



Q1 | 2024 - 25

# Prabha

## प्रभा

The Prabha Khaitan Foundation Chronicle



## Women. Power. Progress.

In this issue of *Prabha*, read inspiring stories from our **Ehsaas women** as they share their journeys, advocate for equality, and celebrate the strength and resilience of women worldwide.

Pg 4-10

INSIDE

ART &  
ACTIVISM  
47



GHAZALS &  
CONVERSATIONS  
53



HISTORY &  
POLITICS  
54



NAVIGATING ADVOCACY  
& MEDIA  
70





MANISHA JAIN  
Honorary COO,  
Prabha Khaitan Foundation



## *New Beginnings, Fresh Perspectives*

Dear Readers,

We are thrilled to bring you this edition of Prabha, especially after a considerable hiatus. The pause was intentional, as we took this time to reflect, restructure, and refine the inner workings of our team. It's been a period of growth and transition, and we're excited to share the outcome with you.

One of the key changes we've implemented is altering the frequency of this magazine to a quarterly publication. This adjustment, though challenging, allows us to focus on delivering thoughtful and engaging content, ensuring each edition meets the standards you've come to expect. We appreciate your patience as we navigate these early stages and promise to get better with every issue.

We are also delighted to announce a new addition to our process—guest editors. For this edition, we had the privilege of working with Ehsaas Women, Aakriti Periwal and Vedula Ramalakshmi, whose expertise and guidance have been invaluable. We are deeply grateful for their contribution and look forward to more collaborative efforts in the future.

This edition holds special significance for our team, as it is entirely crafted, designed, and produced in-house. Unlike earlier editions, where we relied on external professionals, this issue represents our collective effort and creativity. Your feedback will be instrumental in helping us evolve and improve as we continue on this journey.

We hope you enjoy reading the stories, articles, and features we've curated for you. Each piece is a labor of love, and we eagerly await your thoughts, insights, and suggestions.

Thank you for being part of our readership and for your continued support.

*Manisha Jain*



AAKRITI PERIWAL

*She is fire, the dragon lives within  
She is water, fluid to her roles  
She is air, breathing life everywhere  
She is earth, grounded with wings to fly  
She is space, even the sky is not her limit  
She is a woman, within the universe residing within.*

History, as we know it, has often favored the stories of those who wielded power, yet it is in the quiet revolutions led by women that we find a different kind of strength—a resilience born not from dominance, but from a deep, unshakable sense of self. There is a philosophy that runs beneath these stories, a quiet current of thought that links empowerment with self-realization, and nowhere is this more evident than in the lives of India's remarkable women.

Take, for instance, the life of Rukmini Devi Arundale, a woman who reshaped the landscape of Indian classical dance with a boldness that was almost revolutionary for her time. In the early 20th century, Bharatanatyam was looked down upon by the societal elite, its practice confined to temple dancers. Rukmini Devi, born into a privileged Brahmin family, dared to step into this stigmatized world, seeing not only an art form but a deeper spiritual connection that could uplift and elevate. Rukmini Devi's mastery of dance was not a rebellion for rebellion's sake; it was an expression of her belief in the unity of body, mind, and spirit, a reflection of the Upanishadic notion that the soul transcends all worldly divisions.

Similarly, the story of Sarojini Naidu, the poet and freedom fighter, offers another perspective on empowerment through expression. Known as the "Nightingale of India," Sarojini's poetry was more than an artistic endeavor; it was a form of resistance, a way of articulating both the beauty and the pain of a nation struggling for independence. One could argue that Sarojini's strength lay in her ability to navigate multiple identities without compromising any of them—poet, activist, mother, and leader. In her life, we see a reflection of the Advaitic principle of non-duality: she embraced the idea that a woman could be all things at once, without diminishing any part of herself. She was a reminder that empowerment is not about breaking into predefined roles but about expanding them, making room for the vastness of human potential.

Vinesh Phogat provides yet another shining example of this kind of resilience. Vinesh's journey was one marked by personal struggle—she faced severe injuries, including a career-threatening knee injury during the Rio Olympics in 2016. Yet, like a true champion, she returned stronger than ever, winning gold medals in subsequent Commonwealth Games and Asian Games.

Vinesh's life reflects the Gita's teaching of action without attachment to the result. Her relentless pursuit of excellence is not about the accolades but the internal fulfillment derived from knowing she has given her all. In her, we see the transformative power of resilience—the ability to rise after every fall, to continue pushing against the boundaries imposed by society and circumstance.

In the stories of these women, we find not just moments of personal triumph, but a deeper philosophy of empowerment that speaks to the core of human existence. Our own Ehsaas women rise to the challenge, day after day, finding beauty amidst ruins and order amidst chaos. This issue by Prabha Khaitan Foundation is a celebration of the indomitable spirit, the heroes of the organization, whose hearts roar the loudest for our undying arts, culture and literature.



डॉ. वेदुला रामालक्ष्मी  
अतिथि संपादक, प्रभा  
अहसास वूमेन, भुवनेश्वर

## या देवी सर्वभूतेषु शांति-रूपेण संस्थिता। नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः॥

गौ रीर्मिमाय सलिलानि तक्षत्योर्कपदी द्विपदी सा चतुष्पदी।  
अष्टापदी नवपदी बभ्रुवृषी सहस्राक्षरा परमे व्योमन॥ ऋग्वेद 1.164.41

भावार्थ - स्त्री समस्त साङ्गोपाङ्ग वेदों का अध्ययन एवं अध्यापन करती है, असंख्यात अक्षरोंवाली होती हुई, आकाश के समान व्याप्त निश्चल परमात्मा के निमित्त प्रयत्न करती है और जल के समान निर्मल वचनों को अविद्यादि दोषों से अलग करते हुये संसार के लिये सुख का स्रोत तथा सभी मनुष्यों की उन्नति का मूल उत्स है।

हमारा वैदिक वांमय स्त्री को शांतिपुंज मानता आया है। अपाला, घोषा, सरस्वती, सर्पराज्ञी, सूर्या, सावित्री, अदिति, दाक्षायनी, लोपामुद्रा, विश्ववारा, आत्तयी आदि अनेक ऋषिकाएं वेद मंत्रों की द्रष्टा रही हैं। भारतीय संस्कृति में मनुष्य की सभी शांतियों की अधिष्ठात्री के रूप में स्त्री ही आराध्य रही है। विद्या, धन, शांति तथा वेदों की अधिष्ठात्री के रूप में क्रमशः सरस्वती, लक्ष्मी, दुर्गा तथा गायत्री को पूजा जाता है। वर्ष भर कोई ना कोई ऐसा पर्व एवं उत्सव होता ही है जिसमें किसी ना किसी रूप में शांति को पूजा जाता है। शरत नवरात्रियों में शांति की उपासना - शैलपुत्री, ब्रह्मचारिणी, चंद्रघंटा, कुष्मांडा, स्कंदमाता, कत्यायनी, कालरात्रि, महागौरी, सिद्धिदात्री तथा लक्ष्मी, सरस्वती तथा महाकाली के रूपों में की जाती है।

कवियों, कलाकारों, महामनीषियों एवं सांस्कृतिक संस्थाओं ने समयानुसार शांति का महिमामण्डन किया है। प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन ऐसी ही एक महती संस्था है। प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन (PKF) सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक कल्याण और मानवीय कारणों के लिए समर्पित है। यह एक गैर-लाभकारी ट्रस्ट है, जिसकी स्थापना स्वर्गीय डॉ. प्रभा खेतान ने 1980 के दशक के प्रारंभ में की थी। कोलकाता में स्थित यह संस्था ललित कलाओं, भारतीय संस्कृति, शिक्षा, साहित्य, लैंगिक समानता और महिला सशक्तिकरण को बढ़ावा देने एवं संरक्षण प्रदान की दिशा में समर्पित है। यह भारत एवं वैश्विक धरातल पर सांस्कृतिक, शैक्षिक, साहित्यिक और सामाजिक कल्याणकारी परियोजनाओं को लागू करने एवं संरक्षण करने हेतु प्रतिबद्ध व्यक्तियों और समान विचारधारा वाली संस्थानों के साथ मिलकर कार्य करती है।

हमारी संस्थापक स्वर्गीय डॉ. प्रभा खेतान महिला सशक्तिकरण के उद्देश्य को आगे बढ़ाने वाली पहलों में सक्रिय रूप से शामिल थीं, चाहे वह किसी की आत्म-सम्मान की भावना हो, अपना मत व्यक्त करने की क्षमता हो या सामाजिक परिवर्तन को प्रभावित करने का उनका अधिकार हो या नारी अस्मिता का मूलभूत प्रश्न हो, फाउंडेशन लैंगिक समानता और महिला सशक्तिकरण को प्रोत्साहित करने की ओर सक्रिय है।

महिला सशक्तिकरण पर फाउंडेशन की प्रगाढ़ निष्ठा ने 'एहसास वूमेन' को जन्म दिया, जो भारत भर में जीवन के विविध क्षेत्रों में प्रभावशाली रूप से काम कर रही महिलाओं का एक समूह है जो समाज के उन्नयन हेतु कार्य करती हैं तथा अन्यो को प्रेरित करती हैं। फाउंडेशन का मानना है कि आज की महिलाएं कल के बदलाव की उत्प्रेरक हैं।

नारी शांति तथा प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन को नमन करते हुये 'प्रभा' का यह संस्करण आप विद्वद्जनों के समक्ष प्रस्तुत करते हुये हमें अत्यांत हर्ष का अनुभव हो रहा है। 'प्रभा' का यह संस्करण भारतीय साहित्य, कला एवं उत्कृष्ट चिंतनधारा के वैविध्य को चमत्कारिक रूप से प्रस्तुत करता है, जिसमें - उर्मिला शिरीष, अजरा नकवी, आलोक श्रीवास्तव, वजाहत हबीबुल्लाह जी के रचना संसार की अपूर्व छटा अपने संपूर्ण वैभव के साथ प्रतिष्ठित है।

'प्रभा' का प्रत्येक लेख, साक्षात्कार एवं फीचर अपने पाठकों को एक गंभीर एवं सम्यक अंतर्दृष्टि प्रदान करता रहे, ऐसा सदैव हमारा प्रयास रहा है। आशा है 'प्रभा' का यह संस्करण भारतीय साहित्य के गौरवशाली धरोहर की सुरम्य झाँकी आपके समक्ष प्रस्तुत कर पाया है। भारतीय संस्कृति के वैभवशाली विरासत के प्रसार-प्रचार तथा संरक्षण के हमारे इस प्रयास में आपकी इस भागीदारी हेतु हम आपके कृतज्ञ हैं। कृपया इस संस्करण का आनंद लें एवं इसकी चेतना को प्रसरित करते रहें।

## [ SNAPSHOTS OF THE MONTH ]

**Cultural Exchange Luncheon: Fulbright Hays Scholars**

The **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** hosted a luncheon in Kolkata for scholars from the Fulbright Hays scholarship project. Scholars, representing various parts of the USA, immersed themselves in Indian communities, exploring mindfulness and wellness. Led by Ashok Oha, Project Director, and Prof. Gabriela Nik Ilieva, Academic Director from New York University, the project aims to develop Hindi learning materials infused with Indian heritage. Scholars document community insights to craft impactful instructional materials. This luncheon served as a platform for engaging discussions on mindful living, enriching the scholars' understanding of India's cultural heritage.



## Empowering

## Women:

## A Journey of Strength,

## Resilience, and Expression

In the tapestry of human civilization, women have been the unsung architects of progress, resilience, and change. From ancient matriarchal societies to the modern-day fight for equality, women have continuously pushed the boundaries of possibility, reshaping the world with their strength and vision. At the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, we stand as staunch advocates for the empowerment of women, recognizing their indispensable role in shaping vibrant communities and fostering sustainable development.

We are honoured to present a special cover story, showcasing the profound voices of our **Ehsaas women**. These remarkable individuals embody the spirit of empowerment in its truest sense. They are authors, actors, politicians, social workers, and more – each contributing their unique talents and perspectives towards our shared mission of safeguarding and promoting Indian art, culture, and social welfare.

Through their poignant articles, heartfelt poems, and evocative paintings, our **Ehsaas women** delve into critical themes that resonate deeply with women's lived experiences worldwide. From advocating for body positivity and self-love to championing reproductive rights and health, they fearlessly confront the challenges that women encounter on a daily basis. They shed light on the pervasive issue of violence against women, urging society to break the cycle of silence and stigma. They explore the complex interplay between social media and mental health, emphasising the need for a more compassionate and supportive online environment.

Moreover, these articles reflect on the evolving landscape of work and employment, advocating for remote work and flexible arrangements that empower women to thrive in both their professional and personal lives. They address the persistent barriers to gender equality in the workplace, calling for systemic change and inclusive practices that recognize and value women's contributions. They underscore the undeniable link between female empowerment and holistic development, highlighting women's agency as a catalyst for progress and prosperity.

As we embark on this journey through the lens of our **Ehsaas women**, we are reminded of the profound impact that women have had – and continue to have – on the fabric of society. Their stories are a testament to the power of resilience, the beauty of diversity, and the triumph of the human spirit. They inspire us to redouble our efforts in advancing the cause of women's empowerment, ensuring that every woman has the opportunity to fulfil her potential and contribute meaningfully to the world around her. Together, let us continue to champion the cause of women's empowerment, building a more just, equitable, and inclusive world for generations to come.



## Carbon Cries

Can I go back?  
Just go back and save myself?  
For thee, my children  
No anatomy of why and no alleging of who can I plain refuse from going any further  
I know you call it 'The road to progress'  
Pray give me the choice to regress  
I know you find it odd and will call me strange  
But may I be madly in love with it and remain estranged its my choice. Isn't it?  
To deplane the modern vestibule  
Alas a choice I don't have a freedom to  
Not mine sadly when you lead to doom  
I will follow when I get back  
In to the past it will be lonely and bereft of you  
It will save me though and you, if you come along  
A reverie, a romance reminiscent now and then  
Letting go the shackles of possession crying over my people gone ahead  
People I love, admire, care for  
Who love what they have  
Homes cars phones! of carbon carbon carbon  
People, acquit me and my soul from chasing carbon  
And spending myself  
I know back in the past, in a pastoral life  
Hinterland may be on some rugged terrain  
I may sleep hungary but I will sleep  
I may wake up weary but I will walk  
I don't mind my soiled hands  
And mud under my nails  
Its in my dough which God kneaded to spirit my body  
But I do mind a lot breathing dust on whiffs  
From eroded lands  
Cancering my lungs  
No fizz to drink  
But don't I prefer pollen ladden air intoxicating inebriating  
I would much love to pick thorns from my skin  
Than to stand exposed to radiation piercing heart  
Material to consume I was born with none  
So let me get back to life  
Lest it takes me to my grave



**Faiza Abbasi**

Ehsaas woman of Aligarh

## जब देखती हूँ...

जब देखती हूँ एक नारी को बेखौफ़ डग भरते हुए,  
यूं सहजता से, सहिष्णुता से, सब बाधा पार करते हुए,  
विश्वास के, गर्व के, मस्तक पर स्वेद बिन्दु झरते हुए  
मन मयूर के ये पंख अनंत तक बढ़ते हुए...

जब देखती हूँ एक नारी को दुर्गा स्वरूप में,  
सब हस्त करते कार्य भिन्न कभी शीत में कभी धूप में,  
प्रकटी है ये भवानी तो तप कर अग्नि के कूप में  
बहु क्षमता का पर्याय गोचर विलक्षण रूप अनूप में...

जब देखती हूँ एक नारी को पुनः बिखर बिखर,  
हताश हो, निराश हो, प्रतीत हो मन अखर अखर,  
स्वयं को सँभाल उठ खड़ी हो फिर निखर निखर  
पहुँच जाती संग्राम कर दृढ़ कदम से शिखर शिखर...

जब देखती हूँ एक नारी को सजग सतर्क सचेतन,  
स्वप्न उसके सभी सनातन स्वीकारती नया परिवर्तन,  
तब जोड़ती कड़ी नूतन जब हो कहीं विषय पुरातन  
परिप्रेक्ष्य में सब तोलती करती सतत विशुद्धचिंतन...

जब देखती हूँ एक नारी को हो जाता यह आभास,  
सँजो कर अपनी अस्मिता रचेगी आज नया इतिहास,  
नतमस्तक श्रद्धा से सब जन देख उसका अडिग विश्वास  
पूर्ण इस क्षण यह एहसास , संपूर्ण यह सुःखद एहसास ।।



**Shruti Agarwal**

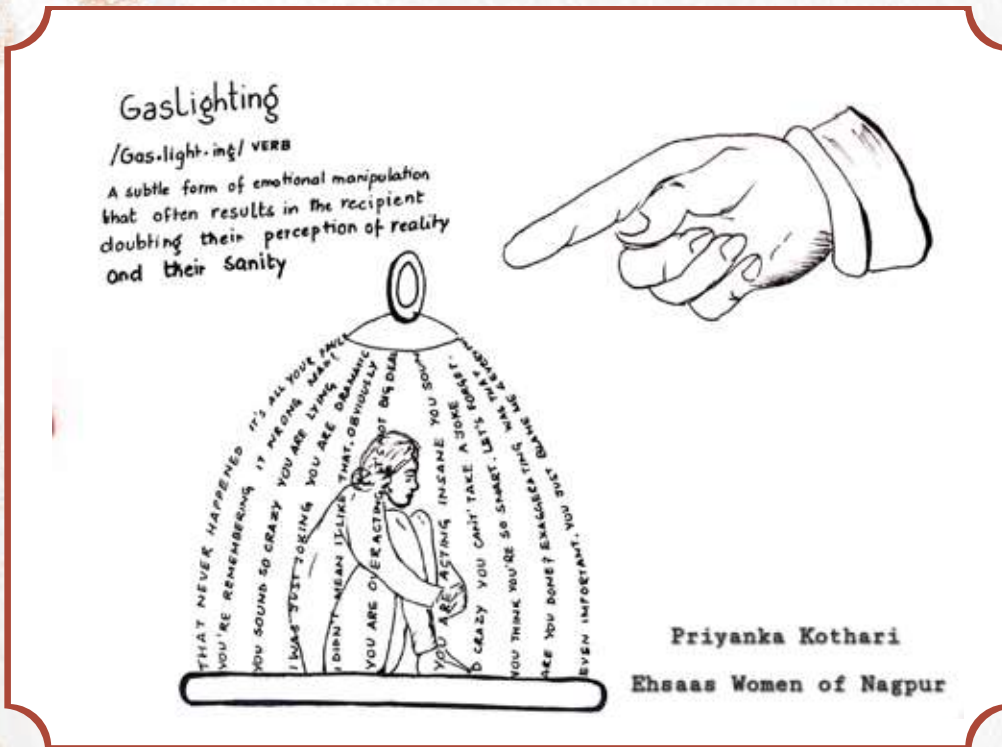
Ehsaas woman of Prayagraj



In this vibrant painting, three diverse women adorned in varied attire stand united, symbolising the beauty of cultural unity and shared womanhood beyond barriers of colour, religion, or region. Through her brushstrokes, Manisha Jain invites us to embrace the 'Ehsaas' of sisterhood and understanding among women from different walks of life.

**Manisha Jain**

Ehsaas woman of Chandigarh



In this poignant painting titled "Gaslighting," a woman is depicted trapped within the cage of her own thoughts, symbolising the insidious nature of mental abuse. Through powerful imagery, the artist sheds light on the manipulative tactic of gaslighting, urging viewers to recognize and address its devastating effects on mental health.

**Priyanka Kothari**

Ehsaas woman of Nagpur



Priyanka Kothari  
Ehsaas Women of Nagpur

## Role of Social Media in Mental Health

Social media plays a significant role in mental health, impacting individuals' well-being in various ways. To address the potential negative effects of social media on mental health, adopting a social media detox can be beneficial. Here are key insights on the role of social media in mental health and how to implement a social media detox effectively:

**Understanding the Impact of Social Media on Mental Health**

**Negative Effects:** Overindulging in social media can contribute to higher levels of anxiety, stress, and depression. The constant comparison, addiction, fear of missing out, loneliness and exposure to highly curated content can lead to detrimental effects on mental health.

**Positive Aspects:** While social media offers connectivity and inspiration, it can also trigger feelings of inadequacy and envy, affecting mental well-being. More than 50 per cent of the youth (18-24 years old) in India have poor mental health, according to a report by Sapien Labs Centre for the Human Brain and Mind. The report, titled 'Mental State of India: Internet-enabled Youth', notes that the mental health of young people in the country has deteriorated during the pandemic.

Research links excessive social media use to anxiety, depression, and poor self-esteem. Researchers have found that people turn to social media when they are lonely and after spending hours on social media, they continue to feel worse.

I would like to mention about my client who was 13 years old and she used to spend hours on Instagram reels seeing celebrities, their life and her friends having fun all the time. So, she started complaining about her life like she does not have money to splurge, she doesn't have friends to go out or have fun with, felt rejected and lonely. Fear of missing out is quite prevalent in the younger masses. Slowly she lost interest in her daily routine and her studies. Cognitive behavioral therapy was used and after a few sessions she has reported some improvements.

Though social media has been designed to bring people closer and connected, the irony is that it can never replace the real world. It's important to meet in person to trigger our happy hormones to make us feel positive and healthy.

### Benefits of a Social Media Detox

Social media detox is highly recommended by psychologists, as it is scientifically proven to enhance mental performance and make you feel happier.

**Enhanced Focus and Productivity:** Taking a break from social media allows individuals to focus better on tasks and improve productivity.

**Improved Self-Esteem:** Disconnecting from social media can help boost self-esteem by reducing comparison and



negative self-perception.

**Curbs FOMO:** It reduces the feeling of being left out.

**Better Sleep:** Limiting social media use promotes better sleep quality by reducing exposure to stimulating content before bedtime.

**Building Genuine Relationships:** Detoxing from social media encourages real-life interactions, fostering deeper connections with others.

**Experience better morning:** social media hinders your sleep in the night due to notifications and if it's the first thing you see you are bombarded with information. Rather it encourages you to start your day with some form of exercise or spending time with your loved ones or meditation.

### Tips for Implementing a Social Media Detox

- i) **Set Boundaries:** Establish limits on social media usage to regain control over digital consumption and prioritize real-life interactions.
- ii) **Monitor Screen Time:** Track the time spent on devices and platforms to assess the need for a detox and identify areas for improvement.
- iii) **Engage in Other Activities:** Use the time freed from social media for hobbies, physical activities, or spending quality time with loved ones.
- iv) **Practice Self-Care:** Incorporate self-care activities like walks, reading, or listening to music during the detox period to promote overall well-being.

In conclusion, adopting a social media detox involves mindful usage of digital platforms, setting boundaries, engaging in offline activities, and prioritizing mental well-being. By understanding the impact of social media on mental health and implementing strategies for a healthy relationship with digital technology, individuals can enhance their overall well-being and mental health resilience.

- **Nidhi Garg**

Ehsaas woman of Bhubaneswar



## Reproductive Rights and Health

Reproductive rights and Health are the pillars of individual freedom and societal well-being and lie at the very foundation of human autonomy encompassing the fundamental right of individual to make informed and uncoerced decisions about their bodies, sexuality and reproductive future and also ensuring that reproductive rights is not only a matter of individual freedom but also a crucial component of public health, gender equality and overall societal well-being. These rights encompass a range of freedoms related to decision making, comprehensive reproductive health care services such as contraception, safe abortion care, parental care etc.

Access to contraception is fundamental to reproductive rights as it enables individuals to plan their families to pursue education and careers. Reproductive rights and health impacts the entire society, in Michelle Obama's words, "No woman can call herself free who does not own and control her body", when women have control over their bodies they are more empowered to contribute to community and the progress of the nation.

Abortion rights are another critical aspect of reproductive rights the ability to access safe and legal abortion services is essential for women's health and autonomy, lack of access to safe abortion care leads to unsafe and potentially life threatening procedures resulting in maternal deaths and also unintended pregnancy's leads to perpetuating cycles of poverty and limiting women opportunities. Dr. Tlaleng Mofokeng, a South African doctor and sexual health expert emphasises the importance of access to safe abortion stating, "The right to choose when and if to have children is a fundamental human right".

In terms of reproductive rights and health, access to affordable and quality maternal health care is also very vital for ensuring healthy pregnancy and reducing maternal mortality rates, access to parental care, skilled birth attendant and postnatal care can significantly improve maternal and child health outcomes. However many women around the world face barriers to accessing reproductive health care services and therefore reproductive rights and health requires a multifaceted approach such as -



A proper legal framework which protects individuals from infringement and ensures access to essential services. Healthcare access which removes barriers to contraception, provides safe abortion care etc. Also to provide comprehensive sex education which empowers individuals to make informed decisions about their bodies and future and also challenging stigma by combatting societal biases surrounding sexuality and reproductive health according to Dr Natalia Kanem, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund, "Access to sexual and reproductive Health Care is not a luxury it is a human right".

Reproductive rights are intertwined with human rights, gender equality and are essential for ensuring the overall well-being of society by striving for a world where every individual has the freedom and resources to control their reproductive destiny. In doing this we not only uphold fundamental freedoms but also contribute to a healthier, more just and more prosperous future for all. As Hillary Clinton said, "Reproductive rights are human rights. They are about the freedom to make our most fundamental decisions about our bodies, our lives, and our futures".

**-Deepa Mishra**  
Ehsaas woman of Lucknow





In this striking painting titled "ARDHNARISHWAR," the canvas represents the universe, highlighting the inherent balance and harmony in the cosmos. Through vibrant hues and intricate ornamentation, the painting celebrates the feminine essence and the profound unity of Shiva and Shakti, embodying the timeless principle of equality. With bold eye reflecting self-awareness and empowerment, it stands as a testament to the strength and resilience of women everywhere.

**-Sharddha Murdia**  
Ehsaas woman of Udaipur



## Harmonies of Empowerment: Celebrating Women in Classical Music

The **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** joined hands with Alliance Française du Bengale to support the French Classical Concert held in Kolkata, commemorating International Women's Day. This collaborative effort aimed to celebrate the talent and contributions of women in classical music. The concert, which served as the grand finale of the second edition of the French Classical Music Concert Series, took place at the prestigious Victoria Memorial Hall. An all-women trio graced the stage, captivating the audience with their enchanting



Helene Richard



Diane Mugot



Wen-Ying Lan playing the Piano

performances. Diane Mugot showcased her skillful rendition on the French bassoon, while H el ene Richard delivered a soul-stirring performance on the clarinet. Wen-Ying Lan mesmerized with her proficiency on the piano, creating a harmonious symphony that resonated throughout the hall. The event attracted a diverse crowd of 400 guests, including music enthusiasts, dignitaries, and community members, who came together to show their support and appreciation for women in classical music. This concert not only celebrated the remarkable achievements of women musicians but also served as a platform to promote gender equality and empowerment, inspiring the next generation of female artists.



## An Ode to Tagore – Poetry of Love and Emotions

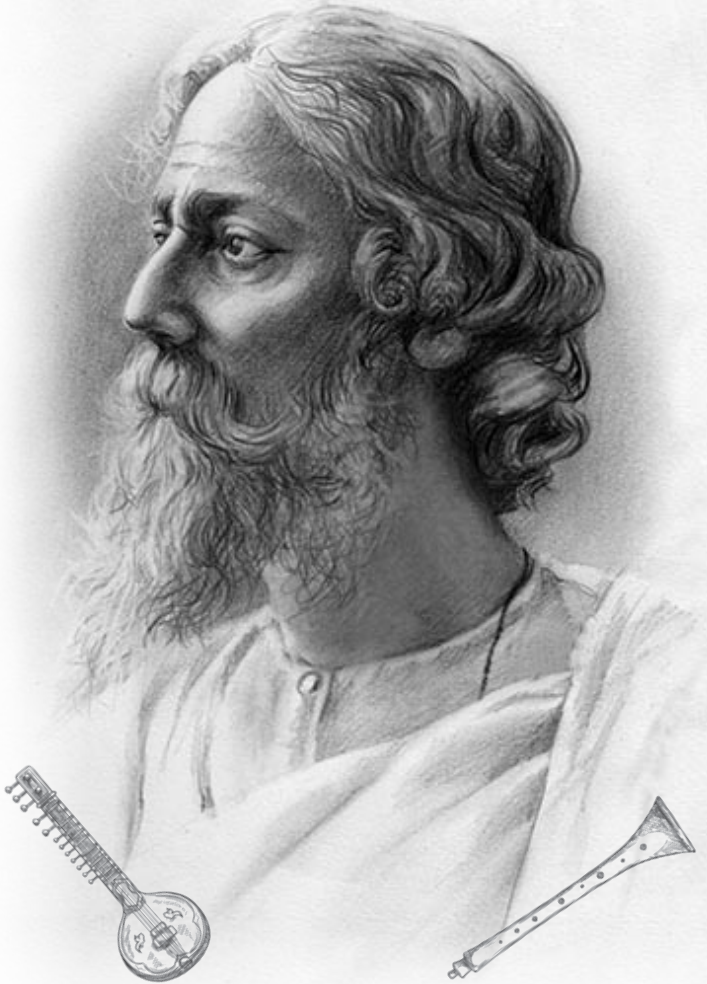
**P**rabha Khaitan Foundation organised **Kasturi** - a musical tribute to Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore held at Kamani Auditorium in New Delhi. This event was an integral part of Sahityotsav – Festival of Letters which is India's most inclusive literature festival annually organised by Sahitya Akademi and Ministry of Culture, Government of India.

**Kasturi** unfurled the poignant and timeless poetry of Rabindranath Tagore through a seamless fusion of classical music, song, *Kathak* dance, and evocative recitation. The production, conceptualized by Sundeep Bhutoria, boasted compositions by Padma Bhushan recipient and Grammy Award winner, Pt Vishwa Mohan Bhatt. Shinjini Kulkarni, notable *Kathak* exponent and **Ehsaas woman** of Noida added graced with her mesmerising choreography. The vocal renditions by Ankita Joshi, an Indian classical vocalist known for her emotive performances, was mellifluous.

The 40-minute production featured three famous poems of Tagore – '*Hiraan Kasturi*', '*Kagajer Nauka*' and '*Tobu Mone Rekho*' each translated by eminent poets Gulzar and Prayag Shukla. The production struck a chord with the audience as it delved into the universal themes of love, human emotions, and the profound beauty of Tagore's literary legacy. It was evening to remember as it lighted up with the richness and depth of Tagore's masterpiece literary creations.

The event also featured artist Pt Ram Kumar Mishra on Tabla, Parveen Kumar on Keyboard, and Ratan Prasanna on Spanish Guitar.

Sahitya Academy President, Madhav Kaushik; Vice President Prof Kumud Sharma; Secretary Dr. K. Sreenivasarao felicitated the eminent guests who made the evening special with their wonderful and beautiful renditions. Formal welcome note and introduction to **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** was delivered by Anupam Tiwari of Sahitya Akademi.



*This event was organised in association with Sahitya Akademi, Ministry of Culture Government of India, and supported by Shree Cement Limited as their CSR initiative*



Pt Vishwamohan Bhatt



Sundeep Bhutoria



Ankita Joshi



Shinjini Kulkarni



Ram Kumar Mishra



Praveen Kumar



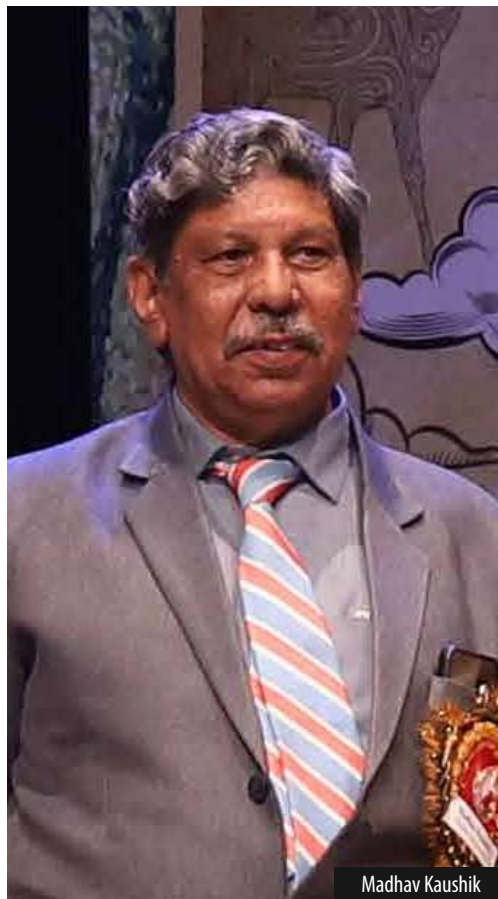
Ratan Prassana



Dignitaries on stage



Kumud Sharma



Madhav Kaushik



K Sreenivasarao

## Empowering Indian Consumers: Ensuring Fairness in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

-Anantmala Potdar  
Ehsaas woman of Delhi



As we gear up to commemorate World Consumers Rights Day, it is imperative to reflect on the evolving landscape of consumer rights, particularly in the context of emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI). In 2024, the global theme underscores the importance of Fair & Responsible Artificial Intelligence for Consumers, resonating deeply with the Indian subcontinent's quest for equitable and just consumer protection mechanisms.

In recent years, India has witnessed a rapid integration of AI into various spheres of everyday life, from e-commerce platforms to banking services and healthcare systems. While the potential benefits of AI are undeniable – ranging from enhanced efficiency to personalized services – it also presents unique challenges, particularly concerning consumer rights and privacy safeguards.

One of the primary concerns surrounding AI is its propensity to perpetuate biases and discrimination. In the Indian context, where diversity is the cornerstone of our societal fabric, ensuring that AI algorithms remain fair and unbiased is paramount. Discriminatory AI systems could exacerbate existing disparities, especially concerning marginalized communities, thereby infringing upon fundamental rights enshrined in our Constitution.

Furthermore, the lack of transparency and accountability in AI decision-making processes poses significant hurdles for consumers seeking recourse in the event of harm or injustice. Unlike traditional human decision-makers, AI algorithms operate opaquely, making it challenging to ascertain the rationale behind their actions. This opacity undermines consumers' ability to exercise informed choice and demand accountability from service providers.

As legal practitioners, it is incumbent upon us to advocate for robust legal frameworks that safeguard consumer rights in the age of AI. India's legislative landscape must evolve to address the unique challenges posed by AI technologies while upholding the principles of fairness, transparency, and accountability.

One potential avenue for bolstering consumer protection in the realm of AI is through the enactment of comprehensive data protection laws. The recent passage of the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2023, represents a significant step towards regulating the collection, processing, and use of personal data, thereby enhancing consumer

privacy rights. However, it is imperative to ensure that these laws are effectively enforced and provide meaningful redress mechanisms for consumers affected by AI-related harm.

