



Q4 | FY 2025-26

Prabha

प्रभा

The Prabha Khaitan Foundation Chronicle



— ECHOES OF NORTH-EAST —

From poetry inspired by rivers and hills to conversations on identity and belonging, Echoes of North-East celebrated the richness of the region's literary landscape. This issue of Prabha revisits its memorable voices and ideas.

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MANISHA JAIN

Honorary Chief Operating Officer
Prabha Khaitan Foundation

EXPANDING HORIZONS TOGETHER

As we turn the pages of this substantial edition, we look back at a quarter particularly rich in conversations, collaborations, and cultural discovery. Across cities, disciplines, and generations, the Foundation continued its endeavour to create meaningful platforms where literature, music, ideas, and heritage could converge in celebration of India's extraordinary diversity.

This quarter holds special significance for another reason. It marks a period of deepening engagement with the North-East, a region whose literary traditions, artistic expressions, and intellectual contributions deserve far greater visibility in the national discourse. Through our landmark festival **Echoes of North-East** in Guwahati, the literary festival **Ramayana – Epic of All Epics** in Dibrugarh, and an expanding footprint of **Aakhar, Kitaab, Kalam**, and **The Write Circle** across Guwahati, Shillong, Dibrugarh, Aizawl, and Dimapur, we witnessed overwhelming enthusiasm for dialogue, storytelling, and cultural exchange.

The North-East was not merely a destination on our calendar; it emerged as a vibrant source of ideas, voices, and perspectives that enriched the Foundation's journey. It is therefore especially fitting that this edition is guest-edited by Esha Dutta, Honorary Convenor of North-East Affairs and **Ehsaas** Woman of Kolkata, whose commitment and vision have played a pivotal role in strengthening our presence across the region.

Alongside these initiatives, the quarter also celebrated music through Rakesh Chaurasia's mesmerising flute recitals across Chennai, Mumbai, and Hyderabad; literature through dozens of engaging author conversations across India; culinary diplomacy through **Rendezvous – The Culinary Chronicles**; and the colours of spring through Phagun Ke Rang, Vasant Utsav, and our annual Holi celebrations.

At its heart, every initiative featured in these pages reaffirms a simple belief: conversations matter. They build understanding, preserve heritage, challenge assumptions, and bring people together across boundaries of geography, language, and experience.

As you explore this edition, we invite you to journey through these moments of learning, celebration, and connection. May these stories inspire new conversations, fresh perspectives, and a renewed appreciation for the many cultures that together shape the idea of India.

Manisha Jain

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors. They do not reflect the opinions or views of the Foundation or its members.



REFLECTIONS FROM THE NORTH-EAST

This edition holds a special place in my heart.

Over the past few months, the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** has witnessed remarkable growth across the North-East, a region whose literary, cultural, and artistic richness continues to inspire and amaze us. From Guwahati, Shillong, Dibrugarh, Aizawl, and Dimapur to conversations that brought together authors, scholars, artists, and audiences, we have been privileged to create platforms that celebrate diverse voices and meaningful dialogue.

The quarter was marked by several memorable milestones, including **Echoes of North-East** in Guwahati and **Ramayana – Epic of All Epics** in Dibrugarh, alongside an array of literary gatherings, musical performances, cultural festivals, and intellectual exchanges across the country. What stood out most was the enthusiasm with which communities came together to share stories, ideas, and experiences.

As someone closely associated with the Foundation's work in the region, it has been deeply encouraging to witness the growing participation of writers, readers, artists, and cultural practitioners from the North-East. Their perspectives enrich our collective understanding of India's cultural landscape and remind us of the importance of building bridges through conversation and creativity.

As you journey through these pages, I hope you discover not only the events we hosted, but also the spirit that connects them—a belief in the power of culture, literature, and dialogue to bring people together.

Happy reading.

- ESHA DUTTA

Honorary Convenor – North-East Affairs
Ehsaas Woman of Kolkata

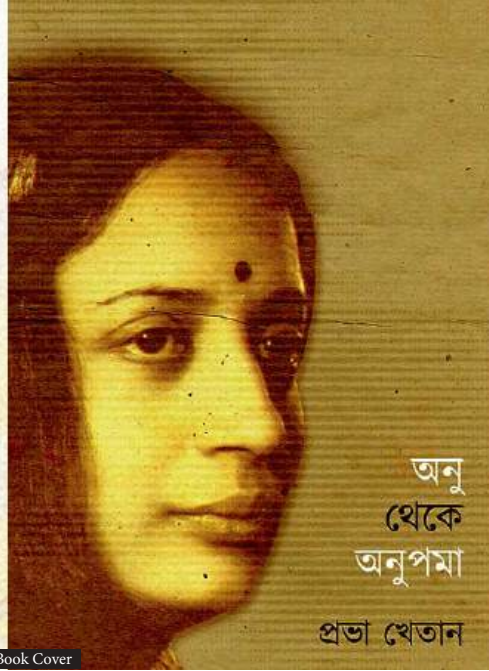
SNAPSHOTS

BOOK LAUNCH: ANU THEKE ANUPAMA

The launch of *Anu Theke Anupama* at the 49th International Kolkata Book Fair brought together authors, readers, and literary enthusiasts in a celebration of Prabha Khaitan's enduring literary legacy.



Tridib Kumar Chattopadhyay



Book Cover



Priti Sanyal



Sanjukta Bandyopadhyay



Saiful Islam

INDO-ISRAEL LITERARY DIALOGUE

The Indo-Israel Literary Dialogue fostered meaningful cross-cultural exchange as Israeli and Indian literary voices came together to explore the power of literature in building understanding across borders.



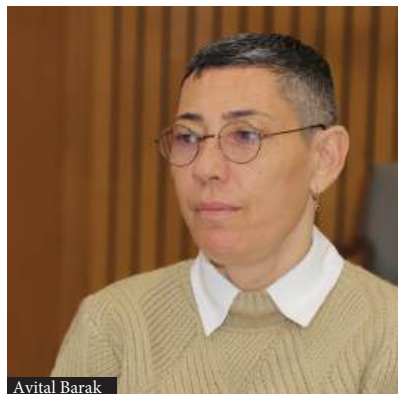
Iris Argaman



Yaara Shehori



Sigalit Gelfand



Avital Barak



K. Sreenivasarao



Anju Ranjan

SNAPSHOTS

DIBRUGARH

Snippets from **Aakhar** Dibrugarh with Assamese Poetess Karabi Deka Hazarika in conversation with Satyakam Borthakur. The session was presented by Oil India Limited, in association with Dibrugarh University and with support of the **Ehsaas** Women of Dibrugarh.



Karabi Deka Hazarika



Satyakam Borthakur



Trishna Deorah



Dhrubajyoti Borah & Karabi Deka Hazarika

SHILLONG

Glimpses from **Aakhar** Shillong with eminent author Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih in conversation with Ellerine Diengdoh. The session was presented by Oil India Limited, in association with Hospitality Partner Vivanta Shillong and with support of the **Ehsaas** Women of Shillong.



Conversation



Narayan Jhunjhunwala & Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih



Jyoti Agarwal & Pooja Goenka

AIZAWL

Highlights from **Aakhar** Aizawl with author C. Lalawmpuia Vanchiau, an author of contemporary Mizo literature, was in conversation with Lalremruati Ngente. The session was presented by Oil India Limited in association with Hospitality Partner, Folkland, and with support of the **Ehsaas** Women of Aizawl.



Amela Lalremdiki, C. Lalawmpuia Vanchiau & Sulo Ashley Lalremruati



Lalrinsangi Nghinglova & C. Lalawmpuia Vanchiau



Conversation

JAIPUR

An engaging session of **Sahyog** in Jaipur with author Anurag Minus Verma in conversation with Tusharika Singh, exploring themes from his book *The Great Indian Brain Rot*, offering sharp insights into the complexities of life in algorithm-driven India. The session was presented in association with Spark PR.



Jagdeep Singh & Anurag Minus Verma



Anurag Minus Verma & Tusharika Singh



Anurag Minus Verma



Book Signing

Echoes of North-East Celebrates Literature, Identity, and Cultural Memory in Guwahati



Inauguration

The vibrant literary and cultural landscape of North-East India took centre stage at *Echoes of North-East*, a two-day regional literature festival curated by the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** and supported by Oil India Limited in association with Gauhati University. Held at the Gauhati University campus, the festival brought together writers, poets, scholars, and readers in a celebration of the region's diverse voices, histories, and creative traditions.

Conceived as a platform to foster meaningful dialogue and highlight the richness of North-Eastern literature, the festival explored themes of language, identity, memory, ecology, and storytelling through a thoughtfully curated series of discussions, readings, and poetry sessions. Over two days, participants engaged with ideas that reflected both the uniqueness of the region and its connections to broader literary and cultural conversations.

The inaugural session set the tone for a festival rooted in reflection, exchange, and discovery. Subsequent discussions examined a range of subjects central to the literary fabric of the North-East. Sessions such as *Women's Voices in North-Eastern Indian Literature*, *North-East Literature in English*, and *Necessity of Mother Tongue* explored questions of representation, linguistic diversity, and the role of literature in preserving cultural identities.

Poetry remained a powerful presence throughout the festival. Sessions including *Hills That Speak: Nature as Voice in North-East Poetry* and *Rivers, Rain, and Roots: Ecology in North-Eastern Poems* brought together poets and audiences in conversations about landscape, belonging, and environmental consciousness. Through verse and discussion, participants reflected on the profound relationship between the people of the region and the natural world that shapes their lives and stories.

The second day continued the exploration of literary expression and cultural memory through sessions such as *My Literary Inspirations*, *Telling Our Own Stories: Voices from the North-East*, and *Myth, Legend, and History in North-Eastern Writing*. These conversations underscored the importance of reclaiming narratives, documenting lived experiences, and preserving oral and written traditions for future generations. The sessions also encouraged audiences to consider how literature serves as a bridge between personal memory and collective history.

A distinguished line-up of authors, poets, and academicians enriched the festival through their insights and creative contributions. Among those who participated were Dhrubojyoti Bora, N. Kiran Kumar Singh, Dkhar Streamlet, Jyotirmoy Prodhani, Satyakam Borthakur, Kairi Mog Choudhary, and Ponung Ering Angu, alongside several other noted scholars and literary voices from across the region. Their readings, presentations, and discussions offered audiences a deeper understanding of the literary traditions and contemporary concerns of North-East India.

Throughout the festival, students, scholars, and literature enthusiasts actively engaged with speakers, creating an atmosphere of curiosity and exchange. The enthusiasm of the audiences reflected a growing interest in regional literature and the stories that emerge from diverse cultural landscapes.



Performance



Anindita Chatterjee, Utpal Sarma, Nani Gopal Mahanta, Dhrubajyoti Bora, Pradip Jyoti Mahanta and K Sreenivasarao

As the festival concluded, it reaffirmed the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation's** belief in literature as a powerful medium for dialogue, empathy, and social connection. More importantly, *Echoes of North-East* highlighted the importance of bringing regional voices into wider literary conversations, ensuring that the stories, languages, and perspectives of the North-East continue to receive the attention and appreciation they deserve.

Echoes of North-East was organized with the support of Oil India Limited; and in association with Gauhati University



Q & A



Inaugural Performance



Assam Japi Hat



Lamp Lighting



Audience



Rashmi Narzary, Anuradha Sarma and Streamlet Dkhar



N Kiran Kumar Singh and Bibhash Choudhury



Anindita Chatterjee, Chetna Rathi, Ponung Ering Angu and Dhrubojyoti Bera



Anindita Chatterjee, Anjali Daimari, Dkhar Streamlet, Swarna Prabha Chainary and Kairi Mog Choudhary



Pradipta Borgahain, Anil Boro and Hridayananda Gogoi



Leena Sarma, Monikuntala Bhattacharjya, Rashmi Chaudhary



Satyakam Borthakur, Jyotirmoy Prodhani, Upen Rabha Hakacham



Sameer Tanti, Anjalee Basumatary, Bijoy Debbarma, Kishor Mohan Bhattacharya and Kshetri Rajan



Performance



Performance



Performance

Ramayana: The Epic That Continues to Inspire

The Prabha Khaitan Foundation, with the support of Oil India Limited and in association with Dibrugarh University, presented a remarkable two-day cultural and literary festival, *Ramayana – Epic of All Epics*, celebrating the timeless relevance and enduring legacy of one of the world's greatest narratives. Bringing together distinguished scholars, writers, cultural practitioners, students, and literature enthusiasts, the festival created a vibrant platform for intellectual exchange and artistic expression centred on the Ramayana's literary, philosophical, and cultural significance.

The festival opened with an inaugural session featuring an introductory address by K. Sreenivasa Rao, Senior Advisor - Art & Culture of the Foundation followed by an insightful inaugural address by noted scholar Baldev Bhai Sharma. The gathering was further enriched by the presidential address delivered by Jiten Hazarika, Vice-Chancellor of Dibrugarh University, and the presence of Manjari Mishra, Ehsaas Woman of Ayodhya who is also a member of the erstwhile royal family of Ayodhya. The formal proceedings concluded with remarks by Satyakam Borthakur.

Adding a powerful cultural dimension to the opening day was a captivating Sattriya dance performance depicting the episodes of *Sita Haran* and *Jatayu Vadh*. Through graceful movement and expressive storytelling, the performance brought alive themes of courage, sacrifice, devotion, and righteousness that lie at the heart of the epic.

The second day featured a series of engaging academic sessions exploring diverse dimensions of the Ramayana. Discussions on Regional, Folk and Tribal Ramayanas highlighted the extraordinary ways in which communities across India have adapted and enriched the epic through oral traditions and regional narratives. Sessions on the Cultural and Civilizational Impact of Ramayana and Devotion and Spirituality in Ramayana examined its profound influence on social values, literature, philosophy, and spiritual thought.

Particularly insightful was the discussion on Ramayana in North-East India: Text, Performance and Identity, which explored the epic's unique role in shaping the region's literary traditions, performing arts, and cultural identity. The concluding academic session on the Philosophical and Ethical Teachings of Ramayana reflected upon the moral and ethical frameworks embedded within the text and their continued relevance in contemporary society.

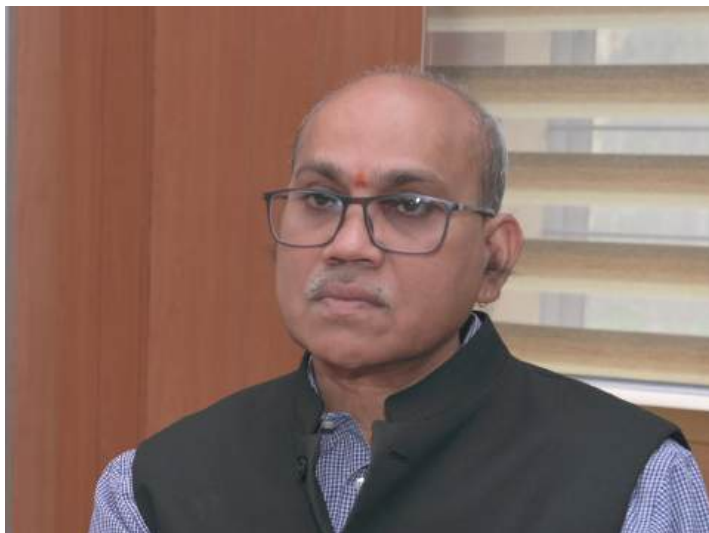
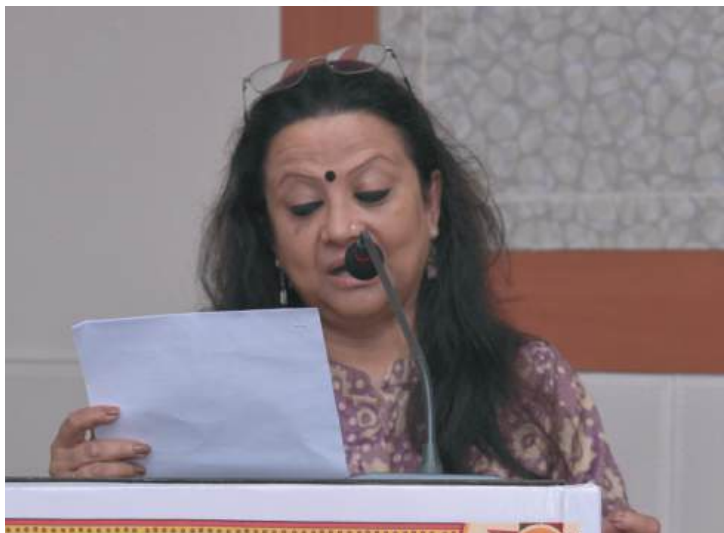
The festival concluded with a vibrant cultural presentation that celebrated the artistic legacy inspired by the Ramayana. Across two enriching days, the programme reaffirmed the epic's enduring ability to inspire dialogue, scholarship, creativity, and reflection. More than a literary celebration, *Ramayana – Epic of All Epics* emerged as a meaningful confluence of ideas that highlighted the continuing relevance of this timeless narrative in shaping culture, ethics, and collective consciousness across generations.



Trishna Deorah, Anindita Chatterjee, Manjari Mishra, Baldev Bhai Sharma, Jiten Hazarika, K. Sreenivasarao and Preeti Bagrodia









Audience

THREADS OF KINSHIP AND CONVICTION: AN EVENING WITH THE THAROORS

Shobha Tharoor Srinivasan

Smita Tharoor

Shashi Tharoor

An evening of rare warmth, wit, and emotional candour unfolded in Kolkata at **Tête-à-Tea with the Tharoors**, organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, where Dr. Shashi Tharoor, Shobha Tharoor Srinivasan, and Smita Tharoor came together for a deeply personal and engaging conversation with journalist and translator Nishtha Gautam.

The evening commenced with a gracious welcome by Shefali Rawat Agarwal, **Ehsaas** Woman of Kolkata, setting a warm and inclusive tone for the gathering; followed by an address from Nidhi Jhunjunwala, who highlighted the importance of such cultural engagements. A graceful moment of recognition ensued when Anindita Chatterjee, Executive Trustee of the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, and Esha Dutta, Honorary Convenor for North-East Affairs and **Ehsaas** Woman of Kolkata, honoured the distinguished guests with exquisite terracotta artefacts.

The conversation gently drifted into reflections on closeness despite distance. Speaking about the Tharoor siblings' enduring bond, Shashi Tharoor remarked that they had "Remained very close to each other. Thank God for modern communication and WhatsApp and the internet," he said, noting that they were "constantly in touch with each other."

As the discussion deepened, Shashi offered a touching reflection on how sibling dynamics evolve with time. He spoke movingly about how Shobha, despite being younger, became a source of nurturing for him. Having built a stable home early on in California, she became, in

his words, someone he would go to "almost in the spirit that I might have wanted to go to my mother." With gentle honesty, he observed, "She was almost like a nurturing elder sister rather than the other way around. The tables turned very quickly."

Shobha Tharoor Srinivasan, in turn, offered poignant insights into how effort and presence define familial love. Recalling the period after their father's death in 1993, she described how Shashi, then working with the United Nations, made repeated efforts to be there for her. She contrasted this with a later moment when Shashi himself was bereaved. "I got on a plane immediately and I was in Delhi within hours," she shared, explaining how she stayed for ten days, followed by Smita joining them.

When asked how much their personalities had been shaped by each other, Shashi offered a characteristically thoughtful response. Reflecting on growing up surrounded by women, he said, "I certainly think that growing up with women around me has made me from a very young age very sensitive. I never got into patriarchy, male chauvinism, misogyny that I sometimes still see around me in India."

He went on to speak candidly about his mother, dispelling any notion of her as a gentle, indulgent matriarch. "My mom was a tough cookie as a mother," he said, smiling. "She's not this gentle purring old 90-year-old. When she was younger, she was a heck of a tough mom

Nishtha Gautam

to grow up under.” This strong female presence, he noted, profoundly shaped his attitudes. “I’ve never had any difficulty either showing respect to women, talking to them, listening to them, as unfortunately too many of our young boys in India have.”

Shobha followed with an affectionate account of how her brother influenced her intellectual growth. She recounted a childhood memory she often shares with school children: “I must have been nine or ten years old. I said this new girl has come and she’s very nice, and Shashi said, ‘Nice! That is damning with faint praise.’” He urged her to use sharper language, to “use an adjective, use an adverb,” a lesson she said stayed with her for life.

Smita Tharoor offered a contrasting perspective, shaped by her

unnerved us. It stressed us out,” Shobha said frankly, recalling their mother’s anguish. Still, the family rallied around him. Shobha described flying in from California to work on his first campaign, witnessing him work from “6 in the morning till 1 in the night.” Despite fierce opposition, he won an outcome she described as “incredible.”

The Q&A session with the audience, addressed to Shashi Tharoor, playfully referenced his reputation as a “human thesaurus.” The audience member asked whether he consciously moderated his vocabulary while speaking to “simpler people.” Tharoor responded with warmth and clarity: “I’d like to think that I’m a communicator, and therefore there’s no point communicating if people don’t understand what you’re saying.”



Nidhi Jhunjunwala



Signing invites and books



Shelfali Agarwal



Felicitation of Shobha Tharoor Srinivasan by Esha Dutta



Felicitation of Shashi Tharoor by Anindita Chatterjee



Felicitation of Smita Tharoor by Anindita Chatterjee

position as the youngest. “I was nine years old when he left for university,” she said, explaining that she had spent more time with her sister than with her brother while growing up. “My sister was far more my role model in terms of aspirations.”

The discussion then shifted to Shashi Tharoor’s entry into politics. Tracing his journey from a middle-class upbringing to the United Nations, he explained how the Emergency years deeply disillusioned him. “I can’t possibly serve a government that can do this to its people,” he recalled thinking, a conviction that led him away from civil services and into an international career. His eventual return to India and plunge into electoral politics, he admitted, was driven partly by ignorance: “I left India at 19. I had never even voted, let alone seen an election up close.”

For his sisters, the decision was deeply unsettling. “It

A follow-up question asked whether Tharoor was more diplomatic at home or in Parliament. His reply was candid and disarming: “I would say I’m diplomatic at home, but with my sisters, there’s no pretence. We talk very frankly and honestly to each other. No diplomacy at all.”

As the evening drew to a close, what lingered was not the stature of the speakers but the sincerity of their bond. Bound by shared values, honest disagreement, and deep affection, the Tharoors reminded the audience that behind public lives lie private constellations of love, loyalty, and enduring conversation. The evening concluded on a warm note with a vote of thanks by **Ehsaas** Woman of Kolkata, Shelfali Rawat Agarwal.

❧ An Enchanting Evening with Rakesh Chaurasia & Group in Chennai ❧

Music has the power to transcend words, creating moments of connection that linger long after the final note has faded. Such an experience unfolded in Chennai as the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, in collaboration with ITC Hotels, presented an unforgettable evening featuring two-time Grammy Award-winning flautist Rakesh Chaurasia and his ensemble. Hosted in association with ITC Grand Chola, the programme brought together lovers of Indian classical music for a celebration of artistry, tradition, and musical excellence.

The evening began with a warm welcome from Vidya Gajapathi Raju Singh, **Ehsaas** Woman of Chennai, who greeted the audience and set the tone for an immersive cultural experience. The gathering reflected a shared appreciation for India's rich musical heritage and the enduring appeal of live performance, drawing together patrons of the arts, music enthusiasts, and members of the Foundation's extended community.

At the heart of the evening was the extraordinary musicianship of Rakesh Chaurasia, one of the world's leading bansuri maestros and a distinguished exponent of Hindustani classical music. A disciple and nephew of the legendary Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia, he has carved a unique identity for himself while carrying forward a celebrated musical legacy. Known for his ability to blend technical brilliance with emotional depth, Chaurasia's performance captivated the audience from the very first note.

