



Q3 | 2024-25

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Prabha प्रभा

The Prabha Khaitan Foundation Chronicle

LIGHTS. LAUGHTER. TOGETHER.

A festive afternoon of warmth, camaraderie, and shared joy.
Where conversations, laughter, and light came together beautifully.

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MANISHA JAIN
Honorary COO,
Prabha Khaitan Foundation

Celebrating Culture in All Its Living Forms

This edition of Prabha is a celebration of living culture—one that is experienced, shared and constantly evolving. From the warmth of our get togethers, where conversations and camaraderie take centre stage, to soul-stirring musical evenings featuring Subha Mudgal and Ricky Kej, these moments remind us of the power of coming together through art.

The pages that follow also chronicle a vibrant literary journey—marked by insightful book launches and author conversations. These dialogues travelled far and wide, reaching audiences across the North East and overseas, reinforcing the idea that stories know no boundaries.

Equally close to our hearts are the initiatives with children—where curiosity is nurtured, creativity is encouraged and the seeds of lifelong learning are gently sown.

This issue has been thoughtfully brought to life by the dedication and vision of our editors, Ehsaas women, Viketuno Rio and Dimple Trivedi, whose commitment has shaped these experiences into a cohesive narrative. We invite you to turn these pages slowly, and relive the many voices, melodies and moments that made this journey meaningful.



DIMPLE TRIVEDI
Ehsaas Woman of Lucknow

प्रभा पत्रिका का अतिथि संपादक होने का सौभाग्य प्राप्त हुआ। ये एक पत्रिका नहीं, वरन साहित्य जगत की एक सजीव चित्रावली है। हिंदुस्तान ही नहीं। विश्व के 55 देशों से समाचार, आलेख, साक्षात्कार, पुस्तक विमोचन इस पत्रिका में संकलित होते हैं। विश्व की प्रमुख समस्याएं, और उनसे जूझते NGOs को भी प्रकाशित किया जाता। सामाजिक, प्राकृतिक, भौगोलिक, ऐतिहासिक सभी विषयों पर गंभीरता से विचार करती हैं हमारी प्रभा।

प्रभा एक सेतु हैं! पाठकों और लेखकों को जोड़ता हुआ, जो निस्वार्थ अपना कार्य करता रहता है। पर्यावरण, के प्रति भी सजगता और संवेदना दर्शाती है। **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** की सादगी ही है कि यहां आए हर अतिथि को यह मंच **अपनो भव** ही लगता है।

यह पत्रिका **डॉ प्रभा खेतान** जी के जीवन का सारसंग्रह है। विषय राजनीतिक हो या धार्मिक, प्रवक्ता उन्मुक्त होकर वार्ता करते हैं और यही कारण है कि इसमें प्रकाशित शब्द शब्द पाठक की भावनाओं से जा मिलते हैं। हिंदी साहित्य को पहले पायदान पर लाने में **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** का बहुत बड़ा योगदान है। प्रांतीय भाषाओं पर कभी इतना काम नहीं हुआ जितना इन आयोजनों से किया जा रहा। हिंदी और प्रांतीय भाषाओं को विश्वपटल यूँ चिन्हित करना, अपने आप में एक बहुत बड़ा यज्ञ है।

हिंदी लेखकों को, जिन्हें कुछ बुद्धिजीवी ही पढ़ते और गुनते थे। आज युवाओं और साहित्य जगत में परचम लहरा रहे हैं। **प्रभा** पत्रिका और **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** का एक और बहुत बड़ा योगदान है कि उन्होंने स्त्री प्रधान संस्थाएं बनाईं। स्त्री की गुणवत्ता को सर्वोपरि रखा है। ये बात मुझे बहुत प्रभावित करती है।



VIKETUNO RIO
Ehsaas Woman of Dimapur

This edition of the magazine is shaped by a simple yet powerful idea: that even in an increasingly fragmented world, culture remains one of our most enduring connectors. The stories, conversations, and creative expressions gathered here explore how art, empathy, and thoughtful dialogue continue to ground us, both individually and collectively, through uncertain times.

Reflecting the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation's** expanding cultural footprint, this issue brings together moments where art, dialogue, and reflection converge. Over the years, the Foundation has nurtured spaces where creativity, conversation, and conscience meet, and this edition stands as a vibrant expression of that evolving legacy.

At the heart of this issue is the soul-stirring musical evening with three-time Grammy Award-winning composer Ricky Kej. More than a performance, the evening unfolded as a shared cultural experience, embodying the Foundation's commitment to presenting globally acclaimed artists while engaging meaningfully with themes that matter. Through music celebrating nature, sustainability, and global harmony, the event echoed PKF's belief in the power of art to inspire awareness and collective responsibility.

Also featured are reflections on curated conversations and intimate cultural gatherings hosted under the Ehsaas platform. Bringing together diplomats, artists, thinkers, and women from diverse backgrounds, these engagements foster dialogue that is inclusive, reflective, and deeply human. As captured in these pages, such spaces are central to the Foundation's vision of cultural exchange, where listening is as valued as speaking, and ideas are allowed to unfold with care.

Women's voices and leadership form a defining thread throughout this edition. Through narratives that highlight women-led initiatives and position women as conveners and cultural catalysts, the issue underscores the Foundation's continued commitment to amplifying women's perspectives. Ehsaas, in particular, emerges as a philosophy of engagement – one that balances intellectual curiosity with emotional depth, and celebration with reflection.

This issue also turns its attention to mindfulness and responsibility, towards our environment, our communities, and ourselves. Several features invite readers to reflect on sustainability, ethical living, and the quiet choices that shape everyday life. Rather than offering prescriptions, the emphasis remains on introspection and awareness as pathways to more conscious ways of being.

As you move through these pages, you will encounter not a single narrative, but a constellation of voices and experiences – each adding depth and dimension to the whole. Together, they reaffirm a shared belief: that art and culture are not luxuries, but necessities; that empathy grows through engagement; and that meaningful connection still has a vital place in our lives.

As you turn these pages, I invite you to read not just with your eyes, but with openness – with *ehsaas*.

A Joyous Afternoon of Togetherness

Prabha Khaitan Foundation hosted its annual Diwali Milan, bringing together associates, Ehsaas Women, dignitaries, and members of the diplomatic community for a warm and vibrant celebration. The gathering, held over a festive lunch, was marked by heartfelt conversations, laughter, and the spirit of unity that Diwali inspires. Guests enjoyed an afternoon filled with brightness, shared memories, and cultural warmth. The event served as a reminder of the strong bonds within the Foundation family and our continued commitment to fostering meaningful connections.





Sundeep Bhutoria, Amitabh Adhar, Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri, Hardeep Singh Puri and Shazia Ilmi



Ehsaas Women



Karuna Goenka, Neelima Dalmia Adhar and Shinjini Kulkarni



István Szabó, Erika Németh



Laxmi Narayan Tripathi



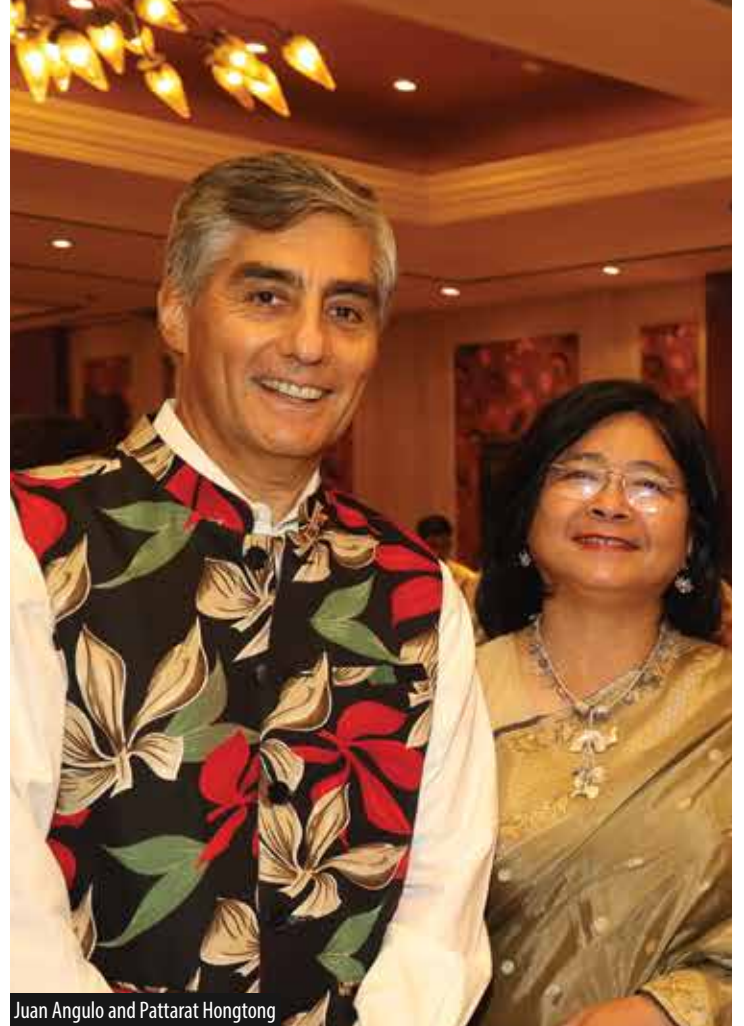
Malavika Joshi and Sachchidanand Joshi



Srinjoy Chowdhury



Kamna Vajpayee



Juan Angulo and Pattarat Hongtong



Neelam Pratap Rudy, Archana Dalmia and G Sodhi



Kartikya Vajpayee



Mani Shankar Aiyar



Meera Ali and Muzaffar Ali



Huma Khalil and Sanjeev Saraf



Aalok Shrivastava



Sanjeev Paliwal



Rachna Seth, Marks Deitons, family



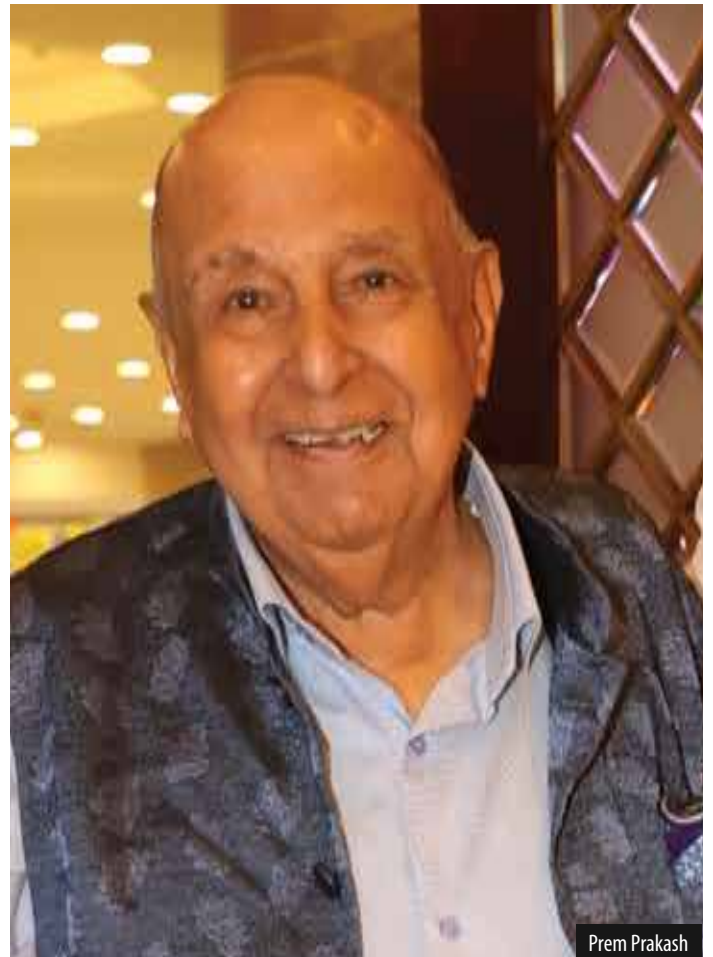
Nawab Naved Ali Khan Rampur, Jacqueline Mukangira, Omar Castañeda Solares, Erika Németh and István Szabó



Neelima Dalmia Adhar, Anant Vijay and Vandana vijay



HE Ms Marisa Gerards and Peter Knoope



Prem Prakash



Lopamudra Raut, Chandni Chopra, Rama Pandey



Sunit Tandon and Rama Pandey



Peter Knoope and Vetsop Namgyel

A Joyous Afternoon of Togetherness

Prabha Khaitan Foundation in collaboration with the Calcutta Presidency College Alumni Association, presented Sur aur Saaz, a cultural evening that left the audience spellbound. Renowned Odissi exponent and **Ehsaas Woman**, Dona Ganguly, took centre stage along with her troupe Diksha Manjari to perform Tasher Desh, Tagore's celebrated dance drama. Their graceful movements, expressive storytelling, and soulful synchrony created an unforgettable artistic experience. The event beautifully reflected the Foundation's commitment to promoting Indian arts and nurturing platforms for classical expression.



Book Launch of Dr Shashi Tharoor's 'A Wonderland of Words: Around the Word in 101 Essays' and Book Rack Launch



A unique book launch of Dr. Shashi Tharoor's latest literary addition- *A Wonderland of Words: Around the Word in 101 Essays* was organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. The Welcome note was delivered by Esha Dutta, Honorary Convenor of North-East Affairs. Introduction note was given by Indranil Ray, Cluster GM of Taj City Centre New Town. The book launch ceremony was joined by Dr. Shashi Tharoor, Anindita Chatterjee, Executive Trustee, Esha Dutta, Honorary Convenor of North-East Affairs, Honorary COO – Manisha Jain, Indranil Ray, Cluster General Manager of Taj City Centre New Town, Gouri Basu, Amrita Ray and Malika Verma, Ehsaas Women of Kolkata. Anindita Chatterjee felicitated the author and politician Dr. Shashi Tharoor with a Dokra metal handicraft.

from an essay - "I'm besotted with words, it's fair to say that I love them but even I could not have expressed my love for words, as a young job seeker called Robert Birosh did in 1934 when he headed to Hollywood looking for a new career as a screenwriter. Birosh was working in advertising in New York and had no connection with the American film industry but he collected the names and addresses of as many directors, producers and studio executives as he could find and he sent them a brilliant letter.

Dr. Tharoor read an extract from the 101 essays. This one was on a much familiar topic for all- Indianism. He read, "I have, not immodestly, considered myself the inventor of the word prepone. I came up with it in 1972, used it extensively in conversations, and employed it in an article in JS magazine soon after. Prepone, as a construction from postpone, seemed to me much simpler as a teenager than saying, "Could you move that appointment earlier?" or "I would like to advance that deadline?" or "Please bring it forward to an earlier date."

Over the years, I was gratified to see how extensively its use had spread in India, but I was wrong. In keeping with the long-standing wisdom that there is nothing new under the sun, I was informed by Katherine Henstridge of the Oxford English Dictionary, no less, that they had an example of the use of the word prepone from 1913 in a letter to the editor of the New York Times. It didn't catch on much in the West, but the proceedings of the 1952 Indian National Congress reveal that other Indians thought along the same lines as me: "In Indian villages, demand for power can be preponed or postponed not only by hours but even by days."

So clearly, the origin of prepone dates from 1913, and I humbly withdraw any claim to its origination. Mind you, I can still make a case, through frequent usage, for being somewhat involved in its popularization.



Esha Dutta, Gouri Basu and Malika Verma

The author embarked on a book-reading journey to take the audience for a ride into his book- '*A Wonderland of Words: Around the Word in 101 Essays*'. The session was followed by some reading sessions by the eminent author Dr. Tharoor and some exchange of conversations with the audience. This left the room of literary enthusiasts mesmerized.

He turned open a dog-eared page and commenced reading



Indranil Ray



Shashi Tharoor

Many words in Indian English, including *prepone*, have stood up to the only test that matters: the test of time and usage. If enough people find a word or phrase useful, it is, in my mind, legitimate. Indian English is a living, practical language used by millions every day for practical purposes. I'm not referring to expressions like *saga*, *namaste*, or *yogi* that have passed into the English language and are used exactly as they are in India. I'm referring to the usage of English words differently in India compared to the Anglophone West.

Many phrases we take for granted in ordinary conversation are actually quite unusual abroad. Calling elders Auntie or Uncle, for instance, or using the expression *adjust* to convey a willingness to compromise or accommodate, may seem strange elsewhere. That doesn't make them wrong or even quaint—it just makes them Indian.

Some Indian English phrases were created by our media and embedded into regular usage. For example, the phrase *history-sheeter* refers to a habitual criminal, with the police explaining that X was a history-sheeter, meaning he had a long criminal record. Some, like *prepone*, came from school and college campuses. *Mugging*, meaning cramming hard for an exam, is widely used by Indian students, but has entirely different connotations for Americans or Brits. To Americans, *mugging* refers to a criminal assault, as in 'she was the victim of a mugging' or an exaggerated facial expression, as in 'he was mugging for the camera.' But when an Indian student tells an American or Brit that he was mugging for an exam, it leads to confusion. Yet, *mugging* is a vivid word that conveys exactly what is intended for every user of Indian English." read the author from his humourously written essay.

Dr. Tharoor went on to mention that there are discussions

of punctuation, apostrophes, hyphens, lengthy introduction. The book is meant to be accessible and entertaining and in the process it can also inform and educate. The book contains various observations of spelling, various grammatical rules, everything from misprints and headlines to typos and how they work. "Words and their origins, idioms, something semi-political like the language of colonization, something borderline offensive like literary insults are included. There is a discussion, all are short light chapters and literary tools, *literation*, *anagrams*, *actograms*, *acronyms*, *backronyms*. All of these things that I discussed in an amusing way."

Book Rack Launch

Following an interesting and humorous reading session with Dr. Tharoor, the event proceeded for a Book Rack Launch in Taj New Town, Kolkata with Dr. Tharoor launching his book on the rack.

The installation of a book rack at Taj City Center marks a wonderful initiative to foster a love for literature and encourage reading habits among the public. Launched by the eminent Dr. Shashi Tharoor with his newest book, this thoughtful addition creates an inviting space for guests and visitors to explore a curated collection of books. It promotes literary engagement and serves as a testament to the power of knowledge, offering readers a chance to immerse themselves in diverse worlds, one book at a time. This initiative by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** not only celebrates the art of reading but also elevates the cultural atmosphere at the Taj City Centre New Town, Kolkata. Dr. Tharoor was joined by Anindita Chatterjee, Executive Trustee, Esha Dutta, Honorary Convenor of North-East Affairs, Honorary COO – Manisha Jain, Indranil Ray, Gouri Basu, Amrita Ray and Malika Verma, **Ehsaas Women of Kolkata**.



