

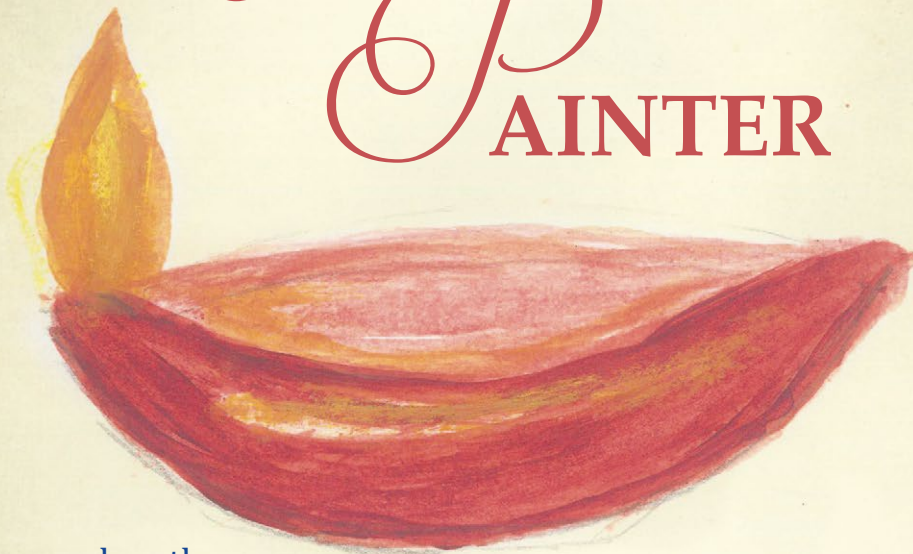


Prabha प्रभा

The Prabha Khaitan Foundation Chronicle

November 2020 | Issue 20

Portrait of a Dancer as a Painter



महाराज

In this issue we explore the importance of cross-creative endeavours through Pandit Birju Maharaj's sketches

INSIDE

TO MOTHERS,
WITH LOVE

16

FEMINISM AND
FICTION

20

THE GREAT
INDIANNESS DEBATE

22

THE ART OF
DANCE

32



INSIDE

THE IMPORTANCE
OF RELEVANCE IN
LITERATURE

9

CHRONICLING LOST
PROFESSIONS

18

THE ART OF
CONVERSATION

19

WORDS FROM AFRICA

26

LOVE AND HATE
ACROSS THE BORDER

30

THE WORLD OF
INNOCENCE LOST

34

OF DISABILITY,
DIGNITY AND DREAMS

38

MUSINGS FROM
THE MOUNTAINS

40

TALES OF TANSEN

44

BEAUTY AS
INVESTMENT

48



Prabha
खैतान



MANISHA JAIN
Communications & Branding Chief,
Prabha Khaitan Foundation

Expressions Beyond One's Boundaries

We at **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** always endeavour to facilitate a cross-cultural exposure of performing artistes and writers to promote the cultural diversity and legacy of India. We believe that art is a form of expression and encourage artistes and writers to think beyond their disciplines to express themselves. In keeping with this idea, we reached out to dance maestro Pandit Birju Maharaj to sketch for us this Diwali. The cover story talks about our Diwali greetings, which went out to over 7,000 patrons, and has been widely appreciated by all.

Apart from our regular events, this chronicle contains invigorating articles by Sunita Kohli on “beauty as an investment”, by Daulat Singh Shaktawat on counting tigers and by Praveen Kumar Jha on Tansen, while our newest member of the **Ehsaas** Women of Chennai, Vidya Singh, takes us along on her enchanting getaway to Kodaikanal.

We hope you continue to share your knowledge and views with us as they are the driving force behind our chronicles. Do keep writing to us. You can mail us at newsletter@pkfoundation.org. For updates on the Foundation's activities do follow us on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.

Stay safe, stay healthy!

[SNAPSHOT OF THE MONTH]



Manoj Muntashir
@manojmuntashir

Thankyou @FoundationPK and @sundeepbhutoria ji for such a distinguished Deewali gift, an original painting from the legend Padmvibhushan Pt. #BirjuMaharaj himself. 🙏



▲ **In his words:** Author and lyricist Manoj Muntashir takes to Twitter to express his appreciation for the Diwali card with Pt Birju Maharaj's painting on it



▲ **Unlock begins:** Our **Ehsaas** Woman from Lucknow, Madhuri Halwasiya, at the Statue of Unity.

Happy Birthday

Prabha WISHES **EHSAAS** WOMEN BORN IN DECEMBER

6th December



Manisha Jain

7th December



Babita Kathotia

19th December



Arundeeplaha

21st December



Anvi Thaker

21st December

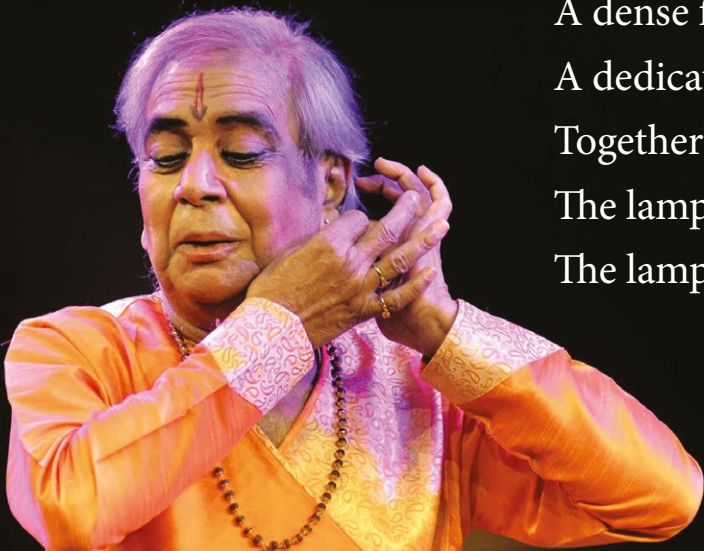


Archana Dalmia



Creativity Beyond Boundaries

A dense forest, an austere gurukul,
A dedicated shishya, and Brij Shyam, the guru.
Together light the lamp of Deepavali,
The lamp of spirituality,
The lamp of sadhana...



— Pandit Birju Maharaj



"A theme that Nana explores quite often in his paintings is the spiritual journey that a guru and his disciple undertake together in all aspects of life. Maybe it stems from having donned the responsibility of training *kathaakars* ever since he was all of eight years himself

— Shinjini Kulkarni,
granddaughter of Pt Birju Maharaj
and Ehsaas Woman of Noida



"It was an honour for me to share my art and words with so many people and also send them greetings for the festival. Both the diya and the painting on the envelope were done by me for the occasion of Diwali, to send my wishes to thousands of people

— Pt Birju Maharaj

"Anything's possible if you've got enough nerve."

— J.K. Rowling

In a crisis that almost brought the entire world to a halt and left it reeling from trying to adapt to the "new normal", one question that raises its head is how do you move forward when the same rules don't apply?

While the question applies to the world of business, politics and everyday life, it also applies to the arts, whether it is through words, canvas, lenses or performance.

If art is about expression, does it matter what discipline, platform or medium it uses? If artistes don't have access to the medium they work with, do they stop working or do they pick up what they have at hand and reinvent themselves? What if a filmmaker starts writing to tell his story instead? And what if a dancer expresses his emotions through a painting?

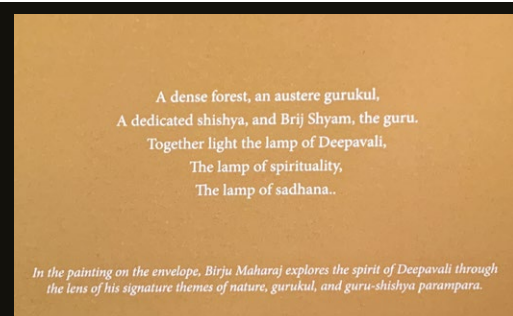
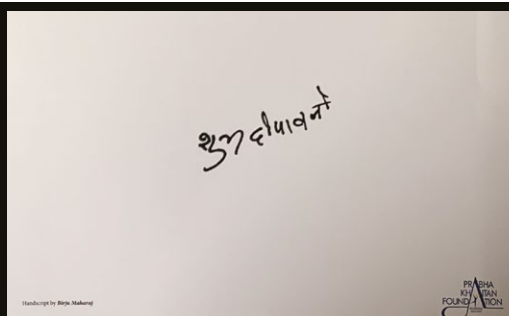
Prabha Khaitan Foundation, which has always encouraged cross-cultural exchanges, reached out to Kathak guru Pandit Birju Maharaj to celebrate the idea of Diwali, not through a virtual performance, but through a sketch on pen and paper. Reproduced in the form of a festive greeting card sent out by the Foundation, his art reached hundreds of people who will be able to cherish this unique work.

In his sketches Pandit Birju Maharaj explores the spirit of Diwali through the signature themes of nature, *gurukul* and *guru-shishya parampara*, that are recurrent in his paintings.

"It was an honour for me to share my art and words with so many people and also send them greetings for the festival. Both the diya and the painting on the envelope were done by me for the occasion of Diwali, to send my wishes to thousands of people," said Pandit Birju Maharaj.

"We at **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** always believe in cross-cultural exposure of performing artistes and writers to promote and safeguard the cultural and literary diversity and legacy of India. It has been an honour and privilege for us to have the dance maestro Pt Birju Maharaj sketch for us. It is a timeless piece of art which people can cherish," said Manisha Jain, Branding & Communication Chief, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**.

"Nothing changes if nothing changes" and if nothing changes we don't move forward, we don't evolve, we don't improve. And nothing is more crucial today than vaulting creative boundaries and not just thinking, but doing out of the box.



Diwali Greetings



Rahul Gandhi

RAHUL GANDHI
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
LOK SABHA



November 18, 2020

Shri Sundeep Bhutoria
Managing Trustee
Prabha Khaitan Foundation
1A Camac Court, 25B Camac Street
Kolkata 700016
West Bengal

Dear Shri Bhutoria,

Thank you for your warm Diwali greetings. My good wishes to you and your family on this joyous occasion.

Sincerely,

Rahul Gandhi

12 TUGHLAK LANE, NEW DELHI - 110011



Gaj Singh



Many thanks for your kind
Diwali Greetings and good wishes which
I warmly reciprocate

Unnat Bhawan Palace
Jodhpur

Gaj Singh
Maharaja of Jodhpur



Bhagat Singh Koshyari

23/12/20

N0 2020/CJ/PS/386



भगत सिंह कोश्यारी
राज्यपाल, महाराष्ट्र राज्य

राज भवन
मलबार हिल
मुंबई 400 034
दूरध्वनी : 022-23863 2660
फैक्स : 022-2386 0404

94 दिसम्बर 2020

प्रिय श्री भुतोरिया जी,

आपकी दिवाली शुभकामनाओं के लिये हार्दिक धन्यवाद। आप सभी को हमारी हार्दिक शुभकामनाएँ। आशा है आप सानंद होंगे।

भवदीय
[भगत सिंह कोश्यारी]

श्री संदीप भुतोरिया जी
मैनेजिंग ट्रस्टी, प्रभा खैतान फाउन्डेशन
1A Camac Court
25-B, Camac Street
कोलकाता-700016

प्रल्हाद जोशी
PRALHAD JOSHI
मुख्य मंत्री



राज्यीय कार्य, कोयला एवं खान मंत्री
भारत सरकार
नई दिल्ली
MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS,
COAL AND MINES
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

पत्रांक: एमएलए/जी/आवास/2020/125

30 दिसम्बर, 2020

प्रिय श्री संदीप भुतोरिया जी,

दीपावली के पावन पर्व पर आपके द्वारा भेजी गई शुभकामनाओं के लिए बहुत बहुत धन्यवाद। इस प्रकाश उत्सव दीपावली के शुभ अवसर पर आप मेरी ओर से भी मंगलकामनाएं स्वीकार करें। शुभकामनाओं के साथ,

आपका,

(प्रल्हाद जोशी)

श्री संदीप भुतोरिया,
मैनेजिंग ट्रस्टी,
प्रभा खैतान फाउन्डेशन,
1ए कामक कोर्ट, 25बी कामक स्ट्रीट,
कोलकाता-700 016



Pralhad Joshi

Office : Room No. 15, Parliament House, New Delhi-110001, Tel : 011-23017780, 23017788, 23018729, Fax : 011-23792341
Office : Room No. 353, 'A' Wing, 3rd Floor, Shaheed Bhawan, New Delhi, Tel : 23387277, 23383109, 23388402
Residence : 11 Akbar Road, New Delhi-110001, Tel : 011-23014097, 23054098
H. No. 129-D, Kamla Nath Mayuri Estate, Keshavnagar, HUDA-505028 (Pantnagar)
Tel. No. : 0534-2211055, 2389555 E-mail : pralhadjoshi@gmail.com



Ravi Shanakar Prasad



Vijay Rupani

रविशंकर प्रसाद
RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD



मंत्री
विधि एवं न्याय, संघार
इलेक्ट्रॉनिक्स और सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी
मान्य मंत्री
MINISTERS OF
LAW & JUSTICE, COMMUNICATIONS
AND
ELECTRONICS & INFORMATION, TECHNOLOGY
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

Dear Mr. Sundeep Bhutoria, December, 2020

Thank you very much for the warm greetings on the occasion of the festive season of Diwali. I reciprocate your wishes.
Let the lights of Diwali spread the light of happiness in your life and health, wealth and prosperity come all your way.

Yours sincerely,

(Ravi Shanakar Prasad)

Mr. Sundeep Bhutoria
Managing Trustee
Prabha Khaitan Foundation
1A Camac Court, 25B Camac Street
Kolkata - 700016.



Electronics Reliance, 6 C.O.O. Complex, Lodi Road, New Delhi-110003
Phone: 011-24389991, 24302026 FAX: 011-24386079

प्रभा खैतान फाउंडेशन



A.S.MJ/2020-237

The Palace
Bhatpur - 311001
Rajasthan
India

November 2020

Dear Sundeep ji,
Many thanks for your kind and
gracious good wishes on the auspicious
occasion of Diwali which I
heartily reciprocate,
with best wishes,
Sincerely,
Arvind Singh Mewar



Arvind Singh Mewar



Vijay Rupani

Chief Minister, Gujarat State

अप्र 12/2020 (19/1)

Dr. 19/12/2020

Message

I thank for the graceful greetings showered for Deepavali, by Prabha Khaitan Foundation, Kolkata and the beautiful hand art of Birju Maharaj.

Let, we together with the bountiful blessings of the guru and God keep the lamp of humanity, spiritually and happiness ever lighting for all.

व.रूपी

(Vijay Rupani)

To:
Shree Sundeep Bhutoria, Managing Trustee,
Prabha Khaitan Foundation,
1A Camac Court, 25 B Camac Street,
Kolkata-700016.
Email: mail@pkfoundation.org



Indresh Kumar

ॐ
दीपावली प्रकाश
पर्व है.
प्रिय बन्धु-संदीप,
अन्धेरा जाये, उजाला आये।
गरीबी जाये, खुशहाली आये।
दुःख मिटे, सुख सदा मिले।
धर्मनिष्ठा मिटे, संस्कार महलें।
नफरत-फसाद मिटे, अमन-मोहब्बत फैले।
आइये हम भी अपनी समतपशी मदद से एक
परिवार जो खुशीगाड़े।
बहुत-2 शुभ आमनाएं दे-दे-दे।
वडा 18354157

RAMESH BAIS
GOVERNOR



RAJ BHAVAN
AGARTALA-799 010
Tel. : 0381-241-4091
0381-241-0217
Fax : 0381-241-0026
E-mail : rajbhavanag@gmail.com
rajbhavanag-tr@gov.in

P.21/RB/Arb./2018/257

January 13, 2020

Dear Mr. Sundeep Bhutoria Ji,

I am very much pleased to receive your greetings on the auspicious occasion of Happy Diwali.

I reciprocate the same and wish you a very happy and prosperous New Year.

Yours Sincerely,

(Ramesh Bais)



Ramesh Bais

Mr. Sundeep Bhutoria,
Managing Trustee,
Prabha Khaitan Foundation,
1A Camac Court, 25B Street,
Kolkata: 700 016.

Myths for Mighty Minds

There is no better way to educate a child than through stories. Acting on this, **Education For All**, in association with Spagia Foundation, Oxford Bookstore and Red Panda, hosted an online storytelling session for all kiddie book enthusiasts.

Held to celebrate Children's Day, the event saw author Piyusha Vir greet her audience and treat them to a fun session filled with memorable stories and myths. Vir, who has authored three books and is a teacher, started the session with an anecdote about her childhood love for all things mythical. "My introduction to mythology was B.R. Chopra's *Mahabharat*, which we used to watch on TV.... I used to love everything about that show — acting, costumes, palaces — but my favourite part was the title song." She quoted a phrase from the song "gyaan ki Ganga" and explained to the children that mythological works contain not just a "river of knowledge but an ocean of knowledge". "They have so much of wealth, wisdom and life lessons that they remain timeless even after thousands of years," she added, before moving on to talk about why she chose to write about the ten avatars of Lord Vishnu in her book, *Daśavatāra*.

Next, Vir shared cute illustrations of Bramha, Shiva and Vishnu, giving the kids a chance to brush up on the who's who of Indian mythology. She then told them stories about each of Lord Vishnu's ten avatars — Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narasimha, Vamana, Parasuram, Krishna, Ram, Buddha and Kalki. She spoke about how Vishnu manifested himself in the world through these avatars and swooped in to save it from ruination. After discussing each of the avatars, Vir also took out time to do a dramatic reading of an excerpt from her book about



Piyusha Vir

Lord Ram's first victory against evil.

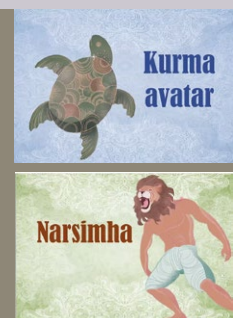
In the interactions that followed she was peppered with questions on varied topics, from other Indian myths to what makes for a good story and who her favourite author is. Fielding a question about what surprised her most while writing her books, Vir joked, "The most surprising thing that I discovered while writing is that I can write! I can write stories that people will read!"

The beauty of these stories and our mythology as a whole is that in every single story there is something or the other that you can learn, take away and apply in your life even today

Vir also spoke about what inspired her to write these stories in particular. "The beauty of these stories and our mythology as a whole is that in every single story there is something or the other that you can learn, take away and apply in your life even today," she explained, giving instances of situations in which one can use the wisdom found in these stories.

The session ended with Vir leaving the kids thinking about deeper issues such as truth and belief, and extremely eager to get her book in their hands.