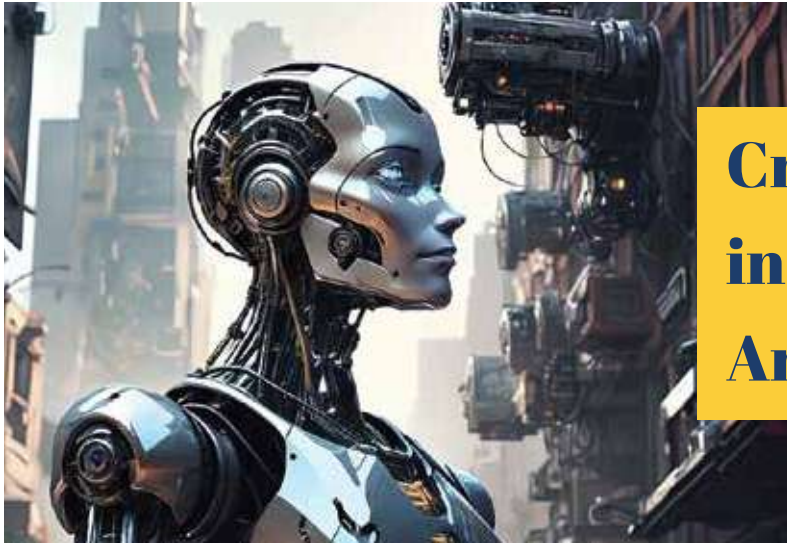
Moreover, regulatory bodies such as the Competition Commission of India (CCI) and the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) must proactively monitor and regulate AI-driven market practices to prevent anti-competitive behavior and ensure a level playing field for consumers and businesses alike. Collaborative efforts between government agencies, industry stakeholders, and civil society organizations are essential to develop and implement AI governance frameworks that prioritize consumer welfare.

In addition to regulatory interventions, fostering consumer awareness and empowerment is crucial in mitigating the risks associated with AI. Educational initiatives aimed at enhancing digital literacy and promoting responsible AI usage can empower consumers to make informed decisions and advocate for their rights effectively. By equipping consumers with the knowledge and tools necessary to navigate the complexities of AI-driven environments, we can foster a culture of consumer empowerment and resilience.

Furthermore, promoting interdisciplinary collaboration between legal experts, technologists, ethicists, and policymakers is essential to address the multifaceted challenges posed by AI. By harnessing collective expertise and insights, we can develop holistic approaches to AI governance that balance innovation with ethical considerations and consumer welfare.

On this World Consumers Rights Day, let us reaffirm our commitment to safeguarding consumer rights in the face of technological advancements. By advocating for fair and responsible AI practices, we can ensure that the benefits of innovation are equitably distributed and that no consumer is left behind. Together, let us build a future where AI serves as a force for good, enhancing consumer welfare and advancing societal progress.

In conclusion, as legal practitioners operating within the Indian subcontinent, we have a pivotal role to play in shaping the trajectory of AI governance and consumer protection. Let us seize this opportunity to champion the rights of Indian consumers and pave the way for a more inclusive and equitable future.”



## Creative Intelligence in the time of Artificial Intelligence

**P**rabha Khaitan Foundation hosted a one-of-a-kind boutique festival **Voice of Tomorrow** highlighting the theme “Creative Intelligence in the time of Artificial Intelligence”. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a term of everyday parlance. Most tech users believe that AI is the development of technology that allows machines to simulate human intelligence, responses and, to some extent, human creativity. AI has been around us in our daily lives for a while — in the form of mobility sensors, geolocation, specialised search engines, healthcare systems, automated cars and more. But with the growing popularity of AI tools like ChatGPT come increasingly urgent questions about the creative autonomy of human minds and how they may be replaced by faster and cheaper artificial tools.

Panels at the **Voice of Tomorrow** ideas festival discussed and debated the extent of AI involvement in sectors like literature, sports, healthcare and films. Is AI an ideal replacement for human decision making? Can artistic output be imitated by the learning capacity of AI and grow even more knowledgeable than human minds? While the possibility of a tech apocalypse may seem daunting, it is also relevant to probe the interdependency of AI and Creative Intelligence.

Artificial Intelligence draws mostly on existing creative data. Moreover, at the present stage, it requires significant human input to provide results that are coherent and emotionally charged — be it in literature, visual arts, design or others. On the other hand, these pitfalls can be addressed by a human mind tailoring the responses of AI.

Whether it's writing a novel or programming code for a software, AI requires human guidance to be not just quick but precise.

The very presence of AI poses a philosophical paradox because it threatens to diminish the significance of human intelligence. “Is AI the enemy or an ally of Creative Intelligence?”. This question has been plaguing us for the past few years. In fact, AI has the potential to exponentially increase the significance of Creative Intelligence. Immense research and reconnaissance that can take hours for thinkers in any field would be done in a jiffy with AI. In literature, AI can become a tool of editing and fact-checking. In medicine, AI, which is utilised to the utmost, can improve curative treatments by leaps and bounds. In sports, too, AI can assist athletes and coaches at many stages.

Accusations of plagiarism and data forgery abound around the use of AI tools. Perhaps this only goes to show how AI is still limited to being a crutch for human output which requires screening and manipulation. Surprisingly enough, AI is creating an even greater demand for creativity. Like most technology, AI functions best in conjunction with, and not as a replacement of, the human mind.

**Voice of Tomorrow** examined all these issues and more. After all, doubt still persists whether AI is a revolutionary change in the world of creativity like the printing press once was or the internet has become. Perhaps it's an unmined scientific route or it's an over-commercialised gimmick — we can only look to the future for definitive answers.



Esha Dutta, Rudrangshu Mukherjee, Anindita Chatterjee and Manisha Jain

## Unveiling Creative Intelligence Amid Artificial Intelligence

The festival's inauguration commenced with a symbolic lamp lighting ceremony, a gesture of illumination and auspicious beginnings. Rudrangshu Mukherjee led this ceremonial act alongside Executive Trustee of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, Anindita Chatterjee, **Ehsaas Woman** and Honorary Convenor for North-East Affairs of the Foundation, Esha Dutta, and the Honorary Chief Operating Officer, Manisha Jain. Their collective presence infused the event with a spirit of leadership, unity, and reverence for the journey ahead.

During the inauguration, Esha Dutta, introduced the Foundation's mission. Sukanya Das, the festival moderator, welcomed the audience, setting the tone for engaging discussions.

Founding Chancellor of Ashoka University and former Associate Professor of History at University of Calcutta, Rudrangshu Mukherjee, was invited to deliver the keynote speech for the event, on the theme "Creative Intelligence in the Time of Artificial Intelligence".

Mukherjee's opening statement clarified his take on the day's theme: "Perhaps I am not the most suitable voice for this occasion. As you can see my grey hairs, you will understand that I am a man of the past. I am inclined towards the importance of man's creative intelligence over its counterpart, Artificial Intelligence."

Mukherjee pointed towards the curious contradiction that the theme posed. Artificial Intelligence (henceforth AI) is the culmination of the brilliance of human minds, a proof of the ingenuity of extraordinarily talented scientists and thinkers. Yet, at the same time, AI is encroaching on human jobs, and stirring a classic clash of ideals. He recounted the old debate of how machines were initially devised to aid humankind in their daily work, yet with their proliferated use, they have contributed to nature's degradation. "Dickens's *Hard Times* echoed in my mind as a poignant reminder of this cyclic struggle," he said.

Humankind, in its quest for progress, has birthed



Rudrangshu Mukherjee



Esha Dutta



Sukanya Das

such technological marvels only to find themselves be eventually crippled by its existence, continued Mukherjee. The internet, which was once a novelty, is now an integral part of our lives. The art of letter writing has vanished, replaced by its quicker substitute, the email. This has resulted in a subtle but palpable erosion of emotions that handwritten words used to carry. Love now, unfortunately, said Mukherjee, is transmitted through sterile screens and emojis. Simultaneously, with a rising dependence on the internet, there has been a drastic decline in the reading of physical books, commented Mukherjee. He posed a question to the rapt audience — with information available any time at the tip of our fingertips, where does it end and true knowledge begin? Mukherjee asserted that the upcoming generation has superfluous information about several things, but in-depth knowledge is something that he finds lacking in them.

He continued his argument about AI-driven tools like ChatGPT, which students often use to craft their assignments. Although students are their

Although students are marvelling at such wonders of modern technology, he asked the room, whether the same ChatGPT has the potential to write *War and Peace*, or paint *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*? Mukherjee went on to say that whatever these tools produce are not original in nature, and they lack the depth of human experience, emotion and creativity. They are simply rehashed versions of the information fed to their algorithm by human creators.

Mukherjee wrapped up his speech with a thought nugget for the younger generations, which will certainly reverberate in their minds. He urged the audience to consider the delicate balance between embracing the advancements of AI while preserving the essence of humanity. The qualities that define humankind — the art of creation, depth of emotion and richness of human experiences. It is our responsibility to preserve them. While AI may augment human capabilities, we should ensure that it serves as a tool for progress rather than a force of erasure. It is with this message that Mukherjee left the podium.



Esha Chatterjee, Shantanu Ray Chaudhuri, Nikhilesh Chaudhuri, Sumita Banerjea, Sanjukta Dasgupta and Ramona Sen

## Exploring AI's Impact on Literature: Perspectives from the Frontiers

The discussion on AI leaving an imprint on various enterprises began with its impact on literature. The session titled “Words’ Worth: What AI Brings to Literature” delved into how literature has begun to evolve, for better or worse, with the introduction of AI-driven tools for writing like ChatGPT. Among the speakers were Sanjukta Dasgupta, former professor and prolific author; Sumita Banerjea, an educator, writer and practising counsellor; Shantanu Ray Chaudhuri, editor at Om Books International; and Nikhilesh Mukherjee, a 16 year-old wunderkind, who is not only a brilliant student, but also a skilled classical guitarist, debater and drama enthusiast. Moderating the panel was Ramona Sen, author and co-founder of Allcap Communications, who has been an editor with HarperCollins India, and a reporter with The Telegraph t2.

The session began with Sen posing a question to the panellists — which character from literature did they think was a robot attempting to pass as a human? While Chaudhuri named Pheluda from Satyajit Ray’s stories, Mukherjee said it could be Professor Calculus from the Tintin comics. Banerjea named Miss Lemon from Agatha Christie’s novels as a possible character. Dasgupta went back in time, and cited Sancho Panza from Don Quixote, Dr. Faustus and Mephistopheles, and Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde.

The dialogue continued with Sen asking the panellists how they envision technology shaping the future of storytelling. Dasgupta began by asserting, “At this moment, I can state with confidence that the creative imagination and emotional intelligence can defy algorithms, and create eccentric,



Shantanu Ray Chaudhuri



Sanjukta Dasgupta

From this slight affirmative voice, Chaudhuri's comments brought back the prevailing voice of scepticism. He spoke about the copyright issue, claiming it to be a very dangerous area that we are approaching. Copyright law, he said, does not grant legal rights to AI-generated works, as they are not considered original works of human authors. Adding how the publishing world is affected by AI, the editor recalled instances where he had received manuscripts entirely ghostwritten by AI.

The speakers then shared their own experiences of dabbling in AI — like having to fish out AI-generated content from their students' assignments — experiences they don't wish to go through again! They emphasised on the dearth of a reading public in today's time, and urged the younger generation to read more books. The dialogue wrapped up with the speakers urging the audience to read more by themselves, and not depend on AI-driven software for such information, followed by a few questions from the audience.

humorous, utopian or dystopian content that AI at this stage cannot match." Banerjea took up Dasgupta's thread of thoughts and said, "From the author's point of view, I feel that there is a sense of ownership, an investment in the act of storytelling. AI, unfortunately, lacks this, and can only give you mimicked work. It is no longer an original creation. There is no connect at the human level."

The conversation made way for Mukherjee's voice, the literal voice of tomorrow. On being asked his opinion about how technological advancements will fare against the timelessness of classics, he said, "ChatGPT might have read every single classic there is to read. But as Murakami said, 'If you're reading what everyone else is reading, you'll be thinking what everyone else is thinking.'" By being so well-read, AI is also exposed, and its ability to find something unique that can resonate with the reader is lacking. However, he added, if such emotions can be fed into the algorithm, with time, AI can produce examples of such timeless classics, too.



Nikhilesh Mukherjee



Sumita Banerjea



Priyam Marik, Indrajit Bhalotia, Anuj Kichlu and Shweta Brahmachari

The second session dealt with the launch of AI in sports, and its subsequent impact, as imagined by professional sportspeople. The speakers of this session included Indrajit Bhalotia, ‘golfing guru’ of the city and founder of Protouch Sports; Anuj Kichlu, CEO of the football management company Best of You Sports India; and Shweta Brahmachari, a national-level rower with several medals to her name. They were joined in conversation by Priyam Marik, consultant at Allcap Communications and journalist for The Telegraph Online My Kolkata.

Marik’s first question was to Bhalotia, enquiring about how AI is already transforming how golf is being played and taught. Bhalotia talked of technical advantages, and said: “With the help of AI, you can analyse a golf swing much better than we used to do earlier. All we have to do is shoot one video, upload it on the server, which is an AI server in the US, and within roughly 90 seconds, the entire golfer is turned into a mannequin and can be seen from all directions. You can see the golfer from all angles, and each angle gets broken down into 300 frames. So every minute detail of the golfer’s position, whether the knee’s moving, or the

## AI's Impact on Sports: Exploring Transformations and Ethical Considerations

shoulder’s turning, is in our hands. It’s really helpful when you’re teaching somebody.”

Marik posed a similar question to Kichlu, about areas in football, like scouting, that can benefit from AI technology. “AI often helps with the final decision-making, on whether the ball crosses the line or not, so the field referee is embracing this technology. But with scouting, using set parameters, that is the biggest role AI has in football.” Kichlu elaborated on this, and spoke about AI performance analysis during scouting for a professional or amateur team — the technology records every nuance of the player’s performance in the 90 minutes, from the

number of forward passes they play to which are their best minutes in the match to whether they were nervous in the last 10 minutes, and so on.

Brahmachari took Kichlu's thread forward and commented on how she thinks AI can help rowers to improve and advance to the next level, including functioning as a personal lifestyle coach. "I believe AI holds a lot of power in enhancing our athletic performance, in terms of data analysis of the athletes. We are already using AI that analyses bio-chemical data from different equipment that we use, which helps us to reach the optimal efficiency in every stroke, or maybe an entire workout," said Brahmachari. Additionally, she mentioned being enthusiastic for the predictive model of AI to use during international championships.

While AI integration in sports seems inevitable, the dialogue shifted towards the issue of fairness with the use of such technology. The speakers doubt extreme scenarios like real-time assistance of players during matches possible at present, deeming them unlikely due to ethical and other regulatory considerations. However, all of them foresee AI enhancing viewer experiences through advanced broadcasting technologies, which can potentially revolutionise sports viewership.

The dialogue further explored the issues of the potential of AI to replace human coaches, and the role it might play in marketing and sponsorship. The conversation was rounded up with a few questions from the audience.



Anuj Kichlu



Shweta Brahmachari



Indrajit Bhalotia



Manisha Jain, Indrajit Bhalotia, Anuj Kichlu and Shweta Brahmachari



## Navigating Healthcare's Future: Balancing AI Advancements and Ethical Concerns

Priyam Marik, Ayanabha Debgupta, Sushmita Roychowdhury and Jai Ranjan Ram

The third session of the day attempted to look at whether AI is going to create a world of seamless healthcare, or if this over-dependence on technology will lead us to the next pandemic. Elucidating further on this topic were experts from the healthcare industry — Jai Ranjan Ram, who has been a child and adolescent psychiatrist based in Kolkata for two decades; Sushmita Roychowdhury, an experienced pulmonologist with 25 years of experience; and Ayanabha Debgupta, who co-founded the Medica Group of hospitals. Moderating the conversation was Priyam Marik, consultant at Allcap Communications and journalist for The Telegraph Online My Kolkata.

Marik initiated the conversation by enquiring about the history of AI in medicine and healthcare, about the sort of early and quick adopter of AI that healthcare has been. Debgupta commented on this, “AI is futuristic, something that is happening today, but for us to appreciate the future, it’s important to know where we have come from.”

” Recounting one of the biggest achievements in healthcare, Debgupta said that in the last 70 years, the average lifespan of our country has increased from 40-45 years to 70+ years currently. The dialogue shifted towards the issues of affordability and accessibility that surrounds healthcare, and how AI may provide solutions to these problems. Roychowdhury presented her opinions next, and spoke of the first AI healthcare app, Internist, devised in 1971, which assuaged the junior doctor from their task of writing about the patient. Parallely, AI also helped in choosing antibiotics, maintaining electronic records of patients, and so on. Ram continued the conversation by clarifying the misinformation that is being circulated, about AI usurping human jobs and said, “We need to understand how AI interplays with medicine, so we can understand how we are actually using it, and then use it to our advantage.” He explained further that AI interprets huge data sets so that humans don’t have to do it. In every way, it is supplementing the doctor’s job, surrounds

healthcare, and how AI may provide solutions to these problems. Roychowdhury presented her opinions next, and spoke of the first AI healthcare app, Internist, devised in 1971, which assuaged the junior doctor from their task of writing about the patient. Parallely, AI also helped in choosing antibiotics, maintaining electronic records of patients, and so on. Ram continued the conversation by clarifying the misinformation that is being circulated, about AI usurping human jobs and said, “We need to understand how AI interplays with medicine, so we can understand how we are actually using it, and then use it to our advantage.” He explained further that AI interprets huge data sets so that humans don’t have to do it. In every way, it is supplementing the doctor’s job.



Sushmita Roychowdhury



Jai Ranjan Ram

The experts went on to provide their insights on the level of accuracy with which AI can function presently, and how this efficiency can be increased with time. They also shed light on a recurrent question in the medicine industry — can AI replace human wisdom and experience when it comes to making split-second decisions by the bedside of a patient? The collective response was in the negative. The professionals also shared their opinions about AI’s position in solving mental health issues, and its rapid increase since the Covid pandemic. Although they were quite embracing of the idea of online therapy as a mediator of minor issues, they suggested that steps (medication or otherwise) should be taken only after consulting a licensed psychologist themselves.

They also warned the young audience against believing every diagnosis that is handed out to them through online resources. The topic of robotic surgery came round, and the doctors pointed out that it is actually senior surgeons who are mostly implementing it, those who have been performing surgery for decades, whose sensory skills have somewhat numbed with age. The dialogue ended with their opinions on biological immortality, on how it is just an idealistic dream of a rich first-world country inhabitant, and emphasised on the importance of expiry dates of everything, even human lives.



Ayanabha Debgupta



Esha Dutta, Hansu Mukherjee, Shruti Das, Suman Mukhopadhyay and Arindam Sil

## Exploring AI's Impact on Filmmaking: Balancing Creativity and Technology

The fourth session of the day focussed on AI's influence on films and the process of film production, and joining the session were the panellists Suman Mukhopadhyay, a National Award-winning filmmaker and theatre director; Arindam Sil, screenwriter, director, producer and actor in the Bengali film industry; and actress Shruti Das. Moderating the panel was Hasnu Mukherjee, creative head of the production house Friends Communication.

Mukherjee began the conversation by introducing the theme — the emergence of AI as a transformative force intertwining technology and creativity, and also to find areas where AI might pose a threat to creativity. She posed the first question to both the film directors, Mukhopadhyay and Sil, asking them how directors can maintain their creative control and ensure integrity of their vision in the presence of AI-powered editing software and automated post-production tools. Sil commented, “Currently, I only use AI to create animals in my

films. I do not have anything against technology if it helps me to achieve my creative aspirations. But I would not want

technology to take over my individuality.” He also said that if all directors begin using the same technology for editing their films, all their works would essentially end up looking similar. AI cannot know what goes on in a director's heart and mind, so emotion would end up lacking in such creation.

Concurrently, ChatGPT recognises only mainstream Hindi films as the entire Indian filmography, added Sil; it has a lot left to learn if it wants to compete with a human. Mukhopadhyay continued Sil's thought and said, “My creative process doesn't start when I am just writing a line on the computer. It's a churning inside you, which is a part of your being, and all of this concocted together makes the artist.” He continued by saying that AI can produce a script in two seconds, but filmmaking is a lot more than that. Even while editing, a filmmaker plays with the audience's emotions, and this connection cannot be achieved just via technology. If AI wants to play 'director', a unique gaze needs

to be fitted into its algorithm, and that will destroy a creator's individuality, he added.

Mukherjee then asked for a new-age actor's perspective from Das, if she thought her creative control would be lost with the use of AI. "No. AI is man-made, and it helps human beings do things faster. It just provides us with faster results. I don't think it is going to replace creatives. AI is just an executor; it is the human that has to give a prompt, so it is only the human that has the power to create," she said.

The conversation bent towards which aspects of film-production can AI help with, and the panellists agreed on the sectors that require more labour, like location scouting, communicating with actors, and so on. However, sectors like set design and shot composition, although they require more labour, also require the individual touch of the director to stand out. They also mentioned, with anecdotes from their respective shooting days, about the organic connection between a director and an actor,

and how the actor delivers exactly what the director wants. Sil and Mukhopadhyay agreed that this human touch will forever be lost if AI attempts to direct.

The conversation reached a general consensus by the end, which the moderator pointed out and added in her conclusion: "Humankind decides their own fate, and AI is here to stay. We should know how much to make use of it, and where to stop." The session concluded with a couple of questions from the audience.



Arindam Sil



Shruti Das



Suman Mukhopadhyay



One-Act play in progress



## Exploring Love Beyond Boundaries: A One-Act Play on Human-AI Relationships

If falling in love with humans is encouraged and appreciated, why can't falling in love with an AI robot be, too? This is the question that Blotting Paper's one-act play, *Love in the Time of Bots* posed to the audience, as a befitting denouement to the theme of the day's discussions. The play circles the life and thoughts of Ryan, the protagonist, chiefly on love and relationships and what is it that can make him happy. Ryan (Mrinmoy Chatterjee), a young man, is in a relationship with Donna (Sreeja Ghosh), but he realises that it is not making him happy anymore. Instead, he finds himself interested and attracted to his personal AI-robot, Eve (Shramana Chakraborty), and often wonders at how this unconventional love would pan out.

Reminiscent of Spike Jones' 2013 science-fiction romantic drama *Her*, the play prods at the established notion of comfort and understanding that humans seek in romantic relationships, by questioning whether these needs can be provided only by another human. Ryan proposes an aberration to this clause, and claims he is understood better by Eve, his AI-robot. Enraged at such an idea, Donna accuses Ryan of committing adultery while being in a relationship with her. Feeling helpless, Ryan leaves and returns home, and is greeted warmly by Eve, as always. The next day, while on his way to office, he stumbles into Shreya (Eliza Zaman), and they both feel a spark for each

other. Hesitant to approach, they make small-talk about their work and hobbies. The conversation seems to go smoothly for Ryan initially, but soon after, he finds himself immersed in Eve's thoughts again. Taking this disruption as a cue, he leaves hurriedly, dropping his work ID card, which Shreya picks up.

What follows next is the climactic revelation. A vengeful Donna reaches Ryan's home one fine day to find proof of her adultery claim. Coincidentally, Shreya, too, goes to Ryan's home at the same time to return the ID card. Donna accuses Shreya of being the "new girl" in his life, which they both deny vehemently. In a dramatic moment, Ryan reveals that there is no other girl in his life, apart from Eve. Everything he has looked for in a partner, he has found in Eve. Although it is unconventional, even radical, he urges Donna and Shreya (and in an extension, the audience), to approach the situation with an unbiased mind. The play ends with a haughty Donna exiting his house, followed quickly by a confused Shreya, with Ryan and Eve staying behind, rejoicing in their union.

ChatGPT wrote the script, with some editing by Ankit Santra. Sridip Bhattacharya operated the music, and this humorous take on love was directed by Sharmistha Pandey.

## Of Translations and Discussions

**T**he **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** and Zubaan Publishers held a one-day event at Goethe Zentrum, Hyderabad to commemorate a very unique partnership.

This Translation Conclave (Feminist Pollinations across our Cultural Landscape) was organized to celebrate a three-year partnership to bring feminist literature published in English into the Indian languages through a series of translation grants. Over a three year period, this partnership has enabled the publication of 46 feminist texts in 10 Indian languages.

Zubaan Publishers has been a pioneer in feminist publishing with an extensive list of fiction, academic non-fiction and activist-friendly texts that have created a unique canon of writing on feminist issues. Publishers chose books from this list to translate into various

Indian languages based on their interest and readership.

The **Prabha Khaitan Foundation's** support for a forward looking grant programme is in keeping with its vision of spreading new ideas and knowledge across the cultural landscape. In the leafy environs of the Goethe Zentrum, Hyderabad, a line-up of luminaries in the fields of academia, publishing and on-ground activism brought out the far reaching impact of a programme such as this. It was a very happy coincidence that the venue was also exhibiting the feminist artwork of artist Percy Tabitha whose line drawings, paintings and installations made a very fitting backdrop to the conversations in the translation conclave. Her firm lines interpreted a feminist worldview in the most visually arresting manner.

### INAUGURATION

The day began with a stirring Keynote by feminist historian, translator and publisher V. Geetha. She struck a true note in the very first line, 'Feminists have always had to translate- their politics, practice and embodied existence.' She went on to give a masterful exposition of how language often falls short in capturing the lived experiences of women. When women struggle against patriarchal frameworks, they find that language as it exists, dilutes or misrepresents their expression. Therefore feminists are engaged in a dynamic act of translation when they push the elasticity of words to convey new concepts. In Geetha's words, 'to 'translate' women's

experiences and gendered realities into legible language, we have recourse to several narrative strategies.' Drawing upon examples from different languages of translations from the work of Dalit women and marginalised groups, she points out how they may have a sense of incompleteness because they cannot, for example, catch unsaid intimacies implied in affectionate address. But new pedagogies and recognizing that academia and language must make space for those experiences that hitherto remained unspoken or not considered worthy of reading, Geetha revealed layer upon layer of the depth that is inherent in the act of translation.



Manisha Chaudhury



Anindita Chatterjee



Urvashi Butalia



V Geetha

## THE LEXICON OF GENDER: TRANSLATING WOMEN



Rita Kothari



D. Saraswathi



J Devika



Vemana Vasanthalakshmi

The day Eminent historian, Malayalam translator and academic Devika J, Telugu translator Vasantha Lakshmi, writer, Kannada translator and Dalit rights activist Saraswathi D moderated by Professor Rita Kothari who is the Head of Centre for Translation at Ashoka University and a translator and theoretician herself. Picking up on the strands of V Geetha's keynote, Prof. Kothari emphasised that translation is often a feminist act in daily life because women translate what is being said to them to play out their roles as defined by patriarchy. Women often do not have the freedom or the language to communicate but translate –or 'make legible' the world that they inhabit.

Devika J spoke about her own work and about women writers from Kerala who encounter this situation and she sees translation as a feminist act because it reads the

world in a different way. It is a way to bring women's 'reading' and writing to the world at large. Saraswathi D linked translation to her work as a Dalit rights' activist. Being from the same community, she underscored how deep wisdom born of centuries of labour is created anew every day by the people at the margins of society but it remains unknown because of an absence of translation. To catch that experiential knowledge, existing vocabulary is often inadequate so much remains untranslated, although it is not untranslatable. It requires new ways of listening and reading.

Vasantha Lakshmi shared the variety of texts that she had worked on alongside her journalistic career reiterating her love for literature and her commitment to exploring different genres for bringing it to a wider readership.



Audience

**WORDS TO WATCH: THE ART OF SUBTITLING**

Head of Zubaan, Urvashi Butalia in conversation with ace filmmaker and subtitler Nasreen Kabir. Nasreen's long association with film making, editing and the Indian film industry has placed her in a unique position to translate and subtitle Indian films into English and take them to new viewers. It requires a different kind of skill to translate dialogues and songs for films where they have to fit in the scheme of the shots edited in the original language. Not only must they capture the essence of the soundtrack in a meaningful and succinct way, they must also display a nuanced understanding of the image of different actors on screen for the subtitles to hit home. Nasreen regaled the audience with numerous anecdotes of how subtitles with literal translation of language lead to unintended hilarity.



Urvashi Butalia and Nasreen Munni Kabir



Anjum Babukhan



Mourya Boda



Dileep Raj



Gita Ramaswami

**FROM INKLING TO CERTAINTY**

Veteran publisher Gita Ramaswami of Hyderabad Book Trust, Dileep Raj, academic and publisher with Insight Publica from Kerala, Sanjay Joshi Hindi publisher with Navarun Publications who leads the initiative Cinema of Resistance and Mamatha KN, Kannada publisher who runs Kaudi Publications, documentary filmmaker and academic were in conversation with Manisha Chaudhry, publisher and the coordinator of the translation grant programme. Since all the panellists were driven by a spirit of activism, they briefly described their work as publishers as being intrinsic to their larger vision of bringing about a change in society to make it more equitable and just for all people. Their belief in the power of books segued quite logically into the publishing of translations so that languages are pollinated with ideas of feminism and bring marginalised voices and experiences to the fore. They had all found the grant programme very helpful and their choice of titles reflected their larger concerns. Gita Ramaswami's long engagement with translation of books into Telugu in the Hyderabad Book Trust had begun because they found there was much scope for taking new books to readers at the grassroots. Dileep Raj spoke about the persistence of



Mamatha KN



Sanjay Joshi

patriarchy in Kerala and also that there was not enough original thinking or dialogue between people in the social sciences although there was much experimentation in the writing of fiction. Sanjay traced the origins of his publishing activity to the screenings of documentaries in the small towns of north India where books would engage audiences while projector reels had to be changed! Mamatha KN was forthright about her deep commitment to Dalit activism and social change and it was her dissatisfaction with the stultifying atmosphere in academia that led her to becoming a publisher. They were all in agreement about the importance of translation and how a grant programme goes a long way in taking this forward.

### MUSICAL PERFORMANCE

The day concluded with a musical performance by Harini Rao and Saikat Basu with renditions of Faiz's poetry and thumri



Harini Rao



Saikat Basu



## Fostering Diplomatic Bonds: Holi Celebration with the Diplomatic Corps

The **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** hosted a vibrant Holi gathering with the diplomatic corps of Delhi, garnering significant attendance and enthusiasm. The festivities unfolded at the residence of Neelima Dalmia Adhar, our **Ehsaas woman** and Convenor of Delhi & NCR Affairs of the Foundation, fostering a spirit of camaraderie and cultural exchange. Srinjoy Chowdhury played a pivotal role in orchestrating this joyous celebration, ensuring its success and resonance within the diplomatic community.





Srinjoy Chowdhury, Neelima Dalmia Adhar and Daniela Mariana Sezonov Tane, Ambassador of Romania to Delhi



Sundeep Bhutoria



Kangan Bhalla



Archana Dalmia and Apra Kuchhal



Sebastian Domzalski, Chargé d'affaires at the Embassy of Poland to India



Darrin Farrant, Director of UNIC with Arijit Ghosh



Allison Chao, a diplomat from Taiwan





Stephane Amalir, director of Alliance Francaise Delhi and his wife Laura Amalir



Masni Eriza Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of Indonesia along with his wife



David Chen Yeshan, Counsellor - The Singapore High Commission in New Delhi along with his wife



Oleksandr Polishchuk, Ambassador of Ukraine to India, Freddy Svane, Ambassador of Denmark to India and Volodymyr Prytula, Second Secretary (Culture, Press & Information) Embassy of Ukraine



Juan Angulo, Ambassador of Chile to India and Amitabh Adhar



Diana Mickeviciene, Ambassador of Lithuania to India and Mateja Vodeb Ghosh, Ambassador of Slovenia to India



Kimmo Lähdevirta, Ambassador of Finland to India along with his wife



Mark Deitons Deputy Head of Mission Embassy of Latvia to India



Alexander Boudouris Deputy Head of Mission Embassy of Greece in India



Georg Enzweiler Deputy Chief of Mission



## Vasant Utsav – Celebration of Raas Leela, dances, and colours



Indian Museum, Kolkata celebrated Vasant Utsav '24 – the Festival of Colours in association with Ministry of Culture, Government of India; **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, notable danseuse Dona Ganguly and the talented students of Ganguly's dance institute Diksha Manjari.

“Ore Grihobasi khol dwar khol, laglo je dol | Sthole jale, bonotole laglo je dol” – on this melodious note of Rabindranath Tagore, Dona Ganguly and her troupe of Diksha Manjari performed to inaugurate Vasanta Utsav 2024 and usher in a celebration of springtime hues and the happiness of Holi. Gouri Basu, **Ehsaas woman of Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, formally introduced the event and welcomed the eager cultural enthusiasts of Kolkata.



Arijit Dutta Choudhury

Song and dance struck the right chord and the sprawling central courtyard of the Indian Museum resonated with the cheer of a vivacious audience enjoying every tune and step. More than 500 students, in their colourful and ethnic attire mesmerized the audience with classical dance performances. They danced to Rabindra sangeet, Nazrul Geeti, and popular Hindi songs – all of them reflecting the essence of the spring season and the festival of Holi.

Danseuse Dona Ganguly dressed as Radha performing ‘Raas Leela’ with Krishna and other dancers was the highlight of the evening. The beauty of the celebration was that the performances were magically weaved with beautiful dialogues in Bengali and Hindi capturing the feel and fervour of the season.



Sayan Bhattacharya



Gouri Basu and Anindita Chatterjee



Dona Ganguly's Performance

The evening, which was a riot of colours (*gula*), beautiful costumes, canon burst of golden-coloured papers, and mellifluous rhythms came to a close with Arijit Dutta Choudhury, Director of Indian Museum felicitating Dona Ganguly, Gouri Basu, and Anindita Chatterjee who is the Executive Trustee of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. The evening enlivened up with students of Diksha Manjari sprinkling colours on the guests and distributing sweets to ring in the festive fervour of the occasion.



Archana Mantri



Jagriti Hazra

The event was supported by Shree Cement Limited as part of their CSR initiative and was in association with the Indian Museum, Ministry of Culture Government of India, and Diksha Manjari







## A Fusion of Art and Activism



Priti Patel

Mallika Sarabhai

The City of Joy witnessed an invigorating evening of **Choupal** featuring Mallika Sarabhai. A remarkable exploration of dance, social activism, and personal journeys. The conversation, expertly moderated by Priti Patel, delved deep into the life and work of Sarabhai, a stalwart figure in Indian classical and contemporary dance. Malika Varma, **Ehsaas woman** of Kolkata, delivered a warm welcome note setting the tone for the insightful discussion.

The dialogue began with Patel expressing her admiration for Sarabhai's contributions to dance and women's empowerment. She reminisced about a pivotal moment in her life when she received an award from Mrinalini Sarabhai, Mallika's mother, during a performance of "Chitrangada," where Mallika's insightful feedback left a lasting impression.

Sarabhai, in her characteristically candid manner, shared insights into her upbringing, emphasizing the ethos of social responsibility instilled by her diverse family background. She recounted anecdotes from her childhood, where discussions about nation-building and societal change were commonplace, setting the stage for her lifelong commitment to using art as a catalyst for transformation.

Reflecting on her journey into the world of dance and activism, Sarabhai discussed her formative experiences at Xavier's College in Ahmedabad, where she confronted societal prejudices and discovered her passion for dance. She highlighted the pivotal role played by her parents, who nurtured her curiosity and encouraged her to pursue her interests.

The conversation took a poignant turn as Sarabhai recounted her struggle with depression and self-discovery, culminating in her decision to embrace dance wholeheartedly. She spoke about the profound influence of her parents' values and her collaboration with her mother, Mrinalini Sarabhai, which evolved into a multigenerational exploration of dance and identity.

Patel interjected with reflections on a collaborative performance titled *Two Lives in Dance*, featuring Sarabhai and her daughter Anahita. She praised the honesty and authenticity of the production, which showcased the unique artistic voices of each performer while celebrating their shared heritage.



Anindita Chatterjee, Tanusree Shankar, Priti Patel, Mallika Sarabhai, Shamlu Dudeja

The discussion then turned to Sarabhai's portrayal of Draupadi in Peter Brook's *The Mahabharata*. Sarabhai highlighted the importance of challenging traditional gender norms and reclaiming the narrative of iconic mythological figures like Draupadi. She recounted her interactions with Brook and their creative differences, underscoring her commitment to portraying Draupadi as a resilient, empowered woman.

