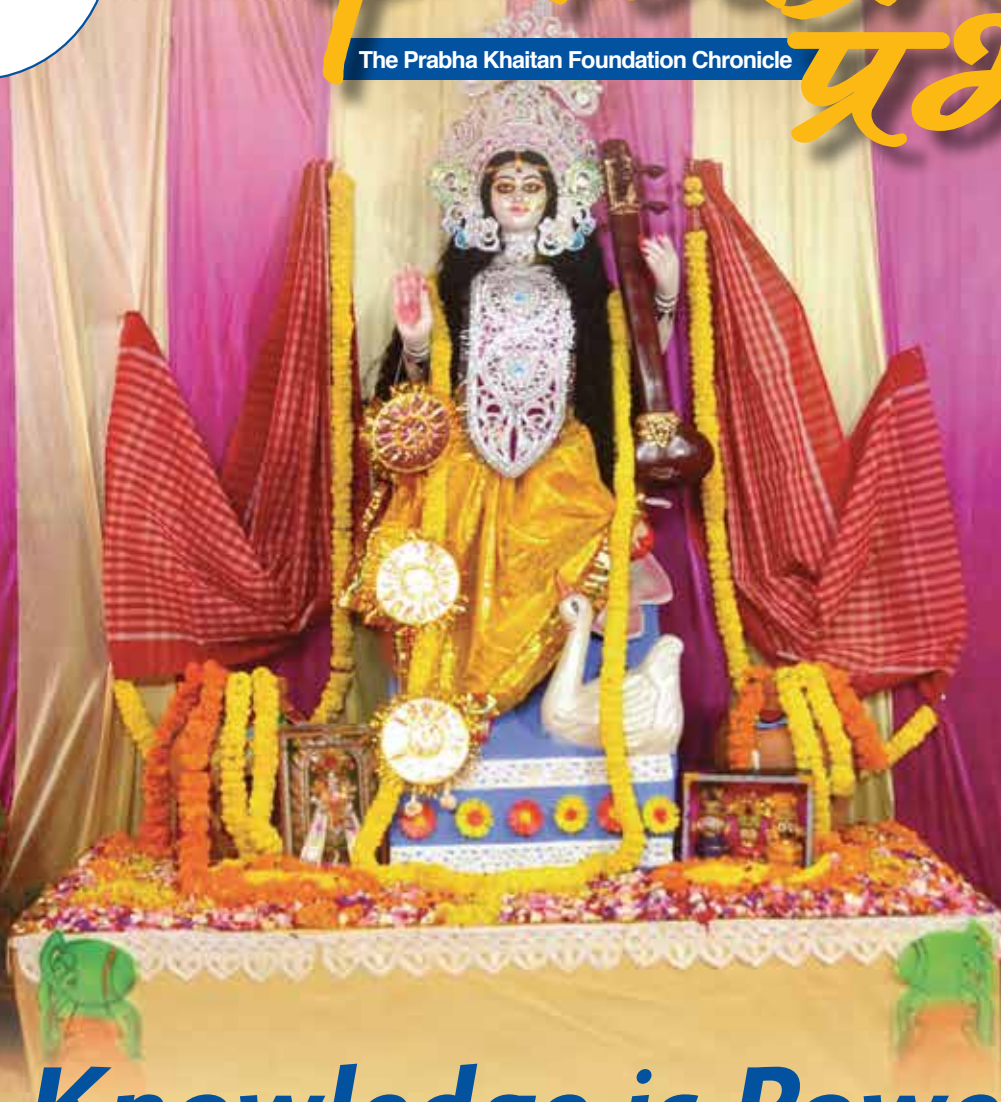




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Issue 54

# Prabha प्रभा

The Prabha Khaitan Foundation Chronicle



## Knowledge is Power

Wisdom, along with love, forms the basis of all that we hold dear in our world. In this issue of *Prabha*, let us honour the goddess of learning in every fathomable way — through celebrations, dialogue, dance, music and art

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Prabha  
प्रभा



MANISHA JAIN  
Honorary COO,  
Prabha Khaitan Foundation

## For the Wise and the Creative

For most of us, Saraswati Puja is always special, given how inextricably linked it is to our childhoods. From hoping that the goddess performs a miracle for our exams, to anticipating the *puja bhog*, the festival always inspires devotion and a trip down memory lane. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** rejoices in celebrating the goddess of music, art and knowledge in ways we know best: by bringing together thinkers, writers and musicians. This year, the festivities were graced by some of India's most revered classical musicians, including the Padma Shri recipient, Shubha Mudgal. Read more about it in this double issue of *Prabha*!

It is also our great pleasure to be able to keep stimulating conversations going with literary and cultural stalwarts under our wonderful initiatives. From books and authors to regional art and cinema, you will find a wealth of knowledge and insights in these pages, straight from the minds of some of the nation's greatest modern luminaries. In short, this double issue of *Prabha* is everything that the newsletter has always been, and everything we have always striven to create for you — a bridge to connect our dear readers with the best minds in the arenas of literature, culture, music, art and, crucially, social justice.

And while we are on the subject of social justice, it must be acknowledged that kindness and the drive to foster equality must be extended to all living beings on our beautiful planet. All creatures, great and small, deserve access to love, care and good health, which, in turn, leads to them thriving. Thus, alongside pledging to come together to protect Earth's marvellous biodiversity and combat a deadly disease that claims so many lives every year, we have also written about our drive to advocate for the rights of our furry friends in the form of a pet-friendly marathon. We hope you will read about it!

We are also excited to bring you a very special issue of *Prabha* in the next edition, where the Foundation, under its **Aakhar** initiative, takes you through a series of festivals celebrating the wealth of India's regional languages. Till then, we hope you enjoy reading this edition, and continue to share your thoughts with us at [newsletter@pkfoundation.com](mailto:newsletter@pkfoundation.com)!

*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 ]



**Prabha Khaitan Foundation** has always believed in forging strong bonds of friendship, respect and collaboration with the best of the best in all walks of life — for it is the inspirational people in every arena who light the way for others. These include stalwarts from every field, be it philanthropy, industry or hospitality. At a dinner at the Taj Bengal, Kolkata, Anindita Chatterjee (Executive Trustee, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**) and Manisha Jain (Honorary COO, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**) met the philanthropist, author and parliamentarian, Sudha Murty (top left), and K. Mohanchandran, Senior Vice-President, Operations, East & Northeast, IHCL (top right)



Greatly cherished at **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** are our very own dynamic **Ehsaas Women**, who have, over the years, left no stone unturned in ensuring that the Foundation's events in their respective cities are flawlessly organised and go off without a hitch. They form an integral part of the Foundation's family, are known for their leadership and dedication to the betterment of society, and greatly valued for their creativity and warmth.

This warmth has also resulted in deep friendships among the **Ehsaas Women** themselves, no matter where they are in the country — or even the world! Recently, Shefali Rawat Agarwal, **Ehsaas Woman of Kolkata**, and Pooja Khanna, **Ehsaas Woman of Dehradun**, met in Germany. Here is a picture of them together!



## Honouring the Goddess of Wisdom and Art

A day of joy and respite for students in West Bengal and also Bihar, Odisha, and Uttar Pradesh, Saraswati Puja has been intricately linked to the childhoods of generations of people. Marking the arrival of spring, Saraswati Puja or Vasant Panchami is celebrated to honour Saraswati

— the goddess of knowledge, wisdom and art. Decked up in shades of yellow, symbolising the blossoming of mustard flowers and the onset of spring, students offer their books, tablas, harmoniums, and *ghungroos* for the goddess to bless.

Saraswati Puja also reflects Bengal's rich heritage, one that is a unique blend of religious traditions and intellectual pursuits. It also promotes inclusivity, as people from diverse backgrounds participate in the celebrations. Transcending generations, the Puja has fostered a deep appreciation for education, art and culture in all.

In the past, the Saraswati Puja celebrations at **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** in Kolkata have been filled with devotion and joy, having been attended by luminaries such as the International Booker Prize-winning author and well-wisher of the Foundation, Geetanjali Shree. This year, the celebrations continued in the same vein, as the puja was graced by esteemed personalities including Padma Shri



The goddess Saraswati

recipient Shubha Mudgal, the tabla maestro Aneesh Pradhan and the harmonium player Sudhir Nayak. A soulful performance by the trio was the highlight of the event, captivating the audience and devotees present. Among the distinguished guests were Aroop Biswas, Minister for Sports and Youth

Affairs, Power, and Housing, Government of West Bengal, and Ananya Banerjee, actor, spokesperson for the All India Trinamool Congress, and Councillor of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation. Noted poet Subodh Sarkar graced the occasion as well to honour Shubha Mudgal. Gouri Basu and Malika Varma — both **Ehsaas** Women of Kolkata — and Sangeeta Datta, **Ehsaas** Woman of London, were also in attendance.

In the spirit of all that the goddess Saraswati symbolises, the discerning audience also observed a moment of silence to honour the memory of one of India's greatest musical maestros, Ustad Rashid Khan, who recently passed away, leaving a gaping void in the nation's classic music pantheon. The day concluded with the Foundation's in-house artist, Sudipta Kundu, presenting a hand-drawn portrait to Shubha Mudgal, while Payel Kar enchanted the audience with some melodious renditions. Here are a few glimpses from the celebrations.



Shubha Mudgal, Aneesh Pradhan, Sudhir Nayak and Nandu Nimbalkar seek the blessings of Goddess Saraswati



Aroop Biswas and Ananya Banerjee pay obeisance to the goddess



Manjari Bhutoria with other devotees at the Saraswati Puja celebration



Soumitra Mitra



Manisha Jain, Sangeeta Dutta and Anindita Chatterjee at the pandal



Young people from Prayas help with the puja preparations



Shubha Mudgal performs



Gouri Basu, Sangeeta Dutta, Sudipta Kundu, Anindita Chatterjee, Manisha Jain and Malika Varma with Shubha Mudgal



Payel Kar sings at the puja celebrations



The audience, including Subodh Sarkar, observe a minute of silence for the late Ustad Rashid Khan



Kishan Pranay, Babulal Sharma Bohra and Sanwar Kumawat 'Mau' with Pramod Sharma, Yashwant Vyas and Lalit K. Panwar at the book launch

## विश्व मातृभाषा दिवस पर आखर में गूंजे राजस्थानी गीत, तीन पुस्तकों का लोकार्पण

मातृभाषा दिवस पर प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन द्वारा आयोजित आखर कार्यक्रम के दौरान गुलाबी नगरी राजस्थानी भाषा की खुशबू से गुलजार रही। इस दौरान तीन पुस्तकों का लोकार्पण हुआ, तो कविता और गीत की महफिल भी सजी। जिन पुस्तकों का लोकार्पण हुआ, उनमें सांवर कुमावत मऊं लिखित 'धाराळी कलम', बाबूलाल शर्मा बोहरा विज्ञ की 'भटकें विज्ञ चकोर' और किशन प्रणय की 'गाम परगाम ने मौसर' शामिल थीं। कवि-गोष्ठी में कवियों और गीतकारों ने अपनी मातृभाषा में एक से बढ़कर एक रचनाएं सुनाईं। राजस्थानी भाषा के इन सुमधुर गीतों और कविताओं को श्रोताओं ने मुक्त कंठ से सराहा। कार्यक्रम के प्रारंभ में प्रदक्षिणा पारीक ने मातृभाषा दिवस के महत्त्व को रेखांकित करने के साथ ही 'अपनी भाषा, अपने लोग' को बढ़ावा देने की फाउंडेशन की सोच के तहत आयोजित इस कार्यक्रम की जानकारी दी। उन्होंने अतिथियों का परिचय भी विस्तार से परिचय दिया।

लोकार्पण कार्यक्रम के साथ कविता और गीत संगोष्ठी के इस विशेष आयोजन के मुख्य अतिथि अमर उजाला समूह के संपादकीय सलाहकार एवं व्यंग्यकार यशवंत व्यास ने मातृभाषा के महत्त्व पर गंभीरता से अपनी बात रखी। उपस्थित श्रोताओं, लेखकों और कवियों को मालवी में संबोधित करते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि मातृभाषा में सृजन न केवल स्थाई और समाज के जीवन मूल्यों को संरक्षित करने वाला होता है, बल्कि इसके माध्यम से हमारी सभ्यता और संस्कृति की रक्षा होती है। इसीलिए न केवल मातृभाषा का प्रयोग करना चाहिए, बल्कि हर किसी को, जो जहां भी हो हरसंभव मातृभाषा के विकास और संरक्षण में भी अपनी भूमिका निभानी चाहिए।

व्यास ने कहा कि हमारी मालवी और हाड़ौती भाषाओं में परस्पर संबंध है। उन्होंने मालवी का एक परंपरागत गीत भी गाकर सुनाया।

के संझा तू जीम ले, / चूढ ले/ तने जिमाऊं सारी  
सारी रात, / चटक चांदनी फूलां भरी रे परात, / एक  
फूलो घटी गयो, / संझा माता रूसी गी/ क्यो रूसी

संझा माता/ चूडेलो घडई दूँ/ चूडा ऊपर मोर नाचे/ मोर नचई दूँ।

कार्यक्रम की अध्यक्षता राजस्थान लोक सेवा आयोग के पूर्व अध्यक्ष ललित के. पंवार ने की। उन्होंने 'आखर' के दौरान राजस्थान की माटी की खुशबू लिए राजस्थानी भाषा में प्रस्तुत विचारों, गीतों और काव्य पाठ की प्रशंसा की। उन्होंने कहा कि राजस्थानी भाषा हमारे जीवन का अभिन्न हिस्सा है। हम अभी भी अपनी भाषा को भूले नहीं हैं। मुझे सरकारी कामकाज के दौरान जहां भी जगह मिली वहां अपनी राजस्थानी भाषा की सुगंध बिखेरी। राज्य सरकार में पर्यटन विभाग में पधारो म्हारे देस वाली टैग लाइन बहुत प्रसिद्ध हुई। इसी तरह केंद्र सरकार में भी कामकाज के दौरान अपनी मातृभाषा राजस्थानी का उपयोग किया। अध्यक्ष पंवार ने राजस्थानी में भजन भी गाकर सुनाया।

इसके पश्चात मायड़ भाषा पर राजस्थानी के नाद सौंदर्य से श्रोताओं का परिचय करवाते हुए हाड़ौती, मेवाड़, मारवाड़, शेखावाटी आदि विभिन्न अंचलों के कवियों और गीतकारों ने कविताएं और गीत गाकर सुनाएं। इनमें सीकर से आई विमला महरिया ने गणेश निमंत्रण और सामाजिक कुरीतियों पर, देवीलाल



Vimla Mahariya, Meenakshi Pareek, Devi Lal Mahiya and Mohan Puri



महिया ने राजस्थानी भाषा की मान्यता को लेकर मार्मिक गीत 'मायड़ री पहचान रूलै क्यो राज में', कोटा के मुरलीधर गौड़ ने गुरु महिमा और बालिका शिक्षा पर और भीलवाड़ा से आए मोहन पुरी ने गांव के जन जीवन को अपनी रचनाओं में अभिव्यक्त किया।

मातृभाषा को समर्पित इस कार्यक्रम में सीकर से आई गीतकार विमला महरिया ने भगवान गणेश का जो वंदना गीत प्रस्तुत किया, उसकी कुछ पंक्तियां यों हैं...

महाराज बिनायक आओ जी/ गणराज गजानन आओ जी/  
म्हारी सभा में रंग बरसाओ जी/ म्हारै आखर आंगण छावो  
जी/ महाराज बिनायक आओ जी ...../ रणक भवन स्यू आप  
पधारो-2/ रिध सिध न सागै ल्याओ जी/ महाराज बिनायक  
आओ जी/ म्हारी सभा में रंग बरसाओ जी/ महाराज गजानन  
आओ जी/ म्हारै आखर आंगण छावो जी

इसी तरह फाल्गुन का महीना प्रारंभ हो चुका है, ऐसे में उनके गीत ने लोगों को होली का स्मरण करा दिया। उनके सुनाए गीत की पंक्तियां थीं...

होळी रो नाको पीगौ जी! / तकनीकी रै राज में/ होळी रो  
नाको पीगौ जी! / चंग धमाल पुराणा होगा/ रंग फीकौ जीनाको  
पीगौ जी.../ गीदड़ रा डंका र नंगारा/ पड़्या चौक में मौधा  
जी! / मोबाइल के जाळ उळझिया/ पड़्या बैसख्यां जौधा  
जी! / नसो लीलगौ सगती आखी/ बूढ्यौ गीगौ जीनाको  
पीगौ जी...

कोटा से आए कवि मुरलीधर गौड़ ने भी अपने गीतों से श्रोताओं को प्रभावित किया। उन्होंने गुरु महिमा पर लिखे गीत से अपनी प्रस्तुति प्रारंभ की। इस वंदना की पंक्तियां यों थीं-

गुरु र ब्रह्मा गुरु र विष्णु, गुरु र देवो महेश्वरा/ साक्षात जे परम ब्रह्म छै, अस्या  
गुरुजी ने नमन करां/ ज्ञान का भण्डार ज्यांको नहीं कोई आर पार/ थांकी  
ही माया मै डूब्यो छै जी सारो संसार/ मंदर मै पावो कदी मज्जिद मै पावो जी/  
गरुद्वारा मै तो कदी जोगियां की लार लार/ थांकी किरपा सूं तर जावै लूला  
लंगड़ा अर बहरा।/ साक्षात जे परम ब्रह्म छै अस्या गरु जी नें नमन करां

इसी तरह बेटी को आगे बढ़ाने, उसके पढ़ने-लिखने और तरक्की करने की प्रेरणा देने वाले गीत पर भी गौड़ ने काफी दाद पाई। इस गीत की पंक्तियां इस प्रकार हैं -

माण्ड बेटी माण्ड/ माण्ड आड़ी लकीर/ माण्ड खड़ी लकीर/ दायों हाथ को  
चूल्हो री/ बायां हाथ को चूल्हो, / माण्ड ऊपर मुखी चूल्हो/ माण्ड नीचे मुखी  
चूल्हो/ माण्ड गोळ अण्डो माण्ड/ बीजणी को डंडो माण्ड, / ऐरी पढ़ लिख बेटी  
म्हारी राज करैगी/ कारां मोटरां मै बैठी - बैठी फिरैगी।/ माण्ड बेटी माण्ड  
....।/ बदल्यो जमानो बेटी तू भी तो बदल री/ थारै आगै खुशियां ये कबसूं  
मचळ री/ अणपढ़ औरतां दबेल रही मरदां की/ फेर कस्यां जीवती मांखी नै तू  
निंगळ री/ म्हारी कड़वी बातां का जे घूंट भरैगी/ कारां मोटरां मै बैठी - बैठी  
फिरैगी।/ माण्ड बेटी माण्ड...

इसी तरह कवि मोहनपुरी के गांव वाले गीत ने लोगों को पुराने समय के ग्राम्य जीवन की याद दिला दी। उनके गीत की पंक्तियां थीं -

जाणै कठै गमयो थारो-म्हारो गांव/ जाणै कठै गमयो बाल्हो-बाल्हो गांव/  
न्हावता हरख नै धूळ मं पांख्यां घरोळ/ ऐरमेर गीत गाता रामचड्यां का व्है टोळ  
ऊली मुली तेर का कांई रै खुंगाळ का/ चौवटा को गळयारो धूळा सूं  
गुदाळता/ मारदड़ी मार-मार मोरां नै दुखावता/ गुल्ली माथे ठोर्या दैर भाइला



I.D. Mathur



Murlidhar Gaur



Gopal Sharma Prabhakar

पदावता/ दाबड़ा की राजाराढ चरभर भूलग्या/ हेत हाळी  
मनवार घरबर भूलग्या/ दादाजी जी मीठी बात सुवाद गमयो/  
घर का धीणा को मीठो सुवाद गमयो/ सोनाळी परभात रो  
वू सूरज ई गमयो/ जातीवाडो असळग नैणां मांही जमयो/  
चूंतयां सूं गमयी नीमड़ी की छांव/ जाणै कठै गमयो थारो-  
म्हारो गांव

जाणै कठै गमयो बाल्हो-बाल्हो गांव

विश्व मातृभाषा दिवस पर आयोजित इस कार्यक्रम में मातृभाषा की उपेक्षा को लेकर पीड़ा को अभिव्यक्ति देने वाले एक गीत ने भी सबके मन को लुभाया। कवि देवीलाल महिया के गीत ने श्रोताओं को अपनी माटी, अपनी भाषा से जोड़ा।

मोर पपीओ काग चिड़ी, हेजी बोले निज रा बोल/ मायड़ रो  
जण निरभागी, / घूम रयो अनबोल।/ मायड़ री पहचान रूले  
क्यू राज मै/ जीभ थका अनबोल फिरा म्हे राज मै/ भाषा रो  
अधिकार गमयो गणराज मै/ जीभ थका ...

माँ बोली बिना मिनख जामारो, गूँगो गेलो और पतबारो/ भासा  
बिन बालकपन बोलो, बोली बाखल साल चौबारो/ भासा ही  
पट राखै मिनख समाज मै/ जीभ थका ...

साधु संत गुणी आ भासा, इण में मीरा कृष्ण रिझायो/ इनमे  
जीव दया दरखत रो जम्भेश्वर संदेश पुगायो/ करणी गाथा गांवा  
जिन आवाज में/ जीभ थका...

इसी तरह महिया के राजस्थान की गौरव-गाथा को दर्शाने वाले गीत ने सभी को गर्व से भर दिया।

भारत री गौरव गाथा में/ जिरी ऊजळ एक कहाणी है/ तप-  
तेज-साच-सगती-भगती/ जिरी आखै जगत पिछाणी है/ जस  
अजर अमर इण धरती रो/ जस गा'-गा' म्है इतरावां/ हृदय में मायड़ बोल  
राख/ मैं राजस्थानी कहलावां।

इस अवसर पर फारूख आफरीदी, ईश्वर दत्त माथुर, महेश शर्मा, साधना गर्ग, कैलाश शर्मा, तनया गडकरी आदि गणमान्य लोग उपस्थित रहे। ग्रासरूट मीडिया फाउंडेशन के प्रमोद शर्मा ने प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की प्रेरणा से होने वाले कार्यक्रमों की जानकारी देते हुए सभी का धन्यवाद ज्ञापित किया।

आखर राजस्थान का आयोजन श्री सीमेंट की सीएसआर पहल के तहत हुआ। सहयोगी ग्रासरूट मीडिया फाउंडेशन, हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर आईटीसी राजपूताना हैं।



Farookh Afridi and Sadhna Garg

## आप जो बात कहना चाहते हैं वह कागज पर आते-आते आधी रह जाती है: शकील जमाली



Shahnawaz Shibli

Shakeel Jamali

रस बोलना लेखक की सबसे बड़ी जिम्मेदारी है। यदि आप संवेदनशील हैं तो दुनिया आपके लिए अच्छी जगह नहीं है आपको बहुत मुश्किल हो जाएगी। भाषाओं को मजहब के खेमे में नहीं रखना चाहिए।" यह बात शकील जमाली ने उर्दू ग़ज़ल, शायरी से जुड़ी स्थिति को बयां करते हुए कही। वे प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन द्वारा आयोजित 'लफ़ज़' कोलकाता में अतिथि वक्ता थे। उनसे प्रोफेसर शाहनवाज शिबली ने संवाद किया। शिबली ने जमाली का शायराना परिचय करवाया। जमाली की प्रकाशित किताबों में 'धूप तेज है', 'कटोरे में चाँद', 'मौज में है बंजारा' और 'कागज पर आसमान' चर्चित हैं। जल्दी ही 'मौलसिरी के फूल' ग़ज़ल संग्रह प्रकाशित होने वाला है।

शिबली ने पूछा कि आपने शायरी को ही क्यों चुना? जमाली ने कहा कि शायर का काम बड़ी जिम्मेदारी का है। समाज के दिलों में क्या चल रहा है, यह शायर ही बताएगा। लिखना-पढ़ना मेरा मुकद्दर था। हमारा काम दिलों को जोड़ना है, हम ऐसे समाज की तामीर करें जिसमें हमारी आने वाली पीढ़ियां सुकून से रह सकें।

करुंगा क्या जो मोहब्बत में हो गया नाकाम  
मुझे तो और कोई काम भी नहीं आता।

जमाली ने कहा कि ऐसे बहुत से दुःख होते हैं, जो आप ग़ज़ल में नहीं कह सकते पर नज़्म या कविता में कह सकते हैं। ग़ज़ल में काफ़िया और रदीफ़ की मजबूरी है। आपके पास शब्दावली है तो आसान हो जाती है, तकनीक तो ऊपर वाला देता है। हमारी मिट्टी मोहब्बत और प्यार की है। आपके पास खूबसूरत दिल है तो आप सबके हैं। 150-200 साल पहले दाग़ ने कहा था—  
न हिंदू कहीं के हैं, न मुसलमान कहीं के हैं  
ये दोनों यहीं रहेंगे, ये दोनों यहीं के हैं।

जमाली ने कहा कि आज लोग पढ़ कम रहे हैं और लिख अधिक रहे हैं। हमें कोशिश करनी चाहिए कि हम पढ़ें और समझें, लिखने की हड़बड़ी न करें। उन्होंने माना कि ग़ज़ल लिखने के अंदाज में, उसकी शब्दावली और उसके तरीके में खासा बदलाव आया है। उन्होंने शायरी सुनाई, कुछ बानगी यों हैं —

हरेक आंसू की कीमत जानती है  
ग़ज़ल शायर का दुख पहचानती है

\*\*\*

वादे पे न आओगे तो तफ़्तीश तो होगी  
कानून को तोड़ोगे तो चालान तो होगा

\*\*\*

जमाली का कहना था कि विसंगति, खराबी, बुराई हमें तकलीफ़ पहुंचाती है। मुझे जो कमी नजर आती है, वह मैं कहता हूँ। उन्होंने कहा कि शायर कोई मसीहा नहीं होता, मगर वह आपको बता सकता है कि कहां क्या चल रहा है। उन्होंने सुनाया—

बुला बुला के थक गई मोहब्बतें

मगर उसे कभी बुखार आ गया कभी जुकाम हो गया

जमाली ने कहा कि ग़ज़ल सीधे-सीधे अपनी बात नहीं करती, बल्कि अपनी बातों को इशारे से बयां करती है और वही उसकी खासियत है।

अब मैं उससे थोड़ा आगे चलता हूँ  
मुझको जिसका पीछा करना होता है

\*\*\*

गुमसुम सा क्यों बैठा है  
उठ पौधों को पानी दे

जमाली ने कहा कि वे पुरस्कारों को बहुत अधिक तवज़ुह नहीं देते। उन्होंने माना कि रेख्ता की वजह से नई पीढ़ी भाषा सीख रही है और साहित्य के प्रति उनकी रुचि भी बढ़ी है। उन्होंने कहा कि उर्दू-हिंदी दोनों हमारी भाषा है, दाएं हाथ से उर्दू, बाएं हाथ से हिंदी। जमाली ने अपनी कई ग़ज़ल सुनाई, साथ ही दर्शकों के प्रश्नों के उत्तर भी दिए।

यह जो खुश होने का दावा करते हैं  
दिन में चार दफा समझौता करते हैं

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वफादारी पर आफत आ रही है  
मियां ले लो जो कीमत आ रही है

\*\*\*

शुरुआत में होटल ताज बंगाल के महाप्रबंधक अर्नब चटर्जी ने स्वागत करते हुए कहा कि यह उर्दू, अरबी और फ़ारसी साहित्य का जश्न मनाने की एक बेहतरीन पहल है। अहसास वूमेन कोलकाता ईशा दत्ता ने धन्यवाद और प्रियका कोठारी ने अतिथियों का उत्तरीय पहना कर अभिनंदन किया।

लफ़ज़ कोलकाता का आयोजन अहसास वूमेन की सहभागिता और श्री सीमेंट की सीएसआर पहल के तहत हुआ। सहयोगी रेख्ता फाउंडेशन और हास्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर होटल ताज बंगाल कोलकाता हैं



Esha Dutta, Priyanka Kothari and Javed Yusuf



## ‘मुस्कान’ के तहत ज्ञान यज्ञ, सैकड़ों विद्यार्थियों को निःशुल्क पाठ्यपुस्तकें



The inauguration of the proceedings

**प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** ने अपने शैक्षिक प्रकल्प ‘मुस्कान’ के तहत भारत रिलीफ सोसाइटी के संयुक्त तत्वावधान में टांटिया हाई स्कूल के सभागार में पंद्रह सौ से अधिक बच्चों को निःशुल्क पाठ्य-पुस्तकें, कॉपियां और अन्य शैक्षणिक सामग्री का वितरण किया। इस कार्यक्रम में सोसाइटी के महासचिव विश्वम्भर नेवर ने कहा कि बच्चों को पुस्तकें भेंट किया जाना ज्ञान यज्ञ में सारस्वत आहुति है, जो अतुलनीय है। आज के समय में पुस्तकों का वितरण कठिन कार्य है, क्योंकि हर स्कूल ने अलग पाठ्यक्रम लागू किया हुआ है। इसके चलते स्कूल के बच्चों को अलग-अलग पुस्तकें खरीदनी पड़ रही हैं।

नेवर ने कहा कि भारत रिलीफ सोसाइटी का यह 39वां ज्ञान यज्ञ है। उन्होंने प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन का आभार जताते हुए कहा कि पिछले दो दशक से फाउंडेशन का निरंतर सहयोग मिल रहा है। फाउंडेशन की संस्थापक का स्मरण करते हुए नेवर ने कहा कि डॉ प्रभा खेतान एक विदुषी महिला थीं, जिनकी रचनाएं आज भी साहित्यिक क्षेत्र में अपना महत्वपूर्ण स्थान रखती हैं। वे समाजसेवा के क्षेत्र में भी सक्रिय रहीं और उनके द्वारा प्रारंभ की गई सभी सामाजिक गतिविधियों को फाउंडेशन पूरी सक्रियता से आज भी उसी निष्ठा से जारी रखे हुए हैं।