The session was presented in association with Spagia Foundation, Oxford Bookstore and Red Panda



आज के लेखन में आज का समय उपस्थित नहीं: अनंत विजय

माक्सवाद की विचारधारा ने लोगों में झूठे सपने बहुत जगाए और इसकी सबसे बड़ी खामी यह थी कि इसने परंपरा को रूढ़ बना दिया। जबकि परंपरावादी होने का मतलब है, अपनी विरासत से, संस्कृति से सीख लेकर आगे बढ़ना है। हमें अपनी विरासत पर गर्व है। सच तो यह है कि मार्क्सवाद ने भारतीय साहित्य को अफीम चटाकर लगभग मूर्च्छित कर दिया है।" यह कहना था *मार्क्सवाद का अर्धसत्य* जैसी विचारोत्तेजक पुस्तक लिखने वाले लेखक, पत्रकार अनंत विजय का। वह **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** की ओर से आयोजित **कलम** आगरा में शिरकत कर रहे थे।

आरंभ में अहसास वूमेन से जुड़ी श्वेता बंसल ने उनका स्वागत किया और श्रोताओं को विजय के व्यापक सृजन के बारे में बताया। उन्होंने बताया कि पत्रकार, आलोचक, स्तंभ लेखक विजय के चिंतन का क्षेत्र साहित्य, सिनेमा और संस्कृति है। आपकी दर्जनभर प्रकाशित कृतियों में *प्रसंगवश*, *कोलाहल कलह में*, *मेरे पात्र और बॉलीवुड सेल्फी* आदि शामिल हैं। सिनेमा पर उत्कृष्ट लेखन के लिए आप राष्ट्रीय फिल्म पुरस्कार 'स्वर्ण कमल' से भी सम्मानित हैं। बंसल ने संवादकर्ता डॉ. अनुज कुमार का भी परिचय दिया और उन्हें आगे की बातचीत की कमान सौंप दी।

कुमार ने विजय की साहित्यिक रुचि की तारीफ में *सूर सूर*, *तुलसी शशि*, *उडुगन केशवदास!* *अब के कवि खट्टोत सम*, *जहां तहं करत प्रकाश* दोहा पढ़ा और अपने पहले सवाल को कुछ यों पूछा कि अज्ञान असीमित होता है जबकि ज्ञान सीमित। आज का साहित्य युवा पीढ़ी को बांटता है, युवा पढ़ते क्यों नहीं? विजय का जवाब था, "यह सोचना गलत है कि युवा पढ़ते नहीं हैं। सच तो यह है कि युवा पढ़ते बहुत हैं, पर हम उन्हें पढ़ा नहीं पाते। आज हर किसी तक साहित्य पहुंचाना बहुत दुष्कर कृत्य है। किताबों की दुकान गांव और कस्बे तो छोड़िए महानगरों तक में काफी दूर-दूर हैं। फिर साहित्य अपनी भाषा को युवाओं की रुचि के हिसाब से भी पहुंचा नहीं पा रहा है।" विजय ने प्रतिप्रश्न किया कि बांटने का अर्थ में नहीं समझ पा रहा। कुमार के स्पष्ट करने पर विजय का जवाब था, "हिंदी में कोई आइकन नहीं है। *दैनिक जागरण* ने बेस्ट सेलर के माध्यम से एक कोशिश की थी। पर इसके लिए मुख्य धारा के साहित्यकारों को भी कोशिश करनी होगी। *मुझे चांद चाहिए*, *कसप*, *गुनाहों का देवता* जैसी पुस्तकों का उल्लेख करते हुए विजय ने बताया कि ये किताबें आज भी बिकती हैं, पर आज ऐसी किताबें नहीं लिखी जा रही हैं। उन्होंने कहा, "आज के युवा लेखक बहुत जल्दबाजी में हैं। जबकि लेखन एक तप है। इसके लिए एक साधना की आवश्यकता है। आपके लेखन में आपका समय उपस्थित नहीं है। सफलता का मापदंड फेसबुक लाइक व ट्वीट हो गया है।"

बिकने वाला साहित्य अच्छा है या उत्तम साहित्य? के सवाल पर विजय ने बहुत विस्तार से अपनी बात रखी। उनका जवाब था कि हल्की किताबें हर दौर में रही हैं। पर क्या प्रेमचंद नहीं बिकते हैं? *गुनाहों का देवता* के नब्बे संस्करण निकल चुके हैं। बाजार को वामपंथियों ने हेय दृष्टि से देखा। जवाब में बाजार ने भी हिंदी को हेय दृष्टि से देखा। नतीजतन पाठक दूर होता चला गया। पांडुलिपि के साथ अगर आप बाजारवाद का विरोध करेंगे तो आपको स्वीकारा नहीं जाएगा। रिजेक्शन लेखक का आभूषण है। अश्विन सांघी, अमीश त्रिपाठी को भी यह संघर्ष करना पड़ा। ऐसा तंत्र विकसित किया जाना चाहिए कि प्रकाशक के साथ लेखक का संबंध बन सके। इसी तरह लेखकों का कोई एजेंट नहीं है। बैंक भी प्रकाशन को उद्योग नहीं मानता। प्रकाशक अपने निजी पैसे से यह व्यवसाय करते हैं, इसलिए उस पैसे की वापसी के लिए उनके सामने सबसे लेखक भी होता है। विजय ने फिर अपने पास पुस्तक छपवाने के लिए आए पैंतीस हजार से डेढ़ लाख रुपए तक की मांग का जिक्र किया और बताया कि यह बाजार से दोस्ती का बाई प्रॉडक्ट है।



Anant Vijay

नेहरू और दिनकर का किस्सा कि राजनीति डगमगा रही हो तो साहित्य उसका हाथ थाम लेता है? के जवाब में विजय ने प्रधानमंत्री जवाहर लाल नेहरू और बिहार के मुख्यमंत्री श्रीकृष्ण सिंह से जुड़े वाकिए का जिक्र किया कि जब सिंह तीनमूर्ति भवन में पंडित जी से मिलने गए तो उन्हें तेरह मिनट इंतजार करना पड़ा। सिंह ने उलाहना दिया, तो नेहरू जी का जवाब था कि मैं आपके लिए ये किताबें खोज रहा। सिंह ने किताबें उलट-पलटकर देखीं और बताया कि

ये दोनों किताबें वह पहले ही पढ़ चुके हैं। क्या आज आप ऐसी स्थितियों की कल्पना कर सकते हैं? नहीं, क्योंकि साहित्य अब समाज के आगे चलने वाली मशाल नहीं है। अब के नेता यह मानते हैं कि साहित्य से चुनाव नहीं जीता जा सकता। हिंदी में आज प्रेमचंद, प्रसाद, पोद्दार नहीं हैं। आज नरेंद्र कोहली के अलावा कोई सार्वजनिक बुद्धिजीवी नहीं है। डॉ. राम विलास शर्मा साहित्य ऋषि थे। उन्होंने हिंदी साहित्य में इतना काम किया है। आज कोई ऐसा दिखता नहीं है, क्योंकि साहित्यकारों ने अपने आपको राजनीतिक दलों का बौद्धिक प्रकोष्ठ बना लिया। वे पार्टी का कार्ड होल्डर होकर इतराने लगे। आज निराला, प्रसाद, शर्मा जैसा कोई ऐसा लेखक नहीं है।

पहले फिल्मों की समीक्षा का बहुत महत्त्व था। आज के समय में ऐसी समीक्षाएं नहीं आती? के जवाब में विजय ने कहा कि स्टार सिस्टम टीवी के टीआरपी की तरह है। बिगाड़ के डर से ईमान की बात कहना लोगों ने छोड़ दिया। साहित्य व सिनेमा इससे अछूता नहीं है। अब समीक्षा के नाम पर तीन सौ शब्दों में कहानी बता दी जाती है। पर यह क्षरण काफी पहले से है। कभी *शोले* की समीक्षा में लिखा गया था — शोले जो भड़क नहीं सका। समीक्षा लेखक की व्यक्तिगत राय होती है। फिल्म में भी कई तरह की होती हैं। उन्होंने *थप्पड़* फिल्म का उदाहरण दिया। समीक्षकों को समाज में अपनी व्याप्ति का बोध होना चाहिए। हालांकि अब हालात बदल रहे हैं। टेक्निकली साउंड लोग भी लिख रहे हैं। एक साख की जरूरत भी होती है। माउथ पब्लिसिटी भी होती। विजय ने फिल्मों पर लाइव टिप्पणी करने वालों से अनुरोध किया कि उन्हें सोच समझकर बात करनी चाहिए। सिनेमा में कई लोगों का श्रम लगा होता है।

मार्क्सवाद का अर्धसत्य का जिक्र करते हुए कुमार ने पूछा कि क्या हम पूंजीवाद की ओर धकेले जा रहे हैं? विजय का उत्तर था कि मार्क्सवाद में पर्यावरण का जिक्र न होना उसकी सबसे बड़ी कमी है। अपने मूल में भारतीय संस्कृति, भारतीय लोक, भारतीय परंपरा व भारतीय मान्यता प्रकृति पूजक है। मीडिया की स्थिति पर किसी फिल्म के संवाद से जुड़े सवाल पर विजय ने कहा कि मीडिया का लक्ष्य हमेशा ही खबरें थीं। पर किसी फिल्म को यथार्थ की जमीन पर रखकर बात नहीं की जानी चाहिए। फिल्म के संवाद को केवल कलात्मक ढंग से देखा जाना चाहिए।

कलम आगरा के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट। आईटीसी मुगल, द लक्जरी कलेक्शन, दैनिक जागरण और अहसास वूमेन आगरा ने सहयोग किया।

The Universal Persistence of Hope



Pooja Tripathi



Meha Dixit



Harkaran Singh

What connects the war-torn victims of Afghanistan with those growing up in the conflict-ridden valley of Kashmir? How do the young and displaced in Ethiopia resemble their counterparts in Sri Lanka? Which is the one enduring trait that unites refugees all across the world?

According to Meha Dixit, the answer is simple — the persistence of hope.

The 10th edition of **The Write Circle Raipur** hosted Dixit, author of *Piece of War: Narratives of Resilience and Hope*, for a visceral conversation about the refugee crisis in conflict zones.

Dixit, who has a PhD in international politics from Jawaharlal Nehru University, has worked with Amnesty International and Save the Children, and travelled far and wide documenting the condition of refugees around the globe.

In conversation with Dixit was Dr Pooja Tripathi, a doctor, author and politician who has worked extensively in the field of gender rights. Welcoming them to the interaction was **Ehsaas** Woman of Raipur, Aanchal Garcha.

The conversation opened with Dixit recollecting how she became interested in understanding rehabilitation and reintegration in fractured societies while studying the condition of children conscripted during war as part of her PhD thesis on Sri Lanka.

Later, Dixit broadened her focus to research about soldiers' rehabilitation across Odisha, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh and Kashmir as well as Ethiopia, Afghanistan and Sierra Leone, among others.

"A common thread that binds post-conflict zones in India and the rest of the world is that the victims of war show relentless bravery in going about their daily lives," noted Dixit. She highlighted the courage and determination it takes for people living in the midst of intense despair to carry on with their lives, as well as how the hope for a better future underpins their existence on a regular basis.

Pivoting the discussion towards the role of women in conflict areas, Dixit observed how women are frequently harassed, abused, or used as leverage in these zones. She also cited the example of Ethiopia — where women have taken up arms — to indicate that it is possible for women to break out of the gender normative roles imposed on them to overturn the narrative that women play second fiddle to men during crises.

Finally, Dixit expressed her concern at how the ongoing pandemic is exacerbating the condition of refugees everywhere, as most of them have no place to stay, no source of permanent food or medical help.

The session ended with Garcha thanking Dixit and Tripathi for the invigorating interaction and a joint statement by the **Ehsaas** Women of Raipur that acknowledged how the indomitable spirit of war victims and their ability to build islands of hope is something we can all learn from, especially during the precarious times of the global pandemic.

The Write Circle Raipur is presented by Shree Cement Ltd, in association with Hyatt Raipur and Ehsaas Women of Raipur

जीवन आसान जवाबों का नहीं, मुश्किल सवालों का सफर है: दीपक रमोला



Deepak Ramola

"मैंने अपने जीवन को इस तरह उबारा।
डूबा हूँ हर रोज किनारे तक आ-आकर
लेकिन मैं हर रोज उगा हूँ जैसे दिनकर बनकर।
इससे मेरी असफलता भी मुझसे हारी,
मैंने अपनी सुंदरता भी इस तरह संवारी..."

कक्षा 9 की यह वह कविता थी, जिसे मेरी शिक्षिका ने यह कहकर याद कराया था कि जीवन के हर दौर में इससे तुम्हें सीख मिलेगी। मैं मानता हूँ कि उनकी बात सही है।" यह कहना है कलम चंडीगढ़ के वर्चुअल सत्र में शामिल लेखक, कलाकार दीपक रमोला का।

कार्यक्रम के आरंभ में अहसास वूमेन की शालू गोयल ने प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन द्वारा जारी कार्यक्रमों की चर्चा की और बताया कि फाउंडेशन भारत और दुनियाभर के करीब तीस शहरों में साहित्यिक और सांस्कृतिक गतिविधियों के साथ ही महिलाओं को सशक्त बनाने के अभियान से जुड़ा है। कलम भी इसी पहल का एक हिस्सा है। अतिथि लेखक रमोला का परिचय देते हुए उन्होंने बताया कि देहरादून निवासी रमोला लेखक, अभिनेता, शिक्षक, वक्ता और गीतकार हैं। आपने अपनी पहली कविता 12 साल की उम्र में ही लिख दी थी। आप का काव्य संग्रह इतना तो मैं समझ गया हूँ काफी चर्चित रहा है। आपने मांझी द माउंटेन मैन और वजीर सहित अब तक दर्जन भर फिल्मों के लिए गीत भी लिखे हैं। फिल्म तथा टीवी धारावाहिक में ऐक्टिंग भी की है। उन्होंने रमोला द्वारा चलाए जा रहे 'प्रोजेक्ट फ्यूल' की विस्तार से चर्चा की और आगे के संवाद के लिए अहसास वूमेन जोधपुर से जुड़ी प्रीति मेहता को बुलाया।

मेहता ने रमोला से पहला सवाल 'प्रोजेक्ट फ्यूल' को लेकर ही किया। रमोला ने बताया, "इसकी प्रेरणा मुझे मेरी मां से मिली, जिन्हें पांचवीं कक्षा में ही मेरी दादी ने स्कूल से निकाल दिया था। मेरी मां स्कूल भले ही नहीं गई थी, पर हर मसले पर उनका विवेक बहुत कारगर साबित होता था। वह मानती हैं कि जिंदगी बहुत कुछ सिखाती है और जिंदगी से हम बहुत कुछ सीखते हैं। यही वजह है कि मैं आम लोगों के जीवन की कहानियां जुटाने लगा और इस

प्रोजेक्ट के तहत लोगों तक पहुंचाना शुरू किया। इसके चार माध्यम हैं, पहला माध्यम शिक्षा है। दूसरा माध्यम है आर्ट, जिसके तहत हम वाइज वाल प्रोजेक्ट करते हैं। तीसरा माध्यम मीडिया है जिसके तहत हम फिल्म बनाते हैं। चौथा है फेस्टिवल। सोशल मीडिया भी इसका एक बड़ा टूल है।" उन्होंने सोड़ गांव की चर्चा की, जो पलायन के कारण खंडहर बन चुका था, और जहां के हर घर की बंजर दीवारों पर उनकी कहानियां उकेर दी गईं।

स्पेशली एबलड बच्चों की चर्चा पर रमोला ने कहा, "मैं लाइफ लेसंस पढ़ाना चाहता था। पर मैं सत्रह साल का था तो मुझे मौका कौन देता। मैंने अहसान फाउंडेशन के लोगों से संपर्क कर खुद उनसे जुड़ा। बाद में भारत भर में पढ़ाया। हम जब किसी को स्पेशली एबलड कहते हैं, तो पहले ही उन्हें दरकिनार कर देते हैं। हमें जोड़ने वाला सवाल करना चाहिए। मुझे यह काम करके कृतज्ञता महसूस होती है कि कितना कुछ है, करने व जानने के लिए।" युनेस्को के काइंडनेस अंबेसडर के सवाल पर रमोला ने कहा, "पद तो कथनी है। पर आपका असली महत्व आपकी करनी है। हर व्यक्ति हर दिन कम से कम तीन सौ बार हारता है और अगले दिन सुबह जग कर सोचता है कि आज यह दो सौ नित्यनबे हो।" लेखन से प्रेम कैसे हुआ? पर रमोला ने बिस्तार से अपनी लेखकीय यात्रा के बारे में बताया। उन्होंने कहा कि स्कूल में मेरी हिंदी की अध्यापिका ने शब्दों से प्रेम, भाषा से प्रेम जगाया। मेहता के अनुरोध पर रमोला ने अपने काव्य-संकलन इतना तो मैं समझ गया हूँ से एक कविता सुनाई।

अपनी फिल्मी यात्रा से जुड़े सवाल पर, रमोला ने कहा कि इसकी कोई गहन कहानी नहीं है कि कहां से फिल्मी सफर की शुरुआत हुई। अपनी नई पुस्तक 50 टफ्टेस्ट केशचंस ऑफ लाइफ की चर्चा करते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि डायरी, कंप्यूटर, पत्रों से निकलकर शब्दों का किताब के रूप में ढलना बड़ी बात लगती है। इस पुस्तक का लेखन एक गेम की तरह था। जीवन आसान जवाबों का सफर नहीं बल्कि मुश्किल सवालों का सफर है। डेढ़ साल तक मैंने सवाल जुटाए खुद के लिए। पांच साल इन सवालों से एक गेम की तरह खेला। क्या यह पुस्तक युवाओं के लिए है, के जवाब में उन्होंने कहा कि उम्र के हर पड़ाव पर जवाब बदलते रहते हैं। यह पुस्तक उम्र का बैरियर तोड़ती है। इसमें दर्शन नहीं है। इसमें सवाल हैं, जवाब में मेरा दृष्टिकोण है।



Preeti Mehta

एस्पायरिंग लेखकों के लिए क्या सलाह है? के जवाब में रमोला ने कहा, "लेखक के लिए आज लिखने का मतलब केवल छपना नहीं है। पहले ऑडिऐंस स्टैब्लिश करिए। आपके पास पाठकों तक पहुंचने के उपाय हैं या नहीं। ईमेल, सोशल मीडिया, वर्डप्रेस से आप पहुंचकर देखिए। यह केवल प्रकाशक की जिम्मेदारी नहीं है। मैं जिन लोगों से बात कर रहा हूँ, उनसे मैं पहले से जुड़ा हूँ, इसलिए मेरी किताब का रीप्रिंट होना अचरज की बात नहीं है।" हिंदी-अंग्रेजी में लेखन के सवाल पर रमोला ने कहा कि हम मनुष्य हैं। हम भाषा कहते नहीं, करते हैं। हम भाषा जीते हैं। पढ़ने से भाषा को इस्तेमाल करने का मन होता है। प्रोजेक्ट फ्यूल का क्या आपके जीवन पर, लेखन पर असर पड़ता है? रमोला का उत्तर था, "हां असर पड़ता हूँ। मेरी नौकरी है कि मैं लोगों की कहानियां सुनूँ। उन्हें सुनकर मैं उनको अपनी कविताओं में पिरोता हूँ।" रमोला ने भारत-पाकिस्तान का जिक्र करते हुए गुलज़ार साहब के शब्दों का उल्लेख किया और अपनी इजाजत नामक कविता भी सुनाई —

काश कभी आंख मसलते हुए, सुबह जब दरवाजा खोलूँ
तो दहलीज के उस तरफ खड़ा हो दूसरा मुल्क,
ना दरारें, ना दीवारें, ना सन्नाटा, ना शिकायतें
बस इजाजत एक कमरे से दूसरे कमरे तक जाने की...

आगे के सफर में क्या? के जवाब में उन्होंने एक पत्रकार से अपनी वार्ता का जिक्र किया। बताया कि दो और किताबें हैं, जो मुझे अगले तीन साल में लिखनी हैं। न्यूयॉर्क के डाटा साइंटिस्ट के साथ मिल कर भी काम कर रहे हैं। पर भविष्य क्या है यह पता नहीं। हरमन जी के सवाल पर उन्होंने कहा मैं प्रकृति से, लोगों से सीखता हूँ। शर्मिता भिंडर के सवाल पर कि व्यक्ति किताब लिखता है या किताब व्यक्ति को? रमोला ने कहा कि दोनों दोनों को लिखते हैं। सच तो यह है कि अनुभव आपको लिखता है। उन्होंने अपनी पुस्तक से एक सवाल व उसपर अपना विचार भी बताया। परी के सवाल पर रमोला ने गार्डनिंग, पेंटिंग, आलू परांठा, म्यूजिक प्रेयलिस्ट को लेकर अपने शौक का जिक्र किया और कहा कि शुक्रवार की शाम को हमारी ऑफिस में एक घंटे पेंटिंग जरूर होती है। अहसास वूमेन की मनीषा जैन ने धन्यवाद दिया।

कलम चंडीगढ़ के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट और अहसास वूमेन चंडीगढ़ ने सहयोग किया



Mohan Puri

आखर राजस्थान में मोहन पुरी की पुस्तक अचपळी बातां का लोकार्पण, चर्चा

मोहन पुरी को लगभग 10 वर्ष की आयु में एक दुर्घटना के कारण लम्बा समय अस्पताल में बिताना पड़ा। उस दौरान उनकी दादी बाल साहित्य — नंदन, बालहंस, चंपक, चंदा मामा, चकमक जैसी पत्रिकाएं पढ़ने के लिए लातीं। इन्हें पढ़कर पुरी के मन में साहित्य के प्रति अनुराग का बीज पड़ा। उन्हें गांवों में होने वाले सत्संग और रात्रि जागरण में गाए जाने वाले गीत भी बहुत अच्छे लगते। उनकी लेखकीय यात्रा ऐसे ही आगे बढ़ी। ग़ज़ल और गीत विधाएं उन्होंने धीरे-धीरे सीखीं।

आखर राजस्थान में पुरी ने अपनी पुस्तक अचपळी बातां से कुछ ग़ज़लों का गाकर सुनाया, जिसमें बेटे पर लिखी एक अनूठी कविता भी थी। बेटे को स्थानीय लोकभाषा में डीकरी कहते हैं।

चूल्हो चौको गार डीकरी

घर आभो संसार डीकरी

बायरयां री मीठी सोरी

गीता री मनवार डीकरी

थांसू म्हांसू बंतळ करती लोपे कौनी कार डीकरी

प्रीत सदा ही हिवडै राखै ढाबे घर परिवार डीकरी..