Joining him on stage were Ojas Adhiya on the tabla, Vishal Dhumal on the keyboard, and Khwab D. Haria on the drums. Together, the ensemble created a compelling musical dialogue that showcased both the discipline of classical tradition and the freedom of creative improvisation. The interplay between flute, percussion, and keyboard produced moments of remarkable synergy, weaving together intricate rhythms, soaring melodies, and spontaneous exchanges that kept the audience enthralled throughout the performance.

As the concert progressed, the atmosphere in the venue became increasingly immersive. The evocative tones of the bansuri, complemented by dynamic rhythmic accompaniment and rich musical textures, created a captivating sonic landscape that resonated deeply with listeners. The performance moved effortlessly between meditative passages and energetic crescendos, demonstrating the versatility and expressive power of Indian classical music while embracing contemporary influences.

A special moment during the evening was the felicitation of Rakesh Chaurasia by Revathi Raju, **Ehsaas** Woman of Chennai, who honoured the maestro with traditional Jaipur puppets. The gesture celebrated not only his remarkable achievements in music but also the spirit of India's diverse artistic traditions.

As the evening drew to a close, the music continued to echo in the hearts and minds of those present. The spellbinding melodies, intricate rhythms, and masterful performances left a lasting impression, carrying the magic of the evening far beyond the concert hall.

*This event was organized in association with
ITC Grand Chola, Chennai*





Vidya Singh



Khwab D. Haria



Shaariq Akhtar



Ojas Adhiya



Audience



Felicitation by Revathi Raju



Vishal Dhumal



Performance

A Soulful Evening of Melody and Mastery in Mumbai

The timeless magic of Indian classical music came alive in Mumbai as **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, in association with ITC Maratha, hosted an unforgettable evening featuring Grammy Award-winning flautist Rakesh Chaurasia. The concert brought together music lovers, cultural patrons, and distinguished guests for a celebration of artistry, tradition, and musical excellence.

Widely regarded as one of the foremost exponents of the bansuri, Rakesh Chaurasia mesmerised the audience with a performance that seamlessly blended technical brilliance with profound emotional depth. His evocative renditions transformed the evening into a meditative journey, allowing listeners to experience the subtle nuances and spiritual richness of Indian classical music.

As the notes of the flute filled the elegant spaces of ITC Maratha, the audience was transported through an expansive

landscape of ragas, each unfolding with grace, sensitivity, and remarkable virtuosity. Chaurasia's mastery over the instrument was evident not only in his intricate improvisations but also in his ability to create an intimate connection with every listener in the room.

The concert reflected the shared commitment of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** and ITC Hotels towards preserving and promoting India's rich cultural heritage. Beyond being a musical performance, the evening served as a reminder of the enduring power of the arts to inspire, unite, and elevate.

The audience responded with enthusiastic appreciation, rewarding the artist with standing ovations and heartfelt applause. The memorable evening reaffirmed the Foundation's dedication to creating meaningful cultural experiences that celebrate artistic excellence while nurturing a deeper appreciation for India's classical traditions.



Rakesh Chaurasia



Ojas Adhiya



Sanjoy Das



Bhagwan Balani



Karishma Mehta



Swati Agarwal



Ketki Bhatia



Performance

An Enchanting Celebration of Classical Music in Hyderabad

Prabha Khaitan Foundation, in association with ITC Kohenur, Hyderabad, presented an evening of exceptional musical artistry with celebrated bansuri maestro Rakesh Chaurasia. The concert brought together connoisseurs of music, cultural enthusiasts, and members of the city's artistic community for a spellbinding experience rooted in India's rich classical heritage.

Renowned for his distinctive style and extraordinary command over the flute, Rakesh Chaurasia captivated the audience from the very first note. His performance showcased the expressive possibilities of the bansuri, weaving together melody, emotion, and improvisation with effortless grace. Each raga unfolded like a story, drawing listeners into a world of reflection, serenity, and wonder.

The atmosphere at ITC Kohenur was transformed into a sanctuary of sound, where music transcended language and connected audiences through a shared appreciation of beauty and tradition. Chaurasia's artistry demonstrated why he

remains one of the most respected and admired musicians of his generation, carrying forward a distinguished musical legacy while bringing his own contemporary sensibility to the classical form.

The concert underscored the importance of preserving and celebrating India's cultural traditions through meaningful artistic engagements. Through initiatives such as these, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** and ITC Hotels continue to create platforms where master artists and audiences can come together in an atmosphere of learning, appreciation, and cultural exchange.

As the evening concluded, the audience expressed its admiration through prolonged applause, acknowledging a performance that was at once technically brilliant and emotionally resonant. The concert left behind a lasting impression, reaffirming the timeless appeal of Indian classical music and its ability to inspire hearts across generations.



Rakesh Chaurasia



Ojas Adhiya



Sanjoy Das



Jitendra Taak



Mourya Boda



Performance

CELEBRATING THE SOUL OF REGIONAL LITERATURE

Aakhar is a literary initiative that celebrates the richness and diversity of India's regional languages by bringing distinguished authors and readers into meaningful dialogue. Rooted in the belief that regional literature carries the true soul of storytelling, it creates spaces to explore language, translation, cultural identity, and the lived experiences that shape literary expression. The sessions in Shillong, Guwahati, and Dibrugarh reflected this spirit through engaging conversations that highlighted the enduring relevance of regional narratives and the power of literature to foster deeper cultural understanding.

SHILLONG



Sylvanus Lamare in conversation Streamlet Dkhar at Aakhar Shillong, organized with the support of the Ehsaas Women of Shillong, in association with Oil India Limited and venue partner Vivanta Meghalaya

GUWAHATI



Kuladhar Saikia in conversation with Bitopan Borborah at Aakhar Guwahati, organized with the support of the Ehsaas Women of Guwahati, in association with Oil India Limited and venue partner Vivanta Guwahati

DIBRUGARH



Yeshe Dorjee Thongchi in conversation with Satyakam Borthakur at Aakhar Dibrugarh, organized with the support of the Ehsaas Women of Dibrugarh, in association with Oil India Limited, and Venue Partner Cygnett Inn



Geshe Dorji Damdul, Shinjini Kulkarni, Karan Singh, Murli Manohar Joshi, Jagdeep Dhankar, Pundrik Maharaj, Abha Vajpai & Kartikeya Vajpai

The Journey from Becoming to Being: Rediscovering Wholeness in a Fragmented World

An evening of rich intellectual engagement and quiet introspection unfolded in New Delhi as *The Unbecoming*, the debut novel by Kartikeya Vajpai, was formally launched under the **Kitaab** initiative of the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. The event was marked not merely by the unveiling of a book, but by a profound dialogue on life, spirituality, and public responsibility.

The book was formally unveiled in an atmosphere of distinction and intellectual gravitas, in the august presence of the Hon'ble Former Vice-President of India, Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar, alongside an illustrious panel of Guests of Honour, Padma Vibhushan Karan Singh, Padma Vibhushan Murli Manohar Joshi, Geshe Dorji Damdul, and Pundrik Maharaj. The occasion was further enriched by the presence of the author Kartikeya Vajpai, Abha Vajpai, and the moderator Shinjini Kulkarni, **Ehsaas** Woman of Noida.

A memorable address by Padma Vibhushan Karan Singh, one of India's foremost philosophers, statesmen, and thinkers, marked the session. What drew him most powerfully to *The Unbecoming*, he explained, was its engagement with a question that has defined his own life's journey: "How do you combine a public life with a spiritual life?"

Singh noted, with literary insight, that every first novel inevitably contains the author within it. "Every first novel contains the author. I have written one novel, and I am also in that novel; not under my own name but under somebody else's name," he remarked, before adding that Kartikeya, too, is present within his narrative, albeit through another identity. He described how the novel takes readers through the world of cricket and onward to

Dharamshala, culminating in what he termed "some excellent dialogue between Siddharth and the guru." These dialogues, he suggested, form the philosophical spine of the novel; quietly probing, yet deeply evocative.

Shinjini Kulkarni guided the conversation with poise, humility, and intellectual curiosity. Drawing attention to *The Unbecoming*, she highlighted its engagement with identity, self-discovery, and the shedding of labels in an age marked by social media anxieties, trolling, and cancel culture, inviting Murli Manohar Joshi to reflect on personal evolution beyond conventional education.

In a deeply reflective and intellectual address, Padma Vibhushan Murli Manohar Joshi offered a philosophical reading of *The Unbecoming*, situating the novel within the long and luminous continuum of Indian thought. Speaking with scholarly gravitas and disarming clarity, Joshi invoked the Vedantic understanding of oneness, noting that the essence of reality is not multiplicity but unity.

Joshi praised the author for undertaking an ambitious intellectual task, explaining a complex philosophical principle through a language that is accessible, contemporary, and rooted in lived experience. In an era marked by confusion between theory and practice, and by relentless questioning of purpose and identity, *The Unbecoming*, he observed, offers clarity without sermonising.

Geshe Dorji Damdul offered a deeply reflective interpretation of *The Unbecoming*, situating the novel within a universal inquiry into consciousness, identity, and the flow of human existence. He explained that the

title “unbecoming” invites reflection on the idea that, in the process of growth and success, human beings often move away from their original nature and must consciously return to it.

Using a vivid metaphor, Geshe Dorji likened the human mind to ferocious ocean waves, turbulent, restless, and opaque. “Only when the waves subside,” he reflected, “does the water regain its clarity.” In disturbed states, clarity disappears; in stillness, truth becomes visible. This, he noted, lies at the heart of the book’s philosophical message: a call to return to the source where everything is inherently complete and harmonious.

Pundrik Maharaj offered a spiritual interpretation of *The Unbecoming*, elevating the novel from a work of fiction to an experiential philosophy. He described the book not as something that was merely written, but as something that was manifested. “Everything already exists in creation,” he observed, invoking the sculptor’s vision that every stone already contains the form within, it only awaits revelation.

Drawing richly from Vedantic, Vaishnav, and Bhakti traditions, Pundrik Maharaj offered a metaphor that became the spiritual centrepiece of his address: the journey of the Ganga. From its origins in the Himalayas, the river gathers memories, minerals, lives, and histories as it flows through India, nurturing civilization, faith, and culture. Yet, he explained, the most profound moment

comes when the Ganga reaches the ocean. In that final leap, its individual identity dissolves, not into nothingness, but into completeness. “*Unbecoming* is not becoming zero; unbecoming is becoming whole,” he declared.

In a reflective and deeply personal moment during the discussion, author Kartikeya Vajpai articulated the inner inquiry that forms the philosophical core of *The Unbecoming*. He spoke candidly about his prolonged questioning of the elusive “state of flow”, a condition of heightened awareness and effortless action that often arrives unexpectedly.

This resistance to uncertainty, Vajpai suggested, is what prevents individuals from truly inhabiting the present. To embrace the moment as it is without attempting to control or anticipate it demands faith and courage. It requires a willingness to let go of the comfort of the known and to trust the unfolding of experience.

The distinguished guests and the author were felicitated with *Dokra* handicrafts, presented by the **Ehsaas** Women of Delhi. Charu Chauhan, Ehsaas Woman of Delhi conferred the honours upon Karan Singh and Murli Manohar Joshi, while Anantmala Potdar, **Ehsaas** Women of Delhi felicitated Geshe Dorji Damdul, Pundrik Maharaj, and Kartikeya Vajpai, bringing the formal proceedings to a dignified and graceful culmination.

This session of Kitaab was organized in association with Penguin Books



Charu Chauhan



Anantmala Potdar



Pundrik Maharaj



Sundeep Bhutoria & Jagdeep Dhankar



Karan Singh



Murli Manohar Joshi



Geshe Dorji Damdul



Salim Khan, Prem Prakash, Gaurapriya Pai Kane, Pramod Sawant, Shruti Juwarkar, Vaishali Joshi, Ranjith Phillipose & Vivek Batra

HISTORY AS RECKONING: A POWERFUL DIALOGUE WITH PREM PRAKASH

In a compelling celebration of history, memory, and intellectual courage, **Kitaab** session organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** in Goa witnessed the formal launch of *History That India Ignored* by eminent journalist and author Prem Prakash. The evening brought together distinguished dignitaries, literary enthusiasts for a discussion that was as thought-provoking as it was timely.

Adding to the ceremonial significance, the book was jointly unveiled by Chief Minister Pramod Sawant; author Prem Prakash; Ranjith Phillipose, Senior Vice President, IHCL- Taj Hotels; Vivek Batra, Group Cluster Manager, Taj Cidade; along with the **Ehsaas** Women of Goa. The session commenced with a gracious welcome address by Gaurapriya Pai Kane, **Ehsaas** Woman of Goa, who set the tone for an evening dedicated to reflection and rediscovery.

In his address, the Chief Minister described the occasion as “not just the release of a book,” but “a reaffirmation of the national responsibility to remember, to recognize and to restore our collective memories of those chapters of history that were either neglected or deliberately misrepresented.” Calling it “a proud moment” to inaugurate the author’s second book in Goa, he emphasized that “releasing such a book is not merely a literary event; it is an act of national service.”

Praising the author’s meticulous scholarship, he noted that the book “stands out for its commitment to evidence, documentation and intellectual honesty.” He particularly highlighted the chapters on Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, the INA’s Battle of Imphal, and Goa’s liberation struggle, observing that “if we do not record our own stories, others will interpret them for us; often incorrectly.” Concluding his remarks, the Chief Minister affirmed, “*History That India Ignored* is more than a book. It is a

reminder, a correction and an inspiration.”

The session, warmly anchored by Vaishali Joshi, **Ehsaas** Woman of Goa in conversation with the author, unfolded into an engaging dialogue that invited the audience to rethink inherited narratives.

The author began by tracing the ideological turning point of the freedom movement. “It was only in December of 1930 that complete independence became the objective of the Congress,” he reminded the audience. Before that, he explained, the demand had largely been for dominion status. “Home rule would have meant we would even today have been a dominion with the British Crown as head of India. Would you have liked it?” he asked pointedly. For him, the shift from dominion status to complete independence was not merely political; it was moral and civilizational.

“This book is a tribute to all those people who fought and said very clearly that we are a great nation. We will have our own people to run the government. We do not need a head of state sitting in England.” In that assertion lay his larger argument: that the revolutionary stream of the freedom struggle had been systematically minimized in post-independence historiography.

Reflecting on when he first sensed that history had been “selectively silent,” he said, “Whoever you ask one simple question; who got us independence? the simple reply would be Gandhi, Congress.” He paused before adding, “Yes, they had a role to play. But the fact also is that post-independent India has not treated the revolutionaries properly.”

He cited the example of the Chittagong uprising. “Imagine, even before the Indian National Army, there was the Indian Republican Army which captured

Chittagong uprising. “Imagine, even before the Indian National Army, there was the Indian Republican Army which captured Chittagong,” he said. “It is reflected by the British as well as many historians since independence as the ‘Chittagong Armory Raid.’ There was no raid on Chittagong Armory. Chittagong was captured. They cut off all rail lines and communications, and then the armory fell into their hands. They never raided it.”

Asked to name one or two unsung heroes from the book, he declined to single anyone out. “It would be very difficult for me to single them out,” he said. “Each one; including a fifteen-year-old; sacrificed their lives.” He spoke of young women revolutionaries who embraced martyrdom. In one case, he recounted, “This young lady threw the bomb. Unfortunately it went into the wrong coach. The next moment she took cyanide and died there itself.”

“If the INA had won the Battle of Imphal, there would have been revolution in India itself,” he argued. “Because Americans had used two atom bombs by that time, there was no force behind it. It was the American Air Force which was helping the British fight the Indian National Army in Imphal.” He described how the British feared executing INA officers. “Even before the announcement of the judgment could be made public, the Commander-in-Chief released them. They were so afraid that if these three were hanged, there could be revolution in India.”

On the question of dominion status, he was unequivocal. “That was the total objective of the Indian National Congress and Mahatma Gandhi until 1930; home rule, dominion status.” He reminded the audience that after World War I, Britain had assured concessions in exchange for Indian support. “Not only was all the expenditure of the war debited to India, but afterwards they said India is not ready for it as yet.”



Vaishali Joshi



Gaurpriya Pai Kane



Shruti Juwarkar

“Goa has made extreme sacrifices for independence. It is totally wrong to say that Goa didn’t fight,” he declared. He attributed the delay in Goa’s liberation partly to excessive reliance on negotiations. “Talks don’t take you anywhere. A revolutionary knows what he wants and he gets it.” He described fears that Goa might become a rest-and-recreation base for American forces, complicating its integration. His recollections of entering Goa during liberation were vivid; villagers planting small flags to mark mined roads, the absence of resistance, the surreal atmosphere of surrender.

He also devoted attention to Justice Radhabinod Pal. “After the war, MacArthur wanted a quick trial of Japanese leaders along the lines of Nuremberg,” he explained. “Justice Pal argued in a 1,300-page judgment that what happened in Japan was not comparable to what happened in Germany.” He pointed out that Pal remains the only judge honored with a statue at the Japanese war memorial. “That shows why our relations with Japan are so close.”

One story that deeply moved him during research was that of Nanak Singh. “He was not happy about partition. He went out to stop a riot and was killed there,” Prem Prakash recounted. “We don’t know how many millions left, how many hundreds of thousands were killed or wounded, how many women were kidnapped. No idea till today.” His voice, though steady, carried the weight of unresolved grief.

Throughout, he reiterated the purpose of his work. “All I have done is brought out this book to give tribute to these people,” he said. “It is not necessary that you should have a memorial only for a known person. These are all unknown people, young people, young women.” The evening closed not with certainty, but with contemplation.

In a heartfelt gesture of appreciation, Ranjith Phillipose felicitated the author, whereas Chief Minister Pramod Sawant was felicitated by Srinivas Dempo, marking a distinguished moment that reflected the collaborative spirit of the evening. The session concluded on a warm and gracious note with a vote of thanks delivered by Shruti Jaiswal Juwarkar, **Ehsaas** Woman of Goa.

*This session of Kitaab was organized with the support of
Ehsaas Women of Goa*

A Life in Motion: Sonal Mansingh Reflects on Art, Resilience and Legacy



Book Launch

An evening of artistic wisdom, and cultural introspection came alive at **Kitaab** Dibrugarh as the launch of *A ZigZag Mind* for an illuminating conversation with renowned classical dancer, cultural icon, and author Sonal Mansingh. Organised under the aegis of the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, the event celebrated not merely the publication of a book, but the extraordinary journey of a woman whose life has traversed the realms of art, public service, philosophy, and cultural stewardship.

The programme commenced with a gracious welcome address by Preeti Bagrodia, **Ehsaas** Woman of Dibrugarh. Sonal Mansingh was in conversation with Lakhpriya Gogoi where the evening evolved into a compelling exploration of tradition, resilience, spirituality, creativity, and the enduring relevance of Indian cultural values in a rapidly changing world. The evening was further enriched by the presence of Chief Guest Prof. Jiten Hazarika and Guest of Honour Prof. Karabi Deka Hazarika.

Prof. Jiten Hazarika delivered an engaging and reflective address. Reflecting on the book's title, he noted, "creativity, reflection, and intellectual discovery seldom move in straight lines. The universities must remain spaces where minds are free to question, explore, challenge conventions, and create." He praised Dr. Sonal Mansingh's lifelong contribution to Indian arts and culture, describing her as a legendary artist whose work continually demonstrates that art is not merely an aesthetic pursuit but a profound means of understanding life itself.

Prof. Karabi Deka Hazarika delivered a thoughtful address describing the book as "a treasure and a memoir of immense value." She highlighted several fascinating chapters that explore themes ranging from the *guru-shishya* tradition and creativity in dance to women's empowerment, spirituality, and personal transformation. She observed, "A memoir is a personal narrative that focuses on a specific aspect or period of the author's life, often exploring their experiences, emotions and reflections."

Reflecting on the title itself, Dr. Mansingh remarked that life seldom follows a linear trajectory. "It has been a life of such experiences and, as the title suggests, zigzags. Imagine twenty-four hours a day, three hundred and sixty-five days a year, how many zigs and how many zags one must navigate. That journey continues until the very last breath," she said.

She mentioned the significance of the *guru-shishya parampara*, which forms a cornerstone of Indian artistic traditions. Dr. Mansingh offered an understanding of the term *parampara*, saying it was often inadequately translated as "tradition." "*Parampara* is not orthodoxy. It is not rigid. It is something rooted and yet constantly moving forward. When one foot advances, the other remains firmly grounded."

She spoke movingly about her gurus and the transformative role they played in shaping her worldview. "A *guru* does not merely teach a skill. A *guru* removes darkness. A true *guru*

opens your eyes to larger possibilities, deeper understanding, and a more expansive vision of life. In many ways, it is not the disciple who finds the guru; it is the *guru* who finds the disciple.”

Mansingh rejected the characterisation of figures such as *Sita and Draupadi* as marginal women. “They are not marginal women. They are the central protagonists around whom entire epics revolve. Without *Sita* there is no *Rama*. Without *Draupadi* there is no *Mahabharata*. They are not peripheral figures; they are the great heroines of our civilization.”

During a Q&A session with the audience, she recounted one of the most dramatic episodes of her life, a near-fatal accident in Germany in 1974 that left doctors convinced she would never dance again. “I was told I might walk again after two years, but I would never dance. Yet I learned that one must never surrender. The moment you give up, your entire being begins to close down. Faith and patience became my companions. If I could not dance, I thought I could not live. It was the dance itself that pulled me back to life.” Towards the conclusion of the session, Mansingh offered a stirring meditation on the role of the arts in times of conflict and uncertainty.

The evening concluded with a heartfelt vote of thanks delivered by Trishna Deorah, **Ehsaas** Woman of Dibrugarh. Sonal Mansingh, Lakhipriya Gogoi, Prof. Jiten Hazarika, and Prof. Karabi Deka Hazarika were felicitated with traditional Kantha Dupatta, Assamese Japi, and Gamusa.

*This session of **Kitaab** was organized with the support of **Ehsaas** Women of Dibrugarh, in association with Dibrugarh University and Oil India Limited*



Sonal Mansingh



Audience



Jiten Hazarika



Trishna Deorah



Preeti Bagrodia



Harinder Singh Sikka

Harinder Singh Sikka on Power, Paradox, and Unlocking the Soul



Anjum Babukhan



Anagani Kamala Devi

An evening of uncommon depth and intensity unfolded in Hyderabad at **The Write Circle**, organised by the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, with acclaimed author Harinder Singh Sikka in a compelling literary dialogue. The session opened with a gracious address by Anjum Babukhan, **Ehsaas** Woman of Hyderabad, who welcomed the gathering and underscored the enduring power of literature that is rooted in lived reality.

In conversation with Anagani Kamala Devi, **Ehsaas** Woman of Hyderabad, Sikka unfolded a narrative shaped by displacement, discipline, war, and an unwavering commitment to truth. When asked about the phase of life that shaped him into a storyteller, Harinder Singh Sikka began, “I have called myself an accidental naval officer, an accidental corporate leader, and definitely an accidental author.” He traced his journey back to his earliest years, sharing that his parents had migrated from Pakistan as refugees and that his childhood was spent in refugee camps.

His entry into the Indian Navy, he explained, was almost accidental. A rare administrative oversight by the UPSC allowed an arts graduate to enter a science-mandatory service. What followed, however, was anything but accidental. Sikka described navigating warships in sea states seven and eight, when waves rose thirty feet high. “People were vomiting blood,” he said starkly. “I was the youngest navigating officer on the ship.”

The turning point came in the 1990s, when Sikka resigned from the Navy with two children and a family to support. “I was sitting on a gun, one of the biggest,” he said, recalling the moment he submitted his resignation. “If you quit early, you would be directly on the road.” Yet, conviction outweighed fear. Doors opened, first in corporate leadership, then in global policy. His work on intellectual property rights took him to Geneva and the WTO.

It was war, however, that transformed him into a writer. During the Kargil conflict, Sikka returned to the battlefield. What he saw broke something inside him. “I used to cry a lot,” he said quietly. “I would visit families of those who had passed away, knowing very well that society would forget them.” Anger followed grief. “How can the enemy be sitting on our head and we did not know?” he demanded publicly.