कार्यक्रम का उद्घाटन गौरव जाजोदिया ने किया। इस अवसर पर उन्होंने सोसाइटी और प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की ओर से निरंतर जारी इस महत्वपूर्ण कार्य की प्रशंसा की। उन्होंने आश्वासन दिया कि भविष्य में भी उनसे जो भी सहयोग होगा, वे पूरा करते रहेंगे।

सुमधुर भजनों से कार्यक्रम की शुरुआत के बाद अतिथियों ने दीप प्रज्वलन कर मां सरस्वती के चरणों में श्रद्धा सुमन अर्पित किए। इस अवसर पर विशिष्ट अतिथि के रूप में रमेश सोंथलिया, सोसाइटी के अध्यक्ष संदीप शाहा, टांटिया हाई स्कूल के सचिव कैलाश चंद शर्मा सहित गणमान्य नागरिक, बच्चे और उनके अभिभावक उपस्थित थे।

कार्यक्रम के दौरान विद्यार्थियों ने भी गीत और कविताएं प्रस्तुत किए। विशिष्ट अतिथियों ने बच्चों को पुस्तकें और स्टेशनरी प्रदान की। संचालन विभागीय सचिव नाथू राम गुप्ता ने किया। आयोजकों की ओर से प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन के प्रतिनिधि मोहन कुमार ने सभी के प्रति आभार व्यक्त किया।



The children with their books

Nathuram Gupta, Mohan Kumar, Gourav Jajodia, Sandip Shah, Ramesh Sonthalia, Kailash Chandra Sharma and Bishambhar Newar

## श्रद्धांजलि: अपनों ने उषाकिरण खान को किया याद, कहा स्मृतियों में हमेशा सुगंधित रहेंगी

साहित्य अकादेमी पुरस्कार से सम्मानित हिंदी और मैथिली की प्रख्यात कथाकार, कवयित्री, नाटककार और लेखिका उषाकिरण खान की

स्मृतियों और यादों में डूबा यह एक विशेष दिन था। पद्मश्री से अलंकृत साहित्यकार उषाकिरण खान की याद में पटना में **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** ने अपने सहयोगियों के साथ एक श्रद्धांजलि सभा आयोजित की। इस दौरान वक्ताओं ने बेहद भावुकतापूर्ण ढंग में उषा जी के व्यक्तित्व, व्यवहार, उनके लेखन और सृजन कर्म को याद किया। उनकी साहित्यिक यात्रा का उल्लेख करते हुए वक्ताओं ने कहा कि वह फूल का बखान करने के साथ जड़ों की भी जानकारी रखती थीं। उनकी रचनाओं में खुशी, दर्द और आशा का समावेश है। वक्ताओं ने यह माना कि उषा जी हम सबकी स्मृतियों में हमेशा सुगंधित रहेंगी, उन्हें याद कर खुद को हरा महसूस किया जा सकता है।

अनीश अंकुर से बातचीत में आलोक धन्वा ने कहा कि वह हमसे इस तरह जुड़ी थीं, जैसे मेरे परिवार के लोग नहीं जुड़े हैं। उषा से मेरा रिश्ता आंसुओं का रहा। उन्होंने हमें प्रेम करना सिखाया। उनसे मुझे प्रेम की परिभाषा समझ में आयी, और जो प्रेम सिखाए, उससे बड़ा गुरु नहीं। उन्होंने कहा कि उषा ने जो लिखा, उससे अधिक उनमें गहराई थी। हमने ऐसी दुनिया बनाई है, जहां सब कुछ नहीं लिखा

जा सकता, लेकिन उषा की दुनिया बड़ी थी। वह सब कुछ लिखती थीं। उनमें भय नहीं था। उनमें सीखने और पढ़ने की ललक थी। वह लगातार पढ़ती लिखती थीं। उनमें ज्ञान पिपासा थी।



The late Usha Kiran Khan

धन्वा ने कहा कि उषा ने जो लिखा है, उनका जीवन परिचय उससे बड़ा है। वे चाहतीं, तो विदेश में रहतीं, पर उन्हें गांव प्रिय था। उषा अपने गांव जाना पसंद करती थीं, जहां उनका जन्म हुआ था। वह एक सक्रिय, करुणामयी और विदुषी महिला थीं। उन्होंने जितना विद्यापति को जाना है, उतना कोई भी नहीं जान सका हैं। लेखिका के रूप में वह अपने समय में सर्वोपरि थीं। उषा फूल और जड़ दोनों की समझ रखती थीं। धन्वा ने कहा कि उनके नाम से आयाम की ओर से पुस्तकालय बनाना चाहिए, जिसमें उनकी लिखी हुई पुस्तक रखी जा सके। साथ ही उनके लिखे हुए विषय पर पटना विश्वविद्यालय में पीएचडी शुरू करना चाहिए।

डॉ. संतोष दीक्षित ने कहा कि जब मैं किशोर अवस्था में था तो वह मेरी नायिका थीं। उस समय से मैं उनको पढ़ता आ रहा हूं। वह कहती थीं कि मीठा बोलना मैथिली वालों की कला है। जब हम किसी को मीठा

पिला कर मार सकते हैं तो फिर जहर की क्या जरूरत है। उषा जी साहित्य की संस्था थीं। उनकी कृतियों में नयापन था। उनके अंदर हमेशा जिज्ञासा



Anish Ankur, Alok Dhanwa and Santosh Dixit reflect on the legacy of Usha Kiran Khan

बनी रहती थी। उनकी रचनाओं में सामाजिक परिवेश था। उनके उपन्यास हमेशा उनको जीवित रखेंगे। उनका साहित्य भविष्य में तारे की तरह लोगों को दिशा दिखाने का काम करेगा।

प्रोफेसर तरुण कुमार ने कहा कि उषा का जाना पटना के सांस्कृतिक पुल के ढह जाने के समान है। उन्होंने कहा कि खुद लेखक होना बड़ी बात नहीं है। अपने जैसी फौज पैदा करना बड़ी बात है। उनके जाने की भरपाई नहीं की जा सकती है। प्रो. वीणा अमृत ने कहा कि उषा ने हमें दुःख का अर्थ समझाया। वह कहती थीं कि दुःख, धैर्य, संतुलन और मजबूती देता है। उनके ज्ञान से हम समृद्ध हुए। उनके पास हर समस्या का समाधान था। कार्यक्रम के दौरान उषा जी की बेटी कनु प्रिया ने मां की लिखी पंक्तियां 'दौड़ी-दौड़ी रे गुलेरिया' सुनाई। मंच संचालन अन्विता प्रधान ने किया। इस अवसर पर मुख्य सूचना आयुक्त त्रिपुरारी शरण, आनंद माधव, भावना शेखर, वीणा अमृत, रत्नेश्वर सिंह, शहनाज फातमी, डा। अजीत प्रधान, निवेदिता, रानी श्रीवास्तव, इति माधव सहित बड़ी संख्या में उषा जी के लेखन के प्रशंसक उपस्थित थे।

उल्लेखनीय है कि उषाकिरण खान के व्यक्तित्व पर अपने स्वतंत्रता सेनानी गांधीवादी पिता के संस्कारों का गहरा प्रभाव पड़ा था। वे पंडित हजारी प्रसाद द्विवेदी और बाबा नागार्जुन जैसे साहित्यकारों के स्नेह-सान्निध्य में रही थीं। आपने संस्कृत, पालि, अंग्रेजी, मैथिली एवं हिंदी के प्राचीन साहित्य का गहन अध्ययन किया था। आप पाटलिपुत्र विश्वविद्यालय के बीडी कॉलेज के प्राचीन भारतीय इतिहास और पुरातत्व विभाग की अध्यक्ष रहीं। कई विधाओं में बहुआयामी लेखन करने वाली उषाकिरण खान हिंदी-मैथिली में समान रूप से अधिकार रखती थीं। आपके 17 से अधिक उपन्यास, सात कहानी संकलन, नौ कविता-



Anvita Pradhan



Tarun Kumar



Veena Amrit



Kanupriya Shankar

संग्रह, बाल साहित्य की पांच पुस्तकें, कथेतर साहित्य की तीन पुस्तकें और चार मैथिली नाटक भी चर्चित खूब रहे।

महिलाओं के समान अधिकार और समानता की गहरी पक्षधर रहीं उषाकिरण खान का यही सबल स्वत्व बोध उनके रचनात्मक व्यक्तित्व को विशेषता प्रदान करता रहा। उनके लेखन में मिथिला का इतिहास, कला, संस्कृति और समाज का सौंदर्य भी दिखता था। उद्दाम प्रेम के साथ स्थानीयता उनके कथानक, कहानियों और उपन्यासों का मूल बोध रहे। 'पानी पर लकीर', 'फागुन के बाद', 'सीमांत कथा', 'रतनारे नयन', 'अंगन-हिंडोला', 'अनुत्तरित प्रश्न', 'हसीना मंजिल', 'भामती', 'सिरजनहार' के अलावा कहानी संग्रह 'गीली पॉक', 'कासवन', 'दूबजान', 'विवश विक्रमादित्य', 'जन्म अवधि', 'घर से घर तक', 'काँचहि बाँस'; नाटक 'कहाँ गए मेरे उगना', 'हीरा डोम', 'फागुन', 'एकसरि ठाढ़', 'मुसकौल बला'; बाल नाटक 'डैडी बदल गए हैं', 'नानी की कहानी', 'सात भाई और चंपा', 'चिड़िया चुग गई खेत', 'घंटी से बान्हल राजू', 'बिरडो आबिगेल' और बाल उपन्यास 'लड़ाकू जनमेजय' आदि से हिंदी और मैथिली साहित्य में अपनी अलग पहचान बना लेने वाली हमारे दौर की महत्वपूर्ण कथाकार उषाकिरण खान को पद्मश्री अलंकरण के अलावा बिहार राष्ट्रभाषा परिषद का हिंदी सेवी पुरस्कार, बिहार राजभाषा का महादेवी वर्मा पुरस्कार, कुसुमांजलि पुरस्कार, भारत भारती पुरस्कार तथा मैथिली भाषा में साहित्य अकादेमी पुरस्कार से सम्मानित किया गया था।

इस श्रद्धांजलि सभा में **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन**, **आयाम**, **नवरस स्कूल ऑफ परफॉर्मिंग आर्ट्स**, **आखर** और **कलम** से जुड़े लेखक, साहित्यकार, स्त्रीवादियों, विचारकों के अलावा उषाकिरण खान से जुड़े उनके अपनों और उनके प्रशंसक पाठकों ने भी उन्हें नमन किया।



Guests observe a minute of silence in memory of the late Usha Kiran Khan



## प्रभा खेतान स्मृति दिवस पर चूरु शहर में संवाद संस्थान का शानदार राष्ट्रीय कवि सम्मेलन

कभी राजस्थानी गीतों पर झूमते, तो कभी हास्य-व्यंग्य की फुलझड़ियों पर ठहाके, कभी देशभक्ति से भरी ओजस्वी कविताओं का रोमांच, तो कभी मां-पिता-भाई जैसे रिश्तों पर मार्मिक प्रस्तुतियों से भावुकता भरा समां... संवाद संस्थान की ओर से स्त्री-विमर्श की सशक्त लेखिका प्रभा खेतान के स्मृति दिवस पर चूरु शहर के मनोरंजन क्लब में आयोजित राष्ट्रीय कवि सम्मेलन का नजारा ऐसा ही था।

लगभग चार दशक बाद चूरु ने यह रंग देखा। मुख्य अतिथि जिला पुलिस अधीक्षक राजेश कुमार मीना थे, तो अध्यक्षता लेखक-शिक्षाविद प्रो. कमल कोठारी ने की। सहायक निदेशक-जनसंपर्क कुमार अजय, वरिष्ठ कवि प्रो सुरेंद्र सोनी और पुलिस उपाधीक्षक जयपाल अटल बतौर विशिष्ट अतिथि उपस्थित थे। आरंभ में भारत माता एवं सरस्वती प्रतिमा के समक्ष दीप प्रज्वलन से हुआ। प्रख्यात हास्य कवि हरीश हिंदुस्तानी ने हास्य फुलझड़ियों से सम्मेलन की शुरुआत की। राजस्थानी कवि बगड़ के भागीरथ सिंह भाग्य ने 'खा धक्का दिन च्यार, बलम मेरा घर आया...', 'गैली से सूँ पैली...' और 'एक छोरी काळती...' जैसी रचनाओं से सम्मेलन को परवान चढ़ाया।

विवेक पारीक ने चंद्रयान-3 की सफलता पर 'है कहानी भारत के अभिमान की, विज्ञान की, अनुसंधान की...' सहित 'धीर धर, धीर धर, अधीर ना हो, धीर धर...', 'नर सिंहों की जननी है ये माटी हिंदुस्तान की...' जैसी वीर रस से सराबोर प्रस्तुतियां दीं। कवयित्री सरला मिश्रा ने 'शुरू करो क्रांति और वीरता की तिमिर को चीरती कहानियां...', 'कलम ही समय आने पर हथियार बन जाए...' जैसी कविताओं से दाद पाई। कल्पना शुक्ला ने रिश्तों से जुड़े भावनात्मक और मार्मिक गीत, जैसे 'गीत वेदना उर में छिपाए रहते बाबूजी...' सुनाया। हास्य कवि गजेन्द्र कविया ने राजस्थानी भाषा में प्रस्तुतियां दीं।

सभी कवियों और वक्ताओं ने हिंदी साहित्य और नारी विमर्श में डॉ प्रभा खेतान के योगदान को रेखांकित किया। कार्यक्रम संयोजक नरेंद्र शर्मा ने स्वागत वक्तव्य और कार्यक्रम की रूपरेखा पर चर्चा की। उन्होंने कहा कि प्रभा खेतान की स्मृति में यह कार्यक्रम में चूरु शहर में सांस्कृतिक गतिविधियों को गति देने की एक पहल है। प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन का आभार जताते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि सांस्कृतिक, साहित्यिक गतिविधियों के लिए फाउंडेशन और उसके कर्ताधर्ता संदीप भूतोड़िया का प्रेम अनुकरणीय है। बिना उनके सहयोग के यह आयोजन नहीं होता।

कभी हास्य-व्यंग्य की फुलझड़ियों पर ठहाके, कभी देशभक्ति से भरी ओजस्वी कविताओं का रोमांच, तो कभी मां-पिता-भाई जैसे रिश्तों पर मार्मिक प्रस्तुतियों से भावुकता भरा समां... संवाद संस्थान की ओर से स्त्री-विमर्श की सशक्त लेखिका प्रभा खेतान के स्मृति दिवस पर चूरु शहर के मनोरंजन क्लब में आयोजित राष्ट्रीय कवि सम्मेलन का नजारा ऐसा ही था।

इस दौरान जिला प्रमुख वंदना आर्य, पूर्व प्रमुख हरलाल सहारण, पूर्व सभापति विजय शर्मा, मोहम्मद हुसैन निर्वाण, ओम सारस्वत, कोतवाली थानाधिकारी अरविंद भारद्वाज, एपीआरओ मनीष कुमार, विकास रणवां, लीटू कल्पनाकांत, राधेश्याम चोटिया, जमील चौहान, मो. हुसैन निर्वाण सहित बड़ी संख्या में जनप्रतिनिधि, अधिकारी, गणमान्य नागरिक एवं साहित्यप्रेमी मौजूद रहे। संचालन हरीश हिंदुस्तानी एवं अनुराग शर्मा ने किया। कार्यक्रम में योगेश गौड़, अभिषेक चोटिया, डॉ मनोज योगाचार्य, सुनील भाऊवाला, रामस्वरूप शर्मा, महेश मिश्रा, संदीप पाटिल, महेंद्र चौबे, रवि दाधीच, श्रीराम पीपलवा, गोपीचंद शर्मा, कैलाश नवहाल, विनोद ओझा, दिनेश शर्मा, गोपाल पारीक, वीणा शर्मा, विमला शर्मा, नवरतन नवहाल, जगदीश रिबियेवाला, देवकांत शर्मा, बाबू पाटिल, नरेंद्र एडवोकेट, सुरेश सारस्वत, राजीव बहड़, लव कालिया, केशर देव आर्य, गुरुदास भारती, देवराज लाटा, आशीष गौतम, पवन शर्मा, मनोज शर्मा, नरेश भाटी, पीयूष दाधीच, कौशल दाधीच, अमित तिवाड़ी, राजेंद्र शेखावत, जगदीश सोनी, गिरधारी सैनी, पवन बड़थवाल, राजेश सोती, योगेश गोयान, कृष्ण कुमार महर्षि, संदेश इंदौरिया, गजानंद गौड़, विनोद राठी, आकाश शर्मा आदि ने कवियों-अतिथियों का स्वागत किया।





Divya Prakash Dubey

## जिस भाषा में आपको सहजता महसूस हो वही अपनानी चाहिए: दिव्य प्रकाश दुबे



Seema Singh

लिखना एक समर्पण की तरह है। हमें नियमित लिखने का अभ्यास करना चाहिए।" यह बात लेखक दिव्य प्रकाश दुबे ने प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन द्वारा आयोजित कलम रांची के एक सत्र में कही। आरम्भ में अहसास वूमन रांची पूनम आनंद ने फाउंडेशन द्वारा संचालित साहित्यिक, सामाजिक और सांस्कृतिक गतिविधियों की जानकारी दी और दुबे का परिचय दिया। अहसास वूमन सीमा सिंह के साथ बातचीत में दुबे ने बताया कि उनके पिता ब्यूरोक्रेसी में थे। उसका लाभ यह रहा कि एक आदर्श जिंदगी मिली और पढ़ाई का अच्छा माहौल मिला। इंजीनियरिंग की पढ़ाई पूरी की तब महसूस हुआ कि पैसे कमाने चाहिए तो एमबीए भी किया। लेकिन एक सवाल जो हर पल दिलोदिमाग में चलता रहता था कि हम क्या हैं और कौन हैं? हमारी दुनिया क्या है, एक यह जिंदगी जो हम जी रहे हैं या दूसरी जो इस नीली बत्ती के बाहर है। खैर 24-25 साल में अपनी आदर्श वाली दुनिया से बाहर निकलना शुरू किया। उस समय घर में कुछ पत्र पत्रिकाएं भी आती थीं, जिसे मैं पढ़ता रहता था, इसलिए मुझे इस बात को समझने में आसानी हुई कि मुझे क्या करना चाहिए और सबसे अच्छी बात यह रही कि मुझे कोई डर नहीं लगा और आगे बढ़ता रहा।



Poonam Anand

किसी बात को स्क्रीन पर दिखाना बहुत कठिन है। तीन शब्द हैं – बताओ मत दिखाओ। स्क्रीन पर जो चलता है वह लिखे हुए को दिखाया जाता है। वस्तुतः हमारे दिमाग में कुछ अलग चल रहा होता है, जबकि हम बोल कुछ और रहे होते हैं। गॉडफादर फिल्म में स्क्रीन प्ले लिखा गया पर उसे 200 लोगों ने भी नहीं पढ़ा होगा। गॉडफादर पुस्तक को लाखों लोगों ने पढ़ा। किताब शुद्ध रूप में है, यानी जिस भाव में लिखी है उसी अर्थ में पढ़ कर भाव ग्रहण किया जाता है। लेखक पुस्तक लिखकर नाम कमाना चाहता है।

दुबे ने बताया कि उन पर किसी तरह का कोई दबाव नहीं रहा। पढ़ाई के दौरान ओशो की लगभग 80 किताबें 2 साल में पढ़ डाली। उनके विचारों का प्रभाव रहा और अपने को उसी कैरेक्टर की तरह ही समझने लगे। हम सब दुनिया भर के उपदेश देना चाहते हैं। सबको लगता है मुझे जो मिला है उसमें थोड़ा बहुत बदलाव कर दुनिया को लौटा दो। हम जब अपने आप को दिखाने की कोशिश करते हैं तो बहुत कुछ छिपा रहे होते हैं।

अपनी लेखन शैली के सवाल पर उनका कहना था कि जब मैं क्रिकेट देखता था, तो सहवाग से प्रभावित था। सहवाग अपना मैच खेलते समय पुराने मैचों की परफॉर्मैस को ध्यान में नहीं रखता था। इस तरह मैं भी लिखते समय पुराने लिखे हुए को याद नहीं रखता। निसंदेह समाज का प्रभाव आता है। पहली बार आप गलतियां कर सकते हैं। पहले की तुलना में आगे की पुस्तक तकनीकी रूप से बेहतर हो सकती है, उनका क्राफ्ट और अच्छा हो सकता है पर सभी किताबें पहली बार ही लिखी गई हैं। पहली किताब ही तो 25वीं किताब की पहली सीढ़ी है। उन्होंने युवाओं को पढ़ने के लिए सुरेंद्र वर्मा की 'मुझे चांद चाहिए' और अज्ञेय की 'शेखर एक जीवनी' की अनुशंसा की।

दुबे ने अपनी पुस्तक 'यार पापा' के कुछ अंश भी सुनाए। उन्होंने श्रोताओं के प्रश्नों का भी उत्तर दिया। उन्होंने कहा, हम हारने वालों की कहानी नहीं बताते। युवाओं से उनके जमाने की बात उनकी बोलचाल की भाषा में ही करनी होगी। लेखक के लिए सेंस ऑफ ह्यूमर बहुत जरूरी है। अंत में अहसास वूमन पूनम आनंद द्वारा ने दुबे का उपहार भेंट कर अभिनंदन किया।

कलम रांची का आयोजन अहसास वूमन की सहभागिता और श्री सीमेंट की सीएसआर पहल के तहत हुआ। हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर होटल चाणक्य और प्रिंट मीडिया पार्टनर दैनिक जागरण हैं

दुबे ने बताया कि पढ़ाई के दौरान पूरा वातावरण इंग्लिश का रहा। उस समय में इंग्लिश के लेखकों दौर का चल रहा था। जैसे चेतन भगत, अमीश त्रिपाठी आदि का, परन्तु वे अंग्रेजी में उतना सहज नहीं महसूस कर पा रहे थे। फिर जैसी कहानियां लिखना चाहते थे, उसकी दुनिया सिर्फ हिंदी में थी।

'यार पापा' की स्टोरी लाइन की प्रेरणा एक सपने से मिली। उन्होंने कहा, मुझे एक सपना आया कि तीन दोस्त 50 साल की उम्र में स्कूल पढ़ने जाते हैं। इसके बाद बहुत दिनों तक यही सोचता रहा कि ऐसा कैसे हो सकता है लेकिन बाद में ऐसे लगा कि क्यों नहीं हो सकता इस तरह से मुझे एक ऑइडिया आया। हालांकि यह कहानी नहीं है। इससे पहले मैंने एक कहानी लिखी थी इन्नेबतूती जिसमें माँ-बेटे की कहानी थी। तो उस समय लगा कि आजकल के माहौल में पिता और पुत्र में ज्यादा बातचीत नहीं हो पाती और बच्चे भी अपने आपको एकांत में रखना चाहते हैं। उस समय यह यहसास हुआ कि पिता को अगर बेटे से बातचीत करनी है तो पिता बन कर नहीं बल्कि एक दोस्त बन कर बात करनी होगी और यार पापा उसी कथ्य पर आधारित है।

फिल्म और साहित्य के अलग अनुभव के बारे में उनका कहना था कि किताब में जो लिखा है आप उसी अर्थ में ग्रहण करते हैं। लेकिन फिल्म में





## अनुवाद अन्य भाषा से अपनी भाषा में परकाया प्रवेश की तरह है: घनश्याम नाथ कच्छावा



Avinash Lall, Sushma Agarwal, Kshitij Chandrakar, Hira Manikpuri, Gaurav Girija Shukla, Ghanshyam Nath Kachhawa, Piyush Kumar, Abha Pal, Inder Pal Kaur, Anil Bhatpahari and Arun Kumar Nigam

साहित्य में अनुवाद बहुत कठिन है, यह दो संस्कृतियों में संवाद का भी माध्यम है। अन्य भाषा से अपनी भाषा में अनुवाद परकाया प्रवेश की तरह है, इसमें पात्रों को जीना होता है। केवल शब्दों का नहीं, अपितु भाव में अनुवाद करना होता है।" यह बात घनश्याम नाथ कच्छावा ने प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन द्वारा आयोजित कलम रायपुर में कही। आरंभ में अभिकल्प फाउंडेशन के गौरव गिरिजा शुक्ला ने अतिथियों का स्वागत किया और फाउंडेशन की गतिविधियों की चर्चा की। पर्यावरण और प्रकृति प्रेमी अतिथि वक्ता कच्छावा का परिचय देते हुए शुक्ला ने उनकी राजस्थानी और हिंदी में प्रकाशित कृतियों के अलावा अनुवाद पुस्तकों, विनिबंध और संपादित पुस्तकों का भी जिक्र किया।

छत्तीसगढ़ी लोक संस्कृति के अध्येता पीयूष कुमार ने सूत्रधार की भूमिका निभाई और पूछा कि आपकी साहित्यिक यात्रा की शुरुआत कैसे हुई? कच्छावा ने बताया कि मेरा जन्म जोधपुर में हुआ। पिता के व्यवसाय के कारण हमें सुजानगढ़ में शिफ्ट होना पड़ा। वहीं मेरा परिचय महाकवि कन्हैयालाल सेठिया हुआ। उनकी प्रेरणा से ही मेरी साहित्यिक यात्रा प्रारंभ हुई और उन्हीं की विरासत को आगे बढ़ाने का कार्य कर रहा हूँ। राजस्थानी भाषा ने हिंदी के लिए अपना बलिदान दिया।

कच्छावा ने कहा कि राजस्थान के साहित्यकार दोनों भाषाओं में लिखते हैं। छत्तीसगढ़ और राजस्थान में सांस्कृतिक एकता है। सुजानगढ़ में 9-10 साल की उम्र में पांचवी कक्षा में प्रवेश मिला। हिंदी पाठ्य पुस्तक में कन्हैयालाल सेठिया की कविता थी 'कुण जमीन रो धणी'। उन्होंने ही मुझे लिखने की प्रेरणा दी। बच्चों की पत्रिका बालहंस में 101 बाल साहित्यकारों की कहानी छपी, उसमें मेरी कहानी 'चालाक चुहिया' छपी। साहित्य में झुकाव बचपन से ही रहा। लोक भाषा में मारक शक्ति है, इसमें रचनात्मकता का स्पेस अधिक है। मनुष्य अपनी बेहतरीन अभिव्यक्ति मातृभाषा में ही दे सकता है। मेरा लेखन विविधता पूर्ण है, कविता, कहानी, डायरी, संस्मरण, निबंध सभी में मैंने काम किया है। पर लघु कथा मुझे अत्यंत प्रिय है, इसमें मैं बहुत सहज महसूस करता हूँ। 2006 में मेरी पुस्तक 'टूठ' छपी उसका सेठिया जी ने विमोचन किया। मेरी एक पुस्तक का विमोचन विजयदान देथा 'बिज्जी' ने और एक पुस्तक का रानी लक्ष्मी कुमारी चुंडावत ने किया।

श्रोताओं के आग्रह पर कच्छावा ने कुछ लघु कथाएं और डायरी 'सूनीं गलियां-घर आबाद' के भी कुछ अंश सुनाए। उन्होंने बताया कि वन्य जीव संरक्षण के लिए भी हमने बहुत काम किया है। फेसबुक पर रोज एक हाइकू लिखना शुरू किया, अब तक मेरे 5000 से अधिक हाइकू हो गए हैं। यह

जापानी विधा है। मैंने राजस्थानी में हाइकू लिखे -  
नीं खाया जिको/ माँ बाप रा गधीड़/ खावै भचीड़  
\*  
मित्र तो इत्र/ रिश्ता महकता/ जीवन विचित्र

मैंने सिंधी कविताओं का अनुवाद राजस्थानी में किया और उसका नाम दिया 'आधुनिक कविता संघ'। इसमें सिंधी कवियों की चौखरी विधा है, दो पंक्तियां और चार शब्द। यह पुरानी विधा है, अब लुप्त हो गई है। साहित्य में राजनीति के प्रवेश ने साहित्यकारों को खेमेबाजी में बांट दिया, इसका नुकसान हुआ। मैंने भी चौखरी में प्रयोग किया -

धड़कता दिल/ जल्दी मिल  
\*  
चाह रखना/ पीड़ा चखना  
\*  
पीड़ा प्रेम/ राशि एक  
\*  
प्रकृति भगवान/ भटके इंसान  
\*  
परदेसी मीत/ अधूरी प्रीत

कच्छावा ने चिंता जताई कि आज हम तकनीक के दौर में हैं, जमाना बदल रहा है। बाल साहित्य किसके लिए लिखें, कौन पढ़ेगा? बचपन में कॉमिक्स पढ़ते थे, अब मोबाइल के जाल में सब उलझे हुए हैं। कच्छावा ने बताया कि असम में साहित्य के प्रति बहुत गहरी जागरूकता है। सईद अब्दुल मलिक की पुस्तक का अनुवाद का काम मिला तो वहां के मुख्यमंत्री का फोन आया, शिक्षा मंत्री ने लिखा कि आप बहुत अच्छा काम कर रहे हैं। उन्होंने कहा कि लोक भाषा को जिंदा रखना है, तो उन भाषाओं में बात करना शुरू करें। जैसा सोचता हूँ उसी तरह लिखता हूँ। विद्या वह जो आचरण में दिखे। लेखक, अनुवादक, कवि को आचरण में भी उन मूल्यों को उतारना चाहिए। अणुव्रत का सिद्धांत है निज पर शासन, फिर अनुशासन। जो विधा लुप्त हो रही है, उसको चुनौती के रूप में लेकर लिखना चाहिए।

कलम रायपुर का आयोजन अहसास वूमन की सहभागिता और श्री सीमेंट की सीएसआर पहल के तहत हुआ। सहयोगी अभिकल्प फाउंडेशन और हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर हयात रायपुर हैं।

## वही देश प्रगति कर सकता है, जिसका साहित्य प्रगतिशील है: घनश्याम नाथ कच्छावा



Vinay Pathak

Ghanshyam Nath Kachhawa

कविता संवेदना और गद्य विचार की अभिव्यक्ति है। कबीरदास जी ने बहुत ही सुंदर बात कही है कि सुखिया सब संसार है खाये और सोए, दुखिया दास कबीर है जागे और रोये। कवियों और साहित्यकारों में एक सामाजिक चेतना होती है और उसी चेतना से वे दुनिया को देखते हैं।" यह बात घनश्याम नाथ कच्छावा ने प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की ओर से आयोजित कलम बिलासपुर में बतौर अतिथि वक्ता कही। आरंभ में आयोजकों की ओर से अभिकल्प फाउंडेशन के गौरव गिरिजा शुक्ला ने अतिथियों का स्वागत किया और फाउंडेशन की गतिविधियों की चर्चा की। उन्होंने पर्यावरण और प्रकृति प्रेमी अतिथि वक्ता कच्छावा का परिचय देते हुए उनकी राजस्थानी और हिंदी में प्रकाशित कृतियों के अलावा अनुवाद पुस्तकों, विनिबंध और संपादित पुस्तकों का भी जिक्र किया और बताया कि आपको साहित्य अकादेमी अनुवाद पुरस्कार, जवाहरलाल नेहरू बाल साहित्य अकादेमी का बाल साहित्य सम्मान सहित कई पुरस्कार-सम्मान मिल चुका है।

छत्तीसगढ़ी विद्वान डॉ विनय पाठक ने कच्छावा से संवाद किया। कच्छावा ने खम्मा घणी से शुरुआत की और बताया कि उनका जन्म जोधपुर की मिट्टी में हुआ। बचपन सुजानगढ़ में बीता। वहीं महाकवि कन्हैया लाल सेठिया परिचय हुआ। उनकी प्रेरणा से ही साहित्यिक यात्रा प्रारंभ हुई और उन्हीं की विरासत को आगे बढ़ाने का कार्य कर रहा हूँ। सुजानगढ़ के कण-कण में साहित्य रचा-बसा है, खास कर राजस्थानी साहित्य। प्रभा खेतान जी भी सुजानगढ़ की ही हैं और संदीप भूतोड़िया भी वहीं के हैं। सुजानगढ़ उन कर्मवीरों की कार्यस्थली है जो वर्तमान में कला, साहित्य को एक नई ऊंचाई पर ले जा रहे हैं। मेरा लेखन बाल साहित्य से शुरू हुआ। उसके बाद राजस्थानी में लिखना प्रारंभ किया।

आपने विदेशी विधा हाइकु को अपनाया? उत्तर में कच्छावा ने कहा कि 2006 में मेरी पहली राजस्थानी पुस्तक 'दूठ' के विमोचन पर सेठिया जी ने सुझाव दिया कि आप कुछ नई विधा पर कार्य कीजिए और वहीं से मैंने हाइकु लिखना प्रारंभ किया। आज जिस तरह की भागमभाग वाली जिंदगी हम जी रहे हैं, उसमें सबके पास समय का अभाव है। पढ़ने के लिए समय नहीं है, इसलिए हाइकु जैसी विधा की जरूरत है जिसमें तीन पंक्तियां और 17 अक्षर पढ़ने के बाद अगर पाठक को यह घटों याद रहे, तो इसका सीधा सा अर्थ है कि हम अपनी बात दूसरों तक पहुंचाने में सफल रहे हैं।

कच्छावा ने कहा कि वैसे तो मैं गद्य का ही व्यक्ति हूँ लेकिन मेरे लेखन में आपको विचार, अनुभूति, संवेदना, चेतना सभी विधाओं का समागम मिलेगा। मैंने पिता पर हाइकु लिखे तो दस हाइकु एक साथ लिखे। इस तरह मैंने 250 हाइकु लिखे और उसका

प्रकाशन सत्रहाक्षर नाम से करवाया है। उन्होंने कहा कि मातृभाषा की अपनी एक मिठास होती है। कविता की मिठास को महसूस किया जा सकता है।

गूंगे केरी सर्करा खाये और मुस्काया।  
भासा री खिमता नै, तोलने री ताकड़ी है कविता  
और सबदां रे भारे में, चंदन री लाकड़ी है कविता...