वरिष्ठ साहित्यकार जितेंद्र निर्मोही ने पुस्तक अचपळी बातां पर अपने विचार व्यक्त करते हुए राजस्थानी में कहा, "इं पोथी में जिंदगानी की ग़ज़ल है। मोहन पुरी की ग़ज़लों में शायरी की खासियत है। इन ग़ज़लों में मांय जमाना भर की बातां हैं। घणी सादगी है। जहीनियत की लारै लारै इमें लफ़्ज़ की तहजीब है। तहजीबी फ़िज़ा स



Jitendra Nirmohi

टकर लेती आम जिंदगी-संस्कृति है। सबसूं बड़ी बात ग़ज़ल की सादगी गहराई के लारै-लार है। जिसी डॉ बशीर बद्र, निदा फ़ाज़ली में देखबा नै मिली। इमै काफ़िया-रदीफ की जुगलबंदी तो शंकर-जयकिशन की नाइं हौवे। जब अच्छो काफ़ियो-रदीफ मिल जावें तो ग़ज़ल की बात और ई होवे है। जब मतलो और मिसरा-ए-सानी ग़ज़ली जोरदार रूपालो बना दे उंके बाद मिसरा दर मिसरा ग़ज़ल अपनी बात गुफ्तगू की नाइं कहती जावें है। छोटी बहर की ग़ज़ला री मोहन पुरी की जोरदार है।

"ग़ज़ल मांय पोएट्री का लगभग 40 बिंदु है। कुल मिलाकर 80 बिंदु विद्वानां ने राख्या। तीन बिंदु आपरै सामने रखूं। एक तो सलासत, मुसावत और तग़ज़ल। सलासत उ ढंग से कहवै है कि आप बड़ी संजीदगी के साथ बड़ी गहराई की बात कह दो और मुसावत वह प्रक्रिया है जिमै अनावश्यक शब्दां को जोड़ मिजाज न लागे यानी ग़ज़ल का सौंदर्यीकरण में जो वृद्धि करे व मुसावत की वृद्धि कहलावै है। या ग़ज़लां में आपकी सम्प्रेषणीयता है आपकी अदावां है। आप कीं ढंग सूं

शब्दों से प्रयोग करो, ग़ज़ल की जो प्रतीक छै बी में सारी बात तग़जल में आवै छै। नारी विमर्श की बात करां तो काई नायिका नहीं है बल्कि सादगी छै। मोहन पुरी की ग़ज़लों में काव्य कौतूहल भी घणा भरा है। कठी कठी या अदम गोंडवी के अंदाज सूं बात करती नजर आवै छै। बिणजारा मिजाजी जब शायरी में आ जाए तो रवानियत पर आ जाती है। मोहनपुरी को यो प्रयास सराहवण जोग ही है। एक मील को पत्थर छै आधुनिक काल में अचपळी बातां। क्योंकि या सहज गंभीरता सूं और संवेदना लेर लोठा ग़ज़लकार की रकाण में आवै छै। उर्दू शायरां से अलग खेत खलिहान और बनराई की बात करबो मोहन पुरी की फितरत में है।

डाला चढ़ मुलकावै कूपल
बन बनराई गावै कूपल
सोन चिड़ी जी पांखा गिनती
निरतन कर इतरावै तू...

यह आनंदित करने वाली शायरी मोहनपुरी का एक अलग पक्ष ने उजागर करै छै। मोहनपुरी की शायरी उर्दू शायरां से दूर, अदावां से दूर, नज़ाकत से दूर एक अलग तरह को नायक ढूंढे छै। मोहनपुरी की नायिका गांव की गोरियां जो घरेलू एवं कृषि कार्य में व्यस्त है तो नायक भी गांव का अल्हड़ और मस्त है तेजा गायन करने वाला है। मोहनपुरी एक शब्द साधक हैं और शब्द साधना पर भी बात करवौ चावै छै।

सपना री मनुहार करां
जिंदगानी सू प्यार करां
म्हे आखर रो चाकर बन
शब्दां रो व्यापार करां

एक शायर और कवि इससे बेहतर और क्या सोच सकता है। कुल मिलाकर अचपळी बातां एक मील को पत्थर छै।"

राजस्थानी साहित्यकार डॉ. गजादान चारण 'शक्तिसुत' ने अचपळी बातां के बारे में कहा, "आज री राजस्थानी में अचपळी बातां एक नई आस नयो विश्वास है और नयो उजास देने वाली पोथी है। राजस्थानी में मूल्यां की रक्षा और आदर्श रखे है। जीवन में सरसता लाने वाली मिनख पणी की बात है। विषय वैविध्य की दृष्टि से आपणी संस्कृति, तीज, त्यौहार, वार, खेत, नदी-नाला, घाटी-पर्वत, ब्याव-सगाई, किसान, गरीब-अमीर, महानगर, आधुनिक राजनीति सब इन गजलों में है। महिला के धैर्य को अभिव्यक्त करना कविता की विशेषता है। गीत-ग़ज़ल के लिए स्वाध्याय जरूरी है। मोहनपुरी सब परम्पराओं को ध्यान राखे। इंडी युवा पीढ़ी न बहुत जरूरत है। सदियां-सदियां रे शोध ने मोहनपुरी ग़ज़लों में काम लेवे तो बहुत बधाई का पात्र है। आज सबसे बड़ी मिनख रे सामने दिक्कत है वा संवाद हीनता री है। आपणे कहावत है लड़न बिरिया दीजे बिछुड़ बिरिया न दीजो। हे भगवान लड़ने की बेला तो दे दो लेकिन बिछुड़ने की बेला मत देना और संवादहीनता र तोड़न की बात मोहनपुरी करै।

बात सू आगे बने छै बात

चांद जो कर दो मुल्क आधी रात ही

इ वास्तै संवाद की बात बतावै छै। आज रे समाज नै संवाद री बड़ी जरूरत है। पीड़ा कवि री क्या है-

छल रिया वै बागबां फूल नै

कलम थारा सांच ने पपोळ तू

कलम सांच तो तने बोलणो ही है।

अपनी ग़ज़लों में मोहनपुरी सहजता से अलंकार, अनुप्रास, लय

शामिल करै। राजस्थानी भाषा में या मोहन पुरी को निराळो प्रयास है। यानी भीड़ से अलग दिखे।"

कार्यक्रम की अध्यक्षता करते हुए सीकर से डॉ शारदा कृष्ण ने कोरोना काल को ध्यान में रखते हुए कहा कि इण अंधारा काल में मोहनपुरी साहस रो कवि आशा अर विश्वास री चमका री किरणा लेर आयो है। पहली पोथी इतना वजनदार ढंग सू इण राजस्थानी री काव्य विधा लेर एक युवा आपणै सामने प्रस्तुत होवे। अपनी भाषा रै वास्ते भी या बड़ी बात है। आपणै सामने भी यो एक अच्छो उत्कृष्ट उदाहरण प्रस्तुत होवे। मोहनपुरी अचपळी बातां काफी ठावी ठरके पणे सूं करी है। इण किताब में मिनख री जीवटता री बातां है मांडी है एक निकेलवो पथ है। कड़कड़तो तावड़ो गड़गड़तो बादल अ आप ने सामने प्रस्तुत हुया है। आरे लेखन में लोक से जुड़ाव और सांस्कृतिक परिवेश को वातावरण है। कवि जब तक लोक सू जुड़योडो नहीं होयगो तब तक लोक ने प्रगटा भी नहीं सकै है। मोहन पुरी आपकी गज़लों में लोक में प्रचलित बातां, कहबतां, मुहावरा याने काव्यात्मक रूप देर जोड़ै है तो गज़लों में जो वजन आयो है फूटराखो आयो है इमै वांकी बड़ी

भूमिका है।

जितनी चीजे अपने लोक जीवन में सुंदरता से सुरक्षित है उन बातों को ग़ज़लों के माध्यम से सामने लाना यानी नई पीढ़ी के लिए अच्छी जमीन तैयार करी है। आने वाली युवा पीढ़ी को लोक जीवन से जोड़ने के लिए यह ग़ज़ल भूमिका निभाएगी। ग़ज़ल को जो व्याकरण है, इमै यांकी ग़ज़ल सही बैठ रही है। पहली पोथी अर नुवां लेखक होता हुआ भी बहुत कम गलतियां है। छंद, गीत, लय सब अपनी जगह सही है।

कार्यक्रम का संयोजन प्रदक्षिणा पारीक ने किया और समापन पर आखर राजस्थान की ओर से प्रमोद शर्मा ने सभी सहभागियों और श्रोताओं को धन्यवाद दिया।

आखर राजस्थान के आयोजक प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन एवं ग्रास्सरूट मीडिया फाउंडेशन थे, प्रस्तुतकर्ता श्री सीमेंट



Sharda Krishna



Jagadan Charan



Palash Krishna Mehrotra



Jyoti Kapoor

Priyanka Kothari

Butterfly Generation, which deals with how his peers grappled with the modernisation of India, was a finalist for the Crossword Book Award 2013. His second book, *Eunuch Park*, set in the underbelly of India's big cities and small towns, was shortlisted for the Shakti Bhatt First Book Prize as well as the Hindu Fiction Prize.

Mehrotra was in conversation with **Ehsaas Woman of Nagpur**, Jyotika Kapoor, and welcoming them to the interaction was **Ehsaas Woman** Priyanka Kothari.

The conversation got

underway with Mehrotra's admission that his biggest struggles as a writer involved overcoming the use of jargon and making his writing more accessible, a common problem for academics making a transition to fiction.

Mehrotra proceeded to stress on the importance of a writer's most important quality — uniqueness. But uniqueness, he argued, cannot be generated in vacuum; it comes only after someone has immersed themselves in a variety of literature through which they can eventually discover their authentic voice.

In a particularly curious observation, Mehrotra described how short stories — which his "restless" mind constantly leads him to write — can often give a writer a wider canvas of emotions to play with than penning novels. Even though a short story has less volume, Mehrotra believes that they allow a writer to explore more ideas, with the themes sometimes emerging by themselves as the story begins to flow.

Mehrotra lamented the dearth of short stories in contemporary Indian writing in English, before advising aspiring authors to appreciate the fact that writing can be a slow process, and editing an even slower one. He also cautioned short story writers against editing too much, for in doing so, a story can often lose its essence.

The conversation ended with Mehrotra urging writers and editors to establish an equilibrium in their relationship in order to produce more successful books.

The Write Circle Nagpur is presented by Shree Cement Ltd, in association with Lokmat, Radisson Blu Nagpur and Ehsaas Women of Nagpur

The Art of Becoming a Storyteller

The question of what makes a good storyteller tends to prove as elusive as what makes a good story. In a bid to resolve these knotty issues of creativity and locate the heart of storytelling, **The Write Circle**, Nagpur, welcomed author Palash Krishna Mehrotra for a conversation on his life and books.

Educated at St. Stephen's College, Delhi, where he did his BA in philosophy, and Balliol College, Oxford University, where he undertook the politics, philosophy, and economics course, Mehrotra — though he writes for the "common man" — has earned much critical acclaim with his books because of their ability to blend personal reflection with social commentary. His first book, *The*



Monica Bhagwagar

Parveen Tuli

Overcoming the Obsession with Fairness



Nirupama Dutt



Jasmeet Nayyar



Indu Aurora



Rinnkie Gill



Gurpreet Singh



Arvinder Chamak

Mere kol oh sab kuch hai jo ikk buri aurat kol hona bohat hi jaroori hunda hai (I have all that it takes to be a wicked woman...)

The above lines from Nirupama Dutt's stirring poem, *Buri Aurat*, shed light on the stigma associated with dark skin and the rampant colourism prevalent in Indian society.

The sixth edition of **Aakhar** Amritsar hosted by Majha House, an Amritsar-based literary and cultural centre, in collaboration with **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, welcomed Dutt as its chief guest for a conversation focused primarily on Dutt's battle through verse to rid the Indian imagination of its obsession with fairness.

A poet, journalist and translator writing in English and Punjabi, Dutt's recent works include the biography of Punjab's Dalit icon, recent works include the biography of Punjab's Dalit icon, Bant Singh, titled *The Ballad of Bant Singh*, and a translation of Gulzar's anthology of poems, *Pluto*, into English.

Kaali Aurat, a short film based on Dutt's poem *Buri Aurat*, was screened just before the conversation began, with Dutt being joined by Rinnkie Gill, a literature aficionado from Chandigarh.

"I am glad to be tagged a 'Kaali Aurat' in the context of [being] a woman who lives on her own terms and does as her heart pleases. I believe in not confining myself to the

stereotypes of society," said Dutt, reflecting on how *Buri Aurat* articulates her own experience of discrimination on grounds of her skin colour, wherein people "still associate dark skin with bad omens."

The prejudice against dark skin, of course, does not exist in isolation. It has become entrenched in direct contrast to the glorification of, even obsession with, fair skin — something that gets compounded when it comes to the appearance of women.

"We even refer to women as the fairer sex, which is one of the clear ways of promoting colourism," observed Dutt.

Having stood up to colourism at every step of her life, Dutt has learnt to understand the concept of beauty beyond colour. The idea that melanin concentration can determine someone's attractiveness, not to mention, self-esteem, is patently absurd in the 21st century, and Dutt can only hope more people come to this realisation, she

said.

Besides combating colourism, Dutt also spoke about her time as a young journalist in Chandigarh, regaling the audience with anecdotes, and explaining how her early years paved the way for her assertion of independence: "I was never driven by an ambition to succeed or attain power through political circles. I was always content doing my own thing."

Aakhar Amritsar is presented in association with Majha House

I am glad to be tagged a 'Kaali Aurat' in the context of [being] a woman who lives on her own terms and does as her heart pleases. I believe in not confining myself to the stereotypes of society



Mohini Kent

Perhaps no other bond in life is as intimate and precious as that between a mother and her child. No matter the stature and success one achieves, one's relationship with one's mother remains a space where it is possible to be vulnerable without being insecure, and to seek solace, support, and strength without feeling compromised in any way.

Lady Mohini Kent Noon's latest book, *Dear Mama*, is a homage to the beautiful space mothers occupy in our lives. Containing heartfelt tributes to mothers from eminent personalities — including Narendra Modi, Mark Tully, the Dalai Lama, and Cliff Richard — *Dear Mama* celebrates the unique qualities of being a mother and the

“As long as prejudices are there against women anywhere, no woman will be totally free

— Cherie Blair



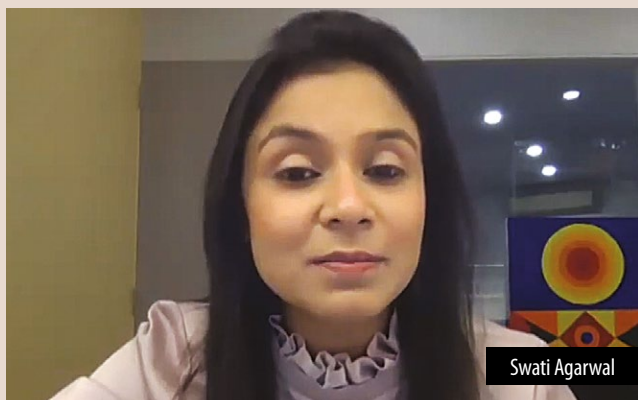
Tribute to Mothers: The Eternal Inspirations



Cherie Blair

resolve, sacrifice, and selfless love that motherhood entails.

Dedicated to the resilience of those who have withstood and overcome the travails of the body and the mind inflicted by human trafficking, *Dear Mama* was launched at **Kitaab**, an initiative of by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, followed by an engaging



and emotionally intense conversation featuring Noon and Cherie Blair CBE QC.

An international lawyer, a committed campaigner for women's rights, and the wife of former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Cherie Blair is also the founder of the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women. Noon herself is the founder chairperson of LILY Against Human Trafficking, besides being an author, film-maker, journalist, and charity worker.

After **Ehsaas** Woman Swati Agarwal welcomed the two accomplished speakers, the conversation began with Blair reading a letter she had written to her mother, expressing her gratitude to a woman, who, as a single mother, had raised Blair and her sister with the best of everything. Blair's mother was an inspiration for her to start her Foundation, which has now helped millions of women set up their own businesses.

Sharing with the audience her best memories of her mother's resilience, Blair stressed upon the need for women to have financial stability. She pointed out that without economic independence, a woman will always struggle to make her own decisions. Blair also highlighted the importance of eliminating prejudice, adding that "as long as prejudices are there against women anywhere, no woman will be totally free."

While discussing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the status of women, Blair observed how "more people have realised that with technology, working from home is more flexible. I think it is particularly liberating for women."

The mother-child equation is one relationship that cannot be tarnished or broken. For her, a bond between a mother and a child is always special and a mother does whatever is under her control and beyond to provide what is best for her children, in whatever part of the world they may be in

Noon, who was born in India and currently resides in London, shared how the idea for LILY, her anti-trafficking organisation, was born after she rescued an infant named Lily from the clutches of traffickers. She also narrated the heartwrenching story of a tribe in Rajasthan that sells its women once they hit puberty, forcing them into prostitution and trafficking — activities that LILY relentlessly works to curb.

To that end, Noon said there was an urgent need to open schools in different parts of India where unprivileged people can avail of a holistic education and live a life free from the menaces of the buying and selling of human beings.

A writer of novels like *Black Taj*, plays like *Rumi: Unveil the Sun* (co-authored with her mother, Amrit Kent) and a series of cookbooks, Noon spoke about preventing women from "falling into this mindset no matter where we are, and how educated or outgoing" that implicitly condones patriarchy and misogyny.

Returning to the mother-child equation, Noon said this was one relationship that could not be tarnished or broken. For her, a bond between a mother and a child is always special. A mother does whatever is under her control and beyond to provide what is best for her children, in whatever part of the world they may be in.

Commenting on the session, Sundeep Bhutoria, managing trustee, Prabha Khaitan Foundation, remarked, "It is a great honour for **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** to host the unveiling of *Dear Mama*, which is a stupendous collection of letters to mothers and which evokes deep feelings of love, emotion, compassion and inspiration."

The conversation ended with Agarwal thanking Noon and Blair for their insights and for their contributions in standing up to oppression against women as well as for empowering women across the world, irrespective of caste, creed, or colour.

This session of Kitaab is presented by Shree Cement Ltd

Reliving India's Dying Professions

The march of time obliterates not just habits, customs, and rituals but entire livelihoods too. Over the decades, the emergence of globalisation in India, and its dovetailing with traditions, has inevitably had an impact on age-old professions, something author Nidhi Dugar Kundalia has dexterously documented through her work.

The Write Circle Ahmedabad hosted Kundalia for a fascinating discussion that sought to unearth the trades that are fast disappearing in India. A graduate of the School of Arts, City, University of London, Kundalia's journalistic writings have featured across national newspapers and magazines. Her domain primarily revolves around socio-cultural issues, capturing journeys that cast the spotlight on stories belonging to the fringes of modern civilisation.

In conversation with Kundalia was **Ehsaas Woman** of Udaipur, Riddhima Doshi, while **Ehsaas Woman** of Ahmedabad, Shaneel Parekh, welcomed them to the interaction.

Kundalia's first book, *The Lost Generation: Chronicling India's Dying Professions*, became the natural starting point for the interaction, with the writer elaborating how it was from a column she was working on that the idea of the book eventually sprouted, inspired in part by her grandmother who had intrigued her with narratives about professions of the past.

One of the most interesting discoveries made by Kundalia concerned the profession of *rudaalis*, whose job was to cry at the funeral of high-ranking men in society. The higher the rank of the deceased, the louder would be the wailing of a *rudaali*, which also meant that the wives of the departed men could not show their tears.



Nidhi Dugar



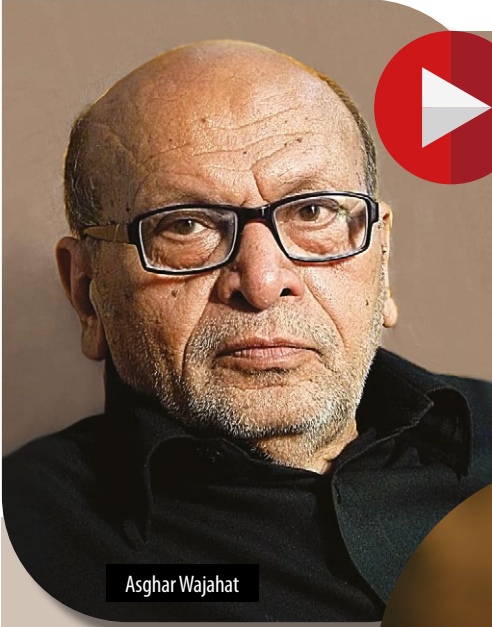
Riddhima Doshi

Kundalia then added to the list of endangered professions in India by citing the examples of street dentists, ear cleaners and barbers. While most of these street professions are no longer visible in most of India, Kundalia was heartened to find that they still endure to some extent in Kolkata, a city Kundalia described as a perfect blend of the old and the new.