A Literary Tapestry of Love, Legacy, and Liberation

At a splendid literary evening in Dehradun, author and diplomat Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri unveiled her evocative debut novel *Swallowing the Sun*, engaging in a mesmerizing conversation with author and columnist Sanjeev Chopra. Held amidst an audience of literary connoisseurs and curious minds, the event quickly evolved into a masterclass on literature, history, poetry, and the intricate mosaic of Indian identity.

The event, graced by the Hon'ble Governor of Uttarakhand, Lt. Gen. Gurmit Singh, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd.) as the Chief Guest, brought together a distinguished gathering of diplomats, writers, literary patrons, and cultural figures. Kitaab was hosted under the aegis of the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** in association with FICCI FLO Uttarakhand; the evening unfolded as a rich tapestry of dialogue, reflection, and poetic resonance.

From stirring addresses to a soul-stirring conversation between Puri and author Sanjeev Chopra, the event offered the city's literary enthusiasts a rare glimpse into the layered world of a novel that bridges love, legacy, history, and hope. Pooja Khanna, **Ehsaas Woman** of Dehradun, warmly introduced the esteemed guests, followed by Pooja Marwah, **Ehsaas Woman** of Dehradun, who shared insights into the work of the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. Charu Chauhan, Chairperson of FICCI FLO Uttarakhand, highlighted the organization's work and vision. Former diplomat and author Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri's debut novel, 'Swallowing The Sun' was launched by Chief Guest, Lt. Gen. Gurmit Singh, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd.), Hon'ble Governor of Uttarakhand, in the presence of author Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri, Sanjeev Chopra, Amb. Kamallesh Sharma, Anindita Chatterjee, Pooja Khanna, Pooja Marwah, Isha Gupta Vaish, Charu Chauhan, Komal Batra and Anuradha Malla.



Gurmit Singh

During the launch, the Chief Guest, Lt. Gen. Gurmit Singh, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd.), Hon'ble Governor of Uttarakhand - delivered a deeply heartfelt and eloquent speech that resonated powerfully with the audience. He began by reflecting on the evocative title of the book, confessing that when he first read the phrase "Swallowing the Sun," he instinctively thought of Hanuman Ji—the mythological figure who dared to perform such a feat. "I thought to myself that I wouldn't open the book, let me first digest these three words," he remarked, drawing smiles from the audience. But as he delved into the book, he shared that he was utterly captivated, finishing it in a single sitting. "It has been written from the soul," he said, lauding not just the story but the emotion embedded in it. He was particularly moved by the book's dedication—to the author's mother. "This concept really touched me," he said, noting how most official documents ask for the father's name but rarely the mother's. He emphasized how this book, through its intimate dedication and narrative, honours motherhood in a way few works of fiction do.

He praised Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri's remarkable effort in crafting a novel that was not just emotionally rich but historically grounded. "The environment, the ecosystem in which it has been written—it's so beautiful," he remarked, drawing attention to how the story moves from rural Maharashtra to the bustling metropolis of Bombay, capturing the transformation of a young woman who joins India's freedom struggle. He spoke with admiration of the progressive upbringing of the protagonists, *Malti* and Kamla, and their father's role in fostering a home rooted in values, courage, and patriotism.

Highlighting the inspirational speech in the book by Maharani Chandrawati, he quoted: "Those who go into the forest first have to hack down the thorny bushes, grapple with dangerous animals, and clear the way... The demons of exploitation you must defeat." The Hon'ble Governor found these metaphors deeply powerful and said they perfectly encapsulate the struggle for women's rights and independence.

From the moment the session began, it was clear that this was no ordinary book launch. "It's entirely my privilege," Puri opened warmly, setting the tone for an intimate, intellectual deep-dive into her layered narrative. Chopra, ever the astute interlocutor, remarked, "You just mentioned, and the Hon'ble Governor also mentioned, the intermingling of poetry and so many things in this book... poetry in three languages—Sanskrit, Marathi, and English."

That intersection of languages and lyricism is central to *Swallowing the Sun*. "Poetry is something I grew up with," shared Puri, reminiscing about her father, a poet who would recite verses every evening from a hand-written notebook he gifted her in 1983. "Both my parents spoke in poetic language," she added, describing the literary air she breathed growing up.

The cover of the book, too, became a topic of animated discussion. "You know, they say don't judge a book by its cover," Chopra quipped, "but there are some books where the love story begins with the cover—and this is one of them." Puri explained how the design drew from Saint Muktabai's *abhang*, symbolizing dreams, audacity, and transcendence. "This book is about breaking boundaries," she emphasized. "Flying into the sky, daring to follow the sun." A metaphor that so beautifully captures the essence of her female characters—strong, fearless, and deeply layered.

One of the most talked-about characters was Ma Sahib, a mystical woman afflicted with "divine madness" and blessed with clairvoyant visions. "She is one of my favourite creations," Puri said, revealing how her editor

David Davidar was also captivated by her. "If she were a man," she reflected, "she would have been venerated as a psychic... instead, as a woman, she's marginalized." It was a profound commentary on how society treats women with spiritual gifts—often dismissing their insights as madness.

In this same spirit, Puri spoke about the British women in her book—Miss Crawford and Dorothy—not as villains, but as nuanced, complex characters navigating their own challenges under the Raj. "They were also victims of the empire in many ways," Chopra observed. Puri agreed partially, but clarified, "They are strong women. They make their choices—even within their limitations."

The conversation then ventured into historical territory, with Chopra drawing attention to the ideological tension between Gandhi and Savarkar—a theme that underpins the novel. "*Malti* clearly prefers Gandhi," he noted, "but her foster father, Kaka Saheb, leans toward Savarkar." Puri elaborated, "That generation was caught in a *Samudra Manthan*—an ideological churning." Her characters, though advocates of nonviolence, wrestle with the allure of revolutionary rebellion, mirroring the intellectual turmoil of pre-independence India.

Beyond poetry and politics, the book is steeped in magical realism, with local myths and divine prophecies seamlessly interwoven into the plot. The legend of Mahasu Devta, for instance, finds echoes in the visions of Ma Sahib, blurring the lines between mysticism and reality.

Puri's reflections on education—particularly the contrasting ideologies of Macaulay and Linston—added another philosophical dimension. While Macaulay sought to create an elite class of intermediaries, Linston believed in mass education, inspiring institutions like Linston College in the novel. "He respected vernacular education," she noted, explaining how her characters engage with both Kalidas and English literature with equal passion.

As the event drew to a close with a riveting Q&A session with the audience, one could sense that *Swallowing the Sun* was more than just a love story. It is a literary kaleidoscope that embraces poetry, feminism, magical realism, political discourse, and historical reflection—all penned with elegance and conviction.

This session of Kitaab was organized with the support of Ehsaas Women of Dehradun, and was in association with FICCI FLO, Uttarakhand



Anindita Chatterjee, Indira Bargava, Anita Nair, Geetanjali Vikram Kirloskar, Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri, Anju Bobby George, Pankaj Advani, Dhanraj Pillay

Exploring Ideals and Identity Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri on her latest book

Prabha Khaitan Foundation hosted a book launch event in Bengaluru through its stellar initiative **Kitaab**, marking the launch of *Swallowing the Sun*, a remarkable literary work by former Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and Ambassador, Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri. The event was an occasion celebrating the power of storytelling and cultural dialogue in a city known for its vibrant intellectual landscape.

The evening was introduced with a warm and gracious welcome by Vidya Gajapathi Raju Singh, **Ehsaas Woman** of Chennai, who greeted the gathering with words that set the tone for the evening's proceedings. Puri's powerful book, *Swallowing the Sun*, delves into themes of resilience, identity, and human perseverance, making it a must-read for literature enthusiasts and thought leaders alike. The event was graced with the esteemed Chief Guest Geetanjali Vikram Kirloskar. The celebrated author and conversationalist for the evening Anita Nair conducted an insightful conversation with Puri. Geetanjali Vikram Kirloskar shared a few words of wisdom.

Joining Kirloskar for the book unveiling were Anita Nair; Anindita Chatterjee, Executive Trustee of the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**; Indira Bhargava; Olympic medalist Anju Bobby George; snooker champion Pankaj Advani; and retired field hockey player Dhanraj Pillai, all lending the event a sense of grandeur and unity.

Nair kickstarted the dialogue by narrating the three layers of the book that she could easily decipher from the book. Narrating the protagonist *Malti* as a feisty spirit which is luminescent and shines right through the book from the beginning to the end. Second, was the display of Marathi



Hardeep Singh Puri

culture which is not read much about in Indian writing in English. It becomes part of the narrative. The third layer of the novel is the freedom struggle where *Malti* has an encouraging father who believes in education for women and so he sends his daughters off to an ashram to study.

In response, Puri stated by quoting, "There is a quote that inspired me was by my friend Malashri Lal- 'May you honour your ancestors whose genes sleep deep within you, who fought for freedom and kinship for little women such as you.' So, the book is a tribute to them and inspiration from my parents' extraordinary life and that era that they

lived in. I was born to them when they were 45, I had a kind of child's insight into their world. They were great storytellers. They were steeped in literature in Sanskrit, Marathi and English literature. I think their story and world and some eras need to be memorialised. I felt that this was a story waiting and wanting to be written.”

There is a judicious mention of *Abhang* in the book. Puri mentioned, “The *Abhang* of Muktabai has possessed me since I was a child. My mother introduced me to it as something that should inspire me but it was also the persona of hers. Imagine this teenage saint, a woman saint who had disciples. She was about a woman-led-mysticism. She fascinated me even as a personality.”

Mentioning on what the book encompasses, “*Abhang* inspires in us all is that if you have faith and dare, you persist even the seemingly impossible becomes possible and that's the theme and epigraph of this novel and it cuts across all the themes and the love story, the coming of age, the young people's struggle and joys and sorrows, compromises, the fight between destiny and free will. Women particularly but also men both British and Indian because they are both kinds of characters here, they seem to be touched by some kind of magic to try to attain the impossible whether they succeed or not. It is reflected in the title of the book ‘Swallowing the Sun’ trying to do the impossible to attain the unattainable.” explained Mrs. Puri.

The characters, as Puri described, are inspired by people she knew, each carrying a piece of her personal story and cultural heritage. “These are not just fictional characters; they're fragments of my own life, experiences, and people I've loved and learned from,” she remarked. “*Malti* is the heartbeat of the novel and drawn from my mother *Malti* Desai herself. Others have different names and also have been transformed a lot but she in her spirit and character very much represents my mother and her journey. Women characters have just come to me and claimed me as a character. Sarla, Miss Crawford, Dorothy, all phenomenal women. They are boundary making. Guru is a character inspired by my father, who was very empowering and empathetic towards women and their rights.” detailed the author.

Swallowing the Sun engulfs a wealth of little civilizations that exist throughout this country and in some ways they are so alike in all civilizations within India and in some ways are so different. There are references to food, clothes, governance, the period of the times set in Maharashtra. “This era of freedom struggle also was one where there was a confluence of the Freedom Movement, there was a civilizational awakening where young people, western educated, having western ideas, using them to fight oppression and colonialism but at the same time

growing strength from this civilizational awakening and confidence from that. There is so much parallel and resonance with the present.”

The author has used theatre as a form of resistance in the book. Elaborating on that, the author stated, “One example I can share is how my own experiences with Marathi theatre have shaped parts of the story. There was a friend of my father's- someone we greatly admired. We used to “lionize him,” as he was one of the greatest and most revolutionary playwrights in Marathi theatre—also a social revolutionary. His play *Bhumikya*, for example, is known for its strong advocacy of women's rights. And another, *Sat Ghulam* or *Enslaved by Power*, resonates deeply. There are two or three chapters in the book cantered around this theme, which also mark the beginning of the journey for young characters like Guru, *Malti*, Kamla, and Ram. It's through these plays that they start their journey, engaging in “national advocacy on nationalism” and movement building.”

Puri has woven Marathi poetry and music into the narrative in a “sumptuous” way. She has managed to integrate these elements without disrupting the flow. To which, “I was infused with Marathi poetry, thanks to my father, and grew up “feeling it, living it.” It was challenging, but I wanted to include this tribute to my parents and to Marathi culture. I've been told by critics and readers that the poetry blends seamlessly into the story. I used Marathi poetry, translated it, and even included my own poetry, as well as English poetry when it was appropriate.”

In closing, Puri encouraged readers to see *Swallowing the Sun* not only as a story of one young girl but as a narrative for anyone who has ever felt torn between past and future, tradition and ambition. “It's about finding light even when it feels as though the sun is swallowed by darkness,” she said, capturing the essence of her book with poetic poignance.

The event ended with a resounding Q&A session, leaving the audience eager to explore Puri's literary journey, where personal memories blend seamlessly with universal themes of resilience and self-discovery. Anindita Chatterjee felicitated the guests and Vidya Gajapathi Raju Singh, **Ehsaas Woman** of Chennai, delivered the formal vote of thanks.



Vidya Gajapathi Singh

This session of Kitaab was organized with the support of Ehsaas Women.



Neha Mahana, Aarti Gupta, Geeta Malhotra, Lakshmi Puri, Archana Khaitan, Kanika Vaid, Anuradha Varshney and Nalini Sanwal

Book Launch of *Swallowing the Sun* – A Tribute to Women Empowerment and National Celebration

In a vibrant book launch session hosted by the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** in association with FICCI FLO Kanpur, the esteemed author Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri launched her book *Swallowing the Sun*. The event was a celebration of history, culture, and literature. Geeta Malhotra, Ehsaas Woman of Kanpur opened the event with a warm welcome address.

Nalini Sanwal, Chairperson, FICCI FLO Kanpur addressed the audience. Author Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri, **Ehsaas women** of Kanpur – Aarti Gupta and Geeta Malhotra, FICCI FLO Kanpur Chairperson Nalini Sanwal, Event Chairperson Neha Mahana, and Haleem Jung were present at the book launch ceremony. Mrs. Puri was in conversation with Aarti Gupta, Ehsaas Woman of Kanpur, who guided the audience through the intricacies of the book and the author's journey.

Puri began by sharing her excitement about launching the book in Kanpur, describing it as a city with profound historical significance. "This is the first time I am launching my book in Uttar Pradesh, and I couldn't think of a more fitting place. Kanpur holds an important place in the freedom struggle, particularly with its connections to the First War of Independence in 1857, which was once referred to as a mutiny. In my book, I explore the period between 1918 and 1952, which marks a crucial phase in our fight for independence," Puri remarked.

The book, "Swallowing the Sun," draws upon two significant themes: India's freedom struggle and the cultural renaissance, with a special focus on the Marathi cultural movement. "The freedom struggle of India was a beacon for other nations seeking independence. It set an example for the world's decolonization movements. But the cultural renaissance happening simultaneously, particularly in Maharashtra, was equally transformative," she explained.

As Puri explained, *Swallowing the Sun* is not merely a fictional tale but a tribute to the real-life women whose courage and sacrifices shaped the future of India. "This is as much history as it is her-story," she said, referring to her desire to spotlight the invaluable contributions of women, often relegated to the margins of history.

Puri also highlighted Kanpur's deep cultural roots, mentioning how the city's rich literary heritage had inspired her work. "Kanpur has always been a place of great cultural significance. The city's poets, like Subhadra Kumari Chauhan etc have shaped the cultural fabric of India. Their influence is reflected in my writing," she said.

In this rich context, Puri's work brings forth the struggles and triumphs of India's independence while celebrating the cultural forces that shaped the nation's identity. The author expressed a sense of pride in the opportunity to launch her book in such a culturally vibrant city, noting, "Kanpur, the land of poets and literature, is where the soul of India resides."

The title *Swallowing the Sun* holds special significance, derived from a 13th-century devotional song by the Marathi poet Saint Muktabai. Puri explained, "The metaphor of 'swallowing the sun' speaks to the belief that, with faith, even the impossible can be achieved. It reflects the indomitable human spirit, which is central to the journey of the characters in my book."

The protagonist, *Malti*, is a fierce, unapologetic young woman driven by her ideals. "*Malti* is a coming-of-age character, inspired by my mother's courage and brilliance. She embodies the fearless pursuit of truth, justice, and freedom," said Puri. *Malti's* journey of personal growth is intertwined with the political upheaval of the era, amplifying the novel's broader themes of empowerment.

The conversation delved into the central character, whose journey defies societal norms and celebrates the power of education. Puri explained, "Education for girls should not be seen as a luxury, but as a tool for empowerment," reflecting her belief that when women are educated, they break free from the shackles of oppression. *Malti's* story, she said, was inspired by her own family's commitment to women's education, with her father supporting her and her sisters' schooling despite widespread societal resistance.

The book itself sings with verses in three languages: Sanskrit, Marathi, and English. Puri shared some of these poems, which are not merely literary flourishes but vital elements of the story's emotional core. For example, Guru, the love interest of *Malti*, recites a poem to her on the beach as they first confess their love. "The glorious sunset as a perennial witness, her pen dipped in the red sack of my love," Puri read, quoting the lyrical passage from her novel, which beautifully portrays the depth of Guru's feelings for *Malti*.

In her discussion, Lakshmi Puri delved into the central theme of the book—women's empowerment through education. "When Saraswati is a woman, how can you not allow girls to walk into schools?" she recited from the novel, quoting *Malti's* father's impassioned plea for his daughters' education. *Swallowing the Sun* is infused with the ethos of the freedom movement, beautifully articulated through poetry and historical references. "Her story is as much history as it is her story," Puri emphasized, highlighting how the book celebrates the often-overlooked contributions of women in India's freedom struggle.

The personal connection to these poems is evident in Puri's writing. "Poetry was not just part of my family's fabric, it was their language of love," she shared. Her father, a poet himself, would recite poems to the family every evening, and this tradition is evident in the lyrical quality of the novel.

The novel's poetic style was another point of focus during the conversation. Puri revealed how her father, a poet himself, and her family's deep connection with poetry inspired the lyrical nature of her writing. "My father was married to bird song," Puri shared, explaining how poetry in three languages—Sanskrit, Marathi, and English—became an inseparable part of her narrative. The verses evoke emotions and amplify the spiritual undertones of the book, from love to patriotism, resonating deeply with readers.

During the launch, Puri recited several poignant poems from the book, including one of the love letters exchanged between Guru and *Malti*. "The glorious sunset as a perennial witness" she began, her voice resonating with the essence of longing and devotion. The love letters, she explained, were

based on real letters between her parents, with some imagined to enrich the fictional elements of the story. "These letters were so full of passion, emotion, and devotion," Puri reflected, adding that they brought the characters' love story to life in a deeply personal way.

The discussion also touched upon the theme of gender equality, an issue that Puri passionately champions. Reflecting on her work at the United Nations, she shared her most memorable achievement: "The creation of a dedicated Sustainable Development Goal on gender equality, which was a hard-fought victory." She further emphasized the importance of both supply-side and demand-side initiatives to ensure gender parity, citing the need to bridge the gender digital divide and invest in vocational training and skills development for women.