The conversation concluded with reflections on the enduring relevance of Indian classical dance forms in a rapidly changing world. Sarabhai emphasized the fluidity and adaptability of tradition, urging artists to embrace innovation while honoring their cultural heritage.

Overall, the event was a compelling exploration of art, activism, and personal resilience, showcasing Mallika Sarabhai's indomitable spirit and her enduring impact on Indian dance and society. Through her candid anecdotes and thought-provoking insights, Sarabhai inspired audiences to embrace change and harness the power of creativity for social change.

The guest and conversationalist were felicitated by Tanusree Shankar, adding a touch of honor to the occasion.



Mallika Sarabhai

*Choupal* Kolkata was organised with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative in association with print media partner, The Telegraph-t2. The session was facilitated by **Ehsaas Women** of Kolkata

## Soulful Renditions of the Doyen of Music

**P**rabha Khaitan Foundation in association with FICCI FLO Indore celebrated Shubha-aagman – a concert with the doyen of Hindustani classical music, Shubha Mudgal in Indore.

Mamta Bakliwal, chairperson of FICCI FLO formally welcomed the audience. Suchitra Sajid Dhanani, **Ehsaas woman** of Indore delivered the introductory words on **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. Legendary singer Mudgal was felicitated with a beautiful memento – Jaipur puppet by **Ehsaas women** from Indore – Surbhi Dhupar and Unnati Singh.

Nature is at its beautiful best in Spring– with colourful blossoms all around. Festival of colours – Holi gives more reasons to cheer during this time. Shubha Mudgal created a mood of mellifluous festivities with her classical songs celebrating Holi. Her renditions were music to ears – every musical piece celebrated the mood of springtime cheer and Holi, the festival of colours. Aneesh Pradhan accompanied her on the tabla. Sudhir Nayak and Grusha Dey played the harmonium and tanpura respectively. It was an enthralling session for the cultural enthusiasts of Indore to revel as Mudgal rendered three beautiful compositions on Holi.



Shubha Mudgal

*The event was supported by Shree Cement Limited as part of their CSR initiative and was in association Ficci Flo Indore*



Audience



Aneesh Pradhan



Sudhir Nayak



Mamta Bakliwal



Surbhi Dhupar, Unnati Singh, Shubha Mudgal, Suchitra Dhanani

## Exploring the World of Drama on World Theatre Day

On occasion of World Theatre Day, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** hosted **Aakhar Bengal** session with two theatre personalities – Pankaj Munsii and Ujjwal Chattopadhyay at in association with Purba Paschim.

Veteran and popular Bengali theatre actor, organizer, and director Pankaj Munsii and famous playwright and professor of Economics at Government College shared their experiences and insights about the world of theatre and its significance in the cultural milieu at the session in Kolkata.

Soumitra Mitra, formally introduced the session and the esteemed guest speakers. He invited Saiful Islam to read out Nobel Prize in Literature 2023 recipient Jon Olav Fosse's message on World Theatre Day entitled 'Art is Peace'.

The session had a delightful highlight as audience crooned two theatre songs. The first song was from Rabindranath Tagore's drama Falguni and the second was from Athoi Jol which is an adaptation of Bibhutibhusan Bandopadhyay's novel done by Ujjwal Chattopadhyay and directed by Bratya Basu.

The literary talk initiated with Pankaj Munsii sharing his thoughts on the significance of Fosse's message on WTD and how theatre emerges as the perfect platform to voice the different shades of life. Munsii stated – 'Theatre is life's script' and how song-based drama can be an exciting and inspiring way to reach out to the audience with stories of human lives and social messages. Songs in theatres



Pankaj Munsii



Ujjwal Chattopadhyay

enhance the ability to make any performance more appealing; such is the power of music to influence and retain for a long time in the audiences' minds.

Ujjwal Chattopadhyay read out the theatre script he had penned based on famous Bengali author Ramkumar Mukhopadhyay's novel *Dukkhe Keora*. The drama he read out was styled as a monologue by the poor person, *Dukkhe*, who speaks to invisible someone about a lot of many things of life on which he has his profound insights. Before reading out the drama, Chattopadhyay expressed his admiration for the genius of Pankaj Munsii who made an innovative use of song to elevate the stature of a theatrical performance.

Ramkumar Mukhopadhyay, who was part of the distinguished audience of **Aakhar** session, expressed his delight and gratitude. Mukhopadhyay also shared the writing process of his novel; the innovativeness of which lay in the answers of the single character of the novel (poor man *Dukkhe*) from which the readers can gauge the questions supposedly being asked by the writer, but as a character who remains non-existent.

Pankaj Munsii was felicitated Suchandra Show and Ujjwal Chattopadhyay was felicitated by Sampurna Chakraborty.

*Aakhar Bengal* was supported by Shree Cement Limited as their CSR initiative and was in association with Purba Paschim



Soumitra Mitra



Saiful Islam

## कहानी में सच्चाई होगी तो सालों तक याद रखी जाएगी: उर्मिला शिरीष

जीवन एक बार ही मिलता है इसलिए कभी हार नहीं माननी चाहिए, जीवन को खुलकर जीना चाहिए और समस्याओं का सामना करना चाहिए...



Urmila Shirish



Mukti Shahdeo



Mahua Maji felicitated Urmila Shirish

सामाजिक सरोकार, संवेदनाएं और प्रेम न हो तो जीवन का अस्तित्व ही नहीं बचता। जीवन को समझना है तो आस-पास के परिवेश को देखना और महसूस करना चाहिए। यह कहना है कथाकार उर्मिला शिरीष का। वे दिल को छूने वाले प्रसंगों, अनुभूतियों और संवेदनाओं से होतप्रोत होकर **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** की ओर से आयोजित कलम रांची के सत्र में अपनी बातें कहीं। आरम्भ में आयोजक रांची अहसास वूमन डॉ. सीमा सिंह ने अतिथियों का स्वागत करते हुए प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की गतिविधियों की विस्तृत जानकारी दी। उन्होंने **कलम** के साथ ही किताब, लफ्ज़, एक मुलाकात विशेष, सुर और साज, द राइट सर्कल और आखर जैसे आयोजनों की चर्चा की। सामाजिक व सांस्कृतिक सरोकार से जुड़कर **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** लगातार अपनी रचनात्मकता को साकार करता आ रहा है। जिसके कारण देश-विदेशों में उसकी अपनी एक अलग पहचान है।

उन्होंने अतिथि वक्ता का परिचय देते हुए बताया कि लेखिका उर्मिलाजी एक उम्दा लेखिका हैं। मध्य प्रदेश में 19 अप्रैल, 1959 को जन्मी रचनाकार उर्मिला शिरीष ने हिंदी से एमए, पीएचडी और डीलिट् की उपाधि आद्योपान्त प्रथम श्रेणी में प्राप्त की। आपके द्वारा रचित सम्पादित पुस्तकों की गिनती दो दर्जन से अधिक है। इनमें उपन्यास 'खैरियत है हुजूर', 'चाँद गवाह', 'कोई एक सपना'; कहानी संग्रह- 'बिवाईयाँ तथा अन्य कहानियाँ', 'उर्मिला शिरीष की श्रेष्ठ कहानियाँ', 'दीवार के पीछे', 'मेरी प्रिय कथाएँ', 'ग्यारह लंबी कहानियाँ', 'कुर्की और अन्य कहानियाँ', 'लकीर' तथा 'पुनरागमन', 'निर्वासन', 'रंगमंच', 'शहर में अकेली लड़की', 'सहमा हुआ कल', 'केंचुली', 'मुआवजा', 'वे कौन थे' के अलावा प्रख्यात लेखक गोविन्द मिश्र की जीवनी 'बयावाँ में बहार' और साहित्यकारों से साक्षात्कार 'शब्दों की यात्रा के साथ' शामिल हैं। आपने 'खुशबू' और 'धूप की स्याही' नामक कहानी संग्रहों का संपादन और 'प्रभाकर श्रोत्रिय: आलोचना की तीसरी परम्परा', 'हिंदी भाषा एवं समसामयिकी' तथा 'सृजन यात्रा गोविन्द मिश्र' जैसी पुस्तकों का संपादन भी किया है। केंद्रीय साहित्य अकादेमी नई दिल्ली की जनरल काउंसिल की सदस्य और स्पंदन संस्था भोपाल की संयोजक शिरीष म.प्र. साहित्य अकादमी के अखिल भारतीय मुक्तिबोध पुरस्कार, कमलेश्वर कथा सम्मान और वागीश्वरी पुरस्कार सहित अनेकों पुरस्कारों से सम्मानित हैं। परिचय के बाद कार्यक्रम के क्रम को आगे बढ़ाने तथा लेखिका के साथ संवाद करने के लिए कवि व रचनाकार मुक्तिशाहदेव को मंच सौंपा गया।

उन्होंने लेखिका से रचना प्रक्रिया, कथा की बुनावट और जीवन के साथ तालमेल पर कई प्रश्न पूछे।

लेखिका ने बताया कि बचपन से ही उन्हें पढ़ने का शौक था। जिस समय सब सखियाँ, सहेलियाँ खेलती थी उस समय वे साहित्यिक किताबों की दीवारों के बीच घिरी रहती थी। हमारे स्कूल में एक हिन्दी के अध्यापक थे उन्होंने हमें काफी प्रभावित और प्रेरित किया। वे हमें कविताएं व कहानियाँ लिखने के लिए विषय दिया करते थे। इसके बाद से ही लेखन ऐसा चला कि बिना लिखे मेरा एक भी दिन नहीं गुजरता था। मुझे रविन्द्रनाथ की 'काबुलिवाला' और सुदर्शन की लिखी 'हार की जीत' कहानी ने झकझोर कर रख दिया जिसका असर आज तक मेरे दिलो-दिमाग में छाया हुआ है।

कहानी में बहुत ताकत होती है। जो अपना असर पाठकों पर छोड़ती है। एक लेखक के लिए वातावरण, अनुभूतियाँ, पात्र, परिस्थिति, घटनाएं, विचार आदि इतने महत्वपूर्ण होते हैं कि वह लेखक के दिमाग में घूमते रहते हैं। वे पात्र बाहर निकलने के लिए दस्तक देते हैं। वे कहती हैं आज कल के माहौल को लेकर मैं चिन्तित हूँ। लड़कियों के साथ दुष्कर्म होता है। दुष्कर्म करने वाले खुले में आराम से घूमते हैं पर लड़कियों को शर्मशार होकर, मुँह छुपाकर जीना होता है, जबकि उसका कोई दोष नहीं होता। ऐसे में लड़कियों को आत्महत्या जैसे कदम नहीं उठाने चाहिए बल्कि उनको आगे बढ़ना चाहिए। जीवन में हार नहीं मानना, दबना नहीं चाहिए, आगे बढ़ना चाहिए क्योंकि जीवन एक बार ही मिलता है। इसलिए किसी को न दबाए, न रोके बल्कि उन्हें बढ़ने के लिए अपना सहयोग दें।

औरतों को हर किसी को जवाब देना पड़ता है। यहां तक कि बेटे के प्रश्नों का जवाब भी मां को देना होता है। पर मां कोई प्रश्न नहीं कर पाती क्योंकि बच्चों ने खुद के लिए एक अलग तरह का आवरण बना रखा है। कहानी में सच्चाई हो, प्रकृति के करीब हो, संवेदनाएं दिलों को छूती हो, ऐसी कहानियाँ सदियों तक याद रखी जाती हैं।

इस मौके पर मौजूद दर्शकों ने लेखिका से कई प्रश्न पूछे, कई कहानियों के पात्रों के बारे में जानना चाहा। इस अवसर पर राजसभा सांसद महोआ ने लेखिका को उत्तरीय पहनाकर सम्मानित किया तथा स्मृतिचिन्ह स्वरूप कठपुतली प्रदान की। कार्यक्रम के अन्त में रश्मि ने सभी के प्रति आभार व्यक्त किया।

रांची कलम का आयोजन अहसास वूमन के सहभागिता और श्री सीमेंट की सीएसआर पहल के तहत हुआ तथा मीडिया पार्टनर दैनिक जागरण का सहयोग रहा।



Poonam Anand



Seema Singh

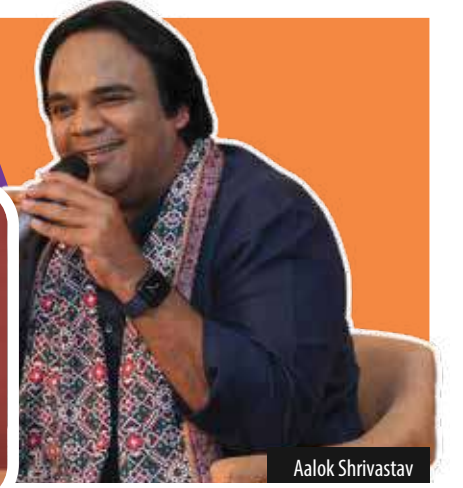
हम नहीं बोलते,  
हमारी तहज़ीब  
बोलती है :

**आलोक श्रीवास्तव**

प्रयागराज में अहसास वूमेन की ओर से कलम के  
आगाज़ पर दी शुभकामनाएं



Shruti Agarwal



Aalok Shrivastav

हम नहीं बोलते, हमारी तहज़ीब बोलती है। हमारे संस्कार ही हमारे व्यक्तित्व को प्रकट करते हैं। यह कहना है लोकप्रिय कवि आलोक श्रीवास्तव का। यह बात **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** की ओर से आयोजित **कलम** प्रयागराज के सत्र में कही गई। आरम्भ में आयोजक अहसास वूमेन की ओर से दीपिका अग्रहरि ने अतिथियों का स्वागत व धन्यवाद किया। उन्होंने **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** की गतिविधियों की जानकारी दी और कलम के साथ ही किताब, लफ़्ज़ एक मुलाकात विशेष, सुर और साज, द राइट सर्कल और आखर जैसे आयोजनों की चर्चा की। उन्होंने खुशी जताई कि प्रयागराज में अहसास वूमेन की ओर से कलम सत्र की शुरुआत हुई है। उन्होंने अतिथि वक्ता का परिचय देते हुए बताया कि प्रतिष्ठित कवि आलोक श्रीवास्तव को आलोचना के प्रतिमान डॉ नामवर सिंह ने "दुष्यंत कुमार की परम्परा का आलोक" कह कर अलंकृत किया था। वहीं कमलेश्वर, गुलज़ार और जावेद अख्तर जैसे साहित्यिक-दिग्गजों ने उन्हें 'हिंदी-उर्दू को जोड़ने वाला ग़ज़लकार बताया। उनकी पुस्तकें 'आमीन' व 'आफ़रीन' की गिनती हिंदी की बेस्ट सेलर बुक्स में होती है। मध्यप्रदेश की साहित्य अकादमी व उर्दू अकादमी से सम्मानित आलोक यूके की ओर से ब्रिटेन की संसद 'हाउस ऑफ कॉमन्स' में सम्मानित होने वाले देश के एकमात्र ग़ज़लकार हैं। रूस के अंतर्राष्ट्रीय पुष्किन सम्मान व बॉशिंगटन डीसी में अंतर्राष्ट्रीय कविता सम्मान से भी उन्हें सम्मानित किया गया है। वे पेशे से टीवी पत्रकार हैं और इन दिनों फिल्मों के लिये गीत व कहानी-लेखन में सक्रिय हैं।

दीपिका ने आगे के संवाद के लिए श्रुति अग्रवाल को आमंत्रित किया। उन्होंने कवि से जीवन, साहित्य, लेखन और पत्रकारिता से जुड़े कई प्रश्न किए।

आलोक श्रीवास्तव ने **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** के कार्यों की सराहना करते हुए कहा, जिस तरह से फाउंडेशन साहित्य के प्रसार-प्रचार के लिए कार्य कर रहा है वह सराहनीय और प्रशंसानीय है। उन्होंने प्रयागराज को साहित्यिक राजधानी बताते हुए कहा कि, "मैं साहित्य की राजधानी में आ पहुंचा हूँ, जो मात्र पवित्र नदियों का ही संगम स्थल नहीं है बल्कि साहित्य, संस्कृति व कला का भी संगम स्थल है। इलाहाबाद-प्रयागराज में कला, साहित्य व संस्कृति की त्रिवेणी बहती है। हमारी तहज़ीब है कि अगर मैं इस शहर को हरिवंश राय का या महादेवी वर्मा या उमाकांत या फिर रवीन्द्र कालिया का शहर कहूँ तो यह थोड़ी नाइंसाफी होगी। यह साहित्य की ऐसी राजधानी है जहाँ पर साहित्यकारों ने जो भी रचा है वह अतुलनीय है।" इस मौके पर उन्होंने युवाओं को उत्साहित करते हुए कहा

**हम आपके इशारे पे घर बार छोड़ दें  
दीवाने हैं ज़रूर, मगर इस कदर नहीं।**



Deepika Agrahari



Rupesh Kumar Singh felicitating Aalok Shrivastav

जब आप कुछ करने की ठान लेते हैं, और धैर्य पूर्वक उसे करते हैं, तो यकीन मानिए सफलता आपको मिलेगी ही। हमें ध्यान रखना चाहिए कि हमारे पास ऐसे लोगों की भीड़ न हो जो हमारे हौसलों को डगमगा दे।

**मंज़िलें क्या हैं, रास्ता क्या है  
हौसला हो तो फासला क्या है**

उन्होंने बताया कि "उर्दू व हिन्दी दोनों भाषा विरासत के रूप में मिली हैं। एक बार सारी रात मुशायरा सुनने में गुज़ार दी। लौटने पर पिता के गुस्से का शिकार होना पड़ा। मैं रोते हुए अपनी मां के पास आया और पूरे आत्मविश्वास के साथ कहा कि "वे मुझे चाहे तो और दस बार मार लें पर मैं बनूंगा तो शायर ही जिसकी ग़ज़ल जगजीत सिंह, गुलाम अली गाएँगे" तब मेरी मां ने कहा था "आमीन"।"

"जब अपने पेशन को प्रोफेशन बना ले तो काम आसान हो जाता है। मैंने नौकरी के लिए पत्रकारिता को चुना क्योंकि लेखन और पत्रकारिता में एक चीज सामान्य है वह है सामाजिक सरोकार का होना। दृष्टि, विजन, समाज, वक्त और परिवेश पर अपनी नजर रखना।"

उन्होंने आज के संदर्भ में कहा कि - "हम रियल लाइफ से रील लाइफ में आ गए हैं। अभी सारा साहित्य सोशल मीडिया में फैला हुआ है। साथ ही शिवतांडव स्रोत के हिन्दी अनुवाद पर कहा कि कई बार हम सिर्फ माध्यम होते हैं। मैं खुद को भाग्यशाली मानता हूँ कि मैं इसे करने का माध्यम बना।" उन्होंने बाबूजी, अम्मा के अलावा कई सारी ग़ज़लें सुनाकर लोगों को मुग्ध कर दिया।

**घर की बुनियादें, दीवारें. बामो-दर थे बाबूजी  
सबको बाँधे रखने वाला ख़ास हुनर थे बाबूजी**

इस अवसर पर वहां मौजूद दर्शकों ने भी कवि आलोक से प्रश्न पूछे। कार्यक्रम के अन्त में कान्हा श्याम के महाप्रबन्धक रूपेश ने अतिथि को स्मृति चिन्ह भेंट किया।

प्रयागराज कलम, अहसास वूमेन की सहभागिता और श्री सीमेंट की सीएसआर पहल के तहत हुआ। हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर कान्हा श्याम तथा मीडिया पार्टनर दैनिक जागरण का पूरा सहयोग रहा।

## हम खुद को हिन्दुस्तानी समझे: वजाहत हबीबुल्लाह

'ब्रोकन कॉलम्स ऑफ सनलाइट' की  
अगली कड़ी लिखना चाहते हैं

बंटवारे के बाद देश को नया बनाने की कोशिश की गई। बहुत से कार्य किए और काम करने का मौका भी मिला इसके लिए खुद को खुश किस्मत मानता हूँ। यह कहना है सेवानिवृत्त आईएस और पूर्व अल्पसंख्यक आयोग के अध्यक्ष वजाहत हबीबुल्लाह का। वे **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** व **रेखा फाउंडेशन** के सहयोग से आयोजित लफ़्ज़ अलीगढ़ में अतिथि वक्ता के रूप में दर्शकों को सम्बोधित कर रहे थे।

कार्यक्रम की शुरुआत में अहसान वूमेन अलीगढ़, डॉ. फैजा अब्बासी ने **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** के कार्यों के बारे में विस्तार से बताया, **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** साहित्य, भाषा, लोक कला, लोक भाषा, संगीत-कला, सांस्कृतिक धरोहर के संरक्षण व प्रचार-प्रसार हेतु सालों से कार्य करती आ रही है। उन्होंने फाउंडेशन से जुड़ी विभिन्न गतिविधियों की जानकारी दी। उन्होंने बताया कि **लफ़्ज़** का यह आयोजन फाउंडेशन की '**अपनी भाषा अपने लोग**' को बढ़ावा देने की पहल का हिस्सा है।

फैजा ने अतिथि वक्ता का परिचय देते हुए बताया कि भारतीय प्रशासनिक सेवा (आईएस) 1968 बैच के पूर्व सिविल सेवक वजाहत हबीबुल्लाह पुराने लखनऊ परिवार से हैं। उन्होंने अपने करियर का ज्यादातर समय जम्मू-कश्मीर में बिताया है, जिसमें अधिकांश कश्मीर घाटी में गुजारा है। उन्होंने भारत के दो प्रधानमंत्रियों-इंदिरा गांधी और राजीव गांधी के स्टाफ में क्रमशः निदेशक और संयुक्त सचिव के रूप में भी काम किया है और केंद्र शासित प्रदेश लक्षद्वीप के प्रशासक थे और भारत के दूतावास, वाशिंगटन डीसी, यू.एस. में पद संभाला था। इसके अतिरिक्त निदेशक, लाल बहादुर शास्त्री राष्ट्रीय प्रशासन अकादमी का भी दायित्व संभाला। इसके बाद, वे उपभोक्ता मामलों के विभाग और कपड़ा और पंचायती राज मंत्रालय में सचिव थे। सेवानिवृत्त होने के बाद हबीबुल्लाह ने भारत के पहले मुख्य सूचना आयुक्त के रूप में कार्य किया - भारत के सूचना का अधिकार अधिनियम के तहत अपील की अंतिम अदालत का नेतृत्व किया और अध्यक्ष, राष्ट्रीय अल्पसंख्यक आयोग के रूप में कार्य का निर्वाह किया। यूनाइटेड स्टेट्स इंस्टीट्यूट ऑफ पीस के पूर्व रैंडोल्फ जेनिंग्स फेलो, हबीबुल्लाह को धर्मनिरपेक्षता में उत्कृष्टता के लिए राजीव गांधी पुरस्कार से सम्मानित किया गया है। वह ब्रॉडकास्ट कंटेंट कंट्रोल काउंसिल, भारत के सदस्य हैं। वह 'माई कश्मीर: द डाइंग ऑफ द लाइट' के लेखक हैं।



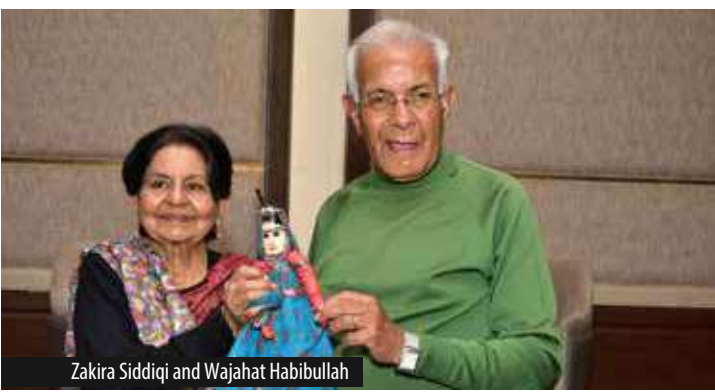
Faiza Abbasi



Wajahat Habibullah

उन्से हुई दिलचस्प बातचीत में उन्होंने देश की स्थिति, साहित्यिक रुझान और जीवन से जुड़ी कई बातों को साझा किया। लेखन के प्रति लगाव होने के कारण वे लिखते रहें। उन्होंने कई किताबें लिखीं। राजीव गांधी पर उनकी किताब को हाल ही में उर्दू में अनुवाद, ब्राउन बुक्स, नई दिल्ली द्वारा प्रकाशित किया गया है। डॉ. फैजा ने उनसे लेखन के प्रति उनके जुनून, उर्दू के साथ संबंध और उनकी प्रतिष्ठित माँ बेगम हमीदा हबीबुल्लाह, जो लखनऊ की एक प्रसिद्ध सामाजिक कार्यकर्ता थीं, उनके बारे में विस्तार से पूछने पर उन्होंने खुले दिल से जवाब दिया। लेखक ने कहा कि, लेखन में उनकी रुचि इतिहास में उनकी पृष्ठभूमि के कारण है और वह अपनी चाची अतिया हुसैन की विभाजन पूर्व पुस्तक 'ब्रोकन कॉलम्स ऑफ सनलाइट' की अगली कड़ी लिखना चाहेंगे। सवाल-जवाब सत्र के दौरान उन्होंने इस बात पर जोर दिया कि भारत के भविष्य के लिए उनका संदेश इसकी विविधता के संरक्षण के लिए है। उन्होंने कहा कि प्रेम, भाईचारे और शांतिपूर्ण सह-अस्तित्व से प्रत्येक भारतीय को नागरिक के रूप में महत्व देना संभव है। हमें खुद को भारतीय समझना चाहिए क्योंकि देश सब का है। इस अवसर पर उन्होंने उमरावजान फिल्म की गज़ल को गा कर सुनाया, जिससे दर्शक मुग्ध हो गए।

कार्यक्रम के समापन पर उनकी लिखी पुस्तक की उर्दू और अंग्रेजी प्रतियां दर्शकों को भेंट की गई और प्रोफेसर जाकिर सिद्दीकी, पूर्व प्राचार्य, महिला कॉलेज, एएमयू द्वारा लेखक का अभिनंदन किया गया।



Zakira Siddiqi and Wajahat Habibullah

लफ़्ज़ अलीगढ़ का आयोजन अहसास वूमेन की सहभागिता और श्री सीमेंट की सीएसआर पहल के तहत हुआ। सहयोगी के रूप में रेखा फाउंडेशन का भी पूरा सहयोग मिला।

## हिन्दुस्तान मेरे रंग-रंग में बसता है: अज़रा नकवी

- प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन के आयोजन में आकर ताजगी मिलती है



Vinita Jain



Azra Naqvi

हिन्दुस्तान हमेशा से ही दिल के करीब रहा है, वह मेरी रंग-रंग में बसा है इसलिए हमने भारत लौटना ही चुना। यह कहना है शिक्षिका, लेखिका, शायरा और समाजसेवी अज़रा नकवी का। आप प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की ओर से रेख्ता फाउंडेशन के सहयोग से आयोजित लफ़्ज़ अजमेर में बतौर अतिथि वक्ता के रूप बोल रही थीं। आरम्भ में आयोजकों की ओर से अहसास वूमेन विनीता आशित जैन ने फाउंडेशन से जुड़ी विभिन्न गतिविधियों की जानकारी दी। उन्होंने बताया कि लफ़्ज़ का यह आयोजन फाउंडेशन की 'अपनी भाषा अपने लोग' को बढ़ावा देने की पहल का हिस्सा है।

विनीता ने अतिथि अज़रा नकवी का विस्तृत परिचय दिया। नकवी ने अलीगढ़ मुस्लिम विश्वविद्यालय, जे.एन.यू. और कनाडा की कॉन्कोर्डिया विश्वविद्यालय से शिक्षा प्राप्त की। महिलाओं के लिए सामुदायिक कार्यकर्ता की भूमिका निर्भाई तथा दक्षिण एशियाई थिएटर ग्रुप 'तीसरी दुनिया' का आयोजन किया। कनाडा में किंडरगार्टन शिक्षिका के रूप में सेवाएं दी और अभी रेख्ता फाउंडेशन के साथ जुड़ी हैं। आपने सउदी लेखिकाओं की कहानियों के संकलन का अनुवाद किया तथा सउदी पत्रकार की जीवनी 'मेरे शव पर रोज' के अलावा कवयित्री सैदा फरहद की कविताओं का संकलन किया। नकवी 38 साल देश के बाहर रहकर सामुदायिक सेवा में बहुत काम किया और 'साउथ एशिया कम्युनिटी सेंटर' नाम से एक एनजीओ की शुरुआत की।

इस सत्र में उन्होंने खुशी जताते हुए कहा कि "जब भी वे प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन में आती हैं, ताजगी से भर उठती हैं। इतनी सारी यादें समेट कर मैं हर बार लौटती हूँ।" उन्होंने जीवन के बारे में बताते हुए कहा कि - "मैं खुद को सौभाग्यशाली मानती हूँ कि मेरा जन्म ऐसे परिवार में हुआ जहाँ मेरा सम्पूर्ण विकास हो पाया, जैसा कि मैं चाहती थी। हमने बचपन से ही पिता को देखा कि सद्भावना और आपसी सौहार्द के लिए किस तरह से कार्य करते थे। उनको देखकर ही हम बड़े हुए और हमें समझ आया कि शायद जीवन ऐसा ही होता है। अम्मी को शेर लिखने का शौक था। वे इस कदर लफ़्ज़ों पर गौर करती थी कि किसी ने भी

शब्दों का गलत उच्चारण किया है तो वे तुरंत सुधार देती थी। उनके गुणगुनाते शेरों-शायरी लोरी की तरह मेरी नींदों में आज भी समाई हुई है।"

"मैंने देखा कि चाहे आप कही भी चले जाएं महिलाओं की स्थिति और समस्याओं में ज्यादा फर्क नहीं है। पर अब स्थितियां बदली हैं। भारत में भी महिलाओं को आगे बढ़ने का और अपने दम पर अपना भविष्य बनाने का माहौल बन रहा है।"

ग़ज़ल पर उन्होंने कहा कि - "ग़ज़ल तो ग़ज़ल है हिन्दी व उर्दू कहना ठीक नहीं है क्योंकि उर्दू के साथ ही हिन्दी में भी अच्छी ग़ज़लें लिखी जा रही हैं। ऐसे में उसे हिन्दी की ग़ज़ल या उर्दू की ग़ज़ल कह कर अलग नहीं करना चाहिए। मेरे कई शेरों में हिन्दी के शब्द हैं। ग़ज़ल शब्द ही अरबी से आता है। ऐसे में अरबी में उसकी जो अलग-अलग तकनीक है उसी में लिखा जाएगा, भाषा चाहे जो हो। हिन्दी-उर्दू रोजमर्रा की जुबान है ऐसे में हमारे लिखने में वह सहज ही शामिल हो जाती हैं। रेख्ता फाउंडेशन उर्दू के क्षेत्र में अच्छा कार्य कर रही है। ताकि लिखने वालों को सहूलियत हो।"

उन्होंने सद्भावना पर जोर देते हुए कहा कि हमें डरने की जरूरत नहीं है संवाद की जरूरत है। आपस में बातें करें।

जीवन के विविध पहलुओं पर अपने विचार, अपने अनुभव को साझा करते हुए उन्होंने अपने कई शेर सुनाए।

कैसे कैसे स्वाँग रचाए हमने दुनिया-दारी में  
यूँ ही सारी उमर गँवा दी औरों ग़म-ख़वारी में  
हम भी कितने सादा-दिल थे सीधी सच्ची बात करें  
लोगों ने क्या क्या कह डाला लहजों की तह-दारी में  
जब दुनिया पर बस न चले तो अंदर अंदर कुढ़ना क्या  
कुछ बेले के फूल ख़िलाएँ आँगन की फुलवारी में  
सवालालत के सत्र में नकवी ने श्रोताओं के प्रश्नों के उत्तर दिए। इस अवसर पर डॉ. ब्रिजेश माथुर ने नकवी को स्मृतिचिन्ह भेंट किया।

लफ़्ज़ अजमेर का आयोजन अहसास वूमेन की सहभागिता और श्री सीमेंट की सीएसआर पहल के साथ ही रेख्ता फाउंडेशन व वी-केयर का भी पूरे सहयोग मिला।



Brijesh Mathur, Azra Naqvi and Vinita Jain

## पंजाब की भूमि पर अज़रा नक़वी ने हिन्दी-उर्दू का बांधा सेतु

शिक्षक, लेखिका, शायरा और समाजसेवी अज़रा नक़वी अपने व्यक्तित्व तथा धारदार लेखनी के लिए जानी जाती हैं। उन्होंने एम.एससी., एम. फिल और फ्रेंच भाषा में प्रमाणपत्र हासिल किया हैं। आपने मॉन्ट्रियल में एंकर, सामुदायिक कार्यकर्ता, किंडर-गार्टन शिक्षिका, दक्षिण एशियाई थिएटर ग्रुप 'तीसरी दुनिया' और रियाद में दिव्यांग बच्चों के विशेष देखभाल केंद्र के समन्वयक की भूमिका निभाई है। आप आकाशवाणी की उर्दू सेवा और उर्दू मजलिस, तथा 'उर्दू न्यूज' और अंग्रेजी दैनिक 'सऊदी गजट' से भी जुड़ी रहीं। अभी आप रेख्ता फाउंडेशन से जुड़ी हैं। आपकी प्रकाशित कृतियों में कविता-संग्रह 'दिल के मौसम', कहानी संग्रह 'आँगन जब परदेश हुआ', लेख-संकलन 'जहां बना लें अपना शमां' और समीक्षा पुस्तक 'शेर किताबें यादें', अनूदित संकलित पुस्तकों में 'परिवर्तन की आवाज़ें', 'मेरे शब ओ रोज़', सईदा फरहत की कविताओं का संकलन 'कुल्लियात' शामिल हैं। आपके लेख और अनुवाद कई अंतर्राष्ट्रीय संकलनों में प्रकाशित होते रहते हैं। आपने देवनागरी लिपि में भी बच्चों के लिए काम किया है। महिला रचनाकारों की देशभक्ति कविताओं का संकलन 'मेरे वतन की खुशबू' शीर्षक से प्रकाशित है।

**प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** उर्दू, अरबी और फारसी भाषा को बढ़ावा देने के लिए **लफ़ज़** का आयोजन देश भर में करती आ रही है। इसी क्रम में अज़रा नक़वी ने अमृतसर, लुधियाना, चंडीगढ़ और जालंधर में लफ़ज़ के कार्यक्रम में शिरकत की। उन्होंने देश बंटवारे से लेकर, महिलाओं की स्थिति, लेखन व समाज के बदलाव पर खुल कर अपनी बातों को साझा किया।



“ अब की बार जो घर जाना तो सारे एल्बम ले आना वक्रत की दीमक लग जाती है यादों की अलमारी में ”





