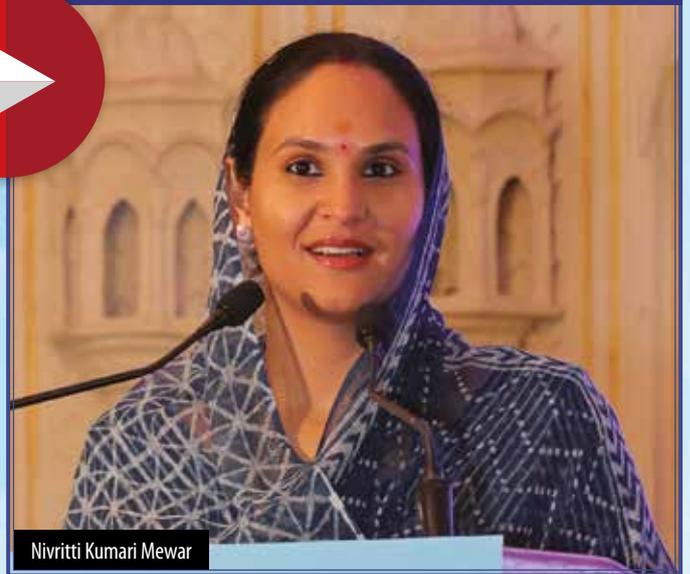
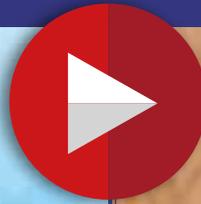


The young virtual audience



Aviraj Singhvi

Introducing A Child Prodigy's Latest Book



Nivritti Kumari Mewar

Prabha Khaitan Foundation values the act of highlighting works of literature by notable individuals. Another edition of **Muskaan** hosted a distinctive book launch by young literary prodigy Aviraj Singhvi. In today's tech-dominated world, where young people often get engrossed in screens and gadgets, discovering someone who has embraced their own storytelling approach is refreshing. The contributions of parents, teachers, mentors and well-wishers also deserve recognition as this achievement wouldn't have been possible without their support. The book launch event for *The Famous Fantastic Pill* was introduced by another young individual, Aarohi Murdia, who quoted Einstein's emphasis on reading fairy tales to enhance intelligence.

At this tender age, the young author has showcased impressive imagination and storytelling skills that captivate readers. His debut book, *Aviraj's Anthology: Ode to Poetry*, earned him awards and a place in the Wonder Book of Records as the youngest child writer with diverse styles.

Dedication, perseverance and innate talent shine through the storylines, with the book's impact being better conveyed by its readers. Swati Agarwal and Shraddha Murdia, **Ehsaas Women of Udaipur**, honoured the evening's star, whose parents, Akshita and Rounak Singhvi, were present during the felicitation. Nivritti

Kumari Mewar, the daughter-in-law of the erstwhile Mewar royals, graced the event for the unveiling of Aviraj's book, and Babu Babel, former president of Indian Electrical and Electronics Manufacturers' Association and independent director on the boards of Secure Meters and RR Kabel, spoke at the event.

The talented young author, who expressed gratitude to the Almighty, recited poetry from his work and shared insightful experiences about his writing journey.

He reflected on the countless sleepless nights and edits that enriched his journey. During his formative days, he would share unfinished stories with his parents, who consistently encouraged and motivated him, becoming his support during challenging times. The process of editing and



Nivritti Kumari Mewar speaks to the child author

refining was arduous, with his teachers playing an incredible role in helping him shape the stories he believed in. Sending the manuscript to the publishing team took considerable time, dedication, and effort. Holding *The Famous Fantastic Pill* in his hands was a tangible symbol of the young author's dedication and a dream fulfilled. The wonderful book launch concluded with a heartfelt vote of thanks by the young Armaan Agarwal.