उन्होंने कुछ क्षणिकाएं भी सुनाई -

पतंगा थोड़ा तो जी ले

मरने की तुझे इतनी जल्दी क्यों लगी है  
कह रही है फफकती लौ  
आग तो अभी भी पूरी नहीं जली है

\*\*\*

पथिक थको मत  
इतने नजदीक आकर  
मिट जाएगी तेरी थकान  
मंजिल पाकर

\*\*\*

कच्छावा ने अनुवाद के क्षेत्र का अपना अनुभव शेयर करते हुए कहा कि जब तक परकाया प्रवेश नहीं होगा तब तक अनुवाद सफल नहीं होगा। अनुवाद एक मौलिक काम है, जब मुझे सईद अब्दुल मलिक का उपन्यास दिया गया तब समझ में आया कि सिर्फ हिंदी को राजस्थानी या असमिया को राजस्थानी में बदलने का कार्य अनुवाद नहीं है, बल्कि एक संस्कृति को दूसरी संस्कृति में ढालने का कार्य है। लक्ष्य भाषा और स्रोत भाषा का ज्ञान ही नहीं अपितु सांस्कृतिक दृष्टि भी होनी चाहिए। मुझे आज भी यही लगता है कि यह मेरी मौलिक किताब है। मेरे ख्याल से अनुवाद होते रहना चाहिए। अनुवाद संवाद और संस्कृति को सीखने का बहुत मजबूत माध्यम है। कच्छावा ने सवाल-जवाब सत्र में भी हिस्सा लिया। आभार अहसास वूमन डॉ गरिमा तिवारी ने प्रकट किया।

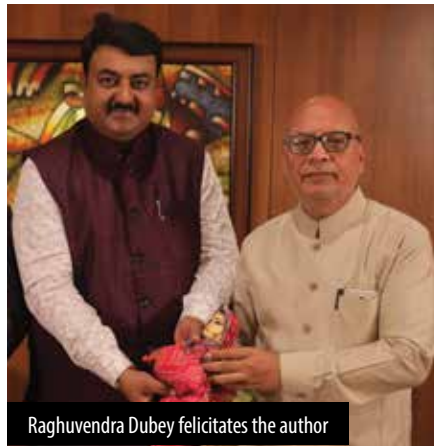
कलम बिलासपुर का आयोजन अहसास वूमन की सहभागिता और श्री सीमेंट की सीएसआर पहल के तहत हुआ। सहयोगी अभिकल्प फाउंडेशन और हिंदी मीडिया पार्टनर नई दुनिया हैं।



Garima Tiwari



Gaurav Girija Shukla



Raghuvendra Dubey felicitates the author



Shubha Singh felicitates Vinay Pathak



लेखन नैसर्गिक है पर इसे निखारा जा सकता है। वह भी तब, जब कुछ न कुछ साहित्य आपके अंदर हो। वैसे अच्छा गुरु भी आपकी लेखन क्षमता को निखार सकता है।" लेखिका अंशु हर्ष ने यह बात प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन द्वारा आयोजित कलम जोधपुर में बतौर अतिथि वक्ता कही। अहसास वूमेन जोधपुर प्रीति मेहता ने आगंतुकों का स्वागत किया और कला, साहित्य और संस्कृति के क्षेत्र में फाउंडेशन द्वारा संचालित गतिविधियों की जानकारी दी। उन्होंने अतिथि वक्ता लेखिका हर्ष की भी परिचय दिया और बताया कि आपका कविता संग्रह 'शब्दों का समंदर' और 'ए प्लेटोनिक लव' नाम से प्रकाशित हुआ है। आपकी 'महाभारत के हनुमान' नामक पुस्तक भी प्रकाशित हो चुकी है।

अहसास वूमेन शैलजा सिंह से संवाद में हर्ष ने कहा कि अपने घर, शहर में अपनों के बीच साहित्य की चर्चा करना बेहद सुखद अनुभव है। अपने बचपन के बारे उन्होंने बताया कि पिता पुलिस सेवा में थे, तो मैं राजस्थान के हर हिस्से में घूमी और वही मेरे लिए लर्निंग पाइंट था। उन्होंने बताया कि 2008 में मेरा पहला लेख दैनिक भास्कर में छपा, जिसमें मैं विनर थी। वही मेरे लिए लेखन की प्रेरणा बना। क्या लेखन को अन्य विधाओं की तरह ही सीखा जा सकता है? हर्ष ने कहा कि साहित्य में लेखक के विचार उन्मुक्त होना चाहिए। मेरा लेखन साहित्य के किसी नियम में खरा नहीं उतरता क्योंकि वह विचार लिए होता है और अपने समापन पर एक सवाल छोड़ जाता है, जिसे पाठक सुलझाता रहता है।

महिला सशक्तीकरण से जुड़े सवाल पर हर्ष ने कहा कि हमारे देश की महिलाएं कभी भी अशक्त नहीं रही हैं। वे हमेशा से शक्तिशाली रही हैं। हमारी परम्पराएं हमारी जड़ों में संपादित हो रही हैं, ऐसा हमारा इतिहास बताता है। ग्रामीण स्तर पर कुछ काल में जो थोड़े बहुत बदलाव हुए हैं, उसकी वजह अलग थी। उन्होंने कहा कि मेरी कविताएं मुक्त छंद की कविताएं हैं। मैंने करवा चौथ पर एक कविता लिखी।

कितने बरस हो गए हैं ब्याह को  
मैं यह परंपरा नहीं निभाती  
तुम्हारे लिए मैं करवा चौथ नहीं करती  
मुझे याद है अग्नि साक्षी थी हमारे बंधन की  
जब कुछ वचन लिए थे हमने एक-दूजे के लिए ...

एक सवाल के उत्तर में हर्ष ने कहा कि डिजिटल युग ने प्रकाशन को प्रभावित किया है। कबीर और मीरा का साहित्य अपनी ताकत से पाठक तक पहुंचता है। भविष्य के स्वप्न के बारे में उनका कहना था कि मुझे ईश्वर पर भरोसा है वह मेरे से बहुत कुछ करवा ही लेगा, आज तक हर मोड़ पर वही लेकर गया। मैंने खवाब देखना छोड़ दिया है, मैं पूरी तरह ईश्वर के प्रति समर्पित हूँ। उन्होंने अपनी कुछ कविताएं सुनाईं। अब मैं नहीं आऊंगी तुमसे मिलने

अब तुम्हें मुझसे मिलने आना होगा  
खयाल रखना है तुम्हें  
क्योंकि यह रिश्ता पुराना है...

'इलेक्ट्रॉनिक लव' पुस्तक से भी उन्होंने कुछ कविताएं सुनाईं -  
मैं आना चाहती थी  
तुमसे मिलने  
लेकिन सूरज का ताप बहुत तेज था  
रास्ते में कोहरा घना था...

हर्ष ने श्रोताओं के प्रश्नों के भी रोचक जवाब दिए। उन्होंने कहा कि मुझे भीड़-भाड़ में अच्छा नहीं लगता। अकेले रहना ज्यादा अच्छा लगता है। भीड़-भाड़ में सुकून खो जाता है। हम सबको अपनी अंतर्दृष्टि से प्रेरणा लेनी चाहिए। अपने शौक को जिंदा रखें, वह आपके जीवन में आनंद देगा। ईश्वर के प्रति समर्पण के भाव का अर्थ आज के क्षण में जीना है। वर्तमान में जीना ही महत्त्वपूर्ण है। कल के भविष्य की चिंता नहीं करनी चाहिए। कठिन परिस्थितियों में ईश्वर में दृढ़-विश्वास आपको जीने का संबल देता है। हम सब कुछ प्रारब्ध लेकर आते हैं समय पर ही उसकी परतें खुलती हैं।

हर्ष ने कहा कि जब लगे कि अब लिखना चाहिए तो लिखना चाहिए। डायरी लेखन राइटिंग थेरेपी की तरह काम करता है। हर्ष ने एक प्रेम-कविता भी सुनाई। आयोजकों की ओर से होटल ताज हरि महल के सचिन ने उपहार भेंट कर हर्ष को सम्मानित किया।

कलम जोधपुर का आयोजन अहसास वूमेन की सहभागिता और श्री सीमेंट की सीएसआर पहल के तहत हुआ। हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर होटल ताज हरि महल जोधपुर हैं।



Preeti Mehta



Sachin Kulkarni felicitating the author



Neelima Dalmia Adhar, Anil Sharma Joshi, Divya Mathur and Vandana Singh

## मैं कुछ भी लिखती हूँ, तो उसके हर पहलू को ध्यान में रखती हूँ: 'कलम' गाजियाबाद में दिव्या माथुर

**प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** की ओर से गाजियाबाद में 'कलम' का यह पहला आयोजन 'स्वर' संस्था के सहयोग से हुआ। अतिथि वक्ता थीं प्रवासी रचनाकार दिव्या माथुर। अहसास वूमन नीलिमा डालमिया आधार ने औपचारिक वक्तव्य में फाउंडेशन की गतिविधियों की चर्चा की। उन्होंने कहा कि दिल्ली-एनसीआर के नोएडा, फरीदाबाद और गुरुग्राम के बाद गाजियाबाद के इस आयोजन को साहित्य, कला और संस्कृति के प्रति फाउंडेशन की प्रतिबद्धता का एक कदम बताया। आधार ने कहा कि 'स्वर' से हमारा जुड़ाव 'अपनी भाषा, अपने लोग' के हमारे अभियान का एक हिस्सा है।

आयोजकों की ओर से 'कलम' गाजियाबाद में स्वागत और धन्यवाद वक्तव्य 'स्वर' की न्यासी वंदना सिंह ने दिया। उन्होंने फाउंडेशन के 'कलम', 'किताब', 'लफ़्ज़', 'एक मुलाकात', 'द राइट सर्कल', 'सुर और साज' तथा 'आखर' जैसे कार्यक्रमों की चर्चा के साथ ही 'स्वर' संस्था के बारे में बताया। उन्होंने कहा कि यह भारतीय कलाओं को प्रोत्साहित करने का एक मंच है, जहां आकर सुर, तान और साज जीवंत हो उठते हैं। यह परफार्मिंग आर्ट को बढ़ावा देने और विरासत के संरक्षण के लिए भी प्रयासरत है। अतिथि वक्ता माथुर का परिचय देते हुए सिंह ने बताया कि आप वातायन-यूके की संस्थापक, रॉयल सोसाइटी ऑफ आर्ट्स की फेलो, आशा फाउंडेशन की संस्थापक-सदस्य, ब्रिटिश-लाइब्रेरी की 'फ्रेंड' सहित

अनन्य पुरस्कारों और विश्वविद्यालयों द्वारा सम्मानित लेखिका, अनुवादक और सम्पादक हैं। आप नेहरू केंद्र लंदन में वरिष्ठ कार्यक्रम अधिकारी, विश्व हिंदी सम्मेलन-2000 की सांस्कृतिक उपाध्यक्ष, यूके हिन्दी समिति की उपाध्यक्ष और कथा-यूके की अध्यक्ष रह चुकी हैं। आपके 8 कहानी-संग्रह, 8 कविता-संग्रह और कई उपन्यास प्रकाशित हो चुके हैं।

केन्द्रीय हिन्दी शिक्षण मंडल के पूर्व उपाध्यक्ष एवं लेखक अनिल शर्मा 'जोशी' ने माथुर से संवाद किया। माथुर ने बताया कि मैं 1985 में अपने दो छोटे बच्चों को लेकर लंदन पहुंची, क्योंकि मैं किसी वजह से वापस नहीं आना चाहती थी। मैंने उच्चायोग में दिहाड़ी क्लर्क के रूप में नौकरी शुरू की। गोपाल कृष्ण गांधी ने मेरे काम को देखते हुए नेहरू केंद्र की स्थापना के बाद मुझे कार्यक्रम अधिकारी की जिम्मेदारी सौंपी। हमारा पहला कार्यक्रम 14 नवंबर 1992 को हुआ, जिसमें पंडित रविशंकर और अल्ला रक्खा को बुलाया गया था। हमारे पास बैठाने के लिए कुर्सियां तक नहीं थी। ये लोग दरी लेकर आए थे। गोपाल कृष्ण गांधी का वहां महात्मा गांधी के चलते इतना नाम था कि वे जिसे कह देते थे वह आ जाता था। नेहरू केंद्र के सामने लाइर्स और लेडीज की लाइन लगी थी।

माथुर ने कहा कि मेरे पिता सूफी थे, बचपन से वे यही पाठ पढ़ाते थे कि तुम कुछ नहीं हो। मैं आज भी यही समझती हूँ, लेकिन जीवन में कुछ होना

जरूरी है। इसके बाद तो चल निकला। 1992 से 2016 तक मैंने वहां काम किया। दुनिया के बड़े-बड़े लोग वहां आए, सबसे मिलना हुआ। उन्होंने नेहरू केंद्र में होने वाले कार्यक्रमों के बारे में विस्तार से बताया और 2003 में हिंदी को बढ़ावा देने के लिए वातायन के स्थापना की बात कही। माथुर ने बताया कि वातायन की स्थापना के बाद जल्दी ही हमने 1200 कार्यक्रम कर लिए थे। कई अंतर्राष्ट्रीय कार्यक्रम भी किए और भारोपीय की स्थापना की। मैंने 2004 में वातायन अवार्ड की स्थापना की। निदा फाजली से लेकर जावेद अख्तर तक को यह अवार्ड दिया था। अपनी लेखन यात्रा से जुड़े सवाल पर उन्होंने कहा कि मेरा पहला कहानी संग्रह 'आक्रोश' छपा था।

अपनी कृतियों से जुड़े सवाल पर उन्होंने कहा कि मेरे कहानी-संग्रहों की विषय-वस्तु बहुत अलग-अलग है। इनमें स्त्री की इच्छा, उसका प्रेम, भविष्य और मृत्यु से जुड़ा स्वप्न सब कुछ शामिल है। मैं जब कुछ भी लिखती हूँ, तो उसके हर पहलू को ध्यान में रखती हूँ। मेरे पास अपने ही सारे संग्रह नहीं हैं। उन्होंने 'मेड इन इंडिया', 'पंगा', 'शाम भर बातें' जैसे कहानी संग्रहों और उपन्यास 'तिलिस्म' की कथा-वस्तु और भावभूमि के बारे में भी विस्तार से बताया, जिनमें अमूमन प्रवासी भारतीयों की पार्टियाँ, स्त्रियों पर अत्याचार, इस समाज का दोमुंहापन और अलैंगिक लोगों के मनोभाव भी उजागर हुए। माथुर ने अंश पाठ भी किया और सवाल-जवाब सत्र में हिस्सा लिया। कल्पना मनोरमा ने अतिथि वक्ता माथुर और संवादकर्ता जोशी का अभिनंदन किया।

*कलम गाजियाबाद का आयोजन श्री सीमेंट की सीएसआर पहल के तहत हुआ। सहयोगी 'स्वर' संस्था और हिंदी प्रिंट मीडिया पार्टनर दैनिक जागरण हैं।*



Kalpana Manorama felicitating the author



Mamta Kalia



Rama Pandey



Vaishali Joshi

Geetanjali Shree

आजादी किसी एक वक्त में आने वाली चीज नहीं है। आजादी के रास्ते में तरह-तरह के जोखिम आते रहते हैं। कुछ बाउंड्रीज को आप तोड़ना चाहते हैं, तोड़ देते हैं। कुछ को आप नहीं तोड़ पाते हैं। जहां तक औरतों की बात है, एक उम्र के बाद उनके लिए कुछ हद तक सीमाओं को तोड़ना आसान होता है।" यह कहना है इंटरनेशनल बुकर पुरस्कार से सम्मानित लेखिका गीतांजलि श्री का। वह **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** की ओर से आयोजित 'कलम' गोवा में बतौर अतिथि वक्ता बोल रही थीं। आयोजकों की ओर से **अहसास** वूमन श्रुति जुवारकर ने श्री का स्वागत किया।

अतिथि वक्ता गीतांजलि श्री का परिचय देते हुए उन्होंने बताया कि उनका सरनेम 'श्री' उनकी मां के नाम पर है। जुवारकर ने श्री की कृतियों और उन्हें मिले सम्मान, फेलोशिप की चर्चा की। श्री से संवाद **अहसास** वूमन वैशाली जोशी ने किया। जुवारकर ने जोशी का भी संक्षिप्त परिचय दिया।

जोशी ने अंग्रेजी माध्यम में श्री की पढ़ाई का उल्लेख करते हुए जानना चाहा कि आपका लगाव हिंदी की तरफ कैसे हुआ? श्री ने कहा कि आपके सवाल का कोई सीधा जवाब नहीं है। कहानी हर चीज से जुड़ी है। यह पैदा होने के साथ ही लोगों के जीवन से जुड़ जाता है। शिक्षा केवल स्कूलों में नहीं होती है। हम बाहर भी सीख रहे होते हैं। कहने को मैंने हायर एजुकेशन अंग्रेजी में लिया है लेकिन हिंदी मेरी खून में, मेरी रगों में बहती है। अपनी पहली कहानी से जुड़े सवाल पर श्री ने कहा कि मैंने पहली कहानी ट्रेन में लिखी थी, जब मैं बीस साल के आसपास की थी। मैं दिल्ली अपने शोध के वाइवा के लिए जा रही थी। मैंने वह कहानी उसी यात्रा के दौरान एक रजिस्टर में लिखा, और अपने पति को दिखाया। चूंकि मैंने देर से लिखना शुरू किया था, इसलिए बाद में बहुत तेजी से लिखा।

श्री ने थिएटर से जुड़े सवाल के उत्तर में कहा कि यह इतिहास से हुआ। मेरी एक मित्र अनुराधा कपूर ने कहा कि मैं एक वर्कशाप कर रही हूँ तुम उसके लिए लिखो। यह खेल-खेल में शुरू हुआ और इसमें मुझे बड़ा मजा आया। यह एक सामूहिक काम था। हम अपनी मिलीजुली, साझी संस्कृति को उभारना चाहते थे। हमने औरत की दृष्टि से उमराव जान को फिर से उभारा। उनमें कई नए चरित्र जोड़े। पहली कहानी से इंटरनेशनल बुकर प्राइज तक पैंतीस साल की आपकी यात्रा कैसी थी, इस बारे में आपकी प्रतिक्रिया? श्री ने कहा कि लेखन और पुरस्कार दोनों अलग-अलग चीजें हैं। लेकिन यह किसी के हाथ में नहीं है कि पुरस्कार आए या नहीं। यह न तो मंजिल थी, न है। लेखकीय यात्रा में बहुत कुछ आपके आगे भी होता है, तो बहुत कुछ पीछे भी। अभ्यास से जाने-अनजाने आप अपने आपको, अपने हुनर को मांजते जाते हैं। भाषा से, साहित्य से आपका सरोकार बढ़ता जाता है। लेखन हर समय आपको कुछ न

कुछ सिखाता रहता है।

आपको किससे प्रेरणा मिली? का उत्तर देते हुए श्री ने कहा कि दुनिया में इतना कुछ बेहतर लिखा गया है कि किसी का नाम लूंगी तो कोई न कोई छूटेगा। रूसी साहित्य हम पढ़ते रहे। विश्वास है कि उसने सिखाया होगा। अपने वक्त के लोगों में निर्मल वर्मा, कृष्णा सोबती, श्रीलाल शुक्ल, विनोद कुमार शुक्ल हैं, इन लोगों ने इतना बढ़िया लिखा है। उन्होंने कहा कि आखिर चेतन के अलावा हमारा चेतन भी कुछ न कुछ सिखाता रहता है। हमारे चारों ओर इतना कुछ रचा गया है कि हम जितना भी पढ़ें हम कम पढ़ेंगे। महाभारत ने भी बहुत कुछ सिखाया है। इसका कोई मुकम्मल जवाब नहीं है। एक सवाल के उत्तर में उन्होंने कहा कि किसी भी भाषा को लेकर उनका कोई पूर्वाग्रह नहीं है। लेकिन जिस भाषा में आप अपने को अभिव्यक्त कर सकते हैं आपको करना चाहिए। उन्होंने 'रेत समाधि' के अनुवाद से जुड़े सवाल का भी विस्तार से उत्तर दिया। श्री ने स्त्री की सीमा और आजादी से जुड़े सवाल पर भी अपनी बात रखी। उन्होंने दर्शकों के अनुरोध पर अपनी पुस्तक का कुछ अंश पढ़ा और सवाल-जवाब सत्र में श्रोताओं की जिज्ञासा का भी समाधान किया। धन्यवाद **अहसास** वूमन गौराप्रिया पाई काणे ने दिया। अतिथि वक्ता श्री का अभिनंदन क्लस्टर जीएम अश्विनी आनंद ने दिया।

**अहसास वूमन की सहभागिता से कलम गोवा का आयोजन श्री सीमेंट की सीएसआर पहल के तहत हुआ। हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर सिडाडे दे गोवा और प्रिंट मीडिया पार्टनर लोकमत हैं।**



Shruti A. Juwarkar



Gaurapriya Atul Pai Kane



Ashwani Anand felicitates the author

## नरेन्द्र मोदी भी भारतीय राजनीति की कथा कहते हैं: अनंत विजय



Anant Vijay



Smita Bhardwaj



भारत में कथा वाचन की परंपरा दास्तानगोई से बहुत पुरानी है। रामचरित मानस से लेकर महाभारत तक यही प्रविधि अपनाई गई है। इन कथाओं में जैसे ही मुक्ति की बात होती है तो वह पॉवर-टेक्स्ट में बदल जाता है।" यह बात प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन द्वारा आयोजित कलम भोपाल में लेखक, पत्रकार, स्तंभकार अनंत विजय ने कही। आरंभ में उनका स्वागत अहसास वूमेन इंदौर सुरभि धूपर ने किया। उन्होंने फाउंडेशन की गतिविधियों की विस्तार से जानकारी दी और अतिथि वक्ता का विस्तार से परिचय दिया और बताया कि विजय की अब तक चौदह पुस्तकें प्रकाशित हो चुकी हैं, जिनमें 'प्रसंगवश', 'कोलाहल कलह में', 'विधाओं का विन्यास', 'बॉलीवुड सेल्फी', 'लोकतंत्र की कसौटी' और 'मार्क्सवाद का अर्धसत्य' उल्लेखनीय हैं। आपकी पुस्तक 'अमेठी संग्राम' के कई संस्करण आ चुके हैं।

धूपर ने बताया कि विजय को सिनेमा पर सर्वोत्कृष्ट लेखन के लिए राष्ट्रीय फिल्म पुरस्कार 'स्वर्ण कमल' मिल चुका है। आप राजस्थान के महाराणा मेवाड़ सम्मान, बिहार सरकार के डॉक्टर फादर कामिल बुल्के पुरस्कार और गणेश शंकर विद्यार्थी सम्मान से भी सम्मानित हैं और वर्तमान में दैनिक जागरण में एसोसिएट एडिटर हैं। विजय से संवाद वरिष्ठ प्रशासनिक अधिकारी स्मिता भारद्वाज ने किया, जो लेखिका, कला और संस्कृति प्रेमी हैं। भारद्वाज ने विजय से पूछा कि आप ध्यान और मेडिटेशन करते हैं? उत्तर ना में मिला। भारद्वाज की प्रतिक्रिया थी कि बिना ध्यान के भी विजय की इंद्रियां जाग्रत हैं। वे समाज को सच बताते हैं, आईना दिखाते हैं और बिना किसी से प्रभावित हुए अपने विचारों को सबके सामने रखते हैं। विजय ने कहा कि बतौर पत्रकार और स्तंभकार पढ़ने और किसी से पीछे न रहने की सोच ने हर ज्वलंत विषय पर जागरूक रहने की प्रवृत्ति विकसित की।

पत्रकार और पत्रकारिता में परिवर्तन से जुड़े सवाल पर विजय का उत्तर था कि अब सहूलियतें बढ़ गई हैं। लेकिन पत्रकारिता एक कौशल का काम है। आज हाथ में मोबाइल रखने वाला हर बंदा अपने को भले ही पत्रकार कह ले, पर वह है नहीं। पत्रकारिता में जिस मर्यादा और उत्तरदायित्व का बोध हमें कराया जाता है, उसका अभाव है। पत्रकारिता को पत्रकारों से खतरा है। उसे यह काम उतनी ही गंभीरता से करना होगा, जैसे सर्जन सर्जरी करता है। ओटीटी पर हिंसा, अश्लीलता, अराजकता, स्वतंत्रता, स्वच्छंदता और उत्तरदायित्व से जुड़े सवाल पर विजय ने कहा कि इसी पर मेरी पुस्तक 'ओवर द टॉप: ओटीटी का मायाजाल' आ चुकी है। मैं इस प्रश्न से 2006 से टकरा रहा हूँ। वहां सेक्सुअलिटी, न्यूडिटी, जबरदस्त हिंसा, गालियों की भरमार और इस तरह की दृश्यावली है कि इसे देखा और सुना नहीं जा सकता।

विजय ने कई ओटीटी सीरीज का उद्घरण देते हुए कहा कि अभिव्यक्ति की आजादी के साथ ही उसकी सीमा रेखा भी तय है। अब सरकार ने त्रिस्तरीय व्यवस्था बनाई है और उसके दबाव में सेल्फ रेगुलेशन की बात सामने आई है। मेरा निजी तौर पर मानना है कि इस दिशा में रेगुलेशन होना चाहिए। एक प्रश्न



Surbhi Dhupar



Suchitra Sajid Dhanani



Sadguru Sharan Awasthi

के उत्तर में विजय ने कहा कि मैं हर कुछ सालों बाद खुद को चुनौती देता हूँ। पॉलिटिक्स की जगह मुझे कल्चर की पॉलिटिक्स पर लिखने में मजा आने लगा। गायकों और नृत्यांगनाओं के बीच जो राजनीति है वह राजनेताओं की राजनीति से अधिक दिलचस्प है। मैं आजकल राजनीति पर बोलता हूँ।