As the conversation moved towards the future of women's empowerment, Puri shared her insights from her experience working at the United Nations, where she championed gender equality in sustainable development. "I was part of the team that helped secure a standalone sustainable development goal for gender equality," she said proudly. She also addressed the importance of providing women with not just education, but the tools for financial independence, digital access, and skill development. "Investment in women's education is key, but it should be coupled with opportunities to create livelihoods," Puri noted.

Puri recited an empowering poem, a central piece of the book, which resonated with the message of self-realization and strength for women. "Am I not complete and auspicious? I know my own strength," she quoted, offering a stirring anthem for all women and girls.

The evening concluded with a thoughtful discussion on the interplay of history, culture, and literature, leaving the audience both inspired and eager to explore *Swallowing the Sun*. The event was a powerful reminder of the importance of remembering the past while embracing the cultural forces that shape our present and future.

The conversation was a reminder of the ongoing struggle for gender parity, not just in education but in every sector of society. Puri's book, *Swallowing the Sun*, is not only a celebration of India's history but also a call to action, urging readers to recognize the unsung heroines who fought for the nation's freedom and to continue the fight for equality today. Archana Khaitan felicitated Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri with a kantha uttoriyo stole and Geeta Malhotra, **Ehsaas Woman** of Kanpur delivered the closing address.

This book launch session was organized with the support of Ehsaas Women of Kanpur, and was in association with FICCI FLO Kanpur



Book Launch

Tipu Sultan: History, Legacy, and Contested Narratives

At the launch of his much-anticipated biography of Tipu Sultan: The Saga of Mysore's Interregnum (1760–1799), historian and author Vikram Sampath delved deep into the psychological and historical complexities of Tipu's life and legacy. In a riveting panel discussion organised by Prabha Khaitan Foundation in a session of Kitaab, Sampath offered nuanced insights into Tipu's troubled upbringing, his flawed leadership, and the critical father-son dynamic that, according to the author, shaped much of the Mysorean ruler's trajectory. The session featured an engaging conversation led by Ms. Lipika Bhushan, with Dr. Vikram Sampath, Mr. Pavan K. Varma, and Ambassador Bhaswati Mukherjee, exploring the legacy and historical intricacies of Tipu Sultan.

The book was launched by Chief Guest Dr. S. Jaishankar, Honourable Minister of External Affairs, Govt. Of India, alongside Special Guest Mr. Pavan K. Varma, author and diplomat; Event Chair Ambassador Bhaswati Mukherjee, President, India Habitat Centre; Anindita Chatterjee, Executive Trustee, Prabha Khaitan Foundation; Vinnie Kakkar, National Advisor, Prabha Khaitan Foundation; and Ehsaas Women Poonam Bafna and Dipali Bhasin.

Dr. S. Jaishankar addressed the gathering with his insightful remarks, elevating the evening with his distinguished presence. Poonam Bafna, Ehsaas Woman of Coimbatore, delivered a warm welcome address, while Vinnie Kakkar, National Advisor of Prabha Khaitan Foundation, felicitated the dignitaries with handloom stoles.

Calling it much more than a mere biography, Dr. Jaishankar remarked, "To call this a biography would be a serious understatement," adding that the book



Dr. S. Jaishankar

captures "not just the flavour of a fast-moving and complicated era, but offers insights into politics, strategy, administration, sociology, and even diplomacy." He noted its meticulous attention to detail and

described it as "granular in its detail and creative in many ways in its spirit, making the reader feel like a fly on the wall in Tipu Sultan's palace."

Dr. Jaishankar commended Vikram Sampath for his objectivity and courage in addressing a sensitive historical subject. "There is an honesty as well as an objectivity in Vikram's approach," he said, acknowledging the difficulty of presenting such a nuanced portrait of a polarizing figure.

Reflecting on Tipu Sultan's foreign policy, Dr. Jaishankar shared his fascination with the ruler's international engagements. He praised the book for shedding light on Tipu's diplomatic overtures to France, Turkey, Afghanistan, and Persia. He noted, "Tipu's expectations of his foreign partners and the incentives he offered them actually tell us something about his mindset." The Minister revealed that even he was surprised to learn that Napoleon had written to Tipu Sultan—a letter that, ironically, never reached him due to British interception.

He also drew attention to how Tipu's own people, including communities like the Kodavas and others in the Malabar region, "still carry deep scars" from his rule, with events like the

Mandya- Mangaluru community's observance of Deepavali as a day of mourning serving as somber reminders.

Ambassador Mukherjee described the 18th century as one of the darkest phases in Indian history, a time marked by the subcontinent's decline from prosperity to chaos. She acknowledged the monumental challenge Vikram Sampath had taken on in seeking to "demystify Tipu Sultan and present him as he was—warts and all."

Ambassador Mukherjee also touched on Tipu's controversial military campaigns, stating, "Unlike his father Hyder Ali, Tipu got his kingdom on a platter. But in a diabolical warpath, he launched lethal attacks on Malabar, Mangalore, Travancore, and Kodagu, leaving behind a trail of death, destruction, mass conversions, and desecration of religious places of worship." These historical wounds, she noted, are still remembered and felt in Southern India today.

Sampath began with a striking recollection: "My entire foray into writing and historiography was thanks to Tipu Sultan." As a young boy who once hated history—"the maximum punishments I got in school were for history," he admitted—his interest was unexpectedly sparked by the popular Doordarshan serial "*The Sword of Tipu Sultan*." He recounted how the show depicted Tipu and Hyder Ali as heroic figures, while the Wodeyar rulers were vilified—"The Maharaja was shown as this obese, dancing figure, and the Maharani as a conniving vamp straight out of an Ekta Kapoor serial."

That curiosity turned into a passion, culminating in his first book "*Splendours of Royal Mysore: The Untold Story of the Wodeyars*" in 2008. Sampath recalled, "I thought I'd write one book and return to my boring corporate job, calculating profit and loss for an American company. But thankfully, destiny had other plans."

Sampath also addressed Tipu's legacy across the border. "I hope those who emulate Tipu know how he actually died—on the 4th of May, 1799, amidst a heap of corpses." He reflected on how nations like Pakistan, with no linguistic or historical ties to Tipu other than religion, have chosen to valorize him—"For a country that otherwise airbrushes its own history, to remember a man with whom they share only faith says a lot."

As a special guest on the panel, Pavan Varma began by situating the discussion within a broader cultural and historical context. Touching upon the Islamic invasions of India, he said: "It is an intellectual dishonesty to try and gloss over the genuine destruction, proselytization, and pillage that took place." Citing Will Durant, Varma remarked, "He called it one of the bloodiest chapters in world history." Attempting to paint such episodes in soft colours, he added with irony, is like saying, "The invaders arrived in a tourist bus, offered some biryani and got puri, halwa and Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb in return."

Bhushan nudged Sampath on the diplomacies on the aspect of the social report card and his military policies, while his book touches on the psychology make-up on Tipu as well, Sampath began by contrasting Tipu Sultan with his father, Haider Ali, painting a picture of opposites in both temperament and intellect. While Haider Ali was "actually illiterate because of his troubled childhood" and only managed to sign the first alphabet of his name, "H," Tipu was "extremely well-versed in Persian and Arabic" and "wrote copiously." However, Sampath cautioned against equating literacy with wisdom: "Literacy and knowledge cannot actually count for strategy and diplomacy."

He suggested that Tipu's downfall stemmed from his own inflated sense of greatness. "You get the kingdom on a platter, but then your hubris, your arrogance, your own megalomania can lead to your downfall. What all the father builds, this man literally squanders in about 17 years."

Sampath revealed the discovery of a startling document in Tipu's palace after his death—an agreement Tipu had signed for his father's approval. It contained eight articles of obedience, with pledges such as "I will not steal money. If I steal, I can be flogged," and even rules against idle talk and rebellion. "The last line reads, 'I am signing all this,' with a signature and a royal emblem," Sampath said, highlighting the tense and deeply mistrustful father-son dynamic.

Turning to matters of religion and governance, Sampath asserted that Haider Ali was pragmatic, having usurped the throne from a Hindu Maharaja and ruling over a Hindu-majority kingdom. Haider's focus, according to Sampath, was on power, not faith: "He let people do whatever they pleased as long as he had the power." Dutch sources even noted that Haider banned cow and bull slaughter in Mysore.

With an immersive Q&A session with the audience, Sampath highlighted Tipu's displayed religious fervour from a young age. "Even as a young boy, he used to go on hunting sprees and kill cows and oxen," Sampath said. In one instance, Haider was so enraged by this behaviour that he put Tipu in solitary confinement—a punishment that, Sampath noted, mirrored the later incarceration of Veer Savarkar, a subject of his earlier work. The event concluded with Dipali Bhasin, Ehsaas Woman of Delhi, delivering the Vote of Thanks.

Tipu Sultan- His Complex Legacies, Leadership and Controversies- Decoded in Detail By author Dr. Vikram Sampath



Poonam Bafna, Anil Kathotia, Dr. Vikram Sampath, Tejasvi Surya, Madhu Nataraj, Bhavish Aggarwal, Anindita Chatterjee, Revathi Raju, Rajalakshmi Aggarwal, Devesh Varma

In a book launch of under the aegis of **Kitaab** in Bengaluru, the alluring evening was filled with some rich storytelling and conversations. Vikram Sampath's new literary historical work– *Tipu Sultan: The Saga of Mysore's Interregnum (1760–1799)* was launched by Tejasvi Surya, Member of Parliament Lok Sabha (Bangalore South). The session involved a discussion around the book which was moderated by Madhu Nataraj, choreographer, artpreneur and mentor.

Shubhi Mehta, FIHCR welcomed the gathering and Poonam Bafna, **Ehsaas Woman** of Coimbatore delivered the introductory note. The book was unveiled by Guest of Honour Shri Tejasvi Surya. He was joined by Poonam Bafna, Anil Kathotia, Vikram Sampath, Smt. Madhu Nataraj, Bhavish Aggarwal, Anindita Chatterjee, Revathi Raju, Rajalakshmi Aggarwal, Devesh Varma.

Vikram Sampath, in his very prolific work trajectory, has resurrected fallen heroes, forgotten personalities, and even a dynasty outside Karnataka, people do not know much about. When asked why he chose Tipu Sultan, a very exalted personage. He elaborated, “I was a boy of 12 or 13 years of age when *The Sword of Tipu Sultan* by Sanjay Khan was released. In that, Tipu and his father Haidar were portrayed as usurpers of the throne of Mysore. The Wadiyar royal family was shown in a very poor light. The then Maharaja Krishna Raja Wadiyar was depicted as this obese man dancing with court dancers, while the Maharani, Rani Lakshmani, was portrayed as a typical soap opera villain, always conspiring and conniving.”

He simplified, “This upset the Wadiyar family which was The conversation forayed into mentioning that Tipu Sultan had sought legitimacy from the Ottoman Caliph. The author clarified, “Haider Ali had taken the kingdom as a contract

from the Maharaja, his position was not hereditary. It didn't legally pass on to his son. Tipu Sultan wanted formal sanction to rule, so he sought legitimacy from the Mughal emperor. However, the Mughal emperor, himself a hostage to the Marathas, couldn't do much.”

He continued, “Tipu sent a delegation to the Ottoman Caliph, claiming, “I am the original ruler, a true blue-blooded Muslim ruler.” He even highlighted his military conquests to justify his rule. The Ottoman Caliph eventually conferred upon him the title of Badshah of Mysore. This wasn't unprecedented, as earlier dynasties, like the Lodhis and Tughlaqs, sought legitimacy from the Caliph in Turkey. However, the Mughals had broken away from this tradition, relying on their own authority. Tipu, after receiving the Caliph's recognition, began calling himself Badshah Tipu Sultan Bahadur and commissioned a grand octagonal golden throne with a humbird on it. Sadly, he never got to sit on it, as he died before its completion. Today, fragments of that throne remain in the London Museum.”

Nataraj was intrigued by how Tipu Sultan was someone eager to establish matrimonial alliances with other ruling families. Tipu's personal quest for legitimacy seemed to extend beyond titles. The author shed light on this and replied, “Tipu Sultan consistently tried to arrange matrimonial alliances with prominent Muslim families, but they often scoffed at him, saying, “You may be a Muslim, but you are not of our class.” This quest for acceptance or legitimacy shaped much of his life and decisions.”

The book delves into the complex father-son relationship between Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan. Their leadership styles and dynamics are something that Sampath highlights this in his book. The author decoded that saying, “Tipu Sultan was

born after much prayer by Haider Ali and his wife, which is how he got his name. Despite being illiterate himself, Haider could only sign the first letter of his name, "Ha" -- he wanted his sons, Tipu and Karim, to be well-educated. He placed them under a tutor but, upon testing their progress after two years, was aghast at Tipu's religious extremism. He remarked, "If my son reads things like this, he will become a good mullah but not a raja of a kingdom."

The author added, "Haider valued pragmatism and statecraft over religious zeal, and he often dismissed Tipu's intelligence, foresight, and diplomacy. He even favoured adopted sons like Muhammad Ali and Shahbaz over Tipu. Upon assuming power, Tipu eliminated Shahbaz to secure his position. Their dynamic was turbulent. For instance, during the Battle of

Chinapattana in 1770, Haider publicly punished Tipu for defying him in front of his soldiers. Tipu, humiliated, threw down his sword and turban, saying, "I will not fight with you anymore."

In the book, Sampath has highlighted the differences of leadership between Tipu Sultan and his father. He expounded, "Haider Ali was a pragmatic leader focused on diplomacy and statecraft. Tipu, on the other hand, often leaned into religious zeal and personal vendettas. While Haider spearheaded the First and Second Anglo-Mysore Wars successfully, Tipu's leadership faltered during the Third and Fourth Anglo-Mysore Wars, ultimately leading to his defeat.

Haider Ali is often viewed as a figure who sought to maintain a certain harmony in his kingdom, yet there are stories that highlight tensions, such as the one involving the procession of the Ranganatha Swami Temple. "There's an interesting episode involving a renowned Pirzada of a seminary in Srirangapatna. During a procession of the Ranganatha Swami Temple, stones were allegedly pelted from within the seminary, disrupting the procession. In retaliation, the Hindus armed themselves and forced their way through the next day. The Pirzada was unhappy

and complained to Haider, stating that idolatry should not be allowed in a Muslim-ruled kingdom. Haider, after hearing the entire episode, reportedly asked, "Who cast the first stone?" When the Pirzada admitted it was his followers, Haider responded, "Then you should be ready to receive a return."

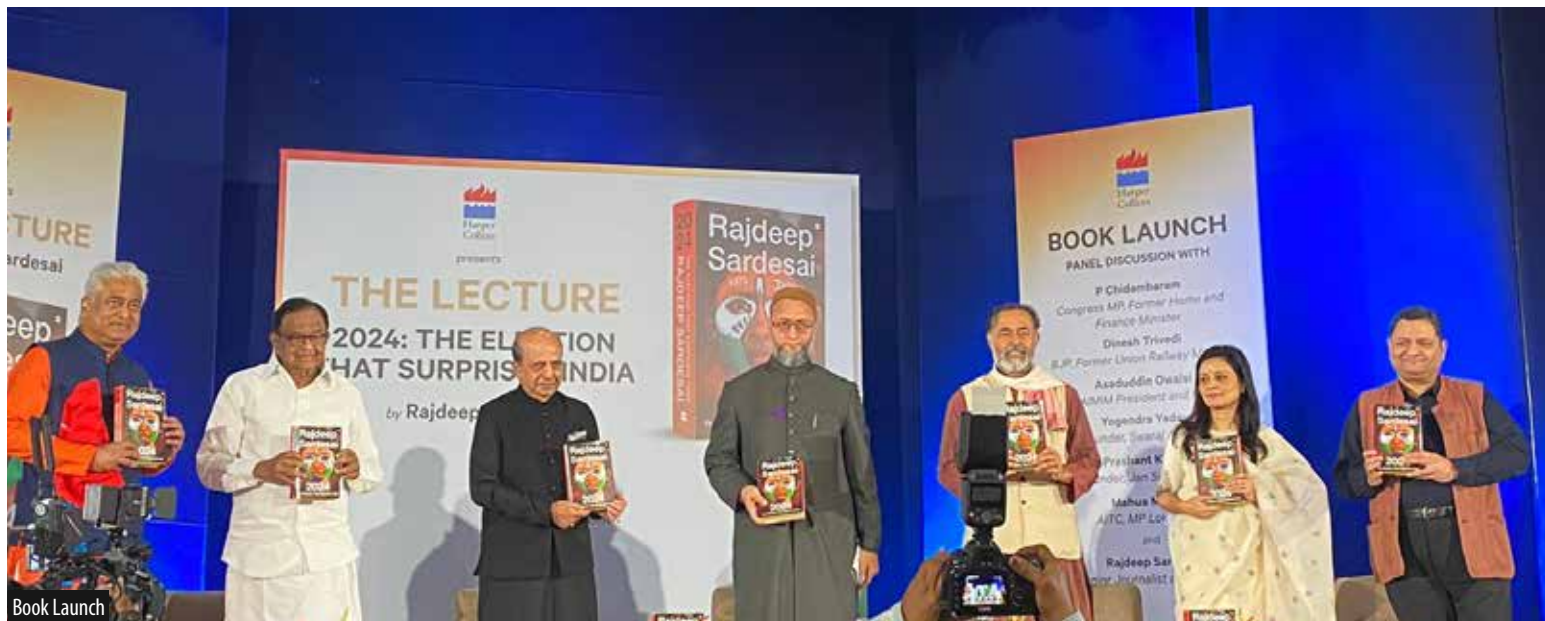
"The Pirzada, frustrated, threatened to leave the kingdom and he did and returned later. Haider, however, prevented him from coming back. This incident showcases Haider's pragmatic approach to governance and his effort to maintain order without bias. Both father and son committed atrocities, with Haider infamously leading genocides in Kerala and Tipu continuing this legacy against Christians in Mangalore. These actions left a lasting impact, often evoking strong, polarized reactions even today," narrated Sampath.

Tipu Sultan went on to acquire the title of "Sher-e-Mysore" and emerge as a figure of admiration in certain narratives. Decoding the narration of this, he said, "The perception of Tipu as "Sher-e-Mysore" is complex. Post-Independence, there has been a tendency to celebrate anyone who resisted British colonialism as a freedom fighter. Tipu fought the British, but his alliances, particularly with the French, complicated this narrative. The French, another colonial power, were as exploitative as the British. Tipu used the French in his political games, leveraging their rivalry with Britain. However, his appeals to the broader Muslim ummah also reveal a deeply religious dimension."

The event ended with a resounding Q&A session, leaving the audience eager to explore stories of Tipu Sultan's reign and life. Anindita Chatterjee felicitated the guests and Revathi Raju, **Ehsaas Woman** of Bengaluru, delivered the formal vote of thanks.