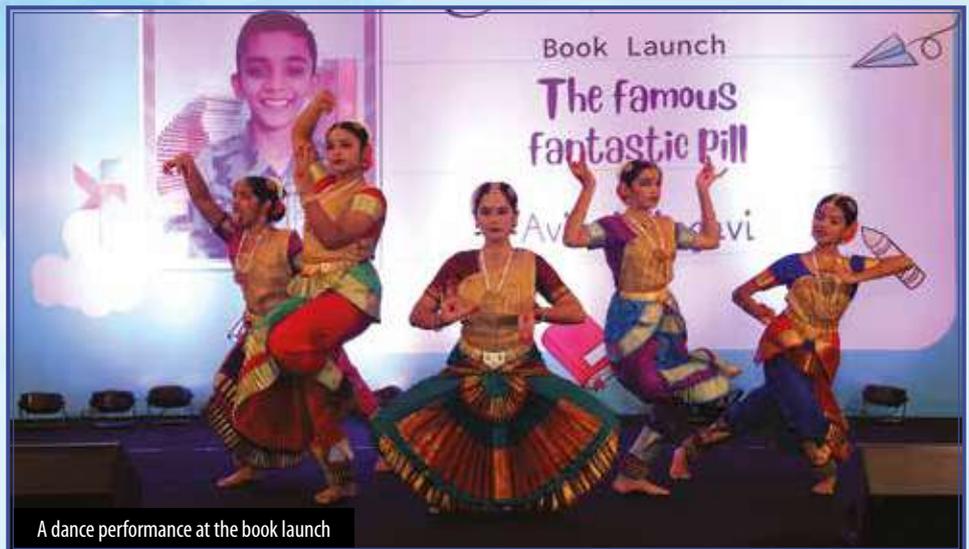
A joint initiative with Education for All, this session of Muskaan was presented by Shree Cement Limited



Swati Agarwal and Shradha Murdia with Aviraj Singhvi



Babu Babel



A dance performance at the book launch



Aarohi Murdia



Armaan Agarwal

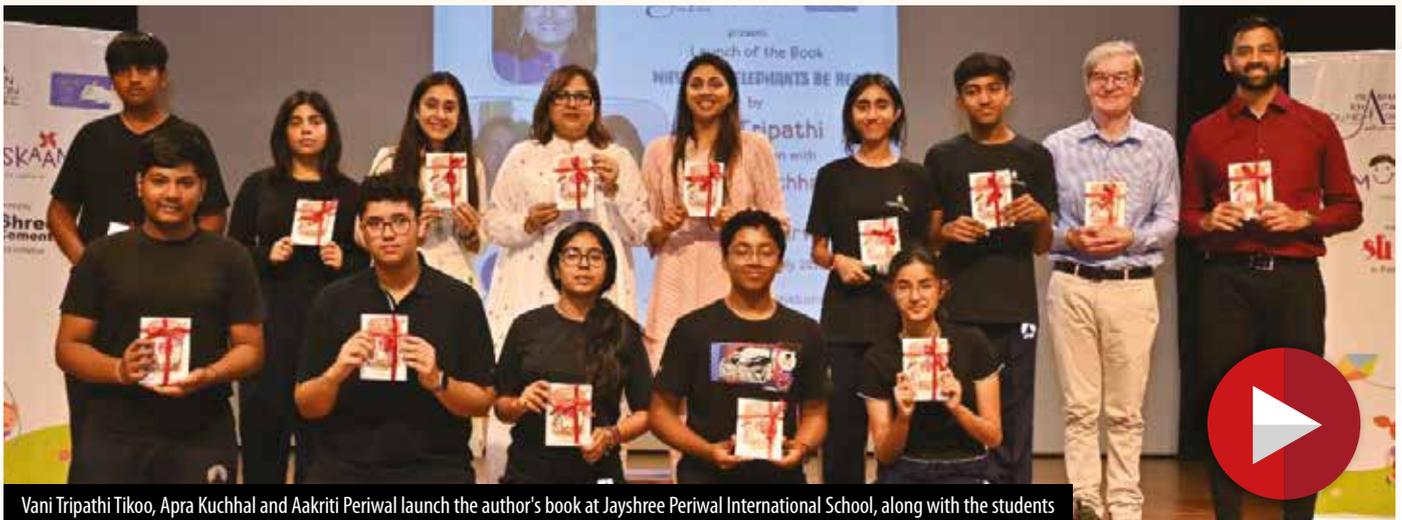


Aviraj Singhvi signs copies of his book for his readers

A Four-Fold Celebration



Writing for children is magic; we paint pictures for impressionable minds and shape their imagination. This is why **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** has always foregrounded the importance of literature for children. Recently, children's author Vani Tripathi Tikoo's book, *Why Can't Elephants Be Red?*, was launched in Jaipur, with **Muskaan** taking the author and her book to the students of four schools in the city. Read on to know more about the visits and the conversations surrounding the book!