कला, संस्कृति के प्रति लगाव और पढ़ने की प्रवृत्ति बच्चों में कैसे बढ़े? के उत्तर में विजय ने कहा कि मैं बच्चों से यही कहूंगा कि मां-बाप की बात मानो। आजकल तो मां-बाप ही बच्चों को मोबाइल थमा दे रहे हैं। आजकल बच्चों की ढेर सारी समस्याओं, बीमारियों के पीछे मां-बाप ही जिम्मेदार हैं। हमने अपनी परंपरा के बारे में अपने बच्चों को कुछ नहीं बताया। फिल्मों पर लेखन से जुड़े सवाल पर विजय ने अपने पुराने सहयोगी इकबाल रिजवी से लगी शर्त के बारे में बताया। उन्होंने कहा कि मैं फिल्मों की समीक्षा नहीं करता, मैं फिल्म इतिहास में रुचि रखता हूँ। उन्होंने फिल्मों को लेकर अपनी दीवानगी के बारे में भी बताया और दावा किया कि अब फिल्में विवाद पर नहीं चलती हैं।

विजय ने कहा कि अपनी बात को मैं राजनीति से जोड़ रहा हूँ। अमित शाह ने भाजपा के राष्ट्रीय अधिवेशन में पांच मुक्ति की बात कही है। प्रधानमंत्री नरेन्द्र मोदी भी भारतीय राजनीति की कथा कहते हैं। उस कथा में भी वे कहते हैं कि हम आपको गरीबी से मुक्त कराएंगे और विकसित भारत का सपना दिखाते हैं, इसीलिए वह लोगों के दिल में उतरता है। 'मार्क्सवाद का अर्धसत्य' पुस्तक से जुड़े सवाल पर विजय ने अपने परिवार के उद्घरणों के साथ विस्तार से बात रखी कि वे मार्क्सवादियों के दुचित्तेपन से बचपन से ही परिचित हो गए थे। उन्होंने 2015 में कथित असहिष्णुता के मसले पर पुरस्कार वापसी के पीछे की राजनीति के बारे में भी विस्तार से बताया।

विजय ने 'अमेठी संग्राम' पुस्तक लिखने के पीछे के श्रम और सोच से जुड़े सवाल का भी उत्तर दिया। कार्य और परिवार के बीच तालमेल कैसे रखते हैं? का उत्तर देते हुए कहा कि अनुशासन आवश्यक है और नींद पर मुझे विजय प्राप्त है। काम में मन लगाना जरूरी है। उन्होंने श्रोताओं के सवाल-जवाब का भी उत्तर दिया। अंत में धन्यवाद ज्ञापन अहसास वूमेन इंदौर सुचित्रा धनानी ने दिया। नवदुनिया के संपादक सद्गुरु अवस्थी ने अतिथियों को स्मृति चिन्ह भेंट किया।

कलम भोपाल का आयोजन अहसास वूमेन की सहभागिता और श्री सीमेंट की सीएसआर पहल के तहत हुआ। हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर ताज लेकफ्रंट भोपाल और हिंदी मीडिया पार्टनर नवदुनिया हैं।

## साहित्य में स्त्रियों के योगदान पर इतिहास हमेशा मौन रहा है: मनीषा कुलश्रेष्ठ

इतिहास हमेशा ही स्त्रियों की साहित्यिक जगत में उपस्थिति पर मौन रहा है। भक्तिकाल में एक मीरा को छोड़ दिया जाय तो उस काल में भी बाकी स्त्रियों का जिक्र नहीं मिलता।" यह बात प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की ओर से आयोजित कलम लखनऊ में लेखिका मनीषा कुलश्रेष्ठ ने कही। होटल ताज महल लखनऊ के महाप्रबंधक विनोद पाण्डे ने अतिथियों और श्रोताओं का स्वागत किया। अहसास वूमन माधुरी हलवासिया ने लेखिका, कवयित्री, कथाकार, संपादक कुलश्रेष्ठ का विस्तार से परिचय दिया। कुलश्रेष्ठ से संवाद ज्योत्सना कौर हबीबुल्लाह ने किया। मल्लिका से जुड़े सवाल पर कुलश्रेष्ठ ने कहा कि भारतेंदु स्वयं मल्लिका को अपनी पोषिता और प्रेरणा कहते थे, लेकिन जब उन्होंने भारतेंदु मंडल बनाया तो बड़ी सहजता से वहां से मल्लिका को अलग कर दिया। मेरे ख्याल से उस समय पितृसत्तात्मकता का दौर था, जिसमें तकरीबन सभी विदुषी स्त्रियां उस दायरे में आ गयीं, जिन पर इतिहास मौन रहा।

मल्लिका लिखने का ख्याल कैसे आया? के उत्तर में कुलश्रेष्ठ ने बनारस हिंदू यूनिवर्सिटी के म्यूजियम से जुड़ी घटना बताई। भाषा के चयन पर कुलश्रेष्ठ ने कहा कि लेखक को भाषा का चयन उस कहानी के दौर के परिवेश के अनुसार करना चाहिए, इसलिए मैंने खड़ी बोली में लिखा। उन्होंने कहा कि अपनी कहानियों को लिखते समय इस बात का बेहद ख्याल रखती हूँ कि जिस दौर की कहानी लिखूँ उस दौर के परिवेश का ही निर्माण करूँ। लेखन में नई भाषा शैली में लिखने का उद्देश्य यह भी होता है कि पाठक को नए नए शब्दों का ज्ञान हो। एक सवाल के उत्तर में कुलश्रेष्ठ ने कहा कि मेरी मल्लिका एक मेधावी, विदुषी और आत्माभिमानी पात्र है। कभी-कभी तो लगता है लेखक कहानी को नहीं चुनता बल्कि कहानियां ही लेखक को चुनती हैं।

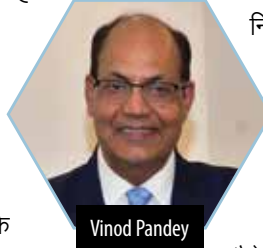
कुलश्रेष्ठ ने कहा कि मल्लिका लिखते समय मैं पूरी तरह डूब गई थी, इतिहास की मल्लिका को और कल्पना के साथ लिखते लिखते मुझे कुछ नहीं याद रहा कि मैं क्या लिख रही हूँ। जैसे, जब भारतेंदु की मृत्यु हुई उस समय मल्लिका की उम्र महज 35 वर्ष रही होगी। उस समय किसी को नहीं पता कि वो क्या कर रही होंगी, कहां गयी होंगी तो उस समय के चित्र को मैंने अपनी कल्पना से शब्दों के माध्यम से उकेरा।



Jyotsna Kaur Habibullah

Manisha Kulshreshtha

कुलश्रेष्ठ ने कहा कि मैं शुरुआत से लेखक नहीं बनना चाहती थी, बल्कि मॉडल बनना चाहती थी, कथक नृत्यांगना बनना चाहती थी। रेडियो में काम करने के दौरान कई हिंदी साहित्यकारों को जानने का मौका मिला। मेरा पहला नॉवेल शिगाफ़ था। उस समय मैं पति के साथ कश्मीर में थी उस स्थिति को देखते हुए लिखा। इस वक्त मैं कुछ नए विषय पर लिख रही हूँ मेट्रियार्की। इसका अर्थ है मातृसत्तात्मक, जो कि केरल में कुछ कुछ जगहों पर है। जिसे नायर समाज ने अंग्रेजों को चिट्ठी लिख कर बन्द कराया। खासी समाज में आज भी मेट्रियार्की चल रहा है। जिसमें घर की सबसे छोटी बेटी को जायदाद मिलती है और लड़का शादी कर के लड़की के घर आता है। सारे निर्णय घर की बेटी ही लेती है। अगर आप हाथियों के बारे में थोड़ी सी जानकारी रखते हैं तो उनमें भी मेट्रियार्की है। झुंड की कुलमाता ही तय करती है कि कहां पानी मिलेगा, कौन सा स्थान जंगल में सुरक्षित है। बाकी सबको उसके निर्णय को मानना ही होगा।



Vinod Pandey

कुलश्रेष्ठ ने अपनी कुछ और किताबों के बारे में जानकारी दी जैसे 'स्वप्नपाश' जो सिजोफ्रेनिया के बारे में है। उन्होंने अपने द्वारा संचालित 'कथा-कहन' नामक क्रिएटिव वर्कशॉप के बारे में भी बताया, जिसमें 15 मंटर और 30 सहभागी होते हैं, सब कुछ सिखाते हैं। उसमें सबसे अच्छी बात ये रहती है कि सुबह जिसके साथ में आप सीखते हैं, शाम को उसी के साथ आप घूम सकते हैं, चाय पी सकते हैं। उन्होंने सवाल-जवाब सत्र में भी हिस्सा लिया। विजय साही ने उपहार भेंट कर अतिथि लेखिका का अभिनंदन किया। आभार अहसास वूमन डिम्पल त्रिवेदी ने दिया।

**कलम लखनऊ का आयोजन अहसास वूमन की सहभागिता और श्री सीमेंट की सीएसआर पहल के तहत हुआ। सहयोगी लखनऊ एक्सप्रेस, हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर ताजमहल लखनऊ और हिंदी मीडिया पार्टनर दैनिक जागरण हैं।**



Dimple Trivedi, Deepa Mishra, Jyotsna Kaur Habibullah, Manisha Kulshreshtha, Kanak Rekha Chauhan, Vijay Sahi and Madhuri Halwasia





Ricky Kej

## Of God and Yearning

In the realm where talent meets passion, Ricky Kej stands as a beacon of musical brilliance and environmental fervour. The synergy between the three-time Grammy recipient's musical passion and environmental consciousness finds resonance with **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. To this end, Kej, a longtime well-wisher, has curated 12 distinctive musical pieces for the Foundation, many of which have been showcased in past issues of *Prabha*. For the months of February and March, let us delve into the sublime compositions that speak of the magic, melancholy and strange beauty of *Longing*, and serve as a celebration of the revered *Mahadev*, or Lord Shiva.

### February: *Longing*

Kej's compositions captivate audiences with their beauty and message. This time, the theme for February showcase Kej's 2014 release of *Longing*. From his Grammy-winning album, *Winds Of Samsara*, comes this song about pure, unadulterated love and longing — be it for one's homeland, family, friends, beloved, the natural world or lost memories. It is composed in a traditional Indian *thumri* style, but with a modern touch to its sound.



### March: *Mahadev*

Lord Shiva, one of the principal deities in Hinduism, is revered as the supreme being who holds the roles of the destroyer, transformer and benefactor. Often depicted with a soft countenance but a fierce aspect, Lord Shiva symbolises the cyclical nature of creation and destruction, embodying the divine and primal forces of the universe.

Mythologically, Lord Shiva is known for his cosmic dance, the *Tandava*, which represents the rhythm of life, death and rebirth. This divine dance is said to symbolise the eternal motion of the universe, with Shiva as its masterful choreographer. Shiva is often depicted as residing in Mount Kailash, which is revered as the cosmic centre of the universe, where Shiva meditates in eternal bliss. For the month of March, the musical composition is an ode by Kej to Lord Shiva. The song being showcased is named *Mahadev* and it speaks about Shiva's might, strength and benevolence.

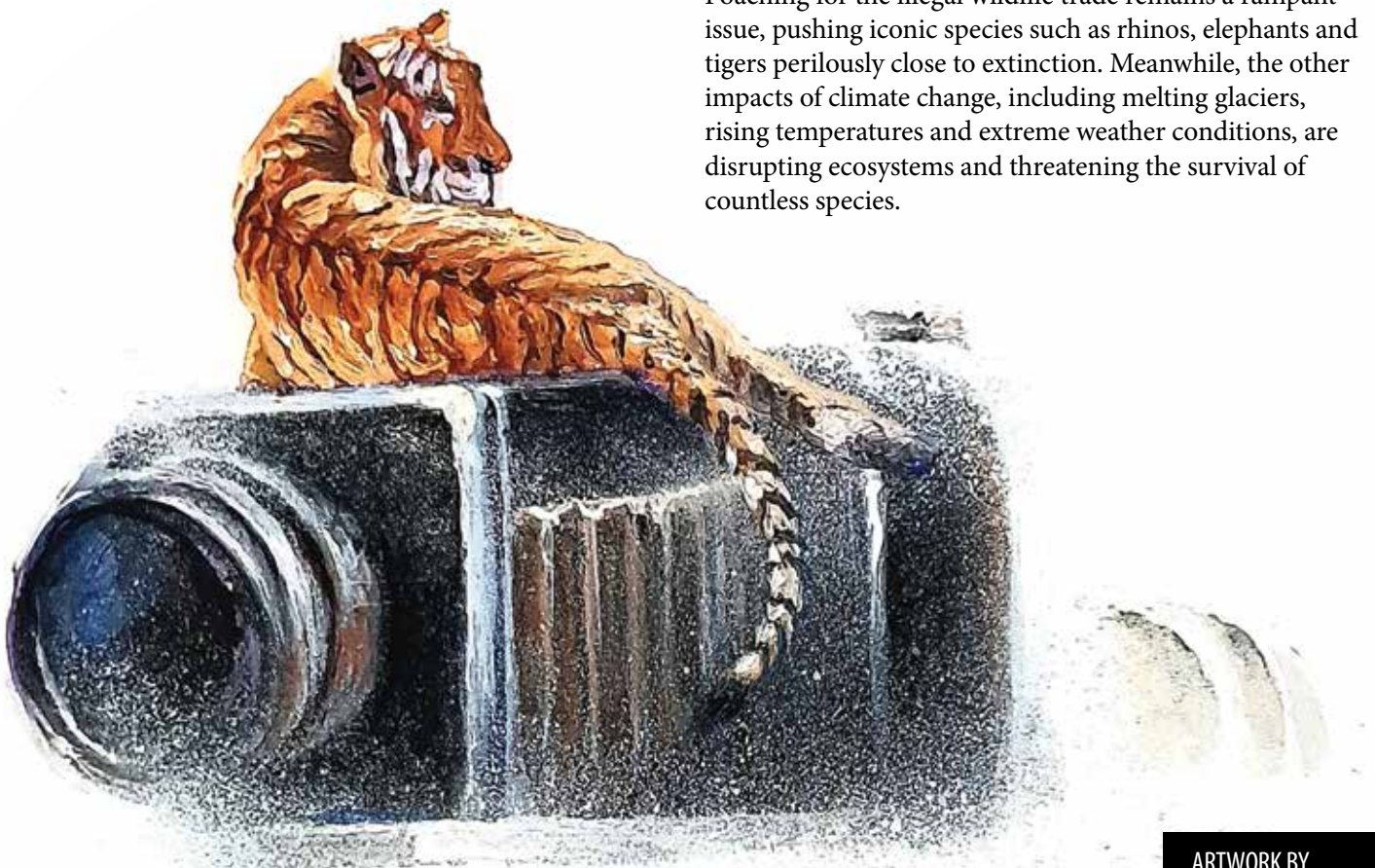


# Celebrating Biodiversity and Conservation

Imagine, in ten years' time, global warming and climate change will cease to be the life-threatening and ecosystem-disrupting issues that they are today. Imagine, the water crisis will be solved, and wild endangered flora and fauna will no longer face the uncertainty of extinction. It is to actualise these goals that every year on 3 March, people from around the world join hands to celebrate World Wildlife Day, a day dedicated to raising awareness about the importance of wildlife and biodiversity conservation. This commemoration was proposed by Thailand to celebrate and raise awareness of the world's wild flora and fauna, and further acknowledged and established by the United Nations General Assembly in 2013. World Wildlife Day serves two purposes: one, as a wake-up call to all the residents of the world, to urge them to take measures before the consequences of global warming and climate change push

all life as we know it to the point of no return; and two, as an urgent reminder of the need to protect and preserve the rich whorls of life that inhabit our planet. At its core, the day aims to celebrate the diverse array of flora and fauna that call Earth their home. Our planet is endowed with an incredible variety of species, from magnificent elephants strolling through the African savannas to vibrant coral reefs brimming with marine life. However, despite their beauty and significance, many of these species are facing unprecedented danger.

One of the greatest challenges for wildlife today is habitat loss and destruction. With the human population at an all-time high, natural habitats are being destroyed at an alarming rate to make way for agriculture, urbanisation and infrastructural expansion. Simultaneously, many species are gravely threatened by deforestation, which is driving them to the verge of extinction. In addition, wildlife is under increasing pressure from poachers. Poaching for the illegal wildlife trade remains a rampant issue, pushing iconic species such as rhinos, elephants and tigers perilously close to extinction. Meanwhile, the other impacts of climate change, including melting glaciers, rising temperatures and extreme weather conditions, are disrupting ecosystems and threatening the survival of countless species.



ARTWORK BY  
SUDIPTA KUNDU

Despite these grave challenges, there is reason for hope. Around the world, dedicated individuals, organisations and governments are working tirelessly to preserve and safeguard animals and their habitats. Environmental activists like Greta Thunberg, Inger Andersen and William Nordhaus have not only envisioned possible remedies but also begun implementing them. Moreover, there is growing acknowledgement of the significance of sustainable development practices that balance the needs

of both people and the planet.

Recent years have witnessed notable successes in wildlife conservation.

Numerous endangered species, including the mountain gorilla, humpback whale and giant panda have had population recoveries and conservation successes as a result of tireless efforts. Furthermore, technological developments like DNA analysis and satellite monitoring are transforming conservation efforts by enabling scientists to better understand wildlife and its needs. Looking ahead, the future of climate and wildlife conservation lies in collaborative effort: together, we must

## Did You Know?

- Whales are helping in the fight against climate change. A single whale captures more carbon dioxide in its lifetime than 1,000 trees.
- Coral reefs are keeping the ocean ecosystem alive. They support a huge amount of marine life, offering protection from strong waves and predators, while contributing \$172 billion to the global economy.
- There are more than 8.7 million species of plants and animals on Earth, and scientists estimate many more are still undiscovered.

strive to address the joint challenges of climate change and habitat and biodiversity loss. This includes providing local communities with the resources they need to preserve their natural resources and advocating laws that put sustainability and conservation first.

Furthermore, education and public awareness will also be key to securing a future for the planet. By raising awareness about the importance of biodiversity and the dangers that animals are facing, we can inspire action and foster a global ethic of management towards the

natural world. Every attempt to inform and involve the public in the process of conservation — whether through documentaries, educational programmes or grassroots campaigns — is a step towards a more secure future for wildlife.

World Wildlife Day is a crucial reminder of our shared responsibility to safeguard and maintain the astounding diversity of life on Earth. While the challenges wildlife is facing are major, they are not insurmountable. Together we can ensure that future generations inherit a planet rich in biodiversity and brimming with life. So, let us join hands on this World Wildlife Day and make a commitment to the pressing need to protect the priceless ecosystem that sustains us all.



# Coming Together to Fight a Killer

“When you get to the end of your rope,  
tie a knot and hang on.”

— *Franklin D. Roosevelt*





Cancer tears families apart, ends hopes and dreams, and destroys the futures of countless people. According to data released by the Indian Council of Medical Research and the National Centre for Disease Informatics and Research, there are over 1.5 million new cases of cancer diagnosed annually in India — figures collated on the basis of hospital records, population studies and cancer registries. Each year, more than seven lakh deaths are attributed to the disease. Late detection, poor access to healthcare facilities and exorbitant costs of treatment often lead to people losing the fight. Pan-India, access to screening, treatment and diagnostic services vary widely. Some urban areas have better infrastructure and facilities, while rural areas lack proper resources.

Government initiatives such as the National Cancer Control Programme aim to address the growing burden of cancer through prevention, screening, treatment and palliative care services. Quick detection *via* effective screening programmes is important for boosting the chances of treatment and reducing mortality. Another objective is to improve access to quality cancer treatment services, including radiation therapy, immunotherapy, targeted therapy, chemotherapy and surgery. It focuses on strengthening healthcare infrastructure, equipping healthcare professionals and making essential drugs available. Palliative care is important, especially for patients who are at advanced stages with the disease.

If we are to rein in cancer and its effects, we have to implement a multifaceted approach bringing together different strategies and stakeholders. We need public awareness campaigns, healthy lifestyle choices including regular exercise, a balanced diet, abstinence from tobacco and reduced alcohol consumption levels. This is easier said than done. Tobacco use is a leading cause of preventable cancer deaths in India, so reducing tobacco consumption can have a substantial impact on cancer incidence. It is also imperative to reduce exposure to environmental and occupational carcinogens found in air pollution, hazardous chemicals, and ionising radiation. Strengthening environmental regulations can help protect individuals from cancer-causing agents in their surroundings. Support needs to be extended to research to better comprehend the epidemiology of cancer in India. Evidence-based policies are the need of the hour, as are regulations to prioritise cancer control in the national health agenda.

Most importantly, governments need to open clear channels of communication between themselves and their citizens, so that people suffering from cancer or taking care of loved ones with cancer feel heard, seen, and taken care of. Effort must go into preventive measures as well as ensuring that treatment does not ruin families or individuals financially. At

present, cancer care in India still faces significant challenges. High treatment costs, limited insurance and out-of-pocket expenses come together to create a financial strain that often leads to delayed or incomplete treatment. There also aren't enough doctors, oncologists, nurses and support staff to bear the immense burden of the disease nationwide. However, it is our hope, as a nation, that with concerted efforts to address infrastructure gaps, financial barriers and workforce shortages, and by leveraging technological innovations, we can pave the way for a more equitable and effective cancer care system.

## What we need:

- Strict tobacco control policies
- Bringing down pollution levels
- Protecting and increasing green cover
- Widespread screening for early detection
- Regular physical activity
- Support for cancer research



Snehasis Chatterjee with Swagatalakshmi Dasgupta and Sundeep Bhutoria at the exhibition on Lata Mangeshkar

# A Tribute to the Nightingale of India

A legend of the Indian music industry for all seasons, Lata Mangeshkar enchanted music lovers with her voice for over seven decades. Having sung thousands of songs in 26 languages, she has been immortalised through her magical voice. But the true expanse of her work remains unknown to many in the country.

In a three-day exhibition held at the Indian Council for Cultural Relations Jamini Roy Gallery in Kolkata from September 28 to 30, 2013, musicologist Snehasis Chatterjee showcased a rare collection of memorabilia dedicated to the legendary Indian playback singer. The event was jointly organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations. The exhibition's preview, on 27 September, 2013, featured special guest Swagatalakshmi Dasgupta, an eminent Rabindrasangeet singer from Bengal, while

the formal inauguration took place on 28 September in the presence of the distinguished Jawhar Sircar, who was, at the time, the CEO of Prasar Bharati.

Chatterjee, a music teacher, embarked on his conservation journey in 1990 owing to a lack of comprehensive information on Lata Mangeshkar. His ambitious project, the *Lata Geet Kosh*, involved compiling the singer's songs in 32 languages across 15 volumes. His dedication earned him a place in the Limca Book of Records in 2001. The exhibition showcased a diverse array of items, including booklets, photographs, gramophone record sleeves, cassettes, audio CDs, VCDs and more. All of this provided a unique glimpse into lesser-known aspects of Lata Mangeshkar's life. The display aimed to pay a humble tribute to the Nightingale of India on her 85th birthday.



Reba Some

Sundeep Bhutoria, managing trustee, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, expressed admiration for Snehasis Chatterjee's archival work. "The exhibition is a humble tribute to the living legend and the Nightingale of India," he said. "It is an honour to associate with Snehasis Chatterjee and his excellent work which has great archival value. The Foundation has always supported individuals like Snehasis, who excel in their field." In his

statement during the exhibition's preview, Chatterjee expressed his gratitude to the Foundation and ICCR Kolkata for their support in organising the event. The exhibition not only celebrated Lata Mangeshkar's extraordinary career, but was also a testament to the meticulous efforts put in by Chatterjee in preserving and presenting the rich musical legacy of the legendary singer.



Swagatalakshmi Dasgupta views the exhibits at ICCR Kolkata



A picture of Lata Mangeshkar with Jawaharlal Nehru on display at the exhibition



A picture of Lata Mangeshkar and her sister, Meena, dressed as Lord Krishna and Sudama



A picture of Lata Mangeshkar's father, Dinanath Mangeshkar

# Charting New Territories

**P**rabha Khaitan Foundation harbours a vision of preserving, promoting and celebrating the diverse facets of Indian heritage. Central to the Foundation's ethos is the belief that culture is not merely a relic of the past, but a dynamic force continually evolving and shaping the collective consciousness. Through diverse programmes, collaborations and outreach efforts, the Foundation endeavours to create platforms for dialogue, creativity and cross-cultural exchange.

From supporting emerging artists and scholars to curating unique initiatives, the Foundation's programmes foster the spirit of inclusivity and innovation. To that end, our

**Ehsaas** Women have worked tirelessly over the years to expand the Foundation's activities to various parts of the country.

In a vibrant showcase of camaraderie last year, the **Ehsaas** Women of Indore organised a delightful meet-and-greet event in their city. This gathering served as a platform for fostering connections and celebrating the rich tapestry of India's cultural heritage. The event witnessed the attendance of distinguished members of the city, including Smita Bharadwaj, Additional Chief Secretary in Bhopal, film producer Vikram Malhotra, and author Nirmala Bhuradia, among others. Here are a few glimpses from their meeting!



Apra Kuchhal, Sundeep Bhutoria, Suchitra Sajid Dhanani and Surbhi Dhupar





Vikram Malhotra, Suruchi Malhotra and Smita Bhardwaj



Surendra Singh and Milind Singh



Preeti Dave, Arjun Dhupar, Shamit Dave, Kavita Saluja and Ramandeep Singh Saluja



Rajesh Agarwal and Pankaj Agarwal



Mr Bhuradia and Nirmala Bhuradia

## A Story Extraordinaire



David Davidar

Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri

Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri boasts a distinguished career spanning 28 years as an Indian Foreign Service diplomat. Her leadership acumen shone during her tenure at the United Nations, where she held prominent roles for 15 years, culminating in her position as Assistant Secretary General. She also played a pivotal role in shaping the agenda of UN Women, the pioneering global organisation dedicated to advancing gender equality. Puri's unwavering commitment to human rights earned her prestigious accolades, including the esteemed Eleanor Roosevelt Award for Human Rights. At a recent session of **Kitaab** organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** at the prestigious Kamal Mahal, ITC Maurya, Puri discussed her book *Swallowing the Sun* with novelist and publisher David Davidar. The chief guest for the event was the noted actor and author Kabir Bedi.

Neelima Dalmia Adhar, Honorary Convenor Delhi-NCR of the Foundation, delivered the welcome note and introduced the guests. Anindita Chatterjee, Executive Trustee of the Foundation, felicitated Puri, Bedi and Davidar. Attended by around 500 guests, including luminaries from the literary world and distinguished personalities from various walks of life, the session

kept the audience fully engrossed. The launch of the book gave way to an engaging discussion.

Puri began the conversation with a reflection on Mark Twain's insight, "Truth is stranger than fiction." She said, "I was inspired by Mark Twain's words that truth is stranger than fiction mostly because fiction is obliged to be tied down to possibilities and truth is not." She continued, highlighting her parents' extraordinary life experiences, noting, "My

parents' life has indeed been extraordinary in terms of the transcendence of possibilities and I could have as well written a biography." However, Puri aspired to go beyond intellectual engagement, aiming to touch the hearts and souls of her readers. "But I wanted to reach out to the heart and I poured in poetry to speak to the soul," she explained.

As Puri delved deeper into her creative process, she revealed the transformative power of her parents' love letters, which breathed life into her narrative: "What triggered my shift from biography to fiction were these 148 love letters that were exchanged between my parents." She disclosed, "These letters then turned this whole novel into an epic love story."



Kabir Bedi



The author signs copies of her book



Vandana Singh, Shinjini Kulkarni and Anant Vijay

Puri also touched upon the cultural milieu that shaped her upbringing. “I was born and brought up in Delhi... So there was a sense of exile and my parents created a world in Maharashtra,” she shared, reminiscing about the Marathi cultural immersion facilitated by her parents.

When asked what she thought of the oft-discussed clash between modernity and tradition, Puri responded that themes of cultural identity, socio-political upheaval and the enduring power of love form the essence of her book. “My main protagonists, Baba, Malti, Guru, Kamala and others, embraced the modern whilst being self-aware and proud in their Indian skin,” she concluded.

*Kitaab Delhi was organised with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative in association with Aleph Book Company, hospitality partner ITC Maurya and media partner Dainik Jagran*



Onkar Kanwar and Chandni Chopra



The audience at the event



Amitabh Kant and Ranjeeta Kant



C.M. Sharma and Neelkant Bakshi



Amaan Kidwai



Rasaal Dwivedi



Halim Jung



Barkha Dutt (file picture)



Hardeep Singh Puri



Huma Khalil, Prabhu Chawla and Kaushal Kishore



Kabir Bedi and Parveen Dusanj



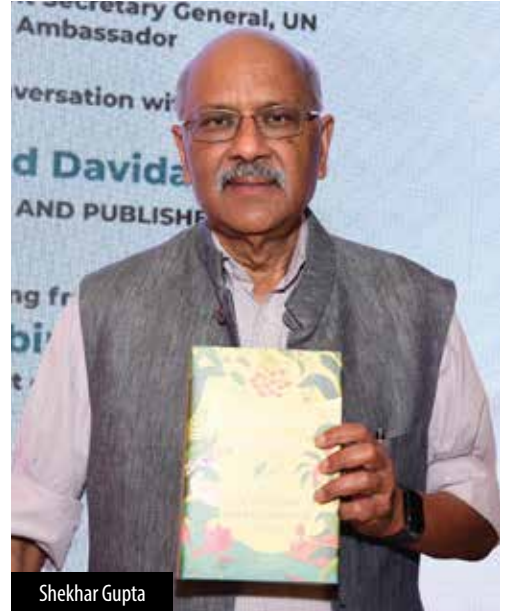
Shahnaz Husain and Raj Kumar Puri



Namita Gokhale



Kishwar Desai



Shekhar Gupta



Pushkar Chauhan, Srinjoy Chowdhury, Sundeeep Bhutoria, Anindita Chatterjee, Neelima Dalmia Adhar and Amitabh Adhar

## A Tale of Truth and Transcendence



Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri

Ranjit Hoskote

A former diplomat with a long and distinguished career, Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri served as Assistant Secretary General at the United Nations for 15 years. Recently, she added another feather to her cap by authoring her first book *Swallowing the Sun*. At a recent session of **Kitaab** in Mumbai, organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, she was in conversation with the poet and critic, Ranjit Hoskote. Anand Mahindra, chairman of the Mahindra Group, was the chief guest for the session.