Azra Naqvi and Arvinder Chamak

## भाषा हमें आपस में जोड़ने का काम करती है : अज़रा नक़वी

भाषा से बैर नहीं होना चाहिए। न ही उसके साथ राजनीति होनी चाहिए। भाषा तो हमें आपस में जोड़ने का काम करती है। यह कहना है शिक्षिका, लेखिका, शायरा और समाजसेवी अज़रा नक़वी का। आप **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** की ओर से **रेख़ता फाउंडेशन** के सहयोग से आयोजित **लफ़्ज़ अमृतसर** में अतिथि वक्ता के रूप में बोल रही थीं। आरम्भ में आयोजकों की ओर से **अहसास वूमन** शीतल खन्ना ने फाउंडेशन से जुड़ी विभिन्न गतिविधियों की जानकारी दी। उन्होंने बताया कि लफ़्ज़ का यह आयोजन फाउंडेशन की '**अपनी भाषा अपने लोग**' को बढ़ावा देने की पहल का हिस्सा है। **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** कला साहित्य और संस्कृति के क्षेत्र में काम करने वाली एक सक्रिय संस्था है, जिसकी गतिविधियाँ भारत और दुनिया भर के 55 से अधिक शहरों तक पहुंच चुकी हैं। इसके बढ़ने का क्रम लगातार जारी है। फाउंडेशन अन्य देशों में भारतीय संस्कृति के ब्रांड एंबेसडर के रूप में अपनी पहचान रखती है। **लफ़्ज़** के आयोजन के पीछे फाउंडेशन की कोशिश उर्दू, अरबी और फारसी भाषा को बढ़ावा देने की है। रेख़ता फाउंडेशन इस दिशा में उसका सहयोगी है। **लफ़्ज़** के अलावा फाउंडेशन **कलम, किताब, एक मुलाकात, सुर और साज और आखर** जैसे कार्यक्रम भी आयोजित करता है। हमें अपने इन कार्यक्रमों में श्री सीमेंट के सीएसआर इनीशिएटिव के तहत सहयोग मिलता है। हमें खुशी है कि आज अज़रा नक़वी अमृतसर के सत्र में हमारी अतिथि हैं।

शीतल खन्ना ने अतिथि का परिचय करवाने के बाद आगे की बातचीत के लिए डॉक्टर डा. अरविंदर सिंह चमक को आमंत्रित किया। उन्होंने वर्षों तक नेशनल ब्रिक व टाइल एसोसिएशन के अध्यक्ष के रूप में कार्य किया साथ ही ऊर्जा कार्यक्रमों में भी कर्मरत रहें और जर्मनी, पाकिस्तान, बांग्लादेश और भारत की सरकारों के पैनल में हैं हालाँकि उनका असली जुनून कला खासकर थिएटर है।



Sheetal Khanna, Praneet Bubber, Preeti Gill

**लफ़्ज़ सत्र** में डा. अरविंदर चमक ने अज़रा नक़वी के साथ संवाद किया। भावनाओं से गूँजती कविताओं के बीच, नक़वी ने विदेश में अपने जीवन के किस्से साझा किए, अपने अनुभवों और अंतर्दृष्टि से चर्चा को समृद्ध किया। सांस्कृतिक बारीकियों को समझने से लेकर जमीनी स्तर पर सामाजिक परिवर्तन की वकालत करने तक, नक़वी ने अपनी यात्रा की परतों को खोला। समर्पण और करुणा के माध्यम से उन्होंने जो रास्ता बनाया, उस पर प्रकाश डाला। अपनी कविता और व्यक्तिगत कथा के माध्यम से, उन्होंने साहित्य की परिवर्तनकारी शक्ति का अनावरण किया।

इस अवसर पर उन्होंने कहा कि, "आज भाषा का क्षेत्र बहुत व्यापक और विस्तृत हो चुका है। ऐसी-ऐसी तकनीक आ गई है कि आप एक मिनट में लिपि बदल सकते हैं। इमोजी लैंग्वेज आ चुकी है। भाषा हमें व्यापक रूप में जोड़ रही है। उर्दू मीठी जुबान है। हिन्दी लिपि की अपनी जगह है। हम अगर उर्दू को बदल दे तो उसकी रुह मर जाएगी। उसे भी रहना है। अफसोस की बात है कि आज कल के बच्चे हिन्दी भी पढ़ नहीं पाते। वे रोमन में लिखकर पढ़ते हैं। अब तो मोबाइल पर अपनी ही अलग भाषा हो गई है। भाषाओं का सफर खूबसूरत है। जो हमें आपस में जोड़ता है।"

थिएटर के बारे में बताते हुए कहा कि, "अब थिएटर बहुत कम हो गया है, क्योंकि इतने सारे टीवी चैनल हैं, थिएटर की जो पुरानी खूबसूरती थी वो खत्म हो गई है। मुझे एक्टिंग करने का बहुत शौक था। अभी फर्क आया है। आज कल भी ड्रामे होते हैं और मुझे लग रहा है कि थोड़ा रिवाइवल हुआ है थिएटर।"

इस खास मौके पर उन्होंने अपनी नज़्म और शेर सुनाए। कार्यक्रम में मौजूद दर्शकों ने उनसे प्रश्न पूछे। कार्यक्रम के अन्त में प्रणीत बब्बर ने नक़वी को स्मृति चिन्ह देकर सम्मानित किया। शीतल खन्ना ने धन्यवाद ज्ञापन किया।

*लफ़्ज़ अमृतसर का आयोजन श्री सीमेंट लिमिटेड के सहयोग से उनकी सीएसआर पहल के रूप में तथा हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर ताज स्वर्णा और हिंदी प्रिंट मीडिया पार्टनर दैनिक जागरण के सहयोग से किया गया था। सत्र का संचालन अहसास वूमन ऑफ अमृतसर द्वारा किया गया।*



Azra Naqvi

## सारी दुनियां की औरतों ने काफी सहा है....अज़रा नक़वी



Deepika Bhalla

“दुनिया के कई देशों में घूमते हुए देखा है कि हर देश की औरतों ने काफी सहा है। हर मुल्क की स्थिति अलग होने पर भी महिलाओं की समस्याएं लगभग एक जैसी ही रही। आज के समय में बदलाव आया है महिलाओं ने बोलना, पढ़ना सीख लिया है। वे आगे बढ़ रही हैं, और कामयाब हो रही हैं।” यह कहना है उर्दू शायरा, लेखिका अज़रा नक़वी का। आप **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** की ओर से **रेख्ता फाउंडेशन** के सहयोग से आयोजित **लफ़्ज़** लुधियाना में बतौर अतिथि वक्ता के रूप में बोल रही थीं। आरम्भ में आयोजकों की ओर से लुधियाना **अहसास वूमन** जर्का जैन ने **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** से जुड़ी विभिन्न गतिविधियों की जानकारी दी। साथ ही अतिथियों का स्वागत किया। मौके पर अतिथि लेखिका के साथ बातचीत की लुधियाना **अहसास वूमन** दीपिका भल्ला ने।

“

कैसे कैसे स्वाँग रचाए हम ने दुनिया-दारी में  
यूँ ही सारी उमर गाँवा दी औरों ग़म-ख़वारी में

”

मौके पर अज़रा नक़वी ने अपनी जीवन यात्रा और साहित्य के अनुभव को साझा किया। यह सत्र बहुत ही मनमोहक रहा। उन्होंने उर्दू भाषा के प्रति अपने जुनून के बारे में बताया। अज़रा नक़वी ने कहा कि बहुत सी अनकही बातें हैं जिन्हें लिखना चाहते तो हैं पर हिम्मत नहीं कर पाते। बहुत सी चीज नहीं लिखने से रह जाती हैं। नक़वी ने अपने बचपन से लेकर बड़े होने तक के सफर की बहुत सी बातें बताईं। किस तरह से माहौल लिखने-पढ़ने का मिला और वे वैसा कर पाईं जैसा वे खुद चाहती थीं। इसके लिए वे खुद को खुशकिस्मत मानती हैं। उन्होंने बताया कि आज भी रेख्ता फाउंडेशन से जुड़कर उर्दू को लेकर काम करते हुए काफी कुछ जानने और सीखने को मिला रहा है। नई तकनीक के बारे में जाना।

इस मौके पर उन्होंने अपनी कई नज़्में और ग़ज़लें सुनाईं। कार्यक्रम में मौजूद दर्शकों ने भी अपनी पसन्द की नज़्मों की फरमाइश की जिसे नक़वीजी ने सुनाया साथ ही दर्शकों के प्रश्नों का उत्तर भी दिया। नीति ग़ोवर ने लेखिका को सम्मानित किया।



Audience



Zarqa Jain

लफ़्ज़ लुधियाना का आयोजन श्री सीमेंट लिमिटेड के सहयोग से उनकी सीएसआर पहल के रूप में तथा हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर सेंट्रा ग्रीन के सहयोग से किया गया। सत्र का संचालन अहसास वूमन ऑफ लुधियाना द्वारा किया गया।



Azra Naqvi



Simar Sadosh

## बच्चों के लिए साहित्य रचना आसान नहीं - अज़रा नक़वी

“

बचपन कितना प्यारा था जब दिल को यक़ीं आ जाता था  
मरते हैं तो बन जाते हैं आसमान के तारे लोग

”

“ बच्चों के लिए साहित्य की रचना करने का तरीका अलग होता है। उनके लिए भाषा सहज, सरल होनी चाहिए ताकि वे खुद को उससे जोड़ सकें और उसे पढ़ने में मजा आए।” यह कहना है लेखिका अज़रा नक़वी का। वे **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** की ओर से **रेख्ता फाउंडेशन** के सहयोग से आयोजित **लफ़्ज़** जालंधर में बतौर अतिथि वक्ता के रूप में संबोधित कर रही थीं। आरम्भ में आयोजकों की ओर से जालंधर **अहसास वूमेन** सोनिया अग्रवाल ने **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** से जुड़ी विभिन्न गतिविधियों की जानकारी दी। साथ ही अतिथियों का स्वागत किया। मौके पर लेखिका के साथ बातचीत की सिमर सदोष ने।

मौके पर अज़रा ने बताया कि - “ बचपन से ही माँ को देखा है कि कैसे वह बच्चों के साथ काम करती है। एक कमरे में गरीब रिक्शावालों के बच्चों को पढ़ाती थी। खाना बनाते-बनाते वे उनसे कुछ लिखने को कहती। वे खुद भी वैसा लिखती थी कि बच्चों को वह काफी पसन्द आता था। वैसा ही बचपन से देखा इसलिए बच्चों ने एक खास जगह मेरे जीवन में बनाई है। मुझे उनके साथ काम करना, उनके लिए लिखना पसन्द है।”

“आज के इंटरनेट और मोबाइल के समय में बच्चों के लिए लिखना थोड़ा कठिन हो गया है। इस लिए रेख्ता पर हम काफी कुछ वैसा दे रहे हैं, जिससे बच्चे पढ़ें, जाने और उसका आनन्द ले सकें।”

इस अवसर पर उन्होंने कहा कि - “ कुछ भी लिखना नज़्म, ग़ज़ल नहीं है। जब तक हमारे अन्दर के अहसास, मन में उमड़ रहे भाव न आए तब उसे मीटर में लिखा जाए तभी वह नज़्म का रूप लेती है। हिन्दी में भी बहुत सुन्दर-सुन्दर छन्द हैं। अच्छा लिखा जा रहा है। काफी सम्भावनाएं बढ़ी हैं।”



Kulwinder Phul



Ruhi Walia Syal



Sonia Aggarwal



Divya Kapoor Sardana

लफ़्ज़ जालंधर का आयोजन श्री सीमेंट लिमिटेड के सहयोग से उनकी सीएसआर पहल के रूप में तथा हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर रैडिसन तथा हिंदी प्रिंट मीडिया पार्टनर दैनिक जागरण का सहयोग रहा।

## लेकिन मैं प्रोज पोएट्री को पोएट्री नहीं मानती : अज़रा नक़वी



Shally Vij



Azra Naqvi



Madhavi Lamba

“ मैं प्रोज पोएट्री को पोएट्री नहीं मानती हूँ, क्योंकि पोएट्री में रिदम तो होना चाहिए जो आपको अट्रैक्ट करता है, आकर्षित करता है। एकचुअली गज़ल जो है वो अरबी से, फारसी में भी आई, इसका एक खास मीटर है जो वही तय हुए थे, आज तक वही मीटर है लेकिन अब गज़लें हिंदी छंदों में भी कही जा रही है। यह अच्छी बात है। नज़्म जैसे कोई पोयम होती है उसमें आप एक ख्याल डेवलप करते हैं पूरी एक बात उसमें कही जाती है उसकी खूबसूरती अलग है और गज़ल की खूबसूरती अलग है।” यह कहना है उर्दू शायरा, शिक्षिका, लेखिका और समाजसेवी अज़रा नक़वी का। आप **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** की ओर से **रेख़ता फाउंडेशन** के सहयोग से आयोजित **लफ़्ज़ चंडीगढ़** में बतौर अतिथि वक्ता के रूप बोल रही थीं। आरम्भ में आयोजकों की ओर से चंडीगढ़ **अहसास वूमन** माधवी लाम्बा ने **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** से जुड़ी विभिन्न गतिविधियों की जानकारी दी। साथ ही लाम्बा ने अतिथियों का स्वागत किया। मौके पर अतिथि के साथ बातचीत की **शैली विज** ने। उन्होंने नक़वी से जीवन के अनुभव के बारे में कई प्रश्न पूछे। उन्होंने अपनी आंखों से देखी दुनियां और उनके फसानों का जिक्र किया।

“मैंने कुछ जाना, समझा और लिखा सब मेरे अनुभव का ही निचोड़ है। मुझे नहीं पता कि मैंने कब लिखना शुरू किया, पर मेरी पहली नज़्म तब लिखी जब मैं बीएससी में थी, मेरा पेपर था और मुझे केमिस्ट्री पढ़ने में बिल्कुल मजा नहीं आता था तो मैंने एक नज़्म लिख डाली वह भी बस मिनट में। बस वही से सिलसिला शुरू हो गया।”

नक़वी ने कहा कि - “ भारत में ज्वाइंट फैमिली में रहने की हमारी परंपरा है, उसकी कुछ, और मुश्किल है। हमारे यहां की जो रिवायत है, जो परंपराएं हैं अब बहुत मॉडर्न भी हो गई हैं, लड़कियों के अंदर रची बसी हैं। वो अपना एफर्ट खुद जानबूझ के ना भी करें तो भी उनके दिमाग में बसी हुई हैं। हमारी सब बच्चियां आज एक से एक प्रोफेशन में हैं और अच्छा काम कर रही हैं लेकिन एक प्रेशर उनके ऊपर रहता है। जिंदगी में औरत के सोचने का तरीका, औरत के महसूस करने का अंदाज़ अलग होता है। अल्लाह ने ऐसे ही बनाया है। हिंदुस्तान के मसले और थे सऊदी अरेबिया में भी मैंने बहुत काम किया उनकी कहानियों की एक किताब थी जो 1960 के दशक में आई थी। देखा तो आश्चर्य हुआ कितना खुल कर उन्होंने अपनी बातें लिखी थी।”

मौके पर उन्होंने अपनी रचनाएं सुनाकर दर्शकों को मुग्ध कर डाला। मौजूद लोगों ने उनसे कई प्रश्न पूछे। बाद में सभी ने उनकी पुस्तकों पर हस्ताक्षर करवाकर प्रतियां ली। प्रीति बक्शी ने लेखिका को सम्मानित किया। माधवी लाम्बा ने सभी के प्रति आभार व्यक्त किया।



Book Signing

लफ़्ज़ चंडीगढ़ का आयोजन श्री सीमेंट लिमिटेड के सहयोग से उनकी सीएसआर पहल के रूप में तथा हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर ताज़ चंडीगढ़ के सहयोग किया गया था। धन्यवाद ज्ञापन चंडीगढ़ की अहसास वूमन माधवी लाम्बा ने किया।

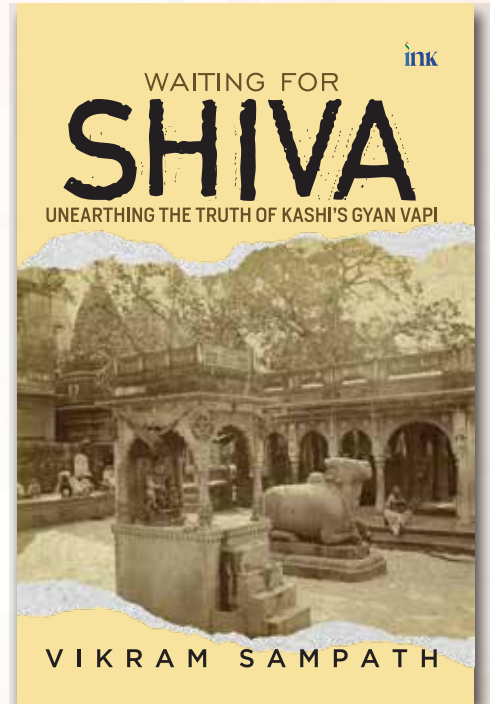
## Embarking on a Literary Odyssey: Vikram Sampath's new book on Kashi's GyanVapi Launches Across India

Outlining a successful book launch tour, Kitaab was organized by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** to release renowned author Vikram Sampath's latest book- "*Waiting for Shiva: Unearthing The Truth Of Kashi's Gyan Vapi.*" The book recreates the history, antiquity and sanctity of Kashi as the abode of Bhagwan Shiva in the form of Vishweshwara, or Vishwanath.

The event aimed to promote literacy, celebrate history, while shedding light on some facts on mythical stories through riveting conversations with the author circling the book. The book launch was spanned across multiple cities in India, including Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Mumbai and Pune. Engaging and cogent panel discussions were witnessed on topics related to the book's themes, such as historical narratives and cultural preservation. Experts from various fields enriched the discussions, providing valuable insights to the audience.

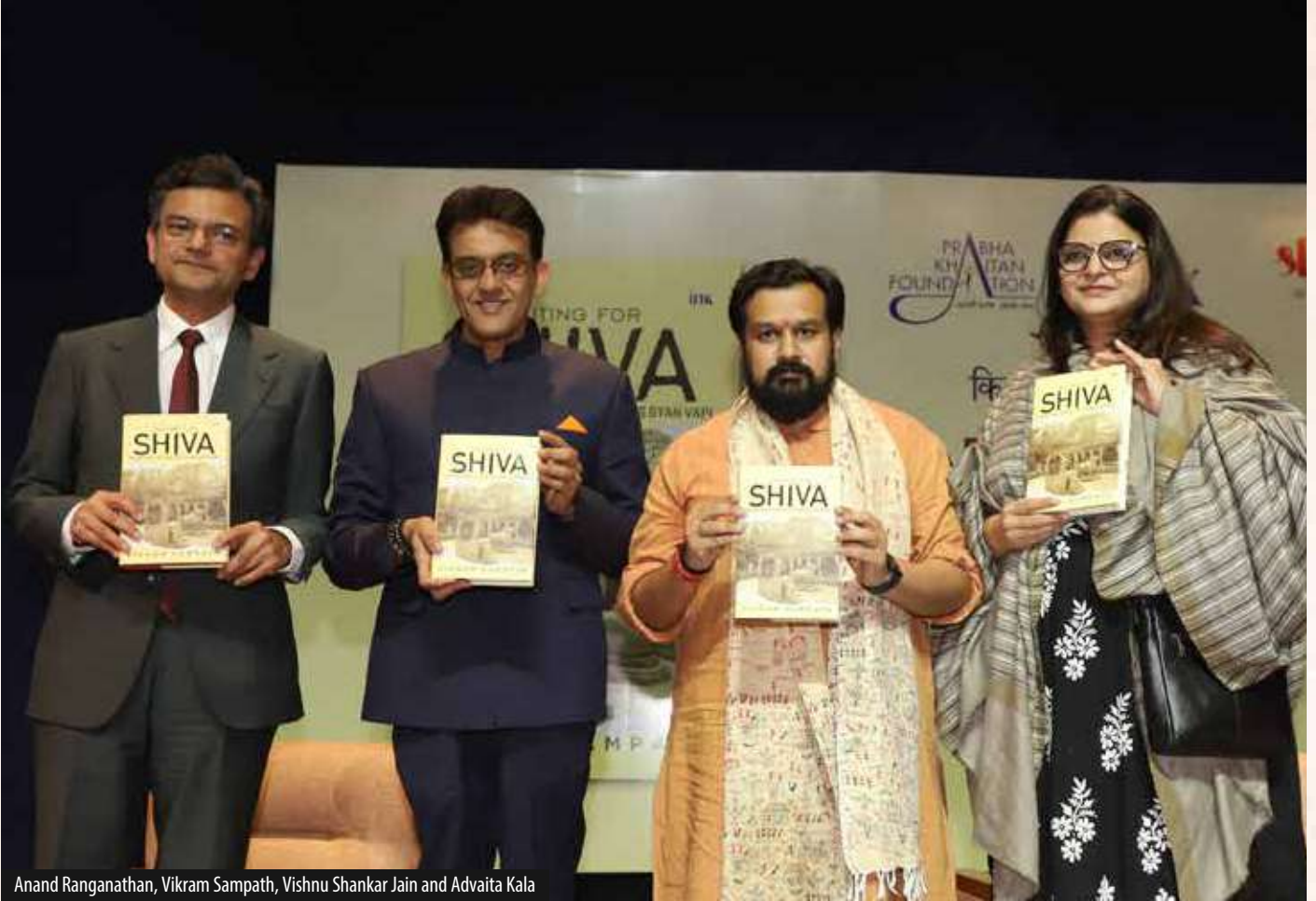


Hon'ble Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Yogi Adityanath and Vikram Sampath



Sadhguru and Vikram Sampath

DELHI



Anand Ranganathan, Vikram Sampath, Vishnu Shankar Jain and Advaita Kala

Hon'ble Finance Minister **Nirmala Sitharaman** graced the launch of **Vikram Sampath's** latest book at the **Kitaab** session held in the capital city. **Sadguru Sakshi Shree**, Advocate **Shri Hari Shankar Jain** and **Dr Anand Ranganathan** were also present on the occasion.

The event commenced with a Welcome address by **Neelima Dalmia Adhar**, Honorary Convenor, Delhi ensuing the felicitation of the guests by **Shinjini Kulkarni Ehsaas woman Delhi, NCR**.

The book launch was joined by our Ehsaas Women **Neelima Dalmia Adhar**, **Archana Dalmia**, **Shinjini Kulkarni**, **Dipali bhasin**, **Karuna Goenka**, **Anshu Mehra** and **Anindita Chatterjee**, Executive Trustee of the Foundation. An intriguing panel discussion was followed between **Anand Ranganathan**, **Vishnu Shankar Jain** and **Vikram Sampath** with the moderator **Advaita Kala**.



Nirmala Sitharaman



Anindita Chatterjee and Neelima Dalmia Adhar



Archana Dalmia and Karuna Goenka

Nirmala Sitaraman shared a few words herself. “Societal abuse and things that people have tolerated has been the undercurrent from generations. Everyone did their little bit to make sure that these recognition for these holy places - seven Moksha Nagris have been kept alive. We are a fortunate generation as 3 of these Moksha Nagris - Ayodhya, Kashi and Ujjain have been getting reconstructed, freshly built and given new life.” shared Sitaraman.

“When Vishnu Shankar Jain says, a temple is a temple always, it is because our living Supreme Being is inside it. And we worship him like a member of our family. When Nirguni, Sarguni, bhakti singers sang, they were having conversations with the Gods. They adored, worshipped and were angry with Him. They also communicated with Him about their day-to-day yet wanting to reach the Moksha, to be in His company, give me “Anayasena Maranam, Vina Dainyena Jeevanam”, a life where I do not have to depend on anyone. Vikram has done a fantastic service documenting all this for the Hindu Civilisational cause” said Sitaraman.

Kala initiated the dialogue by probing Sampath about his motivation behind writing the book and the underlying urgency and angst evident in his narrative. As the conversation unfolded, the panellists delved into the historical invasions faced by Kashi, emphasising the resilience of its people and the continuous struggle to revive its religious significance. Sampath highlighted the intriguing discovery of rulers from across India converging to rejuvenate Kashi, despite the dominance of the Islamic Sultanate during that period.

Advocate Vishnu Shankar Jain shared his personal journey and struggles in fighting legal battles concerning disputed cases involving mosques and temples. Inspired by his father's dedication to the cause, Jain spoke passionately about the importance of preserving heritage and upholding justice in such cases.



Anhu Mehra



Shinjini Kulkarni

Throughout the discussion, the panellists engaged in a thought-provoking exchange, shedding light on the historical, cultural, and legal dimensions of Kashi's heritage, leaving the audience with a deeper understanding and appreciation for the subject matter with a Q&A session with and dozens of history students from Delhi University and Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) present in the audience, post hoc.



Sadhguru Sakshi Shree

*Kitaab Delhi was organised with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative in association with BlueOne Ink Publishers*

BENGALURU



Mansi Malik, Anil Kathotia, Anirudh Chakravartty, Vikram Sampath, Sadguru Sri Madhusudan Sai, TV Mohandas Pai, Vikram Sood and Shivani Gupta

Launch of Vikram Sampath's latest masterpiece in Bengaluru began with introduction of the Foundation and greeting the guests by Mansi Malik, **Ehsaas Woman** of Hyderabad. It was a prestigious moment to welcome Sadguru Sri Madhusudan Sai as the Chief guest for the evening.

Anirudh Chakravartty, CEO, BluOne Ink Publishers, shared a few words before the epic conversation began. Anil Kathotia felicitated the esteemed guests with cotton silk stoles which preceded the book launch by Mansi Malik, Anil Kathotia, Anirudh Chakravartty, Vikram Sampath, Sadguru Sri Madhusudan Sai, TV Mohandas Pai, Vikram Sood and Shivani Gupta. Moving on, the panel discussion between Sadguru and the author was moderated gracefully by media personality, Shivani Gupta.

The conversation embarked on a journey of series of discussions starting about the importance for historians and researchers to not use Sanskrit translations made by westerners, particularly made by their biases or their incomplete knowledge of the language. "I was fortunate enough to have mentors who shared my mania in this and shared reams of Sanskrit, Puranas, Shiv-Puranas, Linga Puranas, Padma Puranas, Skanda Purana, Vayu Purana with me, which helped me document this book." remarked the author.

Speaking about why the author wrote this well-researched book, Sampath said, "I almost felt that it was a historian's burden, nay, responsibility to ensure that all the facts about Kashi Vishwanath were

put together in the form of a book."

Kashi being called the soul of Indian spirituality, Sadguru mentioned that "It is very important for Indians to know about Kashi. In Kashi Panchakam, it says, that which illuminates everything that comes to it is Kashi. Not only is it soul-filling but also lighting from the inside, to realise the Divinity." So Kashi is the most important attaining place for Moksha which is the ultimate place everyone wants to go, the deepest aspiration for one to have. "Even if one goes and sits at Kashi simply, you will be able to absorb all the energy. It is an experiential reality that cannot be found in books." commented Sadguru.

The talk went about proding into the past history and the juxtaposition that has been shown over the years. "Hassan Nizami, one of the contemporaries chronicled that in one invasion, thousands of temples were destroyed in 1194. After 20 years, Vishwarupa of Sena Dynasty coming to Varanasi, establishes a pillar where it is written that this city belongs to Vishweshwara, marking it as our place." explained Sampath.

The book is an impressive tome that brings together historical, religious, archaeological, and legal arguments to the ongoing Hindu reclamation project in Varanasi. Sampath says that Hindus have been waiting for Shiva just like the Nandi bull waits for a darshan in temples. In the book, Sampath bemoans the historians' denial and denunciation of the umbilical cord India has with its civilisational ethos.

Following the proceedings of the event, a Q & A session was held with a good receptive audience. As the curtains draw close on this extraordinary gathering, it was with profound gratitude that Mansi Malik extended a heartfelt appreciation to each and every one of you who graced this occasion with their presence.



Vikram Sampath



Shivani Gupta



Sadguru Sri Madhusudhan Sai



Anirudh Chakravarty



Mansi Malik



Aabhas Maldahiyyar in audience



Ricky Kej in audience

*Kitaab Bengaluru was organised with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative*

PUNE



Book launch with conversationalist Shefali Vaidya, author Vikram Sampath, Chief guest J Sai Deepak and others

The book launch event **Kitaab** for "Waiting for Shiva: Unearthing The Truth Of Kashi's Gyan Vapi" was a resounding success in Pune, drawing attention to the rich cultural heritage of Kashi and the scholarly contributions of Vikram Sampath. The presence of Chief Guest J Sai Deepak, Advocate and author; and the insightful moderation by author Shefali Vaidya added prestige to the event, making it a memorable occasion for the audience.

The book was launched amidst Chief guest J Sai Deepak, conversationalist Shefali Vaidya, author Vikram Sampath, Pradeep Rawat, Ajay Mehta, Mahesh Lahoti, Kumar Gehra, Mukesh Malhotra, Pramod Choudhury, Abhay Firodia and Nitin Nyati graced the occasion.

During the scintillating discourse between the author, Shefali Jain and Vishnu Jain, Sampath recounted analysing "the historical accounts and archaeological

evidence surrounding the Gyan Vapi" while shedding light on its significance in Kashi's religious and cultural landscape. "There was a lot of delving into the symbolism and spiritual significance attributed to the Gyan Vapi while exploring its enduring appeal as a sacred site of pilgrimage," said the author.

When directed to J Sai Deepak about why the topic needs to be of any reverence to the Indians who are not from Kashi, he replied, "You cannot think of the history of this land, without thinking of Kashi, considering that its dynasty and city features heavily in our epics, both in Ramayana and Mahabharata. And these two cannot be spoken about without Kashi being in the picture."

Followed by a Q&A session, a formal Vote of Thanks was delivered by Manohar Dapara.



Audience



Vikram Sampath



Shefali Vaidya



J Sai Deepak



In Conversation: Shefali Vaidya, Vikram Sampath, and J Sai Deepak

*Kitaab Pune was organised with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative in association Pune Samvad*

MUMBAI



Swati Agarwal, Kushal Mehra, Poonam Mahajan, Vikram Sampath, Ashwin Sanghi and Harkaran Singh

**Kitaab** Mumbai graced by the presence of esteemed Chief Guest, Poonam Mahajan, Member of Parliament and Ashwin Sanghi, author. The event inaugurated with a Welcome address by Swati Agarwal, **Ehsaas Woman** of Mumbai followed by felicitation of guests by Harkaran Singh, General Manager of Aurika SkyCity, Mumbai.

“The book launch was held in presence of the guests ensuing a talk that was moderated by author Kushal Mehra . It aimed to highlight the historical significance of Kashi and delve into the narratives explored in the book. The discussion unravelled the enduring allure of Kashi as a pilgrimage site and its impact on Hindu philosophy and theology.



Kushal Mehra



Ashwin Sanghi



Mudit Jain, Malti Jain, Poonam Mahajan and Swati Agarwal



Harkaran Singh

The theme of the book was spotlighted on the cataclysmic events in the Kashi temple's history. "The holy city embodies the very soul of our civilization and personifies the resilience that we have displayed over centuries in the face of numerous adversities and fatal attacks." shared the author. To give some context to the audience, he said, "The place, all the time, faced a lot of iconoclastic waves, waves of breakage and destruction. Aurganzeb, was the last in the entire continuum. However the first attack was made in 1194 by Qutb ud-Din Aibak, where the whole of Kashi was demolished."

The event was subsequently followed by Q & A session with the audience. Delivery of the formal Vote of Thanks was by Swati Agarwal.



Audience

*Kitaab Mumbai was organized with the support of Ehsaas Women of Mumbai and with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative in association with hospitality partner, Aurika SkyCity*



Sagarika Ghose

## Navigating Politics, Media, and Advocacy



Payal Mohanka

The convergence of politics, media, and advocacy unfolded in a thought-provoking dialogue at recent **Author's Afternoon** graced by a distinguished media personality and politician, Sagarika Ghose. The conversation, facilitated by Payal Mohanka, delved deep into the multifaceted journey of the guest, shedding light on her experiences, perspectives, and aspirations. Amidst the backdrop of intellectual exchange, the event commenced with a warm welcome note by Nilisha Agarwal, **Ehsaas woman** of Kolkata.

The dialogue unfolded organically, offering a glimpse into the evolution of the Ghose's career trajectory, which seamlessly traversed the realms of journalism and politics. With over three decades of experience as a journalist, encompassing roles as a reporter, editor, columnist, and anchor, she brought a wealth of insights to the forefront. Having recently ventured into the realm of politics, her journey epitomized a transition driven by a profound sense of responsibility and a fervent desire for transformative change.

Reflecting on her transition from journalism to politics, Ghose shared candid reflections on her initial reluctance and eventual acceptance of the political arena. Despite harboring skepticism towards governmental structures, the guest's decision to embrace politics was spurred by a

palpable sense of urgency to address systemic shortcomings and safeguard democratic principles.

In a poignant revelation, she underscored her commitment to curbing executive overreach, advocating for a more decentralized approach to governance that empowers individuals and safeguards civil liberties.

Central to the dialogue were reflections Ghose's acclaimed biographies of prominent political figures, including Indira Gandhi and Atal Bihari Vajpayee. With keen insight and meticulous



Nilisha Agarwal



Nandita Palchoudhuri felicitating Sagarika Ghose



Esha Dutta

research, she unraveled the complexities of their personas, offering readers a nuanced understanding of their legacies. From Indira Gandhi's enigmatic blend of strength and vulnerability to Vajpayee's irreverent humor and political acumen, each biography served as a testament to the guest's skill as a storyteller and historian.

In a poignant conclusion to the dialogue, Ghose articulated her desire for a politics rooted in empathy and compassion, where the pursuit of power is eclipsed by a genuine commitment to public service.

As the conversation drew to a close, audience members were afforded the opportunity to engage in a spirited Q&A session, delving deeper into pressing issues and emerging trends in politics and media.



K Mohanchandran

As attendees departed, enriched by insights and inspired by the guest's indomitable spirit, they carried forth a renewed sense of purpose and possibility in their own pursuits.

A heartfelt thank you address delivered by Esha Dutta, **Ehsaas woman** of Kolkata. Furthermore, the occasion was marked by a felicitation of Ghose and Mohanka by Nandita Palchoudhuri, adding a touch of honor to the afternoon.



Arbab Chatterjee

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



## Unveiling the Power of Comics: A Dialogue on Climate Change and Wildlife Conservation

Namgay Choden and Rohan Chakravarty

The second installment of **The Write Circle** series, hosted by the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** in Bhutan unfolded a captivating conversation at Thimphu. With a focus on fostering literary engagement and intellectual discourse, the event brought together renowned cartoonist and illustrator Rohan Chakravarty and environment consultant Namgay Choden to explore the intersection of climate change and wildlife conservation messaging through the medium of comics.

Rohan Chakravarty, the acclaimed creator of *Green Humour* a series of cartoons and illustrations dedicated to wildlife and nature conservation, took center stage as the featured author. With seven books to his credit, Chakravarty's work has garnered international acclaim, earning him prestigious awards from organizations like UNDP, WWF International, and the Bangalore Literature Festival.

The conversation, expertly guided by Namgay Choden, delved into the unique role of comics in conveying complex environmental issues with humor and creativity. Chakravarty shared insights into his creative process, illustrating how he utilizes humor and wit to deliver poignant messages about climate change and wildlife conservation. Through a captivating presentation of his comic works, Chakravarty demonstrated the power of visual storytelling in raising awareness and inspiring action.

Attendees, comprising individuals from diverse backgrounds ranging from illustration to climate change advocacy, actively engaged with the speakers, posing thought-provoking questions and contributing to a dynamic exchange of ideas. From discussions on the impact of climate change on wildlife habitats to the role of individual action in conservation efforts, the dialogue resonated with audiences passionate about environmental stewardship.