“That is where a writer became an author,” he said simply. Writing *Raazi*, he revealed, took eight years. “English is a foreign language for me,” he admitted. His method was painstaking, twenty bullet points per chapter, twenty chapters, slowly shaped into prose. When legendary literary agent Jeffrey Archer visited his home and told him, “This is not storytelling. You have let a woman’s emotions pour into the book,” Sikka thought the book had failed. Archer’s next words changed everything: “This book will do well.”

The discussion then turned to what later became *The Chabi Master*. Recalling a chance encounter on a golf course, Sikka shared a humorous anecdote about helping a man return his wife’s lost keys after he feared her reaction. The man’s remark — “I wish I had introduced my wife to travel past master” — stayed with him, eventually evolving into *Chabimaster*, the keeper of keys, both literal and symbolic.

The conversation and Q&A session with the audience was marked by thoughtful pauses, emotional honesty, and moments of quiet awe. The formal vote of thanks was delivered by Mansi Malik, **Ehsaas** Woman of Hyderabad and the evening concluded with Harinder Singh Sikka being felicitated with a hand-crafted stole by Jahnavi Tandon.

*This session of **The Write Circle** was organized with the support of **Ehsaas** Women of Hyderabad*

From Tin Roofs to Timeless Truths: Harinder Singh Sikka's Life Journey

An evening of rare candour, courage, and conviction unfolded at **The Write Circle** in Coimbatore, an initiative of the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, where distinguished author Harinder Singh Sikka was in conversation with Sharanya Sankar. The session was marked by a compelling blend of lived experience and philosophical reflection. The evening commenced with a warm welcome address by Poonam Bafna, **Ehsaas** Woman of Coimbatore.



Sharanya Sankar



Harinder Singh Sikka

Recounting his childhood, Sikka painted a stark yet dignified picture of growing up in a refugee colony under a tin roof in *Subzi Mandi*. "Four of us, my parents worked hard, hard is not an ordinary word; to feed us three square meals," he recalled. Television, he shared, was a luxury glimpsed through a neighbour's window, while relatives "would here and there taunt my parents." These memories, narrated without bitterness, carried the weight of lived humility.

His entry into the Indian Navy, he admitted, was no less than "a miracle." Despite an academic journey marked by struggle; "Mathematics to pass marks were 13; I never got 14"; he found his calling through the Navy NCC, driven by a simple desire to see the world. "When people were vomiting blood, the young officer was standing; nobody would replace me," he said, seeing in that endurance a divine design. "He had a design for each one of us; provided you demand that from him."

The conversation also touched upon his foray into writing and the turbulence surrounding *Calling Sehmat*, later adapted into *Raazi*. Sikka recounted asserting creative control with unwavering resolve. "I gave it only on conditions that I will choose the director and the actor," he said, narrating how he confronted powerful studios unapologetically. "If you do not want profit in life, you can never suffer a loss," he reiterated, positioning integrity above compromise.

A recurring metaphor through the evening was that of unwinding; a process Sikka described as essential to creativity and clarity. "The more I researched on him, he would take me back to unwind, to unwind more," he said, likening this inner unlocking to what cricketers, actors, and artists instinctively do. Yet society, he lamented, channels creativity largely towards negativity. "Our system is such that we are creative only towards negativity. This is how advertisements sell."



Roopa Mohandas



Poonam Bafna

Turning to geopolitics, Sikka spoke with the authority of lived experience and deep research. Referring to Pakistan, he stated, "Through this book I've told a story of Pakistan... how Zia-ul-Haq polished Bhutto's shoes; true story." His analysis was unsparing as he traced a "path of destruction" and warned that the very nuclear weapons created for deterrence may become "the cause of their death forever. Karachi would have been done forever, but is that a solution? No."

As the session concluded, the prevailing sentiment was one of quiet awe. Sikka's journey; from refugee colonies to global platforms, stood as a testament to fearlessness, ethical conviction, and the power of believing deeply in one's path. The formal vote of thanks was delivered by Roopa Mohandas, **Ehsaas** Woman of Coimbatore and author was felicitated by Poonam Bafna, **Ehsaas** Woman of Coimbatore.

*This session of **The Write Circle** was organized with the support of **Ehsaas** Women of Coimbatore, in association with Hospitality Partner, Welcomhotel By ITC Hotels, Coimbatore*

QUESTIONING SILENCE, RECLAIMING MEMORY

PROVOCATIVE
DISCOURSE AT THE
WRITE CIRCLE WITH
HARINDER SINGH
SIKKA

Harinder Singh Sikka



Shaneel Parekh

An evening of rare intensity, candour, and moral courage unfolded at **The Write Circle** in Ahmedabad, where acclaimed author Harinder Singh Sikka engaged in a deeply stimulating and reflective conversation with Shaneel Parekh, **Ehsaas** Woman of Ahmedabad. The evening commenced with a warm and gracious opening address by Sagar Brahmabhatt who welcomed the audience.

Sikka spoke of his early years as a hockey player whose talent was curtailed by poverty. "I could not play at a better level because I did not have hockey shoes," he said simply, before narrating how his decision to join the NCC Navy Cadet Corps altered the course of his life. His first voyage aboard INS Camorta proved transformative. "When I sailed out from that harbour across the blue seas, I started telling myself; this is the life I want to live."

What followed was a series of improbable turns that defined his professional life. From being entrusted with surface-to-air missile systems that each cost about ten crores, to firing the largest number of successful hits despite his avowed discomfort with science, Sikka's narrative was a testament to learning beyond formal limitations. Yet, in a move that stunned his superiors, he declined further prestige. "I said no, I don't want to do this... I want to do logistics," even when warned he would become a "salt horse—good for nothing."

Sikka recounted his decision to resign from the Navy without pension, amid financial uncertainty and familial responsibility. "Everybody called me a fool," he admitted. Yet this leap of faith led him to the corporate world and eventually to moments of national consequence. His account of challenging government policy on life-saving drug taxation was delivered with restrained fury. "I wrote against a serving finance minister," he said, recalling how his article became a starred question in Parliament. Summoned and humiliated, "All the chairs were removed,

so I had no choice but to stand," he still refused to withdraw his words.

The turning point, he narrated, came when he was invited by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. "An ordinance was issued. All life-saving drugs were removed from taxes," Sikka recounted.



Priyanshi Patel

Literature entered his life not as an aspiration but as consequence. *Calling Sehmat*, later adapted into *Raazi*, emerged from his experiences in the Kargil conflict. Yet even here, Sikka refused compromise. "If I don't want profit, I cannot suffer a loss," he reiterated while describing his resistance to Bollywood's narrative distortions. "There is not a single tricolour in *Raazi*," he said pointedly, expressing his discomfort with the dilution of national sentiment. Money, he emphasised repeatedly, held no sway. "I ensured that this money goes to charity."

The session concluded with a Q&A session, not with neat answers, but with unsettled questions; precisely as Sikka intended. His discourse was not designed to persuade gently, but to provoke deeply. The session concluded on a dignified note with a heartfelt vote of thanks by Cecil Kanuga, The House of MG, followed by the felicitation of the author by Priyanshi Patel, **Ehsaas** Woman of Ahmedabad, who presented him with a traditional Kantha stole, an elegant gesture marking the close of the session.

*This session of **The Write Circle** was organized with the support of **Ehsaas** Women of Ahmedabad, in association with Karma Foundation with Hospitality Partner, The House of MG*



Cecil Kanuga



Sagar Brahmabhatt



Shalini Modi & Dr. Pamela Erickson

RASAS, REFLECTION, AND RENEWAL: AN EVENING OF STORYTELLING WITH SHALINI MODI



Harpreet



Devendra Ratnawat

Ajmer witnessed a deeply contemplative evening at **The Write Circle**, an initiative of the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, where literature, mythology, and lived experience converged in a thought-provoking dialogue. The session featured author Shalini Modi in conversation with Dr. Pamela Erickson, unfolding as an evocative exploration of emotions, traditions, and the enduring relevance of Indian wisdom in contemporary life. The evening commenced with a warm welcome note by Harpreet from Hotel Pratap Mahal, setting a gracious and receptive tone.

At the core of the discussion was Shalini Modi's distinctive approach to bridging "Indian methodology and modern life," a theme that resonated strongly with listeners. Reflecting on her writing, it was observed that this endeavour finds expression through the classical concept of '*rasa*.'

Each chapter of her book, the author explained, is dedicated to a single *rasa*, connecting it to a divine couple and examining how different beings respond when that emotion overtakes them. "The difference lies in how they react to that *rasa* when it happens and when it overwhelms them," she remarked, adding that mythology offers not prescriptions but mirrors; reflecting human reactions in heightened, symbolic form. Drawing from the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, and various *Puranic* narratives, she suggested that "One must have gone through something deeply to write such stories with authenticity."

A particularly compelling segment focused on storytelling as a bridge between generations. The author reflected on growing up with oral storytelling rather than written texts, and noted that "stories were passed down, culture was passed down much before the writing tradition happened." She pointed out that this is why audiobooks have found renewed relevance today, especially among children who may struggle to read but are eager to listen. Her intent, she explained, was to take "baby steps towards connecting the younger generation to the scriptures, making stories accessible, engaging, and relevant to present-day life."

The discussion then moved to her more recent work, *The Eternal Sun: The Legacy of Suryadev*. Speaking about her twelve-year-long *Surya Sadhana*, she explained how her connection with the Sun evolved organically; through chanting, offering water, and observing sunrises and sunsets. "Nothing could happen without the sun," she said, noting its scientific importance for photosynthesis, bone health, and mental well-being. She also highlighted the symbolic dimension: "He symbolises the light of knowledge that removes the darkness of ignorance."

Through vivid retellings from Hanuman and Suryadev to Ram invoking the *Aditya Hridayam* before defeating Ravana, the author illustrated how ancient narratives weave together cosmic and personal strength. "He is a cosmic deity and also a personal source of confidence," she remarked, explaining how the Sun's lineage represents the triumph of *dharma* over *adharma*.

Equally striking was her reinterpretation of well-known mythological figures such as Ashwatthama and Ahalya. On Ashwatthama, she observed that despite being "born with blessings, his downfall stemmed from jealousy and choices, concluding, "It's not all written in destiny; we make our own destiny by the choices we make." On *Ahalya*, she offered a nuanced explanation, "Ahalya was guided inward into meditation and self-realisation until redemption came through inner awakening," she reflected.

The session concluded with an engaging Q&A session and a heartfelt vote of thanks by Devendra Ratnawat, General Manager, Hotel Pratap Mahal, who also presented mementos to the author and conversationalist, marking a gracious and fitting close to an evening that celebrated stories.

*This session of **The Write Circle** was organized with the support of **Ehsaas Women of Ajmer**, and was in association with **WeCare**; Hospitality Partner, Pratap Mahal, Ajmer - IHCL SeleQtions*

BETWEEN STARS AND STORIES: SHALINI MODI'S MEDITATIVE JOURNEY



Shalini Modi

Shweta Bansal

Agra hosted a luminous session of **The Write Circle**, an initiative of the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, featuring author Shalini Modi in conversation with Shweta Bansal, **Ehsaas** Woman of Agra. The evening unfolded as a seamless blend of literature, mythology, astrology, and spiritual inquiry, drawing a deeply engaged audience into a contemplative exchange on human desire, destiny, and inner growth. The session opened with a gracious welcome by Jyoti Chitkara.

From the outset, the dialogue took a reflective turn as Shalini Modi spoke about the subtle relationship between astrology and human longing. She observed, "Astrology should not be used as 'this will happen, that will happen,' because there is a lot of free will. It should be used as a guiding force."

Speaking of her own journey into writing, Modi shared, "My journey of writing began very surprisingly through learning astrology." She explained how planetary alignments and the activation of certain houses in her horoscope coincided with her return to writing: "When I started studying astrology, that planet got activated, that house got activated, and that is when I started writing again." Unlike many authors who begin young, she noted, "I started much later. It is because certain planets and certain houses get activated."

On the role of prayer and ritual, she offered a philosophical distinction. "Most of the chants will say that Lakshmi gives you *bhakti* or *mukti*. It is up to you what you want," she explained. "What you put intent into, you will get." She elaborated that stories associated with mantras act as bridges between intellect and devotion: "The stories give a backstory to the mantra, so it becomes easier to connect."

The discussion moved naturally to her book *The Seven Immortals*. Reflecting on the character of Ashwatthama,

she said, "His character really intrigued me because he was born with blessings but made very wrong choices." She traced his tragic arc: "He wanted to annihilate the entire clan of the Pandavas and even tried to kill the unborn child of Uttara." The moral, she concluded, was unmistakable: "The choices you make are what make you. So, make the right choices."

Turning to the concept of *rasa*, Modi explained,

"Emotions also leave an aftertaste. Like sweet mango juice leaves sweetness, disgust leaves bitterness." Drawing from the *Natyashastra*, she said, "I have used these emotions depicted through *abhinaya* and facial expressions and connected them to divine relationships." She illustrated this with the story of Ahalya and Gautam Rishi: "Because of his anger, all his *punya* got destroyed. So he went back to the Himalayas to build that bank of *punya* again."

The author's exploration of *Surya*, the Sun God, formed another luminous arc of the evening. She recounted the *Ramayana* episode of Rama's exhaustion in battle: "Rama was totally tired because *Ravana* was no ordinary opponent." It was Sage Agastya who intervened, she said, instructing Rama to recite the *Aditya Hridaya Stotra*. "Rama recites it three times and is fully charged with new energy," she narrated. "Here *Surya* is shown as a cosmic power whom even *Narayana* prays to."

Addressing questions on *karma* and free will in a Q&A session with the audience, she clarified, "Astrology never says this will definitely happen. It tells you a period. What you do with that period is your choice." She stressed the uniqueness of human life: "A human is the only one who can fast when food is in front of him. That will be only ours."

The session became a reflective journey across myth, meaning, and modern life. In her own words, "What you put intent into, you will get," a line that lingered long after the evening was over. The author was felicitated by Harvijay Singh Bhaia and the evening concluded with a warm vote of thanks by Vinti Kathuria, **Ehsaas** Woman of Agra.

This session of The Write Circle was organized with the support of Ehsaas Women of Agra, Hospitality Partner, ITC Mughal; and Hindi Print Media Partner, Dainik Jagaran



Vinti Kathuria



Jyoti Chitkara



Shalini Modi

REFLECTIONS ON MYTHOLOGY AND ASTROLOGY

Indore hosted an engaging session of **The Write Circle**, an initiative of the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** in association with **Ehsaas Women of Indore**. The distinguished author Shalini Modi reflected on Indian mythology, astrology, and spiritual wisdom in conversation with Suchitra Sajid Dhanani. The event commenced with a warm welcome by Surbhi Dhupar, **Ehsaas** Woman of Indore, who set a congenial tone for the evening.

At the outset, Sajid Dhanani noted the common axiom that childhood shapes the future of an individual. Shalini Modi concurred, recalling growing up with mythology in her home. "I have grown up hearing stories; all kinds of stories of different *Puranas*, *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*. Those stories would actually kind of transport me to this magical world of gods, goddesses, and even *rakshasas*." In describing these tales, she likened them to her children's fairy tales. "Instead of the fair English fairy tales, these were our kind of fairy tales."

As she matured, she sensed layers of meaning beneath the narratives and began reading more critically. "I felt the need to find symbolism in these stories instead of just taking them literally. And that's how the journey started of being an author, of reading more." Her recollection was candid and relatable; it painted astrology not as arcane, but as woven into everyday life, inherited from parents and woven into marital harmony.

The discussion naturally progressed to astrology's role in normal life. Modi was emphatic that astrology should not be misconstrued as fatalistic: "Astrology should not be taken as just a prediction because there is also talk about free will. Your period could be good to do well in business, or to get married, or to have a kid, but the eventual work has to be done by you. If you decide not to do anything and sit pretty, then nothing is going to move." She explained, "The work and the choices are yours. But definitely astrology tells you the promise of the chart you are born with. It gives you cues."



Surbhi Dhupar, Unnati Singh & Suchitra Sajid Dhanani

Throughout the evening, Modi's reflections were interspersed with vibrant dialogue. She did not shy away from addressing skepticism. When asked about handling debates over astrology's validity, she advised: "You can only say your bit and then keep quiet. You can't change someone's perception. Everyone has their belief system."

One particularly animated segment of the dialogue centered on mythology's emotional depth. Modi illustrated this with the example of Kunti and the Pandavas, specifically focusing on fear as a dominant *rasa*. She said: "Fear is something so intrinsic but she did not give up. She handled all of them with great dignity. She remembered the boon that she had in life." Through these stories, Modi demonstrated how ancient characters' emotional journeys can serve as mirrors and guides for contemporary life.

She further elaborated on the *rasa* of laughter through the mischievous episodes of Krishna and the Gopis. She remarked, "We have Krishna and Rukmini for *shringara*. But I think for me, the *rasa* I used is *hasya*, because when we think of Lord Krishna, he is always teasing the Gopis. They would sometimes get angry at him, sometimes laugh, and it's like a lovely playful bond."

In her final thoughts, Modi spoke of balance. She noted how the solar deity Surya's presence in her recent writing underscored daily rhythm. Invoking the spirit of hospitality, Unnati Singh, **Ehsaas** Woman of Indore thanked the audience for their enthusiastic participation. Before the formal closing, **Ehsaas** Women of Indore, Surbhi Dhupar, Suchitra Sajid Dhanani, and Unnati Singh joined the stage to felicitously honour Shalini Modi presenting her with traditional Jaipur puppets.

*This session of **The Write Circle** was organized with the support of **Ehsaas** Women of Indore, Hospitality Partner, Sayaji; Hindi Print Media Partner, Nayi Duniya*



Rasheed Kidwai

Aizawl witnessed an intellectually charged and deeply absorbing edition of **The Write Circle** as journalist and author Rasheed Kidwai engaged in conversation with Shashwati Goswami. The session unfolded as a rare blend of investigative history, political context, and media critique. The evening began with a warm welcome by Amelia Lalremdiki Sailo, **Ehsaas** Woman of Aizawl gracing an opening for the evening.

Opening the discussion, Kidwai drew a striking parallel between contemporary cyber fraud and a crime committed decades before the age of OTPs and internet banking. "Fraud and scams are happening today because of technology; but in 1971 a big corruption happened that somebody mimicked Indira Gandhi's voice and called up the bank manager of State Bank of India, New Delhi branch, asking for 60 lakh rupees." He described how the caller announced, "Indira Gandhi will talk and demanded urgent funds for Bangladesh," invoking the tense backdrop of the Indo-Pak war.

Kidwai recounted the astonishing gullibility and urgency that marked the episode: "The bank manager collected 60 lakh rupees, put it in a huge steel trunk, and handed it over near the Free Church." He added, with emphasis, that at today's value the amount would be 171 crore rupees. The episode 'shook the nation', spawning conspiracy theories that ranged from Sanjay Gandhi's involvement to a CIA operation.

As the narrative progressed, the tone deepened into inquiry. Kidwai explained that the accused, Rustam Sohrab Nagarwala, was arrested swiftly and later died in custody.

Turning to Nagarwala's character, Kidwai painted a nuanced portrait: "Nagarwala was a very interesting character, very well-travelled; a hands-on person. One of the most intriguing aspects concerned Nagarwala's behaviour after the crime. "He dyed his hair, trimmed his beard, and roamed around Delhi," Kidwai said, adding that his

ECHOES OF A NATION'S SECRETS: RASHEED KIDWAI ON THE NAGARWALA AFFAIR, MEDIA, AND THE DISCIPLINE OF DOUBT



Shashwati Goswami



Amelia Lalremdiki Sailo



Ashley Lalremruati

movements seemed strangely aimless: "It is as if he was waiting for the police to come."

The judicial process came under sharp scrutiny. Kidwai stated bluntly, "The judicial process was very sloppy." He described how Nagarwala was pressured into confession: "The police told him, 'Just confess and you will go scot-free.'" The magistrate, he said, acted "in great hurry," failing to ensure legal counsel or examine evidence thoroughly. "Had Nagarwala lived, perhaps he would have been exonerated," Kidwai suggested, underscoring the miscarriage of due process.

As the session closed with an interaction between the author and the audience, sharing not only the memory of a scandal, but a renewed respect for inquiry itself. In Kidwai's words, the Nagarwala affair was "not just a crime story; it is a commentary on our political system." It concluded with the felicitation of both speakers by retired IFS officer Lalduthlana Ralte with *Kathputlis* from Western India, followed by a vote of thanks by Ashley Lalremruati, **Ehsaas** Woman of Aizawl.

*This session of **The Write Circle** was organized with the support of **Ehsaas** Women of Aizawl, in association with Oil India Limited; Hospitality Partner, Folkland*



Rasheed Kidwai

IDEAS, IDEOLOGIES, & THE ANATOMY OF POWER



R Lungleng



Abokali Jimomi



Viketuno Rio

An enriching evening of thought, dialogue, and reflective inquiry unfolded at **The Write Circle** session in Dimapur, organised by the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. The session featured noted author and journalist Rasheed Kidwai in conversation with media personality and political commentator R Lungleng. The evening commenced with a warm welcome by Abokali Jimomi, **Ehsaas** Woman of Dimapur.

The conversation opened on a reflective note as Kidwai spoke about the shaping of Indian states and the long-term consequences of political design. Drawing from recent travels, he added, "I was there in Mizoram last week. I realised that actually there should have been greater attention to creation in keeping with the linguistic, cultural, and economic aspirations of the people."

Turning to contemporary politics, observed a significant transformation in democratic practice: "We are supposed to be a parliamentary democracy where MPs elect a Prime Minister, but now we have a situation where the Prime Minister elects MP." He continued, "This is a negation of what democratic principles stand for. Indian democracy is working very well; it is vibrant."

Drawing parallels with global politics, Kidwai reflected, "You were quoting Thomas Jefferson. Once upon a time Jefferson was President of the United States. Now you have Donald Trump, and the principles of Jefferson are not in practice." He contextualised this within India's political shifts, explaining that the success of the ruling party lay in combining "cultural nationalism, muscular nationalism, the issue of identity, and majoritarianism."

On dynastic politics, Kidwai challenged conventional assumptions. "If you remove the dynasty, women's

participation in Indian politics would fall to two or three per cent," he said, adding, "Nothing is simple in India." While acknowledging that the dynasty contradicted democratic ideals, he maintained, "Are we questioning the wisdom of the voters who elect them?"

Reflecting on journalism, Kidwai spoke with professional introspection: "Media is a mirror of society." He added, "The media actually perpetuates the existing belief system." In a remark that drew quiet nods from the audience, he said, "From an ethical point of view, both pro-government and anti-government conduct is questionable."

The evening culminated in discussion of Kidwai's latest work on the Nagarwala scandal. Summarising its theme, he said, "It is very tempting to reach conclusions, but if something remains inconclusive, we must admit it remains inconclusive." He emphasised that the book was not merely about a crime but "a commentary on our political system."

The session wrapped with a Q&A session with the audience which was marked by moments of humour, candour, and philosophical pause, lending the evening both intellectual rigour and human warmth. As the evening concluded with closing remarks by Viketuno Rio, **Ehsaas** Woman of Dimapur and the ceremonial felicitation with hand-crafted terracotta artefacts by Subhadeep Chatterjee, the atmosphere carried a sense of thoughtful completion.

*This session of **The Write Circle** was organized with the support of **Ehsaas** Women of Dimapur, in association with Oil India Limited; Hospitality Partner, Zone Niathu Dimapur by The Park.*

A SYMPHONY OF WORDS, WORLDS, AND WONDER: AN EVENING WITH A STORYTELLER WHO WRITES FOR THE CHILD AND THE COSMOS

A remarkable edition of **The Write Circle**, an initiative of the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, unfolded in Shillong with author and poet Shobha Tharoor Srinivasan, who was in conversation with academic and scholar R. H. Duncan Lyngdoh. Jyoti Agarwal, **Ehsaas** Woman of Shillong offered a warm welcome to the evening.