Karishma Mehta, **Ehsaas** Woman of Mumbai, delivered the welcome note while Swati Agarwal, **Ehsaas** Woman of Mumbai, introduced Puri. Anindita Chatterjee, Executive Trustee of the Foundation, felicitated Puri, Hoskote and Mahindra. This was followed by the launch of the book before the conversation got under way.

Reflecting on her parents' extraordinary lives, Puri remarked, "To me, my parents were walking on water." Their epic love story and the societal awakening they embodied could have

easily been the subject of a biography, yet Puri sought to transcend the conventional norms of storytelling.

"I wanted to write with abundance about their story," Puri confessed, "but I also wanted to do it without having to hide the truth." It was this commitment to authenticity that led her to embrace the alternative eyes of the imagination, allowing her to tell the truth in its essence. Through the lens of fiction, she explored the divergent destinies and

untold dramas that shaped her characters' lives, guided by the cultural milieu of her upbringing.

Born into a world steeped in Marathi literature and Saraswat culture, Puri found solace in the multilingual nature of her narrative, echoing the rhythms of tradition and heritage. Her characters, imbued with the spirit of modernity and the wisdom of tradition, grappled with the complexities of cultural identity and societal upheaval.

"I have very distinguished ancestors," Puri remarked, reflecting on her lineage.



Anand Mahindra addresses the audience



Ketaki Bhatia, Swati Agarwal, Suhel Seth, Anindita Chatterjee and Karishma Mehta with Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri, Ranjit Hoskote and Anand Mahindra as they formally launch the book

“What makes some of us diplomats turn to writers of fiction is the fact that we are exposed to so many linguistic and cultural universes.” For Puri, the metamorphosis of her characters found its genesis amidst the bustling streets of Mumbai, a city pulsating with life and possibility.

As she read excerpts from her novel, Puri captivated the audience, inviting them to embark on a journey of discovery and revelation. The evening concluded with a

lively Q&A session, as the attendees engaged in spirited discourse, enriching the collective experience. Ketki Bhatia, **Ehsaas** Woman of Mumbai, delivered the vote of thanks on behalf of the Foundation.

*Kitaab* Mumbai was organised with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative in association with Aleph Book Company



Mukesh Batra, Mudit Jain and Malti Jain with the author



Ranjit Hoskote, Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri and Anand Mahindra after their felicitation



What makes some of us diplomats turn into writers of fiction is that we are exposed to so many linguistic and cultural universes



Hardeep Singh Puri and Madhur Bhandarkar



The Ehsaas Women of Mumbai take a picture together



Vijay Kalantri



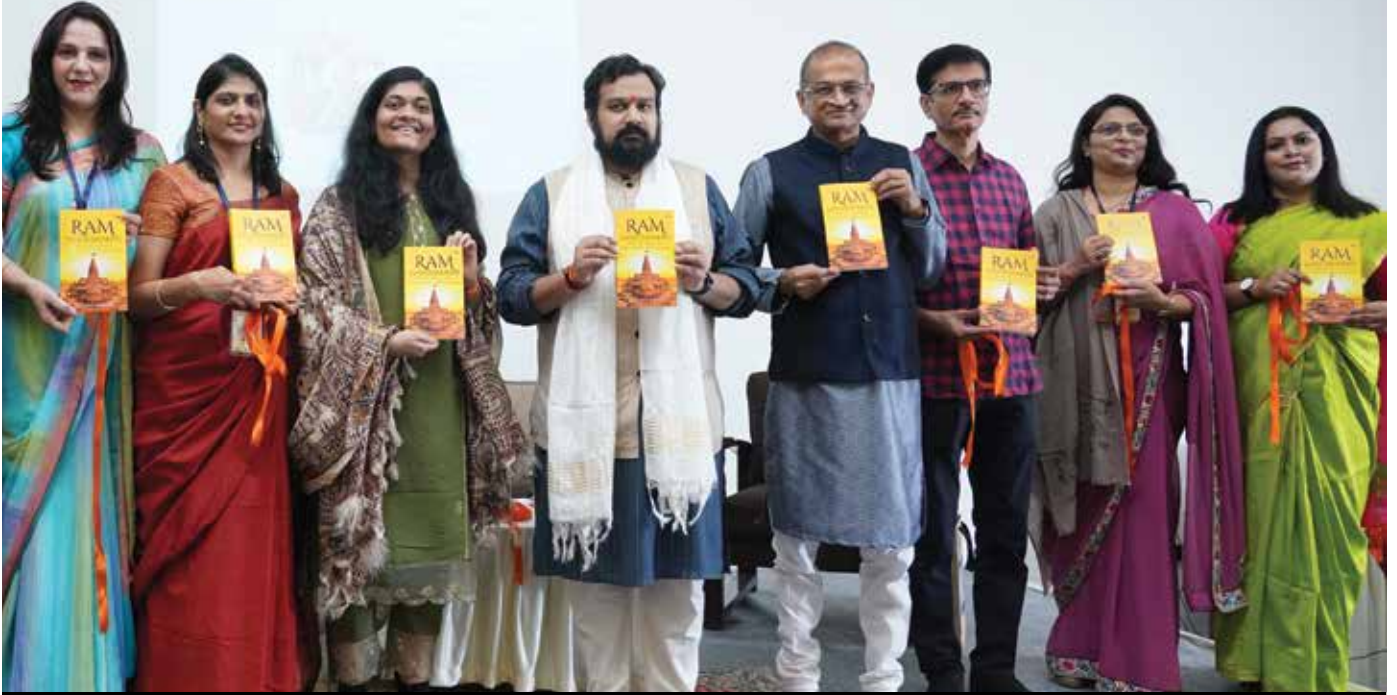


I wanted to write with abundance about my parents' story, but I also wanted to do it without having to hide the truth





## “Unless the Lion Writes the Story, the Hunter will be Glorified”



Jyoti Kapoor, Priyanka Kothari, Satish Sarda, Monica Bhagwagar and Sushmita Singh with Rashmi Samant, Vishnu Shankar Jain and Hemant Lodha at the launch of Samant's book

It was an august evening when three eminent personalities gathered at the Chitnavis Centre in Nagpur to discuss *Ram Janmabhoomi: The Inspiration for Hindu Resurgence*. The book comes at a timely hour, against the backdrop of the recent inauguration of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, and is authored by Rashmi Samant, who bears the distinction of being the daughter

of a *kar sevak*. The event took off with the host, Monica Bhagwagar, *Ehsaas* Woman of Nagpur, welcoming the audience, and setting the stage for the lighting of the inaugural lamp.

Samant is a young leader who scripted history as the first Indian woman president of the University of Oxford Students' Union. *Ram Janmabhoomi* is her second book.



Rashmi Samant, Vishnu Shankar Jain and Hemant Lodha in conversation

After the book was unveiled by the eminent advocate of the Supreme Court, Vishnu Shankar Jain, the conversation was taken forward by Hemant Lodha, a chartered accountant, who is also an avid reader with an interest in philosophy, spirituality, relationships, leadership and books on management skills.

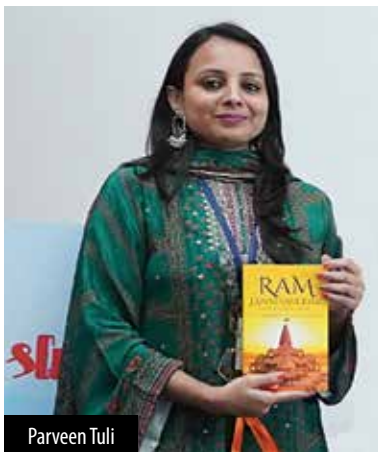
When Samant spoke, she underlined how significant the occasion was. “Among us, we have luminaries like Vishnuji who fought when there was no sign of light,” she said. “But the Ram Janmabhoomi movement is one such movement in which every person involved staked everything, including their lives.” Samant went on to talk about how the *kar sevaks* played a very important role in the Ram Janmabhoomi struggle. She said that, in Ayodhya, there

Among us, we have luminaries like Vishnu Shankar Jain [a key advocate in the Ram Mandir movement], who fought when there was no sign of light. But the Ram Janmabhoomi movement is one such movement in which every person involved staked everything, including their lives

were 70 mosques that remained untouched during the *kar sevak* movement. She rounded off the discussion by talking about the needs of an indigenous population that rejects outside influences. “We need to realise the continuous nature of this narrative,” she said.

The session was followed by an invigorating Q&A round with the audience. The evening came to a close with Jyoti Kapoor, *Ehsaas* Woman of Nagpur, giving the vote of thanks and congratulating Samant on her book.

*Kitaab* Nagpur was organised with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative in association with Manthan, Chitnavis Centre and with the support of *Ehsaas* Women of Nagpur



Parveen Tuli



The author signs copies of her book



The author and a guest pen notes of gratitude to Prabha Khaitan Foundation and the Ehsaas Women of Nagpur



The audience at the event



T.V. Mohandas Pai, Poonam Bafna, Tejal Pardhy, Vikram Sampath, Saiswaroopa Iyer and Anil Kathotia with Aabhas Maldahiyar at the launch of his book

## “Who were the Mughals, really?”

There was an unmistakable buzz in the air as book lovers gathered at the launch of Aabhas Maldahiyar’s book, *Babur: The Chessboard King*. Hosted by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** under its **Kitaab** initiative, Maldahiyar, an architect, urban designer and writer, was introduced to the audience by Poonam Bafna, **Ehsaas** Woman of Coimbatore. Joining Maldahiyar on stage for a discussion were a host of notable personalities — philanthropist and the chairperson of Manipal Global Education, T.V. Mohandas Pai, historian and author Vikram Sampath, and author Saiswaroopa Iyer.

Maldahiyar is an architect and urban designer who fuses his intense love for history with captivating storytelling. After the unveiling of the book, the conversation went into full swing.

Pai revealed that he had observed Maldahiyar tweet a lot

about history, and was struck by the author’s curiosity. “He used to go to the primary sources in his tweets, to counter people who were running fake narratives,” said Pai. “Our history books published in India are full of fake narratives written by people who want to control our minds. We are all victims of this, because we never bother to question anybody.” He observed that political conscience came to India as a mass movement.

Sampath observed that Maldahiyar’s book was very tastefully produced and designed. “My younger brother Aabhas accuses me of many things of which there is very little verification,” said Sampath, in a light vein. “But I shall plead guilty to pulling him away from the toxicity of social media!”

Iyer called *Babur: The Chessboard King* a “fascinating book”. “The introduction had me intrigued about so much that we



Anindita Chatterjee



The panel discussion gets underway

don't know," she observed. She pointed out the author's stance that "non-factual history" is being taught. "There are many people who say, 'It's just history, we will write the exam and forget about it, so why make such a hue and cry about it?' said Iyer. "But what we need to have more of are discussions about getting history right."

"Babur did not consider himself a Mughal," said the author. "However, he used the word 'Mughal' around 400 times in the *Baburnama*, and seemed to have the worst opinion of the Mughals. So who were the Mughals, really?" Perhaps the answer to the author's question lies in his book!

The conversation then went into an interesting Q&A session with the audience, after which Bafna thanked the chief guests, the audience and the panel for the scintillating discussion. With this, the evening came to a close.

*Kitaab Bengaluru was organised with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative in association with hospitality partner ITC Windsor and with the support of Ehsaas Women of Bengaluru*



The audience at the event



A guest interacts with the panellists



Soma Aich, Abhirup Sarkar, Nabakumar Basu, Sumantra Sengupta, Soumitra Mitra and Saiful Islam

## Remembering the Maestros of Bengali Literature

Nirendranath Chakravarty and Samaresh Basu are two of the most prominent luminaries of modern Bengali literature. Chakravarty distinguished himself through insightful poetry and poignant prose. His works reflect a deep understanding of human emotions and societal complexities. Samaresh Basu, on the other hand, infused his writing with bold narratives and social commentary, shaping the literary landscape with his powerful storytelling. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** organised a special **Aakhar** session at the International Kolkata Book Fair to pay homage to the two stalwarts of Bengali literature on the occasion of their birth centenary year. The guests for the evening were Samaresh Basu's son, Nabakumar Basu, and Nirendranath Chakravarty's son-in-law, Abhirup Sarkar. They were felicitated by Purba Paschim's Swati Das.



Swati Das

Nabakumar Basu gave up his career as a surgeon to pursue literature, and has been following his passion for the last 48 years. He eventually realised that few writers have been able to make a difference in the literary world like Samaresh Basu. "In Bengali literature, after the three Bandopadhyays (Tarasankar Bandyopadhyay, Manik Bandopadhyay and Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay), the role that Samaresh Basu played has hardly been matched or surpassed by any other writer," he said. "When Samaresh Basu started writing, we had just gained independence and were grappling with the huge refugee influx from Bangladesh. His literary career can be divided into four phases. The first phase was from 1948-1958, which can be called the preparatory stage, but even during that stage he wrote novels such as *B.T. Roder Dhare*, *Ganga*, *Nayanpurer Mati*, all of which readers remember."

In 1968, Samaresh Basu's writing took a different

turn, and the kind of literature he wrote generated quite a bit of controversy with novels like *Pathan*, *Teen Purush* and others. In the last decade, from 1978-1988, one of his most important works was *Dekhi Nai Phire*, which was incomplete. "We need to bring back our authors and celebrate our literature," said Nabakumar. "The responsibility of keeping Bengali literature alive cannot be just that of Bangladesh. He [Samaresh Basu] also wrote under his pseudonym 'Kalkut', and he deserved to be honoured for being able to create two different kinds of literature that were equally important."

Abhirup Sarkar shared a few precious anecdotes about his father-in-law, Nirendranath Chakravarty. "I used to call him Niren kaka, since he was a friend of my father's," he recalled. "The relationship that my mother-in-law and Niren kaka shared was full of love and respect, the kind I had never seen before. Even though they were disparate in their political ideologies, they always understood each other."

Even though Nirendranath Chakravarty had different views about politics from Ashok Mitra, the former finance minister of West Bengal, they shared a close friendship. "When Ashok kaka passed away, Niren kaka called me," reminisced Abhirup. "I had never heard him sound so bereaved."

The occasion also witnessed some memorable readings and recitations. Purba Paschim's Soma Aich recited poems by both Nirendranath Chakravarty and Samaresh Basu, while Sumantra Sengupta read Samaresh Basu's short story, *Adab*, before the programme drew to a close.

*Aakhar Bengal* was organised with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative in association with Purba Paschim and Anandabazar Patrika Online



Bhagwati Prasad Dwivedi

Ramraksha Mishra Vimal

## Celebrating the Richness of the Bhojpuri Tongue



Neelima Singh



Tanuja Shankar felicitates the author



Ratneshwar Singh felicitates Bhagwati Prasad Dwivedi

The buzz was palpable around the East Gandhi Maidan, Patna, because, at Khadi Mall, it was a special day. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, under its **Aakhar** initiative, hosted the eminent Bhojpuri poet, essayist and editor, Ramraksha Mishra Vimal, who has authored books like *Pahal*. He was in conversation with Bhagwati Prasad Dwivedi, who writes in Bhojpuri and Hindi and has authored *Bhojpuri Kathayen* and *Yaatna Shivir*.

In attendance was a large audience consisting of scholars, literature lovers and distinguished individuals. This included eminent personalities like the former Director of ICCR at Hungary, Tanuja Shankar, writer Ratneshwar Singh, folk singer Nitu Kumari Naveget, and the Special Secretary of the Department of Industries, Government of Bihar, Dilip Kumar. Also present were media personalities, members of Aayam Sanstha, as well as a large number of Bhojpuri intellectuals.

The conversation between Dwivedi and Vimal was full of interesting insights and anecdotes. After touching upon the *Ramcharitmanas* and Tulsidas, Vimal laid emphasis on the reasons behind the exclusion of Bhojpuri under the Eighth Schedule under the Constitution of India, which

lists the official languages of our country. There are 22 official languages in India, among which Bhojpuri does not feature. Vimal rejected the common narrative that Bhojpuri is obscene, and sang a few of his Bhojpuri songs and *ghazals* in celebration of his beautiful language.

The speakers discussed how Bhojpuri may face criticism owing to biases against its status as a language, simplistic media portrayals, socioeconomic challenges in its native regions, discrimination against its speakers, and misreadings of its cultural subtleties. These factors somehow create a negative perception that is an inaccurate representation of the richness and diversity of the language and Bhojpuri culture. It is a rich tongue, just like any other language, and a delight to learn owing to its history and linguistic complexities.

After the interaction, it was time for Tanuja Shankar and Ratneshwar Singh to felicitate Vimal and Dwivedi. Neelima Singh, a senior member of Aayam, delivered the vote of thanks, and brought the enriching evening to a close.

*Aakhar Patna was organised with the support of Shree Cement as their CSR initiative and in association with Aayam: Sahitya Ka Stree Swar Sanstha*

“Poetry is self-expressive, and the poet is but a medium”



The stage was set for an evening of poetry as Prabha Khaitan Foundation, under its Aakhar initiative, hosted the former IAS officer turned poet, Pradeep Biswal, for a discussion on his craft. Nidhi Garg, Ehsaas Woman of Bhubaneswar, delivered the welcome note and introduced the author to the audience. In conversation with him was the academic and Odia writer, Pragyan Prabartika Dash.

Having penned seven anthologies of poetry in Odia, including *Bhumi Sparsha*, *Dhusar Dhrupadi*, *Seshaloka*, *Prema Kabita*, *Pheriba Batara*, *Sachitra Samay* and *Jibana Jemiti*, Biswal's work is widely read and appreciated. He has also written poems in English, and his work has been translated into Hindi, Punjabi and Telugu. He has been honoured with a fellowship by the Government of India, and he has earned several other awards and felicitations from several literary and cultural organisations for his significant contribution to literature and culture.

“Life is larger than literature,” said Biswal. “Literature cannot capture all the hues of life, only a few glimpses.” He went on to explain to Dash how social media has democratised literature, thereby enabling anyone to become a writer overnight. “There is no editorial hegemony; the readers decide the quality of writing,” he said.

Dash enquired by Biswal chose poetry as his preferred medium of expression, instead of the short story or the novel. “It wasn't me that chose poetry,” he replied. “Rather,

poetry chose him. Poetry is self-expressive, and the poet is but a medium. I failed to write a single line for months together, and, at times, even faced the challenge of writing at odd hours. Within a poet, there exists a lover, rebel and an ascetic. The poet must honour his poetic self.” What about his impetus for writing poetry? “Love is the source of poetry,” Biswal replied, simply. “Poetry without passionate love isn't possible.”

Biswal looked back over his poetic journey spanning four decades, and recalled how difficult it was to get published in the earlier days. “There is an urgent need for translation to promote literature beyond geographical boundaries,” said the poet. “The Sahitya Akademi can play a more active role in this regard.” What advice does he have for the younger generation of writers? “They should be true to their feelings and expressions,” said Biswal, with great clarity.

The event drew to a close as the eminent Phani Mohanty and the distinguished bureaucrat-turned-poet Piyush Kumar Patnaik felicitated Biswal and Dash respectively. Vedula Ramalakshmi, Ehsaas Woman of Bhubaneswar, delivered the vote of thanks, thereby bringing the engrossing discussion to a close.

*Aakhar Bhubaneswar was organised with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative in association with hospitality partner Mayfair Hotels & Resorts and with the support of Ehsaas Women of Bhubaneswar*



Vedula Ramalakshmi, Phani Mohanty, Nidhi Garg and Piyush Pattnaik with the author and the moderator



# A Journey Through Poetry



The Aakhar Kobita Samaroha, organised by Abrittilok, marked a literary milestone. The three-day poetry festival commenced at the Paschimbanga Bangla Akademi in Kolkata, and continued in Shantiniketan, with events at Lipika and Mohar Bithika Angon. Supported by Sahitya Akademi, the Kanika Bandopadhyay Memorial Trust, and Prabha Khaitan Foundation, the gathering witnessed the presence of esteemed poets and scholars like Srijato, Tanmoy Chakraborty and Aveel Majumdar, among others. Renowned elocutionists such as Pranati Thakur and Soumitra Mitra enriched the event with soul-stirring renditions. Both Kolkata and Shantiniketan witnessed immense audience engagement and appreciation throughout the festival. Here are a few glimpses from the event.

## DAY 1: Kolkata

The first day of the festival witnessed performances by Soumitra Ghosh, Ramkrishna Chatui, Subodh Sarkar and Pranati Thakur, among others. Renowned educationist and art critic, Samik Bandyopadhyay, graced the event alongside Devendra Kumar Debesh, the regional secretary of Sahitya Akademi



Binayak Bandyopadhyay, Arpita Pal, Aveek Majumder, Samragnee Bandyopadhyay and Ramkrishna Chatui



Samik Bandyopadhyay and Soumitra Mitra



Prabal Kumar Basu



Priti Sanyal



Rizurekho Chakraborty



Debendrakumar Debesh



Soumitra Ghosh, Subodh Sarkar, Ranajit Das, Sanjukta Bandyopadhyay and Anupan Sengupta

## DAY 2: Shantiniketan

The poetry festival continued its vibrant celebration at Santiniketan's Lipika, in collaboration with Visva-Bharati, featuring recitations by acclaimed artists like Payel Sengupta, Shyamasree and Shekhar Bhowmick, among others. The day also saw performances by the band Kobita Connection, Bratati Bandyopadhyay's group Bratati Parampara, and the Sundar group of Shantiniketan. Manabendranath Saha and Amal Pal of Visva-Bharati University graced the occasion with their presence



Nilanjan Bandyopadhyay, Siddhartha Mukhopadhyay, Subhabrata Roy Chowdhury, Atanu Sasmal, Swaroop Chanda and Banhishikha Goswami



Manabendranath Saha, Amal Pal and Soumitra Mitra



Palash Das and Deepmoy Das of Kobita Connection



Sundar Group from Shantiniketan



Shyamasree Bhowmick and Shekhar Bhowmick



Payel Sengupta



Bratati Parampara Group from Shantiniketan

### DAY 3: Shantiniketan

At Mohar Bithika Angon, the final day of the Kobita Samaroha witnessed a captivating conclusion with poets Srijato and Tanmoy Chakraborty sharing their verses alongside recitationist Soumitra Mitra



Soumitra Mitra, Malabika Mitra, Tanmay Chakraborty, Srijato and Dhurba Bandopadhyay



The Anandadhara group performs, led by Priyam Mukhopadhyay and Ritapa Bhattacharya

## Reba Rakshit: A Strong Woman Forgotten by History



Priyam Marik



Ida Jo Pajunen

In Kolkata, a city teeming with stories both grand and obscure, one extraordinary narrative has been resurrected — that of Reba Rakshit, a forgotten circus stuntmaster from mid-20th century Calcutta. Reba Rakshit was remembered for one particular spectacle: having an adult elephant walk over her chest. Yet, history chose to overlook her. This led author Ida Jo Pajunen to give Rakshit a voice through her book, *Strong Woman Reba Rakshit: The Life and Adventures of a Stuntmaster*. Pajunen was a guest at a session of the Glenburn Culture Club — a series centred around authors and literary discussions — organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, to talk in detail about Rakshit.

The event commenced with an introductory note by journalist Chandrima Pal. “This is a remarkable story of a remarkable woman, but everything we know about her has been told by the men in her life,” said Pal. “She never got to tell her own story, and that’s where Ida comes in.” The journalist, Priyam Marik, led Pajunen through her journey to bring this book to life. The author immersed herself in research on ancient yoga practices and gender stereotypes while in North Kolkata. This journey eventually led her to Reba Rakshit. “Rakshit achieved these incredible feats of strength,” said Pajunen. “This is what she was most known for. But she also faced many difficulties, tensions, and conflicts, because this was the 1940s and 1950s. Rakshit is in a leotard costume, yet she’s the circus star.” How big was Rakshit back in her day, and why did history forget about her? “Hers is not a name most people would say to you. But if you ask them about her, they’d immediately remember, as it was very much alive in their recollections, but not in recorded history,” said Pajunen. “She was wooed by celebrities and royalty and was making a lot of money. Despite her desire to



Chandrima Pal

quit, the circus company insisted that Rakshit couldn’t leave because her absence would deter audiences from attending.”

“The start of this project was prompted exactly by that question: why is nothing written about her now?” said Pajunen. “She was appreciated for her entertainment value, but not as a figure that should be recorded in history.” The conversation highlighted how Rakshit was an inspiration to all, especially younger children. Pajunen talked about an anecdote that Chandrima Pal’s aunt told her: “The legend of her stunts was so inspiring to people, including little girls, that they would start to pile pillows upon pillows, as many as they could, higher and higher, so that the pillows could act like an elephant!”

The discussion touched upon many other facets of Rakshit’s life. The evening wound to a close with a Q&A session with the audience, and concluded with the author signing copies of her book.

*This session was organised with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative in association with hospitality partner The Glenburn Penthouse and digital media partner The Telegraph Online — My Kolkata*



Manisha Jain



Cathy Tongper



Manjari Jaruhar

Ramona Sen

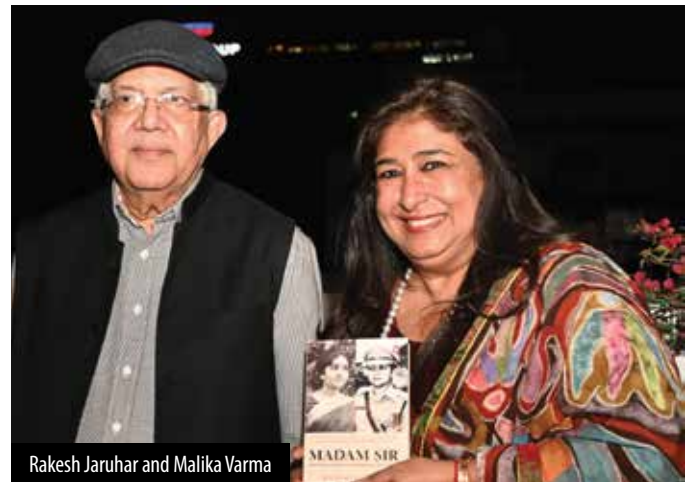
Imagine that you are a child once again. You've come home from a long day at school. Your friends are calling you to play. Lately, there has been one specific game of which you can't seem to get enough. *Chor-police* — an exhilarating game of espionage involving running, hiding and chasing.

For Manjari Jaruhar, the first woman IPS officer of Bihar, this game was her life. Jaruhar struck an arresting figure as she spoke of anecdotes which reshaped the contours of law enforcement that transcended gender dynamics. Ramona Sen, author and journalist, took Jaruhar through her experiences at a session of the Glenburn Culture Club, organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. Jaruhar's book, titled *Madam Sir*, is the story of a young girl living a sheltered life, with a seemingly traditional future planned out for her. However, her life takes unexpected twists and turns, as this delicate little girl is reborn in the police academy, fighting stereotypes as well as crimes.

"My parents and grandparents were very disciplined. We had to be good at our studies, and we had to be groomed properly." It was this strict upbringing that held Jaruhar in good stead when she joined the Indian Police Service. The act of prioritising a career

of her choice was an act of rebellion against her otherwise conservative family.

Jaruhar's time in the CID proved to be the most difficult posting of her career. "The DG didn't want me. He demeaned me by telling me that he would have to take out 'Kiran



Rakesh Jaruhar and Malika Varma

Bedi's file' to determine what to do with me! I never gave up, and worked diligently on every file I got. The seniors were impressed, and then the chief minister declared that all Crimes Against Women cases in the state would now be investigated by me!" Jaruhar has always believed that the uniform — which was never made for the female body in the first place, she said — was "the great equaliser". A lot may have changed between her time and today, but there is no hiding from the fact that discrimination still exists. Her message to young women IPS officers now? "The chair is never important, the person occupying that chair is. So make a difference wherever you are."

Guided by Sen, Jaruhar spoke about the need to evolve along with the times. The evening drew to a close with a Q&A session with the audience, which included Jaruhar's colleagues and students from the police force, as well as the former police commissioner of Kolkata, Soumen Mitra.

*This session of the Glenburn Culture Club was organised with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative in association with venue partner The Glenburn Penthouse and media partner The Telegraph Online — My Kolkata*



Manisha Jain



Soumen Mitra



Abhijit Gupta

Nandini Das

# Chronicling History, the Novel and Travel Writing

A recent session of **An Author's Afternoon**, organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, witnessed the presence of author-academic Nandini Das, who is a professor of early modern literature and culture at the University of Oxford. The author of *Courting India: England, Mughal India and the Origins of Empire*, Das was in conversation with Abhijit Gupta, a professor of English at Jadavpur University. After the welcome address was delivered by Arnab Chatterjee, General Manager of Taj Bengal, Kolkata, the lively discussion got underway.

Gupta initiated the conversation by reminiscing about their university days at Jadavpur, where Das and he participated in a departmental production of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, directed by Anando Lal. From Kolkata, Das went on to pursue her doctorate at Oxford, appreciating the flexible curriculum which sustained her interest in reading widely. As the conversation shifted to her books, Gupta enquired about her writing process, and whether it had changed since her very first book and her latest one. "It's very different," said Das, "but there were moments when I was writing this book that

certain things became clearer to me about links between the two books." Elaborating on her interest in the novel, she said, "What particularly interests me in the novel is narratology, or the way narratives are structured. One of the oldest ways in which storytelling starts is by someone setting off on an adventure. You step out of a threshold, a doorway, and that interested me a lot. So I decided to trace it back to its earlier forms." The earliest forms of such setting out, continued Das, was prevalent in medieval literature, with elements of romance like dragons, knights and damsels.