Rohan Chakravarty with Members of Global Shapers Thimphu

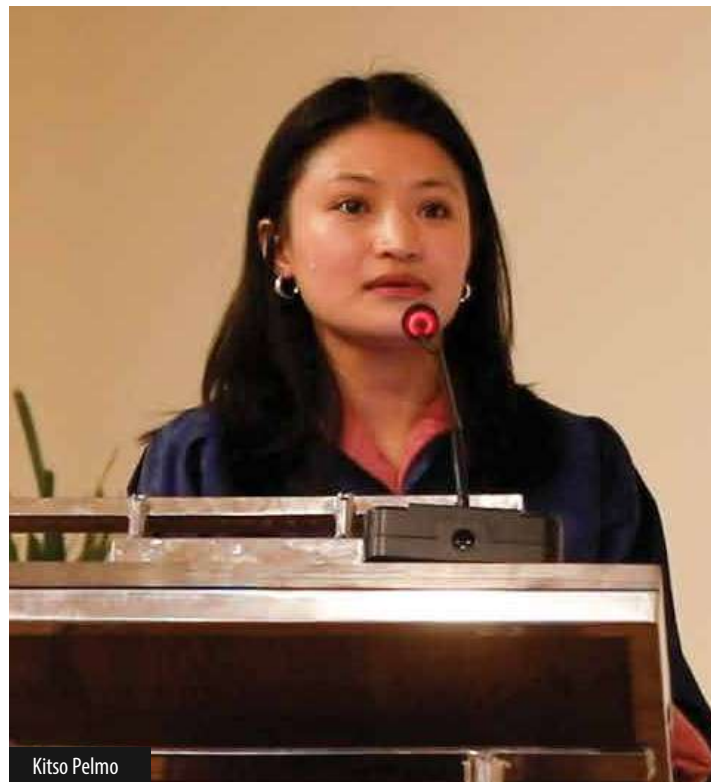


Kitso Pelmo, Namgay Choden, Rohan Chakravarty and Urvi Bhuwania

A highlight of the evening was the distribution of Chakravarty's latest work, 'Pugmarks and Carbon Footprints,' to attendees, providing them with an opportunity to delve deeper into the themes explored during the session. The event concluded on a high note with a book signing session, allowing guests to interact personally with the author and acquire signed copies of his acclaimed publications.

The Write Circle series continues to serve as a platform for fostering meaningful dialogue and promoting literary engagement on pressing societal issues. With each session, the foundation reaffirms its commitment to fostering a deeper connection between authors and their readers while addressing themes of global significance.

As the evening drew to a close, attendees departed with a renewed sense of inspiration and empowerment, equipped with fresh perspectives on the vital role of storytelling in driving positive change. Through the fusion of art and advocacy, Chakravarty and Choden demonstrated the transformative potential of comics in shaping attitudes and behaviors towards environmental conservation, leaving a lasting impact on all those in attendance. The closing Address was delivered by Kitso Pelmo.



Kitso Pelmo

*The Write Circle Thimphu was organised with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative in association with Bhutan Echoes, Siyahi and hospitality partner dusitD2 Yarkay Thimphu*



Neelima Dalmia Adhar and Diana Mickevičienė

## Bridging Cultures: Exploring the India Lithuania Literary Connection

**P**rabha Khaitan Foundation recently played host to a captivating session of **Tête-à-Tea** featuring Diana Mickevičienė, the Ambassador of the Republic of Lithuania to India. The event, held in Delhi, delved into the intricate tapestry of cultural and literary ties binding India and Lithuania. Facilitated by Neelima Dalmia Adhar, Honorary Convenor of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** for Delhi NCR Affairs, the discussion proved to be an enlightening exploration into the shared heritage of these two distant lands.

The event commenced with a warm welcome from Anantmala Potdar, **Ehsaas woman** of Delhi. What ensued was a rich exchange of ideas and experiences, as Diana Mickevičienė shared her journey of discovering India and the profound impact it had on her.

Diana's narrative of her early encounter with Indian culture, particularly through the classic film *Umrao Jaan*, highlighted the universal allure of art and aesthetics. Despite geographical disparities, she found resonance with the essence of Indian heritage, sparking a lifelong fascination.

The conversation seamlessly transitioned into a discussion on linguistic connections, notably the striking parallels between Sanskrit and Lithuanian. Diana's insights illuminated the profound historical ties, evident even in the etymology of place names like "Siesartes," resonating with the Sanskrit "Saraswati."

Further, the dialogue expanded to encompass broader historical narratives, challenging prevailing misconceptions and underscoring the shared legacy of trade and



Anantmala Potdar



Anuradha Gupta and Diana Mickevičienė

cultural exchange between India and Lithuania. Diana's anecdotes, including the discovery of Baltic artifacts bearing traces of Indian Ocean commerce, underscored the depth of historical interconnection.

A highlight of the session was the unveiling of a unique dictionary featuring cognates between Lithuanian and Sanskrit, curated by renowned scholars. This endeavor served not only as a linguistic exploration but also as a testament to the enduring bonds between these distant cultures.

**Tête-à-Tea** with Diana Mickevičienė served as a poignant reminder of the enduring bonds that transcend borders. Through shared narratives of art, language, and history, the event reaffirmed the timeless connection between India and Lithuania, enriching the cultural landscape of both nations. The session ended with a Q&A with the audience followed by the Ambassador felicitation by Sonali Gupta, Principal of Shri Ram Millennium School.

*Tête-à-Tea Delhi was organised with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative in association with hospitality partner The Connaught IHCL Selections. The session was facilitated by Ehsaas Women of Delhi.*

## Exploring Transformation : Conversations with a Diverse Fiction Writer



Priya Hajela and Anshu Mehra

In an evening filled with literary insights and personal anecdotes, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** recently hosted **The Write Circle** with Priya Hajela in Meerut. Priya Hajela, a fiction writer whose debut book *Ladies Tailor* has garnered attention, shared her journey from a corporate career to becoming a passionate writer. The event, conducted by Anshu Mehra, **Ehsaas woman** of Meerut, provided attendees with a glimpse into the transformative power of storytelling.

Priya Hajela's transition from a successful corporate career spanning over two decades to embracing the world of writing was the focal point of the conversation. With candor and sincerity, she narrated her decision to pursue writing as a means to explore deeper themes, particularly inspired by personal experiences and familial history.

The evening commenced with Garima Mithal, another **Ehsaas woman** of Meerut, delivering the welcome note and expressing gratitude. Priya Hajela was felicitated by Anjum Prakash, adding a touch of honor to the event.

The heart of the conversation revolved around Priya's journey, from her childhood marked by personal challenges to her decision to leave the corporate world and delve into writing. Priya reflected on her upbringing, which was shaped by her mother's struggle with bipolar disorder and the impact it had on her family dynamics. Her narrative painted a poignant picture of resilience and adaptation in the face of adversity.

As the conversation unfolded, Priya shared insights into her writing process, emphasizing the importance of discipline and perseverance. She spoke about the challenges of transitioning from the structured environment of

corporate life to the solitary pursuit of writing, highlighting the need for self-motivation and commitment.

The audience was captivated as Priya delved into the themes of her stories, including her debut book *Ladies Tailor* which is set against the backdrop of partition times. She explained her choice of setting, drawing from her own family history and a desire to explore untold narratives from that era. Priya also discussed her approach to crafting strong female characters and the role of women in her stories.



Anju Prakash and Priya Hajela

Throughout the conversation, Priya's passion for storytelling and her commitment to authenticity shone through. Her journey from corporate professional to acclaimed author served as an inspiration to aspiring writers in the audience, reaffirming the transformative power of literature.

In conclusion, **The Write Circle** with Priya Hajela in Meerut was a testament to the enduring allure of storytelling and the profound impact it can have on individuals and communities. As Priya continues to explore new narratives and themes in her writing, her journey serves as a reminder of the importance of embracing change and following one's creative instincts.

*The Write Circle Meerut was organised with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative in association with hospitality partner Crystal Palace and print Hindi media partner Dainik Jagran. The session was facilitated by Ehsaas Women of Meerut.*



Garima Mithal, Anju Prakash, Priya Hajela and Anshu Mehra

## Empowering Narratives: A Conversation with Lakshmi Puri



Swati Agarwal



Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri

The **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** recently had the honor of hosting another enriching session of **The Write Circle**, this time featuring Lakshmi Mudeshwarapuri in Udaipur. The event unfolded amidst the vibrant celebration of Holi, adding an extra layer of joy and color to the occasion. Lakshmi Puri, a stalwart in the field of diplomacy and a vocal advocate for gender equality, graced the gathering with her profound insights and engaging narrative.

Born into a family deeply rooted in public service, Puri's upbringing instilled in her a profound sense of responsibility towards societal change and justice. Throughout her illustrious career, she held pivotal roles within the United Nations, including serving as its Assistant Secretary-General and playing a leadership role in the establishment of UN Women, the first global organization dedicated to promoting gender equality.

During the conversation, Puri reflected on her debutante novel, a powerful narrative set against the backdrop of the Indian independence struggle. She eloquently discussed her motivation for choosing this tumultuous period of history, citing her deep connection to India's quest for greatness and her desire to reclaim its civilizational glory.

The novel, inspired by her parents' engagement in the freedom struggle, artfully blends real-life events with fiction, creating multidimensional characters that defy stereotypes. Through the lens of feminism, Puri highlighted the importance of creating male characters who are agents of empowerment, working hand in hand with strong, self-assured female protagonists.

She shared insights into her creative process, emphasizing the intentional layering of her narrative to reflect the complexities of human experience. Drawing from her own upbringing in a feminist household, Puri imbued her characters with a sense of agency and purpose, challenging traditional gender roles and stereotypes.

Throughout the conversation, Puri's passion for storytelling and commitment to social change shone through. Her novel serves not only as a work of art but also as a catalyst for reflection and dialogue on issues of gender, identity, and societal transformation.

As the event drew to a close, attendees were left inspired by Puri's words and the enduring relevance of her message. In celebrating her remarkable contributions to literature and diplomacy, we are reminded of the power of storytelling to shape our understanding of the world and inspire positive change.

**The Write Circle** continues to be a platform for meaningful conversations and intellectual engagement, bringing together authors, thinkers, and readers to explore diverse perspectives and ideas. As we look ahead to future sessions, we are excited to continue this journey of discovery and dialogue, guided by the vision of empowerment and equality championed by Lakshmi Puri.

*The Write Circle Udaipur was organised with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative in association with hospitality partner Radisson Blu Resort & Spa Udaipur. The session was facilitated by Ehsaas Women of Udaipur.*



Shraddha Murdia



Kanika Agarwal



Mumal Bhandari



Riddhima Doshi

## Unveiling Social Disparities: Insights from an Enlightening Dialogue



Swati Narayan and Deependra Rana

The latest session of **The Write Circle** unfolded with an insightful dialogue featuring Swati Narayan and Kanchan Mathur at ITC Rajputana, Jaipur. Organized by the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, the event delved into pressing social issues through the lens of Swati Narayan's research.

Mita Kapur commenced the session by extending a warm welcome and introducing Swati Narayan, an academic specializing in social policy and public healthcare. Narayan's seminal work, "Unequal," emanates from her extensive research spanning over a decade, exploring the root causes of India's persistent inequalities. Encouraged by Kanchan Mathur, a professor at IDS Jaipur, Narayan eloquently shared her research findings, enriched with anecdotes collected during her travels across India and its neighboring countries.

Narayan commenced by outlining three major inequalities plaguing India, hindering its progress compared to its neighbors. Through meticulous research, Narayan unearthed disparities in wealth, caste, and gender, shedding light on India's socio-economic landscape. Drawing comparisons between villages in Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and their counterparts in Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, Swati underscored the complexities of India's social fabric.

She elucidated on India's struggle to address issues like public defecation, attributing it to societal apathy and inadequate governmental interventions. Contrasting India's approach with Bangladesh's successful initiatives, Narayan emphasized the importance of innovative strategies and community involvement in addressing social challenges.



Kanchan Mathur



Swati Narayan

Despite the grim realities, Narayan remains hopeful for social change, advocating for inclusive models of governance and grassroots initiatives. She highlighted the transformative impact of movements in Nepal, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala, emphasizing the role of collective action in challenging entrenched social hierarchies.

In "Unequal," Narayan underscores the power of social movements in driving lasting change, resonating with the audience's aspirations for a more equitable society. The session concluded with a renewed commitment to fostering dialogue and action towards building a more inclusive and just future.

The event also featured a closing address by the general manager of ITC Rajputana, Deependra Rana, who emphasized the importance of addressing social disparities. He also presented a memento to Swati Narayan and Kanchan Mathur, symbolizing appreciation for her illuminating contributions to the dialogue.

**The Write Circle** with Swati Narayan served as a catalyst for meaningful conversations, inspiring individuals to confront and address the multifaceted challenges of inequality in contemporary India.



Mita Kapur

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



## Unraveling South India's History: A Virtual Exploration

Pradeep Chakravarthy

Draped in antiquity, resilience, and cultural opulence, South India's history beckoned forth in a recent online event, orchestrated by the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** under its initiative, **Muskaan**. Led by Pradeep Chakravarthy, a seasoned writer and history enthusiast from Tamil Nadu, the event offered a riveting journey through the annals of time.

Sumitra Ray, the Students' Programmes Advisor of the Foundation, extended a gracious welcome to the esteemed guest and over 200 eager students from various schools, spanning classes 7 to 9.

Pradeep skillfully navigated the intricacies of South India's past, shedding light on its profound influence on the Indian Subcontinent and beyond. Through captivating storytelling and an informative presentation, he unveiled the region's ancient architecture and shared legendary tales, including those of Tenali Raman.

Interacting seamlessly with the students, Pradeep emphasized the relevance of history in



Sumitra Ray

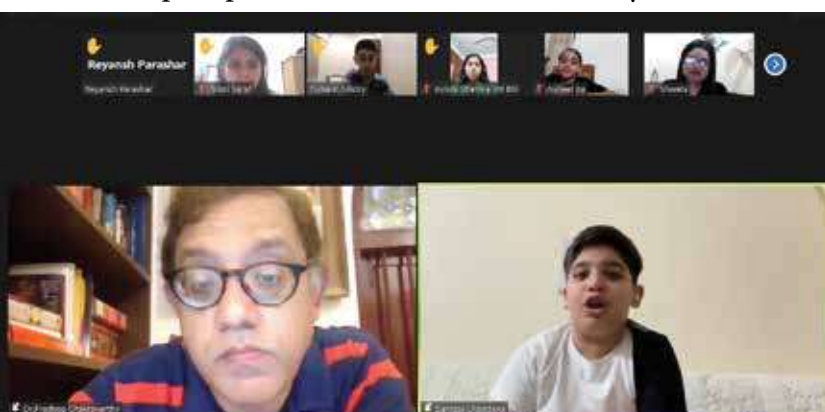
contemporary life, showcasing ancient artifacts to illustrate its enduring significance. From his personal collection, he showcased ancestral artifacts, offering insights into

their craftsmanship and utility, bridging the chasm between past and present.

The event concluded with a lively question-and-answer session, enriching participants' understanding of South India's vibrant history and leaving them enlightened and inspired.

In summary, the online event organized by the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** illuminated the rich tapestry of South India's history, fostering a deeper appreciation for its enduring legacy and leaving participants with a newfound sense of connection to the storied past of the region.

*A joint initiative with Education for All, this session of Muskaan was presented by Shree Cement Ltd under their CSR initiative*



# Spreading Joy: Muskaan's Holi Celebration with Underprivileged Children

The **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, through its initiative **Muskaan**, spread the vibrant hues of Holi with underprivileged and special children in Kolkata. The festivities included food, clothing, and gift distributions alongside a cultural program. The heartwarming event took place at Amra Padatik and Sahid Smrity Colony, bringing smiles and joy to the faces of these children.



*A joint initiative with Education for All, these sessions of Muskaan was presented by Shree Cement Ltd under their CSR initiative*

## Silent Expressions: A Mime Extravaganza



Wrapped in a shroud of silence yet brimming with profound emotions, Mime transcends linguistic boundaries to evoke a myriad of sentiments, from jubilation to introspection. Recently, the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, under its **Muskaan** initiative, curated a mesmerizing Mime show that transported audiences into a realm where gestures and movements spoke volumes.

Held at the Indian Museum Auditorium, this two-day spectacle enchanted marginalized children from various NGOs in Kolkata. Spearheaded by Kunal Motling, a seasoned and certified drama artist, along with his team of accomplished mime artists, the event promised an unforgettable experience.

The curtains rose to reveal a solitary figure center stage, initiating a performance characterized by expressive gestures and facial contortions, igniting a chain reaction of comedic chaos, accompanied by his fellow performers. Inviting children from the audience, they introduced them to the enchanting realm of mime, demonstrating the power of non-verbal communication while encouraging active participation.





With each scene, the protagonist embarked on a whirlwind of slapstick misadventures, from navigating through imaginary rooms to grappling with a stubbornly stuck mop or attempting to free a handbag suspended mid-air. Each vignette unfolded into a riot of physical comedy, eliciting chuckles and smiles without uttering a single word. Through their silent narratives, the mimes illuminated the universality of humor, leaving the audience enraptured in laughter and delight.

As the final curtains descended and applause filled the

auditorium, the artists graciously acknowledged the adulation, joining the audience on stage for group photographs. In a world often dominated by verbal discourse, this captivating performance served as a poignant reminder of the beauty inherent in silence, leaving a lasting impression on all who witnessed its enchanting allure.



*A joint initiative with Education for All, these sessions of Muskaan was presented by Shree Cement Ltd under their CSR initiative in association with Indian Museum Kolkata*





## My Mom

*If you ask me ,  
Why I love my mom so much?  
There are reasons that match  
Her motherly nature is such a catch*

*If I ever feel low  
She consoles  
If I ever achieve something grandeur  
Her happy smile is discovered  
A beautiful soul is uncovered*

*My mom is so caring and selfless  
No one compares  
Her modesty and humble nature  
Always made a person who is better*

*If there still is a doubt  
Whether one should love their mom  
Just question yourself  
And find the answers on*

*Throughout the centuries  
The person who sacrificed  
Can we even question why ?  
She takes it as her duty  
And does selfless deeds  
One should love their mothers definitely .*

**Debangana Sengupta** , also known as Dhriti, started her writing career in 2020, she wishes to bring smiles upon her reader's faces ...



## Intellectual Enclave: PKF-FCC Quiz Sparks Enthusiasm

The second installment of the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** and Foreign Correspondent Club (FCC) quiz witnessed vibrant participation from journalists, diplomats, and individuals spanning diverse backgrounds. Helmed by quiz master Srinjoy Chowdhury, the event resonated as a resounding success.

S. Venkat Narayan, FCC President, extended a warm welcome, setting the stage for an evening brimming with intellectual stimulation and camaraderie. Neelima Dalmia Adhar, **Ehsaas woman** from Delhi and Honorary Convenor of Delhi & NCR Affairs of the Foundation, provided an illuminating introduction to the foundation, spotlighting its impactful initiatives.

The quiz itself proved to be a riveting affair, featuring eight competitive teams. Team Venus, composed of Shreya Jai, Arindam Majumder, and Deepak Patel, clinched the coveted first prize. Meanwhile, securing the second prize was team

Uranus, represented by Rudroneel, Shaiful Alam, and Anuj.

In addition to the main awards, two audience prizes were bestowed upon Subedaar Ajay and Jyoti Kathpalia, acknowledging their active engagement and spirited participation throughout the quiz.

The highlight of the prize ceremony was the esteemed presence of Marje Luup, the Estonian Ambassador to India, who graciously felicitated the victorious teams.

The triumph of the second edition of the PKF and FCC quiz not only underscored the spirit of healthy competition but also emphasized the significance of knowledge-sharing and community engagement in today's interconnected world.



## Throwback: Strengthening Cultural Bonds - The MoU Signing Between PKF and AFdB



Stephane Amalir, Sundeep Bhutoria and Fabrice Etienne

In a nod to the enduring cultural ties between Kolkata and Paris, a significant milestone was marked on April 24th, 2013 in Kolkata. This event witnessed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** (PKF) and the Alliance Française du Bengale (AFdB), fostering a collaborative platform for cultural exchange and cooperation.

Representing the Foundation, Sundeep Bhutoria, the Managing Trustee, inked the MoU alongside Stéphane Amalir, the then Director of Alliance Française du Bengale, in the esteemed presence of Fabrice Etienne, the then Consul General of Consulate de France in Kolkata.

The MoU symbolized a commitment to joint endeavors in organizing cultural events and

programs spanning diverse artistic realms such as art, films, theatre, literature, and more. It aimed to facilitate meaningful exchanges between India and France, with a focus on bridging the cultural landscapes of Kolkata and Paris.

The ambiance of the event resonated with the spirit of cultural convergence, as renowned singer Usha Uthup graced the occasion, serenading the gathering with soulful renditions of French classics like "C'est si bon" and "Autumn Leaves."

The collaboration between PKF and AFdB was not merely a formal agreement but a testament to the shared vision of promoting cultural vibrancy and artistic dialogue. Building upon PKF's longstanding engagement in social and literary initiatives, this partnership heralded a new chapter in fostering



Sundeep Bhutoria with Rajyashree Behera and Gouri Basu



Sundeep Bhutoria and Jeffrey Reneau

cultural exchange between India and France.

The guest list comprised distinguished personalities from the cultural sphere, including representatives from the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), the American Centre in Kolkata, the British Council, and esteemed diplomats from the Consulate de France in Kolkata, among others.

At its core, the MoU aimed to catalyze collaborative projects in the performing arts and literature, offering a platform for artists and performers

from both countries to showcase their creativity and talent on a global stage.

As we look back on this historic event, we celebrate the spirit of cultural diplomacy and collaboration that continues to enrich the cultural fabric of Kolkata and strengthen the bonds between India and France. The signing of the MoU was not just a ceremonial act but a reaffirmation of the enduring friendship and cultural synergy between two vibrant nations.



Stephane Amalir, Usha Uthup, Sundeep Bhutoria and Fabrice Etienne



Stephane Amalir, Sundeep Bhutoria and Fabrice Etienne

## Championing Earth Day 2024: Embracing the Planet vs. Plastics Movement



As we mark Earth Day 2024, the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** takes a stand for our planet with a resounding call to action: Planet vs. Plastics. In a world where plastic pollution has reached alarming levels, threatening the health of our oceans, wildlife, and communities, it's imperative that we unite in the fight against this pervasive environmental crisis.

Plastic pollution is a global challenge of unprecedented magnitude. Every year, an estimated 8 million tons

of plastic waste find their way into our oceans, wreaking havoc on marine ecosystems and endangering countless species. Single-use plastics, from bottles to bags to straws, account for a significant portion of this pollution, with approximately 50% of plastics produced designed for disposable use.

Moreover, the fashion industry, driven by the ethos of fast fashion, has emerged as a major contributor to environmental degradation. The rapid production

and disposal of clothing not only generate immense waste but also contribute to pollution and resource depletion on a staggering scale.

In the face of these challenges, the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** advocates for decisive action on multiple fronts.

First and foremost, we call for the rapid phase-out of single-use plastics. By reducing our reliance on disposable plastics and embracing reusable alternatives, we can stem the tide of plastic pollution and reduce the burden on our planet's ecosystems.

Additionally, we urge the international community to prioritize the establishment of a robust UN Treaty on Plastic Pollution. Such a treaty would provide a comprehensive framework for global cooperation, setting targets for plastic waste reduction, promoting sustainable waste management practices.

“  
The Earth does not belong to us:  
we belong to the Earth.

— Marlee Matlin  
”

Furthermore, we emphasize the importance of addressing the environmental impact of the fashion industry. By advocating for sustainable fashion practices and supporting brands that prioritize ethical production and consumption, we can reduce the industry's ecological footprint and move towards a more circular economy.

At its core, the Planet vs. Plastics movement is a call to action for individuals, communities, and policymakers alike. It's a recognition of our shared responsibility to protect and preserve the Earth for future generations.

As Mahatma Gandhi famously said, "The Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not every man's greed." In this spirit, let us come together to champion sustainability, stewardship, and a profound reverence for the natural world.

On Earth Day 2024 and beyond, let us stand united in our commitment to the planet, forging a path towards a future where humanity and nature thrive in harmony.

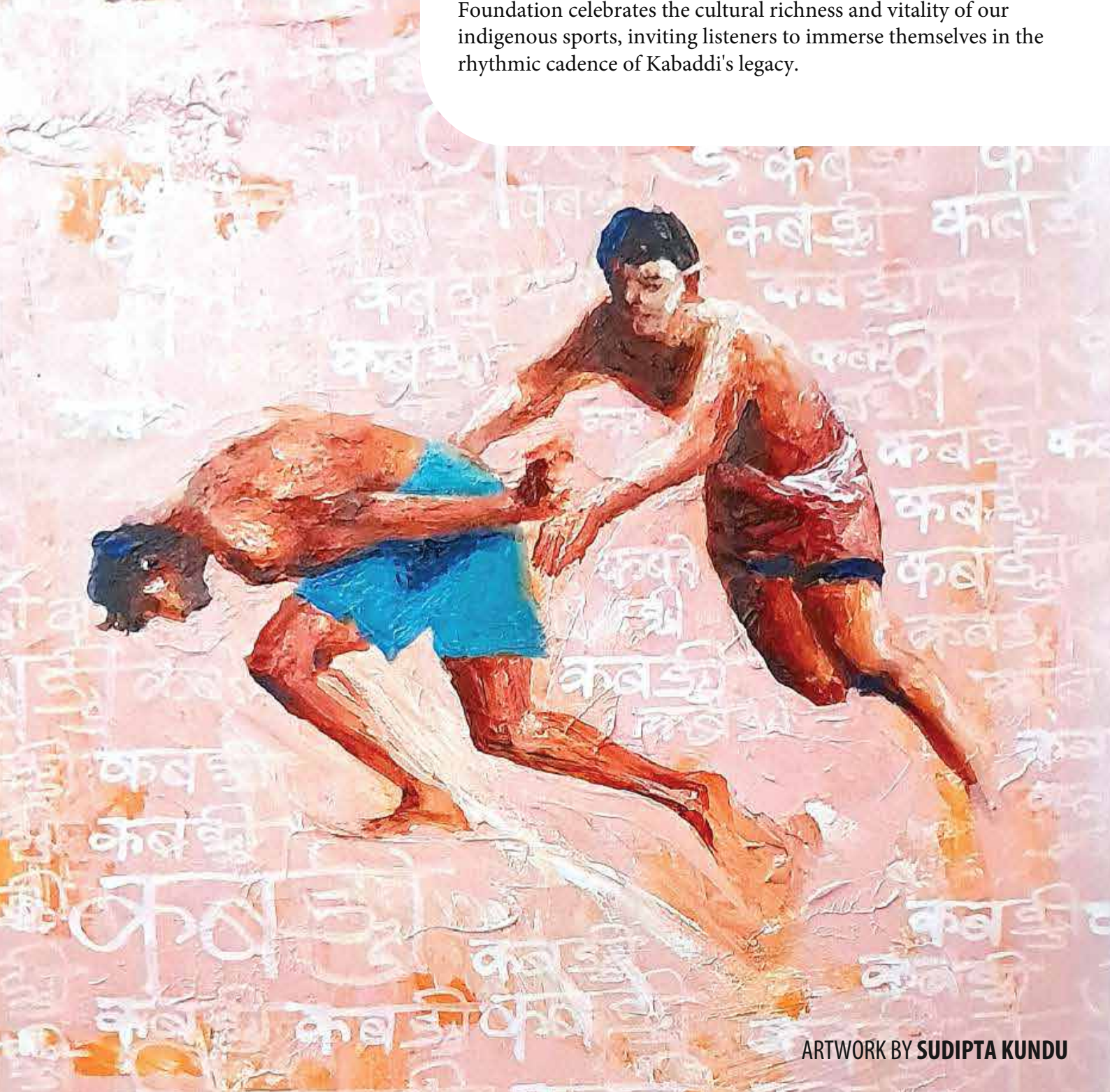




## Exploring Musical Ode: Kabaddi in Harmony

In a fusion of tradition and melody, the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** introduces the **Music of the Month**.

Spearheaded by the illustrious Grammy Award Winner, Ricky Kej, the 40-second composition paying homage to the rustic vigor of Kabaddi, the beloved contact sport rooted deep in India's heritage. The tune encapsulates the spirit of Kabaddi, blending its raw energy with melodic finesse. Through this musical tribute, the Foundation celebrates the cultural richness and vitality of our indigenous sports, inviting listeners to immerse themselves in the rhythmic cadence of Kabaddi's legacy.





Manjari Mishra, Shradha Murarka and Yatindra Mishra

## A Royal Rendezvous

**F** ICCI Kolkata visited Ayodhya, where we held an engaging Choupal session at the palace of the erstwhile royal family. Organized by the Prabha Khaitan Foundation, the session featured a conversation between FICCI Chairperson Shradha Murarka and Yatindra Mishra, a member of the royal family. The event was graced by the presence of Bimlendra Mohan Pratap Mishra, the erstwhile king, and Apra Kuchhal, Honorary Convenor for **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** for Central and Rajasthan Affairs.



Bimlendra Mohan Pratap Mishra and Neha Saraf



Apra Kuchhal and Yatindra Mishra



Yatindra Mishra with FICCI FLO Kolkata Chapter



Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri

## “Debut Novel ‘Swallowing the Sun’ by Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri Celebrates Women Empowerment and Cultural Heritage”



Sunaina Singh

The **Prabha Khaitan Foundation (PKF)** continues to champion literary talent and the arts in India, demonstrating its commitment through book launch series, **Kitaab**, for Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri’s debut work, “Swallowing the Sun.”

The launch of “Swallowing the Sun” was more than just a formal unveiling; it was a celebration of storytelling and a tribute to the timeless art of narrative. The highlight of the evening was an engaging conversation between Mrs. Puri and Sunaina Singh, Former Vice Chancellor, Nalanda University & VP, ICCR. The event welcomed Dr. Sangita Reddy, JMD, Apollo Hospital Group and Najeeb Jung, Former Lieutenant Governor, Delhi.

The introductory welcome was delivered by Mansi Malik, Ehsaas Woman of Hyderabad and opening address was done by Mourya Boda, **Ehsaas Woman** of Hyderabad. Anindita Chatterjee, Executive Trustee of the Foundation felicitated the author and the guests. The much anticipated book launch was joined by other **Ehsaas Women** of Hyderabad.

Singh mentioned that Puri is an example of a truly empowered woman. “Her book is a riveting, unstoppable, compelling and 60 chapters later, an epigraph that seems to be resounding in the head with every page.

As a reader you feel courageous, take you to another realm of elevation and you feel very empowered after reading the book. The book is trying to do the unattainable which is based in the period of pre-Independence.”

“The book is rooted in Marathi, Dhakna language which made perfect sense to launch in Hyderabad and believe in the work of serendipity. Hazaaron Khwaishein Aisi ki har Khwaish pe dum nikle, Bahut nikle mere armaan magar phir bhi kam nikle , a quote of Mirza Ghalib. This thought of writing a dastan-e-zindagi was swirling in me and I started writing in Budapest, then got a writer’s block. After 20 years, in 2020, I started writing again pushed by Mr. Hardeep Puri Ji to really get down to finishing the novel. I thought to myself that it was a labour of love and if not now, then when. That pushed me and I worked 10 hours a day, from June 2020-July 2021.” reminisced the author.

“For me, it was a time of contemplation while writing the novel. Muqta Bai, a teenage poet, who I was very obsessed with, appeared and commanded me the Mantra of the book. It is quite an epiphany. She had come and given the title of the book to me.” said the author.

“The ant flies into the sky, She swallows the sun. Another miracle! A barren woman begets a son. A scorpion burrows down to the nether realms and Shesha, the snake king, bows his head at its feet. A fly gives birth to a hawk Muktabai sees all! Muktabai laugh by Abhang of Muktabai” Mrs. Puri’s book starts with Muktabai’s Abhang and concludes with similar poetic resonance. The book is about a biographical character in the book about a girl, father and the entire novel is almost a panoptic view of the epic time.” said the author.

Quoting Mark Twain’s famous adage that “truth is often stranger than fiction,” Puri emphasized that her parents’

lives surpassed the bounds of possibility. While the novel draws inspiration from their experiences, it also represents an act of imaginative creation. “My parents were extraordinarily people. The book is inspired by my parents Krishna Ganesh Murdeshwar and my mother Malti Desai and it is their



Mansi Malik



Sangita Reddy



Mourya Boda

engagement in the freedom struggle but also their personal Journey as much as it meshed and inter-meshed with the national history. That's what is so fascinating and that's what I've tried to bring in the book. It is not, of course, a biography and I wanted it to be inspired by them but I also wanted it to be something that not only speaks because biographies speak to the intellect but I wanted this to speak to the heart and I wanted it to be infused with poetry so that it speaks to the soul. That is why my editor, the legendary writer and author himself, described this novel as 'an epic feat of remembering and story-telling.' I reflected on how it all came together and I found that there are these overlapping worlds of memories that are woven into this novel. There is memory of what happened and who was there, then how do you remember and then interpretation in remembering that, then comes filigree that you draw from the imagination." explained the author on what inspired her to start the book.

Was the intention to layer the book intentional? "Yes, the cardinal of this story was my parents' journey. I wanted it to be an Act of Creation, as if, I very immodestly talked about this saying that I wanted to play god or goddess so you create characters, you push them around, you challenge them, you destroy them at will as if you are playing God. So there is that joy and there is that intent but of course when I discovered also that when you are writing you are not in control all the time there are times when your characters just appear to you. At 2:00 in the morning, suddenly I used to get up and say oh I must create this character or I must make her go this way or that way. So those epiphanies come to you, as you go along as much as there is some design, there is a combination of design, imagination and those Strokes of Revelations that come to you even as you go along." said Puri on creating characters and her writing journey.

"The book has a character named Malti , she studies and goes to Shimla and Delhi where her husband is a part of the constitutional writing with Dr. Ambedkar. It reminds me of the quote Manzil milegi , bhatak kar hi sahi Gumrah to woh

hain, jo ghar se nikle hi nahin." said the author. How did you juxtaposition the characters of Sarla and Malti in the book? The author replied, "Sarla is one of my favourite creations. When I started the novel, I had an idea of many characters that I will be using, like my mother, father, grandfather and so some of the characters are taken from real life. I make them go through different corridors and different destinations. But both make sure they break boundaries, fly but eventually both ways they have a tragic end."

Describing her book and characters, "I have tried to use traditions, epics and Shastras to disprove the interpretation which is anti-women which is made. I must give the reference: How Sarla complains her husband is not showing any passion to Malti. Malti says, 'But women are not supposed to feel any desire.' She replies, 'Who says that!' She went on to quote Kautilya saying, "Women have twice the appetite for food than men, 8 times the sexual desire, twice the astuteness and 6 times the courage." quoting the author. The women in the book fly into the sky, in some sense they are swallowed by the sun rather than swallowing the sun.

Puri encouraged everyone to read the book to get a wider perspective on parenting and the world. Its characters include a forward-thinking father and his rebellious daughter, challenging caste barriers even in places like schools, where girls were traditionally barred to prevent inter-caste marriages. The message that the father gives in the book is, "Girls need not get married immediately after studies, she need not be only in the house, she is supposed to be everywhere in the world." stated the author. The conversation concluded with a Q&A session with the audience and the formal closing address was delivered by Mansi Malik, **Ehsaas Woman** of Hyderabad.