Vani Tripathi Tikoo, Apra Kuchhal and Aakriti Periwal launch the author's book at Jayshree Periwal International School, along with the students

With great fanfare, under the **Muskaan** initiative of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, the book, *Why Can't Elephants Be Red?*, by author, social activist and cultural influencer Vani Tripathi Tikoo, was unveiled in front of the young students of Jayshree Periwal International School. Apra Kuchhal, the Foundation's Honorary Convenor of Rajasthan and Central India Affairs, delivered the inaugural speech, leading smoothly into a discussion about Tikoo's deep-rooted connection with Rajasthan, where her mother's family has its origins. For the author, the session at JPIS felt like a return to her roots, which she explained to the conversationalists, Apnavi Kuchhal and Ariana Agarwal. Each book, story, poem, and play embarks on its unique path. *Why Can't*

Elephants Be Red? embarks on a twofold journey. The first narrative delves into the origin of the concept of the red elephant in the author's mind. The second facet delves into how creative imagination in children can be inadvertently suppressed. The book introduces us to Akku, a two-and-a-half-year-old girl brimming with imagination and adventure.

The book's other journey is rooted in reality. During the pandemic, the author found herself in Delhi, caring for her bedridden mother, separated from her two-year-old daughter, who was in Singapore with Vani's in-laws. The poignant story of the red elephants also narrates the tale of a Kashmiri family that put their lives on hold for two years. The author emphasizes the need to

share realistic stories about children. Being inspired by method actors such as Naseeruddin Shah, Om Puri, Anupam Kher and Irrfan Khan, the author, also an actor, sees her role not just as a motivator or teacher, but as a facilitator. She encouraged the audience to nurture their inquisitive minds where, among exams and grades, we must also use art as a tool of self-expression. The session concluded with a harmonious chorus that sang, "*Laal Laal Haathi Hu Main*" (I am the Red Elephant).



Vani Tripathi Tikoo with Apnavi Kuchhal and Ariana Agarwal

Paying Tribute To Children's Resilience



Vani Tripathi Tikoo and Apra Kuchhal launch the author's book at Maharani Gayatri Devi Girls' School, along with the students

Vani Tripathi Tikoo was a great hit among the students at Maharani Gayatri Devi Girls' School, at the launch of her book hosted by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** and as a part of its **Muskaan** sessions.

At the forefront of Vani Tripathi's endeavors are her campaigns and outreach programmes, which focus on fostering women's political engagement and channelling youth energies into a unified platform addressing critical areas such as education, empowerment and employment. Her engagement also extends to both the silver screen and the stage, highlighting her profound connection to the arts. Her book, *Why Can't Elephants Be Red?*, is an illustrated masterpiece that pays tribute to the resilience and tolerance exhibited by children. Through the vibrant lens of a young girl, the book offers a unique perspective on the world. Apra Kuchhal, the Foundation's Honorary Convenor of Rajasthan and Central India Affairs, gave the opening speech, after which the session took off.

Vani Tripathi Tikoo assured the students that they would gain invaluable insights to apply in practical life settings. Conversationalist Mariyam Chowhan pointed out that the book's title itself sparks curiosity in readers — it delves into a young girl's inquisitiveness about the origins of colours and their potential variations. The author's connection to Rajasthan and the book's genesis were intertwined in a captivating narrative. Vani Tripathi also shared a heartwarming anecdote involving

acclaimed actor Nawazuddin Siddiqui, who endearingly saved her number as *Laal Laal Haathi* (Red Elephant), a cherished acknowledgment of her book's title.

Interestingly, her association with the National School of Drama included her role in the play, *Laal Laal Haathi*. The play eloquently conveyed the story of a talented schoolboy whose imaginative artistry painted animals in vibrant hues. His audacious act of depicting a red elephant challenged societal norms, highlighting the tendency to stifle creativity and impose conformity. This resonated with the notion that adults often curtail children's imaginative visions, losing touch with the essence of childhood's innocence, dreams and experiences.

The book's second narrative thread stemmed from a deeply personal experience during the pandemic. Separated from her daughter for a prolonged period, the author's reunion with her child sparked the inspiration for the book. It is a reflection of the little girl's questions, wonder and observations, celebrating the boundless creativity and imagination innate in children.