What particularly interests me in the novel is narratology, or the way narratives are structured. One of the oldest ways in which storytelling starts is by someone setting off on an adventure. You step out of a threshold, a doorway, and that interested me a lot. So I decided to trace it back to its earlier forms

Delving deeper into the rise of the novel during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Das spoke of how fiction writing came into being. "This period witnessed a generation of well-educated, newly graduated youth in London facing an economic crisis. During the late 1500s, an ageing empress, economic turmoil and limited job opportunities for these recent graduates pushed them to a limit. Frustrated by the lack of employment,

they turned to writing imaginative stories of better situations in prose, marking a shift in fiction writing," explained Das. Against the backdrop of such times, Das introduced traveller-writer Thomas Coryat. "Deeply

motivated to create a name for himself, Coryat began taking bets and challenging himself to walk around Europe. People would usually bet against him, and he would successfully complete each journey, document his experiences in a book and make double the money off of it. This dual-income strategy made him one of the earliest English celebrities,” said Das. Unfortunately, betting against himself did not end well for the adventurous Coryat. Fuelled by adrenaline and wishing to outdo his previous feats, Coryat decided to walk across the land of the great Mughals, never to return or finish documenting his travels.

Serving as a contrast to Coryat and his eccentricities was another man, Thomas Roe, whose narratives inspired Das to pen *Courting India*. In 1616, James I sent Roe to India with the goal of establishing trade relations between the emerging British Empire and the prosperous Jahangir-ruled Mughal Empire. Roe’s appointment as the first English ambassador signalled the beginning of diplomatic ties between the two diametrically opposed societies. Through an examination of Roe’s time in India, Das’s book reveals the historical processes that were formed by the connections between two disparate civilisations. Unearthing such intimate exchanges made Das feel like a “historical eavesdropper”, she said.

When asked how she approached writing the book for general readers, Das said, “As an academician, I emphasise to my students, as I also try to uphold, the importance of our aesthetic obligation to our readers. Thus, throughout the writing process, I consciously



Juergen Gerhard Kurzhals felicitating the author

maintained a dual awareness: I aimed to present the narrative in a manner enjoyable to my readers, while simultaneously upholding my academic rigour.”

The session concluded with an interactive Q&A session with the audience. Executive Trustee of the Foundation, Anindita Chatterjee, delivered the official vote of thanks.

*An Author’s Afternoon* was organised with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative in association with hospitality partner Taj Bengal, Kolkata, and digital media partner The Telegraph Online — My Kolkata. The session was facilitated by *Ehsaas* Women of Kolkata



The audience



The author signs copies of her book



Ruchira Gupta

## Capturing Resilience in Adversity



Anjum Katyal

At a recent episode of **An Author's Afternoon**, organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** at Taj Bengal, Kolkata, Malika Varma, **Ehsaas** Woman of Kolkata, extended a warm welcome to the attendees and leading industrialist Harshvardan Neotia offered the introductory speech. The person of the hour was author, journalist and anti-trafficking activist Ruchira Gupta, in conversation with writer and translator Anjum Katyal.

Katyal commended Gupta's evolution as an activist and writer, acknowledging her ability to embody the essence of the young girls for whom she advocates in her latest book. "I've known her for many years and during different phases of her life. She constantly reinvents herself much like the protagonist of her book *I Kick and I Fly*," said Katyal.

Gupta's journey is certainly an inspiring one. She started out as an active journalist on the ground, went on to set up a non-governmental organisation against trafficking and, most recently, has come into her own as a writer of fiction. The shift from journalist to fiction writer is significant, and as Katyal noted, "It is a whole different ball game. When you are a journalist, you are writing very readable prose and communicating information." Confirming her talents as a writer of fiction, Gupta read a few passages from the book, illuminating the twists and turns in the story as well as her craft and skill at using the written word.

As someone who has worked closely with women and girls who have been victims of trafficking, Gupta is close to these communities. Asked to speak about the community amidst whom her book is set, Gupta

said "In my book, I delve into the nomadic tribe whose traditional way of life centred on seasonal migrations from their forest abodes to the plains. They would trade dairy and indigenous goods, demonstrate tightrope walking skills, and even sell snake venom." However, their fate took a dark turn with the advent of British colonial rule and the enactment of the Criminal Tribes Act. This legislation unjustly branded 16 tribes as criminals and subjected them to harsh restrictions.

Forced to abandon their ancestral livelihoods, many resorted to menial tasks for landowners, including the distressing practice of opium mixing and the exploitation of women for sex work. Even after India gained independence and repealed the law, the stigma persisted, and law enforcement continued to target individuals from these communities.

Gupta's own efforts to fight sex trafficking began in Mumbai, where she encountered numerous women from these tribes working in beer bars and brothels. "Motivated by their plight, I embarked on a quest to locate such tribes and provide support and empowerment to those ensnared in intergenerational prostitution, striving to break the cycle of exploitation and restore dignity to their lives," she said.

The author emphasised the challenges confronting girls who get pushed into prostitution, including deprivation of basic necessities like food and education, which perpetuates a vicious cycle of exploitation.

I embarked on a quest to provide support and empowerment to those ensnared in intergenerational prostitution, striving to break the cycle of exploitation and restore dignity to their lives



Many, as first-generation learners, face discrimination and bullying in schools. The dire circumstances also expose them to the constant threat of abduction by traffickers. Gupta recognised the need to empower these vulnerable children, equipping them with the skills to defend themselves in case of kidnapping attempts, thus providing a semblance of security in a perilous environment and boosting their self-confidence.

As these young girls learnt karate and excelled in competitions, Gupta began to document their journey. She witnessed a transformation in their families' perception and the town's recognition of their achievements. Katyal took note of the book's authenticity, attributing it to Gupta's intimate understanding of the community, an understanding derived from her first-hand experiences with them. The narrative delves into intricate details of the girls' lives, revealing the underlying

motivations that shape their actions, a perspective that is often overlooked by outsiders. These tales embody resilience and offer glimpses of hope amidst adversity.

The session concluded with an interesting Q&A with the audience during which Gupta expertly fielded a lot of interesting questions, including about her book. Finally, with Anindita Chatterjee, Executive Trustee of the Foundation, presenting the vote of thanks and Amrita Ray of Taj City Centre felicitating the guests, the engaging session drew to a satisfying close.

*An Author's Afternoon was organised with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative in association with hospitality partner Taj Bengal, Kolkata, and digital media partner The Telegraph Online — My Kolkata. The session was facilitated by and supported by Ehsaas Women of Kolkata*



Harshvardhan Neotia



Anindita Chatterjee and Malika Varma



Amrita Ray



Treena Saha and Deepa Kundu, members of the PKF Special Force, welcome the guests as Arnab Chatterjee looks on

## An Author Speaks on Writing, Empowerment and Resilience through a Pandemic



Preeti Shenoy



Ashley Lalremruati



The vision held by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** to bring India's northeastern states into its nationwide and global conversations has been happily realised over the past several months, as a series of engrossing discussions have taken place across the cities of Dimapur, Shillong and Guwahati. The Foundation also organised a session of **The Write Circle** in the Mizo capital of Aizawl with Indian author and blogger, Preeti Shenoy, known for her

bestselling books and influence on India's literary scene.

The session was even more special because it was organised against all odds. The first scheduled Aizawl session had to be called off owing to some last-minute disturbances in the city, but the associates of the Foundation and the **Ehsaas** Women are known to never give up. Together, they ensured that the dream of the inaugural Aizawl session was realised — and what a session it was!

“The pandemic did change all of us. Our perspectives and values have changed, and I never thought I would write a self-help book. And yet, through the pandemic, I did



Amelia Lalremdiki Sailo



Esha Dutta

Amelia Lalremdiki Sailo, **Ehsaas** Woman of Aizawl, delivered the welcome note, and Esha Dutta, the Foundation's Honorary Convenor for Northeast Affairs, outlined the grit and determination it took for the Foundation's team and the **Ehsaas** Women to bring the Aizawl session to fruition. This set the tone for a scintillating discussion between Shenoy and Ashley Lalremruati, **Ehsaas** Woman of Aizawl.

While the discussion kicked off with Shenoy speaking about her book, *All The Love You Deserve*, the conversation soon moved on to her experience of writing during the global pandemic. How did she weave the pandemic and its effects on human lives into *The Magic Mindset*, the book she wrote during Covid? "The pandemic did change all of us," said Shenoy. "Our perspectives and values have changed, and I never thought I would write a self-help book. And yet, through the pandemic, I did." Shenoy then began to speak about how she dealt with that period in time. "I would post little snippets," she said, "and people were locked in their homes, so they would wait for my stories on Instagram. They said it gave them hope."

As more was uncovered about the author's professional and personal life, she was asked how she was able to consistently write books. "I confess that it was harder when my kids were younger, as my husband had a transferable job and I did not have a mother-in-law," she said. "I wanted to be a stay-at-home mom and raise my kids, but I would organise things in such a way that I had time for writing." Thus, when her kids would go to school, Shenoy would switch off the doorbell and begin to write. "Writing is the most important thing for me," said the author. "When I was an unpublished writer, I would write; and now, when millions of people are reading, I still write!"

The discussion ended with a Q&A round with the audience, followed by a closing speech delivered by Lalremdiki. The audience got their own copies of Shenoy's book signed by her, and also enjoyed some refreshments.

**The Write Circle** Aizawl was organised with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative in association with hospitality partner Folkland and with the support of **Ehsaas** Women of Aizawl

I confess that it was harder [to write consistently] when my kids were younger, as my husband had a transferable job and I did not have a mother-in-law. I wanted to be a stay-at-home mom and raise my kids, but I would organise things in such a way that I had time to write. Writing is the most important thing for me. When I was an unpublished writer, I would write; and now, when millions of people are reading, I still write!



Pratap Sailo felicitates the author



## Imaginations of Modern Cooks

Food is life; and, as such, it is also a highly-engaging topic of discussion. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** organised a special session of **The Write Circle** at the Vidarbha Literary Festival in Nagpur to talk about a unique aspect of food with a panel of distinguished individuals who know food better than most. This uniquely curated panel discussion, titled *Stone Soup: How Ancient Food Became Trendy*, featured author and culinary expert Karen Anand, author Abhilasha Sethia and nutritionist Vidhi Beri. The official welcome address was delivered by Priyanka Kothari, **Ehsaas** Woman of Nagpur, on behalf of the VLF and the Foundation, following which Monica Bhagwagar, **Ehsaas** Woman of Nagpur, introduced the panellists and moderator to the audience. The session was moderated by Parveen Tuli, **Ehsaas** Woman of Nagpur.

Tuli began by posing a question on the evolution of food to Anand: how has she witnessed the daily affair of dining evolve through the ages, especially in the highly globalised and consumerist age that we currently live in, where homemade meals are being challenged by the

breakneck speed of delivery apps? Anand replied by relating the situation to her own family. “My children, who are in their 30s, love home-cooked food,” she said. “They love to come home to warm meals. They’re both boys, and they’re married to highly-skilled and professional women, who aren’t in the house much. They simply don’t have the time or energy for the 2-3 hours it takes for meal preparation. A quick bite is what they look for, after a long day.” Anand did, however, also add that in spite of foreign cuisines and fast food items making their place on the dinner table, the staple *dal chawal* will remain popular.

Tuli took the question of “quick bites” to Beri, and asked how such quickly-fixed meals impact one’s body. “Although such bites save time, they tend to cater to only certain food groups, and deprive the body of the rest,” replied Beri. She mentioned the cookbook she co-authored with Sethia, *A Superfood A Day*, which has successfully revolutionised the idea of “quick bites” for growing children by creating over 70 quick-fix recipes with healthy nutrients. Sethia added to Beri’s

comment by emphasising the different approaches to food preparation among the generations, and the ways in which parenting differs from earlier. This inspired her to create the cookbook as a present to her grandson. “The style of parenting has totally changed, and the younger generation is much more mindful about what to give their children to eat,” she said. “The book, therefore, attempts to keep both generations happy.” Anand took this observation further by saying that in a world where everyone is always running out of time, we should make the act of cooking collaborative, and do it with our families.

The conversation shifted towards Anand’s bestseller and her ode to Indian food, *Masala Memsahib*, and the story of its conception. “This book is an amalgamation of recipes I have been scribbling in my diaries since I was 18 years old,” she said. “I am, indeed, the ‘Masala Queen’ — I do travel with my masalas, in case unprecedented cooking demands arrive!” Tuli took the conversation back to Sethia and Beri’s book, and delved deeper into its conceptualisation. “We included superfoods like millets, raisins and almonds in our recipes to tackle fussy eaters,” said Beri. “Almost every house has a child, be it a six-month-old or a teenager,

who is a picky eater. So, we thought of innovative recipes like nutella *laddoo*, date balls, pizza and pasta with millet and jowar flour, and tried them out on our families first. They worked well!” “Because such ingredients are widely available nowadays, it is easier for people who are mindful about their health to cook these recipes at home,” added Sethia. What makes these recipes unique is that Sethia and Beri consciously used ancient Indian ingredients while restructuring their presentation in a way that the younger generation would find appealing.

The conversation wound down with an enriching Q&A session with the audience, whose food queries the panellists answered enthusiastically. The session concluded with Nita Cali, the trustee of Chitnavis Center, felicitating the speakers. Jyoti Kapoor, **Ehsaas** Woman of Nagpur, gifted the speakers ceremonial shawls, thereby wrapping up the interesting afternoon.

*The Write Circle Special Nagpur was organised with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative in association with Vidarbha Literary Festival, Chitnavis Centre and with the support of Ehsaas Women of Nagpur*



Parveen Tuli, Monica Bhagwagar, Jyoti Kapoor and Priyanka Kothari with Karen Anand, Abhilasha Sethia and Vidhi Beri



Anjum Babukhan

Shobha Tharoor Srinivasan

## A Writer's Memories of her Mother

The miracles wrought by mothers and the strength they possess form the foundation of life. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, under its initiative, **The Write Circle** hosted the eminent author and voiceover artist, Shobha Tharoor Srinivasan, to talk about her book, *Good Innings: The Extraordinary, Ordinary Life Of Lily Tharoor*, centred on her own mother. The event opened with Mansi Malik, **Ehsaas** Woman of Hyderabad, welcoming the audience, and Srinivasan was in conversation with Anjum Babukhan, **Ehsaas** Woman of Hyderabad.

Khan began by asking Srinivasan about her childhood and family bonding experiences. “My childhood was very similar to the ones many of you have had,” recalled the author. “We were not distracted by video games and devices, so we grew up in a family where books, words and word games kept us going. My father worked for a newspaper, so we always had 5-6 newspapers in the house.” What was her first source of inspiration to write? “Writing was part of our family. In many ways it is the sound of words that I have always loved. I wrote poetry when I was a child. I did voiceover work and coached my kids when they were in school. I wrote throughout my life, even in my career as a developmental director.” Srinivasan also detailed out how she started with poetry, progressing to writing material that was never eventually published.

Khan then observed how *Good Innings* is a biography of Srinivasan’s mother, who was a pillar for her and the family. “This book is essentially an intimate portrayal of my mother based on my memories of her and how she influenced us over all these years,” said the author. “I

have only selected, from each stage of her life, interesting stories that will resonate with the reader. It is my hope that the next generation will find something to learn from these stories.”



Mansi Malik

The conversation, which contained several anecdotes about the strong and inimitable Lily Tharoor, also veered towards some other topics, including the effects that artificial intelligence is having on human lives. The discussion wound to a close with an interesting Q&A round with the audience, and concluded with Malik delivering the vote of thanks and Srinivasan being felicitated with a gorgeous *Madhubani* shawl by the author and editor, Vanaja Banagiri.

*The Write Circle Hyderabad was organised with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative in association with Trident Hotel and with the support of Ehsaas Women of Hyderabad*



Vanaja Banagiri felicitates the author



Manjot Chawla

Vipul Rikhi

The impact of the works of the Indian poet and mystic, Kabir, are felt to this day. At a session of **The Write Circle** organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, Kabir was a significant subject of discussion, owing to Vipul Rikhi – a gifted artist who, for the last decade, has been passionate about the life and works of the mystic. Rikhi's book, *Drunk on Love: An Essential Introduction to the Life, Ideas and Poetry of Kabir*, is the result of this passionate study. Urvi Bhuwania delivered the welcome note, and Manjot Chawla, who has expertise in events and management, was the moderator, deftly steering the conversation with Rikhi. The audience was taken into a universe of couplets, anecdotes and stories about Kabir.

Chawla began by asking Rikhi about his first brush with the great poet and philosopher. Rikhi gave the audience a first hand account of the transformative moments that shaped his journey, with the discussion veering into the enigma that was Kabir's life. The author dived into the folklore around Kabir's existence as a weaver living by the Ganges in Varanasi.

But no discussion about Kabir can be complete without exploring his poetry. The couplet, "*Jaati humari aatma, pran humara naam, akal humara isht, gagan humara gram*", offered the audience a unique perspective on Kabir's spiritual insights, going beyond societal constructs to focus on the very essence of humanity. Rikhi and Chawla discussed how '*jaati humari aatma*' tells us that

the essence of our being contains our actual identity; '*pran humara naam*' reveals that our life force is the very tenet of our existence; '*akal humara isht*' highlights how intellect is a divine attribute, gently coaxing us toward enlightenment; and '*gagan humara gram*' paints the verdant sky as our final home. As the conversation shifted towards the significance of Kabir in the sphere of the Bhakti movement, the author and the moderator explored Kabir's perspective on self-reflection and the notion of dualism. They also touched upon Kabir's thoughts on religion, the application of his philosophy in modern contexts, and his ruminations on morality. Rikhi emphasised Kabir's plea for a peaceful world *sans* strife.

As the session wound down, the audience asked questions about Kabir's connection to Sufism and the linguistic mysteries that surround his couplets. Rikhi answered questions on Kabir's faith in oral traditions and the transformative influence of his unique dialect, *khadi boli*, which has had an impact on several languages. Vaidehi Singh felicitated Rikhi and Chawla, thus bringing the animated session to a close.

*The Write Circle Jaipur was organised with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative in association with hospitality partner ITC Rajputana, Siyahi and Spagia Foundation, and with the support of Ehsaas Women of Jaipur*



Urvi Bhuwania



Vaidehi Singh, Neeru Saluja and Nandini Atal



Tripti Pandey



Gautam Sen and Nirmal Sen



## Behind the Silver Screen

Rahul Rawail

Neelima Deshpande

In another memorable session of **The Write Circle**, organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, the renowned film director and writer, Rahul Rawail, shed light on his literary journey that culminated in his book, *Raj Kapoor: The Master at Work*. Along with his insights on his book, Rawail also shared his literary and cinematic experiences. He was joined in conversation by Nilima Deshpande, a veteran performing artist. The official welcome address was delivered by Neelam Seolekar, **Ehsaas** Woman of Pune.

The conversation began with Deshpande asking Rawail about the motivation behind writing a book on Raj Kapoor. How is his book different from all other books on the film veteran? “The other books focus on Raj Kapoor as a showman, but nobody spoke about him at work, or how he made his films, or what inspired him,” said Rawail. “When I decided to work on this book, I went and spoke to his wife, who encouraged me to go forward with the project.” Elaborating on his writing process, Rawail recalled narrating the story to a bright junior, who wrote it down on paper. On being asked about his break from directing films, Rawail expressed his discontent with the current mindset looming over the film industry: “They are not shooting films anymore, they are shooting numbers. They are just focusing on the weekend audience, but what about my mid-week audience? Moreover, in my opinion, they are also getting carried away with technology.”

Rawail also spoke about his early days in the film industry, and the massive shift in his dream from becoming a nuclear physicist to being an assistant director to Raj Kapoor, which in turn sparked his interest in becoming a director himself. He shared the biggest lesson he received from Raj Kapoor in the art of filmmaking, which he has followed like a maxim: “I never hear a story, I see a story.” Rawail reminisced about the compassion and encouragement of his mentor, recounting how he always encouraged the young Rawail to ask as many questions as he wanted. The session wrapped up with a lively Q&A round with the rapt audience. The final vote of thanks was delivered by Sujata Sabnis, **Ehsaas** Woman of Pune.

“The other books focus on Raj Kapoor as a showman, but nobody spoke about him at work, or how he made his films, or what inspired him. When I decided to work on this book, I went and spoke to his wife, who encouraged me to go forward with the project”

*The Write Circle Pune was organised with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative in association with O Hotel Pune and media partner Lokmat, and with the support of Ehsaas Women of Pune*



Ehsaas Women of Pune Neelam Seolekar, Amita Munot and Sujata Sabnis with Neelima Deshpande and Rahul Rawail





## Dissecting Data Myths



Chirag Patel



Rukmini S.

Rukmini S., a Chennai-based independent data communicator, is renowned for her journalistic focus on inequality, gender, caste, and politics. At a session of **The Write Circle**, hosted by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, the spotlight was on Rukmini and her insights, as she embarked on an engrossing conversation with Chirag Patel, a versatile mentor in various sectors.

Having formerly served as the National Data Editor of *The Hindu* and *HuffPost India*, Rukmini has contributed to numerous Indian and international publications. Her accomplishments include the Likhoo Awards for Excellence in Media (2019). Her debut book, *Whole Numbers & Half Truths: What Data Can and Cannot Tell Us About Modern India*, delves deep into the complexities of interpreting government data, aiming to debunk prevalent myths and misconceptions. It garnered critical acclaim, winning the Tata Literature Live! First Book Award (Non-Fiction) in 2022. Her second book is slated for publication in 2024. Urvi Bhuwania welcomed the audience, introducing Rukmini and Patel, and Rukmini's journalistic journey set the stage for a profound discussion.

Patel, known for his expertise in the financial services sector, prodded Rukmini to unravel the essence of her work. Rukmini spoke of her motivations, rooted in the misinterpretation of statistical data within India's dominant political narratives. She shared insights into her journalistic experiences, revealing the stark disparities between official data and ground realities.

Reflecting on her encounters within police stations, Rukmini unveiled startling truths hidden behind seemingly straightforward statistics. She highlighted instances where assault charges were fabricated to dissolve disapproved relationships, shedding light on the intricate layers of

societal dynamics. "In India, the workforce is more masculinised than in most parts of the world," she revealed. "In fact, even unemployed men put in less work than employed women into household chores." Her revelations challenged the prevalent notions of gender roles and labour dynamics.

Diving deeper into her research, Rukmini shattered the illusion of progressive values among the younger generation. Contrary to popular belief, her book uncovers a stagnancy in societal ideologies, with the youth exhibiting conservative leanings on crucial issues like inter-caste marriages and social integration. "Many of the assault

charges were filed by parents to break up relationships they disapproved of, instead of women being assaulted in real life," Rukmini said.

The session culminated in an engaging Q&A round, with attendees delving into the ethical dimensions of data analysis and the nuances of contextualising statistics devoid of political influence. Rukmini's insightful responses resonated with the audience,

fostering a deeper understanding of her research. The evening concluded with Deependra Rana, general manager of ITC Rajputana, presenting tokens of appreciation to Rukmini and Patel, thereby marking the end of yet another enlightening session.

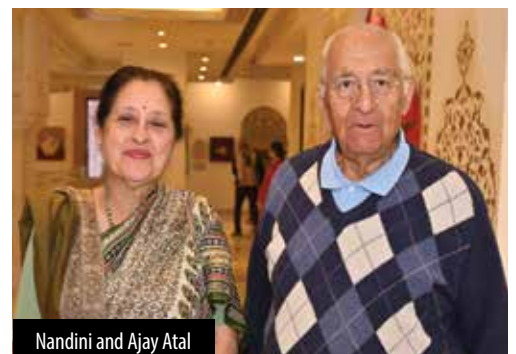
*The Write Circle Jaipur was organised with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative in association with Siyahi, Spagia Foundation and hospitality partner ITC Rajputana, and with the support of Ehsaas Women of Jaipur*



Anuradha Singh and Priya Chirag



Urvi Bhuwania, Doorva Devarshi, Prerna Singh, Ratika Bhargava and Richa Khetan



Nandini and Ajay Atal



Aarti Gupta, Bhavna Roy and Geeta Malhotra



## An Insightful Journey through Indian Philosophy

Kanpur witnessed a deeply enjoyable session of The Write Circle as Prabha Khaitan Foundation hosted author and director of Himanshu Roy Foundation, Bhavna Roy, for a conversation. An avid reader herself, Roy enthralled the audience with her anecdotes and tales, exploring the fundamental principles of Indian philosophy and their significance in today's world. The author was in conversation with Geeta Malhotra, Ehsaas Woman of Kanpur.

The conversation opened with Roy being asked about her childhood and family. "I was the oldest of four siblings," she said. "Because my father changed jobs frequently, we were required to change schools often as well. Eventually, we went to boarding school, which took us to Mussoorie."

"I come from a very traditional as well as liberal family," Roy continued. "My grandfather was from Benaras, so our early childhood was spent there. So we were steeped in customs and the stories populating our mythology, puja path, getting milk and so on." Roy added that her baba used to read the Sundara Kanda every evening near the Tulsi Ghat, and she would always accompany him.

Roy also spoke about the toll that losing her husband in 2018 had on her. "I was lost, and it took me three years to look positively at the rest of my life," she said. Three days after her husband passed away, her brother told her to go for counselling, but it was more of a mix between psychology and spirituality.

As the conversation progressed, Roy got into many other details about her life, ranging from her husband's

illness, to being comfortable in one's own skin, and, of course, her book, *Idol*, which she co-wrote with Amish Tripathi. "Over 3,000 years ago, the entire world used to idol worship," she said. "The Abrahamic way of life was born just 3,500 years ago, with the three religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam." She even added that in the Torah (the first five books of the Old Testament or the Hebrew Bible), idol worship is equated to devil worship. More of Roy's intriguing thoughts were shared with the audience during a Q&A round. The conversation came to a close with Aarti Gupta, Ehsaas Woman of Kanpur, delivering the vote of thanks.



Archana Khaitan

*The Write Circle Kanpur was organised with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative in association with hospitality partner The Landmark Towers, media partner Dainik Jagran and with the support of Ehsaas Women of Kanpur*



The audience



## Folk Maestro Enthralls One and All

In a mesmerising display of musical virtuosity, celebrated folk singer Malini Awasthi graced the stage at the IILM Centre for Arts and Ideas in Delhi. The event, a part of the New Year celebrations organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** and FICCI Ladies Organisation (FLO), unfolded on a memorable winter evening.

Awasthi showcased her exceptional talent, honed under the tutelage of the legendary Hindustani classical singer and Padma Vibhushan awardee, Girija Devi of the Banaras *gharana*. With her mellifluous voice and captivating renditions spanning Hindi, Awadhi and Bhojpuri, Awasthi left the audience spellbound. The Padma Shri awardee's skilful renditions of *thumri* and *kajri*, notably "*Thare Raho Baanke Shyam*," have garnered widespread acclaim over the years.

Supported by the **Ehsaas** Women of Coimbatore, the musical evening drew a distinguished crowd, including FLO National President Sudha Shivkumar, Chairperson of the Coimbatore Chapter Rama Rajasekaran, and Past Chair and **Ehsaas** Woman of Coimbatore Poonam Bafna. The event served as a fitting tribute to India's rich cultural heritage and musical traditions.



Malini Awasthi



Malini Awasthi with her troupe of musicians



Malini Awasthi performs at the venue



Archana Dalmia and Poonam Sharma



Sudha Shivkumar and Joyshree Das Verma



The audience



Dipali Bhasin and Neelima Dalmia Adhar



Namita Goutham, Poonam Bafna and Malini Awasthi



Rama Rajasekaran felicitating the singer



The troupe of musicians



Anvita Pradhan with Usha Kiran Khan

## “बिछड़ा कुछ इस अदा से कि रुत ही बदल गई इक शख्स सारे शहर को वीरान कर गया”

Anvita Pradhan  
Ehsaas Woman of Patna

**D**r Usha Kiran Khan, a celebrated author and academic, a dotting mother and grandmother, and, above all, a wonderful friend to people of all generations, passed away on 11 February after a brief illness. She was 78.

She was a prolific writer who contributed significantly to Hindi and Maithili literature. Her work was not just stories, but a reflection of society. Her writings reflected her sensitivity towards society. Her stories were woven around the rural lives of women

and farmers, with an emphasis on women's issues. She was benevolent, and yet, rational. She motivated and guided many around her to write and publish their work.

Usha Kiran Khan was born in Laheriasarai in the Darbhanga district of Bihar, to the family of freedom fighter Shri Jagdish Choudhary. His Gandhian views influenced her during her formative years. Later, after the death of her father, she moved to her maternal grandmother's home for her education.

At a very young age, she was married to an IPS officer, the late Ramchandra Khan. After marriage, she completed her graduation in Ancient Indian History from Patna College, and did her PhD from Magadh University. She joined Patna's B.D. Evening College as a Lecturer, and later retired as the Head of Department of Ancient Indian History and Archeology. She is survived by three accomplished daughters and a son.

In her early years of writing, she was influenced by the works of Jankavi Baba Nagarjun, one of the finest poets and writers of Maithili and Hindi literature. She was also greatly inspired by the mediaeval poet, dramatist and writer, Vidyapati, who is considered the fountainhead of Maithili literature. Her novel, *Sirjanhaar*, is based on his life.