Audience



Ballots, Bias, and the Battle for Democracy: Reflections on the 2024 Indian Election

This year's edition of *The Lecture* featured the launch of Rajdeep Sardesai's latest political chronicle, *2024: The Election That Surprised India*, accompanied by a panel discussion. The event was organised by Harper Collins in association with the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. *The Lecture* is a distinguished series that brings eminent writers and thinkers from around the world to Indian audiences.

Seasoned voices from across India's political spectrum converged to reflect on the seismic shifts shaping the nation's electoral landscape. The event was both intellectually stimulating and deeply reflective, with moments of candour and wit adding texture to the conversation. Udayan Mitra, Executive Publisher, HarperCollins India, introduced the gathering with his warm welcoming words. The event was followed by a book launch ceremony and dynamic panel discussion featuring a stellar lineup of P. Chidambaram, Dinesh Trivedi, Asaduddin Owaisi, Yogendra Yadav, and Mahua Moitra.

In his compelling address, Rajdeep Sardesai reflected on the evolution of India's electoral democracy through the lens of his decades-long experience as a journalist. He explored themes such as the erosion of ideological politics, the unchecked flow of money, rising communalism, and the weakening of institutions like the Election Commission. Emphasizing India's extraordinary diversity, he described elections as both a celebration and a mirror of the country's contradictions.

Recalling Jawaharlal Nehru, he said, "That great leader who towers above all else in this room sadly, Jawaharlal Nehru, has been trapped and vilified in a hyper-polarized new India." Sardesai pointed out that Nehru was the driving force behind the concept of universal adult suffrage, a

radical decision for a newly independent nation—so radical, in fact, that it was once described in editorials as "The greatest gamble in history."

As the lecture unfolded, Sardesai marked the ten tectonic shifts in Indian elections that he has witnessed over the decades—each one a commentary on democracy's erosion and resilience.

The first change, he noted, was the vanishing vibrancy of electoral campaigning. He lamented that the once colourful, chaotic, and noisy campaigns have now been reduced to sanitized, heavily regulated events. "It's as if silent, invisible underground tactics have replaced the highly visible riot of colour and tumult that once marked this magnificent exercise," he observed.

The second shift was even more concerning: the ever-expanding role of money in elections. Sardesai exposed the deep rot of unregulated campaign spending, citing seizures of ₹850 crores in Maharashtra and Jharkhand alone. "Truth, my friends, is that money power has greatly undermined India's electoral process," he declared.

The third transformation he termed the de-ideologization of politics—an era where party loyalty is replaced by opportunistic defection. Sardesai revealed that over 25% of BJP's 2024 candidates were formerly with the Congress, and more than 500 MPs and MLAs had switched parties between 2014 and 2021. "Even God can't stop the defection industry in Goa," he remarked wryly.

The fourth and most troubling shift, he warned, was the normalization of communal rhetoric. Sardesai condemned the widespread use of hate speech and dog whistles like

“vote jihad” during campaigns. “What was seen to be fringe, extreme rhetoric in 1989 is now unfortunately mainstream,” he lamented.

He then turned a sharp eye on the Election Commission, once feared, now seen as an enabler of political favouritism. “The Election Commission was meant to be a tough, neutral umpire. Instead, sadly, it’s become a 12th man mostly batting for one side,” he stated, invoking the cricketing metaphor that recurred throughout his speech.

Veteran politician and former Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram set the tone with a pointed observation. “Let me say in one sentence – the electorate has moved to the right,” he declared, candidly acknowledging the ideological transformation of India’s voting patterns. In a moment of sharp introspection, Chidambaram noted, “Like in many other countries of the world, the Indian electorate has markedly shifted to the right.”

The event wasn’t without levity. Dinesh Trivedi, known for his frank and affable manner, commented with a touch of optimism, “These elections were such that it felt like everyone won and was celebrating.”

Trivedi also quipped, “There is no GST on confession,” eliciting a ripple of laughter. “I reached a point where I couldn’t recognize my country, honestly,” Moitra confessed, setting the tone for what would be a searing critique of the electoral and political landscape.

She described the 2024 elections as not just a contest of ballots, but a referendum on a singular figure. “Everything was about Mr. Modi,” she said. “The election was fought on his name... and in that way, if you look at it, this was a vote against Mr. Modi. The country didn’t give him 272,” she added emphatically, highlighting that for all the might of the ruling party, the clear majority eluded them.

On the opposition, he quipped, “It’s not the BJP’s job to create a vibrant opposition — they’re trying, but it’s not happening.” In a dramatic flourish, he highlighted PM Modi’s global stature, recalling how Russia and Ukraine “stopped a war” to allow Indian students to exit — a moment, he said, that reflects India’s growing international clout. Trivedi’s remarks blended nostalgia, nationalism, and conviction, serving as a counterpoint to the evening’s more critical narratives.

Political analyst Yogendra Yadav offered a sobering and nuanced critique of India’s electoral integrity. With characteristic clarity, Yadav began by underscoring a fundamental tenet of democracy: “The bare minimum of the possibility of democracy is that both sides should accept the electoral outcome,” adding ominously that India appears to be

inching closer to the troubling paths taken by Pakistan and Bangladesh.

While acknowledging that electronic devices like EVMs can be manipulated, he was clear in his demand: “Skeptics must bring evidence not only that EVMs can be manipulated, but that they actually have been.” In a thoughtful historical turn, Yadav reminded the audience that the first serious doubts about EVMs were raised by the BJP itself — notably by L.K. Advani and party MP GVL Narasimha Rao. While critiquing opportunistic flip-flopping by politicians across the spectrum, he firmly discredited the current Election Commission as having “no spine whatsoever.”

Owaisi’s remarks painted a picture of a deeply rigged system, where Aadhaar data, digital schemes, and early cash disbursements are weaponized for electoral gain. He didn’t shy away from criticizing the first-past-the-post system either, labelling it a relic that marginalizes large swathes of voters and reinforces polarization.

Perhaps the most impassioned part of his speech came when he slammed communal rhetoric used by high-ranking leaders: “When you say ‘Dham, Youth, Jihad’—who are you addressing? Is it for all Indians or a particular community?” Citing video evidence from Aurangabad of BJP workers distributing cash to women voters, he accused the Election Commission of partisan inaction, adding, “500 rupees is a great thing for them now, because Modi has made even the poor poorer.”

Responding to the perennial accusation of “minority vote bank politics,” Moitra flipped the script with characteristic fire: “This is the problem—when you change parties, you actually get very confused with what your thought process is.” She defined secularism with sharp clarity: “Where all your fundamental rights defined in the Constitution are guaranteed to every single person, irrespective of religion... My poverty may define me, but my religion won’t.”

In a compelling rebuttal to the criticism of outreach to minority leaders, Moitra made it personal and real: “When I’m on my campaign trail, I meet Bishops, Matas, and Imams—not for votes, but because they are my constituents. I will sit with them, have tea with them, and listen to them.” Her tone was defiant yet deeply rooted in democratic ideals, making her one of the most outspoken voices of the evening. Her remarks were not just a defence of her politics but a call to reclaim the constitutional soul of India.

The lecture concluded with an engaging Q&A session, where the audience—comprising journalists, students, academics, and political enthusiasts—posed a series of sharp, thoughtful questions to the panel.



Book Launch

An Evening of Inspiration, Reminiscence and Humility - All About Sushilkumar Shinde

An evening brimming with inspiration and reverence unfolded at the grand book launch of “Five Decades in Politics” by the distinguished Sushilkumar Shinde, as narrated to Rasheed Kidwai. The event organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** was a celebration of wisdom, leadership, and enduring commitment, featuring a compelling conversation led by the renowned Rajdeep Sardesai. Prominent figures, including President, Indian National Congress Mallikarjun Kharge, Rajya Sabha MP Digvijaya Singh, and the esteemed educationist Vijay Dhar, shared their profound reflections on Mr. Shinde’s extraordinary political odyssey.

The evening began with a heartfelt welcome from Archana Dalmia, **Ehsaas Woman** of Delhi. In a gesture that echoed both tradition and gratitude, Anindita Chatterjee, Executive Trustee of the Foundation, and Neelima Dalmia Adhar, Honorary Convenor of Delhi NCR Affairs, alongside **Ehsaas women** of Delhi Karuna Goenka and Anantmala Potdar, honoured the distinguished guests with exquisite handloom scarves, adding a touch of warmth and recognition to the momentous occasion.

Udayan Mitra, Executive Publisher, HarperCollins India gave a speech emphasizing that Shinde's journey in politics is not just a tale of triumph over adversity but also a valuable lesson in how to maintain composure and kindness through life's many trials. “He has managed to survive various political challenges with a smile on his face, which is something reflected in the cover of the book,” he remarked. “The book is a testament to the enduring spirit of Mr. Shinde and how his approach to life and politics can serve as an inspiration to others,” appreciated Mitra.

Sardesai commenced the discussion sharing his admiration

for Shinde's unique approach to politics. He highlighted Shinde's ability to maintain dignity and humanity, even while competing in a polarized political environment. Sardesai recounted a personal anecdote from 1999, when Shinde helped him arrange an interview with Priyanka Gandhi, demonstrating his resourcefulness and warmth. Sardesai praised Shinde for his genuine humility, never flaunting his power or using divisive tactics. He emphasized that Shinde’s success lies in his ability to build friendships and navigate politics with grace and kindness.

He said, “Mr. Shinde’s book is not just a political memoir; it’s a guide to leadership, integrity, and dedication to public service.” Sardesai emphasized that Shinde’s journey offers valuable lessons for future generations of politicians and citizens, urging them to prioritize humanity, humility, and service above all else.

At the launch, Five Decades in Politics, Sushilkumar Shinde, the author shared numerous personal anecdotes, political insights, and reflections on his extraordinary career. Speaking to a packed hall, Shinde expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to release his memoir, which recounts his journey from a humble background to becoming a prominent political figure.

Shinde began by acknowledging the presence of key individuals who had supported him throughout his career. “Today, I am here because of the guidance and support I received from many people, including my dear friends like Rajdeep Sardesai,” he said. Referring to Sardesai’s father, Dilip Sardesai, a well-known cricket player, Shinde remarked, “We always watched him play cricket in Mumbai, and now his son, Rajdeep, has become a guiding light in the media and journalism.”

Shinde went on to reflect on the value of mentorship and guidance in his own political career. “Just as I entered politics, I started seeking advice from those around me, including from people like Rashid bhai and others,” he shared. He noted how, even when challenges arose, he always had the counsel of trusted colleagues. “In politics, maintaining good relationships is crucial. Even though sometimes misunderstandings arose with people, I always worked to correct them and move forward,” he added.

The former Home Minister of India also spoke about his journey in politics, particularly his relationship with key political figures. “Vijay bhai, whom I always consulted, once advised me, ‘Don’t get distracted. Go to Lal Chowk, speak to the people, and walk around Dal Lake,’” Shinde recalled, sharing how this advice shaped his public image. “His guidance helped me gain a lot of publicity, and people started recognizing me as a Home Minister who was not afraid to interact directly with the public,” he added.

Addressing the audience, Shinde spoke with affection about his relationship with Mallikarjun Kharge, with whom he shares a close political bond. “Kharge Sahab and I have a long-standing relationship, dating back to our early days in politics. We come from neighbouring districts – he’s from Gulbarga, and I’m from Solapur. He’s always been a great friend and a guiding force for me,” Shinde explained.

A significant portion of his speech was dedicated to the topic of his rise as a political leader from a marginalized community. “I come from the Scheduled Castes, and it wasn’t easy to become the Chief Minister of Maharashtra. Many people doubted it,” he said. “But Sonia Gandhiji, who saw the potential in me, made that decision. She believed in my ability to lead despite my background, and I will always be grateful for her support,” he added.

Shinde acknowledged the weight of the responsibility he carried as the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, remarking, “It was not an easy task to represent the Scheduled Castes in a position of power, but Sonia Gandhiji took that bold decision, and I am proud to have been given that opportunity.”

He also spoke candidly about the challenges he faced, saying, “In politics, you don’t always win. I’ve contested elections, and while I didn’t always win, I never lost my courage. I learned that in politics, as in life, victory and defeat are both part of the journey.” Shinde mentioned his experience running for Vice President of India, recalling how he garnered more votes than expected. “I contested the Vice President election knowing that it was a tough fight. But even in defeat, I remained resolute. In politics, it’s not about winning or losing; it’s about doing the right thing,” he said.

At the heart of Shinde’s speech was a message of perseverance and integrity. “I have always believed that no matter what your position, you must work hard, with respect for every role you take on. The key to success lies in hard work, humility, and the ability to respect everyone, no matter their position,” he said.

The author thanked everyone who had supported him throughout his career and the book’s launch. “Today, I feel immense gratitude. From being a clerk to becoming a minister, I’ve seen it all. Life is about working hard, and I’ve never been afraid to do any job, no matter how small,” he said. He expressed his appreciation for those who stood by him, including his mentors, family, and colleagues. “Rajeev ji, Sonia ji, and others have always given me the strength to keep going, and for that, I will always be grateful,” Shinde left the audience inspired by his resilience, humility, and unwavering dedication to public service.

Vijay Dhar spoke fondly about Shinde’s character and leadership. He recalled the same smile on Shinde’s face that he had noticed 50 years ago. Dhar mentioned how Shinde managed to win over even his adversaries with his humble demeanour. “He would defeat his enemies with a smile, always saying, ‘your work will be done,’ and they would leave happy,” he said. He also shared a personal anecdote about Shinde’s friendship with Sharad Pawar, highlighting Shinde’s ability to stay calm and composed, even in challenging situations.

Digvijaya Singh praised Shinde for his leadership qualities. He quoted Sonia Gandhi’s words, describing Shinde as “ever smiling, always calm, and with great ability to listen to different viewpoints and find a middle path.” Singh highlighted Shinde’s journey from a humble beginning, losing his father early, to becoming the Home Minister. He noted Shinde’s ability to adapt and maintain his principles, even when Sharad Pawar took a different political step. Singh also admired Shinde’s capacity to unite people and manage challenges during tough times in politics.

The launch of *Five Decades in Politics* was not just a reflection on his political career but also a lesson in leadership, perseverance, and the power of mentorship. His life story, captured in his memoir, continues to inspire those seeking to make a difference in the world of politics and beyond. Archana Dalmia, **Ehsaas Woman** of Delhi concluded with a closing address.



Mateja Vodeb Ghosh



Srinjoy Chowdhury

Building Bridges – Her Excellency Mateja Vodeb Ghosh on Slovenia-India Relations, Cultural & Shared Values

A delightful session of **Tête-à-Tea** with Her Excellency Mateja Vodeb Ghosh took place in New Delhi. Her Excellency Mateja Vodeb Ghosh is the Ambassador of the Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia to India, appointed in 2021. She was in conversation with Srinjoy Chowdhury. The event commenced with Neelima Dalmia Adhar, the Honorary Convenor of Delhi NCR Affairs and **Ehsaas Woman** of Delhi, presenting the Foundation and warmly greeting the guests and audience to the literary session.

The conversation between the interviewer and Her Excellency Mateja Vodeb Ghosh, the Ambassador of Slovenia to India, provided profound insights into the relationship between the two vastly different countries, Slovenia and India. The discussion revolved around the contrasts and surprising connections between the nations, particularly in tourism, work, and culture.

She explained, “We noticed a significant increase in work permits being issued to Indians, especially in fields like construction and IT. Many are even coming to Slovenia for higher studies, PhDs, and post-doctoral research.” She further mentioned, “The number of Indians in Slovenia has grown from 200 to over 1,000 in just a few years.”

Tourism was another key area discussed. Although exact figures are elusive due to the Schengen visa system, Her Excellency shared that many Indian tourists are seeking new, off-the-beaten-path destinations in Europe after exploring popular places like France, Italy, and Switzerland. Slovenia, with its natural beauty and rich cultural history, is now on the map for these travellers. “Slovenia is the only country in the world with the word ‘love’ in its name, and that’s something we emphasize in our promotions,” she said, referencing Slovenia’s national tourism slogan, I Feel Slovenia.

The conversation then turned to the rich culinary diversity of Slovenia. Located at the crossroads of Italian, Austrian, Hungarian, and Balkan influences, Slovenia offers a

unique blend of cuisines that cater to diverse palates. “You can have everything from Mediterranean dishes to Austrian-German influenced meals. And yes, you can find some good Indian restaurants in Slovenia as well,” she said humorously, “my husband would disagree about the authenticity of the Indian food.”



Neelima Dalmia Adhar

As the discussion wrapped up, some bits from the Q&A session garnered attention. Slovenia’s sporting achievements, particularly at the Paris Olympics, where Slovenia won three medals, two of which were gold, despite its small population. Her Excellency attributed this success to Slovenia’s strong sports culture, saying, “Sports is integrated into our daily lives. It’s just as important as academics or the arts. From kindergarten, children are encouraged to participate in sports, whether it’s swimming, skiing, or basketball.”

Mateja Vodeb Ghosh’s passion for her homeland and her deep connection to India came through in her engaging conversation, leaving the audience with a deep sense of appreciation for both nations. Through her words, it became clear that despite the differences in size, population, and economics, there are strong ties and shared values that bind Slovenia and India together. The closing address was delivered by Neelima Dalmia Adhar and the felicitation of the guests was done by Monika Mohta.

This session of Tête-à-tea was organised with support of Ehsaas Women of Delhi and was in association with Sai Shinjini Academy of Fine Arts & Culture; hospitality partner The Connaught.



Rakhshanda Jalil

Sanjay Kumar Kundan

Of Urdu, humanity and writing- with Dr. Rakhshanda Jalil

A thought-provoking session of untold stories unfolded at **The Write Circle** in Patna with the esteemed Dr. Rakhshanda Jalil who was in conversation with Sanjay Kumar Kundan. The session was a true celebration of literature, filled with thought-provoking discussions and enriching insights by Prabha Khaitan Foundation. Anvita Pradhan, **Ehsaas Woman** of Patna, delivered the welcome address, setting the stage for an engaging dialogue.

Jalil's books are circled around the 4 P's. Politics, passion, people and places. In her recent book, she has tried to connect the works of Urdu poets who talk about love and unity amongst diversity.

Harking back to her earlier childhood times, Jalil mentioned the importance of imbibing culture and language to children from an early age. Talking about events or experiences which must have turned her into the fierce Champion for Urdu Hindustani, a language which has been much contested a language which falls squarely into the politics of literature, the author stated, "Like how in South India, you leave your chappal your slippers outside when you enter the house in my family, we left English outside, like there was no written down rule and my parents were both perfectly literate and cosmopolitan people in their own way but it was an unspoken rule that we at home will speak in Urdu Hindustani like not immaculate Urdu but we will speak in Urdu to our parents and outside the house of course English was a necessary evil but I had a very domestic way of speaking to some extent even now I speak very fluently but I don't have a critical idiom, so when I'm asked why I don't write in Urdu it is because my entire education has perforce been in English, has perforce been in English so my frame of reference my vocabulary my critical idiom is all in Urdu so I increasingly access it," expressed Dr. Jalil.