In the final part of the conversation, Kundalia shifted to talking about her second book, *White as Milk and Rice*, which aggregates the stories of six tribes in India reckoning with radical changes over the last century.

While addressing the way these tribes manage to remain self-sufficient without intermingling much with the rest of society, Kundalia made a crucial distinction between wanting to learn about the tribes and wanting to intervene in their lives. According to her, it is best to let such tribes organise themselves as they alone understand what makes them happy and content.

The Write Circle Ahmedabad is presented in association with Karma Foundation, The House of MG-Mangalbag, Divya Bhaskar and Ehsaas Women of Ahmedabad



Asghar Wajahat

"मेरी पहली भाषा हिंदी थी। विभाजन के साथ ही उर्दू पाकिस्तान चली गई। मेरी स्कूल की पढ़ाई हिंदी में ही हुई। लेखन के लिए लिपी बाधा नहीं है। देवनागरी में भी आप ग़ालिब को लिख सकते हैं। हिंदी में जो जीवंतता है वह उर्दू में नहीं है।" ये बातें वरिष्ठ लेखक असगर वजाहत ने कलम भुबनेश्वर के दौरान कहीं। कार्यक्रम के आरंभ में अहसास वूमेन की ओर से डॉक्टर निधि गर्ग ने किया वजाहत का स्वागत किया और कहा कि यह दौर मास्क, सेनिटाइजर, सोशल डिस्टेंसिंग जैसे शब्दों को हमारे बीच ले आया है। प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन द्वारा चलाए जा रहे बहुविध अभियानों की चर्चा करते हुए उन्होंने वजाहत का विस्तृत परिचय देते हुए उनकी सात आसमान और जिस लाहौर नई देखा, ओ जम्या नहीं जैसी कृतियों की चर्चा की। उन्होंने बताया कि आपकी 20 पुस्तकें प्रकाशित हैं, जिनमें पांच उपन्यास, छह नाटक, पांच कहानी-संग्रह, एक यात्रा वृत्तांत, नुक्कड़ नाटकों का एक संग्रह और साहित्यिक आलोचना पर एक पुस्तक शामिल है। आगे की बातचीत के लिए उन्होंने डॉ वेदुला रामालक्ष्मी को यह कहते हुए आमंत्रित किया कि आप हिंदी की रोटी खाती हैं।

वेदुला ने पहला सवाल जिस लाहौर नई देखा, ओ जम्या नहीं को लेकर पूछा। वजाहत का जवाब था, "यह नाटक मानव संबंधों का नाटक है। यह बताता है कि मनुष्यता दूसरी आवश्यकताओं से बड़ी है। बंटवारा इसकी पृष्ठभूमि में है। यह मनुष्य से मनुष्य के रिश्ते की कहानी है। यह पहले देश की सीमाओं को तोड़ता है। फिर धर्म से जुड़ता है और बताता है कि धर्म तोड़ता नहीं है। यह धर्म की सकारात्मक व्याख्या करता है। इसका एक पात्र कवि है, जो संसार को एक कवि दृष्टि से देखता है।" यात्रा-वृत्तांत से जुड़े सवाल के उत्तर में वजाहत ने सोशल टूरिज्म पर बल दिया। उनका तर्क था कि टूरिज्म के दौरान इमारतें न देखकर उस समाज को देखा जाना चाहिए। उनका कहना था कि यह लेखकों के लिए चुनौती भरा इलाका है, क्योंकि भाषा की चुनौतियों के बावजूद आपको इसे देखना होता है।

वेदुला ने वजाहत से बुडापेस्ट की चित्र प्रदर्शनी के उल्लेख के साथ 'रंग और रेखाएं बनाम शब्द और अक्षर' को लेकर अगला सवाल किया, जवाब में वजाहत ने माना कि मैं अपने को एक्सप्रेस करना चाहता हूं, तो कई ऐसे भाव आते हैं जहां शब्द भावनाओं को पूरी तरह अभिव्यक्त नहीं कर पाते। रंग और आकार मुझे बहुत आकर्षित करते हैं। जिन्हें मैं शब्दों से व्यक्त नहीं कर पाता उन्हें चित्र से व्यक्त कर पाता हूं। कहानी, उपन्यास, नाटक आदि में कौन सी ऐसी विधा है जो पाठकों को छू जाती है? के उत्तर में वजाहत का मत था, "मेरा सोचना है कि अधिकतर पाठकों के पास सोचने का समय नहीं है। कम पढ़ कर भी अधिक जानकारी मिले, यह आज के पाठक की मांग है। मैंने भी उपन्यास त्रयी लिखा। पर कितने लोग हैं, जो इसे पढ़ना चाहते हैं। इसलिए आज कंटेंट नहीं सार देने की जरूरत है।" गोडसे@गांधी.कॉम से जुड़े सवाल पर वजाहत ने कहा,



समर्थन और विरोध के बीच एक तीसरा भी रास्ता है — संवाद का: असगर वजाहत



Vedula Ramalakshmi

"यह पुस्तक परा-इतिहास के हिसाब से लिखा है। परा-इतिहास वह क्षेत्र है, जहां यह कल्पना की जाती है, कि अगर ऐसा न होता तो क्या होता? इस किताब में यह कल्पना की गई है कि गोली लगने के बाद गांधी बच जाते हैं और गोडसे से मिलने की बात करते हैं। वह गोडसे से मिलते हैं और कहते हैं कि तुम्हारे इस कृत्य से कुछ लोग तुमसे घृणा करते हैं, कुछ प्यार करते हैं। मैं एक तीसरा रास्ता अख्तियार करता हूँ संवाद का।"

वजाहत ने यह माना कि लेखक जो लिखता है, वह उसका भोगा हुआ यथार्थ होता है। पर बहुत से ऐसे प्रसंग होते हैं और बातें होती हैं जो छूट जाती हैं। आत्मकथा लेखक को समझने की एक कुंजी है। आप अपने साहित्य को दृश्य रूप में देखते हैं तो क्या कहते हैं? के जवाब में वजाहत ने कहा कि जब लिखा हुआ शब्द जीवित हो जाता है, तब आप उसे चमत्कार के रूप में देखते, महसूस करते हैं। पर बड़ा सवाल यह है कि क्या ऐसा होता है। लेखक सौ फीसदी सोचता रहता है। वह यह जानता है कि यह एक संयुक्त प्रयास है, इसलिए इसमें स्पेस होना चाहिए। फिल्म वह माध्यम है, जिसमें लिखा हुआ मूर्त रूप में सामने आ जाता है। वे रचनात्मक लोग हैं। विदेश और भारत में अध्यापन में क्या अंतर है? के उत्तर में वजाहत ने बताया कि विदेश में विद्यार्थी ज्ञान अर्जन के लिए पढ़ते हैं। इसके चलते उनके अध्ययन में गंभीरता आ जाती है। वहां का छात्र स्कूल के स्तर पर अंतर्राष्ट्रीय साहित्य पढ़ चुका होता है। पर अब हमारे यहां भी हिंदी पढ़ने के लिए काफी प्रतिभाशाली छात्र आ रहे हैं, जो पहले नहीं आया करते थे। अब छात्रों की प्राथमिकता साहित्य भी बन रहा है। इससे हिंदी भाषा और साहित्य को अच्छी प्रतिभाएं मिलेंगी। आज का हिंदी अध्यापक भी हिंदी साहित्यकारों से जीवंत संबंध रख रहा है।

सोशल मीडिया से जुड़े सवाल पर वजाहत का मत था कि सोशल मीडिया एक रोचक एरिया है, जो खुला है। जबकि पत्रिकाओं में रचना भेजने पर साल भर में रिवेशन आते थे। आज फेसबुक पर आपको एक दिन में पता चल जाता है कि लोग क्या कह रहे। पर इसकी भी अपनी सीमा है। यह अभी गंभीर माध्यम नहीं माना जाता है, मेरा मानना है कि इसे गंभीर माध्यम बनाया जाना चाहिए। स्त्री विमर्श, जनजातियों के उत्थान पर लिखना और उनके लिए काम करना और बात है, आप ऐसा कैसे कर लेते हैं? के उत्तर में वजाहत ने कहा, "किसी भी व्यक्ति के लिए जरूरी है कि समय, माटी और समाज से जुड़ा रहे। इसे जानने के लिए जरूरी है कि आपका संपर्क समाज से बना रहे। मैं शुरु से रिमोट एरिया में काम से जुड़ा रहा हूँ। महिला, बच्चों के क्षेत्र में जो काम कर रहे हैं वहां से लिखने के लिए बहुत सामग्री मिलती है, नए अनुभव मिलते हैं।" उन्होंने अपनी जन्मस्थली फतेहपुर से जुड़ाव, अपने यात्रा संस्मरण का भी विस्तार से जिक्र किया और कहा कि मैं एक व्याकुल आत्मा हूँ। गुलाम मोइनुद्दीन खान के कोरोना से जुड़े सवाल पर वजाहत ने कहा कि ऐसा समय किसी भी शताब्दी में एक बार आता है। पिछली सदी में प्लेग और टीबी था। साहित्य ने उसे भी दर्ज किया, इसे भी दर्ज करेगा। वजाहत ने शगुफ्ता जबी के सवाल का भी जवाब दिया और श्रोताओं के अनुरोध पर गुरु चेला संवाद नामक लघु कथा भी सुनाई।

कलम भुबनेश्वर के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट। मेफेयर होटल & रिसोर्ट्स और अहसास वूमेन भुबनेश्वर ने सहयोग किया।



Of Faith, Feminism, and Everything in Between

Koral Dasgupta

A conversation that spans everything from society to spirituality, authorship to agency, and myths to meditation is a rare treat. At the 86th session of **An Author's Afternoon**, writer Koral Dasgupta touched upon all this and more, in conversation with Shraddhaa Murdia, **Ehsaas** Woman of Udaipur.

Dasgupta has written five books, starting with *Power of a Common Man*, which explains consumer behaviour through the prism of the phenomenon called Shah Rukh Khan. Her fourth book, a comedy called *Summer Holidays*, has been picked up for screen adaptation, while her latest, *Ahalya*, inaugurates a five-part *Sati* series that reimagines the tales of five women as told in Indian myths.

After a warm welcome by **Ehsaas** Woman of Kolkata, Esha Dutta, Dasgupta started off with a confession — Kolkata had been replaced by Mumbai in her life! But she said while "Maximum City" now featured in her author description and designation, she feels she will always share a special bond with Kolkata, for it is this city that made her fall in love with words, literature, culture, music and rituals.

"Bengal has always been very deep into art, culture, and literature.... In our culture people argue, they put their views forward very aggressively and robustly but that never severs ties. It just makes people aware of another school of



Shraddhaa Murdia

thought but has never sounded threatening to any other school of thought," Dasgupta said.

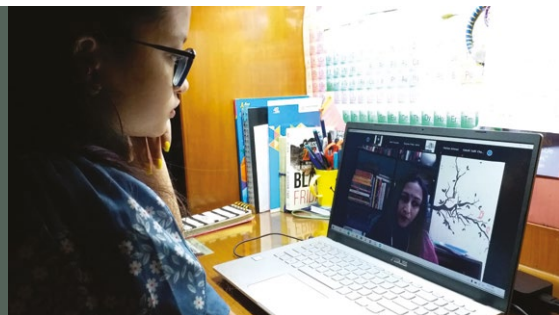
The writer spoke passionately of her love for books, which bloomed in her childhood, and how writing for her is never about showing off her skills, but a medium through which "to live the different kinds of lives that I would have loved to live."

Dasgupta's *Sati* series, in association with Pan Macmillan, revolves around the "Panch Kanyas" or the Five Virgins of Indian mythology — Ahalya, Kunti, Draupadi, Mandodari, and Tara. By demonstrating how these women are exemplars — not of the purity of the body, but of the purity of the mind —

Dasgupta argued that the essence of our myths has

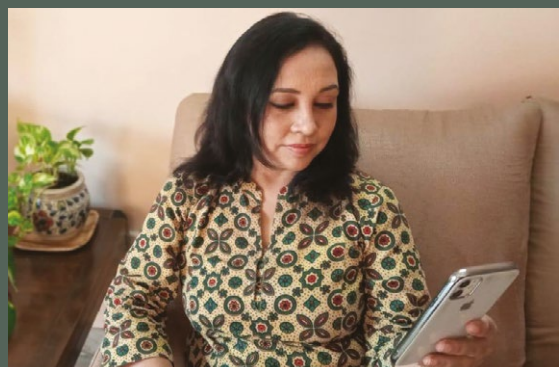
Ahalya is one person who cannot be dominated by any foreign body trying to come and tell her that she is not enough. That is the way I had seen her

— Koral Dasgupta



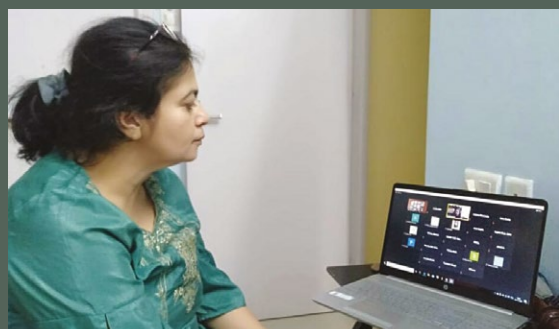
A very informative session, really enjoyed it. Thank you **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** for organising such meetings even during these difficult times.

— Ahana Roychowdhury



A wonderful session, thoroughly enjoyed it. I was impressed with Koral's views and will definitely buy her book.

— Vandana Singh



Nice thoughts on femininity and gender equality during the discussion. Wishing Koral Dasgupta the best of luck.

— Sujata Khan John



A very interesting conversation conducted really well by Shradhaa Murdia. I found Koral Dasgupta's views on femininity and feminism, the ancient versus modern interpretations, really interesting.

— Monica Sen Saha

been misinterpreted, undermining the female's point of view in the process.

Ahalya, the first book of the series, is a story told from the perspective of its eponymous protagonist, whose husband, sage Gautam Maharishi, cursed her after suspecting her of getting seduced by the God, Indra.

Ahalya, to Dasgupta, is not just a feminist icon. "Personally... I believe in femininity. In our feminist conversations, we often end up giving up our femininity. Ahalya is one person who cannot be dominated by any foreign body trying to come and tell her that she is not enough. That is the way I had seen her."

When writing her books, people often tell Dasgupta to pray or meditate to get closer to God, but none of that has been of any help to her, she admitted. Instead, it has made her only more restless.

Following her mother's advice — work is worship and meditation — made it far easier for her to

concentrate. "I often feel that we don't know the complete journey of our life. God, who has given us our life, knows this journey and is in a better position to decide what will work in the long run," said Dasgupta.

Dasgupta also discussed the knotty subject of infidelity, pointing out how it should not be judged as a violation of societal norms, but seen as circumstantial, from a person-to-person standpoint. Wisdom differs from chastity, she said, and questioned why the latter only applies to women, who are told to avoid certain things so as to remain bound within the so-called rules of society. Ultimately, Dasgupta argued, these same rules can get in the way of women achieving their dreams.

She concluded with a positive thought, that everyone has the right to be happy, but should also be considerate towards others.

An Author's Afternoon is presented by Shree Cement Ltd, in association with Taj Bengal Kolkata

Notes on Nationalism and Indianness



Shashi Tharoor

The ability to have a healthy debate — a civil exchange of contradicting ideas and opinions — and embrace plurality in all forms are some of the key tenets of democracy. The recent virtual launch of author and Member of Parliament Shashi Tharoor's 22nd book, *The Battle of Belonging: On Nationalism, Patriotism, And What It Means To Be Indian*, was imbued with this democratic spirit.

The book launch, organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** through the **Kitaab** platform, in association with Aleph Book Company, saw a gathering of eminent guests both from the political and the literary worlds — two spheres Tharoor continues to expertly straddle for more than a decade. In an attempt to embrace a healthy exchange of ideas, they participated in a riveting panel discussion on some of the core concepts, like nationalism, patriotism, and what constitutes "Indianness", which have been elaborated in the book.

From the former vice-president of India, Hamid Ansari, and the former chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Farooq Abdullah to the former Rajya Sabha MP, Pavan K. Varma, poet and novelist Makarand Paranjape, and author-publisher David Davidar, the eminent panellists did not shy away from engaging in a critical appraisal of Tharoor's book and spoke their

minds about its intriguing and thought-provoking ideas.

Also in attendance were veteran journalist Karan Thapar, who moderated the panel, and **Ehsaas** Woman and Honorary Convenor of Rajasthan and Central India Affairs, Apra Kuchhal who flagged off the **Kitaab** session. Hamid Ansari unveiled Tharoor's book, which according to the author, is "not just theoretical or academic but intensely personal" and "is the culmination of a lifetime's thoughts, readings and arguments" made on "issues of nationalism and patriotism."

Speaking about his impetus to write the book, Tharoor said that it "was prompted by the rise of a fundamental challenge to the very essence of Indian nationalism." The book, revealed Tharoor, "offers one observer's note towards an understanding of nationalism in the world against specificity in India today." It delves into the history of how "India's own anti-colonial nationalism converted itself into a "civic nationalism" encoded in a democratic Constitution and then the conflict over contemporary attempts to convert that into a religious-cultural nationalism."

He elaborated that India must go back to its roots and follow "civic nationalism" that has faith in the Constitution and the civic bodies, rather than a

religious nationalism that divides the country and does more harm than good. He expressed his belief that India is a fairly young nation and can be a place where people do not feel that they do not belong. "That," said the gifted wordsmith, "is the battle of belonging to India and having India belong to you. Those are the principal themes in the book."

Explaining why the book falls in the "rarest-of-rare 'indispensable' category — books you cannot do without" even if one does not agree with Tharoor's ideologies, Davidar said, "It is a remarkably learned, even-handed and lucid study of foundational ideas and concepts and national values." "I hope every Indian will read the book," he added, and that "people will be reading and discussing *The Battle of Belonging* fifty years from now."

Following the launch, Thapar opened the floor for the panel discussion by quoting from the book, 'Are some Indians more Indian than others?' He asked the panellists to freely share their thoughts on the book, as well as their take on the nature of nationalism and

patriotism that is prevalent in our country — whether it is right or wrong, or whether it should at all be categorised as good or bad.

Ansari opened the panel by sharing his views on the book. "This is a passionate plea for an idea of India that was taken for granted and is now seemingly endangered by ideologies that seek to segment it

on imagined criteria of us and them," he said, adding, "Shashi Tharoor has dilated on the essential ingredients of 'Indianness' as understood in the freedom struggle and the subsequent seven decades of the Republic of India. I found the essays on identity and patriotism particularly enlightening." The book's

analysis, he felt, was "comprehensive" yet stopped short of suggesting a "doable recipe for correcting the shortfalls."

Speaking on all things nationalism, patriotism, citizenship as well as matters of legal and fundamental rights, Davidar said, "Nationalism has many conflicting definitions, there is no right or wrong nationalism. The wrong nationalism is not anti-nationalism."

The nationalism being promoted in India today is a totalising vision that excludes citizens, those who do not subscribe to it, on the basis of identity or immutable markers like ethnicity, religion, language and so on

— Shashi Tharoor

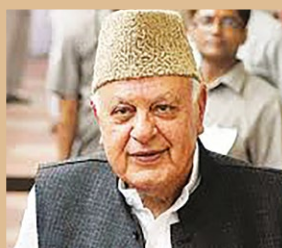


Shashi Tharoor has dilated on the essential ingredients of 'Indianness' as understood in the freedom struggle and the subsequent seven decades of the Republic of India. I found the essays on identity and patriotism particularly enlightening

— Hamid Ansari

I think ours is 'civilisational nationalism' and is always plural. Shashi has considered the Indian Constitution almost like a sacred text which can't be changed. But it has been changed 103 times...

— Makarand Paranjpe

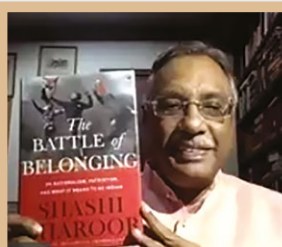


Today we are being divided on religion, caste, creed and language. Are we making a strong India or killing the very essence of it? Shashi has done a great job writing this book... We have to fight against forces that divide us...