Ushaji was a prolific writer. Her masterpieces, her *chef-d'oeuvre* include *Bhamati: Ek Avismaraniya Premkatha* and *Sirjanhaar* (both in Maithili), *Agan Hindola*, *Ratnare Nayan*, *Hasina Manzil*, *Phagun Ke Baad*, *Janam Avadhi*, *Satyapan*, *Ghar Se Ghar Tak*, and *Pani Par Lakeer*. These works, among others, have cemented her legacy as a peerless, inimitable storyteller capable of capturing the essence of life and human relationships through her narratives. Apart from this, she has written many short stories, plays, children's novels, and some *lokgeet*.

Ushaji was recipient of several awards, including the Bihar National Language Council's Hindi Seva Award; the Sahitya Akademi Award for her novel, *Bhamati: Ek Avismaraniya Premkatha*; the Kusumanjali Sahitya Samman by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations for her novel, *Sirjanhaar*; the Mahadevi Verma Samman; and the Dinkar National Award. In 2015, she received India's highest civilian award, the Padma Shri.

I first met Ushaji in 2013, when my husband, Ajit Pradhan, Aradhana Pradhan and I were organising the first literature festival in Patna. She curated the sessions on Maithili, Magahi and some of the dying regional dialects — Angika and Bajika — beautifully. It was during the second literature festival that we met Sundeep Bhutoria, and the ideas of **Kalam** and **Aakhar** were floated. Ushaji was very supportive with her advice, and was present at almost all **Kalam** and **Aakhar** sessions, in her crisp, traditional sari, distinctive *bindi*, *choodi* and her magnetic smile.

Ushaji had a great sense of humour. She was the centre of attraction at most of the literature festivals and social events. Her passing is a big blow to the literary society of not only Patna and Bihar, but also to the Hindi-speaking belt of India and the readers of Hindi and Maithili in Mauritius and Suriname. Her works have been translated into Odia, Urdu, Bengali, English and Russian as well.

“उनका जाना बहुत खलेगा – पर वो जहाँ भी रहेगी रौशनी लुटाएँगी किसी चिराग का अपना मकाँ नहीं होता।

अपनी रचनाओं में वो जिंदा हैं – नूर संसार से गया ही नहीं।”



# Education is for All

**Geeta Malhotra**

*Ehsaas Woman of Kanpur*

**I**nternational Education Day commemorates the global significance of education, emphasising its role in fostering peace, understanding and sustainable development. Our commitment to promoting access to quality education should extend beyond mere words — it should manifest itself in daily actions. This includes a specific focus on making education accessible to girls. Education should aim at personality development, succeeding in the job market, and the reinforcement of our value system. Only through this comprehensive approach can children evolve into confident, successful individuals capable of contributing to the development and uplift of their families, communities, society, and, therefore, the country's overall progress.

Before venturing onto the international platform, it is crucial to establish strong educational foundations at home, akin to the robust flow of the Ganges reaching the seas and beyond, to the Indian Ocean. The exchange of ideas, technology, and scientific ideas necessitates quality education not only in elite institutions but also at the grassroots level. Focusing on education for the masses lays the groundwork for sustainable development, social equity and overall uplift. Accessible and quality education is a key catalyst for job accomplishments, increased livelihoods and breaking the cycle of poverty. Collective efforts from CEOs, bureaucrats, entrepreneurs and organisations dedicated to humanitarian causes are the need of the hour. Through policies and compassion, we must, physically, financially and mentally, strive to uplift the underprivileged who lack access to education, thereby contributing to their empowerment and advancement.





Abir Chatterjee, Anumegha Kahali, Sohini Sarkar and Suman Ghosh



Anashua Majumdar



Indraadip Dasgupta



Jaya Seal



Manisha Jain

## Spotlight on Regional Cinema

A special post-premiere screening of *Kabuliwala*, directed by National Award-winning filmmaker Suman Ghosh, was held recently at INOX Insignia in South City Mall. Garnering acclaim from audiences and critics alike, the film was showcased by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** under its **Chalchitra Rangmancha** initiative to a sparkling audience of celebrities and film critics.

At the special screening, attention was drawn to Anumegha Kahali's portrayal of little Mini. The young actor was lauded for her impeccable performance alongside legendary star Mithun Chakraborty. Although the latter did not attend, his fellow cast members Abir Chatterjee and Sohini Sarkar made an

appearance. Other notable figures from Tollywood, including Moon Moon Sen, Mimi Chakraborty, Saswata Chatterjee and Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury, added to the star-studded ambience.

Representing the Foundation, Honorary Chief Operating Officer Manisha Jain expressed aspirations to elevate the initiative into a renowned cultural brand, emphasising the Foundation's commitment to fostering creative excellence and supporting quality cinematic endeavours.

*Chalchitra Rangmanch* was organised with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative in association with SVE, Jio Studios and hospitality partner INOX Insignia





Bickram Ghosh with his son



Kaushik Ganguly and Churni Ganguly



Mimi Chakraborty and Isha Saha



Ujaan Ganguly



Moon Moon Sen



Saswata Chatterjee



Sohag Sen and Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury



Suman Mukhopadhyay



Anindya Chatterjee strikes a pose with the participants

# Furry Friends' Marathon

The love for four-legged friends took centre stage at the second edition of Fur-a-thon, a pet-friendly marathon in Kolkata. Organised by Furrfolks, an animal welfare NGO, under the **Karuna** initiative of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** to raise awareness and support for animal welfare laws in India, the marathon drew around 80 animal lovers and their beloved pets to join the fun. On the agenda were two exciting categories of events – 2 km with pets and 4 km without pets. The run kicked off at six in the morning from South City Mall and ended at Golpark.

Rumela Mitra, the founder of Furrfolks, outlined the organisation's vision of a safe world where animals and humans coexist peacefully. "We wanted to spread awareness about what counts as animal cruelty, so other animal lovers and welfare workers can come together to stop it," she said. S.K. Basit, co-founder of Furrfolks, emphasised the importance of advocating for stronger animal welfare laws. "The cost of any life is worth a lot more than a small amount of money,

and more people need to root for stronger laws against people who commit animal cruelty," he said.

Actor Anindya Chatterjee, an animal lover with six fur babies of his own, was the chief guest at the event. He said, "It's heartening to see the effort Furrfolks puts in to help animals especially in emergency situations. Last year, the event was a success, and it is sheer joy to see the event grow in numbers this year." Chatterjee and his pets joined the marathon as well, sharing positive energy with the other participants. As an added bonus, all participants received special competition gear – t-shirts for the humans and race bibs for their furry companions.

The cost of any life is worth a lot more than a small amount of money, and more people need to root for stronger laws against people who commit animal cruelty – S.K. Basit

A community feeling and love for animals won the day, as Fur-a-thon 2024 celebrated the bond between humans and animals while striving for a world where all creatures are treated with compassion and respect.

*This Karuna event was organised with the support of Furrfolks*



The race begins



A participant runs with her dog



Rumela Mitra



Prize distribution under way



Participants at the event



Four-legged friends at Fur-a-thon Season 2



Arjit Walia, Sumitra Ray, Nita Nijhara and Namrata Jain

## On a Literary Adventure

Artistic finesse and intellectual enrichment took centre stage, as Co-Scholastic and **Muskaan** crafted a memorable workshop featuring artist and author Namrata Jain at Bal Bharati Public School, New Delhi. Arjit Walia, co-founder of Co-Scholastic, and Sumitra Ray, the Student Programmes and Activities Adviser of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, extended a warm welcome to Jain.

The young attendees at the workshop embarked on a unique literary voyage during which Jain recited timeless couplets by legendary poets like Kabir, Rahim and Tulsidas. Dedicated to imparting foundational values to the next generation, the author presented Indian couplets together with their moral essence, drawing attention to the timeless works of revered poets. Tailored for children aged three to 12 years, the workshop featured *dohas* and verses in Hindi and English, ensuring inclusivity across a wide audience.

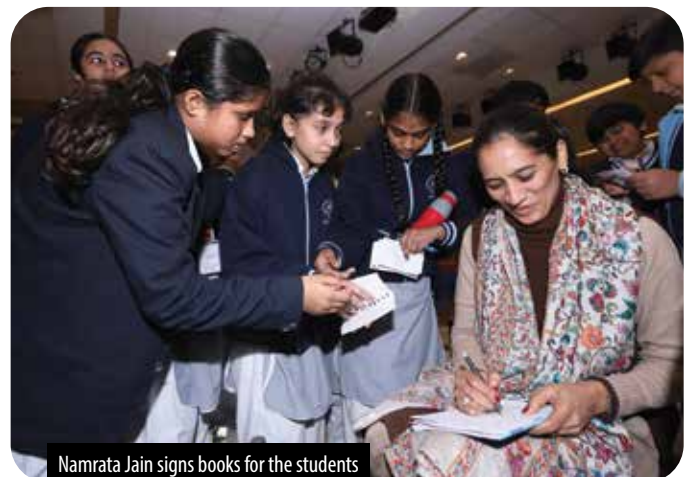
“It was enthralling to see the energy and enthusiasm of students at the Bal Bharti Public School as we read and discussed books, *dohas* and poetry,” Jain said. The fun-filled Monday morning session was marked by the infectious energy and eager participation of the school students. Jain’s “The Namaste Series”, in particular, became a focal point among students at the workshop, and discussing this trilogy underscored the significance of literature and cultural heritage in contemporary times.

By the end of the event, the excitement of the young attendees was palpable and everyone joined in for a spirited Q&A session. A harmonious blend of art, cultural exploration and literary discourse, the event left an indelible impression on everyone present.

*Muskaan*, a joint initiative with **Education For All Trust**, is organised with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative and in association with Co-Scholastic.



The Q&amp;A session gets underway



Namrata Jain signs books for the students

## Cheers to Our Educators!

The **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** and the **Education for All Trust** recently hosted an evening of cocktails and dinner celebrating educators under the **Muskaan** initiative at Taj Bengal, Kolkata. On the guest list were teachers from Modern High School for Girls, La Martiniere for Boys, Shri Shikshayatan School, South City International School, Sri Sri Academy, Techno India Public School and The BSS School. As the guests enjoyed drinks, delicious food and live music, conversations flowed with ease and everyone had a lovely time. Here are glimpses of a memorable evening!



(Clockwise from the back, left) Sudeshna Banerjee, Rajashri Biswas, Gargee Banerjee, Damayanti Mukherjee, Sunita Sen, Krishnakoli Dasgupta, Samita Pincha and Satabdi Banerjee



Saleha Khan



Matthew Sam



Soma Das



Mansi Kamdar Shah, Sumitra Ray, Tania Sen and Banhi Bhattacharya



Saptarshi Chakraborty, Devpriya Dutt and Debductta Bera Adhya



P. A. John Stephen, Arpita Roy and Teresa Gupta

# Let's Make India Safer for Children



Neha Budhia and Preeti Maroti conduct the session

Child safety is non-negotiable. Children should never be worried about their safety. Sadly, India's child safety record is not favourable. In 2022, there were more than 36 children in a lakh had crimes committed against them, a marginal increase from over 33 cases per lakh children in 2021. Also, in 2021, kidnapping and abduction accounted for 45% of the crimes against children, while sexual offences, including child rape, were at 38.1%. In the light of such alarming numbers — and these are only the registered cases — it is imperative that certain concepts be taught to children at a young age. It is prudent to make sure children know what to look out for, and how to differentiate between 'good' and 'bad' touches.

In order to do its part in ensuring such awareness, Prabha Khaitan Foundation, under its Muskaan initiative, organised a Zoom session for the students of Classes II, III and IV. The session was conducted by Wow Wonders, a value-based centre promoting learning through fun, music, art and craft, and was helmed by Neha Budhia and Preeti Maroti. Around 1,000 students from different parts of India attended the session.

The proceedings began with Sumitra Ray, the Foundation's Students Programs Advisor, greeting everyone. The main aim of the interactive session was

to teach children, sans any shame, how to recognise if something feels wrong, and to make them understand that their bodies are their own. Personal safety measures were taught too. The children were encouraged to be assertive while refusing unwanted touches, as well as to confidently withdraw from uncomfortable situations. The concept of 'no touch areas' were also sensitively and skilfully explained, with Budhia and Maroti effectively demonstrating these ideas through role play.



Sumitra Ray

Jayneen Sanders's powerful book, *Some Secrets Should Never Be Kept*, was discussed, and the important lesson of not hiding traumatic experiences was emphasised.

Children were also taught the importance of having a 'safe circle' — a group of five trusted individuals whom they could talk to in the event of an emergency. The session ended with an interactive Q&A round, during which the students posed several questions and got their concerns clarified. It is hoped that this joint effort will arm children with the necessary knowledge to prioritise their safety and safeguard their well-being in today's oft-dangerous world!

*Muskaan, a joint initiative with Education For All Trust, is organised with the support of Shree Cement Limited as their CSR initiative*



A slide from the presentation about safe touch



The virtual audience

# How to Make a Story Come Alive

Puppeteers have successfully captured the attention of audiences of all ages, across cultures. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, under its initiative **Muskaan**, invited the renowned puppeteer, Shreedevi Sunil, to weave her magic for the students of two schools in Kanpur. Let's have a look!

## Puranchandra Vidyaniketan

Using her expertise in puppetry, Shreedevi Sunil captured illustrated of the story, *Brother Crocodile and Sister Chicken*, skilfully conveying the concept of diversity and unity. The story taught the students that we are all fundamentally the same, despite our apparent differences. This was an invaluable lesson in encouraging empathy. Sunil also shared the classic fable, *The Bundle of Sticks*,

which fosters teamwork and collaboration. The students, who hung on to her every word, gained important insights into the power of collective effort and unity. The session was appreciated by Sanjay Sharma, the vice-principal, and Aarti Gupta, **Ehsaas** Woman of Kanpur, called it "a truly a memorable experience for everyone involved."

Shreedevi Sunil interacts with the children of Puranchandra Vidyaniketan, Kanpur



Sanjay Sharma



Aarti Gupta

## The Chintels School

At The Chintels School, Neelam Motani, the headmistress of the primary section, introduced Sunil to the students. Sunil conducted workshops for the educators and children, concentrating on arming teachers with modern classroom techniques. If teachers make stories more engaging and relatable, they can capture the students' attention. Concepts like *navarasa*, or the nine emotions implemented in dance forms and storytelling, were discussed. The event left teachers and students inspired by the power of puppetry to facilitate education.



Neelam Motani



Shreedevi Sunil with the teachers from The Chintels School

*Muskaan*, a joint initiative with **Education For All Trust**, is organised with the support of **Shree Cement Limited** as their CSR initiative



## Rhyme Time for Young Minds

Catch 'em young! There is no better time to introduce children to literature than when they are young and eager to learn. Kids pick things up quickly, and if you make an activity feel interesting, chances are you will have an interested child on your hands. The Looney Limerick Contest, organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** under the Muskaan initiative, exemplified this at the 'Peek A Book' Children's Literature Festival.

Held at the Museum of Solutions in Mumbai, the contest was open to children aged 8-14. Entries were invited from 15 schools in the city and through social media. Would-be participants were also provided with information on the limerick's history, structure and use by well-known writers. A verse form that first made its appearance in England in the early 18th century, a limerick is a funny five-line poem. However, composing a limerick is far from easy. Mastering humour as a craft is often a struggle, and combined with the structural constraints of the limerick format, it presents an interesting challenge for young writers.

More than 50 children took part in the Looney Limerick Contest, sharing verses on a wide range of topics. The 10 winners were Ishika Dalal (10 years), Jaisal Shah (14 years), Prisha Jhawar (11 years), Rachita Kamath (10 years), Sairah Agarwal (10 years), Shlokh Balamurugan (11 years), Shriyaditya Singh (10 years), Ishwari Chaughule (14 years), Dia Gate (13 years) and Ayesha Bijlee (13 years). Each of them received certificates and prizes, and their limericks were presented at the festival, bringing this lively and unusual poetry competition to a satisfying end.







The children strike a pose

## The Gift of Learning

In late January or early February of each year, Saraswati puja is held to honour the Hindu goddess of knowledge, music, wisdom, art and learning. Devotees adorn idols of the goddess Saraswati with flowers, present fruits and sweets as offerings, and place their books and other instruments of learning at her altar, hoping for her divine touch to ensure their academic success and further their learning.

The auspicious occasion presented **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** with the opportunity to extend a helping hand to underprivileged students under its **Muskaan** initiative. Working with members of the Anon Club, the Foundation distributed educational items to young ones in a south Kolkata locality. The politician Debashish Kumar and local councillor Probir Kumar Mukhopadhyay also graced the event. The children, who had all come dressed in their festive best, were thrilled to receive their gifts ahead of the new school year.

*Muskaan, a joint initiative with Education For All Trust, is organised with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative*



Mansi Kamdar Shah hands out gifts along with members of Anon Club



Debashish Kumar



Probir Kumar Mukhopadhyay

# In the City of Angels

Since its inception in the early 1980s, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** has been dedicated to the preservation of India's vibrant cultural, literary and educational heritage, alongside a steadfast commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women. Collaborating with diverse organisations and individuals, the Foundation has relentlessly pursued its vision. Throughout India, our dedicated team has passionately executed a myriad educational, literary and social welfare projects.

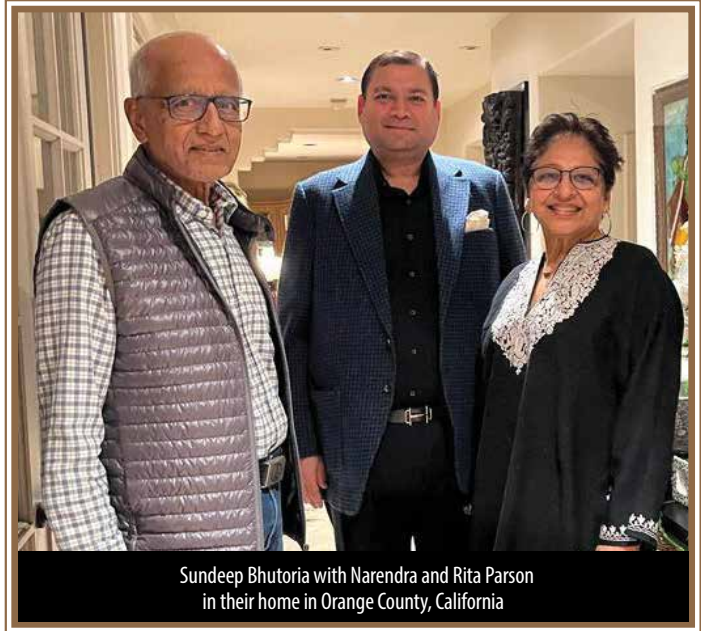
In line with these efforts, Sundeep Bhutoria, the Foundation's Managing Trustee, recently crossed the seas to visit California, especially the joyous city of Los Angeles. His mission: to strengthen bonds, build new ones, and broaden the horizons of the Foundation's endeavours — and, of course, to also take the time to enjoy the beautiful city! On his trip, he met many stalwarts from diverse fields, including, happily, the Grammy Award winner and the Foundation's well-wisher, Ricky Kej, among several other luminaries. Delve into the highlights of his visit to various landmarks of the city such as the Dolby Theatre, the popular Indian restaurant, Spice Affair, in Beverly Hills, and more. Here are a few glimpses from his visit to the City of Angels!



Sundeep Bhutoria along with Ricky Kej at the 66th Grammy Awards in Los Angeles



Sundeep Bhutoria with Kanwarjit Singh in downtown Los Angeles



Sundeep Bhutoria with Narenda and Rita Parson in their home in Orange County, California



Sundeep Bhutoria with the members of LA MEETRA, Chitra Arora, Savita Chaudhry and Falguni Jalota, in downtown Los Angeles



Sundeep Bhutoria and Cathy Tongper with Nishtha Goel and Radhika Puri from LA MEETRA in Los Angeles



Sundeep Bhutoria with Payal Sawhney (Founding Executive Director, Saahas For Cause) in Los Angeles



Sundeep Bhutoria at the Indian restaurant, Spice Affair, in Beverley Hills, California



Sundee Bhutoria with Payel Sasmal, Vijayalakshmi, Bhaswati Moulik, Riddhi Chakraborty, Dipankar Biswas, Babli Chakraborty and Pratanu Ghosh, all of whom are key members of various art and cultural organisations, in Los Angeles



Sundee Bhutoria addresses the members of art and cultural organisations in the city of Los Angeles



Sundee Bhutoria with Parvege and Soma Hawlader in Los Angeles



Sundee Bhutoria with Kaushik Sashmal in Los Angeles



Sundee Bhutoria with Zeel Ahir in Los Angeles



Sundee Bhutoria at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles

## Equipping Students for Wildlife Advocacy



A session on spider diversity in progress

Given the growing threats of pollution and climate change, teaching the younger generation about wildlife conservation is essential. With this in mind, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** partnered with Tiger Watch to organise The Wildlife Conservation Intensive Training Program, a seven-day workshop for university students in Rajasthan. Held in Ranthambore at the Rajiv Gandhi Regional Museum of Natural History, the workshop sought to empower youth through skill training and building awareness about wildlife conservation. The programme focused on various aspects of conservation, including research methodologies, tiger monitoring and legal matters.

The participants, including students, researchers and veterinarians, were selected based on recommendations and past field exposure. Throughout the programme, the attendees interacted with expert speakers from diverse backgrounds, such as tiger conservationist Valmik Thapar,

Vidya Athreya from the Wildlife Conservation Society, Kishor Rithe from the Bombay Natural History Society and Varad Giri from the Reliance Foundation, who shared insights on topics ranging from the human-wildlife conflict and herpetology to museum conservation efforts and opportunities for further education and research grants.

Field visits to the Boli Forest and Ranthambore National Park provided hands-on learning opportunities as the participants identified flora and fauna, observed wildlife conservation strategies and practised survey techniques. Practical sessions on data sampling and line transect surveys equipped them with essential field skills. The participants later spoke of the programme's effectiveness in imparting knowledge, fostering a sense of responsibility towards wildlife conservation and providing networking opportunities.



A tour of the museum



Participants on a field trip



Morning trek in the forest

# From Scotland with Love

The historic connections between Scotland and India were in full view as **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** hosted a special meet and greet session with Lord Charles Bruce, Vice Chair of the Scottish Centre of Tagore Studies (ScoTS) and Chairman of the Kolkata Scottish Heritage Trust. ScoTS, which is based in Edinburgh, Scotland, collaborates with the Foundation and actively participates in cultural and literary events in the region.

The session, held over lunch at Taj Bengal, Kolkata, drew several notable guests, including **Ehsaas** Woman of Kolkata and dancer **Dona Ganguly**, dancer and choreographer **Tanusree Shankar** and English professor of Scottish Church College **Kaberi Chatterjee**, among others. Enjoy these moments from a wonderful afternoon!



Lord Charles Bruce



Tanusree Shankar



Anindita Chatterjee and Piali Ray



K. Mohanchandran and Seema Mohanchandran



Lord Charles Bruce, Debnita Chakravarti and Kaberi Chatterjee



Malika Varma, Esha Dutta, Lord Charles Bruce and Dona Ganguly



Nandita Palchoudhuri



Priti Patel



Arnab Chatterjee and Debolina Chatterjee

## Furthering Translations between India's Languages

In the month of July in Delhi, three women author-translators – Arshia Sattar, Rita Kothari, and Urvashi Butalia – joined a panel titled “Translation as Exploration”. While Sattar, renowned for her translations of classical Sanskrit texts, emphasised that translation is “a political act” based on one’s positionality and practice, Kothari, as a translator and theorist of translation mentioned that it is “a very big part of reorienting what we consider as knowledge”.

These comments came against the backdrop of the success of the Zubaan-Prabha Khaitan Foundation Translation Series. In 2021, the independent feminist publishing house, Zubaan, and the non-profit trust Prabha Khaitan Foundation, founded by the late novelist and poet Prabha Khaitan, came together to promote the works of women authors, particularly feminist literature.

How does an independent publisher execute such a project? To begin with, it reaches out to other publishers for suggestions and invites applications. It generates interest and initiates conversations across and between languages. It also asks the publisher of the translation how much of the grant will go directly to the translator. And that’s how gradually it finalises grants for 35 titles over two years in about 10 languages.

Explaining the progress made by the project so far, Butalia provided examples, showing how it questions the

standard hierarchised unidirectional movement from a “local” or “regional” language into a “national” or “global” one.

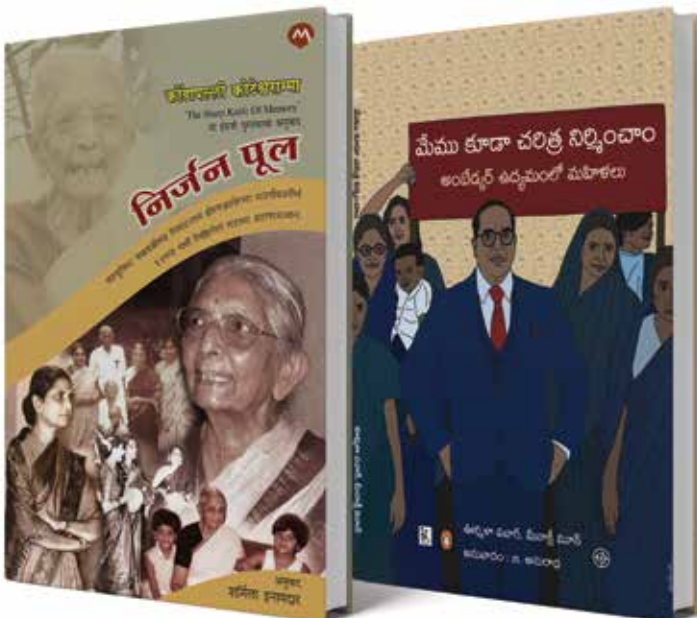
Under the aegis of the project, Arupa Patangia Kalita’s novel, *The Story of Felanee* (translated from Assamese into English by Deepika Phukan), was translated into Marathi by Meghana Dhoke. *The Sharp Knife of Memory*, Kondapalli Koteswaramma’s searing political memoir in Sowmya V.B.’s English translation from Telugu, was chosen for translation into Malayalam and Marathi. The afterlives of some of these projects, taken up by popular publishers such as Mehta Publishing House in Marathi, DC Books in Malayalam, and Dhauli Books in Odia, are based on well-assessed markets for readership.

On the face of it, these translations testify to reading and publishing networks that have long existed among some Indian languages, with perhaps the novelty being that English now occupies a bigger mediating role than ever before. This has been warranted by the receding figure of the translator equally proficient in two non-English languages. However, a holistic review of the Zubaan-Prabha Khaitan Foundation translation series brings forth other examples that further enrich and deepen the stakes of this exploratory mission.

For instance, Avinuo Kire’s short stories based in Nagaland, collected as *The Power to Forgive and Other Stories*, were picked up by a Konkani imprint, *Under the Peepal Tree*, in the hands of the translator Anwasha Singbal. And the Tamil publisher Panmuga Medai signed up to publish Zubaan’s collection of women’s writings from North-East India.

In North-East India, of course, works in English are both the “original” and “translation”, as seen in the Zubaan anthologies as elsewhere. Here, the English language mediates as a lingua franca between literary cultures as different as those of Nagaland and Tamil Nadu. This affirms how the journey of a book doesn’t end with its publication or translation into English – it often begins there.

H.S. Anupama runs Kavi Prakashana, an independent publisher with a focus on Dalit voices. Kavi Prakashana, keen on publishing *We Also Made History in Kannada* for several years, was delighted when Zubaan reached out to them with the necessary rights and translation grant. D. Saraswathi, a friend and companion of Anupama’s at the





All Karnataka Women's Federation, translated this book, viewing translation as a part of its activism. Publishing, Anupama adds, is her "social responsibility".

From the Malayalam publication of Vandana Singh's *Younguncle Comes to Town* (translated by Baiju Natarajan) by Insight Publica to the Kannada publication of Easterine Kire's *When the River Sleeps* (translated by Ravi Kumar Hampi) by Vaishnavi Prakashan – many of the translated books in the series have reportedly invited record attendance at the launch events, been discussed in newspapers and magazines, and have sold between 400 and 1,000 copies within a few months of publication.

But even if these numbers might appear remarkable in non-English publishing spheres, the real success of this initiative seems to lie elsewhere. When your politics are different, so are your measures of success.

Publishing consultant Manisha Chaudhry, coordinating the programme on behalf of Zubaan, recognises the potential of the grant support to start conversations and lauds the exploratory efforts of small publishers.

Punjabi publisher Parminder Singh Shonkey took a risk by starting Rethink Foundation with an undertaking to publish primarily non-fiction, particularly translations. Keen on considering projects not being taken up by others, an encounter with the book *Do You Remember Kunan Poshpora?* (by Essar Batool et al), led him to the Zubaan-Prabha Khaitan Foundation grant, which he appreciates "for giving small publishers a platform". Remarking that other publishers have begun following suit, he's thrilled to be publishing two exceptionally critical books, *Do You Remember Kunan Poshpora?* and

*The Business of Sex* (edited by Meena Seshu and Laxmi Murthy), for the Punjabi- and Hindi-reading public.

Screening narratives from the margins through Cinema of Resistance pointed to the need for translation, often on the spot, as well as for including marginalised voices in print alongside audiovisual. This is how Navarun Publications was set up. In this case, it was the translator, Madhu B. Joshi, who, through the grant, recommended Navarun and found a home for her Hindi translation of *Rewriting History: The Life and Times of Pandita Ramabai* by Uma Chakravarti – a work Joshi was already hoping to see in Hindi.

Joshi sees the possibility that one publisher can offer support, however little, to other publishers, building a network of translations, translators, and publishers. Translations are a bidirectional story in Navarun's catalogue, and Joshi, too, hopes to initiate one such grant when he can to continue the project of "spreading an idea".

Perhaps that's where the politics and success of an initiative like this are most visible. Zubaan is actively working on the third year's list of titles for the series. Kavi Prakashana may end up distributing more copies to students free of cost. Support in the form of funds from the Prabha Khaitan Foundation and implementation from Zubaan, for the choices made by translators of what to translate, and by publishers of what to publish, have highlighted the potential of championing translation being an act of social responsibility.