The event not only marked the culmination of creative endeavours, but also underscored the need to nurture and champion the imaginative spirits of children, a sentiment that resonated throughout the author's engaging dialogue.



Vani Tripathi Tikoo and Shruti Rastogi



All About The Mind of a Child



Vani Tripathi Tikoo and Apra Kuchhal launch the author's book at the Neerja Modi School in Jaipur

Author and cultural influencer Vani Tripathi Tikoo's book, *Why Can't Elephants Be Red?*, was also unveiled at Neerja Modi School, hosted by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** under its **Muskaan** initiative. It brought together young students for an energising session. Apra Kuchhal, the Foundation's Honorary Convenor of Rajasthan and Central India Affairs, delivered the welcome note and handed the stage over to the author and the moderator. In conversation with Vani Tripathi was Apal Jain, a student of Neerja Modi School. The author's journey from a small-town girl to a theatre artist, propelled by her love for literature, saw her pursuing a diploma in acting. She had also embarked on her first professional play at just 13.

As the session took its course, Vani Tripathi mentioned how coming to Neerja Modi School felt like a homecoming to her, as she had been there more than 10 years ago, with her mother and family members having a close connection with Rajasthan. Speaking about her influence behind the book, she went on to say that every book has a journey; the last play she had ever done before joining the "big bad world of films" was called *Laal Laal Haathi*. She also shared a funny anecdote about how Nawazuddin Siddiqui, a senior of hers in drama class, had saved her name as *Laal Laal Haathi* on his phone.

The conversation soon came to a point of learning, as far as children are concerned. The author said that learning should always have fun attached to it. The

performing arts give you a peek into those things which are a part of creative imagination, which is what she considers creativity with imagination. She believes we are all boxed as human beings even in the physical reality of life.

Before the session concluded, Vani Tripathi read a passage from her book before accepting questions from the audience. The session drew to a close with a closing speech by Kuchhal.



Vani Tripathi Tikoo in conversation with Apal Jain



The author with the students of Neerja Modi School

The Story Of Reality And Imagination



Vani Tripathi Tikoo and Apra Kuchhal launch the author's book at The Palace School in Jaipur

Closely associated with **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, The Palace School got the chance to witness the book launch of *Why Can't Elephants Be Red?* by Vani Tripathi Tikoo. Organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** as a part of **Muskaan**, in an effort to help students develop necessary skills in everyday life, the launch was followed by a conversation between the author and the Principal, Urvashi Warman.

After Apra Kuchhal, the Foundation's Honorary Convenor of Rajasthan and Central India Affairs, delivered the opening speech, the conversation turned to the woman of the hour. Actor-producer Vani Tripathi Tikoo, a socio-political activist turned author, has focused on encouraging women's participation in politics. She has been closely involved in theatre, films, and television both in India and abroad, and, as an actor, has done about 50 plays, and 40 television serials. The political science graduate from Delhi University joined the theatre academy and drama group led by the famed Ebrahim Alkazi. She has also engaged in journalism and broadcasting, occasionally contributing to Indian newspapers.

Vani Tripathi explained how every book embarks on a unique journey, yet this book carries a dual narrative. Her final play at the National School of Drama, *Laal Laal Haathi* (Red Elephant), revolved around a schoolboy with a penchant for art over academics. He painted animals with imaginative colours, once crafting a red elephant, which didn't sit well with the teacher. The play subtly addressed the issue of stifling children's creative imagination as they navigate the pressures of growing up.

The second narrative tied to the book is more personal; during the pandemic, the author was separated

from her two-year-old daughter. When they finally reunited, her daughter had turned four. The book captures the little girl's inquiries, amazement and observations about the world around her; it marks Vani Tripathi's debut, written from the perspective of a young girl.

In *Why Can't Elephants Be Red?* the protagonist is a young girl who narrates her view of the world. The author consistently puts emphasis on realistic writing, an aspect that often scares writers. While fantasy, frozen castles, and fairies have their place, there's also room for a form of realistic fantasy. As children in India are raised on tales from their grandparents, the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana* and other mythological tales, the country is a realm of storytellers. The author urged the young audience in the auditorium to never cease dreaming, for the thoughts within our minds come to life in our dreams. As we mature, we may find ourselves directed by others, told what to do and what not to do. 'The Red Elephant' serves as a symbol of imaginative reality, a reminder that education should be inclusive, flexible and most importantly, delivered with a sense of enjoyment.