When prompted how she wrote books on fiction and Urdu simultaneously, "Having read English literature

with my inspiration William Somerset Maugham, words just flowed. I did not think so much. There is also a template for students who have read English Literature will know that there must be a start, middle and an ending part to a story. The ending part should be very stark and leave the readers something to think about. Having only this in mind, I kept writing." recollected Jalil.

The Poets who were the songwriters in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s and even later have given us the sense of romance and some stereotypical ideas about beauty. "A lot of things have changed recently because Urdu words have gradually started disappearing and there are certain writers or sex of people who feel that Urdu has to be taken away or there has to be some cleansing to the language. Urdu is there not just in the cinema industry but the Urdu writers and film lyricists have done a huge service in keeping Urdu alive in difficult times. But every time there was a war with Pakistan, Urdu became the enemy, it's strange but it is visible." expressed Jalil.

There was an immersive Q&A session with the audience that brought up some interesting answers from the author. The event was graced by the presence of Tripurari Sharan, who felicitated the author. The session concluded with a heartfelt vote of thanks delivered by Anubha Arya, **Ehsaas Woman** of Patna.



Anvita Pradhan



Anubha Arya

*This session of **The Write Circle** was organized with the support of **Ehsaas Women** of Patna, and was in association with Navras School of Performing Arts; Hospitality Partner, Chanakya; and Print Hindi Media Partner, Dainik Jagran*



Koral Dasgupta

Exploring Myth and Modernity: A Conversation with Koral Dasgupta



Jyoti Agarwal

On a vibrant evening organized by the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, Koral Dasgupta, the celebrated author, storyteller, and educator, sat down with Jyoti Agarwal for an engaging and insightful conversation. The event took place under the aegis of the Foundation's initiative- **The Write Circle**. In conversation with Jyoti Agarwal, **Ehsaas Woman** of Shillong, brought to light Dasgupta's thoughts on writing, life, and the delicate balance she maintains between creativity and discipline. Pooja Goenka, **Ehsaas Woman** of Shillong delivered the opening address.

As the event commenced, Jyoti Agarwal, set the tone by asking Koral Dasgupta about her entry into the world of mythology, latest being that of that Sati series, after having written about love, life and similar aspects. Dasgupta, known for her bold and imaginative narratives, responded with warmth and reflection.

"I'm not a mythologist. I am probably better read than many others when it comes to Indian mythology epics, I have read many versions of them. So, there are questions that come and when you grow up reading them so many times and accumulating those questions in your mind, there is a time that you spend with them you feel very uncomfortable being wherever you are and the takeaways that people around you try to tell. When you read and deal with these things for a long time, subconsciously it starts returning to you."

"Writing for me," she began, "wasn't a planned journey. It was a calling I couldn't ignore." She elaborated on how her early fascination with storytelling shaped her path. "I have always been drawn to myths, history, and untold stories of women. I wanted to bring those narratives to life."

Dasgupta's writing has Indra in all of her five books in the Sati series. Indra plays a very important role. She has connected Indra with indriya, which is the senses. We are often told that Indra is the mischievous one and how we must stay away from. But Dasgupta's books take a different

approach about Indra. "Indra is a God of Water and it cannot have any shape. We cannot put Him in a box. He is mischievous, fun but I wanted to add Indra in the Sati Series just to be a little daring and add a perspective against what people believe Indra to be." further remarked Dasgupta.



Pooja Goenka

Her passion for cultural narratives was palpable as she described her desire to break stereotypes, particularly surrounding women's roles in myth and history. "Women in our epics are strong, multi-dimensional, and far more nuanced than the traditional portrayals. I wanted to explore their strengths, vulnerabilities, and how their stories are relevant even today."

Talking about how Dasgupta's books are being read and researched worldwide, she responded, "Indian epics are getting read from different perspectives and Divinity is coming up as a course- Divinity studies and Indian mythology or Hindu mythology is of interest to a lot of people. So probably that is how a lot of research work is happening. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is instrumental in raising interest towards these works. This is beyond India that we are talking about." mentioned the five- book Sati series author.

The intriguing conversation then directed towards a Q&A session with the audience. The closing remarks were given by Ellora Burma from Taj Vivanta and the author was felicitated with a handcrafted Ajrakh stole by Twinkle Suhasini Marak.

This session of The Write Circle was organized with the support of Ehsaas Women of Shillong, and Hospitality Partner, Taj Vivanta



Koral Dasgupta

Kallol Dey

Reimagining Epic Female Hero with Koral Dasgupta

Another edition of **The Write Circle**, an English literary event organized by the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, was held in Dimapur to promote English literature in the North-East region. The guest author was Koral Dasgupta, a celebrated author, storyteller, and educator. The welcome note was addressed by Atuno Rio, **Ehsaas Woman** of Dimapur. The author engaged in a conversation with distinguished moderator Kallol Dey, an independent journalist from Dimapur.



Viketuno Rio



Abokali Jimomi

The literary discourse commenced with the conversationalist briefing about how Dasgupta's Sati series has been adapted from the untold voices of the young women and their lives. It is said that Hindu women recite a Sanskrit chant in the morning, which is believed to dispel even the most inauspicious circumstances by invoking the names of the five women known as the *Pancha Kanyas*. Dey said, "The five virgins destroy the greatest sins. These women are also forced into their individual identity. Dasgupta writes retelling from a women's perspective. In Ramayana, Tara has a considerable section but it's a passing or a substantial reference. Dasgupta retells the stories of iconic women from these epics right in a fairer light, more substantial light. Tara is a first-person narrative."

Describing what research she had to do when writing about Tara, the last of the Sati series, she remarked, "This entire research that I did for Tara was about animal principles, animal way of life and animal ethics. I read that animals always move in herds and every herd, there is an alpha. If there's a conflict in between and another Alpha emerges, that Alpha will always be in conflict with this one and the rest of the group will divide itself. It is their choice who they go with. When there is an alpha, everybody has to be with that Alpha, you are either with this one or with that one. If you don't want to be, then you are the third Alpha. If Tara or Ruma wanted to protest against Sugriv or Bali, they would have to become the other alpha but they did not want to."

Dasgupta further added, "The purpose of me writing these stories is not to establish religious narrative but to establish that Arthnarishwar narrative, which says that the union of masculine energy and feminine energy gives rise to a wonderful word. It is Shiva- Shakti, who come together to restore the world. When you take Shakti away from Shiva, he will do tandav. Shiva does that with his feet. It is a dance of destruction. That is a mythical fantasy dance. Every time two very vibrant energies are trying to be each other's strengths, they are creating something beautiful and every time for whatever reason, be it fate or joy, if they are breaking up there is a tandav."

As the event wrapped up, the audience was left with a deeper understanding of Koral Dasgupta's writing journey. Her approach to storytelling—rooted in passion, observation, and a strong connection to culture and history—served as an inspiration for many in attendance. The author and the conversationalist were felicitated with metal craft Dokra by Tournagbam Bobby Singh, General Manager of Zone Niathu by The Park. The formal vote of thanks was delivered by Abokabi Jimomi, **Ehsaas Woman** of Dimapur.

This session of The Write Circle was organized with the support of Ehsaas Women of Dimapur, and Hospitality Partner, Zone Niathu by The Park



Koral Dasgupta

Exploring Feminine Strength in Indian Epics



Simalisha Baruah

The Write Circle, organized by the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, welcomed yet another session of Koral Dasgupta- as a part of her literary tour in North-East India. She is an entrepreneur, writer, educator and painter. Her stories explore the inherent nature of complex minds leading to a relatable conflict and unpredictable climax. Tanushree Dutta Gogoi, **Ehsaas Woman** of Guwahati welcomed the audience. The session involved a conversation of the author with Simalisha Baruah, **Ehsaas Woman** of Guwahati.

During a riveting literary discussion, the author of the Panchakanya series shared the intriguing journey behind her work, offering a window into her creative process and deep reflections on mythology and philosophy. Her insights provided a fresh perspective on traditional narratives, challenging societal norms and highlighting the fluidity of gendered experiences in ancient texts.

On what inspired her to write about the Panchakanya, the author recalled, "It was a spark, an idea I didn't expect anyone to accept. I sent out emails with zero expectations, yet somehow, Aalia was already written, and the rest followed." Her fascination with the kanya or virgin concept within mythology ignited the desire to explore the purity attributed to these figures. "In Bengal," she explained, "Sati is a very political word. Women have been thrown into fire to maintain their physical purity. Yet, here I see women with multiple partners being called mahasati. This led me to realize that the idea of purity had to be much more than just physical."

She elaborated on her understanding of ancient texts, stating, "These aren't religious scriptures, but ancient philosophies. Religion divides people, while philosophy seeks to understand the bigger picture." The author spoke passionately about how mythology uses metaphors to convey profound truths. "For instance, she shared, "the collaboration of masculine and feminine energy is essential for creation. Shiva and Shakti together represent

productivity, but when separated, chaos ensues." On whether she experiences writer's block, the author dismissed the term as "glorified." She likened it to a bad day at any other job, saying, "It's just a bad day at work when nothing is coming through."

The author concluded with a thought-provoking comment on the societal reinterpretation of characters like Sita. "We've been told Sita is obedient, but look at her actions. She chose to go to the forest, demanded the golden deer, and even refused Hanuman's help when captive. Sita was anything but obedient. She was always running ahead, leading the charge."

Through a dynamic Q&A session, the author shed light on the complexities of mythological figures and their relevance to modern life, challenging long-held assumptions and offering new interpretations of timeless stories. The closing address was delivered by Tanushree Dutta Gogoi, **Ehsaas Woman** of Guwahati and the author was felicitated with traditional handloom stoles by Alakananda Das.



Tanushree Datta Gogoi



Audience

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



Gracy Bawitlung

Voicing of Myth with Modernity



Koral Dasgupta

On a lively evening in Aizawl, **The Write Circle** was hosted with renowned author, storyteller, and educator Koral Dasgupta. She engaged in a thought-provoking conversation with Gracy Bawitlung, Member Secretary of Mizoram State Legal Services Authority. The event, held as part of the Foundation's literary umbrella, offered valuable insights into Dasgupta's perspectives on writing, life, and how she skillfully balances history, mythology and creativity with discipline. Amelia Lalremdiki Sailo, **Ehsaas Woman** of Aizawl opened the event with a warm welcome note.

When queried about how Hindu religion is any different from other epics, the Sati series author remarked, "Any ancient literature or text, irrespective of religion, any folk, myth, at the end of the day, tries to tell a certain truth about life and livelihood. They make use of characters to be able to do that. They are not commercial fiction they never were meant to be. They were ideally written by philosophers who are making use of certain characters could be animals, humans or even God. You would not find the basic learning that or the truth that they are trying to say about any kind of living, humans, plants or animals."

The tête-à-tête forayed into how much of Dasgupta as a person is relatable to Tara, she declared, "Tara is a very notorious person. She loves creating mischievous trouble. She will do something to irritate people and if the person gets irritated, she perceives happiness. I think that is how all women are. We love irritating our brothers, fathers, boyfriends or husbands."



Amelia Sailo



Audience

On consciousness, Dasgupta stated in her words, "In real life, very few people are truly awakened by their conscience, but when it happens, that's when transformation begins. Bali's death, for example, isn't simply a physical demise. I don't consider these events as purely religious; I call them philosophical. These texts are more about philosophy than religion. Philosophy doesn't focus on birth or death; it believes in an endless cycle of existence, manifesting in different forms and dimensions."

When inquired if this act does not necessarily signify the end of Bali. To which the author responded, "Exactly. Bali's death doesn't signify the end of his being. It means that the part of him that had become arrogant, angry, and destructive was eliminated. What remains is the good force that still exists within him. It's in that moment of clarity, as he faces his end, that Bali's arrogance fades away, and he sees things as they truly are."

An interactive Q&A with the author and receptive audience was then concluded with the storyteller-author stating on women and the roles she played, "In the human world, there's a misconception that homemakers are somehow useless. In reality, homemakers are managing money, managing people, and managing resources. They're essentially practising production, financial, and human resource management. Mythology tells us something significant—women go through different stages and cycles of life, and at each stage, their bodies and minds change. These changes, driven by hormones and life experiences, make women well-suited for advisory roles, rather than front-running ones." Amelia Lalremdiki Sailo, Ehsaas Woman of Aizawl delivered a formal Thank you note. Lalrini Sangsiamia felicitated the guests with Lucknowi Chikankari stoles.

This session of The Write Circle was organized with the support of Ehsaas Women of Aizawl, Hospitality Partner, Folkland



Aishwarya Jha



Isha Gupta Vaish

Exploring Creativity and Culture

On a serene day in Mussoorie, fondly known as the Queen of Hills, the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** hosted a captivating literary session of **The Write Circle**. The featured author, Aishwarya Jha, shared insights from her literary journey, providing the audience with a glimpse into her creative process and personal experiences. Isha Gupta Vaish, **Ehsaas Woman** of Mussoorie expertly guided the conversation, creating an engaging atmosphere. Ankit Vaish from Amara Hill Queen welcomed the audience with a brief welcome note.

The session commenced with Vaish getting to know Jha as a person out of the many accomplished titles under her name. “I think on a day-to-day basis, I’m someone for whom doing the right thing is very important. This idea of there not being a gap between what you think, what you say and what you do— that’s very important to me. I feel like it’s something which is increasingly rare in our world, where a lot of things are about projecting something, thinking something else, saying something else. Looking out for beautiful things like my protagonist Arya is something that I do.” Jha has recently authored “The Scent of Fallen Stars”, a fiction.

“I’m always very moved by beauty. I always like to see beauty around me, that’s very important to me. I have seven dogs. Dealing with them is pretty much a full-time job. I’ve done theatre, plays, acting, directing, management, consulting, and worked in the beauty and wellness sphere with luxury fashion. A lot of different things interest me.”

Jha has written many scripts for plays and shows that involved writing stories in the form of long writing and poetry. When asked about which of the two she enjoys the most, Jha stated, “Even when I read other people’s poetry, those few brief lines can have this instant impact. you know and it’s like those few words have captured something so monumental and impactful. There is no favourite but I think that writing poetry helped me with my fiction just as writing plays also helped me with writing my novel.”

On poetry, Jha added, “I’m influenced by poets and storytellers who use metaphors to convey deeper truths. To me, writing is not just about telling a story; it’s about crafting an experience for the reader, and language plays a crucial role in that.

“I think this new trend of self love has always been there. You almost always do something, even if it is for someone only for you. The husband is dear to the wife for the wife’s sake; the wife is dear to the husband for the husband’s sake. The child is dear to the parents for the parents’ sake, and the parent is dear to the child for the child’s sake. We love people for our own sake; we love them because they bring us joy, they bring us happiness. Tomorrow, if someone you love is having a problem, you won’t like it because you’ll feel upset if they have a problem. So, I don’t think there’s a crisis of self-love in the way it is projected these days.

Talking about India and its narrative of how she has mentioned in her book, “As for Indophile, it’s a venture we’ve been talking about for a while, and we’re just getting started. We have such a rich heritage in India with art, music, dance, cuisine, and more, but I feel a lot of it isn’t highlighted enough. Indophile is a love letter to India — a way to celebrate all the lesser-known gems of our culture. For example, there’s an instrument called Jal Tarang, which I mention in my book. It produces exquisite, almost cosmic music, but not many people have heard of it or seen a performance. That’s just one of the things we hope to share through this venture.”

This session of The Write Circle was organized with the support of Ehsaas Woman of Mussoorie, Hospitality Partner, Amara Hill Queen; Print Hindi Media Partner, Dainik Jagran



Aishwarya Jha

Unveiling the Journey of the Heart and Pen



Pooja Marwah

An enthralling session of literary insight- **The Write Circle** was organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** in Dehradun, drawing a hall full of an attentive audience. Pooja Khanna, **Ehsaas Woman** of Dehradun welcomed the gathering with a formal opening address and invited everyone to indulge in an evening of a literary conversation moderated by Pooja Poddar Marwah, **Ehsaas Woman** of Dehradun. She steered the discussion with thoughtfulness, encouraging Jha to share her reflections on her writing journey. From her early years to her current success, Jha traced her path with warmth and candour, speaking openly about the challenges she encountered and the profound transformations that influenced her work.

Jha's newest addition to the literary world is one which has facets and shades of herself. Going back to where it all started working with Hermes, the author mentioned, "I started working at Hermes when I was 19 because I did the London School of Economics international program so that I could take my exams at the British Council. I wanted to have that experience because I really feel like the best learning is when you're on the job. I was at a junior position, it was a fashion associate. I got to see the behind the scenes of how this huge conglomerate and MNC functioned and it was not glamorous."

Intrigued on how she chose to start writing, the conversationalist Marwah inquired on the same. To which, she implied, "I always used to love writing. As a child, I was encouraged to write because I was good at it. Other subjects, not so much."

Commenting on whether the author writes poetry or prose more, she said "A lot of people tell me that they find a lot of poetry in the prose that I write. I love poetry. I feel like I love words, I used to always love to read about writing and improve and sharpen my skills all the time because I think words are so powerful, whether they're written or spoken or heard or felt. I have always wanted to write books, novels and maybe in the future non-fiction."

Jha also commented on her experience on writing about the 90's part of the book which she mentioned was full of nostalgia, "I remember writing the part with full of old memories. We as children used to use a lot of imagination because innovation was slower. Things like CD players had come out and I remember people talking about it even after 5 years at that time. I really wanted to capture that era, not just the tangible part, but just simple emotions and feelings about it."

As the conversation drew to a close, Jha wholeheartedly answered the audience's questions in a Q&A session. She encouraged aspiring writers in the audience to embrace the process fully, regardless of the difficulties. "The journey of writing is never straightforward, but it's in the twists and turns that you find your true voice," she advised. Marwah closed the session by expressing her admiration for Jha's artistry and dedication, remarking, "It's rare to witness such an honest conversation about the intricacies of writing and self-discovery."

Ehsaas Woman of Dehradun, Pooja Khanna delivered the Vote of Thanks and Maj. Ravi Randev felicitated the author with a handloom scarf.



Pooja Khanna



Audience

This session of The Write Circle was organized with the support of Ehsaas Women of Dehradun, Hospitality Partner, Hyatt Regency Dehradun Resort & Spa; Print Hindi Media Partner, Dainik Jagran



Mazhar Farooqui

On Various Strides of Journalism



Kaveree Bamzai

This absorbing session of **The Write Circle** Delhi featured the fearless investigative journalist Mazhar Farooqui. He is a multiple-award winning investigative journalist who has dedicated his life to relentlessly digging for the truth, exposing corruption and uncovering mega scams. The event was held in conversation with journalist, author and film critic- Kaveree Bamzai. The Welcome address was delivered by the gracious Neelima Dalmia Adhar, the Honorary Convenor of Delhi NCR Affairs and **Ehsaas Woman** of Delhi.