— Farooq Abdullah

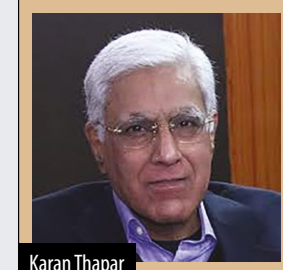
[The book] is a remarkably learned, even-handed and lucid study of foundational ideas and concepts and national values

— David Davidar



It is an important book in which Tharoor has invested his cerebral energy to project and propagate a point of view which is very relevant

— Pavan K. Varma



Karan Thapar

He added that in this day and age of social media, where people can vent about everything without having much knowledge about it, it is important to define nationalism properly to avoid creating more trouble. The book, therefore, takes old and new ideas into account and can help people make up their own informed definitions of nationalism.

When it was Abdullah's turn to speak, he started by narrating a story from his childhood. He remembered going to puja at a friend's place where he was not allowed in the kitchen since he would have made the food for the puja 'impure'. He recalled asking his friend's mother the reason for this segregation — whether it was because he prayed to a different God. Abdullah went on to compare that incident to the present-day situation in India, where people are being segregated based on religion and the God they pray to.

Responding to a question from Karan Thapar, Abdullah added, "Today we are being divided on religion, caste, creed and language. Are we making a strong India or killing the very essence of it? Shashi has done a great job writing this book... We have to fight against forces that divide us...."

Tharoor himself contributed to the discussion saying that "the nationalism being promoted in India today is a totalising vision that excludes citizens, those who do not subscribe to it, on the basis of identity or immutable markers like ethnicity, religion, language and so on." Making a case for "civic nationalism", which is anchored in institutions and constitutions, he said that it "derives from the consent of citizens to participate in a free and democratic society and best safeguards individual rights and hence must be promoted and protected above all."

Refuting this very idea of "civic nationalism", Paranjape, an erstwhile professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University, said that Tharoor's latest book will lend itself to serious debate. Being one such person who contests

Tharoor's views, Paranjape added that India was never a country that had "civic nationalism".

Critiquing the author's views, he elaborated, "I think ours is 'civilisational nationalism' and is always plural. Shashi has considered the Indian Constitution almost like a sacred text which can't be changed. But it has been changed 103 times...." He cited the 42nd Amendment, executed during the Emergency, and the addition of "socialist and secular" to the Constitution's "sovereign, democratic republic" Preamble as examples, adding, "Let us not kid ourselves, all our politics are based on caste calculations, linguistic calculus, religion and caste." Paranjape said that Tharoor's dismissal of the nationalism prevalent in today's India is a form of segmenting nationalism into good and bad, and therefore unfair.

Varma too donned the hat of critic, describing Tharoor's book as being "one-sided". Elaborating, he said to Tharoor, "All religious extremes are bad, including Islamic fundamentalism, which I notice you don't speak about in your book at all. And if there are sanctuaries for it in any parts of India, I think, they should equally be the focus of your attack so that the book does not appear to be one-sided."

However, Varma too commended Tharoor's endeavour saying that it is an "important book" in which Tharoor has "invested his cerebral energy to project and propagate a point of view which is very relevant."

Whether in agreement with his views or not, all the panellists unanimously lauded Tharoor's book for its potential to trigger a serious and much-needed debate on issues pertaining to current-day India. Kuchhal concluded the session by thanking the panellists for their insightful commentary on all things nationalism, patriotism, India and *The Battle of Belonging*.

*This session of Kitaab is held in association with
Aleph Book Company*

Yet another fascinating book. So true! Nationalism is being used to deflect us from the main problem.

Dr Shashi Tharoor's book, *The Battle of Belonging*, has opened a debate on resolving religious extremism. Any party declaring anti-secularism as their manifesto is going against the Constitution framers. How correctly Dr Farooq Abdullah said that it's not the ideal India of Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru. Our civilisation has left us a cultural legacy, the Upanishads and Bhagwad Gita are dialogues and we too need a debate to resolve this distortion of secularism. Since all is resolved with dialogue, let's deal with the matter with resolve and introspection

— Tinaa Bhinder

The Battle of Belonging is going to raise many questions. The meaning of Hinduism has changed in the present time, which needs to be discussed

— Dr Atula Bhaskar



It was an enlightening experience listening to a distinguished panel. It is pertinent to ask ourselves what we define India as. Are we ready to live to ensure the 'idea' of this wonderful nation thrives? I hope to read this book to find out if my understanding of this nation resonates with what Shashiji is proposing

— Tarundeep Singh

It was a delight to hear this debate. The civilised points for and against, made it so appreciable. I actually want to explore it more. The eloquent views of Professor Paranjape and Pavan Varma were very enlightening

— Kamal Uppal



I thoroughly enjoyed the session. I completely agree with Dr. Tharoor's perspective and his idea of patriotism and nationalism, but it was refreshing to hear the contrary views expressed in a logical and reasonable manner instead of the populist rantings one hears all the time these days. Definitely going to read the book

— Deepa Swami

Dr. Tharoor emphasises that it cannot be one's nationalism or patriotism against another's. He has brought home the point that patriotism is indeed the pure, unadulterated love for one's country and that present day nationalism at times demands sacrificing one's individuality and critical faculties

— Kanak Rekha Chauhan



A very enjoyable session. Other than the content, the eloquence of the speakers was remarkable. Pawan Varma was no less eloquent than Shashi Tharoor in conveying his views. The difference between patriotism and nationalism spelt out by the speakers opens up more avenues for discussion. I hope the present government takes some cues from the main points in the book and widen its outlook on patriotism, which is very narrow at the moment

— Charanjit Sobti

I am a big fan of Shashi Tharoor's writing and his views. It was interesting to hear the views of some of the most erudite speakers in India today. The views expressed, though different, were bound together by the dream for a better India, and it's through discussion and dialogue and expression of opinion, that we can achieve something. Such sessions have a large audience and thus work towards spreading ideas and getting people to start thinking

— Artika Aurora Bakshi

I have already heard Karan Thapar's interview about the book. I fully agree with his concept of civic nationalism. That alone is the sustainable culture for the evolution of a pluralistic society. The history of World War II bears witness to it. I sometimes wonder why we Indians learn nothing from history. Maybe we are making a collective celebration of stupidity

— Minna Bagga

An insightful discussion. Whereas nationalism and patriotism are the two sides of the same coin, the book will certainly help the reader understand how one is going to define one's sense of belonging to the country in present times as well as future

— Narendra Singh Sengar

Today's session was a treat. I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to witness it. All the speakers were exceptional. Many thanks

— Kalpana Grover



Priyanka Om

मैं इस बात से इतिफाक नहीं रखती की हिंदी का विकास नहीं हो रहा है। नई वाली हिंदी ने नया पाठक वर्ग तैयार किया है। हजारों किताबें छप रही हैं। मुख्यधारा का साहित्य लाइब्रेरी में जा रहा है। आखिर अंग्रेजी में पढ़ा-लिखा वह तबका, जिसे 'की' और 'के' का फर्क नहीं पता है, उसे पढ़ने वाला वर्ग भी तो बड़ा है।" यह कहना था तंजानिया में रह रही लेखिका प्रियंका ओम का। वह **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** की ओर से आयोजित **कलम** रायपुर & बिलासपुर के संयुक्त वर्चुअल सत्र में शिरकत कर रही थीं। कार्यक्रम के आरंभ में **अहसास** वूमेन व अभिकल्प फाउंडेशन की ओर से ओम का स्वागत किया गौरव गिरिजा शुक्ला ने किया। शुक्ला ने फाउंडेशन द्वारा चलाई जा रही गतिविधियों और कलम के समृद्ध सत्रों का उल्लेख करते हुए अतिथि वक्ता ओम का परिचय देते हुए कहा कि आपने अंग्रेजी साहित्य से पढ़ाई की और युवाओं की प्रेरणास्रोत हैं। आपकी प्रकाशित पुस्तकों में *वो अजीब लड़की* और *मुझे तुम्हारे जाने से नफरत है* शामिल है। संवादकर्ता अन्विता प्रधान को आगे की बातचीत के लिए आमंत्रित करते हुए शुक्ला ने कहा कि आप कला और साहित्य प्रेमी हैं और कलम के सबसे पुराने सदस्यों में एक हैं।

प्रधान ने पहला सवाल किया कि आपने लिखना कब शुरू किया? कौन आपका पसंदीदा लेखक है? ओम ने बताया कि

अफ्रीकी समाज की महिलाएं उन्मुक्त व भाषा प्रेम हमसे अधिक: प्रियंका ओम



Anvita Pradhan

कॉलेज के दिनों में अंग्रेजी साहित्य की छात्र थी, तो इस तरफ मेरा बहुत आकर्षण था। ब्रिटिश लेखक ऐलडस हक्सले का उपन्यास *ब्रेव न्यू वर्ल्ड*, जेन ऑस्टिन की *प्राइड एंड प्रिज्युडिस* मुझे पसंद थी। प्रेमिल कविताएं मुझे बहुत पसंद हैं।" आपके प्रिय लेखक अंग्रेजी के हैं जबकि आप हिंदी में लिखती हैं? के जवाब में ओम ने कहा, "मैं फेवरिटिज से बचती हूँ। जिसे पढ़ती हूँ, उसकी छाप मेरे लेखन पर पड़ सकती है। *गुनाहों का देवता*, *मुझे चांद चाहिए* मैंने बहुत कम उम्र में पढ़ा था, तब मैं उसे समझ नहीं पाई थी। यहां जब अफ्रीका में रहने लगी तो मुझे लगा कि मुझे हिंदी बोलनी चाहिए। तंजानिया की भाषा सोहली है। चाहे फाइव स्टार हो, पार्टी या बाजार, ये लोग आपस में सोहेली में बातचीत करते हैं। मैंने यह महसूस किया कि ये अफ्रीकी



Gaurav Shukla



Garima Tiwari

लोग हैं। इन्हें अपनी भाषा को लेकर कितना प्यार है। जबकि हम अपने को कल्वर्ड कहकर भी अपनी भाषा की जगह अंग्रेजी को प्रमुखता देते हैं। बस इसके बाद मैं हिंदी में लिखने लगी।"

आपकी कहानियों के केंद्र में स्त्री है? के जवाब में ओम ने कहा, "आसपास के किस्सों से कहानियां बनती हैं, यह मेरी टैग लाइन है। मेरी जितनी भी कहानियां हैं, मेरा देखा हुआ, सुना हुआ, जाना हुआ है। एक स्वांतः सुखाय कालगर्ल पर आधारित कहानी दिल्ली की उस लड़की की कहानी है, जिसे मैं जानती थी। इसी तरह भारतीय समाजों में दो बच्चों के बीच माँ बाप का प्यार किसी एक बच्चे से अधिक होता है, पर सौतेलापन कहानी लिखी।" प्रेम पत्र कहानी के जिक्र पर ओम ने कहा, "हम उस दौर के हैं जब ईमेल और हार्ट्स अप नहीं था। बालपन का प्रेम तब भी था। उस समय चिट्ठियों से इसका इजहार होता था। तब खून से लिखी जाने वाली चिट्ठी का बहुत महत्व था। यह तीन सहेलियों की कहानी है। एक टॉमब्वॉय है, एक गर्लिस और एक बहुत पढ़ाकू है। इनके बीच एक लड़का आ जाता है। इसमें बहुत छोटी घटनाएं शामिल हैं।" आपकी कहानियां बहुत बोल्ट हैं? के जवाब में ओम ने यह माना कि उन्हें बहुत आलोचना सुनने को मिली। उन्हीं के शब्दों में, "जब मैंने लिखना शुरू किया तो मेरे गुरु मेंटोर सत्य प्रकाश असीम ने मेरी तुलना इस्मत चुगताई और सिमोन द बौउआ से की। किसी ने बोल्ट कहा, किसी ने पोर्नोग्राफी तक कहा। पर इस्मत चुगताई, चित्रा मुद्रल, मृदुला गर्ग सबने बोल्ट कथानक पर कहानियां लिखीं हैं।"

अफ्रीकी समाज से जुड़े लेखन पर ओम ने बताया कि 2008 से अफ्रीका में हूँ। 2013 से तंजानिया में हूँ। पर यह बहुत खुला समाज नहीं है। ये लोग बाहरी लोगों से बहुत घुलते-मिलते नहीं। अफ्रीका में औरतों की स्थिति पर ओम का कहना था, "अफ्रीकी पुरुष औरतों के बारे में बहुत लिबरल हैं। वे ऊंची आवाज में किसी स्त्री से बात भी नहीं करते। अफ्रीकी स्त्रियां काफी स्वतंत्र हैं। सेक्स के प्रति भी उनमें काफी खुलापन है। हर स्त्री, भले ही वह शादीशुदा हो, उसका कोई न कोई ब्वायफ्रेंड होता है, और यह बात उसके पति को भी पता होती है। अफ्रीका की स्त्रियां अपने अधिकारों के लिए बहुत सचेत हैं। उनकी

सोच उन्मुक्त है। यह यहां का कल्चर है। यहां बलात्कार की कहानी सुनने को नहीं मिलती है।" प्रधान के अनुरोध पर ओम ने अपनी एक नई कहानी का अंश पाठ भी किया। यह एक ऐसी शादीशुदा स्त्री की कहानी है, जिसे प्यार की तलाश है। वह सोचती है कि शादी साथ रहने को कहते हैं। वह भटकती है, बाद में समझती है कि स्वयं से प्रेम करना ही सब कुछ है। अफ्रीकी समाज के खुलेपन से पारिवारिक विघटन की वहां क्या स्थिति है? पर ओम ने बताया, "यहां दो धर्म हैं, मुस्लिम व ईसाई। मुस्लिम कई शादी करते हैं। पर कई मामलों में स्त्रियां खुद भी चली जाती हैं। विघटन की समस्या भारत जैसी ही है। पर यहां स्त्री भी छोड़ कर जा रही है। यहां की स्त्री अभिशप्त नहीं है।"

ओम ने बताया कि अफ्रीका में भी लड़के हिंदी पढ़ रहे हैं। हिंदी का प्रचार प्रसार खूब हो रहा है। उन्होंने कहा कि तंजानिया में कोरोना का कोई संकट नहीं है। फेवरटिज्म से जुड़ी अपनी बात को स्पष्ट करते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि हर व्यक्ति पर किसी न किसी का असर होता है। पर बिना पढ़े तो आप लिख नहीं सकते। साहित्य की समझ पढ़ने से ही आती है। कहानी सबके पास है, कहना सभी चाहते हैं। मेरे लिए किस्सा उतना महत्वपूर्ण नहीं है, जितना शिल्प है। कुछ कहानियां घंटे की हो सकती हैं, तो कुछ में पूरा जीवन होता है। क्लासिक और नई हिंदी दोनों को पढ़ना चाहिए। मैं खूब पढ़ती हूँ। मैं फेसबुक पर दोस्तों से नई कहानियां मांगती रहती हूँ।

इस आयोजन में रायपुर और बिलासपुर के कई साहित्यप्रेमियों ने शिरकत की। सत्यभामा, अजय अवस्थी, अनीस श्रीवास और जी ए घनश्याम आदि ने सवाल पूछे। अहसास वूमेन की गरिमा तिवारी ने धन्यवाद दिया।

कलम बिलासपुर & रायपुर के प्रायोजक थे श्री सीमेंट। अहसास वूमेन, अभिकल्प फाउंडेशन, हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर हयात रायपुर और मीडिया पार्टनर के रूप में दैनिक जागरण की ओर से नई दुनिया ने सहयोग किया।



Real Power Lies in the Purity of the Mind

Koral Dasgupta

What does real power look like and to whom does it belong? Is power about the assertion of the ego or its abnegation? How does power relate to the body and the mind? These are some questions that the fiction of Koral Dasgupta often addresses.

An author of five books, including *Ahalya*, the first of her *Sati* series that celebrates female leadership by invoking five legendary women from Indian mythology, Dasgupta was hosted by **The Write Circle** Patna and Ranchi.

Besides writing novels, Dasgupta is an academic, columnist, painter and literary entrepreneur, discovering new voices through her laboratory, www.tellmeyourstory.biz.

In conversation with Dasgupta was **Ehsaas** Woman of Kolkata, Malika Varma, while **Ehsaas** Woman of Patna, Anvita Pradhan, welcomed them to the virtual session.

The conversation got underway with an exploration of what impact the different places Dasgupta has lived in has had on her writing style. She said it was true she keeps shifting from one location to another, and put it down to her fickleness and tendency to get bored easily.

Dasgupta mentioned how her love for reading started when she was a child, as both her parents were working professionals, leaving her with ample time to herself, and consequently, to read. She fondly recalled



Malika Varma

her time in Santiniketan, where she was pursuing a degree in economics, and how she had come to appreciate the different customs governing education there — from the teaching methods to the knowledge sharing among several departments. Despite studying economics, Dasgupta spent a lot of her time in the English department, where her love for literature began to grow deeper.

On shifting to Mumbai, Dasgupta had never planned to stay for more than six months. Fate, however, had different plans for her, as she ended up settling there. Her first book, *Power of a Common Man*, analysed consumer behaviour through the example of Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan.

Dasgupta said the book came about by pure coincidence. As a young professor teaching consumer behaviour, she had decided to make her classes more interesting by incorporating examples from Bollywood. As students became fascinated by her approach,



The conversation with Koral Dasgupta was one with which I could spontaneously relate my life experiences! It was candid and honest. Her life journey is akin to one of the girl-next-door, whose life rolls out one page at a time; one who has imbibed and adapted to her life lessons all the way, and matured into the special character that she is now.

One thing which is strikingly appealing is her consistency with her pen, the regularity, the

routine, the life-work-creativity-innovation balance.

A special mention to her belief that you create your own movie in your mind while you read a book!

— Dr Devendra Singh



Seema Singh

Dasgupta began noting down the class discussions and discovered that she could turn her improvised course into a book. At first, Shah Rukh Khan's company, Red Chillies Entertainment, failed to respond to her during the release of his film, *Jab Tak Hai Jaan*, but by the time SRK's next blockbuster, *Chennai Express*, rolled out, Dasgupta's book was ready for publication.

Her latest book, *Ahalya*, belongs to a different genre altogether, retelling the myth of the eponymous protagonist who was cursed by her husband, Gautam Maharishi, for being seduced by Lord Indra.

Mothered by nature, *Ahalya*'s is a story of magical discoveries spanning identity, spirituality, and sexuality. In Indian mythology, *Ahalya*, along with Kunti, Draupadi, Mandodari and Tara are called the Panch Kanyas or the five virgins. But according to Dasgupta, these women should not be seen as bastions of purity of the body. Instead, the purity that they represent, and the power they derive from that purity, is the purity of the mind.

Dasgupta said society is now reverting to paying more attention to the purity of the mind, inadvertently justifying the radically progressive nature of our ancient myths. She added that our mythical texts have been misjudged and misinterpreted in order to subdue women, for the female characters in these texts are all independent women making decisions for themselves, decisions that have massive ramifications not only on their status and position in society, but also on others

Our mythical texts have been misjudged and misinterpreted in order to subdue women, for the female characters in these texts are all independent women making decisions for themselves, decisions that have massive ramifications not only on their status and position in society, but also on others in their lives

in their lives.

The writer feels that these women were able to make such decisions at the time because they relied on the purity of their minds, though they were judged for the same.

When Varma steered the conversation towards contemporary feminism, it prompted Dasgupta to point out that current society was beginning to give up femininity in order to ascribe to feminism.

In the light of this statement, she brought up the role of homemakers, and how financial stability must not only mean working outside the house, but also include the work performed inside households. Stressing the need to recognise homemakers for their contributions to a country's economy, Dasgupta condemned the practice of looking down upon a homemaker's role, especially in a day and age when

women working outside domestic spaces were fast gaining traction. The conversation ended with Pradhan thanking Dasgupta and Varma for a wholesome dialogue on books, life and feminism.

The Write Circle Patna is presented by Shree Cement Ltd, in association with Dainik Jagran & Navras School of Performing Arts

The Write Circle Ranchi is presented by Shree Cement Ltd, in association with Dainik Jagran & Ehsaas Women of Ranchi



Hamid Ansari

Cornered and Confined: How Love Exposed the Fault Lines of Hate



Geeta Mohan

India and Pakistan share a complicated relationship, to say the least. More than seven decades after Partition, the South Asian neighbours have still not managed to reconcile their historical differences and usher in a détente that consolidates their political association alongside their common cultural heritage.

For an Indian, therefore, to be stranded in Pakistan can prove to be quite the ordeal, even more so when that Indian is suspected of being a spy. Nobody knows this better than Hamid Ansari, cornered and confined in a Pakistani prison, but now in a position to tell his remarkable tale through his book *Hamid* (co-authored with Geeta Mohan), launched at **Kitaab**, organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**.