From the outset, Srinivasan's reflections carried the cadence of lived experience. Speaking of her early years, she recalled a childhood shaped less by constant travel and more by a deeply ingrained sense of identity and curiosity. Summers in Kerala, exposure to multiple cultures, and a household steeped in conversation all contributed to what she described as an instinctive attentiveness to language.

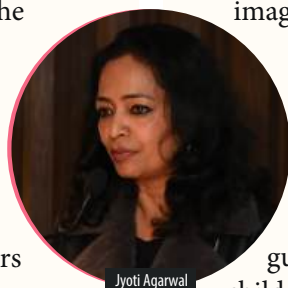
This sensitivity to language was closely tied to a broader philosophy of identity. Srinivasan spoke movingly of her father's insistence that the family see itself not narrowly through regional identity but as Indian, and beyond that, as global. She recalled his "oft-repeated metaphor: that one should be equally adept at eating with one's fingers from a plantain leaf and using cutlery at a formal Western table." The image resonated deeply, encapsulating her belief in cultural fluency without erasure. "This worldview informs both in writing and my engagement with children today, who inhabit a world where a book read in Shillong may be the same one read in Stockholm. Beneath surface differences, human beings share the same emotional grammar; affection, longing, fear, and hope."

Her accounts of school visits across India and abroad offered vivid illustrations of how stories become starting points for dialogue. A perceptive child's question about why a female elephant carries a sacred idol in one of her books opened, she explained, into a broader conversation on gender, equality, and representation. "Why can't we have a female elephant?" she asked the children in return. "Why can't we have a female prefect in your class? Such exchanges



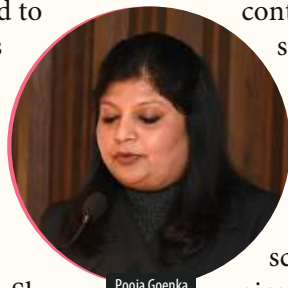
Shobha Tharoor Srinivasan & R. H. Duncan Lyngdoh

demonstrate that children are not resistant to complex ideas; they are simply waiting for them to be framed with imagination rather than instruction," she suggested.



Jyoti Agarwal

The dialogue then turned to her engagement with classical literature and global folklore. Though initially hesitant to retell ancient tales, Srinivasan embraced the opportunity by placing stories from different cultures side by side. Her guiding idea, "one world, many stories", allowed children to see how myths echo one another across continents. Whether it was a Native American origin story or a tale from the *Ramayana*, the impulse to explain the world through narrative proved universal.



Pooja Goenka

As the conversation moved towards voice and performance, Srinivasan traced her journey from school elocution classes to an unexpected career in voice-over work. She was quick, however, to demystify the craft. "Voice is not merely about tone but about sincerity, pacing, and emotional authenticity. Whether narrating a story, advocating for a cause, or writing for children, the goal remains the same; to move the listener. Only when you're moved, will you do something about it."

Questions from the audience further enriched the exchange, touching upon responsibility in writing for young minds and the balance between context and prescription. Srinivasan responded with clarity and conviction, reiterating her belief that children deserve honesty, imagination, and respect. Ibanyllah Warjari honoured the speakers with Dokra mementos. Pooja Goenka, **Ehsaas** Woman of Shillong delivered the vote of thanks.

*This session of **The Write Circle** was organized with the support of **Ehsaas** Women of Shillong, in association with Oil India Limited; Hospitality Partner, Vivanta Shillong*



Shobha Tharoor Srinivasan



Simalisha Baruah



Tanushree Datta Gogoi

AN EVENING OF WORDS, WONDER & SHARED STORIES

The city of Guwahati witnessed a luminous literary evening at **The Write Circle**, an initiative of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. The session featured acclaimed author Shobha Tharoor Srinivasan in an engaging and heartfelt conversation with Simalisha Baruah, **Ehsaas** Woman of Guwahati. The evening commenced on a gracious note by Tanushree Datta Gogoi, **Ehsaas** Woman of Guwahati.

Addressing the contemporary concern of children growing up in an age dominated by screens, Srinivasan responded with clarity and conviction. “As a children’s writer, you have a challenge and a responsibility,” she observed. “The challenge is to keep children engaged.” She articulated her belief that children’s literature must balance education and entertainment, noting, “Is it education or entertainment? It’s a little bit of both.”

She emphasized the importance of inviting children into the reading experience rather than instructing them from a distance. Speaking about her poetry book that introduces poetic forms to young readers, she explained how she combines structure with humor to sustain interest. “If I merely left it with that, children might find it boring,” she admitted candidly, before describing how she follows technical explanations with playful, mischievous poems that bring the forms to life.

The author also reflected on her philosophy of shared humanity, stating, “We all are part of a shared humanity, shared global world.” This sentiment, expressed with quiet conviction, became one of the thematic anchors of the evening. Through her retellings of global folktales and her exploration of idioms across cultures, she illustrated how stories transcend geography and connect diverse communities.

When discussing her much-loved book *India Alphabet*, she described the country as “a subcontinent with diversity and color both in food and topography and people and language and everything.” Her admiration for India’s cultural

richness was palpable. The book, she explained, was conceived not only for Indian-American children but for all readers, fostering cross-cultural understanding from a young age.

One of the most moving segments of the conversation centered on her biography of her mother. Reflecting on the experience of writing the book, she shared, “The book was a very moving experience for me.” She described structuring the narrative in alternating voices, blending first-person and third-person perspectives to capture both intimacy and historical context. In a touching revelation, she noted that her mother, now elderly, occasionally turns to the book to revisit memories.

Her journey as a voiceover artist added yet another dimension to the evening. She recounted how a simple radio essay recording led to a flourishing career. “You never know when something will happen,” she reflected, reminding listeners that opportunity often emerges unexpectedly. The anecdote culminated in her winning a National Award for narration.

A particularly memorable moment arrived when Srinivasan recited her poem, “How many sounds can a C make?” The playful yet instructive verses demonstrated her ability to transform grammar into lyrical entertainment. Her journey as a voiceover artist added yet another dimension to the evening. She recounted how a simple radio essay recording led to a flourishing career.

As the conversation drew to a close, through eloquent dialogue and profound insights, Shobha Tharoor Srinivasan reminded the audience with a Q&A session that storytelling is, indeed, a lifetime in the making. Closing remarks by Tanushree Datta Gogoi, **Ehsaas** Woman of Guwahati, and the felicitation of the author by Dipanjol Deka marked the close of the evening.

*This session of **The Write Circle** was organized with the support of **Ehsaas** Women of Guwahati; in association with Oil India Limited; Hospitality Partner, Vivanta.*

THE INCONVENIENT NATIONALIST: CHANDRACHUR GHOSE IN CONVERSATION AT THE WRITE CIRCLE, GUWAHATI



Chandrachur Ghose

Dhurjati Sarma

The Guwahati edition of **The Write Circle**, an initiative of the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, unfolded as an intellectually charged and deeply reflective evening, featuring author, columnist, and public speaker Chandrachur Ghose in an engaging dialogue with academic Dhurjati Sarma. The evening commenced with a warm and thoughtful welcome address by Anindita Chatterjee, Executive Trustee of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, whose remarks framed the discussion within the Foundation's larger commitment to critical discourse.

Professor Sarma opened the conversation with a nuanced contextual remark, noting that Ghose's works deal with subjects "quite thought-provoking" and "having massive bearing on our present-day lifestyle, present-day living, present-day thought processes." Turning to Ghose's sustained engagement with Subhas Chandra Bose, Sarma posed the central question: Why call Bose "an inconvenient nationalist"? He framed the issue incisively: "Yes, there were tussles and disagreements between Sardar Patel, Nehru, and Gandhi, but somehow they all came together. But Netaji was really uncompromising."

Ghose responded, "He was inconvenient because he was uncompromising," Ghose stated firmly. "Everybody else had soft spots where they would step back from their stated goals, their stated principles. Bose would not. He would not compromise with his ideals, with his goals."

For Bose, he explained, independence was singular and non-negotiable. "When he set his goal for independence of India, there was no looking back. No negotiation. No giving space to the British Raj for talks." This resolute approach inevitably led to conflict. "Getting into a clash with Gandhi meant getting into a clash with almost all of them," he observed, referring to what he described as the "Gandhian

coterie." Leaders such as Sardar Patel, Rajagopalachari, and others, he argued, ensured that Congress remained within "Gandhian principles and Gandhi's command."

As Bose's popularity grew, Ghose emphasized, his stature nearly rivaled Gandhi's. "He is the only political leader in India's history who handed over an electoral defeat to Gandhi. Nobody else has been able to do that." The remark drew murmurs of recognition from the audience.

Yet paradoxically, Bose built no singular political constituency. "He belonged to everybody," Ghose remarked, invoking an English proverb: "What belongs to everybody belongs to nobody."

Reflecting on Bose's philosophical orientation, Ghose observed that while Gandhi and Nehru were "means-centric," Bose was goal-centric. "What matters is our freedom," he asserted, paraphrasing Bose's position. "Their morality has no place there. What matters is our freedom."

The discussion then shifted to Ghose's archival work on declassified documents. Professor Sarma asked about the declassification of thousands of pages and their implications for future scholarship. Ghose clarified, "In three or four phases, we have 2,300 files."

The archival journey began, he recounted in response to an audience, in the wake of a Commission of Inquiry ordered by the Calcutta High Court to examine the mystery of Bose's death. "The government itself admitted in court that earlier inquiries were full of loopholes," he said. Yet when the Commission concluded that the plane-crash narrative was a "hoax," the government rejected the findings. "You don't know what they're saying," he remarked.

As the session drew to a close, Himanshu Yadav felicitated the author, while Krishnanjan Chanda honoured Professor Sarma. In her concluding remarks, Anindita Chatterjee thanked the speakers and audience for sustaining a space of serious intellectual engagement.

*This session of **The Write Circle** was organized with the support of **Ehsaas Women of Guwahati**; in association with **Oil India Limited**; Hospitality Partner, **Vivanta***



Himanshu Yadav & Chandrachur Ghose



Anindita Chatterjee

UNCOMPROMISING TRUTHS AND EXPANDING HISTORIES:
CHANDRACHUR GHOSE IN CONVERSATION AT DIBRUGARH

The Dibrugarh edition of **The Write Circle**, an initiative of the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, unfolded as an evening of intellectual vigour and reflective inquiry, bringing together author, columnist, and public speaker Chandrachur Ghose in a stimulating conversation with academic and author Kaustubh Deka. Preeti Bagrodia, **Ehsaas Woman of Dibrugarh**, extended a gracious welcome to kickstart the event.

Opening the dialogue, Kaustubh Deka remarked on the richness of Ghose's intellectual universe. "Your kind of writing universe is very diverse and very fascinating and very rich," he observed, adding that such breadth made the conversation "delightful as well as challenging."

Though Ghose began as an environmentalist and later a business strategy analyst, writing was always present. Yet history beckoned with greater urgency in the 1990s when the Government of India set up a commission of inquiry into the disappearance of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. "That's when I got sucked into the whole matter," he confessed, describing how what began as interest transformed into relentless engagement.

The pivotal moment, however, lay in his confrontation with classified state archives. "For 60 years after independence, so much information had been classified," he noted. "We would not be able to verify any piece of information or any narrative that was coming out of the government machinery." It was here that his activism intersected with authorship.

With colleagues, Ghose launched a transparency campaign using the Right to Information Act of 2005. "If there is a law which has been passed to bring transparency in governance, why can't we use the same law to bring transparency in our history writing?" he asked. The result was historic: over 2,300 files relating to Netaji were declassified, "the only instance in Indian history where private initiative by youngsters who had no political backing could compel the government to make more than 2,000 files public."



Kaustubh Deka



Chandrachur Ghose

Reflecting on the disparities in published works, Ghose offered a striking statistic: "Mahatma Gandhi's collected works are about 30,000 pages, Pandit Nehru's about 10,000, Netaji's just about 3,000." For a leader of Bose's dynamism, this imbalance was troubling. "Subhas was very, very active, Then where have all those gone?" It was a question that propelled his biography and archival searches across libraries, private collections, and forgotten repositories.

The conversation then expanded to his book *The Birth of a Republic*, a meticulous exploration of the foundational decade of independent India. "Unless we understand 1947 to 1957, we will not be able to understand today's India," Ghose asserted. That first decade, he argued, "laid the foundation, the bureaucratic system was stabilised, the armed forces restructured, political ideologies crystallised."

The discussion ventured into regional intersections during a Q&A session with the audience, including INA movements in the Northeast and speculative encounters between Bose and figures like A.Z. Phizo. Ghose responded grounded in documented evidence. "It is very unlikely that Netaji would have come here, but there were many things which were unthinkable for others."

The session concluded with felicitation by Satyanarayan Mundayoor, honouring both the author and the conversationalist. Trishna Deorah, **Ehsaas Woman of Dibrugarh**, delivered a heartfelt vote of thanks, acknowledging not just the intellectual feast of the evening but the spirit of inquiry it celebrated.

*This session of **The Write Circle** was organized with the support of **Ehsaas Women of Dibrugarh**, in association with Oil India Limited; Hospitality Partner, Cygnett Inn*



Preeti Bagrodia



Trishna Deorah

A LIFE IN SERVICE, COMPASSION AND COURAGE



Swati Pandey



Priyanka Kothari

An evening of profound reflection, and inspiring narratives unfolded in Nagpur under **The Write Circle**, an initiative of the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. The evening featured an engrossing conversation between Priyanka Kothari, **Ehsaas** Woman of Nagpur, and distinguished civil servant, author, and changemaker Swati Pandey. Uniting literature, public service, and social consciousness, the programme sparked thoughtful dialogue on identity, compassion, governance, and leadership. The session commenced with a gracious welcome address by Jyoti Kapoor, **Ehsaas** Woman of Nagpur, who warmly introduced the evening.

Unlike conventional narratives of urban upbringing, Pandey's was a story shaped by forests, tribal communities, and humanitarian work undertaken by her parents. "My parents were doctors for the refugee displacement project of East Bengal," she recalled. "Childhood for me was actually growing up with the Gonds. My parents had no time for me because when you are doctors, you really don't have time for your own kids—you have time for other people's kids."

As the conversation progressed, Pandey traced her educational journey from Bhubaneswar to Nagpur, where she pursued higher studies before emerging as a gold medallist in Anthropology. Her experiences with UNICEF and grassroots development work eventually led

her towards public service. "If you are not part of public policy, if you are not a person who is able to construct policy, then you are really not doing any justice to your own aspirations," she said. "You can have all the dreams, but you don't have a highway."

Among the most compelling segments of the evening was Pandey's recollection of her posting in Chandrapur and Gadchiroli, regions often associated with remoteness and difficulty.

One particularly memorable anecdote involved a young tribal woman abandoned by her husband. "People looked at me and thought I could solve their problem," Pandey explained. "When people think that you can solve their problem, you can't say, 'It is not my problem.'" Through persistence, ingenuity, and no small measure of determination, she succeeded in reuniting the couple. A year later, the family returned to meet her with their newborn child. "For me, that was power," she reflected.

The audience was particularly captivated by her humorous account of receiving a phone call from the office of legendary actor Amitabh Bachchan during the COVID-19 lockdown. What began as a request to retrieve a piano component stranded in the postal system evolved into an innovative public-awareness campaign celebrating India Post's contribution during the pandemic. "Everybody remembered the doctors, nurses, sanitation workers and police," she observed. "They forgot the postman." Pandey spoke passionately about postal workers who delivered pensions, medicines, vaccines, PPE kits, and essential supplies during one of the most challenging periods in recent history.

Whether speaking about tribal communities, abandoned women, heritage conservation, public institutions, or frontline workers, she consistently returned to a singular principle: "compassion must remain at the heart of service." while addressing the audience during a Q&A session. The guest was felicitated with a token of appreciation by Shrimant Mane and the vote of thanks was delivered by Monica Bhagwagar, **Ehsaas** Woman of Nagpur.

*This session of **The Write Circle** was organized with the support of **Ehsaas** Women of Nagpur, and was in association with Hospitality Partner, Radisson Blu; and Hindi Print Media Partner, Lokmat*



Monica Bhagwagar, Jyoti Kapoor, Swati Pandey, Priyanka Kothari & Parveen Tuli

AN EVENING OF RESONANT INTELLECT AND HUMAN DEPTH



Abokali Jimomi



Viketuno Rio



Shehnab Sahin & Akangjungla

The Dimapur edition of **The Write Circle** unfolded as an evening of rare intellectual luminosity and emotional profundity. At its heart was an evocative dialogue between author and humanitarian Shehnab Sahin and journalist Akangjungla. The evening commenced with a gracious welcome address by Viketuno Rio, **Ehsaas** Woman of Dimapur.

What started was a narrative that defied linearity, instead unfolding as a mosaic of memory, loss, resilience, and rediscovery. Sahin's response to the question of her writing journey was neither concise nor conventional and therein lay its power. "I will start this with firstly a disclaimer and an apology. I'm not a precise speaker; this will lead to a longish sort of an answer," she confessed.

Her narrative traversed continents and inner landscapes alike from her academic pursuits, including international development from the University of Torino and a postgraduate diploma in European studies, to her tenure in the Indian civil services, where she "oversaw flagship social welfare, health and education programs at the grassroots level."

Yet, it was perhaps in her recounting of personal loss that the evening found its deepest emotional register. The loss of her father at the age of sixteen became not merely an anecdote but a defining rupture "something shifts in your system, and it never really comes back."

Her subsequent journey through academic excellence, civil service aspirations, and eventual disillusionment was narrated with an almost clinical honesty. "I wanted to become the man of the family," she reflected, revealing the gendered burdens that often accompany grief in socio-cultural contexts.

The dialogue gained further intellectual traction as it moved towards the thematic concerns of her book.

Sahin's answer foregrounded the interplay between history and memory, asserting that her work was "nothing but an act of a very personal expression of everything that mattered to me." Her approach to historical fiction was neither revisionist nor escapist; rather, it sought to reclaim narrative space for the overlooked and the intimate.

Equally compelling was her articulation of linguistic choice. The deliberate retention of untranslatable Assamese words, she explained, "was an act of both artistic integrity and cultural assertion. I would never gloss over the spirit of the word for it to make sense to the reader."

The audience interaction segment further enriched the evening, introducing perspectives that expanded the scope of the discourse. One attendee's reflection, "You have captivated my mind and heart; intelligence is art" elicited a response that seamlessly bridged the personal and the philosophical. Sahin's meditation on emotional intelligence, particularly within the context of gendered professional spaces, was both incisive and unflinching.

As the evening drew towards its conclusion, the cumulative impact of the dialogue became palpable. The formal conclusion, marked by a vote of thanks by Abokali Jimomi, **Ehsaas** Woman of Dimapur, brought the gathering full circle with a note of gratitude and reflective closure. Atoho Jakhalu felicitated the author with hand-crafted terracotta artefacts, as a gesture of esteem.



Atoho Jakhalu & Shehnab Sahin

*This session of **The Write Circle** was organized with the support of **Ehsaas** Women of Dimapur, in association with Oil India Limited; Hospitality Partner, Zone Niathu by The Park.*



Mita Kapur & Shefalee Vasudev

At an invigorating edition of **The Write Circle** in Jaipur, celebrated journalist, cultural commentator, author, and narrative psychotherapist Shefalee Vasudev engaged in a compelling and richly layered conversation with Mita Kapur. The evening unfolded as a sophisticated exploration of fashion beyond aesthetics, examining its intersections with identity, politics, culture, psychology, power, and selfhood.

Reflecting upon her remarkable professional journey, Vasudev spoke candidly about her evolution from magazine editor to one of India's most distinctive voices in fashion journalism. Recounting her tenure with *Marie Claire* and the intellectual foundations that eventually shaped her landmark works *The Powder Room* and *The Voice of Fashion*, she described how her understanding of fashion gradually expanded beyond trends and commerce.

She reflected that while mainstream fashion media often focuses on glamour, trends, and consumption, she was drawn to deeper questions of identity, culture, and belonging. Distinguishing between “fashion-fashion”—the

world of fashion weeks, trends, silhouettes, and seasonal colour stories—and fashion as a social and cultural lens, she asked, “What do clothes say? What does posture, language and personality say?” For her, fashion becomes

meaningful when it helps society reflect on its values, identity, and aspirations.

She touched upon the paradox of personal style, noting that even when people wear similar garments, they project entirely different identities: “It's a sense of self that carries a garment, not the other way around.” The conversation then moved into the realm of politics, a subject explored extensively in her recent work. “It's never just another day's

THREADS OF IDENTITY: SHEFALEE VASUDEV ON FASHION, POWER AND THE STORIES WE WEAR

work for a politician. A politician is selling you themselves, their constituency, your future, their future, power, possibility. It's never just another day. They have to dress. They can't just communicate through speech. They communicate through entourage.”

“Clothing is communication. Whether you iron it or you don't iron it is a clue. Which colour it is and is not is a clue.” Through examples ranging from Indira Gandhi and Narendra Modi to Mamata Banerjee and Mayawati, she illustrated how sartorial choices become deliberate political signals. Every silhouette, fabric, colour, and accessory contributes to a carefully orchestrated language of symbolism.

The conversation further explored khadi, a fabric that occupied a place of particular reverence in Vasudev's reflections. She cautioned against reducing khadi to a mere product or fashion trend, arguing instead that it represents a philosophy, an ethos, and a historical consciousness. “*Khadi* is a way of life. *Khadi* is a philosophy. *Khadi* is beautiful, complex.” she observed.

She carefully unpacked the complexities of labour rights, environmental stewardship, wage structures, transparency, worker welfare, and supply chains. Sustainability, she explained, “is not a fashionable label but an intricate ecosystem of responsibilities. The increasing prevalence of greenwashing, often obscures the substantial ethical commitments required to create truly sustainable systems.”

The audience interaction that followed added further depth to the evening. Responding to questions about clothing and social perception, Vasudev acknowledged that society constantly judges individuals through their attire. “No bag or shoe or brand or watch will rescue us to become someone else. It's we who will.” she said. As the session drew towards a conclusion, the author was warmly felicitated by Ritu Uberoi.

*This session of The Write Circle was organized in association with
Siyahi; Hospitality Partner, ITC Rajputana*



Audience



Shalini Modi

Mythology, Meaning, and Modern Thought



Pooja Khanna

Dehradun witnessed an evening of literary reflection and spiritual inquiry as **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** hosted **The Write Circle** featuring author Shalini Modi. The session brought together literature enthusiasts, seekers, and cultural connoisseurs for an engaging exploration of mythology, philosophy, and contemporary thought.

The author was in conversation with Pooja Khanna, **Ehsaas** Woman of Dehradun, whose poised moderation guided the discussion with warmth and depth. The evening commenced with a gracious welcome by Pooja Marwah, **Ehsaas** Woman of Dehradun, setting the tone for a thoughtful and enriching dialogue.

Tracing the origins of her literary journey, Modi reflected on the deep influence of Indian epics during her childhood. "It all started when I was a kid and I was told stories from the Ramayan and Mahabharata," she shared, adding that over time she began searching for the symbolism hidden within these narratives. Speaking on the balance between devotion and reason, she remarked, "It began with faith and then it led to intellectual inquiry," emphasising the importance of questioning alongside belief.

One of the most compelling segments of the evening revolved around the concept of rasa and emotional balance. Explaining emotions through a simple yet profound analogy, Modi observed, "When we drink a juice, it leaves an aftertaste and so does emotion." Reflecting on shanta rasa, she described it as a state of calmness and harmony, drawing references to the divine relationship of Shiva and Parvati.

Discussing her work on Surya, the Hindu deity of the Sun, Modi described the experience of writing the book as "almost like a divine calling." Seamlessly weaving together mythology, astrology, science, and lived experience, she observed, "You can see how science, astrology, and mythology cross paths." Speaking about sacred spaces, she reflected that ancient temples hold immense energy because of generations of faith and prayer associated with them.