A joint initiative with Education for All, all the sessions of Muskaan were presented by Shree Cement Limited



Urvashi Warman and Vani Tripathi Tikoo

Building a New, Warm Bond

Mudit Jain



Mudit Jain

Manoj Muntashir



Mudit Jain

I first attended a book talk organised in Mumbai by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** and **Ehsaas Women** with my wife, Malti — it was the launch of Neelima Dalmia Adhar's book, *Father Dearest*, her biography of her late father, R.K. Dalmia, the renowned industrialist,

freedom fighter and philanthropist. The talk was held at the ITC Grand Central in Parel, and the **Ehsaas Women** of Mumbai, led by Swati Agarwal, Ketaki Bhatia and two other lovely ladies, were excellent as hosts. Thereafter, Malti and I have attended all their functions, and thank them for inviting us. We have attended the book launches for Vikram Sampath, Ashwin Sanghi and Abhigyan Prakash, to name a few, and all their events have been enjoyable and interesting.

I was invited by Swati Agarwal to interview the renowned lyricist of Bollywood, Manoj Muntashir, and was diffident, as I had not heard of him. But

before interviewing him, I read his brilliant lyrics, composed into award-winning songs. I allowed him to speak freely on his journey and professional life, unlike our TV anchors who like to only hear themselves. The hospitality shown by Swati Agarwal and her team, and, thereafter, getting a signed copy of the book by the author, was a very memorable experience. It is far better than a book signing event at a bookshop, as it is more homely and intimate — one gets time to talk with the organisers and the author apart from interacting with other attendees.

I am always the first to ask questions because of my wish to engage with the discussion upon hearing the author and the moderator. It excites my thoughts to go deeper into the topic of discussion. I vividly remember Neelima's talk, as I had not heard of her book on her famous father, who, despite being an illustrious industrialist and philanthropist, didn't have good family relationships. Neelima's book captured his idiosyncrasies and eccentricities

extremely well without being judgmental. Thereafter, I have gone on to read all her books and enjoy interacting with her.

I also recollect the talk by Manoj Muntashir, on his professional life and journey, which held the audience spellbound, including me as the moderator. I was speechless at his meteoric rise; he talked of his single-minded dedication and the struggles he faced to become one of the most famous lyricists in Bollywood. Malti and I had invited a few of our friends for this talk by Muntashir, including Manju Lodha, who heads the Lodha Foundation, and is the wife of the well-known builder, Mangal Prasad Lodha, in Mumbai. Manjuji herself is an outstanding poet, and her delivery of any prose breaks out into poetry spontaneously. She captured the audience's attention fully by speaking in her trademark poetic style, which left the audience in raptures, including Manojji.

Malti and I were also given a very warm welcome for the Saraswati Puja conducted on



Malti Jain (centre) and Mudit Jain

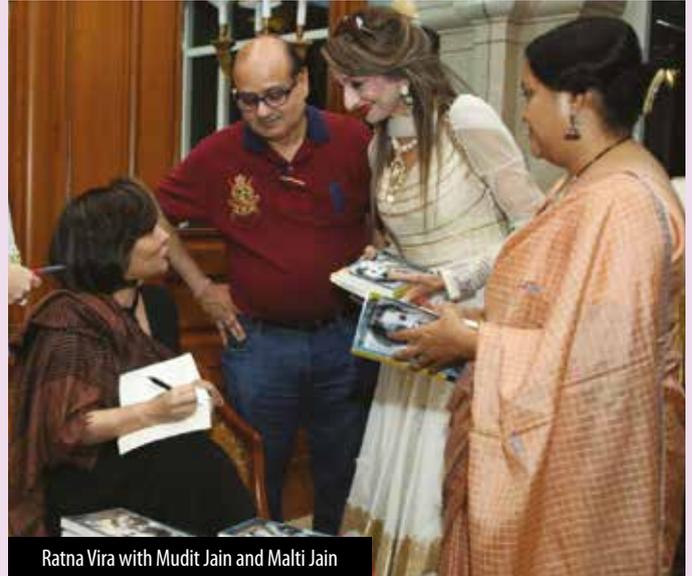


Mudit Jain, Divya Prakash Dubey and Malti Jain

the Foundation's premises in Kolkata. It deepened our good feelings for the excellent work that the Foundation has been doing in promoting reading habits and giving a platform to authors. I am really grateful to Neelimaji for introducing me to the Foundation, and to Sundeep Bhutoria and his team for carrying on the legacy of Prabha Khaitan so ably and in the true spirit.