Ansari is currently a part of the visiting faculty at a college in Mumbai, having completed his master's degree in management studies from Mumbai University and his MBA in HR from NMIMS. He has also worked with NGOs like Rotary Club and

volunteered with the United Nations.

As part of the conversation for his book launch, Ansari was joined by Mohan and an eclectic panel of guests — Rajdeep Sardesai, Rukhshanda Naz, and Nidhi Razdan, who moderated the interaction.

Mohan is a journalist covering international relations and diplomacy, and is currently the foreign affairs editor at India Today, TV Today Network. She also anchors the show, *World Today*.

Sardesai is a primetime news anchor, multimedia journalist, and author. He is a consulting editor at the India Today group, and is an anchor for India Today Television.

Naz has been an activist in the Pakistani women's

movement since the early 1990s. A lawyer by profession, she has worked with a number of NGOs on issues of violence against women and children and on women's empowerment programmes.

Razdan is currently an Associate Professor of Journalism at Harvard University following more than two decades of broadcast journalism at NDTV.

The discussion unravelled with Ansari detailing how he ended up in solitary confinement in Pakistan. After falling in love with a Pakistani girl online, Ansari found her to be suicidal — "one fine day she urged me to save her life...

how his parents would share information with her about their son but insist they be kept off the record, for they were afraid of any official information being misused to hamper Ansari's case. Mohan also commented on the complex nature of the India-Pakistan relationship and the role the Indian government played in Ansari's release, especially through the late Minister of External Affairs, Sushma Swaraj.

Sardesai echoed Mohan in emphasising the greyness of the fault lines that permeate the hatred between India and Pakistan. He shed light on the importance of Ansari's



Nidhi Razdan



Rajeev Sardesai



Rukshanda Naz

Pakistan, like any other country, has both good and bad in every individual; we cannot generalise a society or a country

— Hamid Ansari

and suddenly disappeared." Ansari then got in touch with a Pakistani journalist who promised to help him find his lady love, but once Ansari landed in Pakistan, proceeded to "backstab me, calling the [Pakistani] agencies, which caught me, accusing me of being an Indian spy."

What followed was six years of "torture and hatred" in a Pakistani cell, where the "only mode of communication was writing on the bathroom walls." Initially, Ansari feared his punishment could be extended to 35 years or get converted into a death penalty. "I couldn't get any support... or contact the embassy... I felt I was doomed," said Ansari, who eventually received assistance from Naz and a team of lawyers on being shifted to a civil prison.

"I was told in Pakistan during interrogation that my [Indian] nationality was my only crime... but there were others who boosted my morale," recounted Ansari, stressing that Pakistan, like any other country, has "both good and bad in every individual; we cannot generalise a society or a country."

Mohan supplemented Ansari's account by narrating

book in showcasing to a generation of people intoxicated by hate the potential for good in the citizens of both countries.

Naz, inseparably linked to Ansari's case, reflected on how difficult it had been to convince the Pakistani judiciary that Ansari was not a spy. Naz had already helped an Indian called Ashok Kumar in a similar case in 1995, and on receiving the material pertaining to Ansari's case, she required no additional persuasion to take it up. In summarising her side of the story, Naz cited the valuable contributions of Kazi Mohammad Anwar, who ensured all charges against Ansari were dismissed, making his return to India possible.

As moderator, Razdan encapsulated the conversation aptly by calling the relationship between India and Pakistan a schizophrenic one, which has elements of both good and bad, right and wrong.

This session of Kitaab is held in association with Penguin Books



A Glimpse into the World of Natyam

A celebrated artiste and star-performer, Geeta Chandran has commanded the stage for decades, using her inordinate expertise in Bharatanatyam to impress and inspire generations of dancers and dance enthusiasts. Unlike many, she has adapted the medium of classical dance to address a wide range of issues.

To speak about her life and journey as an artiste and a teacher, Chandran joined in for an **Ek Mulakat Vishesh** chat with Kathak dancer and **Ehsaas** Woman of Noida, Shinjini Kulkarni. The virtual session was flagged off by **Ehsaas** Woman of Delhi, Dipali Bhasin, who gave a glimpse into the repertoire of this dancer-choreographer extraordinaire.

Kulkarni started the *mulakat* by asking the danseuse about her love for Delhi. She also asked Chandran about the challenges of learning a classical dance form away from the social and cultural milieu in which it is entrenched — the temple culture of Tamil Nadu.

Declaring herself "a total Delhi girl", Chandran praised the city, saying, "I have been completely nurtured by this city as an artiste. During the 1970s, '80s and '90s, which were my formative years, we had some fabulous international shows coming in. The embassies were very active



Geeta Chandran



Shinjini Kulkarni

about bringing the best dance companies and showcasing them in Delhi." Staying in Karol Bagh, "a mini south India" and having a teacher who was rooted in tradition helped too, she admitted. "My teacher had moved from Chennai to Delhi and was someone who belonged to the community... so that was a huge blessing for me."

Chandran said that she learnt a lot about "*natyam*", its associated music, poetry, rhythm, literature, melody and movement from her teacher and was lucky to have such a resource in Delhi.

Speaking about why she took up Bharatanatyam, Chandran admitted that it was not with the idea that she would take it up professionally. "There was no such plan. There were no stakes, I learnt the dance because my mother was passionate about it and wanted me to have a strong foundation in whatever I learnt. The idea was never to see yourself as a star... it was always about nurturing yourself through the arts and moulding your personality through the arts," she said.

Moving on to the role that the arts play in society, she explained, "I have always believed that the arts can transform people. If we would have invested more in arts education, I think we wouldn't be having so much of violence and stress around us. Arts do make you more sensitive, it helps you explore your inner spaces."

As the founder-president and artistic director of Natya Vriksha Dance Company, this Padma Shri and Sangeet Natak Akademi Award winner takes her role as a teacher very seriously. "My teacher made me start teaching... I was just helping him at his academy and he used to watch me teach and correct me, so I was very blessed to be taught to teach," she revealed.

As for teaching today's generation, she said that she had to think up a different pedagogy for them because the old system would not work. "I started watching the children and realised that the disconnect was happening at many levels — from not understanding the mythology, not visiting the temples, not experiencing the architecture." So, Chandran created a space that uses a lot of colour, texture and form, to create an ambience that helps the students develop a sense of aesthetics. Her classes are never predictable or structured, they have a different feel and flow to them each time.

However, according to her, the biggest difference in her approach as compared to that of past teachers is that



her "...teachers were very strict. There was no scope for dialogue. It was a one-way process. I didn't want that. I wanted to be a friend to my students."

Moving on to the connection between dance,

spirituality and religion, Chandran shared that having a spiritual bent of mind is not mandatory to pursue an artistic journey. "Every soul is different... and they bring to the dance what they think is their own... I've had students who were non-believers and they dance beautifully. The main thing is to bring yourself into the dance... there are many ways of entering it, and spirituality is just one of them."

As one of the first dancers to bring social issues to stage via a purely classical medium, Chandran was asked if art can bring about real social change and start a

political dialogue. "I don't think one can create beautiful things in a studio without realising what is happening outside. We are all political beings and we need art to be socially, politically alive and responsible.... The choices you make about what you dance and how you dance — that itself is a political statement you make as an artiste," she said. She feels "viewing dance as a performance is a tragedy. Dance is a process. Performing is a small aspect of it," and what matters is that we make each piece socially relevant and meaningful.

The conversation ended with Kulkarni asking Chandran, who is also a trained Carnatic singer, to sing a couple of lines, and with Bhasin thanking them both for an eye-opening session on the world of *natyam*.

Ek Mulakat Vishesh is presented by Shree Cement Ltd

I don't think one can create beautiful things in a studio without realising what is happening outside. We are all political beings and we need art to be socially, politically alive and responsible.... The choices you make about what you dance and how you dance — that itself is a political statement you make as an artiste



Jyotsna Mohan



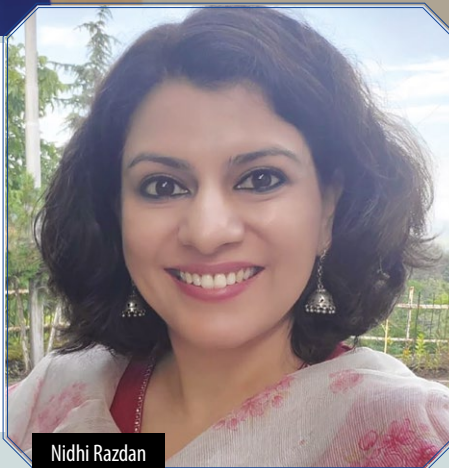
The Lost Days of Innocence

The child is the father of man," wrote William Wordsworth in his poem, *My Heart Leaps Up*. Wordsworth's conception of childhood as an idyllic phase imbued with innocence that forms the foundation of our adult selves has never been an entirely accurate portrayal of reality. With time, however, the lives of countless children have not only lost innocence, but also relinquished any sense of discipline, guidance, and moral development.

The sordidness of childhood and early teenage years that one increasingly sees internationally — thanks to the internet, abuse of affluence, peer pressure, and irresponsible parenting — applies to India as well, as depicted poignantly in Jyotsna Mohan Bharagava's book, *Stoned, Shamed, Depressed*.

Kitaab, a platform by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, launched Mohan's illuminating book in a compelling conversation featuring the author and Nidhi Razdan.

Mohan, who has worked with NDTV for 15 years as a senior news anchor and editor, is also a columnist for newspapers and digital publications in India



Nidhi Razdan

and abroad, while Razdan is currently an associate professor of journalism at Harvard University following more than two decades of broadcast journalism at NDTV, where she rose to the position of executive editor, reporting on politics and international diplomacy, and anchoring primetime shows like *Left, Right and Centre* and *The Big Fight*.

Welcoming them to the conversation was Vanu Ahuja, executive committee member, Phulkari — Women of Amritsar.

In *Stoned, Shamed, Depressed*, Mohan investigates the secret lives of India's urban teens and produces an account — disturbing yet riveting — of struggles with substance addiction, social media and gaming, dealing with intense peer pressure, bullying and body shaming, and the consequent physical and mental health issues. The book narrates the confused journey of Indian teens

to adulthood along a road that is full of temptation, where boundaries are easily blurred, and where the lure of easy adventure, often in the virtual world, can unleash events that have long-term repercussions. The narrative



Shweta Aggarwal



Vanu Ahuja

interweaves accounts of teens, parents, teachers, and child psychologists to reveal a deeply disturbing picture of modern-day school life in urban India.

The conversation about the book began with Mohan saying that she has already been thinking of writing a sequel based on the stories people have been sending her as part of the feedback.

Mohan characterised the millennial generation as one whose problems are often belittled and brushed under the carpet, whose interests and issues frequently become tabooed. She acknowledged that the book had started out with a focus on children between 16 and 20 years of age, but with further research, she discovered glaring problems among those as young as eight or nine. "Things have changed so drastically that kids nowadays talk very casually about self-harm, which gave me many sleepless nights," confessed Mohan.

The discussion pivoted towards the need for raising awareness among adults about the severity of problems encountered by today's children, and how unrestrained freedom and a desire to emulate their parents can be dangerously counterproductive for the young and naive.

On a particularly powerful note, Mohan reflected on how the children she documents in her book are intelligent kids who still have a lot to achieve in life, no matter the turbulence they have faced so far.

Inevitably, the question of gadgets and social media came up in the conversation, to which Mohan stated bluntly that she sees "no business for a 10-year-old child to be on social media, or to have a phone of their own. My kids, who are 12 and eight, are not on social media."

Mohan believes that the further the introduction of technology and gadgets to children can be delayed,

Today, a 20-year-old will have thousands of friends on social media, but only two in real life!...

At 15 or 16, girls may not be popular if they have not lost their virginity, as engaging in sex at that age is considered to be the 'cool' thing to do.

— Jyotsna Mohan Bhargava



This is an important issue which needs to be discussed at length. This process of carefully developing the child will cause all other stages of human development to happen earlier and may also impact the books and literature on this subject.

— Artinder Sandhu

Looking forward to reading the book now and recommending it to all family youngsters and all those who have just become parents so that they don't ignore anything. It will give them the insight to encounter and tackle any situation, thus building a great relationship with their children without hurting the children or themselves.

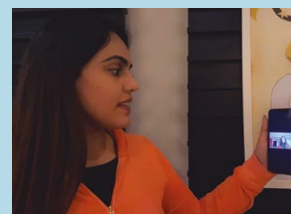
— Ina Singh

Jyotsna has revealed in a very simple and interesting manner that parenting is not all that easy these days with all the right — and wrong — knowledge easily available to children. Parents have to have the eyes of a hawk! I think this book is a must-read for every parent.

— Neeru Gupta

I just wanted to reach out and say a big thank you for conducting this amazing session! I found it extremely beneficial and enlightening. I feel that I am in a far better position to tackle any upcoming teen issues after listening to this conversation between Nidhi Razdan with Jyotsna Mohan.

— Suruchi Savlani



Thank you so much **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** and Phulkari — Women of Amritsar for always organising wonderful sessions. It was informative and a real eye-opener!

— Priyanka Goyal

The session was crisp and interesting. The speakers did justice to all the aspects of adolescent issues and problem behaviours. I will definitely read the book.

— Rupam Oberoi

What an insightful session! So many takeaways for every parent. It has tempted me to read her book.

— Kanika Mehra

What an amazing session! It was an eye-opener, and we should have more sessions like these. It makes us more aware of everything happening around us! I will definitely read the book

— Ruby Swani

the better. To prove her point, she shared the story of a boy who had not been given a phone by his parents till he was 16, even after which he only had a normal phone. Though there was peer pressure on the child, his parents did not cave in, and the boy admitted to being grateful for not having a smartphone, as it allowed him to pursue other hobbies.

Both Mohan and Razdan emphasised that children need attention, love, and care. They must be given other things to do so that they do not spend all their time on the internet, smart devices, or television. The creative side of the child usually blossoms when they do not have a gadget in their hands.

Mohan further observed how the latest generation of teenagers has come to swear by a new set of mores and social customs. "Today, a 20-year-old will have thousands of friends on social media, but only two in real life!... At 15 or 16, girls may not be popular if they have not lost their virginity, as engaging in sex at that age is considered to be the 'cool' thing to do."

Mohan also suggested a potential solution for dealing with teenage issues, especially around sex, by taking a cue from the United States. "The US has figured out that they can tackle teen pregnancy, so girls there are allowed to go to the school pharmacy and ask for the 'morning

after pill'. In India, there would be a furore if a school girl walks into a pharmacy for pills," said Mohan, citing the need to get rid of societal stigma.

The final part of the discussion concerned the period of lockdown triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, and how social media consumption has shot up even more with everyone cooped up inside their homes. Mohan took the opportunity to urge parents to moderate their own use of social media, so that their children cannot mimic them and spend more time online. The instructions of cyber-crime committees warning children against talking to strangers virtually and advising parents to supervise the online behaviour of their kids (without being unnecessarily intrusive) were also highlighted.

Ultimately, both Mohan and Razdan agreed that the key to prevent more stories of the kind featured in *Stoned*, *Shamed*, *Depressed* is transparency and proper, two-way communication between parents and their children. The more children can open up to their parents, the less will be the cases of children taking the wrong track.

At the end of the conversation, **Ehsaas** Woman of Faridabad, Shweta Agarwal, thanked both the speakers for an enriching and empathetic discussion.

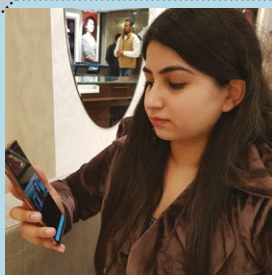
This session of Kitaab is held in association with Phulkari — Women of Amritsar

A wonderful session that is extremely relevant to the issues that parents and schools are grappling with today. Parenting is so different these days as compared to what most of us experienced. Jyotsna Mohan shared some very practical tips on how parents can interact with their children to bridge the communication gap.

— Kirandeep Kaur

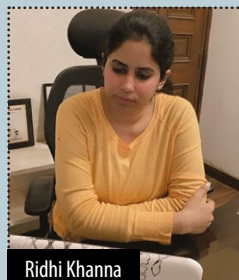


Deepti Puar



The webinar dealt with some very relevant yet less discussed topics about millennials. I thoroughly enjoyed attending it and related to many points with my own formative years.

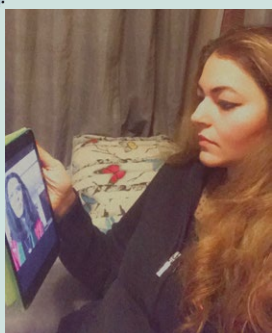
— Dr Savneet Rattan



Ridhi Khanna

Thank you so much **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** and *Phulkari* for tackling new-age parenting problems. An eye-opener of a session!

— Pankaj Bhatia

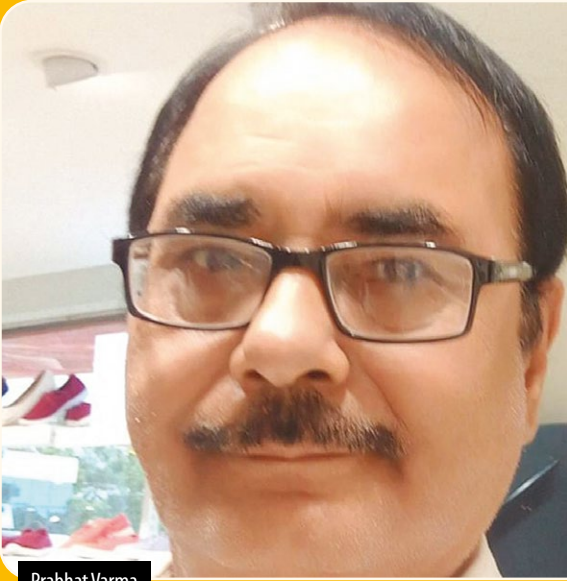


A very empowering session for us mothers, as the majority of us had previously succumbed in our quest to limit the use of social media. If Jyotsna Mohan can do it, why not us? I'm certainly inspired by her notions and steadfastness. I liked the way she answered my queries.

— Tinaa Bhinder

I have attended similar sessions before, but this one was by far the most useful and extremely thought-provoking. I found it very helpful and I have received some tools that I will implement. Thank you for organising it and a very special thanks to the great speakers!

— Sakshi Mehra

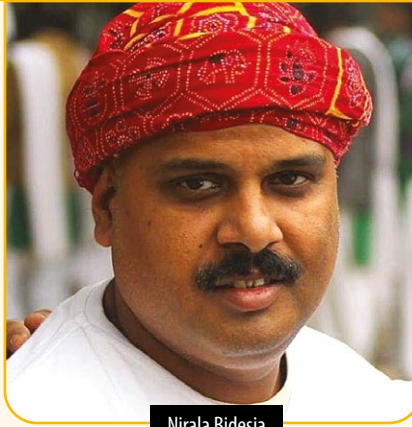


Prabhat Varma

मगही हर भाषा का मूल, लोग जागरूक हुए हैं: प्रभात वर्मा

आखर बिहार में इस बार 'मगही' भाषा पर बात हुई। अतिथि वक्ता थे लेखक, फिल्म निर्देशक प्रभात वर्मा। स्वागत एवं धन्यवाद मसि इस की निदेशिका आराधना प्रधान ने किया। संवाद का दायित्व निराला बिदेसिया ने उठाया। बिदेसिया ने मगही में इलाकावार बदलाव की बात उठाई, तो वर्मा का उत्तर था, "भाषा की बातें काफी बड़ी हैं। मगही भाषा में भाव बहुत है।" उन्होंने बताया कि मां के पेट से जन्म लेने के बाद मैंने जो बात सीखी, वह मगही थी। बिदेसिया के यह पूछने पर की आपने मगही सिनेमा और मगही साहित्य में इतना काम किया है, पर आपको लोगों का सहयोग कितना मिला? वर्मा का उत्तर था, "मैं 1980 से मगही भाषा को संविधान की अष्टम अनुसूची में शामिल कराने के लिए संघर्षरत हूँ। हमें यह ध्यान रखना होगा कि सम्पर्क भाषा हिंदी तेजी से मगध क्षेत्र में अब मगही का स्थान ले रही है। लोग घरों में मगही बोलते-बोलते हिंदी और अंग्रेजी की तरफ बढ़ने लगे। 'सामागधी मूल भाषा' यानी मगही हर भाषा के मूल में है। पर अब लोग अपनी भाषा को लेकर धीरे-धीरे जागरूक हुए हैं और उसे बढ़ावा देने में रुचि ले रहे हैं। इस दिशा में प्रवासी लोगों की भूमिका महत्वपूर्ण है। इस इलाके के जो लोग विदेश में बसे हुए उनका मगही भाषा से लगाव गहराता जा रहा है।"

वर्मा का कहना था कि यह कहना गलत है कि मगही में कुछ काम नहीं हो रहा है। मैं मगही को लेकर जिस संकल्प के साथ आगे



Nirala Bidesia

बढ़ रहा था, उसे आगे बढ़ता देख मुझे बहुत खुशी मिलती है। बिहार एक ऐसा राज्य है, जहां पांच भाषाएं बोली जाती हैं। अंगिका, बजिका, मगही, मैथिली, भोजपुरी में बात होती है। उन्होंने दावा किया कि पटना में मगही भाषा में बात होती है। बिदेसिया के इस सवाल पर कि मगही के साहित्यकारों के नाम पर कुछ नहीं हो रहा, वर्मा ने जोर देकर इनकार किया। उन्होंने कहा कि मगही के साहित्यकारों को पूरे राज्य में बहुत मान

है। कोई मगही साहित्यकारों को नकार नहीं रहा। वर्मा ने कहा कि मगध क्षेत्र की एक बेहद लोकप्रिय भाषा है, और स्थानीय लोगों की जुबान पर भी है। इस भाषा में पुस्तकें भी लिखी जा रही हैं। इसलिए जरूरी यह है कि मगही में हुए काम को देखा जाए। हमें यह ध्यान रखना होगा कि जिनकी मातृभाषा मगही है, वे न केवल मगही बोलें पर उस पर गर्व भी करें। इस चर्चा में मगही के मानसम्मान, भाषा, साहित्यकारों, रचनाकर्म, नई पीढ़ी, नई तकनीक के साथ मगही भाषा साहित्य के इतिहास पर बात की गई। वर्मा ने मगही भाषा में बनाई अपनी फिल्म "विधना नाच नाचावे" के विषय पर भी बात रखी।

आखर बिहार के आयोजक प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन एवं मसि इंक थे, प्रस्तुतकर्ता श्री सीमेंट

Disability Must Not Deny Dreams



"A hero is an ordinary individual who finds the strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles."