The discussion also touched upon femininity, destiny, and personal responsibility. On astrology, Modi offered a balanced perspective, clarifying, "Astrology is not science, the making of the patri is science," while emphasising that individual effort remains central to shaping one's life.

The evening concluded with an engaging audience interaction, followed by a heartfelt vote of thanks by Pooja Marwah. Shalini Modi was felicitated by Suman Marwah with terracotta artefacts from Central India, bringing the thoughtful literary gathering to a graceful close.



Pooja Marwah



Audience

*This session of **The Write Circle** was organized with the support of **Ehsaas** Women of Dehradun, Hindi Print Media Partner, Dainik Jagran*



Shalini Modi

Mythology, Meaning, and Modern Thought



Rashi Sobti

The serene hills of Mussoorie set the perfect backdrop for an engaging and thought-provoking edition of **The Write Circle**, hosted by the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. The evening brought together literature enthusiasts, seekers, and lovers of mythology for an enriching conversation that explored spirituality, ancient wisdom, and their relevance in the modern world.

The session featured an insightful dialogue between the author and conversationalist Rashi Sobti, whose thoughtful questions guided the discussion across themes of mythology, philosophy, and self-discovery. The evening commenced with a warm welcome note by Isha Gupta Vaish, **Ehsaas** Woman of Mussoorie, who introduced the spirit of the gathering and reflected on the importance of literary conversations that inspire reflection and dialogue.

The discussion began with an exploration of the author's journey into spirituality and mythology, examining whether this inclination was innate or cultivated over time. Reflecting on the timeless relevance of Indian epics such as the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the conversation highlighted how these ancient narratives continue to offer guidance on human relationships, morality, inner conflict, and resilience even in contemporary society.

A particularly engaging segment focused on the delicate balance between traditional wisdom and modern interpretation. The author spoke about approaching mythology not merely as stories from the past, but as living philosophies that continue to evolve with every generation. The conversation also delved into astrology, where ideas surrounding destiny, free will, ethics, and scepticism were discussed with nuance and balance. Questions around whether astrology should be viewed as a science, an art, or a spiritual tool led to a lively and insightful exchange with the audience.

The author also shared reflections on the inspiration behind the books *Seven Immortals* and *The Eternal Sun*, offering glimpses into the research, symbolism, and spiritual undert

ones woven into the narratives. Speaking about future projects, the author hinted at continuing to explore themes rooted in mythology, consciousness, and the human search for meaning.

The evening concluded with a heartfelt vote of thanks by Isha Gupta Vaish, who expressed gratitude to the author, guests, and audience for making the session deeply engaging and memorable. The author was felicitated by Rajni Vaish, while Ashu Jain felicitated conversationalist Rashi Sobti, bringing the evening to a graceful close.



Isha Gupta Vaish



Rajni Vaish

*This session of **The Write Circle** was organized with the support of **Ehsaas Women of Mussoorie**, Hospitality Partner **Amara Queen of Hills** and Hindi Print Media Partner, **Dainik Jagran***



Shehnab Sahin

Voices of Resilience, Identity, and Belonging



Amelia Lalremdiki Sailo

The culturally vibrant city of Aizawl witnessed an evening of profound introspection and emotional candour as **The Write Circle**, an initiative of the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, hosted an illuminating literary session featuring author and humanitarian Shehnab Sahin. In conversation with Amelia Lalremdiki Sailo, **Ehsaas** Woman of Aizawl, who also delivered the welcome note, the evening unfolded as a moving exploration of memory, identity, resilience, and the search for belonging.

Opening the conversation with remarkable honesty, Sahin shared that she identifies as being on the autism and ADHD spectrum, adding that she hoped each listener would find something personally meaningful in her reflections. What followed was an unflinching account of grief, transformation, and purpose. Recalling the sudden loss of her father at sixteen, she reflected, “When you lose a primary attachment figure that early in life, something shifts forever.”

The author spoke candidly about the pressures of responsibility that followed, describing how the tragedy ignited a relentless desire “to become the man of the family.” Her reflections on navigating societal expectations, academic ambition, and emotional turmoil resonated deeply with the audience. She also critiqued conventional ideas of success, observing how young people are often pushed toward socially sanctioned careers while their inner calling remains unheard.

One of the evening’s most powerful themes was the importance of listening to one’s “inner voice.” Recounting how images from the Syrian conflict moved her profoundly, Sahin shared how this awakening eventually led her to humanitarian work with refugees in Jordan. “I felt good waking up every day knowing my life meant something to someone,” she remarked.

The discussion also explored themes of identity and alienation following her return to Assam. Speaking about the changing social landscape, she reflected, “This was not

the Assam of my father’s time.” Her deeply personal account of struggling with belonging and confronting her religious identity was delivered with moving vulnerability. Writing, she explained, became an act of survival during periods of intense emotional distress.

Speaking about her acclaimed book *Color My Grave Purple*, Sahin emphasised the importance of reclaiming narratives from the Northeast beyond violence and insurgency. “We are not a population to be defined only through conflict,” she asserted. The conversation also touched upon gender, mental health, and global humanitarian crises, with Sahin offering sharp yet nuanced observations on contemporary realities.

The evening concluded with a moving reading from the author’s work, followed by a heartfelt vote of thanks by Amelia Lalremdiki Sailo. As a gesture of appreciation, the author was felicitated with traditional stringed puppets from Western India, bringing the evening to a graceful close.



Audience

*This session of **The Write Circle** was organized with the support of **Ehsaas** Women of Aizawl, in association with Oil India Limited; Hospitality Partner, Folkland*



Shehnab Sahin



Pooja Goenka

A Love Letter to Home: Exploring Memory, Identity and Belonging

An evening of intellectual depth and emotional resonance unfolded at **The Write Circle** in Shillong, where acclaimed author and humanitarian Shehnab Sahin engaged in a thought-provoking conversation with Pooja Goenka, **Ehsaas** Woman of Shillong. The session began with a warm welcome by Jyoti Agarwal, **Ehsaas** Woman of Shillong, setting the stage for an evening of introspection, storytelling, and meaningful dialogue.

At the outset, Sahin challenged the narrative often associated with her career journey. While many describe her as someone who moved from government service to humanitarian work, she clarified, “I was always a humanitarian worker. These four years were an aberration of sorts, and now I’m back to doing what I was always doing.”

Reflecting on her years in conflict zones and refugee settlements across the Middle East, Sahin shared moving accounts of resilience and generosity. Speaking about communities affected by war, she observed, “The spaces that I call home, you don’t see a lot of integration; you see a lot of disintegration.” Yet she recalled how families living in extreme hardship often displayed extraordinary kindness, refusing to let guests pay for meals despite their own struggles.

The conversation then turned to her return to Assam after many years away. Recalling her search for the place she remembered from childhood, Sahin reflected, “I was coming back to look for the Assam of my father. I could not find the thousand fireflies in our courtyards, the sparrows, or the sense of community.” The pandemic further deepened this sense of dislocation as she worked on the frontlines managing quarantine facilities during COVID-19.

One of the evening’s most poignant moments came when Sahin spoke about becoming acutely aware of her religious identity. Recounting an incident where a stranger assumed she would not contribute to a Hindu festival because of her

Muslim name, she admitted the experience deeply affected her. These reflections eventually formed the emotional foundation of her book *Color My Grave Purple*.

Explaining the title, she shared that the colour purple was inspired by the blossoms of the Queen Crepe Myrtle tree, her father’s favourite. Through fiction, she sought to honour his memory and explore questions of belonging, grief, and identity.

The session concluded with an engaging audience interaction, followed by a heartfelt vote of thanks by Jyoti Agarwal. The author was felicitated by Patricia Mukhim before warmly interacting with readers during a book-signing session.



Jyoti Agarwal



Audience

*This session of **The Write Circle** was organized with the support of **Ehsaas** Women of Shillong, in association with Oil India Limited; Hospitality Partner, Taj Vivanta*



Mahadevi, Myth and the Modern Mind

An evening of intellectual inquiry and spiritual reflection unfolded in Agra as **The Write Circle**, an initiative of the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, hosted acclaimed author Priyanka Sharma Kaintura in conversation with Shweta Bansal, **Ehsaas** Woman of Agra. The event began with a warm welcome by Vinti Kathuria, **Ehsaas** Woman of Agra.

The discussion explored mythology, philosophy, cosmology, and contemporary womanhood through the lens of Kaintura's work *Mahadevi*. Explaining her choice of narrator, the author remarked, "Before Vishnu, before Rudra, who existed? The answer is energy, Shakti, Mahadevi." She shared how she moved beyond the traditional Navadurga framework to create a chronological narrative beginning with cosmic creation, presenting the many manifestations of the divine feminine as part of a continuous story.

Kaintura reflected on how her fascination with mythology began in childhood through stories narrated by her grandmother. Those early experiences, she noted, shaped her literary imagination and highlighted the importance of intergenerational storytelling. Drawing upon her background in business management and corporate communications, she observed that mythological narratives continue to offer timeless lessons on leadership, ethics, ambition, and conflict.

One of the most compelling segments focused on the concept of Shakti. Using vivid imagery, Kaintura explained, "If the universe had a skeleton on which it stood, that is Shiv. Life, movement, flesh, and energy are Shakti." She described the divine feminine as the force underlying creation, preservation, and transformation.

The conversation also examined the emotional dimensions of divinity. According to Kaintura, Indian spiritual traditions embrace human emotions rather than reject them. "Love and fear are the two great emotions, and everything else emerges from them," she remarked.

A lively discussion followed on the relevance of mythology in modern life. Referring to figures such as Draupadi and Satyawati, she argued that ancient stories continue to illuminate contemporary questions of justice, resilience, and identity. Looking ahead to her forthcoming work *Kali*, she reflected on society's tendency to soften the fierce dimensions of the feminine divine.

The session concluded with an engaging audience interaction, followed by a vote of thanks by Vinti Kathuria. The author was felicitated by Sudha Kapur, and readers gathered enthusiastically for a book-signing session.



Vinti Kathuria



Audience

*This session of **The Write Circle** was organized with the support of **Ehsaas** Women of Agra, Hospitality Partner, ITC Mughal; and Hindi Print Media Partner, Dainik Jagran*



Priyanka Sharma Kaintura



Sushma Niraj Sethia

Shakti, Symbolism and the Feminine Divine

An evening of spiritual inquiry and literary reflection unfolded in Jodhpur during a captivating session of **The Write Circle**, an initiative of the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. The event featured author Priyanka Sharma Kaintura in conversation with Sushma Niraj Sethia, **Ehsaas** Woman of Jodhpur, and commenced with a gracious welcome by Preeti Mehta, **Ehsaas** Woman of Jodhpur.

Tracing the origins of her writing journey, Kaintura reflected on her two-decade-long career in corporate communications and how a lifelong habit of observation gradually evolved into storytelling. The turning point, she shared, came during the pandemic when a deep desire to understand the concept of Shakti led her towards an exploration of the Divine Feminine. "I wanted to know who she is," she remarked, questioning whether the Goddess was merely an iconographic figure or something far more profound.

This search culminated in *Mahadevi*, a work that reinterprets mythology through a contemporary lens while preserving its spiritual essence. One of the evening's most engaging discussions centred on the distinction between femininity and womanhood. Drawing upon various manifestations of the Goddess, Kaintura observed that figures such as Saraswati, Kali, and Durga embody different dimensions of feminine power, challenging conventional definitions of womanhood.

The conversation also explored fascinating intersections between mythology and science. Referencing concepts such as sacred geometry, the Fibonacci sequence, and the Sri Yantra, Kaintura illustrated how ancient wisdom often resonates with modern scientific thought. "Kali is dark, cannot be contained, and from her comes the universe," she remarked, encouraging the audience to reconsider familiar mythological imagery.

Addressing the relevance of mythology today, she noted that ancient narratives offer valuable frameworks for

understanding ethics, ecology, consciousness, and human behaviour. "History is extremely important," she said. "It gives us a lens to see life in a different way."

Concluding with a powerful metaphor, Kaintura described Shakti as a river that knows when to nurture and when to become a flood. Through her clarity, scholarship, and insight, she transformed timeless narratives into meaningful conversations for the modern age. The session concluded with closing remarks by Sushma Niraj Sethia. The author was felicitated with handcrafted Rajasthani puppets by Mohit Maharishi of Fairfield by Marriott, Jodhpur.



Preeti Mehta



Audience

The session of **The Write Circle** event in Jodhpur was organised in association with **Ehsaas** Woman of Jodhpur and Nature's Park; and Hospitality Partner, Fairfield by Marriott, Jodhpur



Priyanka Sharma Kaintura

Swati Agarwal

Beyond Rituals and Reverence: Exploring Mythology, Identity and the Feminine Divine

An evening of thoughtful reflection and engaging dialogue unfolded in Udaipur under **The Write Circle**, an initiative of the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. The session featured acclaimed author Priyanka Sharma Kaintura in conversation with Swati Agarwal, **Ehsaas** Woman of Udaipur, exploring mythology, feminine power, spirituality, and the relevance of ancient wisdom in contemporary life. The evening commenced with a welcome note by Shraddha Murdia, **Ehsaas** Woman of Udaipur.

From the outset, Kaintura spoke with candour about the responsibilities of a writer. “Editing the truth never worked for me,” she remarked, emphasising that authentic storytelling allows readers to discover parts of themselves within a narrative.

Discussing the inspiration behind her work, Kaintura shared how a simple question led her on a journey of research, travel, and discovery: Who is Devi beyond the familiar iconography of temples and rituals? “What we understand of Devi is not even the beginning of her,” she observed. “She is the basis of this whole universe.”

Drawing parallels between spirituality and science, she described Shakti as the primordial energy that sustains existence. Referring to the mythology of Mahishasura, she explained how feminine energy embodies both nurturing and transformative power. “The same river that nurtures can also become a flood,” she noted, highlighting the multidimensional nature of the feminine divine.

A recurring theme throughout the discussion was the disconnect between ritual and understanding. Kaintura argued that while traditions continue to be practised, their deeper philosophical significance is often overlooked. “We worship them, but we’re not really valuing them,” she reflected.

The conversation also examined ethics, mythology, and the complexities of human behaviour. Drawing examples from the Mahabharata, she noted that mythology rarely presents the world in absolutes. “The world exists in shades of grey,” she said, emphasising the nuanced lessons embedded within ancient narratives. She further distilled her research into what she called the “Three Es” — Energy, Emotions, and Ecology — underscoring the interconnectedness of humanity and nature.

The audience interaction that followed explored themes ranging from feminism and cultural identity to ecological consciousness. Kaintura encouraged critical inquiry over unquestioning belief, stating, “Blind faith is not good. I would rather have somebody study and then choose what they want to believe.”

The evening concluded with a heartfelt vote of thanks by **Ehsaas** woman, Shraddha Murdia. The author was felicitated by Swati Agarwal and Shraddha Murdia in recognition of her literary contributions and efforts to reinterpret mythology for modern readers.



Shraddha Murdia



Audience

*This session of **The Write Circle** was organized with the support of **Ehsaas** Women of Udaipur; Hospitality Partner, Radisson Blu Palace Resort & Spa, Udaipur*



Arti Dwarkadas

From Boardrooms to Barren Fields: A Journey of Growth and Grit



Jatan Shekhawat

An engaging evening of honesty, humour, and hard-earned wisdom unfolded at **The Write Circle** in Jaipur, hosted by the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, where acclaimed author Arti Dwarkadas was in conversation with Jatan Shekhawat. The session opened with a warm welcome by Mita Kapur of Siyahi.

Dwarkadas, who spent decades in Mumbai's advertising world, recounted the life-changing decision that took her from urban boardrooms to a remote patch of barren land in rural Maharashtra. "We decided we are starting an organic farm. We know nothing about farming," she admitted with characteristic candour. What began as an ambitious experiment soon became a lesson in humility. "We went in with urban confidence. Rural reality hit us in the face at every turn."

Reflecting on her years on the farm, she observed that agriculture has a unique way of challenging human assumptions. "Effort and outcome on the farm are distant cousins," she remarked, describing how nature constantly reminds one of the limits of control.

A particularly memorable part of the discussion centred on the farm's early interactions with the neighbouring Adivasi community. Suspicious of the newcomers' intentions, villagers initially believed they were building luxury farmhouses. Recalling a tense confrontation, Dwarkadas laughed, "We're not here to farm. We're here to farm." Over time, persistence and genuine commitment earned the trust of the community.

The conversation also highlighted the invaluable role of Maruti, the farm's first employee and trusted companion. "He adopted us," she said affectionately, crediting him with guiding them through countless challenges and helping bridge the gap between urban aspirations and rural realities.

Beyond farming, the discussion became a reflection on privilege, sustainability, and personal transformation.

Dwarkadas acknowledged that unlike many farmers, she could absorb financial losses. "A small farmer can't," she noted, drawing attention to the uncertainties faced by those who depend on agriculture for survival.

Perhaps the most profound insight of the evening came when she reflected on how farming changed her. "I used to be a control freak," she confessed. "Farming has taught me to listen—to the land, to local wisdom, and to nature's rhythms." Summing up her journey with humility, she told the audience, "I'm not a farmer. I'm a learner."

The session concluded with an engaging audience interaction, followed by the felicitation of the author and conversationalist by Aakriti Periwal, **Ehsaas** Woman of Jaipur, with exquisite Dokra artefacts. Mita Kapur delivered the vote of thanks, bringing the enriching evening to a close.

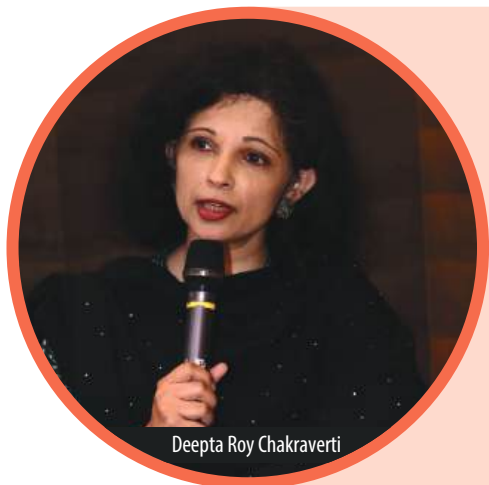


Mita Kapur



Aakriti Periwal

*This session of **The Write Circle** was organized in association with Siyahi; Hospitality Partner, ITC Rajputana*



Deepta Roy Chakraverti

Reclaiming a Forgotten Trailblazer



Nidhi Garg

An evening of historical rediscovery and inspiring reflection unfolded in Bhubaneswar as **The Write Circle**, hosted author and biographer Deepta Roy Chakraverti in conversation with Nidhi Garg, **Ehsaas** Woman of Bhubaneswar. The session explored the extraordinary life of Jamini Sen, one of India's pioneering women physicians whose remarkable legacy remains largely overlooked in her homeland. The evening began with a warm welcome by Varun Shangloo, General Manager of Vivanta Bhubaneswar.

Chakraverti shared how discovering that Jamini Sen continues to be honoured in Scotland while remaining relatively unknown in India became the catalyst for her book. "The West remembers her and celebrates her, but her own country forgot her. I felt that was deeply wrong," she remarked, explaining how that sense of injustice fuelled years of research.

Drawing from family archives, oral histories, and extensive historical investigation, the author spent nearly three years reconstructing Jamini Sen's life. Beyond research, however, she described developing a profound connection with her subject. "A successful biography requires a kind of possession. You have to allow the personality to blend into your life," she reflected.

The discussion highlighted how Jamini Sen emerged during a transformative period marked by the Bengal Renaissance and the rise of women's education. Chakraverti observed that figures like Jamini appear during moments of great societal change and continue to inspire future generations. "At times of uncertainty, lives like hers remind us of courage, endurance, integrity, and faith," she said.

A particularly engaging segment focused on the influence of Jamini's father, Chandicharan Sen, a progressive thinker who encouraged his daughters to pursue education for the love of learning. This support, combined with Jamini's own determination, enabled her to overcome significant social barriers and build an extraordinary career.

The conversation also explored her decade-long service in Nepal, where she not only served as physician to the royal family but also played a vital role in strengthening women's healthcare systems. Equally relevant were reflections on the societal scrutiny she faced as an independent, unmarried woman who adopted a child, a reality that still resonates today.

The session concluded with an engaging audience interaction, followed by the author's felicitation by Pradipta Kumar Tripathy. Vedula Ramalakshmi, **Ehsaas** Woman of Bhubaneswar, delivered the vote of thanks before attendees gathered for a book-signing session.



Vedula Ramalakshmi



Varun Shangloo

*This session of **The Write Circle** was organized with the support of **Ehsaas** Women of Bhubaneswar; Hospitality Partner, Vivanta Bhubaneswar*

Writing Through Legacy and Loss



Kashni Tayal



Neelima Dalmia Adhar

The inaugural edition of **The Write Circle** in Hisar, an initiative of the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, brought together literature, history, and personal reflection in a compelling conversation featuring acclaimed author Neelima Dalmia Adhar. In dialogue with Kashni Tayal, the evening explored themes of family, identity, emotional resilience, and the transformative power of storytelling. The session commenced with a warm welcome by Rhea Malik, **Ehsaas** Woman of Hisar.

The conversation also touched upon her later works, including *The Secret Diary of Kasturba Gandhi* and *Radha*, reflecting her enduring interest in uncovering overlooked voices and emotional truths. The evening concluded with a felicitation of the author by Jagdeep Bhargava, while Naresh Leekha honoured conversationalist Kashni Tayal. A heartfelt vote of thanks was delivered by Neha Kajla, **Ehsaas** Woman of Hisar.

At the outset, Adhar offered a candid glimpse into the unconventional circumstances of her childhood. “I am a product of polygamy. I am the fourth child of my father’s sixth wife. We are eighteen children,” she remarked, immediately drawing the audience into her remarkable personal narrative. While acknowledging that the literary influence came from her mother, a prolific Hindi author, she described herself as “an accidental writer.”



Rhea Malik

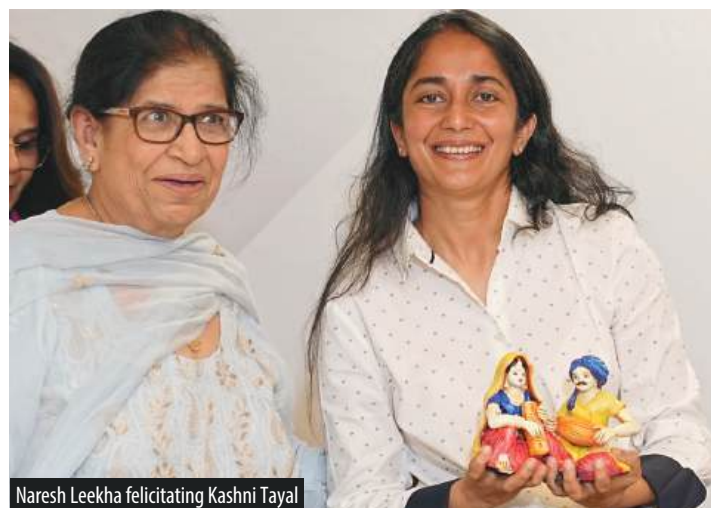


Neha Kajla

The discussion centred around her acclaimed memoir-biography, *Father Dearest: The Life and Times of R.K. Dalmia*. What began as a suggestion from a friend evolved into a deeply personal journey of self-discovery. “When I began writing about my father, I astonished myself. I did not realise how much anguish I had buried within me,” she reflected. Writing, she explained, became an act of catharsis and healing.

Rather than focusing on her father’s business achievements, Adhar sought to understand the man behind the public persona. “I wanted to understand what drove him, what he was searching for, and what he hoped to find,” she said. Her interest, she noted, was rooted in psychology rather than economics or finance.