– Sanchit Toor

A version of this article was first published on Scroll.in



# Exciting Questions, Unbridled Fun

Quizzing is a great way to test those brain cells. Quickfire questions, superfast answers and a knowledgeable crowd — all three essential ingredients were present at the first ever **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** and Foreign Correspondents Club (FCC) Quiz.

After S. Venkat Narayan, President of the FCC, had delivered the welcome address, and Neelima Dalmia Adhar, **Ehsaas** Woman of Delhi and the Foundation's Honorary Convenor for Delhi-NCR, had presented a short introductory note, the quiz proceedings began, with eight teams named after the eight planets. Among the participants were a dozen officers from the Indian Army, including Major Pense.

The event was well-attended by diplomats as well. The Belgian Ambassador Didier Vanderhasselt was the recipient of an audience prize and he distributed prizes to the winning team. Also present was the Greek Embassy's Defence Attaché, Col. Georgios Rimongos, and Md. Shaful Alam from Bangladesh.

The first prize went to Team Jupiter, consisting of Rathindra Basu, Dipankar Bose and Arijit Sengupta.

Team Uranus came in second and the members included Md. Shaful Alam, Simran Sodhi and S. Venkat Narayan. A vibrant mix of entertainment and knowledge, the evening was a delightful experience for everyone.



Georgius Rimongos



Neelima Dalmia Adhar hands over the Audience Prize to Didier Vanderhasselt with quiz master Srinjoy Chowdhury looking on



Arijit Sengupta, Dipankar Bose and Rathindra Basu



Simran Sodhi, Md. Shaful Alam and S. Venkat Narayan



Major Pense, Srinjoy Chowdhury and Rachna Seth with the Agni Veers



## Spreading Blankets of Joy

As a harsh winter gripped the nation, members of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** embarked on a mission to bring warmth and hope to disadvantaged communities. Blanket distribution drives were organised in different parts of the country with the aim of ensuring physical comfort and emotional solace for the underprivileged.

Here are moments from the Foundation's blanket distribution efforts in Jaipur, Kolkata and the Sunderbans.

### Malaviya National Institute of Technology, Jaipur

In a heartwarming gesture, warm blankets were distributed among the impressionable young children of Positive Yuva Network.



### Tollygunge Club, Kolkata

To help them beat the chill, blankets were presented to golf course caddies as a thoughtful winter gift.



## Rani Kothi Market, Kolkata

Extending a helping hand, the Foundation distributed warm blankets to underprivileged communities in the heart of Kolkata.



## Sundarbans

Together with Inner Wheel Club, the Foundation donated blankets, sarees and rice to disadvantaged communities in the region.



## A Celebration of Books

Books, literature, culture and conversation have always been part and parcel of Kolkata's beloved *boi mela* (book fair). The annual event has grown with every passing year, and the 47th International Kolkata Book Fair was the biggest yet, witnessing record crowds as around two-thirds of the city's population visited.

Also present at this year's event were members and guests of the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. Veteran Bengali author Bani Basu inaugurated the Foundation's stall at the Central Park Mela Ground and eminent author-poet Subodh Sarkar attended as a special guest. Among the other notables who dropped in were authors Nabakumar Basu and Tapan Bandyopadhyay, artist Bimal Kundu, politician Surya Kanta Mishra and actor Rwitobroto Mukherjee.

The Foundation's stall was a hive of activity brimming with engaging conversation on books, writers, culture and everything in between. Here is a look back at some of the highlights!



Abhijit Gangopadhyay



Agni Roy



Rwitobroto Mukherjee and Aavek Majumder



Amartya Mukhopadhyay and Damayanti Mukhopadhyay



Farid Kabir and Jyotika Jyoti



Rabin Majumder, Shovansundar Basu, Santanu Bandyopadhyay, Aditi Basu Roy and Siddhartha Mukhopadhyay



Saonli Majumder and Ratul Majumder



Sandip Chakroborty



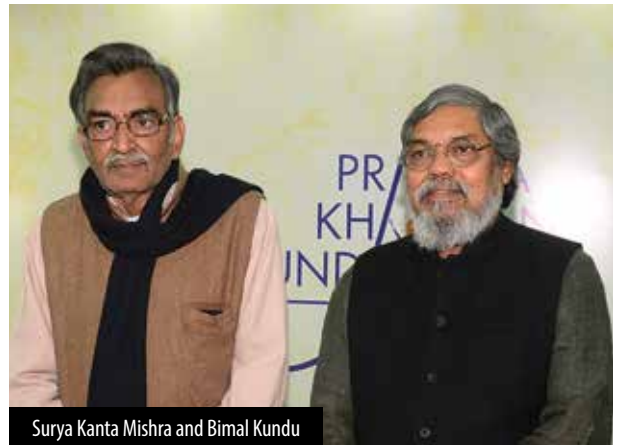
Sanjeeb Sarkar



Sudсна Chakroborty



Surajit Bandhopadhyay



Surya Kanta Mishra and Bimal Kundu



Tanima Sen



Tapan Bandyopadhyay



The audience



**Shazia Ilmi**

*Ehsaas Woman of Delhi NCR*

## The anti-India cabal has been making wild accusations against my government: Excerpts

### Anish Kapoor's 'diatribe'

I will now quote the article from *The Guardian*, not as a standalone case, but as one representing the reams and reams of misinformation churned out by the clones and the trolls of the echo chamber — as that is what the so-called 'liberal' media, including *The Economist*, *Deutsche Welle*, the BBC and *The Independent*, have reduced themselves to.

*The Guardian* says that comment is free, but facts are sacred. Which is why I wondered why it would publish, and keep online for two years, Lord Anish's diatribe about India's new Parliament. I quote: "Unsurprisingly, the Islamic origin of these buildings offends the current regime in Delhi. It is why the tyrant Modi and his henchmen are destroying the area. As I write, the destruction of a number of buildings within the site is under way." Hilarious!

He claims that this is a "hateful, vanity-fuelled campaign to de-Islamify India" via "the destruction of a world-class monument." Huh?

Someone must tell this bright spark that the legislative building (that is, the now old Parliament) is not of Islamic origin. It was built, planned and designed by

Herbert Baker, a colleague of Edwin Lutyens, as a part of the new capital of British India. It was inaugurated in 1927. Also, the old building has not been 'demolished', as claimed by the columnist; it has been converted into a museum dedicated to India's freedom movement. The building has no Islamic influence obvious to me. The circular plan of the building resembles the temples of the 64 *yoginis* in Madhya Pradesh and Odisha. Its railings and dome, as well as that of the Rashtrapati Bhawan, are inspired by the Sanchi Stupa.

Anish Kapoor also wrote, "Tragically, Covid-19 ravages the country but uncaring ideology makes sure that the central vista project has \$2bn in funding while... millions of India's poor and destitute have to fend for themselves. They are dying by the hundreds of thousands."

There is another fact check for Lord Anish pertaining to the Central Vista project and the allegations of the expenditure incurred during a pandemic. Lord Anish chooses to forget that India was among the first to develop a vaccine — and not just one — and, rather than selling it in the market, the vaccine was given for free to a large number of nations under the Vaccine Maitri initiative. Could this have been possible without sufficient funds? India was the only country in the world during the pandemic that helped 80 crore people with



free rations. Still, Lord Anish takes his readers into the voodoo of de-Islamisation. Does he not know that the North and South Blocks, as well as the Parliament House, stand proudly where they have been since they were built? Isn't it absolute hatred for our prime minister, and for India, which propels the falsehood?

Lord Anish has also said that "Modi has appointed third-rate Bimal Patel as his architect. Patel will design its replacement much in the way that Albert Speer followed his Führer's lead, but, of course, Patel does not have an iota of Speer's talent." Is it part of *The Guardian's* policy to lend its platform to the uninhibited ramblings of a deluded mind and allow wild accusations to be made against the most popular PM in the last 75 years?

## Citizenship Act

And now for the coverage on the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019. We saw the deliberate rabble-rousing on the issue of the citizen (amendment) bill — a mischievous agenda of macabre proportions to create disharmony and divide Indians, despite the fact that the bill, now an Act, had *nothing* to do with Indian Muslims.

The governor of Kerala, Arif Mohammad Khan, had said, "Mahatma Gandhi said on July 7, 1947: the Hindus and Sikhs who are in Pakistan, if they do not want to live there, then without doubt they have [the] right to come to India. In this matter, the government of India will be bound to provide them employment, citizenship and all facilities to live a comfortable life." He mentioned that Jawaharlal Nehru had also spoken about India's commitment to taking care of those who had moved during Partition but were keen to come to India. "Nehru said so because there was an objective. These people never demanded partition, they are victims of partition," Khan added.

All our national leaders had promised this — that is, the move to provide citizenship — including the former prime minister, Manmohan Singh, in 2009. The Act has nothing to do with Indian citizens; there is no religious discrimination in our citizenship law. Imagine the savagery of our leftists that they instil fear and hatred amongst our Muslim brothers and sisters by peddling falsehoods!

## 'Rewriting' History

Then there is the Indian syllabus; let us now address the charge of 're-writing history' and 'Hindu-ising texts' by India's school-leaving boards. Thankfully, Indian history is not immutable like the monolithic

Holy Scripture. It can be refined by us humans from time to time as and when new evidence comes to light. A generation of leftist historians, in truck with the Congress, have lionised Max Müller, a man who wrote the following lines to his wife: "India has been conquered once, but India must be conquered again, and that second conquest should be a conquest by education... A new national literature may spring up, impregnated with Western ideas... As to religion, that will take care of itself. The missionaries have done far more than they themselves seem to be aware of... I feel convinced... that... the translation of the Veda will hereafter tell to a great extent on the fate of India, and on the growth of millions of souls in that country. It is the root of their religion, and to show them what that root is, I feel sure, is the only way of uprooting all that has sprung from it during the last 3,000 years."

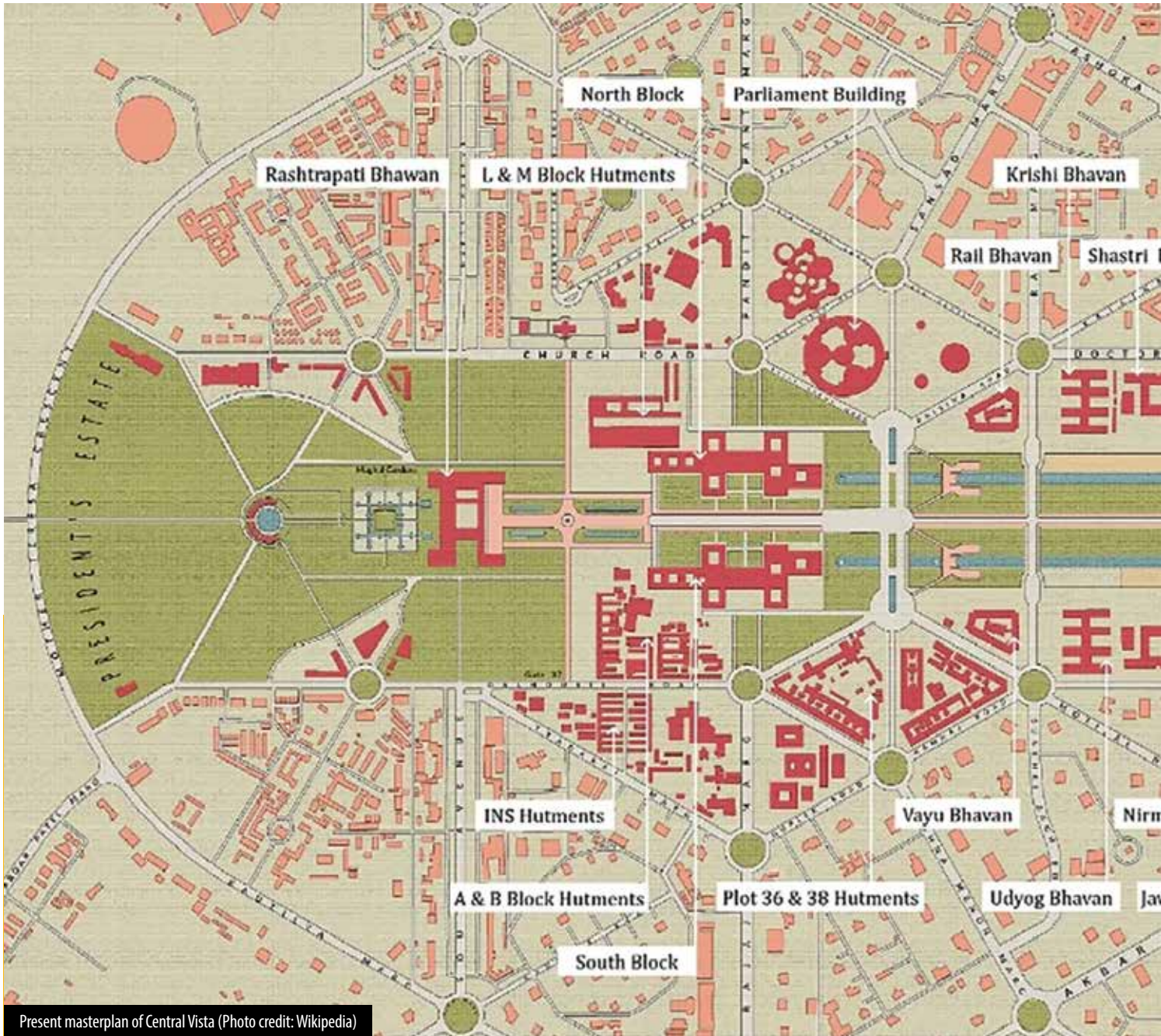
It was also Max Müller who then wrote to Duke of Argyll, the then Secretary of State for India: "But the ancient religion of India is doomed — and if Christianity does not step in, whose fault will it be?"

Remember, Müller was a well-paid employee of the British East India Company, and was entrusted with the translation of the Vedas with the sole purpose of declaring them and their ethos inferior to Christianity.

Lest you think that I am being unfair, the same Max Müller, in his twilight years, was obliged by his soul to utter these words during a lecture at Cambridge: "If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered over the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions of some... I should point to India."

Those interested in decolonising the Indian mind





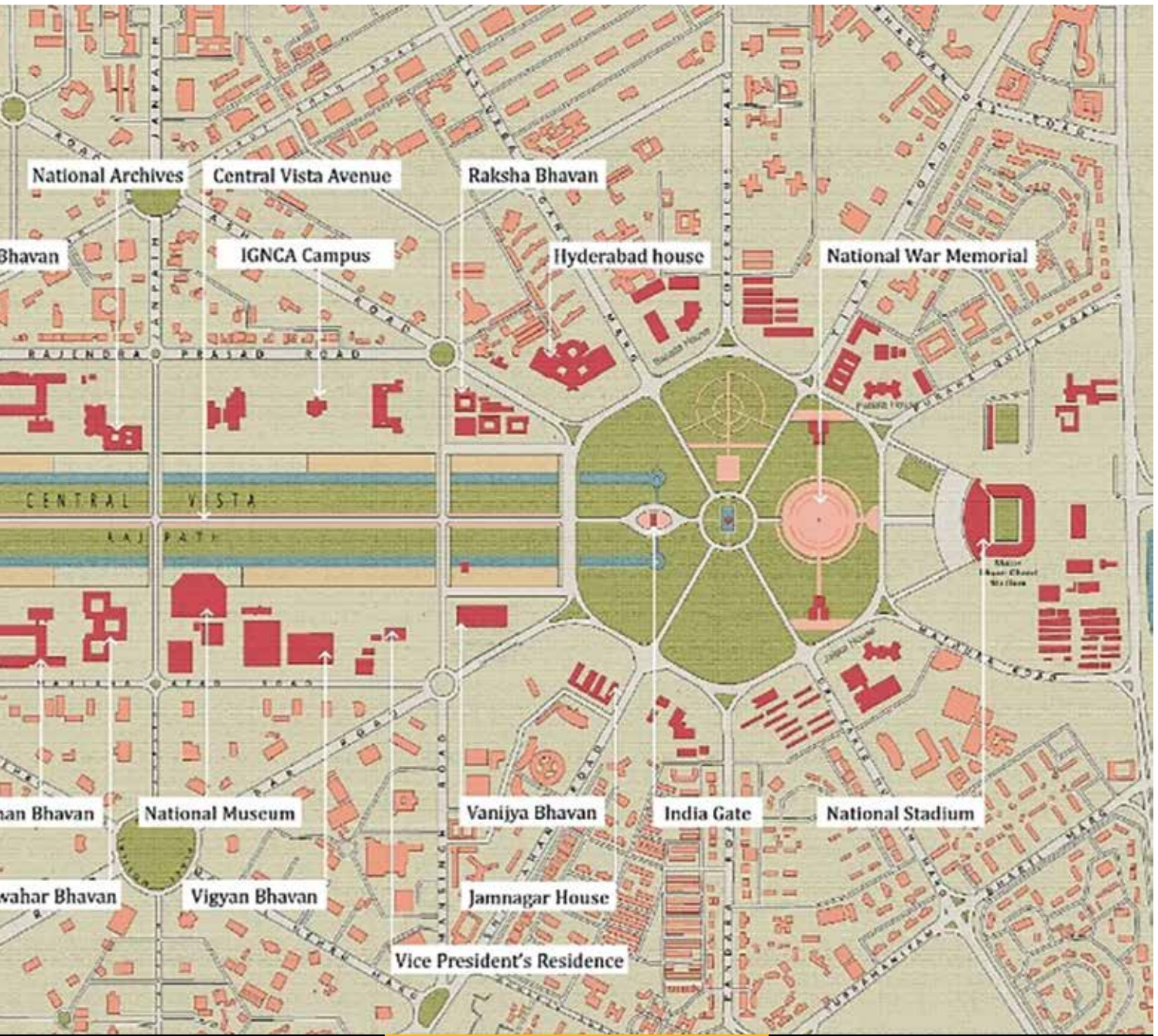
Present masterplan of Central Vista (Photo credit: Wikipedia)

and purging true Indian history textbooks of colonial and Marxist biases must appreciate that views held by scholars and historians are not immutable. They are subject to change over time, and this can be attributed to several reasons. Max Müller's views on India, Hinduism and the Vedas are a classic case in point.

*The Guardian* says, and I quote, "The Indian government has been accused of rewriting history to fit its Hindu nationalist agenda after school textbooks were edited to remove references to Mahatma Gandhi's opposition to Hindu nationalism, as well as mention of a controversial religious riot in which the prime minister, Narendra Modi, was implicated. Textbooks were also revised to remove chapters on the history of the Mughals, the Muslim rulers who controlled much of India between the 16th and 19th centuries."

The truth? Mughal history continues to be part of the curriculum in various classes. Students still study Mughal history in Classes 7, 11 and 12. Only one of the two chapters on Mughals in Class 12 textbooks has been deleted, because the expert committee thought it was not significant.

The director of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), Dinesh Prasad Saklani, has clarified that it is a 'lie' that chapters on Mughals had been 'dropped' from the CBSE books: "Mughals have not been dropped. There was a rationalisation process last year because due to Covid, there was pressure on students everywhere." Indeed, he said, expert committees examined the books for Classes 6–12. "They recommended that if this chapter is dropped, it won't affect the knowledge of the children and an unnecessary



burden can be removed... The debate is unnecessary. Those who don't know can check the textbooks.”

The context may be of interest. India is now working as per the National Education Policy 2020. This is a transition phase, and one of the goals is to reduce the content load. Also, most of the deleted content from one textbook, for a particular class, finds place in others. For instance, if references to castes and *varnas* have been removed in the Social Science textbook for Class 6, it is retained in the history textbook of Class 12, with details of Indian society. This business of presuppositions, implications and extrapolation leading to wide speculations must end.

The anti-India cabal has been pouncing on my government over the fact that references to the 2002

Gujarat riots have been removed. Well, the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, once in the Class 12 sociology textbook, *Indian Society*, have also been removed. Likewise, the reference to the Emergency, perhaps the darkest period of Indian democracy, has been removed.

Did the trigger-happy columnists of *The Guardian*, *The Telegraph*, the BBC, the smug, self-anointed apostles of journalistic integrity, even realise that the Sikh riots were also deleted from the textbooks? And why wouldn't you mention the Nellie massacre (Assam, 1983), the Maliana massacre (1987), the Gujarat riots in 1969, 1985 and 1990, and other riots? Because they not only happened on the watch of the so-called secular governments, but they also don't suit your political agenda.

## A Flourishing Tribe

A cherished part of the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** vision, **Ehsaas** represents a diverse assembly of women from different walks of life who come together to support and foster progress in society. And given that the Foundation is always looking to bring more and more accomplished women into its fold, it is a matter of great pride that some of the most dynamic ladies from the wonderful city of Ludhiana have joined the growing tribe. With the Foundation's goals of furthering activities related to literature, art, culture and, most importantly, social welfare, bringing on board these women is exactly what helps further such noble causes.

The Foundation extends a warm welcome to the wonderful **Ehsaas** women from Ludhiana: Deepika Bhalla, Pallavi Pahwa and Zarqa Rahman Jain.



## Deepika Bhalla

Reading was my first love, which led me to the pursuit of literature. This, in turn, led me to work with various publications in print media. My love for photography started while working with different crews, and during the Covid budget cuts, I had to venture into clicking my own pictures. Thus, naturally, I studied and learnt the tricks of the trade, and made a travel and photography page on Instagram. I'm well connected with quite a few photographers of international repute, whose blogs and articles I write for and contribute to, on demand. I am an organised and dependable candidate who is good at managing multiple priorities with a positive attitude. I am also willing to take on added responsibilities.



## Zarqa Rahman Jain

I am a qualified doctor who has worked extensively in the field of preventive medicine. In the past, I was a medical consultant with an international NGO in Mumbai, working towards HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention. At present, I am consulting with a healthcare startup whose vision is to empower people with better healthcare choices. I am a fitness enthusiast, and have been involved in curating workshops and moderating events related to wellness and nutrition. Originally from Kashmir, I am involved in promoting the state's local arts, crafts and artisanal products through word of mouth. I am also an avid reader and a passionate cook.



## Pallavi Pahwa

Having worked in the administrative department at Mata Kaushalya Devi Pahwa Charitable Hospital, I found immense satisfaction in helping provide necessary healthcare, which was otherwise unavailable in the rural sector. As the finance and taxation manager at Avon Cycles, I learnt how to run the finances of an organisation effectively. As women, it is only through building each other up that we can grow. As such, my time at Ficci Flo, especially as the vice-chairperson of the Ludhiana chapter, added a lot of value to my life. A mother to a teenage son, I am also an avid reader, and cooking for me is a celebration of nature's abundant bounty. I love spending time outdoors, and am a proud pet parent to two lovely dogs. I love travelling to new places, learning about their history and about various forms of art and architecture. Being an Ehsaas Woman is a great privilege; I feel a natural affinity to the values **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** stands for.



Unnati Singh with her team at the Dubai Frame

# Unforgettable Moments: Exploring Dubai's Richness on a Three-Day Tour

*Unnati Singh  
Ehsaas Woman of Indore*



Unnati Singh with Neelima Dalmia Adhar and Amitabh Adhar

Dubai, a city of magnificent skylines and extravagant lifestyles, has always captivated the hearts of travellers. Recently, we had the opportunity to embark on a thrilling three-day tour of Dubai and experience the marvels this city has to offer. From the stunning Burj Khalifa to the cultural treasures encapsulated in the Dubai Frame, this journey was filled with unforgettable moments. Join us as we take you through our incredible Dubai experience.

## Day 1: We Begin

Our journey began with a comfortable Air Asia flight from Indore to Dubai. The excitement brewed within us as we landed at the Dubai International Airport, mesmerised by the grandeur that surrounded us. After settling into our hotel, we wasted no time and headed straight to the iconic Dubai Mall. As we strolled through its vast corridors, we were captivated

by the sheer size and luxury of this magnificent shopping destination. The highlight of the day was witnessing the majestic Burj Khalifa, the tallest building in the world, standing proud amidst the city skyline. The view from the observation deck left us in awe, as we soaked in the panoramic vistas of Dubai's urban landscape.



Unnati Singh enjoys herself with her team at the Marina Beach

## Day 2: Cultural Immersion and Serene Beaches

Day Two promised to be equally enthralling as we embarked on a journey to explore Dubai's cultural heritage. Our first stop was the Dubai Frame, a majestic architectural masterpiece that beautifully captures both the rich history and futuristic vision of the city. From the vantage point of the Frame, we marvelled at the stark contrast between Dubai's old and new cityscapes. Next on our itinerary was the Aya Cosmos, where we were transported on a cosmic journey through the universe and beyond. This immersive experience left us in awe of the vastness of space and humankind's exploration of the unknown.

After embracing the marvels of outer space, we

visited the Future Museum, where technology paints a picture of what lies ahead. From futuristic inventions to cutting-edge displays, this museum offered a glimpse at the possibilities that await us. To relax and unwind, we headed to the picturesque Marina Beach. As we basked in the warmth of the sun, the soft sand beneath our feet and the soothing sound of waves crashing against the shore, we witnessed Dubai's transformation from a bustling metropolis to a serene beach destination. The day culminated in a mesmerising cruise, where we sailed along the glittering coastline, enjoying a sumptuous dinner while being entertained by cultural performances. Last but not least, the limousine ride at night was worth the experience.

## Day 3: Fashion Show and Fond Farewells

On our final day in Dubai, we had the privilege of being a part of the Fame Fashion Show as their official makeup and hair partner, where everyone was showcasing the epitome of style and creativity. It was a celebration of Dubai's world-class fashion industry, blending traditional elements with modern trends.

The runway came alive with a display of stunning

garments and the exceptional talent of gifted kids, leaving us spellbound.

With heavy hearts, we bid adieu to Dubai, carrying with us a treasure trove of memories that will be cherished forever. Our journey back to India was accompanied by a bittersweet mixture of gratitude for the experiences we had and excitement for future travels.



Unnati Singh takes a photo with her team at the Fame Fashion Show

## Parting Thoughts

Dubai, with its blend of tradition and modernity, offers an exceptional travel experience. From iconic landmarks such as the Burj Khalifa to cultural gems like the Dubai Frame and the allure of its magnificent beaches... every moment spent in this city was truly memorable. As we reflect upon our three-day tour of Dubai, we are filled with a sense of wonder at the grandeur this city holds. It is a destination that effortlessly blends opulence with cultural heritage, leaving every traveller in awe. Dubai has undoubtedly stolen a piece of our hearts, and we eagerly await our next adventure to this remarkable city.





# The Indian Education System: The Way Forward

The Indian education system has evolved significantly over millennia and centuries, transitioning from informal learning in natural surroundings to formal classroom settings dependent on textbooks.

Looking back at the Vedic Period around 500 BCE, education in India was characterised by a rich tapestry of hands-on activities, immersive learning experiences in nature and a commitment to simple living. The renowned universities of Nalanda and Takshashila serve as testaments to the breadth and depth of ancient Indian learning methodologies.

However, in recent centuries, the quality of education in India has faced challenges. Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay's curriculum reforms in the 1830s marked a pivotal moment, introducing modern subjects such as mathematics and science while sidelining traditional values and philosophical teachings.

## Today, the Indian education system grapples with several critical issues:

**Lack of Ombudsmen:** Nations like Finland, Sweden, and Norway prioritise the holistic well-being of children by employing ombudsmen and confidential advisors who support students in navigating educational challenges. Introducing ombudsmen in Indian educational institutions could foster a supportive environment conducive to student success.

**Lack of Practical Knowledge:** The current emphasis on theoretical learning often neglects practical life skills that are essential for personal and professional success. Subjects like algebra may not equip students with vital abilities such as financial literacy and tax management, which are crucial for navigating adult life.

**Rote Learning:** Rote memorisation remains prevalent in Indian educational settings, hindering critical thinking and deep understanding. Education should encourage conceptual comprehension rather than rote memorisation to promote genuine learning.

**Answers First, Exams Later:** The practice of providing answers before examinations undermines the assessment's purpose, which is to evaluate problem-solving abilities and comprehension. Examinations should challenge students to apply their knowledge creatively and analytically.

**High Fees and Standards:** The link between high fees and perceived educational quality perpetuates socioeconomic disparities in access to education. Education should be affordable and accessible to all, irrespective of financial background, to ensure equitable opportunities for learning and growth.

**Lack of Sensitivity Towards Poor Students:** Stigmatising vocational careers perpetuates social inequalities and undermines the value of diverse professions. Education systems should foster respect and appreciation for all career paths, promoting inclusivity and social cohesion.

To address these challenges, India could draw inspiration from innovative educational models in countries like Germany and Japan. Tailoring education to individual interests and aptitudes, prioritising practical skills alongside theoretical knowledge, and fostering empathy and respect for diverse career paths are essential steps for revitalising the Indian education system.

*Khanak Vipin Saboo, currently in Grade VI, is the author of five books*

# Watching the Wimbledon Championships in London

*Surbhi Dhupar*  
*Ehsaas Woman of Indore*

There is something magical about the city of London, with its rich history, iconic landmarks and endless cultural experiences. Adding to the enchantment of the city was the thrill of attending the world-renowned Wimbledon Championships 2023! The popular saying, ‘Strawberries and cream, tennis and Pimm’s — that’s what Wimbledon is made of’ is true. Entering the hallowed grounds of Wimbledon was like stepping into a tennis paradise. The lush green courts, immaculately manicured lawns, and the hushed anticipation of the crowd all contributed to an atmosphere of sheer excitement.

With a reserved seat in the international box of the famous Centre Court — courtesy my father, Anil Dhupar, Secretary General of All India Tennis Association, who helped secure the seats — I was privileged to witness some of the world’s greatest tennis players in action, right from Andrey Rublev, Rohan Bopanna, Iga Świątek and Aryna Sabalenka to Novak Djokovic and Carlos Alcaraz.

The intensity, skill and sportsmanship on display were truly awe-inspiring. The nail-biting tie-breakers and sensational upsets were a testament to the sport’s enduring appeal. All in all, it was an experience to remember and cherish for a lifetime!





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