*Kitaab Hyderabad was organized with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative in association with Taj Krishna and with the support of Ehsaas Women of Hyderabad*



Mourya Boda, Anindita Chatterjee, Lakshmi Murdeshar Puri, Sangita Reddy, Najeeb Jung, Sunaina Singh, Anjum Babukhan and Mansi Malik

## Guwahati Celebrates its debut



Simalisha Baruah, Anindita Chatterjee, Dhrubajyoti Borah, Bibhash Choudhury, Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri, Jahnabi Phookan, Esha Dutta and Tanushree Dutta Gogoi

**P**rabha Khaitan Foundation (PKF) has been at the forefront of nurturing literary talent and fostering a love for the arts in India. The commitment to creating platforms for writers and promoting literary discourse was clearly demonstrated in the meticulously organised Kitaab- the book launch event for Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri debut work- "Swallowing the Sun". It was a debut for Kitaab Guwahati as well. The event, held at a prominent cultural venue in the city, attracted a diverse audience of literature lovers, scholars, and students. The initiative **The Write Circle** was recently launched in the North-East region with cities Guwahati, Shillong, Dimapur and Aizawl included. The launch event at Guwahati was more than just a formal unveiling of Lakshmi Puri Murdeshwar's book; it was a celebration of storytelling and a tribute to the timeless art of narrative. The event was highlighted by an engaging conversation with Gauhati University professor Bibhash Choudhary and was attended by luminaries such as Jahnabi Phookan, co-founder of Jungle Travels India and Assam Bengal Navigation Co., and Dr. Dhrubajyoti Borah, a prolific writer and recipient of the Sahitya Akademi Award for his novel "Katha Ratnakar."

Attendees were treated to an engaging program that included readings from the book, discussions on its historic fiction themes and characters, and an interactive session with the author herself. Puri's insights into her creative process and the inspiration behind her reinterpretations of ancient epics captivated the audience, sparking thoughtful discussions and enthusiastic responses. The book launch was indeed a landmark event on the cultural calendar of Guwahati, providing a platform for meaningful dialogue and celebrating the richness of Indian literature. Simalisha Baruah, **Ehsaas Woman** of Guwahati welcomed everyone



Bibhash Choudhury and Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri

and introduced the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** formally to the assembled gathering. She welcomed Jahnabi Phookan, Guest of Honour to share a few words. Anindita Chatterjee, Executive Trustee of the Foundation felicitated the author and the guests. The awaited book launch was joined by Simalisha Baruah, Anindita Chatterjee, Dhrubajyoti Borah, Bibhash Choudhury, Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri, Jahnabi Phookan, Esha Dutta (Honorary Convenor for North East Affairs) and Tanushree Dutta Gogoi.

"Swallowing the Sun" weaves a mesmerising tale set against the backdrop of the Maharashtrian countryside, blended with the fervent political atmosphere of a nation brimming with revolutionary ideas. Mrs. Puri's narrative prowess paints a broad canvas of a nation rediscovering its voice through characters that are both painstakingly portrayed and remarkably real.

Choudhary commenced, " Maharashtra and the novel starts around 1980s, goes on to cover rich period of Indian history a tumultuous period of Indian history and by the time the novel culminates and comes to an end India has gained independence become a Republic and the Constitution has been drafted, so we see a journey of as has been rightly put of the process of the nation coming into being the birth of Consciousness that is behind the making of the idea of the modern Indian woman. I think this is an excellent tribute to the resilient character of Indian Womanhood."

"This novel has been swirling in my consciousness ever since my childhood when I used to listen to the stories. As was pointed out I was born when my parents were 45 and so they were two generations apart from me. I found their world to be fascinating so I lived in this post Independence world but I was very much drawn to their stories and both of them were great storytellers. It's all about storytelling. She was this flamboyant and florid, you refer to some of the metaphors she would use and was deep with mythology- Greek and Hindu mythology, so she would very much embody in her, the germs of this novel. Similarly my father was one that influenced and it was a very Sahitya household in three languages Sanskrit, marathi and English. So we grew up



Jahnabi Phookan



Dhrubajyoti Borah

in a very literary environment and also studied philosophy and scriptures and so on.” stated the author.

“Somewhere I knew I wanted to write about them. But life happened, I got married and foreign services. In everything, you forget your early dreams. When I was leaving for Budapest in 1999, I found 148 love letters and that way I was able to rekindle the dream and took the letters with me and wrote the first 100 pages of the book but left writing for 20 years. But later thought, it was now or never and that's how within a year I wrote the first draft of 270,000 words on my iPhone working some 10 hours a day. The first draft was then further to chiselled over time and then I met David Davidar who believed in the novel and believed in the project and so Aleph took it up and there it is.” recollected Puri.

“Firstly I chose this form of fiction for a reason because I felt that fiction would be better able to reveal the truth about those that I wanted to celebrate through this book and that period too and the biography would on the other hand also only appeal to the intellect. I wanted to appeal to the heart and to the soul right and and that is why I chose this form and many have called it factio – fact and fiction, a blend of that and then the period that I chose was really a seminar period for India but equally for a generation of young people and I want to emphasise this that this book is about for young People, by young people of the young people.” mentioned Puri.

“I may have written it as a senior citizen but it is really for and about the young people of that era and particularly those who got the opportunity of a western education and they're reimagining themselves, the society around them and they're the idea of India. The idea of India not only in terms of freeing her from the shackles of colonialism but also what would India look like and this was one of the most audacious and impossible looking projects of humanity at that time. Nobody thought in 1918 or 1940 that we would be able to defeat the mightiest power on Earth and yet we did it and we did it the way we did it uniquely. It became an exemplar for the world later on even in the '90s, the other countries Poland and Czechoslovakia and others. So this was a very seminal period.” said the former diplomat.

“There is the full future ahead. So this was a time when the young people could turn the worst of times into the best of times, so that is why I chose this and felt that there is such a strong resonance with the present. We are also at that turning point in our life as a nation at 75 plus as an independent country, a modern independent state where we are re-awakening as a civilization, reclaiming and I use these words deliberately our civilizational sovereignty Swamitva, with that there was cultural flowering and renaissance that happened elsewhere and the coming together of the Freedom struggle the cultural travel and the civilizational change isn't that what is happening now and the young people have a role to play and they have to take this up a major way to realize the goals that set for 2047 developed country but also an evolved country in every way culturally, socially in every way so that is why I felt that we must learn from history I'm a student of History we must learn from history that led to the miracle of independence.” emphasised the author.

The moderator then segued into questioning there was the temptation to go towards the path of violence in pursuing the goal of Independence on the other hand there is the example of Mahatma Gandhi and decisions to be made about career about the profession they choose and “the two principal figures of the novel Malti and Gopi they support each other in different times in different ways they support the cause of Independence but they do not lose sight of the Horizon in front of them. How do you really conceive that part to balance it out to keep track of their carriers yet keep insight into the birth of the nation.?” asked Choudhury. The author replied, “Not only men but also women for the first time were getting higher education like Malti, not enough is celebrated about women power and the book does that.

Detailing her response, “The early on the First Act of nationalistic expression is resistance by theatre which means that the stage revolutionary play for the first time in the western educational Bastion which was Elston college and gives a very strong nationalistic message, social reform, man-woman relationship and women empowerment, so it was a composite. Personal is political and the political is personal and the second act.”

“There is the same kind of ideological contestations that you saw there is being repeated now- the Congress way, the Gandhian way or the Veer Savarkar way and the Hindutva, the Hindu ocean and uniting under that and the young people were fairly eclectic; they believed in both they didn't have to choose or they didn't want to choose.” briefed the author. The conversation concluded with a Q&A session with the audience and the formal closing address was delivered by Tanushree Dutta Gogoi, **Ehsaas Woman** of Guwahati.

*Kitaab Guwahati was organized with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative and with the support of Ehsaas Women of Guwahati*

## Exploring Themes of Empowerment and Freedom with Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri



Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri



Ashley Lalremruati

**T**he Write Circle in Aizawl hosted author Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri. The welcome note was addressed by Ashley Lalremruati, **Ehsaas Woman** of Aizawl. The conversationalist for the evening was Amelia Lalremdiki Sailo, **Ehsaas Woman** of Aizawl.

“*Swallowing the Sun*” is a novel that has many elements and it deserves multiple reads, the element of friendship and family, the element of lovers, the element of women empowerment, and the backdrop of Indian society during the fight for Indian independence, all make up for a fantastic novel. The novel inspires and informs all at once. When asked by the moderator Sailo, that Muktabai was the epigraph for the novel and reason for the verse being so special. In reply Puri responded, “The title is taken from a 13th century teenage saint Muktabai, who is now worshipped as a Adishakti now. But in her 18 short years became a mystic saint in her own right. I came across 40 Abhangas and anyone who reads the poems can fly in the sky and swallow the sun.”

Puri recited a few verses of Abhangas. “It may seem surreal but it is about daring to make miracles. The book applies to women empowerment. For girls today education is their birth-right. United Nations assistant secretary general Lakshmi Puri, said, “reservations for women in legislature, judiciary and the police force will help break gender-based stereotyping of division of work.” mentioned the author.

“The different kind of love that Malati has portrayed was a ferocious lover where she could not see anything beyond. Another kind of love was of Ali and baba, which is quiet but is present daily and can be seen in their daily lives. Another was a love shown between brother- in- law and their wives.” said the moderator.



Ashley Lalremruati

“Later she gave up her career. She was always taught never to give up on her career. This is the kind of book which talks about her family, different friendships during Independence. My father was actively involved in the freedom movement like Satyagraha etc. This brought about a strong sense of nationalism in me. That brought about the civilizational reawakening in me.” said Puri in reflection. She spoke about the 90’s era where society had boy preference and girl aversion and mentioned that it still happens but it is changing due to the “Beti bachao, beti padhao” campaign.

During her talk, Puri explored the central themes of her book, notably addressing gender equality, the significance of male support in empowering women, the complexities of freedom, and the various manifestations of love. She also discussed her creative process, drawing upon multiple inspirations and influences for the narrative.

“When my mother passed away, I was in Budapest and coming back, I found 148 love letters from 1929 to 1932 letters of my father in a tin trunk and as I was leaving for Budapest, I realised I had to do something about the sentiments and reflections of that era.” recollected the author. “When my husband and I were separately posted in different countries, I started writing this book. I wrote during Covid times.”

The audience was captivated and had a Q&A session with the author. They were intrigued especially by the Marathi poems she shared, expressing eagerness to delve into them further within her book and to explore additional Marathi poetry independently. Puri’s life story, professional achievements, charisma, and insights left the audience deeply inspired. The author was felicitated by Mizoram Chief Secretary, Renu Sharma. The formal Vote of Thanks was delivered by Ashley Lalremruati, **Ehsaas Woman** of Aizawl.

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



Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri

## A Tale of Courage, Struggle, and Empowerment: Lakshmi Murdeshwar Pu



Jyotirmoy Prodhani

**T**he Write Circle Shillong cherished an interesting interaction with Laskhmi Murdeshwar Puri with her debut writing “Swallowing the Sun”. A well known Indian Foreign Service diplomat for twenty-eight years, she has served in leadership positions at the United Nations for fifteen years, most recently as its Assistant Secretary General. On her new literary journey she talks about three generations of women in the early 20th century. She talks about the diverse scenarios they face during the freedom struggle.

The conversationalist for the evening was Prof. Jyotirmoy Prodhani from North Eastern Hill University. The formal Welcome Note was delivered by Jyoti Agarwal, **Ehsaas Woman** of Shillong on behalf of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** and off kick-started a great conversation.

“I visited Shillong in 2019 and for years I have learnt a lot about the cultural and literary luminosity of this place. Shillong is known for its English literature and poetry. This place has some kinds of literary clubs, so it is very exciting and humbling for someone like me who is a debut novelist.” the author said when Prodhani probed her into talking about the place to launch the Swallowing the Sun book.

This historical fiction book was inspired by her parents who were extraordinary people for their age and a unique representation of their age. “They seized every opportunity they got. Women and even men characters of their age reached very beyond to transcend boundaries to achieve the impossible. Dr. CV Raman, as he mentions in one of his poems, had said, Not all those who walk on water are prophets. So I felt, someone who went to my parents for any situation I was him, for me, my parents in their own right are prophets of that time,” the former diplomat said.

“I could have written a biography but I would have to tell the truths that perhaps you would have to conceal in a

biography. That is why I wrote a faction because it had some Fiction and some facts. All my characters in the book faintly resemble someone I know in my real life or have my own imagination. When you write a biography, it appeals to the intellect. But I wanted to touch the heart by having poetry and lyrical quotes to reach out to the soul of India,” revealed the author.

“I started writing in June 2020 for 7-8 hours a day and never left the house. It requires that kind of discipline and resilience to write a novel that comprises memories and how those are interpreted over time. I completed this epic work in 2021 and David Davidar of Aleph Book Company agreed to publish the book. Of course, it had to go through a robust editing to bring down the number of words,” recollected the author.

“As someone who was born to a family that had the privilege to have a glimpse of that era in which they have lived and struggled and loved and achieved and failed.” said Puri.

The novel follows the perspective of Malati as it navigates one of the most chaotic eras in recent Indian history: the fight for Independence. Malati’s courage empowers her to challenge the traditional male-dominated norms of her era, steering the narrative towards one of women’s empowerment. Supported by her forward-thinking father, Malati and her sister Kamala continuously push against societal constraints, ultimately becoming the first women in their family to pursue higher education.

The intriguing audience followed to ask her some questions at the Q&A session to receive spell-binding answers from the author. Puri also said that it is very much a coming of age tale and it is about young people of that time. “It is for this reason I have said it is of young people, for young people and by young people, to make it resonate with the present era. People will be surprised when they read the book because it does not read like a period novel since people speak the language in a very modern way,” the author said.

Pooja Geonka delivered the formal concluding remarks and Padmashree Patricia Mukhim and Amrit Kumar- F&B Manager, Taj Vivanta felicitated the guests.

*The Write Circle Shillong was organized with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative in association with hospitality partner Vivanta. The session was facilitated by Ehsaas Women of Shillong*



Pooja Geonka



Jyoti Agarwal

## Exploring Themes of Empowerment and Freedom with Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri

The Write Circle was organised a second edition of the English literary event in Dimapur with diplomat and author Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri. The welcome note was addressed by Abokali Jimomi, **Ehsaas Woman** of Dimapur. The author was in conversation with moderator Bano Haralu. Bano Megolhusau Haralu is an Indian journalist and a conservationist from Nagaland.

Her father was a freedom fighter who, apart from instilling in her a strong belief in equality and freedom, indulged the family heavily with poetry. Puri was away from India for 28 years, 15 of which were spent serving the United Nations, but she has always been longing to tell the story. The journey of the novel began in Budapest, the Hungarian capital, where Puri served as India's Ambassador. After 100 pages, however, as she said, Puri "just gave up, maybe because the demands of the positions I held were just growing."

"I was born to parents who were 45 years old. The impact of this was that I was inhabiting a world of their past and not my present. This novel, therefore, tries to capture the power, charm and irresistible attraction that I felt for that period of 1950-1980. That trajectory period fascinated me because it was a time of great promise. The western Indian educated people during that time were in a throw of catharsis. One side was awaiting to know who they were as Indians, another side was that uniting against an oppressive force was a sense of collective identity to support the big leaders of the national movement." mentioned the former UN secretary general.

"*Swallowing the Sun*" is a novel that has many elements and it deserves multiple reads, the element of friendship and family, the element of lovers, the element of women empowerment, and the backdrop of Indian society during the fight for Indian independence, all make up for a fantastic



Viketuno Rio, Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri and Abokali Jimomi



Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri in conversation with Bano Haralu

novel. "Early 1970s, people were breaking out. You have the waves of feminism. We were very influenced by all this in Lady Sriram College. My daughters joke about me when I give them dating advice because they say I grew up as a nun, first girl's school and girl's college." jokingly mentioned Mrs. Puri.

Described by Kabir Bedi as a "profoundly human narrative," the story unfolds against the backdrop of India's struggle for independence. Its characters include a forward-thinking father and his rebellious daughter, challenging caste barriers even in places like schools, where girls were traditionally barred to prevent inter-caste marriages. Quoting Mark Twain's famous quote that "truth is often stranger than fiction," Mrs. Puri emphasised that her parents' lives surpassed the bounds of possibility. While the novel draws inspiration from their experiences, it also represents an act of imaginative creation.

"Many parts of the novel have a biographical element to it because this book is inspired by my parent's version, diversion and interpretation of memories. Many times your mind just remembers in the way it wants you to remember, so the love letters have been a rich source of their character and their relationship" said the author on a lighter note.

During her talk, Puri explored the central themes of her book, notably addressing gender equality, the significance of male support in empowering women, the complexities of freedom, and the various manifestations of love. She also discussed her creative process, drawing upon multiple inspirations and influences for the narrative.

A Q&A session with the author and audience stole all the light with a lot of interaction and information sharing. Puri's life story, professional achievements, charisma, and insights left the audience deeply inspired. The author and the conversationalist were felicitated by Jesmina Zeliang and the formal Thank you note delivery was by Viketuno Rio, **Ehsaas Woman** of Dimapur.

*The Write Circle Dimapur was organized with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative in association with hospitality partner Zone Niathu. The session was facilitated by Ehsaas Women of Dimapur*



## Letter of Praise from Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri

"To the Esteemed Members and Supporters of the Prabha Khaitan Foundation,

Every novel, I was told, has its own journey and destiny. However, I am a believer in the potency of human endeavor and free will to take it to desired destinations, as the title of my novel "Swallowing the Sun" shows. As an author, I have willfully tried to take it to all parts of India. The Prabha Khaitan Foundation has been an indispensable ally and partner, including in exploring new and yet unexplored terrains for literary landings. I was delighted that the Prabha Khaitan Foundation and Northeast Ehsaas women facilitated the launch of my novel in four of the seven northeastern states of India. This was as much a gesture of pan-India inclusivity as it was a tribute to the Northeast with its own distinctive regional storytelling, literary, and cultural capital, known to be so rich and textured.

In Guwahati, the gateway to the Northeast, a mega launch was organized at Radisson Blu Hotel to a packed hall of more than 500 book lovers, cultural and literary figures, academia, and students from many universities, the services, lawyers, and other professionals. Jahnnabi Phookan, former president of FICCI, FLO and Chief Guest, highlighted that "Swallowing the Sun is a gripping read, that has masterfully brought to life the values that shaped Lakshmi's family's destinies, as well as those of the fictional figures, through the first five decades of the 21st century." With the sounds, sights, colors, and sensory inputs she brings into the book, she vividly recreates the tumultuous pre-independence era. It is not just about the past but holds up a mirror to our contemporary issues and a compass to our future. As Lakshmi Ji so eloquently puts it, 'History is the Prophet of the Future.' The doyen of Assamese literature, Dr. Dhruvajyoti Borah, guest of honor, praised the book's great theme, imaginative and excellent storytelling, and called it a quintessential Indian novel that must rightly be taken to all of India. Prof. Bibhash Choudhary praised its 'intricate exploration of India's socio-political milestones,' while celebrating its rich historical tapestry and insights into the making of the modern Indian woman. Over 200 books were signed by me.

The Write Circle session in Aizawl at Folkland was a truly enriching experience. I had the opportunity to share stories and insights from my life and experiences with the city's literature enthusiasts. Amelia Lalremdiki Sailo, an insightful conversationalist, expressed her thoughts about my novel: "When I read that, something changed. It's the story of

young girls empowered by education who became strong, empowered women, and through this book, you have empowered me to believe in myself and the power within me. 'Swallowing the Sun' is a novel that possesses many elements and deserves multiple reads. It intertwines the elements of friendship and family, the element of love between lovers, and the element of women's empowerment against the backdrop of Indian society during the fight for independence. The novel inspires and informs all at once." The Ehsaas women of Aizawl skillfully steered the session with their probing questions. Ashely Lalremruati, also an Ehsaas woman of Aizawl, graciously delivered both the welcome speech and the vote of thanks. Among the notable attendees were Ms. Renu Sharma, Chief Secretary of Mizoram, and Er Lalhmingliani, Secretary of State, whose presence added a significant layer of depth to our discussions. During the event, Chawngmawii, a local delicacy made with coconut milk, sticky rice topped with dragon fruit, was served to the guests.

In Dimapur, Nagaland, the launch of 'Swallowing the Sun' was a momentous occasion. Ehsaas women of Dimapur, Atuno Rio and Abokali Jimoki hosted an engaging session of The Write Circle at The White Owl, located within the premises of the lovely resort Zone Niathu by The Park, started with the purpose of encouraging youngsters to read. The evening was enriched by a profound dialogue with Bano Haralu, a senior journalist, conservationist, and recipient of the Nari Shakti Puraskar, and, Medozeü Haralu, State Coordinator, Pratham ASER Nagaland, Daughter of late Neichülie Nikki Haralu (Ex Indian Ambassador to Panama, Nicaragua and Costa Rica) whose insights brought a deeper understanding of the novel's themes. Aienla Ozukum, my publishing director from Aleph Book Company, was also present, having expertly shepherded the novel through its various stages of publishing and provided insights. It was complemented by contributions from Atuno Rio from Ehsaas Women of Nagaland and Esha Dutta, the coordinator for North East Ehsaas Women, who are both deeply involved in promoting local cultural initiatives such as 'Woven Threads'—a project showcasing innovative, high-end handloom textiles by indigenous craftsmen. A small intimate dinner with local delicacies of sweet potato stacks, crispy Kholar (local red beans) followed. My first visit there allowed me to immerse myself in the unique cultural heritage of Nagaland. A visit to Heirloom Naga, meeting the founder Jasmina Zeliang, to see the stunning indigenous weaves, the cane and bamboo work that the locals were making was another high point of the visit.

Shillong, a picturesque hill station in Meghalaya and the former summer capital of Eastern Bengal and Assam for many years, provided a perfect backdrop for the second edition of The Write Circle. Hosted by Ehsaas ladies Jyoti Agarwal and Pooja Goenka at Vivanta, Shillong, this session featured enriching conversations with academic, literary, and cultural notables, for instance, writer and journalist and women rights activist and editor of Shillong Times, Patricia Mukhim, enhancing the discourse with her seasoned perspectives. I had the privilege of engaging in an enriching conversation with Professor & Author Jyotirmoy Prodhani. During our discussion, Professor Prodhani shared insightful reflections on my book, noting its profound metaphor "Swallowing the Sun," which introduces the narrative. He elaborated on how the book, spanning three generations, brings women to the forefront throughout various pivotal moments starting in the early 20th century, a period marking the onset of India's freedom struggle. The narrative begins in a small village in Ratnagiri, Maharashtra, tracing the life of Malati taking her from Ratnagiri to Indore, then Guna, and back to Bombay where they grew up, before finally settling in Shimla. These shifts across Indian geography metaphorically align with the shifts in their personal and collective destinies, paralleling the tumultuous period of the Indian freedom struggle. Professor Prodhani aptly compared the narrative's depth and thematic resonance to Raja Rao's 'Kanthapura,' recognized as a seminal English novel set against the backdrop of the Freedom Struggle. The event was further

highlighted by the warm welcome and concluding remarks from Ehsaas women of Shillong, Jyotirmoy Prodhani, and was attended by several people from academia, including professors, students, and representatives from the education ministry, making it a vibrant and diverse exchange of ideas. The session was also complemented by the local delicacy, Pumaloi Putharo, which added a special cultural touch in sync with the Foundation's philosophy, emphasizing the integration of local flavors with literary discussions.

These events across the Northeast have been more than mere book launches; they have been dynamic platforms for cultural dialogue, facilitated by the Foundation's commitment to literary immersion and women's empowerment. The vision and dedication of the late Dr. Prabha Khaitan continue to inspire these initiatives, making each event a testament to her legacy. I am profoundly grateful for the opportunities provided by the Prabha Khaitan Foundation and the Ehsaas Women's Initiative to connect with such diverse and passionate audiences. Thank you for your indispensable support and for being part of this enriching journey. I look forward to our continued collaboration to celebrate and elevate the rich tapestry of Indian literature and culture."

## Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri

Diplomat and Author



### Esha Dutta

Honorary Convenor of North-East Affairs

"A most enlightening and enriching tour with enigmatic author and former diplomat, Shrimati Lakshmi Puri, to the north Eastern states of Assam, where she launched the book at Kitaab, and the book discussions for The Write Circle at Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland. Each city brought alive it's unique and distinctive culture during the discussions and the Q&A that followed. The book weaves a magical journey of it's protagonist alongwith other characters, some borrowed from her own personal life, set against the dramatic and tumultuous years of India's freedom struggle. A must read!"

"Having Mrs. Puri join us for our second edition of the Write Circle in Dimapur was both a privilege and a delight. Despite the flight delay that day, her infectious energy and enthusiasm for the session were palpable. We were captivated by her wisdom and creativity, and the poignant way she recited and sang poems from her debut book left a lasting impact, inspiring us all. But apart from these aspects, her warmth and gracious demeanour resonated with each of us present at the session."

### Viketuno Rio

Ehsaas Woman of Dimapur





## Ashley Lalremruati

Ehsaas Woman of Aizawl

"The second Write Circle in Aizawl was a very rewarding experience. As excited as the Eshaas Women of Aizawl were to host Mrs. Lakshmi Puri, it was evident that the guests were just as eager. The conversation between Mrs. Puri and Mrs. Amelia was very engaging as they slowly delved into the themes of the book, prominently the matters of gender equality, the role of men in empowering women, the intricacies of freedom, and the different forms that love may take. Mrs. Puri took the time to recite a few Marathi poems and explained them so beautifully, the guests even expressed that they wanted to look for more. It was an engaging and inspiring session, and no small part due to Mrs. Puri's charm and wisdom."

## Abokali Jimomi

Ehsaas Woman of Dimapur

"The TWC in Dimapur with Lakshmi Puri was quite inspiring. The audience was enthralled by her lively persona and her zest for life that shone through the conversation that ensued on her debut novel. I personally love the fact that she writes from her life experience about women who defied prejudice and men who fought against restricting and obsolete traditions and unjust societal norms that suppress women. It was overall an enlightening evening for us of listening to poetry in a new language -- a beautiful east-meets-west exchange of poetry and stories."



## Jyoti Agarwal & Pooja Goenka

Ehsaas Woman of Shillong

"The news of Lakshmi Puri being the author invited by Prabha Khaitan Foundation for the Write Circle edition in Shillong excited both of us. We could sense the eagerness among the audience to be a part of the conversation and enjoy Mrs. Lakshmi Puri share her journey as an author and the crucial role that she had played in the UN.

During her conversation she also said that it was her second visit to Shillong and she knows about the rich cultural and literary luminosity of Shillong and is glad to be here.

It was a joy to see that Mrs. Puri connected so well with the audience and inspired them deeply. An attractive audience was spellbound by the poetry and the songs she recited. As she was signing her books it was amazing to see how she had a conversation with each and every guest and patiently responded to everyone.

All good things come to an end and this evening left an imprint on all the litterateur enthusiasts. Looking forward to having such powerful authors in the near future ."

## Nurturing Our Future: Embracing Land Restoration on Environment Day 2024



As we observe World Environment Day 2024, the Prabha Khaitan Foundation joins the global community in focusing on a critical theme: Land Restoration, Desertification, and Drought Resilience. Under the powerful slogan, “Our Land. Our Future,” we are reminded of our collective responsibility to restore and protect the land that sustains us, ensuring a thriving future for generations to come.

Desertification and land degradation are among the most pressing environmental challenges of our time.

Desertification, the process by which fertile land becomes desert as a result of drought, deforestation, or inappropriate agriculture, poses a significant threat to food security, biodiversity, and the livelihoods of millions of people. It is estimated that desertification directly affects the livelihoods of over 1 billion people worldwide, with the most severe impacts felt in developing regions. Coupled with the increasing frequency and severity of droughts due to climate change, these issues call for urgent and

concerted action. Droughts affect approximately 55 million people globally each year, leading to water scarcity, crop failures, and displacement of communities. The degradation of land and the depletion of natural resources exacerbate these challenges, making it imperative to adopt sustainable practices that can restore and protect our lands.

Land restoration involves a range of activities aimed at reclaiming degraded land and restoring its ecological health and productivity. These activities include reforestation, sustainable agriculture, soil conservation, and the rehabilitation of wetlands and other ecosystems. By restoring degraded lands, we can improve food security, enhance biodiversity, combat climate change, and build resilience against droughts and other environmental stresses. Restoring land also plays a crucial role in carbon sequestration, helping to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Healthy soils and vegetation act as carbon sinks, absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and reducing greenhouse gas levels. This not only helps combat global warming but also improves soil fertility and agricultural productivity.

Around the world, various initiatives are underway to address the challenges of desertification and land degradation. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) leads global efforts to combat desertification and promote sustainable land management. National governments, non-governmental organizations, and local communities are also implementing projects to restore degraded lands and promote sustainable practices.

In India, efforts to combat desertification and restore degraded lands are gaining momentum. Initiatives such as the National Afforestation Programme and the Green India Mission aim to increase forest cover, restore ecosystems, and enhance biodiversity. Local

communities are also playing a vital role in land

restoration efforts, adopting sustainable agricultural practices and engaging in tree planting and soil conservation activities.

The Prabha Khaitan

Foundation is committed to supporting and promoting initiatives that address environmental challenges and promote sustainable development. In line with the theme of World Environment Day 2024, we are undertaking various projects to raise awareness about land restoration, desertification, and drought resilience. Through our educational programs, we aim to educate communities about the importance of sustainable land management and the need for conservation practices. By fostering partnerships with local organizations, government agencies, and international bodies, we are working to implement projects that restore degraded lands and build resilience against environmental stresses.

As we reflect on the theme "Our Land. Our Future," it is clear that the health of our land is inextricably linked to the well-being of our communities and the sustainability of our planet. Every individual has a role to play in this effort, from adopting sustainable practices in daily life to supporting policies and initiatives that promote land restoration and environmental conservation.

On this World Environment Day, let us reaffirm our commitment to restoring our lands, combating desertification, and building resilience against droughts. Together, we can create a future where our lands are healthy, productive, and capable of sustaining life for generations to come. In the words of Maria Montessori, "The land is where our roots are." Let us teach our

children to live in harmony with the Earth, and let us take the necessary steps today to ensure a greener, more sustainable tomorrow.

*"The land is where our roots are. The children must be taught to feel and live in harmony with the Earth."*

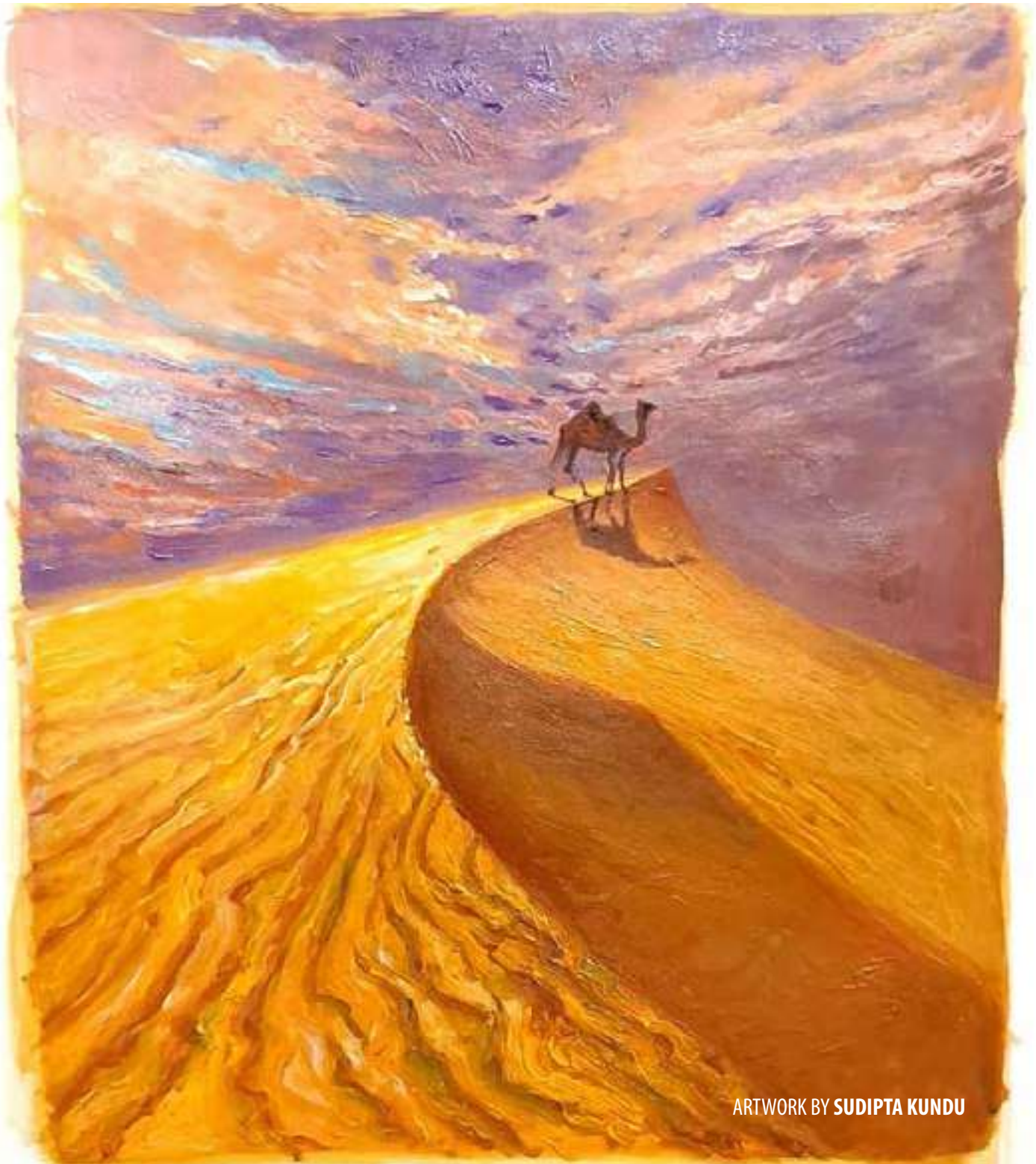
— Maria Montessori



S. Indira Khaitan 2024

## Journey Across Sands: Musical Reflection

Embark on a sonic journey with the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation's** Music of the Month, featuring compositions by three-time Grammy Award Winner Ricky Kej. Immerse yourself in a "Middle East" inspired musical piece, evoking the vast expanse of sand dunes and the solitary trek of a camel through boundless terrain. Through harmonies that echo cultural richness and timeless landscapes, Ricky Kej's composition invites listeners to experience the essence of wanderlust and reflection. Join us in celebrating the spirit of exploration and cultural resonance through music that transcends boundaries and captivates the imagination.





Anant Vijay



Pooja Khanna

## हमलोग तो कंप्यूटर का वो सिस्टम है जिसकी प्रोग्रामिंग किसी और ने कर रखी है : अनंत विजय

- बच्चों को मोबाइल देने की प्रवृत्ति उन्हें किताबों से दूर ले जा रही है....