One of the evening’s most moving moments came when she spoke about forgiveness and acceptance. Through the process of writing, she arrived at a deeper understanding of both her parents and their limitations. “Recognising that neither of them could have done better than they did allowed me to find peace,” she shared.



Naresh Leekha felicitating Kashni Tayal

*This session of **The Write Circle** was organized with the support of **Ehsaas** Women of Hisar, and was in association with Hospitality Partner, **Besstin**; and Hindi Print Media Partner, **Dainik Jagaran***

ANSHUL CHATURVEDI ON VIVEKANANDA, FEAR & THE COURAGE TO STAND ALONE

This session of **An Author's Afternoon** in Kolkata unfolded as a luminous confluence of literature, philosophy, and music, featuring journalist and author Anshul Chaturvedi in a deeply absorbing conversation with tabla maestro Bickram Ghosh. The evening drew an eager and reflective audience, setting the tone for what became an intellectually stirring and emotionally resonant exchange. The session opened with a warm and gracious welcome by Esha Dutta, Honorary Convenor of North-East Affairs of the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** and **Ehsaas** Woman of Kolkata, lending the evening with ceremonial elegance.

What distinguished the evening was not merely the stature of its speakers, but the candour and philosophical depth with which they engaged one another. Ghosh began by recalling his early encounters with Chaturvedi, observing with admiration that “he knew infinitely more about two iconic Bengalis than I knew; Swami Vivekananda and Subhas Chandra Bose.” Reflecting on this unlikely discovery, he added with gentle irony, “I’m a Kolkata boy, and as he himself says, the man from Noida knows much more than me.”

The conversation soon turned toward Swami Vivekananda’s relevance in everyday life. Ghosh highlighted the practical nature of Chaturvedi’s work, noting, “Very few books on Vivekananda are like handbooks which help you lead your life on a daily basis; we put our great leaders up there, make them esoteric, and don’t really use them in our



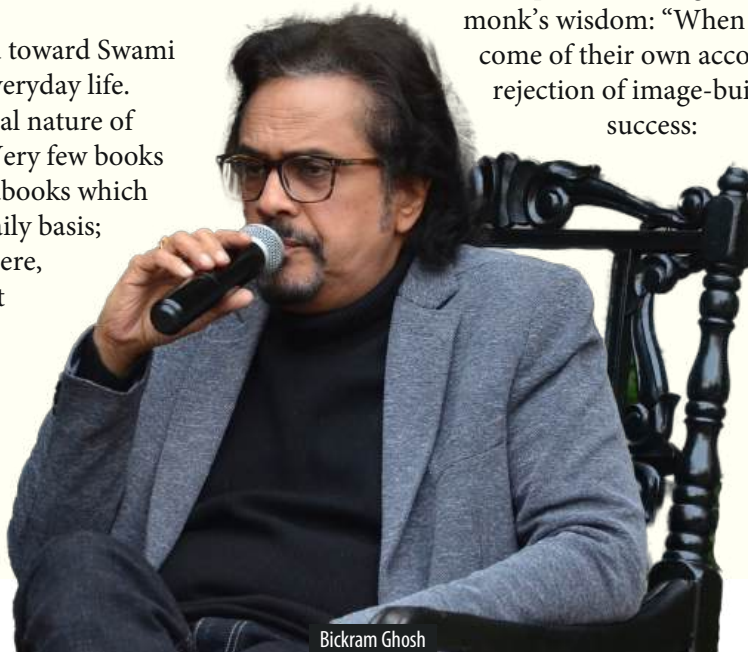
Anshul Chaturvedi

daily lives, but here he’s written a book which you can use in your daily life.”

One of the most provocative moments of the evening emerged when Chaturvedi quoted Vivekananda’s line: “I do not care for human help.” Questioning its modern relevance, he asked whether this meant rejecting parental care, the nurturing mother, or the guiding guru. The dialogue unfolded with striking honesty as he observed, “We live in an era where hustle is seen as a virtue; social climbing is seen as a virtue; and we have internalised it that you have to be a hustler to move ahead in life.”

Central to the discussion was Vivekananda’s teaching that self-work precedes recognition. Chaturvedi quoted the monk’s wisdom: “When the flower blooms, the bees come of their own accord.” He interpreted this as a rejection of image-building and performative

success: “You cannot take a plastic flower and sell enough PR for the bees to come for it. Work on yourself. Do not care for human help to elevate you.”



Bickram Ghosh



Anshul Chaturvedi with Loreto Students



"I am a spirit living in a body. I am not the body. The body will die, but I shall not die."

The conversation deepened into reflections on loss, fear, and impermanence. Chaturvedi remarked poignantly, "Happily ever after is only for film productions. There is no ever after. One of them has to mourn for the other. There's no way around it." His words resonated with quiet gravity as he continued, "The longer you live together, the more difficult the separation."

Turning to religion and atheism, Chaturvedi offered a nuanced perspective: "You don't have to be religious to understand Vivekananda. You can even be an atheist and understand him." He argued that Vivekananda did not preach an abstract faith but insisted on experiential truth: "He is the only man who asked his guru, 'Have you seen God?'"

He further critiqued transactional faith, remarking, "There is a beggar's religion and a shopkeeper's religion; which is transactional." Such religion, he suggested, reduces the divine to a problem-solver for board exams and cricket matches, "which is really demeaning to the larger cosmos." The discussion also ventured into fear as a formative human emotion. Quoting Vivekananda, Chaturvedi said: "Fear must be fought. Dissatisfaction must be welcomed. He who is afraid of loss always loses."

Drawing parallels from sport

and life, he explained that fear alters performance and diminishes potential, "You play not to lose, and so your game changes."

In one of the evening's most lyrical moments, Chaturvedi quoted:

"I am a spirit living in a body. I am not the body. The body will die, but I shall not die."

When asked why humans do not remember past lives, he offered a practical explanation: "Imagine the complications if everybody remembered who they were before... God is a more practical manager of things than we are." What endures, he suggested, are not memories but emotions: "You will carry your strongest emotions; intense love or intense hate; the rest you will forget."

As the evening drew to a close with an interactive Q&A session, forgiveness emerged as a final and vital theme. Chaturvedi observed, "Forgiveness is one of the most essential qualities; there is a cleansing that happens." His reflections transformed the dialogue into something more than a literary conversation; it became a meditation on how to live.

As Esha Dutta, Honorary Convenor of North-East Affairs and Ehsaas Woman of Kolkata, delivered the closing remarks, the author Anshul Chaturvedi was felicitated by Jaya Seal Ghosh, while conversationalist Bickram Ghosh was honoured by Ruman Ganguly with traditional Dokra artefacts.

This session of An Author's Afternoon was organized in association with Hospitality Partner, Taj Bengal



Bickram Ghosh felicitated by Ruman Ganguly



Anshul Chaturvedi felicitated by Jaya Seal Ghosh



Esha Dutta

AN AUTHOR'S AFTERNOON: REFLECTIONS ON CRIME, POWER, AND HISTORY

An evening marked by intellectual vigour and reflective discourse unfolded during **An Author's Afternoon**, where author and former Director General of Police D. Sivanandhan engaged in a compelling conversation with entrepreneur Manoj Mohanka. The session commenced with gracious opening remarks by Gouri Basu, **Ehsaas** Woman of Kolkata, whose eloquence set an appropriately warm and dignified tone for the evening.

As the discussion progressed, the conversation turned toward one of the most formidable figures of India's criminal underworld, Dawood Ibrahim. Sivanandhan, drawing upon decades of policing experience, offered a meticulous account of the criminal's rise to power. Reflecting on the period surrounding The Emergency in India, he remarked with analytical candour: "time Dawood Ibrahim consolidated his position right so the emergency in many ways worked antithetical to the purpose that was set out." The statement, though conversational in tone, revealed a sharp observation that a political episode intended to impose discipline upon the nation had, paradoxically, strengthened certain clandestine networks.

He continued by noting that from this point forward Ibrahim began experimenting with methods that were novel within the underworld hierarchy. "Then and from then on he began to follow what is called uh now known as a disruptive technology," Sivanandhan observed. Elaborating further, he remarked, "he started doing things which were not previously done moving into other people's territory etc etc." The phrasing borrowed almost from the lexicon of modern innovation was striking. It conveyed how the underworld had begun to adopt strategic adaptability reminiscent of corporate disruption, albeit in a far darker domain.

The former police chief also recalled the moment that marked Ibrahim's physical departure from India, a



D. Sivanandhan

moment that would profoundly shape his later global operations. "In 1984 he left India and has not appeared on our soil since."



Manoj Mohanka

The conversation then moved towards the early structure of Mumbai's underworld.

Sivanandhan described a surprisingly cooperative environment in its formative stages. "There was a very peaceful coexistence of the guys," he explained. Figures such as Rajan Nair cultivated a curious reputation as local benefactors. As Sivanandhan vividly recounted, "Rajan madly used to be the Robin Hood by bringing that Ganpati pandal."

The reference to the public celebrations of *Ganesh Chaturthi* illuminated how criminal leaders often fashioned themselves as patrons of community culture. The same strategy, he noted, was later adopted by Varadarajan Mudaliar in Chembur through the Sahyadri Mandal. "He spent three crores of rupees to be the Robin Hood and do good to the people," Sivanandhan remarked, his words hinting at the calculated theatrics behind such philanthropy.

To illustrate the brutality of those years, he narrated the chilling story of a financier named Satish Raji. The man, convinced that technological protection would guarantee his safety, travelled in a vehicle fitted with bulletproof glass. But the criminals devised a brutally simple tactic. "When he was waiting for the signal with two hammers, they hammered the glass in one second. The poor fellow didn't ever believe that this bulletproof glass would save him against a bullet, but not against a hammer." Moments later, the attackers fired multiple shots and escaped with calculated efficiency.



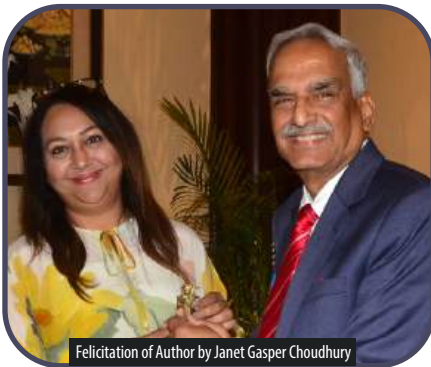
Gouri Basu



Felicitating of Conversationalist by Janet Gasper Choudhury



Dokra



Felicitating of Author by Janet Gasper Choudhury



Book Signing



Audience

Turning back to Ibrahim's early years, Sivanandhan explained that the gangster had entered the criminal world at a remarkably young age. "The guy was born in 1955 and in 1975 he would have been about 20 years old but he began at 14." Yet the large-scale bloodshed associated with the underworld did not fully erupt until later. "The bleeding started only in 1983-84," he noted, referencing escalating rivalries involving figures such as Samad Khan.

The narrative then broadened to include the international dimensions of organised crime. One accused, identified as Alangir, fled to Dubai after obtaining bail. There he prospered through smuggling networks. "The profit of sending gold and electronic goods is huge," Sivanandhan explained, adding that the man constructed an opulent residence known as the White House and ran a lavish hotel with international staff.

One of the most arresting moments of the evening came when Sivanandhan reflected upon the catastrophic events surrounding the 1993 Mumbai bomb blasts. In an unembellished yet compelling narrative, he remarked: "The biggest catastrophe ever in the world that is organized by the mafia, a bomb blast, a terrorist attack took place where 257 Mumbai lost their lives. 857 were injured. 900 were missing. Hundreds of crores worth of property went up in smoke."

Finally, the discussion approached a sombre historical turning point. With a measured tone, Sivanandhan declared: "The main catastrophic event for the whole country took place on 12th March 1993." The attacks followed the demolition of the Babri Masjid on 6 December 1992 and the communal violence that ensued. In the aftermath, some members of the minority community reportedly approached Ibrahim in Dubai with a grim request. As Sivanandhan recounted, they told him to "do some equalizer business whatever it is whatever it meant."

Perhaps the most evocative segment of the evening emerged when Sivanandhan reflected on leadership and personal courage during a Q&A session. Explaining why he often walked publicly without heavy security despite serious threats, he offered a striking rationale: "If I go with Z-category security, what kind of confidence message do I give to the people? How can a businessman believe that I will protect him if I cannot walk without protecting myself?" Gouri Basu, **Ehsaas** Woman of Kolkata would later return to the stage to deliver a heartfelt vote of thanks. The event also featured a moment of ceremonial appreciation when Janet Gasper Chowdhury felicitated both the author and the conversationalist with exquisite Dokra artefacts.

*This session of **An Author's Afternoon** was organized in association with Hospitality Partner, Taj Bengal*



Anjana Chandak

TIMELESS TALES, CONTEMPORARY VOICES: SUR AUR SAAZ WITH ANJANA CHANDAK

Sur Aur Saaz is a cultural and performance-based initiative of the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** that creates meaningful engagements with the performing arts through conversations and presentations by distinguished artistes.

As part of the initiative, acclaimed artiste Anjana Chandak presented her monodrama *Draupadi* in Prayagraj. Organised in association with Hotel Kanha Shyam and supported by Dainik Jagran as media partner, the performance explored the many dimensions of Draupadi's journey, bringing mythology, literature and theatre together in a compelling artistic experience.

The audience responded warmly to the presentation, appreciating its emotional depth and contemporary relevance.



Audience



Shruti Agarwal



Deepika Agrahari



Anjana Chandak



Parveen Tuli



The **Sur Aur Saaz** journey continued in Nagpur at CP Club, with Lokmat as media partner.

Through her acclaimed monodrama *Draupadi*, Anjana Chandak invited audiences to revisit one of the Mahabharata's most powerful characters through a contemporary lens.

Blending storytelling, emotion and performance, Chandak's portrayal highlighted themes of resilience, dignity and self-discovery. The evening was warmly received by audiences, who connected deeply with the timeless narrative and its enduring relevance.



Jyoti Kapoor



Anjana Chandak



Audience



Monica Bhagwagar



Anjana Chandak & Tripti Darda



Bharti Madhok

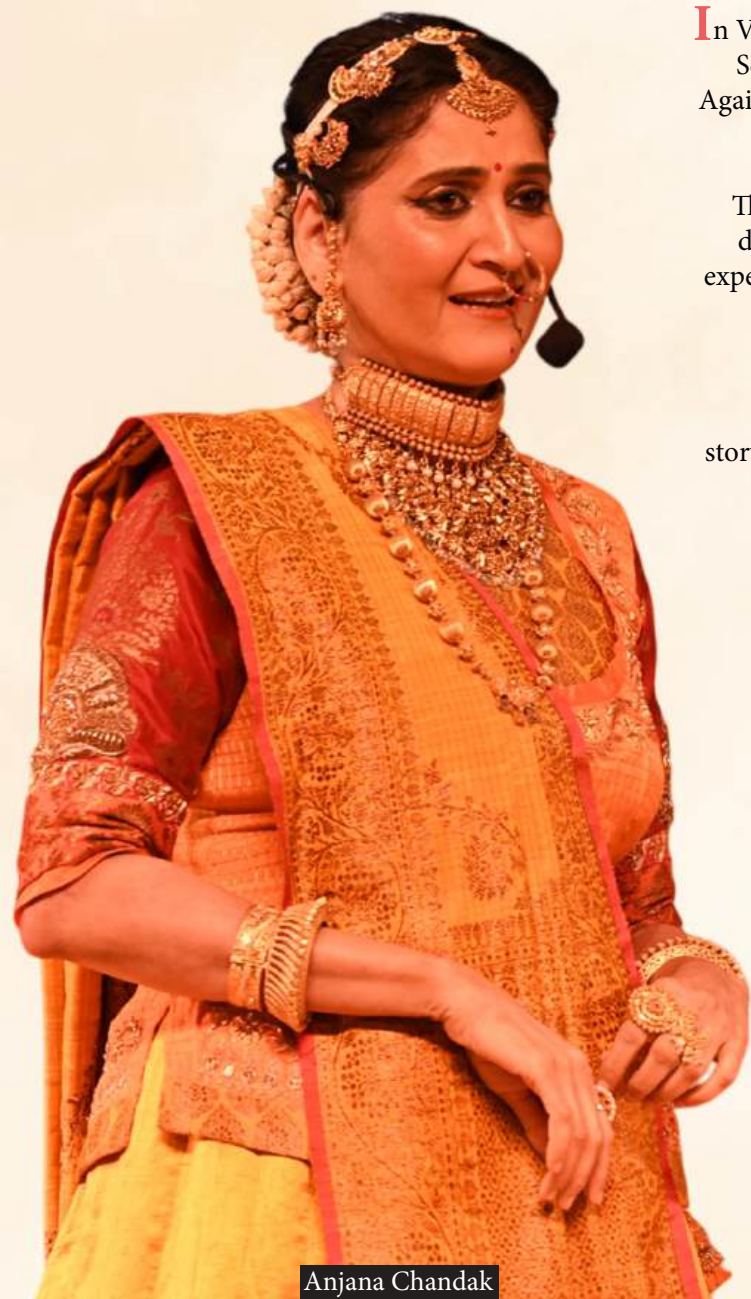


Monica Gupta

In Varanasi, **Sur Aur Saaz** was hosted in association with Sunbeam School and Hostel Varuna, with Dainik Jagran as media partner. Against the backdrop of a city celebrated for its cultural and literary heritage, *Draupadi* found an attentive and engaged audience.

Through a powerful solo performance, Anjana Chandak brought depth and nuance to the iconic character, creating an immersive experience that encouraged reflection on themes of courage, justice and identity.

Rooted in a city that has long nurtured artistic and intellectual traditions, the evening underscored the enduring power of storytelling to bridge the past and the present. Through theatre and expression, the performance invited audiences to engage with timeless themes that continue to resonate across generations.



Anjana Chandak





Anjana Chandak



Sushma Niraj Sethia



Preeti Mehta

The multi-city journey of **Sur Aur Saaz** concluded at Fairfield by Marriott Jodhpur. Through her celebrated performance of *Draupadi*, Anjana Chandak once again captivated audiences, presenting a timeless story that continues to resonate across generations.

From Prayagraj and Nagpur to Varanasi and Jodhpur, the initiative brought together literature, theatre and meaningful dialogue, reaffirming the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation's** commitment to creating enriching cultural experiences and fostering deeper engagement with the performing arts.



Mohit Maharishi & Anjana Chandak



Audience



Anant Vijay

दर्शकों को कमतर समझना फिल्म उद्योग की सबसे बड़ी भूल : अनंत विजय

प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन के 'कलम' कार्यक्रम का गुवाहाटी में आयोजन



Aparajita Pujari

द र्शकों को कमतर समझना फिल्म उद्योग की सबसे बड़ी भूल है। यह कहना है वरिष्ठ पत्रकार, लेखक और चिंतक अनंत विजय का। वे गुवाहाटी में आयोजित प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की साहित्यिक पहल 'कलम' के एक विशेष सत्र को संबोधित कर रहे थे।

अपने वक्तव्य में उन्होंने भारतीय सिनेमा में कहानी कहने की परंपरा पर चर्चा करते हुए कहा कि सिनेमा का मूल उद्देश्य मनोरंजन है और दर्शक अंततः एक प्रभावशाली कहानी तथा भावनात्मक अनुभव की तलाश में सिनेमाघरों तक पहुँचते हैं। यदि कहानी में दम हो, तो दर्शक समय और धन दोनों निवेश करने के लिए तैयार रहते हैं।

गुवाहाटी में आयोजित 'कलम' के इस सत्र का शुभारंभ अहसास वूमेन, गुवाहाटी की प्रतिनिधि तनुश्री दत्ता गोगोई ने किया। उन्होंने प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की गतिविधियों का परिचय देते हुए साहित्य, कला और सांस्कृतिक संवाद के प्रति संस्था की प्रतिबद्धता पर प्रकाश डाला।

अतिथि का परिचय करवाते हुए बताया गया कि अनंत विजय पत्रकारिता, साहित्य और सिनेमा के क्षेत्र में अपने व्यापक लेखन के लिए जाने जाते हैं। परिचय में उनकी प्रकाशित पुस्तकों तथा राष्ट्रीय फिल्म पुरस्कार (स्वर्ण कमल), गणेश शंकर विद्यार्थी पुरस्कार और कलिंगा लिटरेरी बुक अवार्ड सहित अनेक प्रतिष्ठित सम्मानों का भी उल्लेख किया गया। कार्यक्रम में अनंत विजय से संवाद प्रतिष्ठित लेखिका, कवयित्री, अनुवादक और फिल्म समीक्षक अपराजिता पुजारी ने किया।

अनंत विजय कहा कि फिल्मकार अपने समय और समाज से प्रभावित होता है, किंतु अंततः किसी फिल्म की सफलता उसकी कहानी और प्रस्तुति पर निर्भर करती है। भारतीय सिनेमा के इतिहास का उल्लेख करते हुए उन्होंने मदन इंडिया जैसी फिल्मों को सांस्कृतिक और वैचारिक विमर्श का महत्वपूर्ण स्रोत बताया।

ओटीटी प्लेटफॉर्मों पर चर्चा करते हुए उन्होंने अपनी चर्चित पुस्तक 'ओटीटी का मायाजाल' का संदर्भ दिया। उनके अनुसार ओटीटी ने भारतीय भाषाओं और क्षेत्रीय कथाओं को अभूतपूर्व वैश्विक पहुँच प्रदान की है। एआई और अनुवाद तकनीकों की सहायता से स्थानीय भाषाओं की सामग्री अब विश्वभर के दर्शकों तक पहुँच रही है। उन्होंने कहा कि भारत की

सबसे बड़ी शक्ति उसकी विविध लोककथाएँ, सांस्कृतिक स्मृतियाँ और क्षेत्रीय कथाएँ हैं, जिन्हें डिजिटल माध्यमों के जरिए व्यापक मंच मिल सकता है। हालाँकि उन्होंने यह भी स्वीकार किया कि ओटीटी अभी एक विकसित होता हुआ माध्यम है और इसके सामने जिम्मेदार सामग्री-निर्माण की चुनौती भी मौजूद है। उनके अनुसार भविष्य उन्हीं रचनाकारों का होगा जो मनोरंजन, संवेदनशीलता और सार्थक कथा-विन्यास के बीच संतुलन स्थापित कर सकेंगे।

कार्यक्रम के अंत में श्रोताओं ने विभिन्न विषयों पर प्रश्न पूछे, जिनका अनंत विजय ने विस्तार से उत्तर दिया। समापन सत्र में प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की ओर से अनंत विजय और अपराजिता पुजारी को उत्तर-पूर्व भारत की सांस्कृतिक विरासत के प्रतीक पारंपरिक नागा जनजातीय बाँस-निर्मित मुखौटे भेंट कर सम्मानित किया गया। धन्यवाद ज्ञापन के साथ कार्यक्रम का समापन हुआ।



Tanushree Datta Gogoi



Audience

“ भविष्य उन्हीं रचनाकारों का होगा जो मनोरंजन, संवेदनशीलता और सार्थक कथा-विन्यास के बीच संतुलन स्थापित कर सकेंगे। ”

प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की पहल 'कलम' के प्रथम गुवाहाटी सत्र का आयोजन अहसास वूमेन, गुवाहाटी के सहयोग से विवांता गुवाहाटी में संपन्न हुआ। कार्यक्रम को ऑयल इंडिया लिमिटेड का सहयोग प्राप्त था।



Tasneem Khan

अस्तित्व से ऊपर किसी को न चाहे : तस्लीम खान

मिलने की प्रेम कहानियाँ कहाँ होती हैं?
खुशी की कोई कहानी नहीं होती



Mahesh Kumar

आत्मसम्मान से बढ़कर कुछ नहीं होता। अस्तित्व से ऊपर किसी को न चाहना चाहिए—यह कहना है पत्रकार एवं साहित्यकार तस्लीम खान का। जयपुर में आयोजित कलम के एक सत्र को संबोधित करते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि आत्मसम्मान से किसी भी प्रकार का समझौता नहीं किया जाना चाहिए।