— Christopher Reeve

Obstacles, unfortunately, are an inevitability of life. For some, obstacles may manifest in terms of physical infirmities, for some in terms of mental disorders, compounded in both cases by discriminatory structures that deny equality and justice. To be disabled, therefore, is no pronouncement on character; it is, instead, an affirmation that life is harsh and misfortune can be circumstantial.

To be disabled, however, does not constitute a denial to dream.

The observance of the International Day of Disabled Persons or the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) was initiated by the United Nations in 1992 in order to ignite the power to dream big for those who start the process of realising their dreams at a considerable disadvantage.

Celebrated on December 3, the IDPD intends to promote a comprehensive understanding of disability

issues and generate support for the dignity, rights, and well being of persons with disabilities. It seeks to amplify awareness so as to allow integration of persons with disabilities in all aspects of political, social, and cultural life.

Each year, the United Nations selects a specific theme to shed light on a particular form of disability that demands greater recognition. Over time, these themes have addressed a range of issues, from technological access to Sustainable Development Goals, from empowering marginalised voices to fixing societal inequities, in a bid to highlight the ways in which disabilities are entrenched or exacerbated, and the solutions for the same.

For 2020, the agenda was "Building Back Better: Toward a Disability-inclusive, Accessible and Sustainable Post-COVID-19 World". Acknowledging the challenges faced by the planet in light of the global pandemic, UN Secretary-General António Guterres observed, "As the world recovers from the pandemic, we must ensure that the aspirations and rights of persons with disabilities are included and accounted for in an inclusive, accessible and

ARTWORK BY
SUDIPTA KUNDU

sustainable post-COVID-19 world. This vision will only be achieved through active consultation with persons with disabilities and their representative organisations."

The 2020 IDPD celebrations included representatives of UN member states, UN offices, organisations of persons with disabilities, civil society and the private sector taking stock of progress in "building back better," including addressing the global policy framework on disability-inclusive development newly adopted by the General Assembly Third Committee.

Around the world, some one billion people are estimated to be suffering from various kinds of disabilities, with a little more than two percent of India's population among them. Disability inclusion, therefore, is not merely a component of human rights, but is imperative for sustainable development, peace and security. To acknowledge and work towards the amelioration of disabilities not only provides justice but involves an investment in a common future, whose fruits can be shared by one and all.

Building on many decades of the UN's work in the field

of disability, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) — adopted in 2006 — has further advanced the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other international development frameworks, such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, the New Urban Agenda, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development.

Prabha Khaitan Foundation has been unstinted in its support for greater awareness and empowerment on the matter of disability issues and its concomitant concerns. It is our firm belief that the stigma around disabilities must be eliminated at the earliest in order to create an environment across society where persons with disabilities do not face any embarrassment or indignity for their impediments.

It is only when we embrace persons with disabilities as equal participants in our civilisational progress that we can truly unlock the potential of human compassion and collaboration.

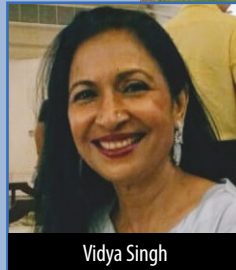
Dunnottar: An Enchanted Cottage In The Woods

Day 1

Driving up to Kodaikanal from Chennai was an absolute pleasure, as the National Highway is just amazing and the vistas of green on either side of the road were just perfect and so soothing to the eyes. Tamil Nadu has had good rain this year, the earth has been well soaked and the entire countryside has burst into myriad shades of green. The landscape in India is so diverse and here in Tamil Nadu, we have the advantage of being a fertile region and all that it needed was the rain to bring nature back to life.

We made good time with a couple of stops for chai and drove on towards Palani Hills that we could see silhouetted in the distance. As we neared the foothills and began to climb Ghat Road, I got a feeling of coming home. The forests blanket the hills all around us and are lush and green after the past month of rain. Manjalar Dam that we can see in the valley below us, is brim-full as it holds the runoff from the mountains all around. As we drive up the winding mountain road, we see a waterfall on the mountainside across the valley. Better known as Rat's Tail, today, because of all the rain, it looks more like "Bushy Tail" with all the water cascading down! Higher up, we pass "Silver Cascade", Kodai's most iconic waterfall, looking full and forceful.

A quick stop at the little Ganesha temple on the way up has been a tradition with the Biswajit family, every time they come up — to break a coconut as an offering to Lord Ganesha, to protect us on our journey and to look after us on our vacation.



Vidya Singh

There is a beautiful mist shrouding the hills as we drive up and this seems to add to the mystery of these mountains. Driving on up, we finally reach Kodai Lake and turn past Tredis Cottage, the residence of the Maharaja of Pudukkottai, and a place where our family has spent several holidays as the guest of the Late Highness, during the early 1970s. Driving around the Lake, I felt a frisson of excitement, looking around and finding a comforting familiarity as we go around each bend of the four fingered lake.

Finally, we are at the gates of Dunnottar Bungalow, the beautiful family home of Biswajit and his brother Ajit, that has been in their family since the time of Independence, when it had been purchased by their grandfather in 1947, from Lord Chamberlain. I am a guest for the next few days at this beautiful heritage home that has been so lovingly restored and designed, keeping in mind its history. The house dates back to 1895 and it has a prime location right on the lake.

Coming up the long sweeping driveway and getting out of the car, we draw a deep breath, our senses filling with the scents of the pine and eucalyptus trees that are all around us in the woods that surround the house. We are right at the door of Dunnottar Bungalow and a wonderful



surprise awaits us as we step into this dreamy English cottage.

Restored and decorated with so much charm and attention to the smallest detail, beautiful black chintz of pink cabbage roses sets the theme for the cottage and this is carried through in every part of the house. Natural teak wood has been used for the beds, cupboards, dressers, old doors and other wood has been used to create tables and other accessories. Vintage photographs have been used in a striking way to bring out the history of the house. Perfect lighting makes a huge difference and creates a welcoming warmth in the house and you feel it as soon as you step in. Dunnottar enfolds you into its embrace and you want to just melt into it and stay here.

Day 2

We awake to a near-perfect day, as there is a beautiful mist but no rain. A walk around the lake is in order.



Walking around the lake in Kodai has to be the best thing to do. This beautiful lake has a road and a walking path all around it. The hills that abut the lake are dotted with beautiful homes and well maintained gardens. The lake has four "fingers", and is a sort of centre point for the little town. It is about 5km once around and today we do two laps. We just step out of the gates of Dunnottar and we are at the lake! We had to do a bit of acrobatics, climbing onto fences, in a couple of spots where the road was waterlogged.

I love misty days and as they say "if there is a mist there is no rain". Then it is back to Dunnottar and an amazing breakfast that had been laid out for us so elegantly. Fresh juice of orange and carrot, Bircher Muesli, perfectly made and set in little individual pots, delicious sourdough bread, freshly baked to go with the scrambled eggs, with a selection of locally made jams and marmalade. There is also idlis with a chutney and some

papaya to end the meal!

The sun is gradually appearing and a sense of peace descends on us as we sit looking out through the giant picture windows at the woods surrounding the house. It is an incredibly soothing sight.

A morning "in town" means shopping for all kinds of knick knacks, most of which we don't really need. We brought back the most amazing chocolate cake and giant chocolate chip cookies. Lunch is an amazing thali meal with a wonderful selection of South Indian and Saurashtrian dishes, all recipes handed down through the generations in Biswajit's family. The highlights were the Tomato Rasam and Amti Curry made with vegetables.

In the Kodai hills, all of us experience the sense that life can slow down and we can savour every moment of it. An incredible sense of peace descends on us as we sit in Dunnottar, and suddenly life seems to be so much more

satisfying. The mist touching the tops of the trees and floating down to the lakeside gives a feeling of a gentle evening.

Another walk around the lake is just lovely, the bracing cold air is crisp with the wondrous perfume of the pine and eucalyptus. At Dunnottar, the evening is glorious with the sound of the cicadas that fills the air. Dinner is soup and chilli cheese toast a la Madras Club. There was a barbecue set up outside, and it was great fun sitting around eating all the goodies that were being grilled there! A perfect end to a lovely day.

Day 3

It is a misty morning as we step out of the gates of Dunnottar, onto the road that goes around the lake. We loop around and head up towards Upper Lake Road. We go up the hill and past the church and finally down to the lake through a steep pathway next to Bryant Park, and we

are back at the lake an hour and a half later and head back home to Dunnottar.

Breakfast today is fresh sourdough bread with cheese and marmalade, all locally sourced. We have a portion of upma and chutney and fruit to finish the meal. The sun is high up now, with blue skies peeping between white fleecy clouds. We make a visit to Satya Sai Baba Temple, Sai Shruti, a lovely experience. The soothing ambiance is so calming, we sit for a while to absorb this.

Another little shopping trip into town and after that, a lovely walk around the lake in the late evening was on the cards. A crescent moon comes up and there are stars scattered all over the sky. A great dinner of carrot and ginger soup with garlic toast, channa with a veg rice, and a raita ends the near-perfect day.

Day 4

It is a beautiful morning, with the sun coming up from behind the treetops; there is a chill in the air today as we head out of Dunnottar for our walk. There are low-hanging clouds in the sky that envelop the hills around us but the lake is clear and almost like a mirror. The wonderful perfume of the woods is always an association with Kodai in our memories.

The Kodai Lake is crystal clear and well-maintained, despite the day trippers who tend to litter! Dunnottar has probably the best location as, although we are right on the lake, the long driveway leading to the house acts as a sort of buffer.

At a point on the lake is a signboard in what may have been a garden — Nabha Garden. It forms a memorial to Maharaja Ripudaman Singh of Nabha, a great patriot and freedom fighter, who had been incarcerated here by the British as a political prisoner in 1928. He was not allowed to return to Punjab and died here in 1942, never to see an Independent India.

Another wonderful lunch is served in thalis for a large group of our friends from Chennai. A beautiful afternoon meant we were able to take the house bicycles and have some fun riding around the lake.

The weather is so perfect that we are able to set up a bonfire in the evening and sit around it chatting and enjoying the outdoors.

Day 5

We are blessed with a bright sunny day with not a cloud in the sky. A perfect day for the trek that had been planned for us. We are going to Jerry's Point, a first for all of us in Kodai! Peter, our guide, arrives at 7.30am and we set off in the car to the starting point of the trek.

Driving up the hill beyond Naidu Puram, we reach the starting point, up on the mountain, at an altitude of 7000ft. Parking our car on the side of the road, we head out, following Peter up the road and head into the forest almost immediately.

The path is carpeted with leaves, fallen branches and twigs. We need to watch our step here so we don't trip over any of these. There is thick green moss growing along the sides of the path that is beautiful to look at and so soft to touch. We step off the wider path after a while and walk through the forest, moving more carefully through the trees, all the while looking around to see if we can spot bison. We see hoof prints and droppings in some of the areas, clear evidence that they had been here not too long before us. We head up some steep sections that have us scrambling and after another hour of walking through this thick forest, we pass some pear orchards. There are old stone walls that could have been built during the British era and a couple of tiny cottages that may be used as shelters during harvest season by the pickers.

Another steep uphill walk and we are finally at Jerry's Point, the edge of the cliff where the mountain ends. After an hour and a half of walking and climbing we are stunned by the visual in front of us. It's photo time, followed by snacks and water before we head back. We go back up the mountain, through the forest and through the pear orchards, to the rough road and soon we are back at our car, reluctant to leave our forest.

Day 6

Waking to another glorious day, with clear skies and bright sunshine, is an absolute joy. The trees in the woods and the lake and the mountains beyond are all bathed in sunlight as we step out of Dunnottar for our morning walk.

The air is crisp and cold as we begin our walk. As we walk past the little Ganesha temple on the side of the lake overlooking the marsh, we see the sweetest of sights — five dogs sitting facing the temple. It even looked as if they were following social distancing norms! They were probably waiting to be fed, or as we fantasised, maybe they were awaiting a darshan from the temple.

We have friends over for breakfast at Dunnottar today and we tuck into an amazing spread of carrot and apple juice, Bircher Muesli, Pongal and Vada with Chutney and finally wholewheat bread with masala omelettes!

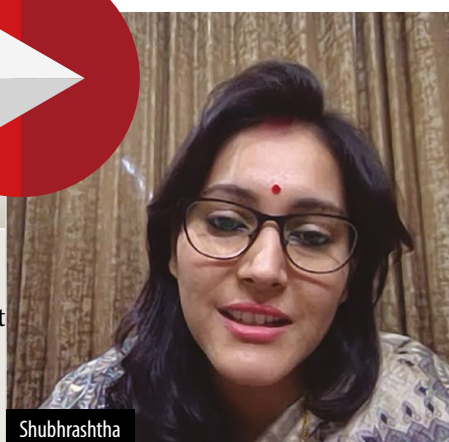
Vidya Singh

Ehsaas Woman of Chennai



Vikram Sampath

A Conversation with a Chronicler



Shubhrashtha



Niru Kumra

Biography, polarising historic figures and historical representation were the topics of discussion at a recent virtual session of **The Write Circle Oslo**, between writer Vikram Sampath and author-columnist Shubhrashtha. The session was flagged off by **Ehsaas Woman of Oslo**, Arundeeep Plaha.

Shubhrashtha started the session by describing Sampath as someone who has been "churning out books that have historical and contemporary relevance" before asking him to trace his journey as a biography writer.

Sampath, in his charming and unassuming way, started on his initial lack of interest in history. He traced his rise in curiosity about the nature of historical representation and misrepresentation to the TV show, *The Sword of Tipu Sultan*. He then explained how he was propelled to research the truth behind the Wodeyars, which gave his writing career a "serendipitous and unplanned" start with *Splendours of Royal Mysore: The Untold Story of the Wodeyars*. Attributing his success to "some grace of divine destiny," he added, "These days authors put in so much thought around the books, the marketing of the book, how to position it, how to position themselves. I did nothing of that..."

The author with three other successful books to his name, including *My Name Is Gauhar Jaan!: The Life and Times of a Musician* and *Savarkar: Echoes from a Forgotten Past, 1883-1924*, said that "one thing led to the other" and he chanced upon the subject of his second book on Gauhar Jaan. She was the first woman in the Indian subcontinent to record her voice on the gramophone in 1902 and died in Mysore as a guest of the Maharaja in 1930. That's how Sampath found out about her while

sifting through the palace archives.

The topic of his latest book, mired in controversy, was next on the cards. Speaking about Savarkar, Sampath said, "This is one man who draws such sharp reactions from those who are his proponents and opponents..." However, Sampath believes that we have come a long way from the wars between Savarkar-Nehru-Ambedkar. His whole premise of writing a book on Savarkar is that "you can love or hate a person as much as you want but there should be an openness to talk about that person without fear... you debate and discuss because that's the hallmark of a liberal democracy."

In conclusion, Sampath said, "the time has come... to ensure that there are more such forums and discussions... about the uncomfortable incidents of the past. As a society with so much diversity... Indian society will have ruptures. The idea is to acknowledge that, the idea is to heal those wounds and to move on rather than whitewash them..."

The session ended with Niru Kamra thanking Sampath and Shubhrashtha for their illuminating conversation.

The Write Circle Oslo is presented in association with Indian Norwegian Community and Ehsaas Women of Norway

In Search of the God of Music



Praveen Kumar Jha

During one of my regular pilgrimages to Maihar in Madhya Pradesh, we drove a little further towards the city of Rewa. As we find in many parts of Madhya Pradesh, a royal palace boasting of its glorious history lies in a modest (if not dilapidated) condition. This particular journey, which seemed impromptu to my doctor colleague, was pretty well contemplated. Quite as much as the musical pilgrimage to the abode of Maihar Senia Gharana, this journey was a step deeper towards the roots. The man behind the proclaimed 'Senia' suffixes — Tansen himself.

I had earlier been to Fatehpur Sikri, where a guide took me through the alleys and courts with his wonderfully rehearsed narration. When I prompted him about Tansen, he showed me a small house

(misnamed as palace) with 12 doors and some nondescript sandstone engravings. It was called 'Tansen Baradari', where Tansen actually resided according to him. I could barely believe one of the Akbar's nine wise men (Navratna) lived in this small hall with no appendage or for that matter, toilets! I assumed it might have been one of the places where Tansen did find some peace to meditate and do his *riyaaz*.

The Rewa palace was a bit more convincing as the local expert (not a guide) showed me an oblong, relatively cramped court where Tansen and other courtiers used to sit with Raja Ramachandra. To be precise, he was Ramtanu Pandey a.k.a. Tanna, who later got a honourable name, 'Taan-Sen', from Raja Vikramjit. I wouldn't

jump to the conclusion that it was because of his musical 'taan', because he was a Dhrupad singer of *Gauhaar* (or *Gobarhaar*) *bani* and the concept of 'taan' became more relevant later with *khyal* music.

Tansen probably moved from Gwalior palace to Rewa in the later years. In the palace, I was shown a small enclosure outside the court, introduced to me as the *gaddi* of Tansen, where he used to sing in open air.

Then, of course, there are various anecdotes that seem to defy science. One of them is, Tanna was born as a deaf and mute child. He was taken to a Sufi saint, Mohammed Ghous, in Gwalior. There, a saint, Swami Haridas, blew air into his mouth and ears, and he began singing under his tutelage. In support of this association is the tomb of Tansen, which lies beside the mausoleum of Mohammed



Ghous, in Gwalior. I won't go much into anecdotes as they have been told time and again. From coffee-table, illustrated books to Bollywood films, they kept glorifying such stories. As a music lover, I wouldn't attempt to wipe them out from memories.

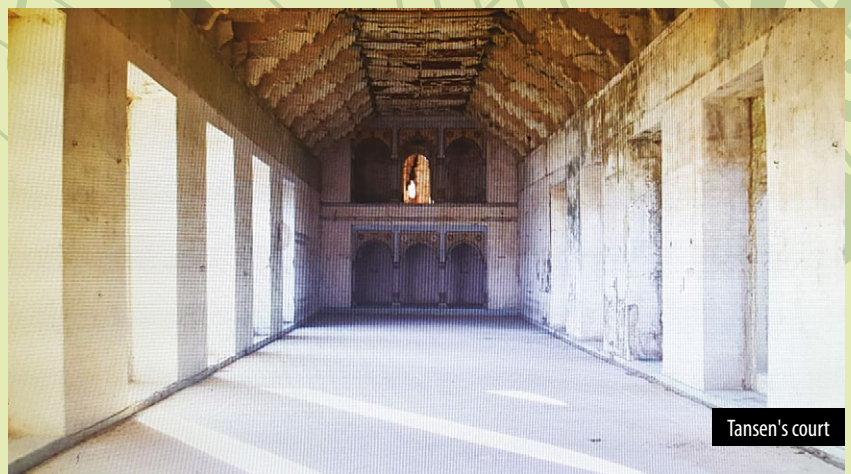
I personally see him as an innovator of Hindustani music, who brought more glamour and prestige to it. Hindustani music can be sharply divided into pre-Tansen and post-Tansen eras, and even present pupils of music continue to live under his shadow. Many schools of music (*gharanas*), vocal or instrumental, *dhrupad* or *khyal*, tend to claim themselves as direct descendants of Tansen. Senia Maihar, Senia Bangash, Senia Sitar, Jaipur as well as Darbhanga and Betiah Dhrupad *Gharanas* claim to have some distant relation with Miyan Tansen.