Commencing the talk on how a guy from Lucknow moved to Dubai, the author said, “I was doing very well in a city like Lucknow, working with Pioneer, Hindustan Times and then Times of India. I was very content and happy with life. Then, I got a call from Gulf news telling me there is an opportunity in Dubai. The initial idea was to go to Dubai and spend like one or two years, make some money and come back but now Dubai is home and I want to go back to Dubai when I come to India.”

The ongoing conversation shifted to Farooqui mentioning about the changes in journalism, writing in pen and ink and then to typewriter. “I have come through all stages, ink and paper, typewriter, TV, newspapers, YouTube and now even Twitter and other social media platforms. The platform to make your voice heard is endless now.” said the author.

Farooqui stated that he has 35 cases against him in Dubai, 2-3 cases in India and multiple legal notices. He also has a lot of other hatred on social media. It is challenging as a person and for the family itself. When asked how he deals with so much toxicity which is not just virtual but also in real life. He replied, “We don't have any agenda, we just do a story and we just report what is in the public domain. There are more Christians and Muslims behind bars on the story than any nationality but to say that I am going after a particular community, that was quite sad and I can deal with all of these things but if they like you know talk about my family to behead my daughters. Those things are disturbing. One day, I was called by authorities and was

asked what are you doing about it. So I'm very careful and had to fly my daughter from India to Dubai because there is risk involved.”

Reflecting on a story that left a lasting impact on him, Mazhar Farooqui shared how, due to job scarcity in India, around 20,000 Indian youths moved to the UAE and became involved with Chinese cybercrime syndicates, targeting India. He explained, “Those scam messages you receive—Dubai was the hub. These operations started in Cambodia and Myanmar, but after crackdowns, they relocated to the UAE, occupying entire buildings. Inside, thousands of men and women, referred to as 'cyber slaves,' were forced to commit crimes. We uncovered 20-storey fortified buildings housing thousands, solely for cybercrime. Fortunately, we were able to put an end to it, though not without casualties.”

The receptive audience inquired about some of their doubts in the field of journalism and Farooqui did not disappoint. He unveiled some facts, myths and other dimensions that he has faced to unearth some unordinary stories in his career. The conversation concluded with such a Q&A session. The closing address was delivered by Neelima Dalmia Adhar and the felicitation was done by Huma Khalil, **Ehsaas Woman** of Delhi.



Neelima Dalmia Adhar



Huma Khalil & Karuna Goenka

This session of The Write Circle was organised with the support of Ehsaas Women of Delhi, and was in association with Dinesh Nandini Ramkrishna Dalmia Foundation and Westland Books, and Print Hindi Media Partner, Dainik Jagran



Trials and Tribulations of Investigative Journalism

Mazhar Farooqui & Carlyle McFarland

The Write Circle, Lucknow surely made a difference to the listeners in the audience with the investigative journalist Mazhar Farooqui who was in conversation with Carlyle McFarland. The welcome address was delivered by Madhuri Halwasiya, the Foundation's Honorary Convenor of Awadh Affairs and **Ehsaas Woman** of Lucknow.

Communalism was happening in the author's own close quarters in the streets of Lucknow. And throughout his book- *The Maz Files: Scoops, Scams And Showdowns*. If one is sensitive and perspective, there is the likelihood that one will be able to pick up these nuances and understand the mind of somebody who is as professional as they come. When interrogated how much this kind of sentiment affected not his writing but his desire to investigate that which is wrong. "It is a private trauma and a childhood trauma which in fact has motivated me into taking to this profession and of course now dealing with it professionally."

"There was a riot in Lucknow in 1991 and there was an open fire in the streets of my house. We see men take position in the school building and anyone who was awake was shot dead. That morning, I was at the station to pick up one of my cousins and while back, we were stopped and when they asked us our name which was Farooqui, we were dragged out of the car and beaten up mercilessly. My father was beaten in front of me and my cousins were taken into custody because the police thought we must be carrying explosives with us. The City Magistrate who was sitting in front did not act on this. This stays in my mind and it does impact me even now", explained the author.

As a journalist, the author writes for different newspapers with different agenda, different countries and different qualities, the editorial board that he reports to affects or influences the writing that he would like to do as an investigative journalist. In reply, "There is no luxury to investigate stories. While I also do weather reports, routine events, I have also investigated stories which put you through lawsuits and are expensive. So, it is not worth it. There is no support from the editorial board. So

investigative journalism is a luxury in the overall journalist scheme of things."

Talking about one story that stayed with Farooqui in his journey, he mentioned that unable to find a job in India about 20,000 Indian youths moved to the UAE where they join Chinese cybercrime syndicates to carry out cybercrimes in India. "So all these phone messages that you get, the epicentre was Dubai. So, they were initially in Cambodia and Myanmar but there was a crack down there so they moved the entire working to the UAE where they took up entire buildings and in these buildings there were men and women - we call them cyber slaves - locked up in a house and told to carry out crimes. When investigated, it was a 20-storey building, each of these 12-13 buildings are housing thousands of people which are all fortified buildings with guards outside and they had only one purpose to carry out cybercrimes and fortunately we managed to end this while a lot of blood was involved." said the author.

The session concluded with an engaging audience Q&A round with the author. The closing remarks were given by Deepa Mishra, Ehsaas Woman of Lucknow and Anita Bhatnagar and Dimple Trivedi, **Ehsaas Woman** of Lucknow felicitated the guests with Jaipur puppets.



Madhuri Halwasiya



Dimple Trivedi & Deepa Mishra

This session of The Write Circle was organized with the support of Ehsaas Women of Lucknow, in association with BP Halwasiya Foundation and Westland Books; Hospitality Partner, Taj Mahal, Lucknow; and Print Hindi Media Partner, Dainik Jagran

The Price of Truth: Reflections on Investigative Journalism Today



Ritika Talwar Singh and Mazhar Farooqui

An engaging session of **The Write Circle** was organised in Patiala by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** featuring acclaimed investigative journalist and author Mazhar Farooqui, whose work has taken him across borders and into some of the most challenging corners of the profession. He was in conversation with **Ehsaas Woman** of Patiala, Ritika Talwar Singh.

He traced his journey from choosing journalism over construction despite family opposition, to a traumatic turning point in 1991 when police violence in Lucknow claimed the lives of several boys, including his cousin.

The discussion explored the plight of Muslims in India, the personal risks of investigative reporting such as death threats and legal cases, the rise of cybercrimes in Dubai driven by Chinese syndicates, and the restricted space for press freedom.



Book Signing



Audience

*This session of **The Write Circle** was organised with the support of **Ehsaas Women** of Patiala, and was in association with Westland Books; and hospitality partner Door No. 3*



Exploring Legacy, Love, and Literary Provocation with Neelima Dalmia Adhar



In a splendid gathering of literary enthusiasts, Neelima Dalmia Adhar captivated the audience in Nagpur as she engaged in an insightful conversation with Priyanka Kothari, **Ehsaas Woman** of Nagpur, under the aegis of the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation's The Write Circle** initiative. The event, known for its vibrant celebration of literature and intellectual dialogue, provided an enriching platform for Adhar to delve into her unique journey across genres, her literary inspirations, and her recent works.

The evening began with a warm welcome address by Monica Bhagwagar, **Ehsaas Woman** of Nagpur, setting a gracious tone for the evening. Parveen Tuli, **Ehsaas Woman** of Nagpur followed with a thoughtful introduction of the guest author, capturing the audience's attention with a summary of Adhar's impressive literary accomplishments.

As the conversation unfolded, Neelima Dalmia Adhar shared an unexpected personal connection with Nagpur, which set an intimate backdrop for the evening's discussion. "I have a special association with Nagpur," she shared. "My maternal grandfather was a reader of English literature at Morris College during the British era, and my mother spent her youth here. Although I could not master Marathi, my mother and her siblings spoke it fluently, keeping the language alive within our family."

Reflecting on her writing journey, Adhar credited her seamless transition across genres to an almost mystical connection with her subjects. "I feel as if I am chosen by my subjects rather than the other way around," she explained thoughtfully. "When I write, I don't stand on the sidelines as an observer; I embody my protagonists. I don't simply write about them—I become them." This immersive approach to storytelling, she explained, was grounded in her study of psychology, which helped her to delve into the psyche of her characters and add depth to her narratives.

Adhar shared a memorable story about her parents' unusual romance, which began with her father's proposal at an award ceremony. She explained, "My father, a man married five times before, fell in love with my mother the moment he saw her. She was appalled at first, but destiny played its

hand." This unlikely union, she revealed, left a complex legacy, one that would profoundly shape her understanding of love, rebellion, and self-expression.

Finally, addressing the societal perceptions of fidelity and moral judgement, Adhar confessed her own unorthodox views: "What is adultery? I was raised in a home where every so-called 'vice' existed as part of normal life. My moral fibre is distorted, so don't expect a conventional answer. Adultery is as prevalent as COVID; everyone's either in it, coming out of it, or wanting it." This openness to challenging social norms, particularly around marriage and fidelity, is a recurring motif in Adhar's books, reflecting her belief in questioning societal constraints.

By the event's end, it was clear to the audience that Adhar's work is not just a collection of stories but a mirror reflecting her life's boldness, contradictions, and complex truths. Through each novel, she continues to probe the deeper questions of heritage, morality, and self-expression, paving the way for conversations that are as provocative as they are liberating. The author even engaged in a Q&A session with the audience. The formal felicitation was conducted by Rahul Soni and Jyoti Kapoor, **Ehsaas Woman** of Nagpur, concluded the evening with a vote of thanks.



Monica Bhagwagar



Jyoti Kapoor



Parveen Tuli

*This session of The Write Circle was organized with the support of **Ehsaas Women** of Nagpur, and was in association with Central Provinces Club Nagpur Ltd; and Print Hindi Media Partner, Lokmat.*

Exploring Violence and Humanity- A Conversation with Siddharthya Roy



Siddharthya Roy & Shokin Chauhan

The thought-provoking session of **The Write Circle**, Pune, captivated the audience with an engaging conversation between investigative journalist Siddharthya Roy and conversationalist Lt.Gen. Shokin Chauhan. The event offered an insightful and thought-provoking dialogue that resonated with attendees. Siddharthya Roy's journalistic expertise, combined with Lt.Gen. Shokin Chauhan skillful moderation, made for a compelling discussion on contemporary issues. The session began with a warm welcome address by Neelam Seolekar, **Ehsaas Woman** of Pune, setting the tone for a memorable and impactful evening that left a lasting impression on all those present.

The tête-à-tête commenced with a quote that epitomises Roy's book- 'you cannot call yourself peaceful unless you're capable of great violence. If you're not capable of that violence, you're not peaceful, you're useless.' Journalist and author Siddharthya Roy and Chauhan, discussed regional politics of violence including events in Bangladesh and Kashmir. While talking about his book "The Company of Violent Men," he opined that violence was a part of life just like love.

The author shared his experiences in Bangladesh, Chhattisgarh and Kashmir, and also gave insights on Rohingyas. "Some of the violent people fight for faith, others for power. But few fight just to belong." Talking about the violence which erupted in Bangladesh a month ago, Roy said he could see this taking shape in 2016 itself. "In front of me, a young man was shot point blank on the forehead without any provocation. When I reported this, Sheikh Hasina's government had blacklisted me."

"The more we push, the more we label people the more we increase our diminution of talk about other people. We left me no option but to do this. That's what we've sadly done with the Rohingyas by calling all terrorists. In my book, I

speak about the hungry ladies of Cox's Bazar, when I met women in a brothel. I spoke to the youngest girl there and all she liked was just an ice-cream. It still hurts me and brings me to tears to see how it is that our civilization is that you couldn't let them remain just simple little girls. We are now here trading for them for their flesh. The saddest part is we do not have the option of human beings just being human beings."

The session was followed by a gripping Q&A. The event came to a close with a heartfelt vote of thanks by Sujata Sabnis, **Ehsaas Woman** of Pune, acknowledging the insightful exchange and the warmth of the audience. The evening concluded with the felicitation of the guests by Amita Munot, **Ehsaas Woman** of Pune, marking the end of a truly memorable and intellectually stimulating session.

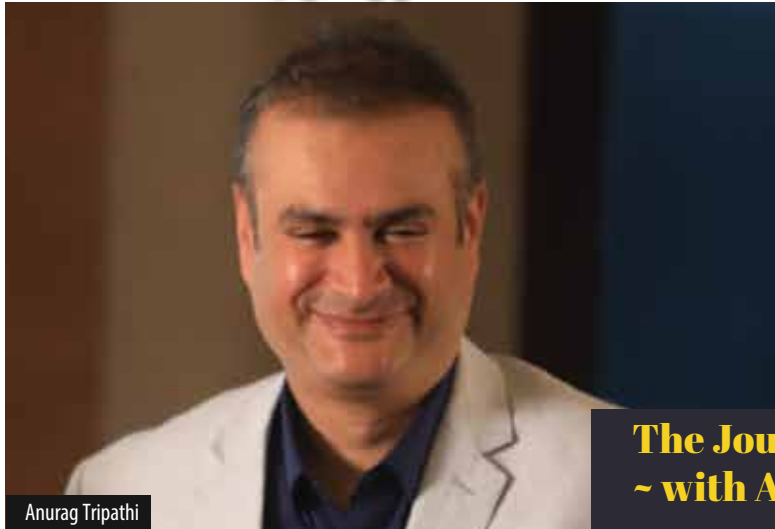


Amita Munot

Neelam Seolekar

Sujata Sabnis

*This session of The Write Circle was organized with the support of **Ehsaas Women** of Pune, Hospitality Partner, O Hotel; and Print Hindi Media Partner, Lokmat*



Anurag Tripathi



Suchitra Dhanani

The Journey of Storytelling and Transformation ~ with Anurag Tripathi

Anurag Tripathi traced his journey as a writer in a recent session of **The Write Circle**, a bouquet event of the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, in Indore. The session, filled with humour, humility, and profound insights, unfolded author Anurag Tripathi's passion for storytelling, a brave career switch from a successful investment banker. Suchitra Sajid Dhanani, **Ehsaas Woman** of Indore was in conversation with the author. She seamlessly navigated the whole conversation.

Surbhi Dhupar, **Ehsaas Woman** of Indore delivered a warm welcome note. Following which, Rohit Bajpai, General Manager, Sheraton Grand Palace addressed the audience.

Dhanani kick-started a quintessential conversation with Tripathi about his book, "The Goa Gambit". She briefed about how the extravagance, glamour, thrills, greed, politics, murky dirt around, lights, curiosity, glitter and glitz of Goa attracts not just youth but everyone to the world of casinos. She said, "Vegas stories also had a big impact on Indians and author Anurag Tripathi has hit the cord very well with the characters and story in his book, The Goa Gambit."

Tripathi commenced his story of being an investment banker to becoming a writer. Taking the advice of Dan Brown to heart, Tripathi embarked on a deep dive into the world of art, a subject he admitted to knowing little about at the time. "I didn't know much about art, but I researched for a good year and a half before I started writing," he shared. This intense research process not only fueled his curiosity but also enabled him to write with authority and insight.

Greed happens to be a central theme in all of the characters in his book, The Goa Gambit. Adding to that, the author said, "Greed is a powerful motivator. It's been with us since the beginning of time, woven into the fabric of human nature. Despite being one of the original seven sins, we still grapple with it. In my writing, I like to explore how greed influences people's choices and behaviours. Gambling isn't just about the act of placing a bet; it's about the thrill of risk.

There's something almost primal about it. Greed is in our genes, and from there, gambling takes root. It's not surprising that even the gods haven't stood a chance against it, let alone humans. As one of the characters in my novel says, 'What chance do mortal men have against these vices—alcohol, gambling, and lust?'"

When inquired if his books would inspire movie makers. He responded, "I heard that MAMI—the Mumbai Academy of Moving Image, is looking at the novel for a potential adaptation. Who knows, one day you might see these characters brought to life on the big screen!"

The conversation paints a vivid picture of Anurag Tripathi's deep connection with his characters and themes, making the discussion not only informative but emotionally engaging for the audience. There was a Q&A session with the audience before wrapping up the session and he shared some untold stories of the lives in Goa that people tend to miss out on. The closing address was delivered by Unnati Singh, **Ehsaas Woman** of Indore. Suchitra Sajid Dhanani, Surbhi Dhupar and Unnati Singh, the **Ehsaas Women** of Indore, felicitated the author.



Surbhi Dhupar and Unnati Singh

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



Harshita Gupta



Pallavi Pahwa

Love, Life and all that Jazz

In an engaging **The Write Circle** session where Pallavi Pahwa, **Ehsaas Woman** of Ludhiana, sat down with debut author Harshita Gupta to delve into her personal journey and the inspiration behind her poignant debut book. Zarqa Jain, **Ehsaas Woman** of Ludhiana welcomed the audience, opening the evening for an intriguing conversation. The discussion between the two was heartfelt and insightful, offering a glimpse into Gupta's life beyond her popular digital content.

Pahwa began by asking the author about her early career transition. Gupta revealed, "I started in 2016 as a radio jockey for three years and then came the digital wave. Instagram and YouTube were exploding, and one day my boss pushed me into creating content." Despite being camera-shy at the time, Gupta added, "I was forced into it, but I eventually fell in love with it. I always tell people- this career chose me."

The conversation then shifted to Gupta's content creation style. Pahwa inquired, "Is there a particular theme or pattern to your posts?" Gupta shared, "I focus mostly on observational comedy. It's about the things I see around me, the people I encounter. And yes, the series with my dad became a hit!" Laughing, she added, "He did theatre for years, so he's a natural on screen. I feel fortunate to help fulfil his acting dreams."

When asked about her therapy journey, Gupta opened up, saying, "I was going through depression in 2016, and after a recent heartbreak, I felt the same symptoms—losing weight, sleepless nights. That's when I realized I needed professional help." She encouraged others to seek therapy, adding, "Mental health is just as important as physical health. Journaling and therapy helped me."

The conversation took a deeply personal turn as they discussed the theme of Gupta's book — overcoming heartbreak. Gupta opened up about the vulnerability behind her writing: "This book is very close to my heart. It's about how to unlove someone, not just love." She also discussed the

importance of therapy in her healing process, stating, "Therapy was the first step in overcoming my heartbreak." Pahwa began by asking Gupta about her views on love. "I believe in true love, but not the Bollywood movie kind," Gupta laughed. "True love, for me, is peace. It's calmness. It's someone who doesn't make me anxious all the time, questioning if they love me, or if they're hiding something from me." She continued, explaining that in today's world, the availability of options often leads to doubt and insecurity in relationships, which she doesn't see as real love. "If you're always anxious, always questioning, that's not love," she said firmly.