Finally, I was lucky to receive books written by Sundeepji on his various ventures and adventures, and I have enjoyed reading them. Thanks to his book on the leopards of Bera, I visited the beautiful sanctuary which I was unaware of earlier.

As was said for Abou Ben Adhem, may the tribe of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** increase, and, unlike him, may it multiply exponentially.



Ratna Vira with Mudit Jain and Malti Jain



Amit Kumar, the former General Manager of ITC Grand Central, felicitates Mudit Jain

*The author is a businessman and one of the promoters of his family-owned company, DCW Limited. He is actively involved in cultural activities, attends programmes of the Asia Society and other organisations, and is a regular attendee at **Prabha Khaitan Foundation's** Mumbai events. He was a former Director on the board of the Rotary Club of Bombay, and on the executive committee of the Museum Society of Bombay. He enjoys wildlife, travelling, theatre, book and film festivals, and reading non-fiction books*



Mudit Jain asks a question during a *Kalam* session with Divya Prakash Dubey



Sumitra Ray

Harsh V. More

A lot of people consider music to be food for the soul. But the ups and downs that come with becoming a musician are mostly overlooked. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** organised a session of **Muskaan** to celebrate World Music Day with Berklee College of Music scholar Harsh V. More. Being an emerging star in the music industry, More is a skilled guitarist and piano player. At 21 years, his talents encompass singing, composing and music directing while providing insights into the workings of the modern music industry. The virtual session, which was held for Classes IX to XII, served as an inspirational experience for aspiring musicians.

More showcased his musical creations through an interactive presentation in which he outlined his journey. His passion for instrumental music was sparked at the age of 9 when he witnessed a teacher playing the guitar. Although he began with the violin, he quickly switched to the guitar within three months. His vocal singing emerged organically while playing the guitar, without any formal vocal training.

More's journey began on YouTube, where he discovered and drew inspiration from other young singers. This prompted him to post covers and self-made videos showcasing his guitar-playing and vocal skills. Since 2014, he has utilised this digital platform to share his compositions and performances with audiences. His first composition, *In Your Eyes*, was created when he was in Class IX; his second composition was in Class XII. He played *In Your Eyes* during the **Muskaan** session, and it is now available on Spotify. Even at a young age, More would write lyrics, compose melodies and play the guitar for his songs. Home music production has become more accessible with the aid of a laptop, negating the need for a professional studio. Harsh took advantage of these resources to compose, sing and produce to upload his tracks to platforms like Spotify.

Experimental projects, like those involving coffee,

contributed innovative elements to his work. More elaborated on his songwriting process, emphasising that musicians don't have a set path to follow. Rather, they must continually refine their craft. Ideas for songs can come in suddenly and must be developed. He described his approach to composing a song as starting with an initial idea, then progressing to melody composition and lyric writing. He would record and produce the songs on his laptop and then mix and master the tracks for a polished sound.

The music industry now offers diverse career opportunities to becoming a vocal artist, lyricist, composer, music director, music producer and recording engineer. More's journey took a significant turn when he gained admission to Berklee College of Music, one of the world's top institutions for contemporary music education. Embracing challenges and risk-taking, More believes that the age of 20 is optimal for pursuing dreams.

Currently, the musician collaborates with brands and companies and does jingle compositions. During interactions with the audience, he addressed various intriguing topics, such as overcoming stage fright and sharing compositions that reflect his personal experiences.

*A joint initiative with **Education for All**, this session of **Muskaan** was presented by Shree Cement Limited*



The virtual audience

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE



Ajay Brahmaj



Aveek Majumder



Chitra Desai



Dwarika Uniyal



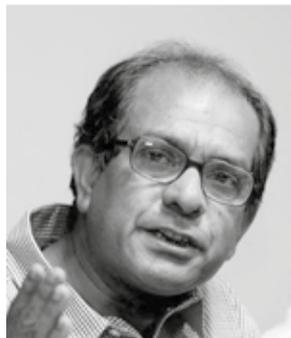
Koel Purie Rinchet



Kshama Sharma



Navtej Sarna



Suranjan Das



Sushil Doshi

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