कार्यक्रम के आरंभ में राजस्थान एवं सेंट्रल इंडिया की मानद संयोजक अपरा कुच्छल ने सभी का गर्मजोशी से स्वागत किया। उन्होंने प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन के कार्यों पर प्रकाश डालते हुए बताया कि हिंदी भाषा को प्रोत्साहित करने के लिए कलम प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की एक अनूठी पहल है। उन्होंने यह भी जानकारी दी कि शीघ्र ही जयपुर कलम का 50 वाँ सत्र नए स्वरूप में आयोजित किया जाएगा।

उन्होंने बताया कि प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन साहित्य को बढ़ावा देने के लिए कलम के अतिरिक्त राइट सर्कल, टेड-ए-टी, लफ़्ज, सुर और साज, किताब जैसे अनेक कार्यक्रमों का आयोजन करता रहा है।

कलम जयपुर के इस सत्र की अतिथि लेखिका तस्लीम खान थीं। संवादकर्ता के रूप में लेखक महेश कुमार ने उनके साहित्य और जीवन अनुभवों को दर्शकों के साथ साझा किया। अपरा कुच्छल ने लेखिका का परिचय देते हुए बताया कि तस्लीम खान पिछले 20 वर्षों से सक्रिय पत्रकार-लेखक हैं। वे डीडवाना महिला महाविद्यालय की ट्रस्टी सदस्य हैं। मूलतः डीडवाना निवासी तस्लीम खान ने बांगड़ कॉलेज, डीडवाना से बी.एससी. तथा जर्नलिज्म में स्नातकोत्तर डिग्री जय नारायण व्यास विश्वविद्यालय, जोधपुर से प्राप्त की। उनका पहला उपन्यास “ऐ मेरे रहनुमा” भारतीय ज्ञानपीठ की नवलेखन प्रतियोगिता (2015) में अनुशासित सूची में प्रकाशित हुआ, जिसका अंग्रेजी अनुवाद भी उपलब्ध है। उन्हें चंद बरदाई युवा सम्मान, प्रगतिशील लेखक संघ (राजस्थान) का शाकुंतलम् सम्मान, सिखवाल स्मृति महिला लेखन पुरस्कार, तथा लाइली मीडिया अवॉर्ड (2021 एवं 2024) से सम्मानित किया जा चुका है।

तस्लीम खान ने कहा कि उन्होंने रिश्तों को गहराई से समझा और महसूस किया कि सिर्फ हमसफ़र होना या प्रेम में होना पर्याप्त नहीं होता। जब दो लोग साथ चलने का निर्णय लेते हैं, तो उनके बीच मानसिक सामंजस्य भी आवश्यक होता है। यही हमनवाई है—एकमत होना, समान सोच रखना।

प्रेम पर बोलते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि भारतीय समाज में महिलाओं को प्रेम के नाम पर भावनात्मक रूप से सबसे अधिक कमजोर किया गया है। सशक्तिकरण केवल पढ़ाई या कमाई से नहीं आता—भावनात्मक रूप से मजबूत होना भी उतना ही जरूरी है। उन्होंने यह भी कहा कि प्रेम करना और प्रेम लिखना—दोनों ही दुस्साहस की माँग करते हैं। यही दुस्साहस उनके पात्रों में दिखाई देता है।

उन्होंने कहा कि आधुनिकता के बावजूद पुरुष वर्चस्व पूरी तरह समाप्त नहीं हुआ है, बल्कि उसने आधुनिक रूप ले लिया है। प्रेम में भी नियंत्रण और निर्देश देने की प्रवृत्ति बनी रहती है। लेकिन उनके उपन्यास की नायिका इस सोच को अस्वीकार करती है। वह अपने अस्तित्व से ऊपर किसी को नहीं रखती।

उन्होंने लेखन और लेखक के बारे में बताया कि कहानी के किरदारों को हम नियंत्रित नहीं कर पाते। इसके लिए लेखक जिम्मेदार नहीं होता। किरदार जहाँ जाते हैं, लेखक को उनके साथ चलना पड़ता है। एक बार जब कहानी शुरू हो जाती है, तो उसकी गति किरदार स्वयं तय करते हैं। कई बार लोग कहते हैं कि पात्रों को मिला देना चाहिए, लेकिन मेरा कहना है—जब किरदार ही नहीं मिल रहे, तो मैं उन्हें भला कहाँ से मिलाऊँ?

आत्मसम्मान पर बोलते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि जहाँ आत्मसम्मान टूटे, वहाँ से निकल जाना चाहिए। रिश्ते बिगड़ सकते हैं, लेकिन आत्मसम्मान टूट जाए तो उसे दोबारा पाना मुश्किल होता है। उन्होंने यह भी कहा कि हमने बेटीयों को सशक्त बनाया, लेकिन बेटों को बराबरी का सम्मान देना नहीं सिखाया।

सत्र में दर्शकों ने लेखिका से कई प्रासंगिक प्रश्न किए। कार्यक्रम के समापन अवसर पर अपरा कुच्छल, मानद संयोजक, राजस्थान एवं सेंट्रल इंडिया ने सभी अतिथियों, वक्ताओं एवं उपस्थित श्रोताओं का आभार व्यक्त किया।

इस सत्र के हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर आईटीसी राजपुताना तथा सहयोगी संस्था वी केयर रहे। जयपुर की अहसास वूमन के सक्रिय सहयोग से इस सत्र का आयोजन हुआ।



Apra Kuchhal



Deependra Rana



Aalok Shrivastav

कविता केवल अभिव्यक्ति का माध्यम नहीं, जीवन को समझने का एक तरीका है - आलोक श्रीवास्तव

लफ़्ज अलीगढ़ में आलोक श्रीवास्तव से रू-ब-रू साहित्य प्रेमी



Faiza Abbasi

प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की साहित्यिक पहल लफ़्ज के अंतर्गत अलीगढ़ में आयोजित विशेष संवाद सत्र में सुप्रसिद्ध कवि, गीतकार और वरिष्ठ पत्रकार आलोक श्रीवास्तव ने अपनी उपस्थिति से साहित्यप्रेमियों को मंत्रमुग्ध कर दिया। कार्यक्रम का आयोजन अलीगढ़ के एमबीए हॉल में किया गया, जहाँ बड़ी संख्या में साहित्य, कविता और उर्दू-हिंदी भाषा के अनुरागी उपस्थित रहे।

कार्यक्रम का स्वागत अहसास वूमेन, अलीगढ़ की संस्थापक फैजा अब्बासी ने किया। उन्होंने अतिथि का परिचय देते हुए कहा कि आलोक श्रीवास्तव समकालीन हिंदी-उर्दू साहित्य की उन महत्वपूर्ण आवाजों में हैं जिन्होंने अपनी रचनाओं के माध्यम से संवेदना, प्रेम, स्मृति और मानवीय रिश्तों को नई अभिव्यक्ति दी है।

संवाद के दौरान फैजा अब्बासी ने आलोक श्रीवास्तव से उनके साहित्यिक सफर, पत्रकारिता के अनुभवों, कविता की रचना-प्रक्रिया और उर्दू भाषा के प्रति उनके अनुराग पर विस्तार से चर्चा की। आलोक श्रीवास्तव ने बताया कि कविता उनके लिए केवल अभिव्यक्ति का माध्यम नहीं, बल्कि जीवन को समझने और महसूस करने का एक तरीका है। उन्होंने अपने चर्चित काव्य-संग्रह 'आमीन' तथा लेखन यात्रा से जुड़े कई संस्मरण श्रोताओं के साथ साझा किए।

कार्यक्रम भावनाओं, स्मृतियों और साहित्यिक चिंतन से भर उठा। आलोक श्रीवास्तव ने अपनी गजलों और नज़्मों के माध्यम से श्रोताओं को कभी प्रेम की टीस, कभी माँ की ममता और कभी जीवन-संघर्ष के अनुभवों से रूबरू कराया। उनकी गजलों और कविताओं की पंक्तियों ने उपस्थित श्रोताओं को भाव-विभोर कर दिया।

उन्होंने साहित्य में भाषा की भूमिका, बदलते सामाजिक परिवेश और नई पीढ़ी की साहित्यिक रुचियों पर भी अपने विचार रखे। उन्होंने वर्तमान दौर के मुशायरों और भाषा-संस्कृति की स्थिति पर भी उन्होंने बेबाक टिप्पणी करते हुए कहा कि साहित्य और भाषा की गहराई निरंतर अध्ययन से आती है, जबकि आज पढ़ने की परंपरा कमजोर होती जा रही है। उन्होंने चिंता व्यक्त की कि नई पीढ़ी रोमन लिपि पर निर्भर होते जा रहे हैं। आज 95 फ्रीसदी गढ़ो और 5 फ्रीसदी पढ़ो की स्थिति बन गई है श्रोताओं को सोचने पर विवश कर गया।

कार्यक्रम में प्रो. ए.आर. किदवाई ने आलोक श्रीवास्तव को स्मृति-चिह्न भेंट कर सम्मानित किया। यह सम्मान साहित्य और भाषा के क्षेत्र में उनके उल्लेखनीय

“

“जब हम त्योहार मनाते हैं, तो केवल रीति-रिवाज नहीं निभाते, बल्कि अपने भीतर की संवेदना, आस्था और पहचान को भी महसूस करते हैं।”

”

योगदान के प्रति आदर का प्रतीक था। अंत में अहसास वूमेन, अलीगढ़ की मनीषा मणि ने धन्यवाद ज्ञापन प्रस्तुत किया और सभी अतिथियों, श्रोताओं तथा आयोजकों के प्रति आभार व्यक्त किया।



Manishaa Mani



Audience

लफ़्ज का यह आयोजन प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन एवं अहसास वूमेन ऑफ अलीगढ़ के संयुक्त तत्वावधान में आयोजित हुआ, जिसमें अल-बरकात एजुकेशनल सोसाइटी, अलीगढ़ का विशेष सहयोग प्राप्त हुआ।

A FRANCO-INDIAN CULINARY DIALOGUE: GAËL CLAVIÈRE'S INDIA TOUR

In a remarkable celebration of gastronomy and cultural exchange, **Rendezvous - The Culinary Chronicles**, presented by the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, in association with Alliance Française du Bengale, brought to India the celebrated French pastry chef Gaël Clavière—Pastry Chef to the French Prime Minister and widely acclaimed across France as the “Dalí of Pastry” for his bold, artistic, and contemporary approach to haute pâtisserie.

Curated as an exclusive collaboration with Taj Hotels Chambers, the tour took place from 7th to 15th February 2026 across four major Indian cities—Bengaluru, Kolkata, and Mumbai. In Delhi, the initiative was hosted in partnership with The Park Hotel. More than a culinary showcase, the tour was envisioned as a high-profile Franco-Indian cultural encounter, seamlessly blending gastronomy with creativity and artistic excellence—values that lie at the heart of the Foundation’s commitment to meaningful cultural dialogue.



Renowned for redefining pastry as an art form, Clavière's creations combine technical mastery with striking visual imagination. His work, often likened to the surreal brilliance of Salvador Dalí, transforms desserts into immersive artistic experiences. His India tour offered audiences and culinary enthusiasts a rare opportunity to engage with French haute pâtisserie through a lens of innovation and expression.



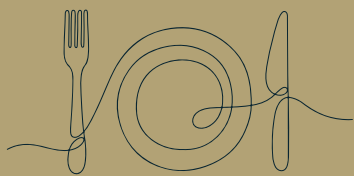
RENDEZVOUS

Conversations and more.

The initiative also builds upon the longstanding association between the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** and Alliance Française du Bengale. Over the years, this partnership has resulted in several notable cultural engagements, including International Women's Day concerts and the French Film Festival, fostering a vibrant exchange between French and Indian artistic traditions.

This tour marks yet another milestone in that shared journey. By bringing one of France's most imaginative pastry chefs to India, the collaboration not only celebrated the finesse of French pâtisserie but also strengthened the enduring ties of creativity, innovation, and cultural exchange between the two nations.





At its heart, Gaël Clavière's India tour transcended the boundaries of gastronomy—it stood as a tribute to the enduring friendship between France and India, expressed through the universal language of art, cuisine, and culture.



DELHI



PHAGUN KE RANG: A MESMERISING CELEBRATION OF MUSIC, SPRING, AND TRADITION



Prabha Khaitan Foundation, in association with Anamika Kala Sangam, presented *Phagun Ke Rang*, a magnificent evening celebrating the vibrant colours of spring and the joyous spirit of Holi, at Kalamandir, Kolkata. The event brought together music lovers, cultural enthusiasts, and admirers of Indian folk traditions for an unforgettable evening steeped in melody, heritage, and festivity.

The evening featured an enthralling performance by Padma Shri Malini Awasthi, accompanied by her accomplished ensemble of musicians. Widely regarded as one of India's foremost voices in folk and semi-classical music, Malini Awasthi is celebrated for her mastery over Awadhi, Bhojpuri, and Bundelkhandi folk traditions. A recipient of both the Padma Shri and the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, she is known for her expertise in *Purab Ang gayaki*, *thumri*, *Dadra*, and *Kajri*.

The programme commenced with opening remarks by Sharmistha Goswami Chatterjee, followed by a warm introductory address by Shefali Rawat Agarwal, **Ehsaas** Woman of Kolkata, who welcomed the gathering on behalf of Prabha Khaitan Foundation. Guest artist Malini Awasthi was felicitated by Esha Dutta, **Ehsaas** Woman of Kolkata, in recognition of her extraordinary contribution to Indian music and culture.

As the performance unfolded, the atmosphere at Kalamandir transformed into a soul-stirring musical journey. Malini Awasthi began the evening with some of her most renowned and beloved compositions, captivating the audience with her powerful voice, emotive expression, and effortless command over folk and classical traditions. Renditions of songs such as *Rang Daarungi*, *Holi Khele Masaane Mein*, *Rasiya Ko Naar Banavo Ri*, *Amma Mere Baba Ko Bhejo Ri*, and *Holi*



Khelen Raghuveera Awadh Ma, among others, filled the auditorium with festive fervour and nostalgia. Her performance beautifully reflected the richness and diversity of Indian musical heritage, transporting listeners through melodies rooted in culture, celebration, and emotion.

Adding a special warmth to the evening, the artist later engaged with the audience by performing songs requested by them, creating an intimate and interactive experience that further deepened the connection between the performer and the listeners. The audience responded with immense enthusiasm, applause, and admiration throughout the evening.

In her special byte, Malini Awasthi reflected upon her beautiful and longstanding association with **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. Expressing her delight at performing before the warm audience of Kolkata, she conveyed heartfelt gratitude for the continued collaboration and shared her hope for many more such associations in the years to come.

Phagun Ke Rang emerged as a memorable celebration of music, culture, and community spirit, leaving the audience immersed in the colours, warmth, and melodies of the season.

This event was in association with Anamika Kala Sangam



Shefali Rawat Agarwal



Sharmistha G. Chatterjee



Felicitating of Malini Awasthi
by Esha Dutta



Colours of Spring, Notes of Devotion: Vasanta Utsav at the Indian Museum

The historic central courtyard of the Indian Museum, Kolkata, came alive with colour, music, poetry, and dance as **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** presented a grand celebration of Vasanta Utsav, inspired by the timeless love of Radha and Krishna as immortalised in Jayadeva's *Gita Govindam*. The evening brought together art lovers, cultural enthusiasts, diplomats, and distinguished guests for a celebration that beautifully blended spirituality, aesthetics, and the joy of spring.

Curated around the theme "*Rang, Ras aur Radha-Krishna Prem*", the programme explored the many shades of divine love, longing, and union through poetry, music, and dance. Managing Trustee of the Foundation, Sundeep Bhutoria opened the evening with a poetic narration inspired by *Gita Govindam*, transporting audiences into the enchanting world of Vrindavan and the eternal bond between Radha and Krishna.

A major highlight of the evening was the captivating Odissi presentation by renowned Indian classical dancer and **Ehsaas woman** of Kolkata, Dona Ganguly along with her troupe, Diksha Manjari. Through evocative choreographies such as *Basant Pallavi* and *Lalita Lavanga Lata*, they brought alive the beauty of spring and the emotional journey of love, separation, yearning, and reunion. Their graceful movements and expressive storytelling held the audience spellbound.

Adding a musical dimension to the celebration, Anando Gupta and members of Dakshinayan (UK) presented a selection of Rabindra Sangeet dedicated to the season of spring. The melodies captured the spirit of renewal, blossoming nature, and festive exuberance, enriching the evening's artistic tapestry.

The celebration concluded on a patriotic and uplifting note with performances of *Jai Ho*, *Desh Rangila*, *Vande Mataram*, and *Rang Diye Jao*, creating a vibrant fusion of devotion, culture, and national pride. In his remarks, Sundeep Bhutoria reflected on how India's diverse spring traditions—from the Holi of Vrindavan to the Vasanta Utsav of Santiniketan—are united by a common spirit of love, harmony, and celebration.

A memorable confluence of art, faith, and cultural heritage, Vasanta Utsav transformed the Indian Museum into a canvas of colour, rhythm, and timeless emotion.





Sundeep Bhutoria







Colours of Camaraderie and Cultural Harmony

Prabha Khaitan Foundation's annual Holi Meet in Delhi brought together members of the diplomatic fraternity, cultural patrons, distinguished guests, and long-standing associates of the Foundation for an evening marked by warmth, music, and festive cheer. Hosted at the residence of Neelima Dalmia Adhar, Honorary Convenor of Delhi NCR Affairs and **Ehsaas** Woman of Delhi, the gathering celebrated the spirit of togetherness that Holi embodies.

The highlight of the evening was a captivating performance by Padma Shri awardees, the renowned Ali Ghani Brothers, whose soulful renditions transported guests into the rich musical traditions of India. Their mesmerising performance created an atmosphere of joy and cultural celebration, earning enthusiastic appreciation from the audience.

The event witnessed the gracious presence of diplomats from various countries, senior members of the cultural community, writers, artists, entrepreneurs, and friends of the Foundation. Conversations flowed effortlessly as guests exchanged festive greetings, strengthened old bonds, and forged new connections in an atmosphere of warmth and goodwill.









Smita Jayakar

Unnati Singh

जीवन में परिवर्तन ही एकमात्र स्थायी सत्य है - स्मिता जयकर

एक मुलाकात में स्मिता जयकर ने साझा किए आध्यात्मिक अनुभव, जीवन-दर्शन और आत्म-जागरण की यात्रा

इंदौर में आयोजित एक मुलाकात कार्यक्रम में प्रसिद्ध अभिनेत्री स्मिता जयकर ने अपने जीवन, फिल्मी यात्रा और आध्यात्मिक अनुभवों पर विस्तृत एवं प्रेरणादायक विचार साझा किए। यह कार्यक्रम साहित्य, कला और संस्कृति को समर्पित मंच लफ़्ज़ के अंतर्गत आयोजित किया गया, जो पिछले चार दशकों से भारतीय सांस्कृतिक एवं साहित्यिक गतिविधियों को प्रोत्साहित करता आ रहा है।

कार्यक्रम में स्मिता जयकर ने कहा कि जीवन में परिवर्तन ही एकमात्र स्थायी सत्य है और व्यक्ति को परिवर्तन का विरोध करने के बजाय उसे स्वीकार करना चाहिए। उन्होंने यह भी कहा कि आधुनिक समय में तकनीक और सोशल मीडिया का प्रभाव बढ़ा है, लेकिन हमें केवल उन्हीं साधनों को अपनाना चाहिए जो हमारे जीवन में सकारात्मकता और उपयोगिता लाते हैं।

सत्र का शुभारंभ अहसास वूमेन, इंदौर की सुचित्रा साजिद धनानी के स्वागत वक्तव्य से हुआ तथा संवाद सत्र का संचालन अहसास वूमेन, इंदौर की उन्नति सिंह ने किया। सत्र का समापन अहसास वूमेन, इंदौर सुरभि धूपर द्वारा प्रस्तुत धन्यवाद ज्ञापन के साथ हुआ।



Surbhi Dhupar and Suchitra Sajid Dhanani



Audience

“
विकास तभी संभव है, जब व्यक्ति अपने डर को पीछे
छोड़कर नए अनुभवों को अपनाए और अपने
कम्फर्ट ज़ोन से बाहर निकले।
”

स्मिता जयकर ने अपनी आध्यात्मिक यात्रा के बारे में बताते हुए कहा कि यह यात्रा उनके फिल्मी करियर से पहले ही शुरू हो चुकी थी। उन्होंने बताया कि अपने जीवन में उन्होंने तीन प्रमुख आध्यात्मिक गुरुओं से मार्गदर्शन प्राप्त किया, जिनमें दादा श्रीजी के साथ उनका अनुभव विशेष रूप से महत्वपूर्ण रहा। उन्होंने कहा कि गुरु-शिष्य संबंध केवल सीखने की प्रक्रिया नहीं है, बल्कि यह एक ऐसी ऊर्जा है, जो व्यक्ति की चेतना को रूपांतरित कर देती है।

उन्होंने 'ऑटो राइटिंग' जैसी आध्यात्मिक प्रक्रिया का उल्लेख करते हुए बताया कि यह एक ऐसी विधि है, जिसमें व्यक्ति अपने भीतर की चेतना से जुड़कर भावनात्मक और मानसिक स्तर पर गहन अनुभव प्राप्त करता है। उनके अनुसार, यह प्रक्रिया अनेक लोगों को मानसिक शांति और भावनात्मक संतुलन प्रदान कर सकती है।

कार्यक्रम में जीवन के विभिन्न पहलुओं, जैसे आत्मविश्वास, प्रयास और निरंतर सीखने, पर भी चर्चा हुई। यह कहा गया कि विकास तभी संभव है, जब व्यक्ति अपने डर को पीछे छोड़कर नए अनुभवों को अपनाए और अपने कम्फर्ट ज़ोन से बाहर निकले।

यह पूरा सत्र साहित्य, कला, फिल्म और आध्यात्मिक के अद्भुत संगम के रूप में अत्यंत प्रभावशाली और प्रेरणादायक सिद्ध हुआ, जिसने उपस्थित सभी श्रोताओं को गहराई से प्रभावित किया। इस अवसर पर सुचित्रा साजिद धनानी ने स्मिता जयकर को स्मृति-चिह्न भेंट कर सम्मानित किया।

एक मुलाकात का यह आयोजन प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन एवं अहसास वूमेन, इंदौर के संयुक्त तत्वावधान में आयोजित हुआ। इस आयोजन में हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर के रूप में सायाजी होटल तथा मीडिया पार्टनर के रूप में नई दुनिया ने विशेष सहयोग प्रदान किया।



Narendra Kumar, Preethi Agrawal, Sudha Rai and Anshoo Sharma

Under the **Sahyog** initiative of the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation's**, a panel discussion titled - "Jane Austen at 250: Reflecting on Her Enduring Legacy" - was held in Jaipur, bringing together scholars and readers to commemorate 250 years of one of literature's most influential voices.

Moderated by Prof. Sudha Rai, the session featured Prof. Anshoo Sharma, Prof. Narendra Kumar, and Prof. Preethi Agrawal, who reflected on Austen's social commentary, ethical depth, and enduring relevance.

Professor Sharma began by tracing her own academic journey into Austen studies, recalling how *Pride and Prejudice*, "one of the most famous novels by her," became the gateway to deeper research. She noted that when the time came to choose a research topic, she approached Austen "with trepidation, aware that Austen was often perceived as deceptively simple. You can say Jane Austen, if you look at language, ideas, concepts and people; you would not say that she is complicated at all."

Family influence, Professor Sharma explained, was deeply embedded in Austen's fiction. She pointed out that naval officers are often portrayed positively; reflecting Austen's own brothers' careers; while villains are frequently drawn from the military.