In the closing and Q&A session, Gupta spoke about the concept of 'moving on.' Gupta poignantly spoke, "For me, moving on is indifference. It's not about love or hate—it's about being unaffected. It took years, but now, that's where I am." The author was felicitated by Gunjan Adya with the closing address delivered by Zarqa Jain, **Ehsaas Woman** of Ludhiana.



Gunjan Adya & Zarqa Jain

This session of The Write Circle was organized with the support of Ehsaas Women of Ludhiana, and was in association with Hospitality Partner, Centra Greens



Harshita Gupta

Ruhi Syal

A Journey of Love and Self-Discovery

The Write Circle in Jalandhar brought together literature enthusiasts for a heartfelt dialogue. **Ehsaas Woman** of Jalandhar, Ruhi Walia Syal, engaged in a candid conversation with debut author Harshita Gupta about her journey, life experiences, and the inspiration behind her first novel. Divya Kapoor Sardana, **Ehsaas Woman** of Jalandhar, gave the welcome address.

The event kicked off with Syal highlighting her transition from being a social media personality to a novelist. What followed was an engaging session, filled with laughter, introspection, and wisdom.

Syal commenced by asking Gupta about her initial struggles with being in the public eye. Gupta candidly admitted, "I was very camera conscious, very, very camera shy. That's why I chose radio because you can obviously talk on a mic, which is very easy for me." She shared how stepping into Instagram content creation was a turning point. "I still remember when I was shooting my first video. I didn't know how to shoot content on a phone or how a camera even looks."

When asked if she would ever return to radio or give up video content, Gupta replied emphatically, "Never, never." The audience laughed and applauded her resolve to keep exploring new mediums.

Syal probed deeper, asking Gupta about the overarching message of her book and how she tackled the topic of heartbreak. Gupta replied, "I think the pain was the problem. When my friends came and told me, 'You know, I can't love again,' it resonated deeply with me. Everybody wants to feel love; everybody wants to be loved. But this generation, I think, is clearly a generation of broken, unloved individuals."

The conversation took a poignant turn when Gupta shared a letter she wrote in her book. This letter, directed to herself, serves as both a personal reflection and a message of

encouragement for readers. In it, Gupta wrote, "Dear you, I know you're almost delusional on the brink of letting go... you're holding on to every shred of hope." The letter reassures readers that despite feelings of hopelessness, they are not alone. Gupta reflected on her own experiences with love, revealing that her journey was filled with disappointments and doubts. "I almost lost the love of my life because dating in today's world erodes your kind," she confessed.

The conversation concluded with Gupta's perspective on love: "Love is responsibility. It is choosing the same person every day again and again," she said. She emphasized that love is not about constant passion but about being there for each other through thick and thin. Her words struck a chord with the audience, offering a calming perspective on the trials of modern relationships.

Gupta had a Q & A session with the audience. Gupta's *Unloved* serves as a testament to resilience and hope, encouraging readers to embrace their journey toward self-love and acceptance. Simran Paintal, **Ehsaas Woman** of Jalandhar, concluded the event with a vote of thanks. The author was felicitated with a Kantha Uttoriyo by Simrita Bawa.



Simran Paintal

Divya Sardana

This session of The Write Circle was organized with the support of Ehsaas Women of Jalandhar, and was in association with Hospitality Partner Radisson Hotel Jalandhar, and Hindi print media partner Dainik Jagran

A Journey of Love and Self-Discovery



Harshita Gupta

An intimate and enlightening gathering that captivated the city's literary community in Amritsar, **The Write Circle** attracted a discerning and intellectually engaged audience. This exclusive occasion offered a rare opportunity to delve deeply into the creative odyssey of the talented author Harshita Gupta, whose debut novel *Unloved* has struck a resonant chord with readers for its poignant and evocative exploration of love, rejection, and emotional healing. The conversation, masterfully guided by the erudite Reena Kundra, allowed the audience to gain profound insights into Gupta's personal experiences. Praneet Bubber, Foundation's Honorary Convenor of Punjab & Haryana Affairs and **Ehsaas Woman** of Amritsar, warmly welcomed the gathering.

Harshita Gupta, a writer with a profound sensitivity to the complexities of human emotions and relationships, took the audience on a reflective journey through her personal and creative life. She shared the ups and downs of her path to becoming an author, emphasizing that writing was not just a career but a deep-rooted passion. "Writing chose me, not the other way around," Gupta reflected during the conversation, hinting at how her writing process often emerges from introspection and lived experiences.



Praneet Bubber



Sheetal Khanna

Today's girl has financial independence. "And thus chooses to move to the next person she wants. She has the right to make her own choices. Earlier, the only reason the ladies did not leave the marriage was because of lack of financial independence. But this generation does lack patience. A minor inconvenience and she is not ready to accept that. That concerns me," said the author. In the book, "*Unloved*", she has compared her story of her ex to Monica and Chandler from *Friends*. "Monica and Chandler were friends first and then they decided to get married. But Ross and Rachel were in a relationship from the start," pointed out the author.

"I think you need to set the rules right from the beginning. The needs should be communicative and nowadays there is something called gaslighting. It is to manipulate someone using psychological methods into questioning their own sanity or powers of reasoning," highlighted the author.

Throughout the discussion, Gupta emphasized the idea that healing doesn't come through external validation but through self-awareness and acceptance. "We need to learn to love ourselves, not because we are perfect, but because we are enough as we are. That's a message I wanted to convey," Gupta said.

The dialogue fostered an atmosphere of introspection and connection, allowing participants to engage not only with the author's journey but also with their own emotional landscapes. Ultimately, the evening was a resounding success with an interactive Q&A with the audience. Kanwar Manchanda felicitated the author and conversationalist and Sheetal Khanna, **Ehsaas Woman** of Amritsar, delivered the vote of thanks.

This session of The Write Circle was organized with the support of Ehsaas Women of Amritsar, and was in association with Hospitality Partner, Taj Swarna, Amritsar; and Print Hindi Media Partner, Dainik Jagran



Exploring Legacy, Love, and Literary Provocation with Neelima Dalmia Adhar



Neelima Dalmia Adhar

In a splendid gathering of literary enthusiasts, Neelima Dalmia Adhar captivated the audience in Nagpur as she engaged in an insightful conversation with Priyanka Kothari, **Ehsaas Woman** of Nagpur, under the aegis of the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation's The Write Circle** initiative. The event, known for its vibrant celebration of literature and intellectual dialogue, provided an enriching platform for Adhar to delve into her unique journey across genres, her literary inspirations, and her recent works. The evening began with a warm welcome address by Monica Bhagwagar, **Ehsaas Woman** of Nagpur, setting a gracious tone for the evening. Parveen Tuli, **Ehsaas Woman** of Nagpur followed with a thoughtful introduction of the guest author, capturing the audience's attention with a summary of Adhar's impressive literary accomplishments.

As the conversation unfolded, Neelima Dalmia Adhar shared an unexpected personal connection with Nagpur, which set an intimate backdrop for the evening's discussion. "I have a special association with Nagpur," she shared. "My maternal grandfather was a reader of English literature at Morris College during the British era, and my mother spent her youth here. Although I could not master Marathi, my mother and her siblings spoke it fluently, keeping the language alive within our family."

Reflecting on her writing journey, Adhar credited her seamless transition across genres to an almost mystical connection with her subjects. "I feel as if I am chosen by my subjects rather than the other way around," she explained thoughtfully. "When I write, I don't stand on the sidelines as an observer; I embody my protagonists. I don't simply write about them—I become them." This immersive approach to storytelling, she explained, was grounded in her study of psychology, which helped her to delve into the psyche of her characters and add depth to her narratives.

Adhar shared a memorable story about her parents' unusual romance, which began with her father's proposal at an award ceremony. She explained, "My father, a man married five times before, fell in love with my mother the moment he saw her. She was appalled at first, but destiny played its

hand." This unlikely union, she revealed, left a complex legacy, one that would profoundly shape her understanding of love, rebellion, and self-expression.

Finally, addressing the societal perceptions of fidelity and moral judgement, Adhar confessed her own unorthodox views: "What is adultery? I was raised in a home where every so-called 'vice' existed as part of normal life. My moral fibre is distorted, so don't expect a conventional answer. Adultery is as prevalent as COVID; everyone's either in it, coming out of it, or wanting it." This openness to challenging social norms, particularly around marriage and fidelity, is a recurring motif in Adhar's books, reflecting her belief in questioning societal constraints.

By the event's end, it was clear to the audience that Adhar's work is not just a collection of stories but a mirror reflecting her life's boldness, contradictions, and complex truths. Through each novel, she continues to probe the deeper questions of heritage, morality, and self-expression, paving the way for conversations that are as provocative as they are liberating. The author even engaged in a Q&A session with the audience. The formal felicitation was conducted by Rahul Soni and Jyoti Kapoor, **Ehsaas Woman** of Nagpur, concluded the evening with a vote of thanks.



Monica Bhagwagar



Jyoti Kapoor



Parveen Tuli

*This session of The Write Circle was organized with the support of **Ehsaas Women** of Nagpur, and was in association with Central Provinces Club Nagpur Ltd; and Print Hindi Media Partner, Lokmat.*



Navigating the Life teachings of Vivekananda- A conversation with Anshul Chaturvedi

Preethi Urs, Anshul Chaturvedi, Swami Sarvapriyananda and Shilpa Mathew

At the IAAC Literary Festival 2024 in New York, author Anshul Chaturvedi and Swami Sarvapriyananda engaged in a thought-provoking dialogue about Swami Vivekananda's enduring legacy, its relevance in contemporary times, and Chaturvedi's book, *"The Vivekananda Handbook for Everyday Living"*. Organized by the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** as part of its literary initiative **The Write Circle Special**, the event was held in association with the Indo-American Arts Council. The session commenced with a warm welcome by Shilpa Mathew, **Ehsaas Woman** of New York.

The session opened with Swami Sarvapriyananda reflecting on Vivekananda's profound impact: "Swami Vivekananda is said to be the pioneer to bring Yoga to the West and then he went back to India. The other part of what he accomplished is he roused his countrymen to a sense of our heritage, our greatness, and our potential." He elaborated on how Vivekananda inspired a collective Indian identity, transcending regional divides. Swami Sarvapriyananda added, "A historian called him the unconscious father of Indian Nationalism. Before Vivekananda, prominent leaders identified themselves regionally: Bengali, Madras, Marathi. After him, they called themselves Indians."

Discussing the book's writing process, Chaturvedi admitted, "Writing about Vivekananda felt daunting. His sharpness of thought and linguistic ability made me question whether I could do justice. But I focused on presenting how his teachings helped me in everyday life." He added, "It is not a guru's sermon, it is a personal reflection of how Vivekananda shaped my life."

Swami Sarvapriyananda praised the book, stating, "It is deeply personal and yet universally applicable. The author has kept himself in the background, letting Vivekananda's wisdom take the foreground."

Spirituality is a central theme in Vivekananda's teachings. Chaturvedi did not view Vivekananda as a conventional

one. "Vivekananda's spirituality isn't about rituals or renunciation alone. It is about living fully and authentically. He taught that 'how you work is much more important than what you do.' This principle applies universally, whether you are a janitor or a CEO. Doing your duty with integrity and excellence is spirituality in action."

When Swami asked him to highlight points on spirituality, he said, "Growing up in a relatively orthodox North Indian family, I could never make sense of many religious protocols. For instance, I would ask, 'Why do we observe certain rituals on Tuesday?' The response was always, 'It is an ancient tradition.' But the Gregorian calendar is only a few centuries old. So how could a cosmic rule align with a man-made calendar? These questions made me step back."

"As a teenager, I couldn't align with the idea of God taking note of days of the week. If I questioned too much, I was labelled an atheist. But being an atheist didn't sit well either because the fear of death loomed large. Spirituality entered my life as I sought answers to these questions, not through the lens of religion but through introspection and texts like those of the Buddha. The Buddha's first point, that no matter who you are, old age, death, and suffering are inevitable, began to resonate deeply with me. That understanding forms the cornerstone of my chapter on spirituality." expressed the author.

The session wrapped with an interactive Q&A session where Anshul Chaturvedi answered some intriguing questions from the audience. The session was truly thought provoking and left many to do some lateral thinking about life. A formal vote of thanks was delivered by Preethi Urs, Director, IAAC Lit Fest; Shilpa Mathew and Preethi Urs felicitated the guests.

This session of The Write Circle Special, New York, was organized with the support of Ehsaas Women of New York, and was in association with the Indo-American Arts Council.



Ritika Talwar Singh & Mazhar Farooqui

Bridging Eras: Tradition, Modernity, and Empowerment with Ambassador Lakshmi Puri

At the IAAC Literary Festival 2024 in New York City, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** in association with Indo-American Arts Council played host to an enlightening and inspiring discussion between Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri and Roopa Unnikrishnan at **The Write Circle Special**. It focused on Puri's latest book "*Swallowing the Sun*" - a compelling novel intertwining history, youth, and the unsung heroes of India's freedom struggle. The session offered a deep dive into her motivations, perspectives, and creative process. The welcome note was delivered by Shilpa Mathew, **Ehsaas Woman** of New York.

Her book "*Swallowing the Sun*" has been described as a fusion of history, youth, and untold stories of India's freedom struggle. Talking about how she came about this compelling narrative, the author mentioned, "I'm a history student and a history buff. History has always been a reservoir of wisdom, not just for scholars but also for diplomats like myself. From that perspective, I've looked at India's freedom struggle as one of the most tumultuous yet transformative and epochal movements."

She continued, "It wasn't just a national movement, it had global implications. Our freedom struggle inspired decolonization movements across Africa, Asia, and even parts of Eastern Europe. I felt this period needed to be memorialized in a way that resonates with young people today. It's not just about remembering history but recognizing its enduring relevance."

"In my book, I focus on the young individuals who were part of this monumental struggle, not just the Gandhis, Nehrus, and other towering figures whom we know well. While they appear in cameo roles in the story, I wanted the spotlight to be on the unsung heroes and sheroes. I emphasize 'sheroes' because the role of women in the freedom struggle has often been neglected or underappreciated." pointed out Puri.

When inquired how young people would resonate with her old-aged stories, she indicated, "Young people today are incredibly dynamic, but they live in a fast-paced, digital world. To connect with them, history must be presented as something alive and relevant, not just a collection of dates and events. In my book, I've used storytelling to bring the past to life. By focusing on relatable, young protagonists, I aim to create an emotional connection. These characters face dilemmas, make sacrifices, and show resilience—all of which resonate with today's youth."

Ambassador Puri spoke about her approach on portraying empowerment. She poignantly said, "Most of my women characters are what Toni Morrison calls 'Outlaw Women' or Maya Angelou refers to as 'Phenomenal Women' and I call 'Muktabai ants'. These characters, whether it's Malti, who ventures to Banaras alone to teach, or Vina, who defies societal norms embody resilience. They break boundaries, sometimes meeting with triumph, other times with tragedy, but they always dare. For instance, Malti faces suspension for speaking out against British imperialism, yet her spirit remains unbroken." She read a passage from chapter *Metamorphosis*:

With resounding applause, the audience was left inspired by the interplay of tradition, modernity, and empowerment in Puri's remarkable debut followed by a Q&A session. The session was a testament to her literary and personal courage, making her a beacon of hope for all. Vote of thanks was delivered by Yakub Mathew, Board Member, IAAC and felicitation of the guests was done by Cathy Tongper, the Foundation's Overseas Affairs Officer and Shilpa Mathew, **Ehsaas Woman** of New York.

This session of The Write Circle Special, New York, was organized with the support of Ehsaas Women of New York, and was in association with the Indo-American Arts Council.



नए लेखकों को माइंडसेट बदलने की जरूरत - दिव्य प्रकाश दुबे

- कैरियर बनाने के लिए समय देते हैं,
पर क्या लेखन के लिए हम समय देने को तैयार हैं ?

"यदि आप लेखक हैं और उसे ही अपना कैरियर बनाना चाहते हैं, तो सबसे पहले अपने माइंडसेट को बदलना होगा। खुद से यह सवाल पूछना होगा कि क्या आप लेखन को समय दे सकते हैं। जैसे हम बुरे से बुरे इंजीनियर बनने के लिए 4-5 साल लगाते हैं, डॉक्टर बनने के लिए 10 साल देते हैं, तो फिर यह सोचना होगा कि यदि आप लेखन को कैरियर बनाना चाहते हैं, तो समय देने के लिए तैयार हो जाइए।" ये कहना है युवा लेखक श्री दिव्य प्रकाश दुबे का जो हाल ही में प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन द्वारा आयोजित कलम सत्र को संबोधित कर रहे थे। इस अवसर पर उन्होंने युवा लेखकों के साथ लेखन के कई आयाम और तकनीकी पर अपने विचार साझा किए, तथा लेखन के बदलते स्वरूप और बढ़ती संभावनाओं पर भी चर्चा की।

कलम सत्र का आरंभ प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की विदेश मामलों की अधिकारी कैथी टोंगपर ने किया। उन्होंने इस अवसर पर लेखिका डॉ. प्रभा खेतान के जीवन के ध्येय के बारे में बताते हुए कहा कि "डॉ. प्रभा खेतान ने अपने संकल्प से साहित्य, कला और संस्कृति की थाती को पोषित और प्रफुल्लित किया है।" यह फाउण्डेशन भारतीय मूल्यों व महिला सशक्तिरण के प्रचार व प्रसार के लिए प्रतिदिन कार्यरत है। प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन ने अपने इस सुदृढ़ संकल्प के द्वारा विश्व में अपनी एक अलग पहचान बनाई है और भारतीय विरासत के एम्बेसडर के रूप में विश्वपटल पर अपना नाम चिन्हित किया है। इस फाउंडेशन के कार्यक्रम, मात्र भारत में ही नहीं। अपितु विश्व के 55 देशों में परचम लहरा रहे हैं। प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन के प्रमुख सत्र हैं। कलम, किताब, लफ्ज़, एक मुलाक़ात, द राइट सर्कल, और साज तथा आखर। इनके अंतर्गत विविध व समृद्ध कार्यक्रमों का आयोजन होता रहता है।

कैथी ने लेखक का परिचय देते हुए बताया कि दिव्य प्रकाश दुबे की सात बेस्ट-सेलर किताबें हैं। 'शर्ते लागू', 'मसाला चाय', 'मुसाफ़िर कैफ़े', 'अक्टूबर जंक्शन', 'इन्बतूती', 'आको-बाको' और 'यार पापा' हैं। वे स्टोरीबाजी नाम से कहानियाँ सुनाते हैं। दिव्य प्रकाश आवाज़ की दुनिया का एक जाना-पहचाना नाम बन चुके हैं। Amazon Audible के लिए पिया मिलन चौक, दिल लोकल और दो दूनी प्यार जैसे मशहूर शो प्रस्तुत कर चुके हैं। मणिरतम जी की फिल्म पॉनियिन सेल्वन के दोनों भागों और इम्तियाज़ अली द्वारा बनायी गई वेब सीरीज़ डॉक्टर अरोरा के डायलॉग भी उन्होंने लिखे हैं। वे कई नए लेखकों के साथ रायटर्स रूम के अंतर्गत फिल्म, वेब सीरीज़ और ऑडियो शो विकसित करते हैं।