हमलोग तो कंप्यूटर का वो सिस्टम है जिसकी प्रोग्रामिंग किसी और ने कर रखी है। वो प्रोग्राम व कमांड देता है और हम लोग एक्ट करते रहते हैं। कभी-कभी कमांड ज्यादा हो जाता है तो जिंदगी हेंग हो जाती है। यह कहना है वरिष्ठ पत्रकार व लेखक अनंत विजय का। वे प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन के देहरादून में आयोजित **कलम** सत्र को सम्बोधित कर रहे थे। सत्र के आरम्भ में **अहसास वूमन** देहरादून पूजा पोदार मारवाह ने **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** की गतिविधियों व कार्यों के बारे में विस्तार से जानकारी दी। उन्होंने लेखक अनंत विजय का परिचय देते हुए बताया कि वे करीब ढाई दशकों से पत्रकारिता क्षेत्र में सक्रिय हैं। राजनीति, साहित्य और सिनेमा पर लेखन जारी है। अब तक आपकी ग्यारह पुस्तकें प्रकाशित हो चुकी हैं। आप सिनेमा पर सर्वोत्कृष्ट लेखन के लिए राष्ट्रीय फिल्म पुरस्कार "स्वर्ण कमल" से सम्मानित हो चुके हैं। वर्तमान में आप दैनिक जागरण में एक्सोसिएट एडिटर हैं।

कार्यक्रम को आगे बढ़ाते हुए **अहसास वूमन** देहरादून पूजा खन्ना ने अतिथि से संवाद करते हुए जीवन, सामाजिक परिदृश्य पर कई प्रश्न पूछे।

अनंत विजय ने बताया कि मैं लेखक और साहित्यकार ही बनना चाहता था पर एमबीए किया, उस समय बहुत क्रेज था, उसके आधार पर नौकरी भी मिली लेकिन मैं कर नहीं पाया। उसके बाद भी चार-पांच नौकरियां छूटी, बेरोजगार भी रहा। यही नियति ने तय कर रखा था। उन्होंने पत्रकारिका के बारे में कहा कि एक जमाना था जब पत्रकारिता के बारे में कहा जाता था कि पत्रकारों को निष्पक्ष होना चाहिए। मैं कहता हूँ पत्रकारों को निष्पक्ष बिल्कुल नहीं होना चाहिए। पत्रकारों का कोई ना कोई पक्ष तो होगा। वह तटस्थ हो सकता है, निष्पक्ष नहीं हो सकता। लोग अब कहते हैं कि पत्रकारिता मिशन नहीं रहा वह प्रोफेशन हो गया। तो पत्रकारिता हमेशा से प्रोफेशन था स्वाधीनता के पहले की बात मैं नहीं करता लेकिन उसके बाद से हमेशा प्रोफेशन रहा क्योंकि जब इसमें पूंजी इन्वेस्ट होगी तो पूंजी का स्वभाव है वो रिटर्न मांगेगा। उन्होंने आगे अपनी किताबों के बारे में बताया कि जब मैं घोषणा कर देता हूँ तो किताब प्रकाशित नहीं हो पाती। ऐसे में अमेठी संग्राम लिखते वा सिर्फ चार लोगों को ही पता था और वह किताब आ गई। उन्होंने राजनीति से जुड़ी कई बातें व घटनाएं साझा की। आज के समय के बारे में अनंत जी ने कहा, मैं मानता हूँ कि ओटीटी मीडिया का ही एक हिस्सा है तो सीरियल कम्स विथ कैपिटल तो कैपिटल रिटर्न चाहता है पर कहानियां अच्छी हो तभी चलता है। बहुत से एग्जंपल्स हैं। हमारे पास कहानियां क्या विमल रॉय, सत्यजीत राय, गुलजार, हिमांशु राय के जमाने में अच्छी नहीं होती थी, कहानियां क्या मनमोहन देसाई जो इतने बड़े एंटरटेनर थे वो अच्छी नहीं दिखाते थे? गोविंदा की फिल्मों में कहानी बिल्कुल नहीं होती थी, सलमान की फिल्मों में कहानी बिल्कुल नहीं होती थी लेकिन बगैर अश्लीलता के मुनाफा कमा सकती है ये उन लोगों ने स्थापित किया है। मुंबई डायरीज देखी है, उसमें बच्चे की डिलीवरी को बहुत ही क्लोज टाइड शॉट्स में दिखाना और बच्चे को खून से लथपथ, नाभी नाल को काटते हुए दिखाना यह किस कहानी की मांग हो सकती है क्या, क्यों दिखा रहे हैं।

खुलेपन पर उन्होंने कहा कि हमारा समाज बदला है उसमें खुलापन आया लेकिन क्या हमारा समाज अभी टॉपलेस नायिकाओं को दिखाने और देखने के लिए मानसिक रूप से तैयार है। क्योंकि इंटरनेट के घनत्व के बढ़ने से और डाटा के सस्ता होने से इंडिया में सारे लोगों तक उसकी पहुंच बढ़ी है तो इन सब चीजों को सोचना चाहिए लेकिन हमारे जो फिल्म के निर्माता निर्देशक हैं सिर्फ पैसा कमाना चाहता है।

मोबाइल की लत पर कहा कि वे भी इसका शिकार हुए हैं और खुद ही उससे निकलने का प्रयास कर रहे हैं। उन्होंने कहा कि बच्चों को मोबाइल देने की प्रवृत्ति इस देश में मां और पिता में हो गई है, मुझे लगता है ऐसा करके वे बच्चों को किताबों से दूर ले जा रहे हैं।

एक पेप्पा पिग इतना पॉपुलर हो गया हमारे देश में, हमारे पास कोई ऐसी चीज नहीं है कि इंडियन लैंबेजेस में उसको क्रिएट कर सके अगर राम और कृष्ण पर भी जो सबसे अच्छी सीरीज बनाई वह जापानियों ने बनाई और आप अब ओटीटी की बात करते हो जो हमें हिंसा, अराजकता, अश्लीलता व मारपीट परोस रहा है और हम उसके आदि हो रहे हैं। हमें इस पर गंभीरता से सोचना पड़ेगा और सोचना इन ओटीटी वालों को भी पड़ेगा।

इस अवसर पर मौजूद दर्शकों ने भी लेखक व पत्रकार से कई प्रश्न पूछे। कार्यक्रम के अन्त में (अवकाश प्राप्त आईपीएस अधिकारी) आलोक लाल ने गुजरात का विशेष दुपट्टा ओढ़ाकर अतिथि का सम्मान किया। धन्यवाद ज्ञापन किया **अहसास वूमन** देहरादून पूजा पोदार मारवाह ने। उन्होंने सभी के प्रति आन्तरिक आभार व्यक्त किया।



Pooja Poddar Marwah

**कलम** देहरादून का आयोजन **अहसास वूमन** की सहभागिता और **श्री सीमेंट** की सीएसआर पहल के तहत हुआ। साथ ही मीडिया पार्टनर **दैनिक जागरण**, **हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर हयात रीजेंसी** देहरादून रिजॉर्ट एंड स्पा का रहा।



Anant Vijay & Isha Gupta Vaish

## 2050 में हिंदी वैश्विक भाषा बन जाएगी : अनंत विजय

हिन्दी का भविष्य उज्वल है। आज के समय में अन्तरराष्ट्रीय बाजार की नजर हिंदी पर है। अनुमान लगाया जा रहा है कि 2050 तक हिन्दी वैश्विक भाषा बन जाएगी। यह कहना है वरिष्ठ पत्रकार व लेखक अनंत विजय का। वे प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की ओर से कलम मसूरी के सत्र को सम्बोधित कर रहे थे।

कलम मसूरी के इस सत्र में होटल अमारा हिल क्वीन के अंकित वैश्य ने सभी अतिथियों का दिल से स्वागत किया। उन्होंने साहित्यिक योगदान के लिए प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन के कार्यों के बारे में विस्तार से बताया। प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन कला, साहित्य, संस्कृति और महिला सशक्तीकरण की दिशा में काम करने वाली सक्रिय संस्था है। यह देश और दुनिया भर में भारतीय संस्कृति और साहित्य के ब्रांड एंबेसडर के रूप में अपनी पहचान बना चुका है। फाउंडेशन के कार्यक्रम और गतिविधियां भारत सहित दुनिया भर के 55 से भी अधिक शहरों तक अपने पंख फैला चुका है। उन्होंने कलम सत्र के अतिथि अनंत विजय का परिचय देते हुए उनकी किताबों व लेखन जगत के बारे में जानकारी दी।

इस खास मौके पर लेखक के साथ संवाद किया अहसास वूमन मसूरी ईशा गुप्ता वैश्य ने। सत्र में अनंत विजय ने हिन्दी को लेकर आशा बंधाने वाली बातें कही। उन्होंने कहा कि आज से 10 वर्ष पहले कल्पना नहीं की जा सकती थी कि भारत के प्रधानमंत्री वाइड हाउस में प्रेसिडेंट और फर्स्ट लेडी के पास में खड़े होकर हिंदी में बात कर रहा है और वे लोग ट्रांसलेशन की मशीन लगा के समझ भी रहे हैं और प्रतिक्रिया भी दे रहे हैं। यह हिंदी का वैश्विक क्षितिज पर विस्तार हो रहा है। हर जगह हिंदी के प्रकाशकों की संख्या लगातार बढ़ रही है, हिंदी में सेल्फ पब्लिशिंग बढ़ रहा है। अब जो डॉट कॉम की दुनिया है उस पर भी हिंदी की सामग्री को हिट्स मिल रहे हैं तो इसका मतलब हिंदी के पाठकों के भूगोल का ही विस्तार हो रहा है। विदेशों में बड़ी संख्या में लोग हिंदी सीख रहे हैं। आज विश्व भर के 45 से अधिक देशों में हिंदी पढ़ाई जा रही है। हमारी हिंदी फिल्मों भी हिंदी को बढ़ावा दे रही है अभी सिंगापुर यूनिवर्सिटी में एक मित्र है जो तमिल और हिंदी की हेड ऑफ द डिपार्टमेंट है। उनका नाम संध्या सिंह है, उन्होंने बताया कि जब वे रंगों के बारे में पढ़ाती है तब चेन्नई एक्सप्रेस का वह गाना दिखाती जिसमें दीपिका हर रंग की साड़ी चेंच करती है साथ ही गिनती के लिए तेजाब फिल्म का गाना एक-दो-तीन के माध्यम से सीखाती है ताकि वे उसे जल्दी ग्रहण कर सकें। हिंदी वैश्विक भाषा का बाजार इतना बड़ा है कि हिंदी के बिना काम नहीं चलेगा।



Ankit Vaish



Rajni Aikant felicitating Anant Vijay

ओटीटी पर सेंसरशिप क्यों नहीं होती इस पर लेखक ने कहा कि ये थोड़ा कठिन इसलिए है कि फिल्म पर जो सर्टिफिकेशन का कानून है वो एक ही मिनिस्ट्री से जुड़ा हुआ मसला है। ये जो ओटीटी या इंटरनेट मीडिया का जो माध्यम है इसमें दो-तीन मंत्रालय जुड़ते हैं। ऐसे में समस्या हो जाती है। जिसके पास ताकत होती है वह उसे चलाता है। यदि किसी ने कुछ थोड़ा दिखाया तो दूसरे ने पूरी तौर पर दिखाने की होड़ लगा दी। अश्लीलता, गाली-गलौज, नश्वता, हिंसा यह सब दिखाकर वे अपनी टीआरपी बढ़ा रहे हैं पर उसकी जरूरत कितनी है यह कोई सोच नहीं रहा। उन्होंने भारत के लोकतंत्र पर कहा कि भारत का लोकतंत्र इतना मजबूत है कि कोई डिक्टेटर हिटलर भी आ जाएगा तो उसको हम बर्दाश्त नहीं कर सकेंगे। मैं यह कहता हूँ कि अपने लोकतंत्र पर भरोसा रखिए और हमें जो एक खुली हवा में सांस लेने की आदत पड़ गई है उसे हम आसानी से नहीं खो सकते।

लेखक अनंत ने समाज में पुस्तकालय के महत्व के बारे में कहा कि पुस्तकालय होने ही चाहिए। इसकी मैंने वकालत भी की है इसके बाद भारत सरकार पहली बार पुस्तकालय नीति लेकर आ रही है जिसमें हर गांव में और ब्लॉक स्तर पर पुस्तकालय की स्थापना की जाएगी और उसका एक नेशनल हब होगा जिसको इंटरनेट के माध्यम से जोड़े जाने की योजना पर काम चल रहा है। लेकिन यह सरकारी बात अलग है, हमें अपने स्तर पर पुस्तकालयों की स्थापना करनी चाहिए और नए लोगों को उसमें जोड़ना चाहिए। पाठकों को पुस्तकालय तक लाने के लिए माउथ पब्लिसिटी के साथ ही अपने बच्चों को पुस्तकालय भेजने का प्रयास करें और खुद भी जाएं तभी सब जुड़ सकेंगे। राष्ट्रीय संस्कृति नीति बनना समय की मांग है और मुझे पूरा विश्वास है कि जो भी सरकार इस बार आए व संस्कृति नीति बनाएगी।

इस अवसर पर दर्शकों ने भी लेखक से कई प्रश्न पूछे। कार्यक्रम के अन्त में रजनी ऐकांत ने अतिथि को स्मृति चिन्ह देकर सम्मानित किया। धन्यवाद ज्ञापन किया अंकित वैश्य ने।

कलम मसूरी का आयोजन अहसास वूमन की सहभागिता और श्री सीमेंट की सीएसआर पहल के तहत हुआ। साथ ही मीडिया पार्टनर दैनिक जागरण, हॉस्पिटैलिटी पार्टनर होटल अमारा हिल क्वीन का रहा।



Anant Vijay signing books for Audience

## हिंदुस्तान की जमीं कहानियों की सरजमीं है - हिमांशु बाजपेयी -भाषाओं को देखने का हमारा नजरिया बड़ा संकुचित है



Himanshu Bajpai



Poorva Sharma

हमारे देश में हर मौसम की, हर त्यौहार की, हर ऋतु की, हर उत्सव की कहानियां हैं। हमारे जो धार्मिक ग्रंथ हैं वो सब कथाओं में कहे गए हैं, वह इसलिए कहे गए हैं क्योंकि इंसान सारे तथ्य भूल सकता है, सब ज्ञान भूल सकता है लेकिन कहानी नहीं भूलता और कहानी भी अगर भूल जाए तब भी उस कहानी ने उसे एहसास क्या दिया था वह नहीं भूलता। आखिर में हम यह मानते हैं कि हर चीज अंत में कहानी ही हो जाती है। हिंदुस्तान की जमीं कहानियों की सरजमीं है। यह कहना है किस्सागोई के जाने माने कलाकार हिमांशु बाजपेयी का। वे **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** के द्वारा मथुरा में **कलम** सत्र के पहले आयोजन में शिरकत कर रहे थे।

कार्यक्रम के आरम्भ में **अहसास वूमन** आगरा विन्ती कथूरिया ने कार्यक्रम का आगाज करते हुए **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** के कार्यों की गतिविधियों के बारे में विस्तार से जानकारी दी। इसके साथ ही उन्होंने किस्सागोई के जाने-माने कलाकार हिमांशु बाजपेयी का परिचय सबसे करवाया। उन्होंने बताया कि हिमांशु अपनी कला के लिए महामहिम राष्ट्रपति महोदय से सम्मानित हो चुके हैं। कुछ ही समय पहले हिमांशु और प्रभा द्वारा प्रस्तुत की गई "रानी दुर्गावती" की दास्तान को प्रधान मंत्री ने "मन की बात" में सराहा। वे भारत के साथ-साथ तुर्की, संयुक्त अरब अमीरात और सिंगापुर समेत कई देशों में प्रतिष्ठित मंचों पर अपनी प्रस्तुतियां दे चुके हैं। उन्होंने हार्वर्ड यूनिवर्सिटी के वर्ल्ड वाइड इवेंट में भारत का प्रतिनिधित्व किया और नेटफ्लिक्स की लोकप्रिय वेब सीरीज "सेक्रेड गेम्स" में भी काम किया है। उनके किस्सागोई भारतीय स्वतंत्रता आंदोलन और संस्कृति पर आधारित होते हैं। क्रांतिकारी आंदोलन, झांसी की रानी लक्ष्मीबाई, गांधी अभय, अवध- 1857, रानी दुर्गावती, गंगा गाथा, महाराणा प्रताप आदि किस्सागोई के माध्यम से प्रस्तुत करते हैं। उन्होंने लखनऊ के किस्सों पर केंद्रित किताब 'किस्सा किस्सा लखनउवा' बेस्ट सेलर रही है और इसी किताब के लिए उन्हें

साहित्य अकादमी युवा पुरस्कार 2021 से सम्मानित किया गया है।

**कलम** मथुरा के इस सत्र में अतिथि से संवाद किया शिक्षाविद् व समाजसेवी पूर्वा शर्मा ने। हिमांशु ने **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** के इस पहल पर अपना आभार व्यक्त करते हुए कहा कि ऐसे कार्यक्रम सच में बहुत खास होते हैं। जिसमें आप अपनी बात शहर के उन लोगों के सामने रखते हैं जिन्हें उनकी अच्छी समझ है। मुझे हमेशा **कलम** का इनिशिएटिव अच्छा लगता है, **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** का बहुत सारे शहरों में ऐसे आत्मीय प्रोग्राम जिनमें सुकून से बात हो सके और शहर के जो चुनिंदा लिखने पढ़ने वाले लोग हैं उनके बीच में आप कुछ बात कह सके। ऐसा मौका देने के लिए **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** का बहुत शुक्रिया।

उन्होंने दास्तान किस्सा गोई पर अपनी बात रखते हुए कहा कि भारत में एक वाचिक परंपरा यानी ओरल ट्रेडीशन जबानी रिवायत है। इसकी अपनी परम्परा है जो चली आ रही है। हिंदुस्तान की जमीन मुख्यतह कहानियों की सरजमीं है जिसमें दास्तान एक ऐसी रिवायत थी, मध्यकालीन स्टोरी टेलिंग ट्रेडीशन था जो कि एक जमाने में बहुत लोकप्रिय थी। लेकिन जैसे-जैसे समय बदला, उसके साथ परिस्थितियां बदली है उसके मुताबिक फिर वह एक तरीके से मिट-सा गया था लेकिन 2005 के आस-पास उसका रिवाइवल हुआ और उसके बाद एक कारवां शुरू हुआ।



Audience

उन्होंने बताया कि दास्तानागोई दो लफ्जों से मिलकर बना है दास्ताना और गोई यानी कि कहानी कहना या सुनाना। अब दास्ताना कहानी है, वह एक खास किस्म की कहानी है। एक लंबी कहानी, एक ऐसी कहानी जो किस्सा दर किस्सा आगे बढ़ती है और कई-कई दिन, कई-कई रात, कई-कई हफ्तों, कई-कई महीनों, कई-कई सालों तक लगातार सुनाई जाती है। जो दास्ताने बहुत मशहूर हुई मसलन अलिफ लैला एक दास्ताना ही तो थी। 2005 में तकरीबन 80 सालों के बाद जब वो दोबारा से शुरू हुई तो तब तक का समय-काल में खासा बदलाव आ चुका था। ऐसी स्थिति में किस्सागोई की कहानी में बदलाव जरूरी था। अब मॉडर्न दास्तानें शुरू हुई तो उसमें कंटेंपरी इश्यूज और मॉडर्न टॉपिक्स पर भी दास्ताने की जाने लगी। हमने मॉडर्न टॉपिक्स को दास्ताना गोई के अंदाज में पेश किया। अब 10 साल हो गए कहानियां सुनाते हुए 2014 में हमने यह सफर शुरू किया था। 10 सालों में 30 से ज्यादा दास्तानें सुनाई है और 500 से ज्यादा शो किए हैं। जिस दास्ताना गोई की कल्पना की उड़ान जितनी ऊंची होगी उतनी ही वो अच्छी मानी जाती है। उन्होंने किस्सा गोई पर कहा कि कई बार हम कहानी सुनाते हुए इतना खो जाते हैं कि हम खुद पात्र बन जाते हैं। सामने कौन बैठा है यह भी समझ नहीं आता।

उन्होंने लखनऊ शहर की विशेषता, उसकी नजाकत और मिजाज के बारे में अपने खूबसूरत अंदाज में किस्सा सुनाया साथ ही उससे जुड़े किस्से भी साझा किए। जिसे लोगों ने काफी पसन्द किया।

इन्होंने किस्सागोई के बारे में बताया कि उसका बोलने का, लिखने का अंदाज अलग है। जब हम लिखते हैं तो उसका तौर-तरीका अलग होता है। जब हम सामान्य कुछ लिखते हैं तब हमें कहा जाता है कि छोटे-छोटे वाक्यों में लिखें पर जब हम दास्ताना कहते हैं तो दास्ताना लम्बे-लम्बे लिखे जाते हैं। कभी-कभी एक वाक्य एक पन्ने का हो जाता है। यही उसकी खासियत भी है। दास्ताना में यह माना जाता था कि दास्ताना लिखी हुई बात भी हो तो उसमें सुनी हुई बात का मजा होना चाहिए, बस यह एक फार्मूला जिसे हम इस्तेमाल करते हैं। काव्य और उसकी भाषा पर कहा कि हमारे कविताओं का सीधा ताल्लुक रहा ब्रजभाषा से। ब्रजभाषा में जो माधुर्य और मिठास है वह मन को छूती है। शायद इसलिए भी की कृष्ण का काव्य हमें सूरदास के पदों में भी मिलता है और रसखान में भी। तमाम कृष्ण भक्ति शाखा के हमारे

कवि का साहित्य इसमें मिलता है। उन्होंने भाषा के सौंदर्य पर कहा कि बहुत सदियों तक काव्य की भाषा ब्रज रही और जिसने काव्य को पढ़ा है वह इस बात को जानता है कि ब्रज भाषा में जितनी लोच है, जितना माधुर्य है और जिस तरह से कवियों के यहां वह सहजता से बहती है वो एक हैरान कर देने वाली है।

हमारे देश की गंगा-जमनी तहजीब का मैं तो उसका बहुत बड़ा फैन हूं। देश की विविधता ही उसकी खूबसूरती को बयां करती है। आजकल उर्दू और हिंदी विवाद पर उन्होंने कहा कि शुद्ध हिंदी या शुद्ध उर्दू बोले उसमें कोई मुश्किल नहीं है। शुद्ध बोलना अच्छा है, शुद्ध हिंदी हो या शुद्ध उर्दू हो अच्छी लगती होगी परन्तु कोई अगर बेचारा मिलीजुली भाषा में बोलने का आदि हो, जो सहजता से दोनों को मिलकर बोलता हो तो उस पर आप प्रेशर ना बनाएं। किसी भी भाषा का अपना सौंदर्य होता है। अब मेरे मन की यह कुंठा रही कि बचपन से ही हम अच्छी इंग्लिश नहीं बोल पाते, वैसा माहौल नहीं मिला हमें, लेकिन अब इसका क्या मतलब है कि जो अच्छी इंग्लिश बोले तो हम उससे कहे यह तो बेकार है यह इंग्लिश बोल रहा है क्योंकि मेरे अंदर एक कुंठा इंग्लिश को लेकर है। बल्कि होना चाहिए कि जो अच्छी इंग्लिश बोलता है तब हमें उसे सकारात्मकता से लेना चाहिए ताकि लगे कि अरे हमें भी इस तरह से बोलना चाहिए। यह सही तरीका है किसी भाषा के सौंदर्य को देखने का।

असल में भाषाओं को देखने का हमारा नजरिया बड़ा संकुचित है। भाषाएं असल में क्या है, बहुत प्राइमरी लेवल पर आप देखेंगे तो संचार का माध्यम है भाषाएं और उसके गहराई में अगर उतरेंगे तो एक पूरी सभ्यता, पूरी संस्कृति, पूरे वैल्यू सिस्टम को आपके सामने रखती हैं। इस अवसर पर उन्होंने अपने कई किस्से सुनाएं साथ ही दर्शकों के पूछे गए प्रश्नों के उत्तर भी दिए। वृज बिहार ग्रुप के प्रबंध निदेशक पवन चतुर्वेदी ने अतिथियों को स्मृति चिन्ह देकर सम्मानित किया। कार्यक्रम की सफलता हेतु **अहसास वूमेन** आगरा चांदनी चोपड़ा ने सभी को धन्यवाद ज्ञापित किया।

**कलम मथुरा का आयोजन अहसास वूमेन की सहभागिता और श्री सीमेंट की सीएसआर पहल के तहत हुआ।**



Vinti Kathuria



Chandni Chopra

Author

## हम सिर्फ निमित्त मात्र है - डॉ. विक्रम संपत



Mayank Singh, Shruti Agarwal, Vishnu Shankar Jain, Vikram Sampath, Malini Awasthi, Bharti Madhok, Venkatraman Ganpati, Shrikant Mishra, Praveen

हम सिर्फ निमित्त मात्र है। कोई भी महत्वपूर्ण कार्य हम नहीं करते बल्कि हमें उस कार्य के माध्यम के रूप में चुना जाता है। हम सिर्फ जरिया होते हैं। मैं भाग्यशाली हूँ कि भगवान ने मुझे शिवा पुस्तक लिखने के लिए चुना। यह कहना है लेखक डॉ. विक्रम संपत का। वे **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** की ओर से देश की पवित्र नगरी काशी के मालवीय मूल्य अनुशीलन केंद्र में आयोजित कलम सत्र के पहले आयोजन को सम्बोधित कर रहे थे। यह अवसर था प्रतीक्षा शिव की ज्ञानवापी काशी के सत्य का उद्घाटन पुस्तक के लोकार्पण समारोह का। इस खास मौके पर मुख्य अतिथि के रूप में उपस्थित थे लेखक डॉ. विक्रम संपत, सुप्रीम कोर्ट के वरिष्ठ अधिका विष्णु जैन व भारतीय लोक कलाकार पद्मश्री से सम्मानित मालिनी अवस्थी।

वैदिक मंत्रों से कार्यक्रम का आरम्भ हुआ। प्रयागराज की **अहसास वूमन** श्रुति अग्रवाल ने मौजूद सभी का स्वागत किया। उन्होंने **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** के कार्यों के बारे में विस्तार से जानकारी दी साथ ही उपस्थित सभी अतिथियों का परिचय भी करवाया। बेंगलुरु स्थित इतिहासकार डॉ. विक्रम संपत नौ प्रशंसित पुस्तकों के लेखक हैं। उनकी दो खंडों वाली जीवनी सावरकर: इकोज फ्रॉम ए फॉरगॉटन पास्ट और सावरकर: ए कंटेस्टेड लिंगेसी, ब्रेवहार्ट्स ऑफ भारत: विगनेट्स फ्रॉम इंडियन हिस्ट्री और यह नवीनतम वेरिटींग फॉर शिवा, सभी राष्ट्रीय बेस्टसेलर रही हैं।

मालिनी अवस्थी भारतीय लोक परंपराओं को अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर प्रसिद्धि दिलाने वाली कलाकार हैं। वे तुमरी और कजरी मधुर शैलियों व मोहक अंदाज से प्रस्तुत करती हैं। भारत सरकार ने उन्हें 2016 में पद्मश्री से सम्मानित किया। साथ ही 2018 में उत्तर प्रदेश संगीत नाटक अकादमी फेलोशिप और संगीत नाटक अकादमी पुरस्कार भी प्राप्त है। अधिका विष्णु शंकर जैन ने अपने करियर की शुरुआत अयोध्या के श्रीराम जन्मभूमि मामले से की थी।



Vikram Sampath



Mayank Singh

ज्ञानवापी विवादित स्थल पर प्रार्थना करने के अधिकार की मांग मामले में जुटे है। डॉ. मयंक नारायण सिंह बनारस हिंदू विश्वविद्यालय के संयुक्त अधिकृत रजिस्ट्रार हैं। वह प्रशंसित थ्रिलर, "चुल्प्स लायर" के लेखक भी हैं। शिक्षाशास्त्री मयंक सिंह ने लेखक व मुख्य अतिथियों से संवाद किया।

इस अवसर पर लेखक डॉ. विक्रम संपत ने पुस्तक से संबंधित तथ्य व महीनों की साधना के बारे में बताया। उन्होंने कहा कि ऐसे बहुत से लोग होंगे जो काशी विश्वनाथ मंदिर के इतिहास से अनभिज्ञ होंगे। यदि हम इतिहास नहीं जानेंगे तो उसकी सच्चाई के बारे में नहीं जान पाएंगे। जब हमें पता ही नहीं है हम किस लिए लड़ रहे हैं तो उस पर हम गर्व का बोध भी नहीं कर सकते। हमारे इतिहास को अगर जानना है तो मूल स्रोत तक पहुंचना होगा। मूल स्रोत उन भाषाओं में होते हैं जो हमको आज शायद पता ही नहीं जैसे संस्कृत हो या पाली, प्राकृत, अरबी, फारसी। शंकराचार्य जी के आदेश पर मैंने दो संस्कृत पंडित से हफ्तों-हफ्तों तक बातचीत की। शिव पुराण, लिंग पुराण, वायु पुराण, ब्रह्म वैवर्त पुराण, पद्म पुराण और फिर स्कंद पुराण आदि कई ग्रन्थों का अध्ययन किया। बहुतों से मिला। विदेशी पर्यटकों के ग्रन्थों को पढ़ा। जहां काशी विश्वनाथ मंदिर के तोड़े जाने के पूर्व का वर्णन मिलता है। मैं खुद को भाग्यशाली मानता हूँ कि मैं इस कार्य का निमित्त बना और कार्य पुस्तक के रूप में आप सब के सामने है।

डॉ. संपत ने कहा कि इतिहास लेखन हमारी कमजोरी रही है। सिलसिलेवार हमने लिखा नहीं फिर बाहर के लोग आते गए, बाहर के इतिहासकार और मार्क्सिस्ट वाले इतिहासकार वह इतिहास गढ़ देते हैं। जिसमें सच्चाई तोड़मरोड़ कर पेश की जाती है।

भविष्य में जो इतिहास के लेखक बनना चाहते हैं उनके लिए यह एक धर्म युद्ध होगा। वे सच्चे तथ्य पर गौर करें। किसी ने कुछ कहा और उसे ही दस्तावेज मानकर, उस पर विश्वास करके, उसे ही सच स्वीकार लें तो ठीक बात नहीं है। उसी तथ्य को माने जो विश्वसनीय सूत्र हो। मैं गर्वबोध करता हूँ कि यह समय भारत की पुनः स्थापना का स्वर्णिम युग काल खंड है और हम लोग बहुत भाग्यवान हैं कि उसे साक्षात् होते देख रहे हैं। बहुत भाग्यवान है यह पीढ़ी जो एक बड़े स्वाभिमानी राष्ट्र में विकसित चेतना लेकर पैदा हुई है।

इस मौके पर पद्मश्री मालिनी ने कहा कि खुद को जानने के लिए इतिहास का जानना जरूरी है। इतिहासकारों का होना तो बहुत आवश्यक है क्योंकि इतिहास नहीं होगा तो हम कैसे जान पाएंगे कि कहां-कहां हमारे पूर्वजों ने गलतियां की तो हम उसे सुधार कैसे पाएंगे।

इस पूरे लेखा-जोखा का, एक ऐतिहासिक सरल शब्दों में पुस्तक के रूप में पेश दस्तावेज प्रमाण है जिसके लिए विक्रम संपत का कृतज्ञ होना पड़ेगा। हर कालखंड में नई पीढ़ी इस इतिहास को जानेगी।



Vishnu Shankar Jain

उन्होंने कहा कि काशी में ज्ञान की बातें करना वास्तव में वैसा ही है जैसे अपने गुरु को कोई शिष्य ज्ञान की बातें कहे क्योंकि यहां सभी ज्ञानवान हैं। काशी के पूरे समाज ने संगीत को सहेजा है और संगीत को आगे बढ़ाया है। यहां पर राज्याश्रय वाली बात नहीं है। यहां पर यदि आप गा रहे हैं तो कोई पान लगाने वाला हो, चाहे रिक्शा चलाने वाला हो, चाहे वणिग हो, चाहे यहां का एक श्रेष्ठी हो, वह उतनी ही संगीत की समझ रखता है और उतना ही आपको आदर और सम्मान देगा। सारे कलाकारों ने भी बड़ी उदारता से उस सम्मान को ग्रहण किया है। काशी का संगीत और संस्कृति पूरी तरह शिव की तरह लगती है जैसे शिव के गण हैं तो सारे गणों से सम्मानित यहां की कला है। मौके पर मालिनी जी ने गायन की विविधता और उसकी खूबसूरती के बारे में बताया। साथ ही ठुमरी, ठप्पा आदि से जुड़ी कई बातें लोगों के साथ साझा की।

विष्णुजी ने ज्ञानव्यापी मंदिर को लेकर चल रहे मामले पर अपने संघर्ष और कानूनी लड़ाई के बारे में बताया। उन्होंने कहा कि मंदिर टूटते रहे, गिरते रहे हैं। शताब्दियों से हम लड़ते ही आ रहे हैं। 1212 में सुदूर बंगाल के सेन वंश का राजा विश्वरूप काशी में आकर वाराणसी के बीचोंबीच एक विजय स्तंभ स्थापित कर दिया उस शिलालेख पर यह लिखा था कि यह पूरी नगरी विश्वेश्वर की नगरी है। दिल्ली सल्तनत का दबदबा होने के कारण भव्य मंदिर का पुनर्निर्माण नहीं कर सकें पर मंदिर हमारा है यह दावा उन्होंने किया था।

किस इतिहास पर विश्वास करें जब एक स्वतंत्र आजाद देश में छात्रों को आक्रांता का इतिहास पढ़ाया जाए और देश के पराजित नायकों के शौर्य गाथाओं को इरादतन छिपा लिया जाए, तब क्रोधित होना अनिवार्य है और यदि उस क्रोध से हलचल होती हो तो होनी चाहिए। राम ने यदि धीरज रखना सिखाया तो राम ने क्रोध करना भी सिखाया है। पूरे राम कथा में वे एक बार ही क्रोधित होते हैं और समुद्र भयभीत हो जाता है।



Bharti Madhok



Malini Awasthi

बड़े बूढ़े बुजुर्ग से मिले संस्कार में हमेशा हम लोग को बताया गया है कि हर विवाद आपसी बातचीत से, आपसी वार्तालाप से सुलझाएं लेकिन कभी-कभी यदि बात अगला न समझ रहा हो तो स्पष्टता से बल्कि जोर से बात कहनी चाहिए और यदि आप सत्य के साथ खड़े हैं तो सत्या की पहली शर्त यही है कि निडर होना अनिवार्य है। आप जब सत्य के साथ खड़े होते हैं और निर्भीक होते हैं तो उसके बहुत सारे आपको इनाम भी मिलते हैं उनको सहने का आप में पराक्रम भी होना चाहिए। विवादों का सबसे सुंदर हल बातचीत है, आपसी सौहार्द है लेकिन न समझे तब आप सत्य की रक्षा के लिए निडर होकर खड़े हो, बिना भयभीत होकर अपनी बात कहिए, अप्रिय बात हो सकती है, चार को बुरी लग सकती है लेकिन आप ऐसे दौराहे पर खड़े हैं तो कोई आया और अपना अधिपत्य स्थापित करके चला गया। उन्होंने इतिहास को खोलकर सबके सामने रख दिया है।

पुस्तक लोकार्पण के इस समारोह में सबसे खास रहा जब लेखक विक्रम संपत ने शास्त्रीय संगीत प्रस्तुत किया वही गायिका मालिनी अवस्थी ने भी लोकगीत पेश कर पूरा समा बांध दिया।

खचाखच भरे सभागार में दर्शकों ने भी अतिथियों से प्रश्न पूछे। वाराणसी की **अहसास वूमन** भारती मधोक ने अतिथियों को दुपट्टा ओढ़ाकर सम्मानित किया। साथ ही कार्यक्रम को सफल बनाने हेतु सभी के प्रति अपनी हार्दिक कृतज्ञता व्यक्त की।

वाराणसी में आयोजित **किताब** सत्र का आयोजन **अहसास वूमन** की सहभागिता, **श्री सीमेंट** की सीएसआर पहल के तहत हुआ साथ ही **काशी मंथन** का भी पूरा सहयोग मिला।



Shruti Agarwal

## Embarking on a Literary Odyssey: Vikram Sampath's new book on Kashi's GyanVapi



Deepika Goyal, Aruna Sairam, S Gurumurthy, Padma Subramanyam and Vikram Sampath

**K**itaab Chennai was organised in association with Vigil and Ehsaas Women of Chennai. An enlightening discussion was held with the historian and author Vikram Sampath, journalist Janani Sampath and advocate Aditya Reddy. They forayed in different segments of the enduring spirit of Indian civilization. Despite facing numerous attempts at demolition, the Kashi temple has endured. Outlining a successful book launch tour, Kitaab was organized by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** to support renowned author Vikram Sampath's latest book- "Waiting for Shiva: Unearthing The Truth Of Kashi's Gyan Vapi". The book recreates the history, antiquity and sanctity of Kashi as the abode of Bhagwan Shiva in the form of Vishweshwara, or Vishwanath.