The 'Miyan' title was bestowed by Mughal emperor Akbar, who borrowed (or usurped) Tansen from the King of Rewa and designated him as one of the nine

gems of his court. Abul Fazl, another gem of Akbar's court, dedicates an entire chapter of his book, *Ain-e-Akbari*, to musicians. He writes about the deal with Raja Ramachandra in *Akbar-Naama*, "His Majesty was pleased and poured gifts of money into the lap of his hopes. His cap of honour was exalted above all others". Some sources mention Tansen was indeed paid two lakhs in currency to perform in Akbar's court!

When I call him an innovator, I see two striking traits in him much ahead of his time. One, he invented and improvised ragas based on Carnatic music, a concept later imitated by the likes of Pandit Ravi Shankar. Darbari Kanada, one of the most enamouring melodies, was invented by implementing Komal Dhaivat vibrato (*andolan*) in a pre-existing raga. Secondly, he patented melodies prefixed with 'Miyan', for example 'Miyan ki Malhar', 'Miyan ki Todi', 'Miyan ki Sarang', etc. All of them existed before Tansen, but he added his unique flavours to them. In modern days, his true descendants could have lived luxuriously on royalties of such patents.

Tansen also compiled his Dhrupad compositions, probably many of them learnt from Swami Haridas, in his treatise called *Kalpadruma*. I could not find the original compilation in text, but many of the Dhrupad *bandishes* of Darbhanga *Gharana*, as well as their style of *Gauhaar bani* singing, may give glimpses of it. Though we may not



find Tansen in more popular 'taans' of Miyan ki Malhaar, which still holds his name with a glorious anecdote of thunderous rains associated with it.

Praveen Kumar Jha

The author is a music enthusiast and author of the book Wah Ustad, based on Hindustani music gharanas, and is presently working as a radiologist in Norway

Counting Tigers



In 1900, although there was no precise estimation of the tiger population in the world, it's assumed that it was almost 1,00,000 (one lakh), which declined to around 3,890 in the year 2016. As per the All India Tiger Census in 2018, the tiger population was 2,967 in India.

What is a census, one may ask. In wildlife management, census is the estimation of the wildlife population of that area. And a census is necessary for the following reasons:

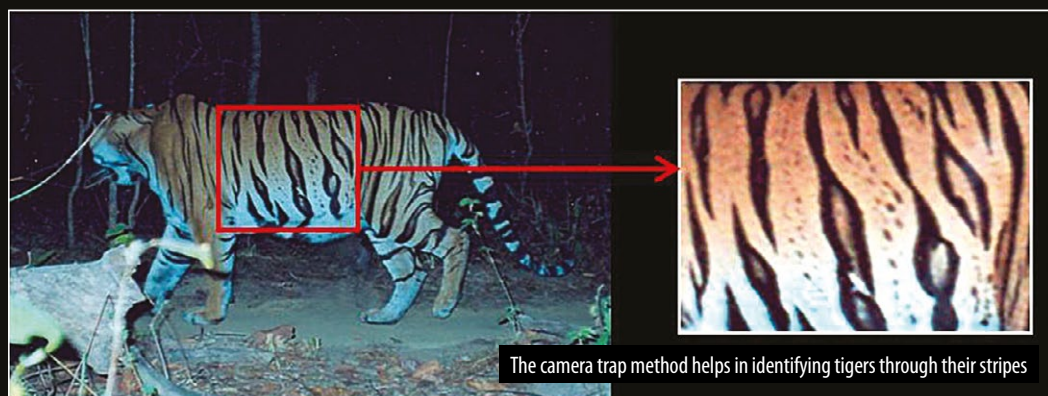
- To know about the wildlife population and ecology of any protected area, and accordingly planning wildlife management strategy.
- To keep a tab on population size at regular intervals and changes that happen time to time.
- To compare two different wildlife areas as per their populations.
- To help wildlife management take proper measures if there is any steep fall in the population of any species.

For wildlife census, the prime and most important step is to have full knowledge of identifying a wild animal. Initially, for the Tiger Monitoring (Census) system there was no fixed methodology. However, the pugmark census came into the picture in 1966. The method was introduced in wildlife management by Saroj Raj Choudhary, founder-director of Simlipal National Park (Odisha), seven years before the launch of Project Tiger (1973).

Tiger numbers were calculated based on the number of different pugmarks in different areas.

In 1973, when the nine Project Tiger areas were





The camera trap method helps in identifying tigers through their stripes



A tiger pugmark

declared, this Census was used and it was followed continuously till 2006 in all Tiger Reserves. At the moment, this Census system is conducted every four years all over India and every year in Project Tiger areas.

Below are the steps that are followed in this methodology:

- Obtaining pugmark tracing, plaster cast and gait measurements, that is, step, stride and straddle.
- While collecting the above, the location, date and substrate information is collected and individual tigers are identified and continuously monitored over a time period.
- Final count and analysis is done at the range level than at the divisional level. During the analysis, it is observed that a lot of overlap has happened in tiger movement. So, to make it more effective, it is very important to carefully observe and omit overlapping of data.

However, it was observed that the pugmark method had a lot of errors and during the late 1980s eminent wildlife scientist Dr. K. Ullas Karanth of Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) concluded that the camera trap method could be effective enough to understand the tiger population and get estimates using capture-recapture framework. In 1995, he published a scientific article where he explained that the population of tigers or any other naturally marked animals that could be individually identified should be estimated using the camera trap method and that the results obtained through this were extremely accurate.

The camera trapping method was started in 2006 and from 2006 to 2010 the sample area was a 4sqkm grid installed with one pair of cameras. In 2011-2012, National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and Wildlife Institute of India (WII) refined this method and made it more intensive by sampling it in 2sqkm grids. With a camera trap one can take photos of almost every tiger and

therefore allow for intensive monitoring.

It was observed that in the outer periphery of the reserves and in remote areas it was difficult to deploy the camera trap method as there were more chances of theft and damage to the cameras by the local population. So, in order to deal with this situation, it was better to engage the locals who were interested to work as wildlife volunteers (who were given proper training) and this helped in collecting data and help the wildlife management achieve their aim.

Use of the camera trap method not only yields tiger photos but also helps demarcate territories of tigers. In addition to tigers, this method helps in counting and monitoring other carnivorous animals such as leopards, striped hyenas and other elusive animals such as the caracal, jungle cat, civet and more.

While tiger pugmarks can differ in different soils, that is in moist and dry areas, there is no confusion in the camera trap method as stripes of any two tigers are universally different.

With camera trapping, tiger monitoring and census became more precise. But while it has been concluded that camera trapping is the best method to monitor tigers and co-predators, it can be done for only four months (two months in summer and two months in winter) in a year. And as tiger movement happens across the year, this is not sufficient. It is also a very costly affair. Therefore, pugmark monitoring is needed simultaneously for recording the beat level and range-level tiger movement all year. The time to time inspection and identification of individual tigers by camera trap also records the presence of tigers that may have dispersed to other areas.

— Daulat Singh Shaktawat

The author is an award-winning forest official who has served four decades in conserving wildlife in Rajasthan

Cultural Capitalism and the Dividends of Aesthetics

Sunita Kohli

"Beauty is vanishing from our world because we live as though it did not matter."

— Roger Scruton

An investment in beauty is imperative because beauty is an idea that encompasses other ideas, whether they are cultural, societal or a part of aesthetics. The definition of beauty is a continuum; it continues to expand. Beauty is the font of all creativity and it is intrinsically wired to desire. The experience of beauty has an immediacy, but the experience itself is a complex one. There are historical paradigms of beauty which are based on traditional values. These ideas of beauty are passed on from generation to generation and often, the popular

perception of it can become warped over time.

Beauty extends much beyond visual aesthetics. It can take many forms, like established values and cultural preferences. Different cultures have different interpretations of beauty because it is relevant to different perspectives. All traditions are subject to particular geographies, histories, levels of education, wealth and experiences.

What and whom we define as beautiful is in many ways a reflection of our own values. To invest in beauty in any form, an adequate knowledge of the past is essential, so that our present is contextual and rooted in reality. Tradition is a testimony of our past. To know it is to invest in what we, in the present, consider beautiful. It is subject to evolving values and belief systems and to incremental knowledge.

Beauty is interconnected to everything and to everyone. It is universal. There can never be a shortage of beauty because it is found everywhere in nature and is intrinsic to the human experience and human consciousness. An investment in beauty enables one to interpret the true and absolute world.

It is widely recognised that the two most beautiful expressions of the human spirit are science and spirituality. It is their beauty which should be the basis for our harmonious coexistence. When that harmony is disturbed, it spews the ugly and the discordant. Only beauty can restore the balance.

An investment in beauty can take many forms. Cultural heritage, whether tangible or intangible, is perhaps the most relevant investment. To invest in its preservation is essential. Different cultures and generations are conditioned to see beauty through their own unique lens. Therefore, the loss of cultural identity is irreplaceable. It is that identity, inherited from its past generations, that represents its particular traditions, histories and ethical values that form its racial memories.

For an investment in beauty it is important to recognise the essentials of cultural pluralism. It is only the recognition of multiple identities — where different traditions coexist — that contributes to the development of humane ideals. This is so true for a country like India with its syncretic culture, assimilated over millennia.



Sunita Kohli

I have always believed that beauty is not a commodity. It goes beyond the desire to possess art and artefacts. Instead, an investment in beauty should be an investment in ideas and ideals and the beauty that comes from knowledge, experiences and travel within and outside of our own borders. This is what adds to our visual vocabulary and develops in one an educated eye that creates one's own museum of the mind.

I am an interior designer, "an interpreter of dreams". My profession deals in the creation of beautiful spatial concepts and the collection of beautiful art and artefacts. But, paradoxically, that alone cannot be an investment in beauty. Beauty extends much beyond possessions. Perhaps, the beautiful aura of a space, imbued with peace and harmony, is the true investment. Beauty cannot be defined by mere ownership of the physical.

For this investment it is imperative that intergenerational and cross-cultural dialogues are strengthened. Craft skills that have been learnt over generations and that have often taught us sustainability be duly recognised and dignified. Our master craftspeople, working across different mediums, and our master-weavers must be acknowledged as "national treasures". Even a seemingly simple product, like a hand-made book, is a collective process. This investment in the cultural mind-set is the most important factor that can intellectually and morally uplift a society. This is truly an investment in beauty.

Today globalisation is the buzzword, but this is not a uniform phenomenon. It goes beyond geographies. Globalisation is the movement of ideas and values that moves across the planet and may be accepted, rejected or mutated into other ideas. It can also return to its original source and influence those value systems that were



Photograph: Sunita Kohli

A thousand lotuses are carved within the coffer of the 16th century CE main prayer hall of the Jami Masjid, in the 7th century CE World Heritage Site of Champaner – Pavagadh, an earlier capital of Gujarat. These lotuses, carved by Hindu craftsmen for an Islamic mosque, are a living testament to the syncretic culture of India's great civilizational diversity. (From 'Kala', Second Edition, for Jaquar 2020)

the essential dynamics of beauty, as understood in that part of the world. I personally think that homogenisation goes against the tenets of true beauty.

This does not imply that there should not be any critical thinking and comparative studies. These are essential to intellectual growth and for the fermentation of new ideas. For this, a good education is essential — an education based on understanding, acceptance and of listening to the other. This alone prevents societies from becoming insular, and instead teaches us to build bridges and to engage in dialogues. Education is an essential investment in the appreciation of beauty. It opens the windows of our

minds to newer perspectives and helps us to evaluate the nuances of different interpretations. Shared knowledge is a value that always bears collective fruition. Today it is increasingly important to understand different transcultural perspectives. Digital platforms steadily impact our daily lives. Therein lies the value of a good education. It can help us self-evaluate and draw correct comparisons with other cultures. Through it we can mutually learn from each other, while retaining the

essence of our own way of life. This is so true in a profession like mine.

We have been a country that was hugely impacted by our own recent past history of colonisation whereby we had largely and mentally rejected our own great traditions of art and architecture. This was the premise of Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism*, where he argued that the coloniser not only colonised us in geographical terms but also colonised our brains. As designers and architects, it is only now, in the past few decades after the liberalisation of the early 1990s, that

An investment in beauty is an investment in self and self-awareness from which, logically, comes selflessness and our humanism. Culture gives us the ability to reflect on ourselves. This is what makes us rational and ethically committed people. Only through culture can we perceive values and make choices

we have developed a renewed self-confidence in our own heritage and realised and given cognisance to the beauty of our own indigenous art and architectural forms. We are now proudly establishing our own Indian identity and celebrating "the vernacular", without its pejorative connotations.

Leonardo Bonacci (Fibonacci) of the 12th century CE believed that calculation was an art form which was a "marvelous thing of beauty". He considered appealing the art of calculation, made possible with Hindu-Arabic numerals, because their use facilitated "the creation of harmonious, orderly and proportionate dimensions." This 'Golden Ratio' is a unique mathematical relationship. Some architectural examples, among many, are the Taj Mahal in Agra, the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris, the Parthenon in Athens and the Pyramids of Giza in Cairo. The 'Fibonacci Series' was also extensively used by iconic designers like Carlo Scarpa and is actively used today by many contemporary architects. Of course, the 'Golden Ratio' is inherent in Nature, in the form of flower petals, pinecones, tree branches, sea shells, spiral galaxies, et al. It is well known that Antoni Gaudi designed his iconic spiral staircase in Barcelona inspired by the spirals found in the cross-section of a Nautilus shell. As he famously stated, "Nothing is art if it doesn't come from Nature. The straight line belongs to men, the curved one to God"; and that "Nothing is invented, for it's written in Nature first."

In India 'Vastu-Kala', or the science of architecture, was introduced in the 1st century CE, to create harmony between man and the elements. This led to the creation of beauty, such as seen in many Hindu and Buddhist temples like the Meenakshi Temple in Madurai and the Shiva Temple in Badami. Vastu-Kala was also used in the construction of the temples in Angkor Wat in Cambodia.

Beauty is all-pervasive and its effects can be intoxicating and emotive. When beauty registers in the motor nuclei of our brains, it leads to the release of the hormone serotonin that creates happiness and a sensation of positivity. Indian culture has, for millennia, understood the importance of beauty and the importance of engaging all the five senses in a single act of appreciation. For instance, in dozens of Rajput and Mughal miniatures, we see noblemen holding a flower. That was not considered

effete but was illustrative of an involvement of the olfactory senses, appreciating the beauty of scent and its effect on our mental well-being.

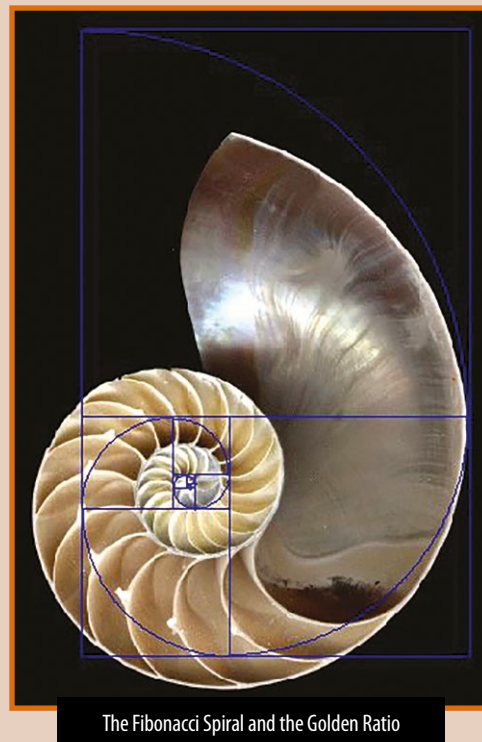
India is an excellent example of historical interculturality that came into India through the various Silk Routes and Spice Routes. These interactions had a huge influence on Indian art, architecture and cuisine, to name only a few disciplines. They also contributed to the richness and diversity of India's gene pool. An example of this can be seen in the Mathura Museum, in the exquisite Gandhara sculptures of the Kushan Period dating from the 1st to the 5th century CE; and the superb architecture and arts of the Mughals. Both are examples of deeply assimilated art forms that became distinctly Indian in their identity. In South India, the art and architecture of

various dynasties was also impacted and influenced by the cultures of other parts of our large subcontinent and by the international trade of those times. The result of this interconnectedness is the beauty inherent in the regional diversity in India, across all tangible and intangible forms of art.

India has also had a great tradition of orally transmitted knowledge. For example, the narratives in our great epics, in their many forms, are known across the length and breadth of this country, by both literate and illiterate people. The same is true of many crafts traditions. An investment in the beauty of sustaining such cultural art forms is important. These represent the "living heritage" of many communities throughout India.

An investment in beauty is an investment in self and self-awareness from which, logically, comes selflessness and our humanism. Culture gives us the ability to reflect on ourselves. This is what makes us rational and ethically committed people. Only through culture can we perceive values and make choices. Through it we are able to express ourselves, become aware of ourselves and question ourselves about the meaning of our own existence and our role on the planet which should ideally be the service of our fellow human beings.

We must invest to keep intact the beauty of our multiple identities. To quote Dostoevsky from *The Idiot*, "Beauty will save the world".



The Fibonacci Spiral and the Golden Ratio

Sunita Kohli is an Indian author, interior designer, architectural restorer and furniture manufacturer

Earlier published in Open Magazine

Spreading Christmas Cheer

Santa comes in all shapes, sizes and forms, and for a group of children, some with special needs and some economically challenged, he came early in the form of Prayas, an associate with **Education for All**. Prayas organised pre-Christmas celebrations for the children on December 14 and 20 at Eleven Bullets Club playground in Kolkata.

Santa's sack contained winter clothes, food packets, sanitisers, masks, colour pencils and more that was distributed among the kids. The children also had a gala time singing, dancing and reciting poetry for the gathered audience, including a dance presentation on *Alo amar alo* that kicked off the celebrations. Actor Joy Mukherjee was a special guest at the event.



IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Guests	Events
Nasreen Munni Kabir	Tête-à-tea
Ananth Narayan Mahadevan	The Write Circle Faridabad & Meerut
Seema Anand	The Write Circle Amritsar
Deepak Ramola	Kalam Mumbai
Siddharth Dhanvant Shanghi	The Write Circle Jaipur
Divya Prakash Dubey	Kalam Jaipur
Anuradha Beniwal	Kalam Nagpur, Udaipur & Ajmer
Vikram Sampath	The Write Circle Birmingham & Oxford
Shilpi Jha	Kalam Gurugram
Manoj Muntashir & Yatindra Mishra	Ehsaas-e-Zindagi
Vishnu Vishwas	Aakhar Jaipur
Ashutosh	Kalam Patna & Ranchi
Koral Dasgupta	The Write Circle Raipur
Nitin Gadkari	The Foundation's website launch
Pradipt Kumar Mishra	Aakhar Bhubaneswar
Prem Prakash & S. Jaishankar	Kitaab book launch
Meghnad Desai & Montek Singh Ahluwalia	Kitaab book launch
Ankita Jain	Kalam London
Anshu Harsh	Kalam New York
Kapil Dev	Ek Mulakat Vishesh
Khalid Jawed	Lafz Jodhpur
Christmas Carnival 2020	Education For All



Ananth Narayan Mahadevan



Ankita Jain



Anshu Harsh



Anuradha Beniwal



Ashutosh



Deepak Ramola



Divya Prakash Dubey



Kapil Dev



Khalid Jawed



Koral Dasgupta



Manoj Muntashir



Yatindra Mishra



Montek Singh Ahluwalia



Nasreen Munni Kabir



Nitin Gadkari



Meghnad Desai



Prem Prakash



S. Jaishankar



Seema Anand



Shilpi Jha



Siddharth Dhanvant Shanghi



Vikram Sampath



Vishnu Vishwas



Pradipt Kumar Mishra

REACH US AT

Address: 1A Camac Court, 25B Camac Street, Kolkata - 700 016, West Bengal, India

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

✉ newsletter@pkfoundation.org 📧 @FoundationPK 📧 @PrabhaKhaitanFoundation 📧 @prabhakhaitanfoundation

For private circulation only