This process of growth and self-discovery, Professor Sharma argued, is central to Austen's women characters. "They grow, they discover themselves, they become better. They grow, they discover themselves, they become better versions of themselves," she said. Importantly, this transformation does not occur solely through romantic confrontation with men, but also through interactions with other women; mentors, sisters, aunts, and maternal figures.

Austen's protagonists, Professor Agrawal observed, are allowed to err. Emma Woodhouse, in particular, learns not through instruction but through reflection. "Emma



Tusharika Singh

JANE AUSTEN AT 250: TIMELESS NARRATIVES, SOCIAL INSIGHT, AND ENDURING RELEVANCE

was allowed to make her mistakes," she noted, describing how Emma pauses, reassesses her pride, and recognises the influence she wields over others.

She recalled Austen's wisdom from *Sense and Sensibility*: "No decision is taken in anger." She spoke movingly of

how Austen teaches readers, young and old alike, to pause in a world that constantly demands instant reactions.

Professor Kumar began on a deeply personal note, acknowledging the act of reading literature is inseparable from mentorship and guidance. His first reading, he admitted, appealed to him immediately, not only because of Austen's language, but because she spoke of displacement and emotional unsettlement. Referring particularly to *Mansfield Park* and its adaptations, he observed that Austen captures "a sense of being given away, a feeling many children experience for different reasons."

He posed a series of probing questions that invited the audience to think critically. "Is there a certain risk of the trivialization of the source text, where most of the emphasis is placed upon mere drama and other sensational aspects?" What happens, he wondered, to the "wisdom and rationality" embedded in Austen's writing when adaptations foreground spectacle over subtlety?

The evening was marked with an engaging Q&A session, reaffirming Jane Austen's enduring influence in today's literary and social landscape. "Reading between the lines is essential," he highlighted. "She looks at the social system of that time and says, okay, this person is responding to this particular system." Wealth, class, profession, and gender expectations are not merely personal traits but structural conditions.

This session of Sahyog was in association with Spark PR



Celebrating Rajasthan's Unsung Wildlife Heroes

The sixth edition of the Machhli and Vanya Prani Mitra Awards, jointly presented by the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** and WWF-India, was held in Jaipur, honouring individuals and teams whose exceptional efforts have strengthened wildlife conservation and human-wildlife conflict management across Rajasthan.

The prestigious Machhli Award was conferred upon the Udaipur Wildlife Rescue Team—Sitaram Meena, Ajit Singh Ranawat, Jitendra Singh, Dwaraka Prasad Sharma, and Ashok Narayan Joshi—for their remarkable contribution to rescuing and safely relocating wildlife. Other recipients included Saroj Kanwar, Forest Guard at Ramgarh Vishdhari Tiger Reserve, for her efforts in community engagement and conflict mitigation; Anita Kumari of Shergarh Wildlife Sanctuary, who has rescued over 450 wild animals; and Ramlal Gurjar of Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary, whose vigilance has significantly reduced poaching and illegal forestry activities. The award carried a cash prize, shared equally among the winners, along with certificates of appreciation.

The Vanya Prani Mitra Award recognised outstanding contributions to managing human-wildlife conflict. Awardees included conservationist Darshan Kumar Menaria, whose community-led efforts transformed Menar into a globally recognised Bird Village; Anil Kumar Bishnoi, who has dedicated over 35 years to wildlife conservation and rescued more than 10,000 animals; and Peera Ram Dhayal, whose rapid-response interventions have helped prevent retaliatory killings and conflict situations. The award too carried a cash price, shared equally among the three recipients.

The awardees were selected by a distinguished jury comprising Rahul Bhatnagar, IFS (Retd.), Rajpal Singh, IFS (Retd.),

and Yash Shethia, Director, Wildlife & Habitat Programme, WWF-India.

Speaking on the occasion, Dipankar Ghosh, Senior Director, Biodiversity Conservation, WWF-India, highlighted the importance of recognising conservation champions who inspire future generations.

The evening commenced with a welcome address by Vinnie Kakkar, National Advisor of the Foundation while Apra Kuchha, Honorary Convenor of Rajasthan & Central India Affairs of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** presented an overview of the Foundation's work and initiatives.



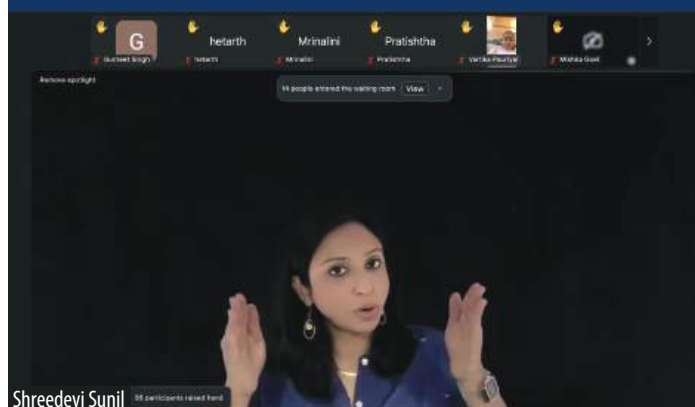
Vinnie Kakkar



Subbiah Nallamuthu and Apra Kuchhal

This award ceremony was presented jointly with WWF-India and Forest Department of Government of Rajasthan and was supported by Ehsaas Woman of Jaipur

Bringing Stories to Life Through Puppetry



Muskaan recently hosted a delightful virtual puppetry session led by renowned puppeteer Shreedevi Sunil, offering young learners a joyful blend of storytelling, creativity, and imagination. The interactive session brought together 500+ students from Grades 1 to 3 from across India, transforming their screens into windows of wonder and discovery.

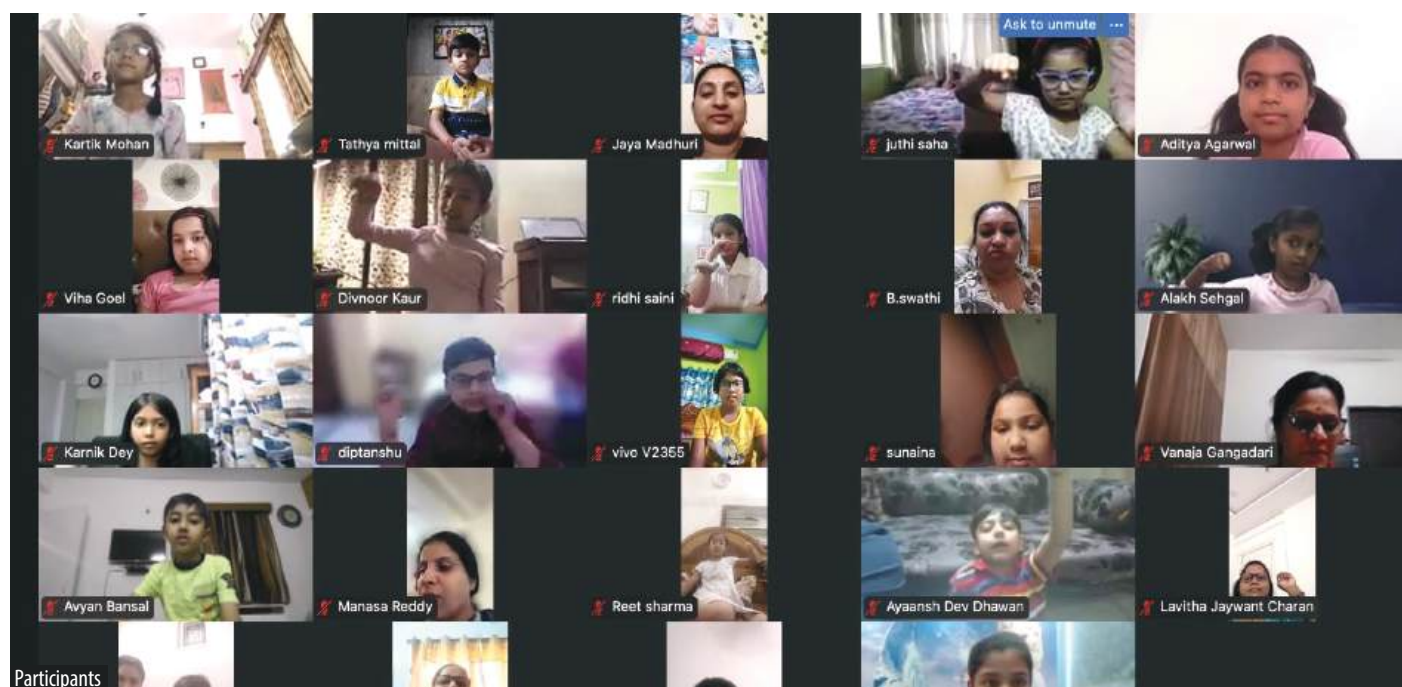
The programme commenced with a warm welcome by Sumitra Ray, Student Programme Advisor, who introduced the guest artist and highlighted the importance of creative arts in nurturing curiosity, communication, and emotional development among children.

Shreedevi Sunil then captivated the young audience with her expressive puppets, engaging characters, and vibrant storytelling style. Through animated performances, playful voices, and colourful narratives, she transported children into a magical world where stories came alive before their

eyes. The session was not only entertaining but also encouraged imagination, active participation, and creative thinking.

Throughout the programme, students remained thoroughly engaged, responding enthusiastically to the stories and characters. The session demonstrated the enduring power of storytelling as an educational tool, fostering both learning and joy in equal measure.

The event concluded with a heartfelt vote of thanks, acknowledging Shreedevi Sunil's inspiring presentation and the enthusiastic participation of students from different parts of the country. By introducing children to the art of puppetry and storytelling, Muskaan continues to create meaningful learning experiences that nurture creativity, cultural appreciation, and self-expression among young minds.



International Day of Persons with Disabilities: Building an Inclusive World for All

On the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** reaffirms its commitment to fostering a society that values inclusion, accessibility, and equal opportunity for all. This day serves as a reminder that persons with disabilities are not defined by limitations, but by their abilities, aspirations, and immense contributions to society.

Across the world, millions of people with disabilities continue to face barriers in education, employment, healthcare, infrastructure, and social participation. These challenges are often created not by disabilities themselves, but by environments and attitudes that fail to accommodate diversity. Building an inclusive society requires us to move beyond sympathy and embrace empowerment, accessibility, and respect.

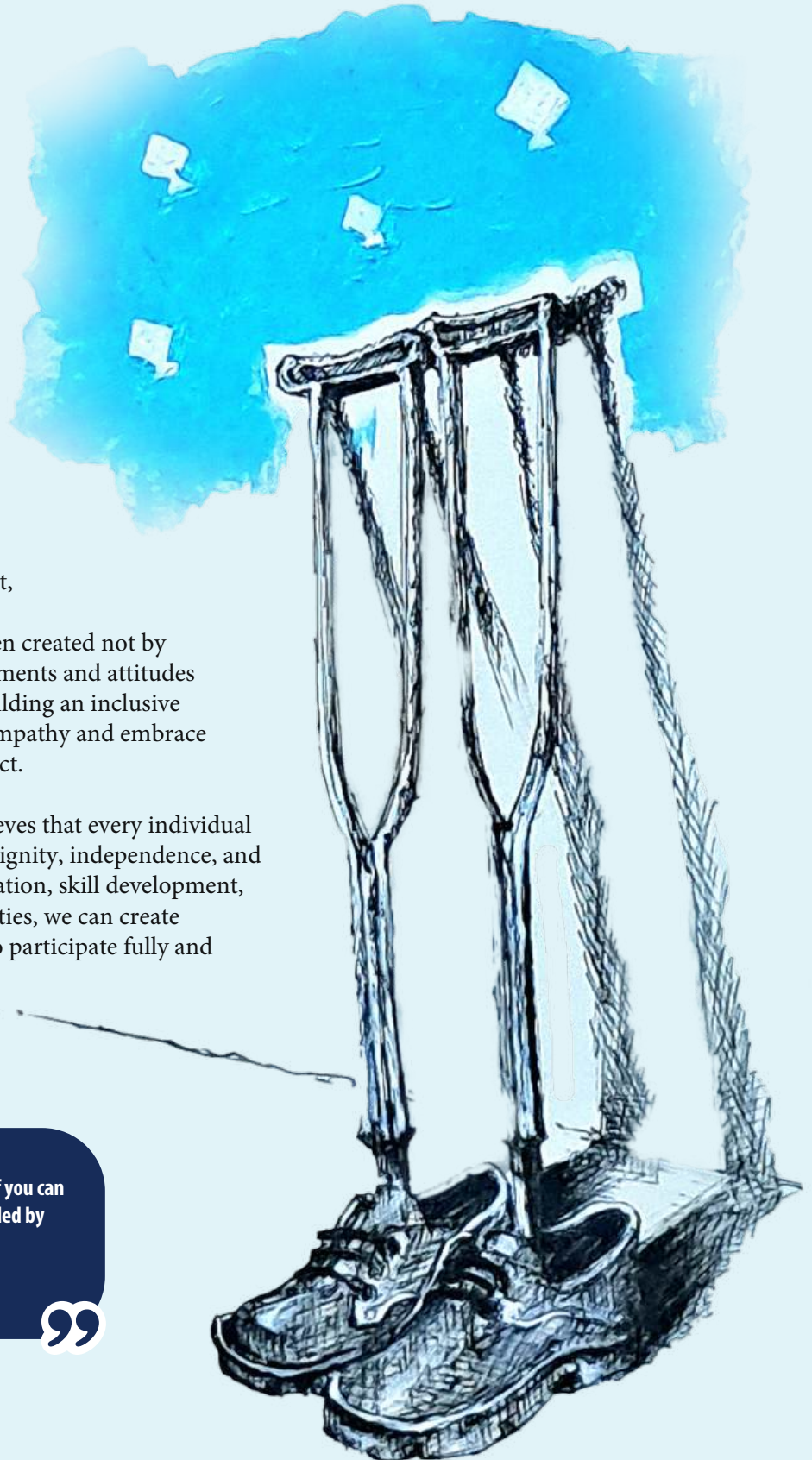
The **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** believes that every individual deserves the opportunity to live with dignity, independence, and purpose. By promoting inclusive education, skill development, accessible spaces, and equal opportunities, we can create communities where everyone is able to participate fully and thrive.

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"Disability is a matter of perception. If you can do just one thing well, you are needed by someone."

— Martina Navratilova

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ARTWORK BY SUDIPTA KUNDU

International Day of Education: Learning Today, Leading Tomorrow

On the International Day of Education, the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** celebrates the transformative power of learning and its ability to create opportunities, empower communities, and drive social progress.

Education is not merely the acquisition of knowledge; it is the foundation upon which individuals build confidence, independence, and the capacity to shape a better future.

Despite significant progress, millions of children and young people around the world still face barriers to quality education due to poverty, inequality, conflict, and lack of resources. Ensuring equitable access to education remains one of the most important challenges and responsibilities of our time.

The **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** strongly believes that education is the key to unlocking human potential. Through initiatives that promote learning, literacy, libraries, and access to educational resources, the Foundation seeks to empower individuals and create pathways toward sustainable development and social change.



"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

— Nelson Mandela

World Cancer Day: United by Hope, Strengthened by Awareness

On World Cancer Day, the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** stands in solidarity with millions of individuals and families affected by cancer. This day is dedicated to raising awareness, encouraging early detection, and inspiring collective action in the global fight against one of the world's most significant health challenges.

Cancer impacts people across all ages, backgrounds, and communities. While advances in medicine and research have improved outcomes for many, access to timely diagnosis,



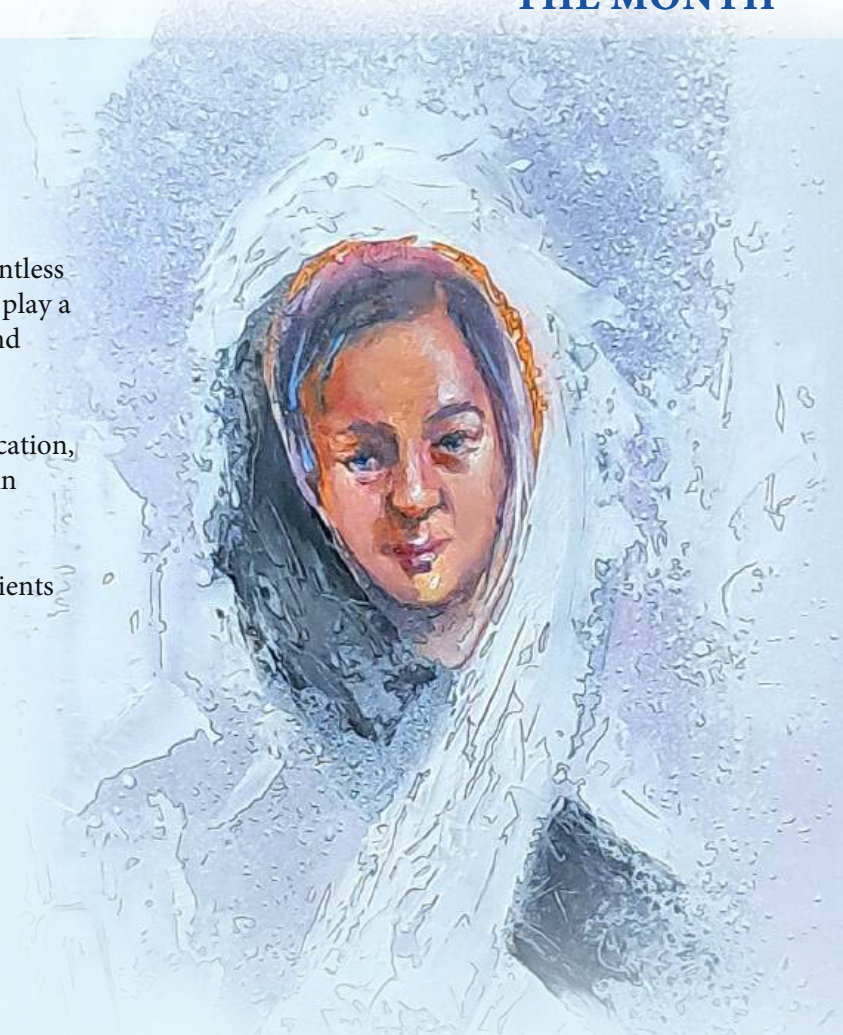
treatment, and support remains a challenge for countless individuals. Awareness and prevention continue to play a crucial role in reducing the burden of the disease and improving quality of life.

The **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** believes that education, compassion, and community support are essential in addressing the challenges associated with cancer. Encouraging healthy lifestyles, promoting regular screenings, and ensuring emotional support for patients and caregivers can make a meaningful difference in countless lives.



"Cancer is a word,
not a sentence."

— John Diamond



ARTWORK BY SUDIPTA KUNDU

Protecting Nature's Lifeline

On the International Day of Forests, the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** celebrates the invaluable role forests play in sustaining life on Earth. Forests are the lungs of our planet, providing clean air, regulating climate, conserving biodiversity, and supporting the livelihoods of millions of people.

Yet, deforestation, climate change, and unsustainable practices continue to threaten these vital ecosystems. Protecting forests is essential not only for wildlife but also for the health and well-being of future generations. The Foundation believes that conservation begins with awareness and collective responsibility. By safeguarding forests and promoting sustainable living, we can preserve nature's balance and ensure a greener, healthier future for all.



"The creation of a
thousand forests is
in one acorn."

— Ralph Waldo Emerson



ARTWORK BY SUDIPTA KUNDU

≡ ECHOES OF HARMONY ≡

The **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** proudly presents *Echoes of Harmony*, a musical journey conceptualised by Grammy Award Winner, **Ricky Kej**. Through this series, music becomes a medium for reflection, connection, and inspiration—exploring themes that transcend borders, cultures, and generations. Each composition invites listeners to engage with ideas that shape our shared humanity, from coexistence and sustainability to love and compassion. Blending traditional influences with contemporary soundscapes, Ricky Kej's creations remind us of music's unique ability to unite hearts and inspire positive change.



CO-EXIST

In this powerful and cinematic composition, Ricky Kej brings together forty singers from forty countries in a remarkable celebration of global unity. Their collective voices chant "OM"—the primordial sound believed to represent the vibration of the universe—creating a profound musical experience that transcends language, geography, and belief systems.

Co-exist is a tribute to the interconnectedness of all life and a reminder that despite our differences, we share a common humanity. Through one universal sound, the composition beautifully conveys a message of peace, harmony, and coexistence in an increasingly interconnected world.



MAHATMA

Inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's timeless words, "The Earth has enough for everyone's need, but not everyone's greed," this evocative composition by Ricky Kej serves as a musical call for environmental consciousness and sustainable living.

Through uplifting melodies and thoughtful orchestration, the piece reflects the delicate relationship between humanity and nature. It encourages listeners to embrace simplicity, responsibility, and stewardship of the planet, reminding us that the choices we make today shape the future of generations to come. *Mahatma* is both a tribute to Gandhi's enduring wisdom and an appeal to live in greater harmony with the natural world.





LONGING

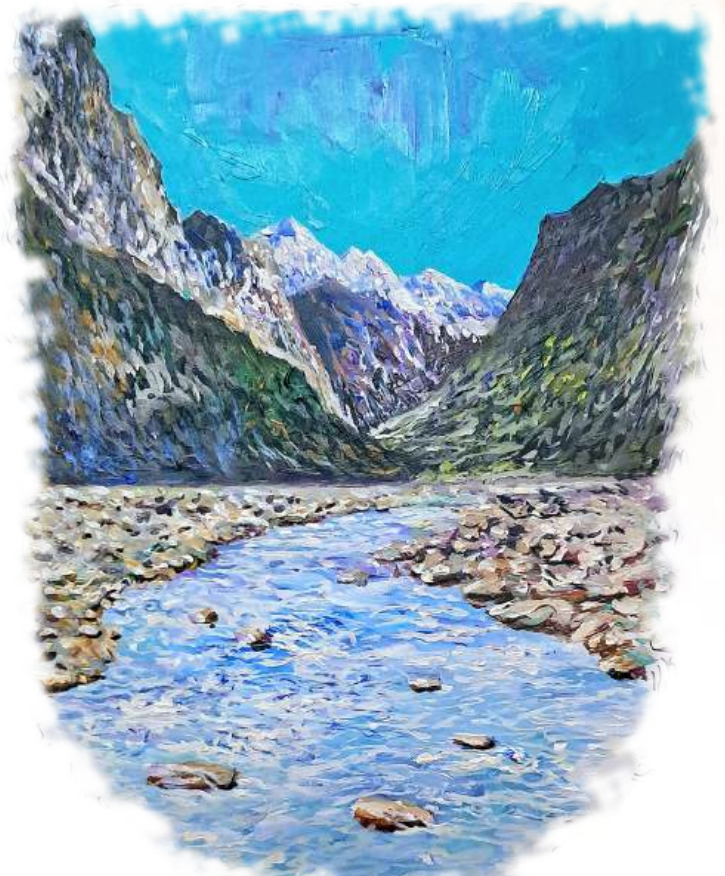
In this deeply intimate composition, Ricky Kej explores the universal emotion of love in its purest form. Rooted in the rich traditions of Indian Thumri, the piece delicately intertwines ancient melodic expression with a contemporary soundscape, creating a musical experience that feels both timeless and deeply personal.

Longing unfolds like a heartfelt conversation between memory and desire, capturing emotions that transcend time and place. Through its graceful melodies and emotional depth, the composition celebrates love's enduring power—gentle, sincere, and profoundly human.

GANGA

In a stirring composition, Ricky Kej pays tribute to the River Ganga, a symbol of beauty, purity, devotion, and life itself. Revered by millions and sustaining over one-tenth of the world's population, the Ganga is both a sacred river and a lifeline.

Through evocative melodies, the piece traces the river's journey from its birthplace in the Himalayas to its confluence with the Bay of Bengal, capturing the landscapes, cultures, and countless lives nourished along the way. *Ganga* is a musical celebration of one of nature's greatest gifts and its enduring connection with humanity.



ARTWORK BY **SUDIPTA KUNDU**