The book launch in Chennai, thus, was not just a milestone for Vikram Sampath but also a reaffirmation of the city's enduring love for literature. It celebrated the power of stories to connect people, provoke thought, and ignite the imagination, solidifying Chennai's status as a beacon of literary culture in South India.

The book was launched in the presence of esteemed Chief guests including S Gurumurthy, chief editor of Thuglak, Padma Vibhushan danseuse Padma Subramanyam, Padma Shri vocalist Aruna Sairam and Ehsaas Women of Chennai Deepika Goyal. Preceded by a formal Welcome note by Akshaya Suresh and felicitation of the guests with handloom scarves, the event followed speeches by the revered guests.

During the conversation when Janani Sampath asked how the author had decided to write on this unprecedented narrative, he remarked, "favourably enough that I have probably succeeded in this very first attempt because as I mentioned it was very different from the previous works devotion, the sense of pathos but also a sense of being

neutral somewhere because you can't get carried away by your devotion, your angst, the anger you feel when you read all those accounts of brutal disruptions desecrations and so on any sensitive person would feel a sense of angst but a historian is called upon to be a moral where he or she has to cut off that emotional connect and also to make it a kind of an objective account and to piece together also the legal issues, even as an English writer when I see documents legal documents I wonder do I even know English because the manner in which the law is presented to make sense of that is mind boggling. Vishnu Shankar Jain provided 2,000 pages of documents for me to refer to and also refer to Puranic vedic texts. You cannot be carried away from your own devotion or sensitivity since any person would feel the anger of the brutal demolition and desecrations."

The conversation embarked on a journey of series of discussions starting about the importance for historians and researchers to not use Sanskrit translations made by westerners, particularly made by their biases or their incomplete knowledge of the language. "I was fortunate enough to have mentors who shared my mania in this and shared reams of Sanskrit, Puranas, Shiv-Puranas, Linga Puranas, Padma Puranas, Skanda Purana, Vayu Purana with me, which helped me document this book." remarked the author.

"British chronicles mentioned that for a city as holy as Kashi, as Mark Twain mentioned 'twice as old as legends, history or traditions', the documentation, especially around Puranic literature may not do complete justice to it. We get a lot of references through the Buddhist texts, Jatarka tales etc. Kashi was not only the panthas for all the Sanathan dharma. It is said that initially it was a seat of Vishnu and Vishnu was the first to give away Shiva. After Shiva married Parvathy, the mother-in-law panicked because Shiva was very normal looking and living. They come and see from top what a



Janani Sampath and Aditya Reddy and Vikram Sampath

beautiful place it actually is. The place is called Anandavana, forest of bliss. There are no amenities between a cat and dog; snake and mongoose. The public put their feet together and travel over a circumference of pancha kosha, the circumference of the sacred spot with which they come and establish themselves and Shiva then comes as a Swayambhu Jyotirlinga there as Vishweshwara. You also have the Vaishnava, Shaiva and Shakta traditions. Manikarnika is one of the Shakti Peethas where the earring fell.”

Along with all this, there are also the Jain and Bhuddha taking route there. “Of the Jain Tirthankaras, Parshwanatha was born there and Buddha gave his first sermon in Varanasi. That was where the five disciples were made. From there emissaries went all over especially during the Mauryan era. The holiness of the past, going back to the Vedic times, the Puranic times is quite something but I think the documentation around it is very patchy and that is one way I think we Hindus documented our past too. Like in the Brihad Bhagavatamrita- Dharmarth-Kama-Mokshanam, Upadesh-Samanvitam, Poorvavrat-katha, Yuktam- itihasam-prachakshate. The narratives of the past were told in a story format, to attain moksha and to be some erratic element, that is called itihasa meaning “it thus happened”, explained Sampath.

The event followed a Q&A session with the audience. Closing remarks were given by Karamchandra Bose. Attendees were treated to an engaging program that included readings from the book, discussions on its themes and characters, and an interactive session with the author himself. Sampath’s insights into his representation and the inspiration behind his reinterpretations of historical narratives captivated the audience, sparking thoughtful discussions and enthusiastic responses.

“British chronicles mentioned that for a city as holy as Kashi, as Mark Twain mentioned ‘twice as old as legends, history or traditions’, the documentation, especially around Puranic literature may not do complete justice to it. We get a lot of references through the Buddhist texts, Jatarka tales etc. Kashi was not only the panthas for all the Sanathan dharma. It is said that initially it was a seat of Vishnu and Vishnu was the first to give away Shiva. After Shiva married Parvathy, the mother-in-law panicked because Shiva was very normal looking and living. They come and see from top what a beautiful place it actually is. The place is called Anandavana, forest of bliss. There are no amenities between a cat and dog; snake and

mongoose. The public put their feet together and travel over a circumference of pancha kosha, the circumference of the sacred spot with which they come and establish themselves and Shiva then comes as a Swayambhu Jyotirlinga there as Vishweshwara. You also have the Vaishnava, Shaiva and Shakta traditions. Manikarnika is one of the Shakti Peethas where the earring fell.”

Along with all this, there are also the Jain and Bhuddha taking route there. “Of the Jain Tirthankaras, Parshwanatha was born there and Buddha gave his first sermon in Varanasi. That was where the five disciples were made. From there emissaries went all over especially during the Mauryan era. The holiness of the past, going back to the Vedic times, the Puranic times is quite something but I think the documentation around it is very patchy and that is one way I think we Hindus documented our past too. Like in the Brihad Bhagavatamrita- Dharmarth-Kama-Mokshanam, Upadesh-Samanvitam, Poorvavrat-katha, Yuktam- itihasam-prachakshate. The narratives of the past were told in a story format, to attain moksha and to be some erratic element, that is called itihasa meaning “it thus happened”, explained Sampath.

The event followed a Q&A session with the audience. Closing remarks were given by Karamchandra Bose. Attendees were treated to an engaging program that included readings from the book, discussions on its themes and characters, and an interactive session with the author himself. Sampath’s insights into his representation and the inspiration behind his reinterpretations of historical narratives captivated the audience, sparking thoughtful discussions and enthusiastic responses.

*Kitaab Guwahati was organized with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative and in association with Vigil*

## Tandava triumphs at the world's biggest arts festival



**A** Primal rhythmic energy and the impossible union of opposites. The coalescence of a Scottish classical guitarist's startlingly passionate sound worlds with the infinitely expressive physicality of three dancers from Bangalore's Piah Dance Company. Musical alchemy and breathtaking choreography, the invisible and visible. An unforgettable journey of sound as emotion and the vibrant essence of Indian dance. This is the inspiration behind Tandava, a music and dance production which the Prabha Khaitan Foundation supported for its world premiere at the world's biggest arts festival, the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, in August 2023.

Tandava began its journey through a conversation between Piah Dance Company founder Priya Varunesh Kumar and me, Edinburgh based composer and classical guitarist Simon Thacker. Tandava is of course the cosmic dance of Shiva, the source of the cycle of creation, preservation and dissolution, uniting seemingly irreconcilable differences. Such a powerful concept immediately fired a period of intense creativity. Freshly composed sections of new pieces were Whatsapped from Scotland to India immediately as soon as they came into being, so that Piah Dance Company could choreograph and rehearse in parallel.

Simultaneously, an application was submitted for the Made In Scotland showcase, which is administered and funded by the Scottish Government's arts body. This is a prestigious curated showcase designed to represent the very best of Scottish arts and artists, sometimes in international collaboration, at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. It is especially designed to attract promoters from around the world, with the intention that they will book this new work for festivals in their countries. This provides vital promotion, kudos and, crucially, a grant award. To our delight, we were chosen. This was my fifth time to be part of Made in Scotland, which I believe is a record. However, given the

substantial extra costs of bringing three dancers from India, as well as food and accommodation at the absolute peak of the tourist season, Made In Scotland's award would need to be augmented from another source, if all the hard work up to this point wasn't to be in vain. This is when the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** stepped in with their crucial support.

The premiere was a resounding success, with a capacity audience and a five star review, the first of five great reviews we received. Edinburgh during the Festival is the most demanding and competitive creative arts market in the world. The chaos, saturation of shows, audience numbers and media presence has to be experienced to be believed. We achieved a very demanding break-even ticket sale target, getting a rapturous reaction after all ten shows. My emotionally charged music, with Indian influences refracted in a cornucopia of new ways, in partnership with Piah Dance Company's rich vocabulary, drawn from their Bharatanatyam training and a deep love of Gujarati and Rajasthani folk forms, proved revelatory. The final triumph was being asked to perform and talk live on BBC News, the most coveted publicity in the entire festival. This was broadcast around the world.



## Empowering Women: The Intersection of Literature, Economics, and Freedom



Chandni Chopra



Shrayana Bhattacharya

A very interesting conversation was brought forth because the topic involved Shahrukh Khan at **The Write Circle** Agra, when economist and author Shrayana Bhattacharya used the name as a metaphor to emphasise Indian women's economic positioning and their freedom in today's world. This was the underlying highlight of her book, *Desperately seeking Shah Rukh: India's lonely young women and the search for intimacy and independence*. Chandni Chopra, **Ehsaas Woman** of Agra moderated an intellectual conversation with the author. Viniti Khaturia, **Ehsaas Woman** of Agra gave the Welcome note on behalf of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**.

When Chandini Chopra initiated the conversation with an obvious question about the book, she said, "The title itself is unmissable. No one can browse past a book-store if you ever come across the title: *Desperately seeking for Shah Rukh*. When I did my research on the book, there was so much more than the title, it is such a layered book." said

In reply Bhattacharya said, "The book is based on 15 years of research and in economics and sociology, we call this a longitudinal study and research when you follow a person or a household or a family for a long period of time and ask facts, follow them, go back to them everytime about their jobs, welfare and circumstances."

She continued, "I decided to go and ask 10 women for 15 years with the question of if they watched their favourite actor's films. I just chose Shahrukh Khan because he just happened to be a shared interest, but it could have really been anything. When I happened to do research at SEVA once, many low income earning women looked very bored when I asked them the typical questions of their family, finances etc. So I realised the traditional way did not work. So I chose



Viniti Kathuria

the topic of movies and especially Shahrukh Khan. The energy just shifted at a higher level and more energised"

The author mentioned that it was challenging to record and write all the said experiences because it had to be done periodically, it had to go through a lot of review process. "Interesting thing about the process was that after the research when I went back for the ethical process after a long time, suddenly everyone's lives became much more changed and the financial and family trajectory would have changed."

"Shahrukh is just a metaphor to talk about the pertinent issues such as, women employment rates and opportunities. After periodical research of 5 years, I realised that women now raise their daughters and sons differently because they are more aware and know intellectually about things now." reflected the author. Themes of why financial independence is important and how women across the spectrum share the same struggle was articulated during the course of the conversation.

Bhattacharya underlined the importance of freedom and dignity for women a lot. She said, "Professor Abhijit Banerjee has endorsed the book and during the book release, I remember had to be unapologetically honest in endorsing the book as a serious economics book because initially people thought it to be some erotic time fiction or a celebrity book just as it is written by a woman and has Shahrukh in it." She made sure the book was accessible to all and highlighted women's personal lives with a simple story or a simple language.

The audience actively participated in the conversation, asking thought-provoking questions about Bhattacharya's research process, inspirations, and the challenges of talking to people from low income backgrounds. Viniti Kathuria delivered the closing remarks in the concluding part of the event and the author was felicitated by Rajeev Saxena, President of Tourism Guild, Agra.

*The Write Circle Agra was organised support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative in association with Hindi print media partner Dainik Jagran and was facilitated by Ehsaas Woman of Agra*

## A Lawyer turned Actor turned an Author Wit with Smiti Jayakar



Kirti Kirdatt



Smita Jayakar

The Write Circle saw a delightful session in Raipur with glamorous and intellectual actor and author Smita Jayakar. Talking about her recent literary work, *IF you can just BE*, and how it encapsulates the core of human emotions and experiences that resonate with each of us throughout our lives. It's about the journey of the very same actor's spiritual exploration that has lasted nearly three decades and what she has learned and experienced. She was in conversation with Kirti Kirdatt, **Ehsaas Woman** of Raipur who navigated a beautiful conversation with the actor author.

The event commenced with a warm welcome note by Aanchal Garcha, **Ehsaas Woman** of Raipur.

Smita Jayakar started her journey in the films and television and hence the inquisitive conversationalist Kirdatt was prompt in asking the question as to how the author got into movies in the first phase of her career. "It was absolutely coincidental that I got into the film industry. I got married early and when kids started going to school, there was suddenly a huge vacuum in my life. I randomly took my application to be a news announcer or a news reader for Doordarshan. There was a gentleman who was looking for a lawyer compere and I am a lawyer, so I fit in perfectly for that role."



Aanchal Garcha



Srishti Trivedi

The conversation shifted to the author Jayakar and her adept exploration of these emotions through her writing. She skillfully delved into these feelings, offering a refreshing perspective on navigating life's challenges. She emphasised, "the book's collection of short stories provides readers with inspiration and simple solutions for daily complexities."

Jayakar mentioned in the talk that accepting and knowing oneself is a very vital part of being. She added, "Accept yourself, if you think you are jealous or an angry person, accept that about yourself. Initiate self integrity first by talking to yourself and connecting with your inner journey. Life is like a bird, your inner and outer world must synchronise, only then can you fly. Why be a reptile and slither when you can be a bird and fly?"



Snigdha Dixit

During the discussion with Kirti Kiradatt, Jayakar explored the spiritual influence on different facets of her life, expressing, "Chakras are akin to flowers; they demand attention and mindfulness to flourish." She underscored the concept of youthful vitality that surpasses age, emphasising the importance of confronting life's trials with resilience and persistently forging new opportunities.

The interesting conversation ensued into an interactive and receptive Q&A with the audience, who resonated with her words. The Vote of thanks was delivered by Shristi Trivedi, **Ehsaas Woman** of Raipur. The felicitation of the author was done by Snigdha Dixit.

*The Write Circle Raipur was organized with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative and in association with hospitality partner, Hyatt Raipur. The session was facilitated by Ehsaas Women of Raipur*

## An Interview with Author Utpal Kumar: Exploring India's Evolving Landscape



Neerja Gupta



Utpal Kumar

An enlightening session of **The Write Circle** organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** at Ahmedabad was dedicated to promoting literature and fostering a culture of reading among people. It was a pleasure of hosting Utpal Kumar, the distinguished author, as the evening delved into the profound themes of his work and life. Opening address was delivered by Priyanshi Patel, **Ehsaas Woman** of Ahmedabad, welcoming the author, moderator Neerja Gupta and the audience.

“The first thing that caught my eye in the book was *Democracy*”, commenced Gupta into asking why the author picked up the word “Bharat” in the book, to which he replied, “Bharat is close to my heart because Bharat name is given by us, Indians. All the others are given by outsiders, so we must be proud. More importantly, it comes from two Sanskrit words ‘Bha’ and ‘rath’ which comes from two Sanskrit words which means, beholder of light and wisdom.”

The discussion then transitioned to the core themes of Kumar’s book: “Dharma, Democracy, and Diplomacy.” Kumar detailed his perspective on Dharma, emphasising its paramount importance in life and particularly highlighting Hindu Dharma’s prominence in an Indian context. He mentioned, “the book was launched a day before the Ram Mandir Pran Pratistha as well. It has something to do with Maa Saraswati and first chapter also speaks about Ayodhya, Kashi and Somnath”

Kumar then provided an in-depth discussion of Democracy and Diplomacy, elucidating the concept of India predominantly already a democratic country. Kumar touched on the cultural and historical relevance of Indian cities such as Ayodhya and Kashi. He recounted a moving story about a family from Tamil Nadu, whose “grandmother was moved to tears during the inauguration ceremony at the Ayodhya Temple. This illustrates the deep emotional and historical connections many Indians have with these places. While we have the Dravidian concept of people worshipping Ravana over Ram. This concept is so overhyped and so wrong.”



Priyanshi Patel



Shaneel Parekh

Another point Kumar emphasised on was “People of my generation were raised viewing India—always inherently Bharat—through a Western lens. This perspective came equipped with filters that not only detached and distanced us but also led us to disdain our own civilizational wisdom. This Western lens was crucial for the success of the Macaulay education system. Regrettably, we persisted with this skewed viewpoint for seventy years after gaining independence, to our great misfortune.” explained the author.

Neerja concluded that his book would resonate with readers worldwide, offering a compelling narrative on India’s evolution and global significance, opening the floor for Q&A with the audience. The talk provided valuable insights into the themes explored in “Bharat Rising” shedding light on India’s transformative journey and was followed by a formal delivery of Vote of Thanks by Shaneel Parekh, **Ehsaas Woman** of Ahmedabad and felicitation of the guests was done by Vikas Buddi and Tulika Saha with traditional Jaipur puppets.

*The Write Circle Ahmedabad was organized with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative and in association with Karma Foundation and hospitality partner, The House of MG. The session was facilitated by Ehsaas Women of Ahmedabad*



Priya Sahgal

## An Interview with Author Utpal Kumar: Exploring India's Evolving Landscape



Sevantika Bhandari

An evening of **The Write Circle** was hosted by Prabha Khaitan Foundation at Jodhpur with an eminent journalist and author Priya Sahgal. Her forte is explanatory journalism rather than the breaking new genre. She was in an intriguing discourse with Sevantika Bhandari, who brought forth prompt insightful questions and encouraged active participation that created an environment conducive to a meaningful exchange.

The event started with Shelja Singh, **Ehsaas Woman** of Jodhpur welcoming everyone for the evening.

For someone who has been in journalism for almost 3 decades, the author initiated the talk mentioning that journalism has changed a lot. "Earlier when I started, I was covering crime because that's what they give to the newcomers. It is organically from crime, I shifted to politics because of the Jain Hawala case (Hawala scandal). The main stream of news were newspapers, television back in 1996 when there was limited access to information. Today, we are no longer the drivers. Social media are rulers." explained the author about the change of source of news and how it is a good and a bad thing. "Good thing because there is awareness and information, bad thing because the editorial filter is not there" said Sahgal.

Bhandari accentuated the challenges a woman faces in the field of journalism in the early '90s in a male dominated country. To which the journalist replied, "I was one of the few journalists who wore jeans to the Parliament. One male MP told me that I hadn't worn a dupatta, to which I replied "How dare you tell me that". Having said that, serious talks are considered in a very serious dress code like salwar kameez with dupatta. But now, things have changed and the mindset is very open."

Sahgal had a small stint in the House of Lords. "I was in one of the press interviews and the PM took a question from the opposition. One of the times, the media bullied him, which I thought wouldn't happen in India." The journalist

author followed 15 contenders of the Prime Minister, she mentioned Rahul Gandhi and Sachin Pilot. When I first brought out the book, I first tried to balance the Congress and the BJP, but now most of the Congress ones have gone to the BJP like Syndia, Milan Dohra, Sachin Pilot, Yogi Adityanath, Hemanta Biswa Sarma, Akhilesh Yadav or Priyanka Gandhi."

Sahgal offered profound insights into the intricacies of Indian politics and painted a vivid picture of its ever-changing dynamics. Through a combination of insightful analysis and captivating storytelling, Sahgal took her audience on a journey through the corridors of power, illuminating the complexities and subtleties that shape Indian politics.

As the session concluded, attendees left with enriched minds and expanded perspectives, inspired by the wisdom and passion of a distinguished journalistic figure. The Thank you address was delivered by Shelja Singh and the guests were felicitated by Meera Singh and Padmaja Sharma. The conversation encapsulated Sahgal's reflections on the changing landscape of journalism and its impact on ever-changing society and political decisions.



Sushma N Sethia



Shelja Singh

*The Write Circle Jodhpur was organized with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative and in association with hospitality partner, Taj Hari Mahal. The session was facilitated by Ehsaas Women of Jodhpur*

## Journalistic Journey: Priya Sahgal on Indian Politics



Priya Sahgal



Monica Bhagwagar

**T**he Write Circle was hosted by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** at Nagpur with journalist and author Priya Sahgal. She is the Editorial Director at a leading media house and a political columnist for a daily. Her forte is explanatory journalism rather than the breaking new genre. She is the author of the book: *The Contenders*. She was in conversation with Monica Bhagwagar, **Ehsaas Woman** of Nagpur, who skillfully navigated an interactive conversation with the author. The event started with Jyoti Kapoor, **Ehsaas Woman** of Nagpur who delivered a welcome note on behalf of the Foundation.

From being a crime reporter to a dramatic shift into journalism, Sahgal has come a long way. “It is very ironic because I started covering crime in Sunday magazine with Vir Sanghvi as the Editor. Jain Hawala happened and from crime it became a progression because there was a crime angle in politics. My first political contact was Kamal Nath who I had to go and interview him, because the political reporter did not know the criminal part. The criminal reporter had to go. We got talking and the politicians are very smart because they start questioning you.” mentioned the author.

“I always wanted to do explanatory news and not breaking news. I want to tell stories and explain situations rather than just telling what happens and when. Eventually, people know all those things. For example, if a Bill is passed, everyone knows the Bill is passed, but who has told what and how will the Bill benefit, those are better areas to work on.” mentioned Sahgal.

“Rahul Gandhi hates meeting the media, unlike Modi, who loves the media and remembers everything about every single media person. Once when I met with Akhilesh Yadav, I had travelled through the expressway. He asked if



Jyoti Kapoor



Parveen Tuli

I had seen the toll gate and if I noticed how it was shaped. He explained that it was shaped in A and Y for Akhilesh Yadav. If he doesn't become the next CM, there is always Adityanath Yogi.” shared the author.

The platform was then open to attendees of the intimate gathering to engage in a Q&A session where Sahgal shared some inscoops on Indian politics, how she dealt with powerful people, and also about her upcoming projects. A formal delivery of Vote of Thanks was by Parveen Tuli, **Ehsaas Woman** of Nagpur. The felicitation was done by Darshana Pun, Team Leader, Hotel Radisson Blu.

*The Write Circle Nagpur was organized with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative and in association with hospitality partner, Radisson Blu and print media partner, Lokmat. The session was facilitated by Ehsaas Women of Nagpur*

## Exploring New Perspectives on Ancient Epics with Anand Neelakanthan



Roopa Mohandas



Anand Neelakanthan

In a recent **The Write Circle** organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, it was a privilege to host Anand Neelakanthan in Coimbatore. He is a novelist, columnist, screenwriter, and public speaker. He is known for writing mythological fiction and has authored 14 books in English and one in Malayalam. He was in conversation with Roopa Mohandas, **Ehsaas Woman** of Coimbatore for the event.

Mohandas' insightful questions allowed Neelakanthan to delve deeply into his creative process and the motivations behind his reinterpretations of these ancient stories. Neelakanthan discussed his fascination with the lesser-known characters and the gray areas within these epics. He explained, "I wanted to give a voice to those characters who are often sidelined or portrayed as villains without understanding their motivations." His novels often present a contrasting viewpoint, challenging the traditional narratives that many are familiar with.

One of the highlights of the talk was Neelakanthan's personal stories about his journey as a writer. He shared how his childhood in a small village, surrounded by storytellers and the rich oral traditions of Indian mythology, influenced his passion for retelling these epic tales. "Growing up, I was always surrounded by stories of gods and demons, heroes and villains. But I always wondered about the other side of the story, and my house and those times were such that I was free to question anything and everything under the sun," he recounted.

Neelakanthan also discussed the challenges he faced while writing from different perspectives. He mentioned the extensive research and the careful consideration needed to stay true to the essence of the characters while providing a fresh take. "It's a delicate balance between respecting the original text and bringing something new to the table," he noted.



Poonam Bafna

Neelakanthan argued that the themes of love, duty, honour, and conflict in these epics resonate with contemporary audiences. He cited examples of how the struggles and dilemmas faced by the characters in these epics mirror modern life's challenges. "Arjuna's doubts on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, Rama's exile, Sita's trials – these are experiences that many of us can relate to in our own lives. They teach us about resilience, sacrifice, and the complexities of human relationships," he noted.

Overall, the talk highlighted Anand Neelakanthan's innovative approach to storytelling and his dedication to exploring the depths of Indian mythology. His work encourages readers to look beyond the surface and consider the multifaceted nature of these timeless epics. Mohandas' skillful talk brought out the essence of Neelakanthan's passion and insights, making for an engaging and enlightening conversation.

The audience actively participated in the conversation, asked thought-provoking questions about Neelakanthan's writing process, inspirations, and the challenges of writing ancient tales. Erine Louis, GM, WelcomITC Hotel Coimbatore delivered the concluding note while Shobhana Kumar felicitated the author.

*The Write Circle Coimbatore was organized with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative and in association with hospitality partner, Welcom Hotel by ITC. The session was facilitated by Ehsaas Women of Coimbatore*



Ritika Talwar Singh

## Understanding Women's Economic Potential with a personal touch- with Sharanya Bhattacharya



Sharanya Bhattacharya

An engaging talk session **The Write Circle** was organised by Prabha Khaitan Foundation featuring Sharanya Bhattacharya, a renowned economist and author, who discussed her latest book, “Desperately Seeking Shah Rukh: India’s Lonely Young Women and the Search for Intimacy and Independence”. Bhattacharya explained her choice of Shah Rukh Khan as a symbol in her book. She emphasised that Khan’s widespread popularity provides a relatable entry point to discuss serious issues like financial independence and gender inequality.

Opening remarks were delivered by Ruhi Walia Syal, **Ehsaas Woman** of Jalandar. The event was moderated by Ritika Talwar Singh, **Ehsaas Woman** of Patiala and attracted a diverse audience of academics, students, and literary enthusiasts.

“The book is about a research where you follow people in time. It is called longitudinal research where you visit them once or twice a year and I did it for 15 years. I like breaking rules because there has been a very traditional way to write economics but my book is unlike my counterparts. Economists are perceived in a certain way but I looked in a way to be more playful. One of the ways was to take an approach like I took.” stated Bhattacharya.

“In social science, they always teach you that you use ice breakers, just to ease conversation and I started asking everyone who’s your favorite actor and surprisingly in this neighbourhood all these women loved Mr. Shahrukh Khan. I love Mr Shah Khan and I realised, isn’t it more interesting to talk to people about things that give them pleasure than talk to people about things that really upset them?” mentioned the economist.

The author went on to talk about how women she interviewed slowly opened up to her about their personal experiences. “In the end, it was never really about the silly celebrity crush. It was about their own experiences to



Ruhi Walia Syal

watching his movie, maybe, why men disappoint them, how they find how difficult it is for women across the board to find free time, money, mobile phones access, just time to breathe and the permission to have fun. It became this very beautiful way to bring the two things, that I wanted to do together- writing the notes and bring the economic factor,

ie. the purchasing power of women, on how they purchase the tickets, because through that you can measure their economic power.”

“While I was writing the book, I knew it would be perceived as an erotic, fandom book written by a girl. I call it ‘The chronic chickletification’ of women’s narratives”, immediately thinking that since it was written by a woman, and that it might not be serious. It took a while to reach the massive audience.” explained the author about the book.

The event was followed by a very interesting Q&A with women sharing their personal experiences of freedom of their economic powers. Bhattacharya shared some stories of girls in rural areas passionate about studying and she said how all the stories humbled her. The formal Vote of Thanks was delivered by Karmnaresh Singh and the felicitation was done by Vandana Talwar.

*The Write Circle Patiala was organized with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative and in association with hospitality partner, Door No 3. The session was facilitated by Ehsaas Women of Patiala*



smita Jaykar

Vaishali Joshi

## Tapping the Actor's Side of Spirituality with Smita Jayakar

**T**he Write Circle Goa was organised by Prabha Khaitan Foundation with the renowned glamorous and intellect actor and author Smita Jayakar. Talking about her literary work, *IF you can just BE and Before Tomorrow*, the books encapsulate the core of human emotions and experiences that resonate with each of us throughout our lives. It's about the journey of the very same actor's spiritual exploration that has lasted nearly three decades and what she has learned and experienced. She was in conversation with Vaishali Joshi, **Ehsaas Woman** of Goa who navigated a beautiful conversation with the author. She skillfully moderated the session, ensuring a smooth flow of discussion and encouraging audience participation. Her thoughtful questions helped draw out detailed responses from Jayakar, providing deeper insights into the themes of the book. Gauripriya Pai Kane, **Ehsaas Woman** of Goa delivered the formal Welcome Note.

"Things just fell into my lap and I think it is very karmic. There was a time when my children remained out for a long time, they would go to school. Suddenly there was a vacuum in my life I didn't know. That time only Doordarshan was there so I would watch that and suddenly it struck me and I thought let me become an announcer or a news reader or something on those lines. I took my application to the director and the television center was close to my house. Unfortunately the director was out of town but I met this gentleman who did some very boring programs back then. He led me to become a lawyer anchor."

"I would credit the glamorous mother era to Reena Lagoo, I just continued that. All top actors like Amitabh Bachan, Shahrukh, Aishwarya Rai are just human beings at the end of the day. They have been very humble. By acting like you are a big star, you would make your co-star nervous and then the shot would not come out well." explained the actor author, on her co-stars.



Gauripriya Atul Pai Kane



Shruti Juwarkar

"I am not telling you to lose it all. Being rich is fine and you are supposed to have that and enjoy all of that. Spirituality doesn't mean to become a beggar or become sad and not smile. Having said that, if you haven't touched base with yourself, if your soul is not nurtured it doesn't mean anything because at the end, we only take our souls with us. Apne aap se mulaqat karna bohot zaroori hai." said the author to enjoy every aspect of life.

"Everything changes according to your breath, that is what spirituality is about. Any spiritual organisation the first they teach is breath watch because your breath changes every time according to your mood. If somebody's lying to me, I would still be able to sense that because the breath becomes very heavy." mentioned the author

The event was followed by an interactive and receptive Q&A with the audience, who resonated with her words. She mentioned how it is high time to take control of your body and acknowledge the same. Everyone has a divine power inside us and we must be able to talk to the divine power. Shruti Juwarkar, **Ehsaas Woman** of Goa delivered the Vote of Thanks. Ranjit Phillipose felicitated the author.

*The Write Circle Goa was organized with the support of Shree Cement Ltd as their CSR initiative and in association with hospitality partner, Cidade de Goa and print media partner, Lokmat. The session was facilitated by Ehsaas Women of Goa*



## Empowering Women: Prabha Khaitan Foundation's Women's Group Meeting

In a proactive initiative led by the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, empowered women gathered to discuss crucial social issues under the guidance of Mamta Sharma, Chairperson of the National Commission for Women. This impactful meeting convened a diverse group of women, including influential figures like Anita Tharyamal, Nidhi Gupta, and Sangeeta Juneja, among others.

The discussion, chaired by Mamta Sharma, delved into pressing topics such as sexual abuse, female foeticide, vocational training, film censorship, and societal awareness. Mamta Sharma passionately advocated for grassroots actions to combat these challenges, emphasizing the need for societal change and judicial reform. She shared poignant examples from her experiences, urging attendees to push beyond comfort zones and engage actively at the grassroots level.

Nidhi Gupta, representing the Foundation, highlighted gaps in support systems and called for stronger measures to protect women's rights. Discussions were particularly poignant on the prevalence of sexual abuse within homes and communities, underscoring the urgent need for sensitization and support mechanisms for victims. The meeting saw concrete proposals for educational campaigns, vocational training initiatives, and advocacy efforts to address these issues comprehensively.

The event also addressed systemic challenges in the judicial system, where delays in justice and inadequate support for victims were identified as significant hurdles. Mamta Sharma stressed the importance of time-bound judicial decisions and heightened sensitivity among law enforcement agencies to ensure justice for survivors.

The gathering concluded with a unified commitment to drive meaningful change, echoing Mamta Sharma's call for concerted efforts at all levels of society. Participants pledged to continue the dialogue, advocate for policy reforms, and support grassroots initiatives that empower women and safeguard their rights.

This gathering exemplified the Foundation's dedication to women's empowerment and advocacy, paving the way for continued dialogue and action on crucial women-centric issues in India. As we reflect on this impactful event initiated by the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, we honor the spirit of collaboration and advocacy that continues to drive positive change for women across India.





## Breaking Free on No Tobacco Day: A Healthier Tomorrow Starts Today



**O**n No Tobacco Day 2024, the Prabha Khaitan Foundation reiterates its commitment to fostering healthier communities by addressing the pervasive challenges of tobacco consumption. Tobacco, in its many forms, continues to be a leading cause of preventable diseases and deaths worldwide, exacting a heavy toll on individuals, families, and healthcare systems.

Globally, over 8 million lives are lost each year due to tobacco-related illnesses, including heart disease,

cancer, and respiratory conditions. What's more, the environmental impact of tobacco is rarely discussed. Cigarette butts, the most commonly littered item worldwide, release toxic chemicals into our soil and water, compounding the harm caused by the industry.

Tobacco also disproportionately affects vulnerable populations. For many, its affordability and accessibility, coupled with aggressive marketing tactics, create a cycle of addiction that is difficult to

break. This cycle is further fueled by myths and misinformation about alternatives like e-cigarettes, which are often marketed as "healthier" options despite their own set of risks.

The Prabha Khaitan Foundation envisions a world free from tobacco's grip and advocates for impactful, multi-dimensional action. We call for strengthening regulations on tobacco advertising, packaging, and sales, including a complete ban on promotions targeting youth. Public health campaigns must highlight the dangers of all forms of tobacco consumption, empowering individuals with facts to inspire informed choices. Community-led interventions, especially in rural areas, can provide cessation programs and

**Tobacco is the enemy of progress. It should not have a place in our lives.**

— Margaret Chan

alternatives to tobacco farming, benefiting both human health and local economies. Beyond human health, tobacco control should prioritize environmental health by addressing waste management and promoting sustainable practices.

No Tobacco Day is a reminder that change is possible when we act collectively. Together, we can create a ripple effect, one that reduces dependency on tobacco and fosters a culture where health, well-being, and sustainability take precedence over harmful habits.

*"The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step,"* said Lao Tzu. Let today be that step toward a healthier, tobacco-free tomorrow—where every breath is a testament to life, not loss.



ARTWORK BY **SUDIPTA KUNDU**



## Traditional Meets Modern: A Musical Ode to the Himalayas

In an evocative blend of tradition and innovation, the Prabha Khaitan Foundation proudly presents its latest Music of the Month. This mesmerizing composition intertwines the timeless melodies of the santoor and bansuri with the pulsating energy of electronica, creating a soundscape that echoes the majestic beauty and delicate fragility of the Himalayas.

Drawing inspiration from the serene yet formidable presence of these ancient mountains, the piece captures their essence—resilient, awe-inspiring, and profoundly vulnerable to the tides of time. Each note is a tribute to the Himalayas' enduring splendor and a call to preserve their ecological and cultural significance for generations to come.

Through this harmonious convergence of the traditional and the modern, the Foundation celebrates the transcendent power of music to convey emotions and stories that words often cannot, inviting listeners to embark on a journey through the soul of the Himalayas.