“

“भाषा को अलग-अलग करने या शुद्ध के नाम पर उसे अलग-थलक नहीं किया जाना चाहिए।”

”

कलम सत्र में लेखक से बातचीत करने वाले वार्ताकार थे अनूप भार्गव, जो एक पेशेवर तकनीकी विशेषज्ञ हैं और दिल से कवि हैं। उन्होंने बी.आई.टी.एस पिलानी और भारतीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान, दिल्ली से शिक्षा प्राप्त की है। उन्हें 2015 में प्रधानमंत्री श्री नरेंद्र मोदी द्वारा 'विश्व हिन्दी सम्मान' से सम्मानित किया जा चुका है। उनका सबसे महत्वपूर्ण योगदान, न्यूयार्क में स्थित भारतीय वाणिज्य दूतावास की आधिकारिक वेबसाइट से एक हिंदी पत्रिका 'अनन्या' का प्रकाशन करना है।

भारत में लेखकों की मानसिकता पर दिव्य प्रकाश जी का कहना है कि 'हमारे यहां लेखन को लेकर लोगों का दृष्टिकोण उदार नहीं है। समाज और लेखकों को अपनी भूमिका समझनी होगी, और ये तभी संभव है जब लेखक अपने लेखन को समय, संयम और धैर्य दे तथा समाज लेखक को सम्पूर्ण स्वतंत्रता दे! लेखन के पूर्ण विकास के लिए। नए लेखकों के प्रति उन्होंने आशावादी होते हुए कहा कि अब लेखन की असीमित संभावनाएं हैं।

उन्होंने भाषा को लेकर अपनी बात रखी। उन्होंने कहा कि भाषा वही होनी चाहिए जैसा हम बोलते हैं, उसे ही पुस्तक में भी उतारा जाए। भाषा को अलग-अलग करने या शुद्ध करने के नाम पर उसे अलग-थलक नहीं किया जाना चाहिए। नहीं तो आने वाली पीढ़ी हिन्दी पढ़ने से और भी कतराने लगेगी। हमें उन्हें जोड़ने के लिए उन जैसी भाषाओं का प्रयोग करना चाहिए।

उन्होंने कहा "हम सभी के अंदर एक बैचेनी होती है! एक बैचेनी स्वयं अपनी खोज की! ये बैचेनी, ये व्याकुलता ही आपके अग्रसर होने में ईंधन का कार्य करती है। युवा लेखकों को अपनी इस बैचेनी को पहचानना चाहिए और लेखन को नए आयाम और उत्साह से प्रारंभ करना चाहिए, कभी भी किसी भेड़ चाल का हिस्सा न बने!!" आगे उन्होंने कहा कि "आज के लेखकों की कलम पर एक बहुत बड़ी ज़िम्मेदारी है!! नौजवान और बच्चों से कैसे संपर्क स्थापित करें? उन्हें कैसे inspire करें लेखन और पठन की ओर! इसके लिए लेखकों को युवा शक्ति और उसकी मनोदशा को समझना होगा। ये एक बड़ी चुनौती भी है!"

इस उपलक्ष्य पर दर्शकों ने भी अपनी जिज्ञासा अनुसार प्रश्न पूछे! सारे प्रश्नों के उत्तर दिव्य प्रकाश जी ने दिए और एक रोचक कहानी भी सुनाई। सत्र समाप्त होने पर सभी अतिथियों ने लेखक की पुस्तक 'यार पापा' की प्रति पर, उनके हस्ताक्षर भी अंकित करवाए। अंततः अतिथि लेखक दिव्य प्रकाश दुबे जी और वार्ताकार अनूप भार्गव जी को कैथी टोंगपर ने स्मृति चिन्ह से सम्मानित किया।

कार्यक्रम को सफल बनाने में IAAC (इंडो अमेरिकन आर्ट्स काउंसिल) और IAAC लिटरेरी फेस्टिवल 2024 का महत्वपूर्ण योगदान रहा।



Tajender Luthra

कविता का शरीर उसकी आत्मा से बड़ा नहीं होना चाहिए : तजेन्द्र सिंह लूथरा

- कविता वही है जो दिल को छू ले,
भावों को आंदोलित करे



Padmesh Gupta

"बस इतना ही चाहिए !
कविता को !

एक सालता हुआ दुख !!

और एक सुनने वाला सीधा साधा मनुष्य !!"

यह पंक्तियाँ हैं, कवि और वरिष्ठ पुलिस सेवा अधिकारी तजेन्द्र सिंह लूथरा जी की। वे प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की ओर से लंदन और बर्मिंघम में आयोजित कलम सत्र को संबोधित कर रहे थे। उन्होंने अपने कार्यक्षेत्र से जुड़े अनुभव, अपनी विचारधारा और काव्य चेतना पर विस्तारपूर्वक चर्चा की और स्व रचित कविताओं का पाठ भी किया।

लंदन में कलम सत्र का स्वागत श्री पद्मेश गुप्ता जी ने किया। उन्होंने श्री तजेन्द्र सिंह लूथरा जी का परिचय वहां उपस्थित सभी गणमान्य अतिथियों से कराया। वहीं बर्मिंघम के कार्यक्रम का शुभ आरम्भ, एहसास वूमन तितिक्षा शाह के स्वागत भाषण से हुआ। उन्होंने इस अवसर पर लेखिका व समाजसेवी डॉ प्रभा खेतान के जीवन ध्येय को विस्तार पूर्वक बताते हुए कहा कि "डॉ प्रभा खेतान ने अपने संकल्प से साहित्य, कला और संस्कृति की थाती को पोषित और प्रफुल्लित किया है।" यह फाउंडेशन भारतीय मूल्यों व महिला सशक्तिकरण के प्रचार व प्रसार के लिए प्रतिदिन कार्यरत है। प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन ने अपने इस सुदृढ़ संकल्प के द्वारा विश्व में अपनी एक अलग पहचान बनाई है और भारतीय विरासत के एम्बेसडर के रूप में विश्वपटल पर अपना नाम चिन्हित किया है। इस फाउंडेशन के कार्यक्रम, मात्र भारत में ही नहीं ! अपितु विश्व के 55 देशों में परचम लहरा रहे हैं।

दोनों ही सत्रों में हमारे अतिथि कवि के साथ संवाद कर रहे थे, ऑक्सफोर्ड बिजनेस कॉलेज के निदेशक, यूके की हिंदी समिति के संस्थापक, शिक्षाविद, बिजनेस लीडर, लेखक, कवि, और इंजीनियर श्री पद्मेश गुप्ता जी। उन्होंने कवि से उनके कार्यक्षेत्र, काव्य क्षेत्र तथा उनके जीवन से जुड़े कई पहलुओं पर प्रश्न किए।

लंदन और बर्मिंघम में आयोजित कलम सत्र के अतिथि कवि तजेन्द्र सिंह लूथरा सर्टिफाइड पब्लिक अकाउंटेंट (CPA) की शिक्षा अमेरिकन इंस्टीट्यूट ऑफ सर्टिफाइड पब्लिक अकाउंटेंट्स से और मास्टर ऑफ एप्लाइड पॉजिटिव साइकोलॉजी की शिक्षा यूनिवर्सिटी ऑफ पेनसिल्वेनिया (यूपएसए) में प्राप्त की है। उनकी कविताएँ बदलाव, विद्रोह, सामाजिक मुद्दों और व्यक्तिगत संघर्षों पर प्रकाश डालती हैं। इनकी कविताएँ न केवल सामाजिक न्याय के प्रति एक दृष्टिकोण प्रस्तुत करती हैं, बल्कि मानवता और व्यक्तिगत संघर्ष को भी बखूबी व्यक्त करती हैं। उनका पहला कविता-संग्रह "अस्सी घाट का बाँसुरी वाला" (2012) प्रकाशित हुआ था। हाल ही में उनका संग्रह "एक नया ईश्वर" प्रकाशित हुआ है, जिसका रूसी और गुजराती में भी अनुवाद हुआ है। उनकी कविताएँ विभिन्न भारतीय और अंतर्राष्ट्रीय पत्रिकाओं में छपती रहती हैं।

कवि लूथरा जी ने प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन के प्रति आभार व्यक्त किया और कहा कि जो प्रयास इस संस्था के द्वारा किए जा रहे हैं!! वो सराहनीय हैं। इन आयोजनों से श्रोताओं/ पाठकों तथा कवि / लेखकों के बीच एक सशक्त सेतु बन जाता है जो यथार्थ में एक सृजनात्मक पहल है।

कवि ने बताया कि उन्हें बचपन से ही कविताओं से लगाव था किन्तु उन्हें उनके कार्यकाल के दौरान हुए 2008 के मुंबई हमलों ने झकझोर के रख दिया। इस आतंकवादी हमले ने निजी व कवि के रूप में उन्हें अत्यधिक प्रभावित किया। उन्हें सिस्टम की उदासीनता ने बहुत विचलित किया और इस असहाय स्थिति ने उनके भीतर के कवि को जागृत कर दिया। वे कॉलेज के दिनों में भी कविता लिखा करते थे लेकिन उन्हें कभी संकलित नहीं कर पाए।

2008 की घटना ने मुझे गहराई से प्रभावित किया। कितने लोगों की जान गई। जो सिस्टम था, वह बड़ा उदासीन था। चूंकि मैं सिस्टम के अंदर था, मैंने उसकी उदासीनता को और ज्यादा महसूस किया। मुझे लगता रहा कि सिस्टम को और सेंसिटिव होना चाहिए। इसी ने मुझे फिर से कविता के करीब ला खड़ा किया और मैंने गंभीरता से कविताएं लिखनी शुरू कीं।

उन्होंने कहा कि कविताओं का दायरा काफी बड़ा होता है और उसमें विस्तार होता है। इसलिए मैंने अपनी कविताओं के विषय को सीमित नहीं किया। मैं उन विषयों का चुनाव करता हूँ जो मेरे मन को छू जाएं और मुझे विचलित कर दें। इसी कारण मैंने बहुत अलग-अलग विषयों पर कविताएं लिखी हैं साधारण आम आदमी, श्रमिक, बाँसुरी बेचने वाला, यहां तक कि अपने पालतू डॉग पर भी कविताएं लिखी हैं।

बड़े कवियों में क्षमता होती है कि वे एक ही कविता में मूर्त और अमूर्त दोनों को मिलाकर लिख सकते हैं, या पूरी की पूरी कविता दार्शनिक हो सकती है। इस तरह से कविता को आप सीधे-सीधे तरीके से न कहकर कुछ सांकेतिक रख सकते हैं। कविताओं में पूरी बात नहीं होनी चाहिए; कई बार पढ़ने के बाद पाठक के मन में कई प्रश्न जाग सकते हैं, और वह उसे अपनी तरह से देख सकता है।

जैसे कहानी और उपन्यास की रेंज बड़ी होती है, या कहें कि एक स्पष्ट कहानी कई किरदारों को साथ लेकर चल रही होती है, जिसे पढ़कर, पाठक कहानी का मूल ध्येय समझ लेते हैं। वहीं कविता में आपको मुहावरे, लोकोक्ति, छंद, अलंकार के माध्यम से अपनी बात कहनी होती है। यही विशेषता कविता को अलग पहचान बनाती है, इसमें पाठक अपनी मनःस्थिति अनुसार उसका अनुवाद करता है।

“

बेशक कम लिखो और जब तक अनिवार्य न हो,
तब तक मत लिखो।

”

उन्होंने सिस्टम के बारे में कहा कि "सिस्टम सिर्फ राजनीतिक व्यवस्था नहीं है !! अपितु शिक्षा, जातिवाद, पूंजीवाद और सामाजिक व्यवस्था का भी महत्वपूर्ण योगदान होता है! इनमें सामंजस्य न होने पर उपजती है प्रतिरोध की या विद्रोह की कविताएं ! जो लचर व्यवस्था पर गहरा प्रहार करती हैं ! जो आम लोगों की, रिकशा चलाने वाले से लेकर अस्सी घाट पर बांसुरी बजाने वाले तक की आवाज बनकर गूंजती है । ऐसी ही एक कविता है 'अरबी घोड़ा' ! अरबी घोड़ा जैसी कई प्रतिरोधी कविताएं लिखी हैं मैंने "

कुछ अंश :

"बहुत हो चुका अब ,एक हाथ से नोच लूं।

आँखें बुझती, चमड़े वाले एनक!

दूसरे से उतर फेंकू, दम घोटती काठी ।

तीसरे से चीर दूं ,जुवान खींचती लगाम ।

चौथे से काट दूं मुश्के, पांचवे से खोल दूं।

भ्रमित करती रकाब!

और स्वतंत्र कर दूं ,अपनी पहचान !

फिर एक छलांग से, पटक दूं धरती पर !

नकली नियम, घोटा हुआ ज्ञान ।

अपरीक्षित श्रद्धा, और मनमानी सत्ता !

और खुद सवार हो अपने पर कहां तुम्हे मुस्कराकर !

आओ! अब दौड़े!!

अपने अपने दम पर "

जो मुक्त कविताएं होती हैं, उन्हें खुली और नई कविता भी कहते हैं। उनमें बंदिश नहीं होती; आप वही लिखते हैं जो आपके भाव होते हैं। कभी-कभी लंबा लिखने के लिए भी ऐसा होता है कि पंच लाइन आ जाती है। कई बार तीन-चार पंक्तियां भी अपने आप में पूरी कविता होती हैं। कवि मन को वहीं रुक जाना चाहिए। मैंने दिल पर पत्थर रखकर एक काम किया है कि मैंने कविता के विस्तार का कभी मोह नहीं किया।



Audience



Titiksha

“

सिस्टम के मायने अक्सर हम राजनीतिक सिस्टम के रूप में समझ लेते हैं, लेकिन ऐसा नहीं होता। राजनीतिक सिस्टम तो एक छोटा सा हिस्सा है; बाकी में हमारे कास्ट सिस्टम, एजुकेशन सिस्टम, और समाज में असमानता भी शामिल हैं।

”

वास्तविकता यह है कि छोटी कविता लिखना बहुत बड़ा चैलेंज होता है, क्योंकि चंद पंक्तियों में पूरी कविता को समेटना होता है। यह एक चुनौती है, लेकिन छोटी कविता लिखना मुझे बहुत सुख देता है। मेरा मानना है कि कविता का शरीर उसकी आत्मा से बड़ा नहीं होना चाहिए; दोनों बराबर होने चाहिए।

कवि अज्ञेय के कथन का समर्थन करते हुए कहते हैं कि बेशक कम लिखो और जब तक अनिवार्य न हो, तब तक मत लिखो। कविता लिखने का तरीका दो तरह का होता है। कविता में मिस्ट्री भी होती है, क्योंकि सब कुछ तो नहीं कहा जा सकता। अगर सब कुछ कह दिया, तो वह कहानी या उपन्यास बन जाएगा।

कई बार मुझे हिंदी की कविताएं पढ़कर दुःख होता है कि वे कठिन शैली में, कठिन शब्दों का प्रयोग करके लिखी जाती हैं। इसके पीछे शायद पांडित्य प्रदर्शन की कोशिश होती है कि मैं भाषा का बड़ा पंडित हूं। ऐसा लिखने से पाठक आतंकित हो जाते हैं और उन्हें समझने में वक्त लगता है। मेरा मानना है कि विषय गंभीर होना चाहिए, ऐसा होना चाहिए जो आपके दिल को छू जाए और उसमें थोड़ी इंटेलेक्चुअल इंकवायरी का स्पेस भी होना चाहिए। लेकिन भाषा और शैली सहज होनी चाहिए। इन तीनों का संयोजन बनाना बड़ा मुश्किल है। कुछ लोग कविताओं को सहज भाव से नहीं लिखते, जिससे कविता लोगों के दिलों से जुड़ नहीं पाती। कविता वही है जो दिल को छू ले और भावों को आंदोलित करे।

इस मौके पर उन्होंने अपनी कई कविताओं का पाठ किया, जिसका लोगों ने पूरा लुत्फ उठाया। कार्यक्रम के अंत में दर्शकों ने कवि से कई प्रश्न पूछे, जिनका उन्होंने खुशी से जवाब दिया।

कलम बर्मिंघम का आयोजन अहसास वृमेन की
सहभागिता तथा संपद, कृति यूके के सहयोग से हुआ।
कलम लंदन का आयोजन हिन्दी समिति, वातायन और वाणी
फाउंडेशन के सहयोग से हुआ।



Varsha Tiwari

अनुवाद एक अभ्यास है : वर्षा तिवारी

- हिन्दी का अनुवाद अंग्रेजी
साहित्य को भी समृद्ध करता है



Natasha Goyal

"अनुवाद एक अभ्यास है। अच्छा अनुवादक एक अच्छा लेखक भी बन सकता है।" यह कहना है अनुवादक और लेखिका वर्षा तिवारी जी का। वे प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन की कलम आगरा सत्र की अतिथि लेखक थीं।

कार्यक्रम का आरंभ एहसास वूमन आगरा विनती कथूरिया जी ने बड़े गर्मजोशी से किया। उन्होंने सभी अतिथियों का स्वागत किया और प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन के कार्यों पर प्रकाश डालते हुआ कहा कि "कलम प्रकल्प" हिंदी व अन्य क्षेत्रीय भाषाओं को प्रोत्साहित करने हेतु एक प्रयास है। कोलकाता स्थित प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन सामाजिक, सांस्कृतिक कल्याण और मानव सेवा के कार्यक्रमों के प्रति कटिबद्ध है। ये भारत में सांस्कृतिक, शैक्षणिक व सामाजिक योजनाओं को समर्थन देने वाले व्यक्तियों और संस्थाओं को सहयोग करते हैं।

विनती कथूरिया जी ने वर्षा तिवारी जी का परिचय देते हुए कहा कि वे हिंदी और अंग्रेजी की प्रतिभाशाली लेखिका हैं। 1999 से पत्रकारिता और लेखन के क्षेत्र में सक्रिय हैं और अपने जीवन एक बड़ा हिस्सा इन्होंने अपने इस ध्येय को समर्पित किया है। वर्षा जी ने टीबीएलएम, आउट ऑफ प्रिंट, शेनॉनडोह, इलेक्ट्रिका, जागरी लिट!! जैसे मंचों पर अपने लेखन का लोहा मनवाया है।

वर्षा जी से बातचीत कर रही थी पुस्तक प्रेमी नताशा गोयल जी। नताशा जी से साक्षात्कार के दौरान वर्षा जी ने अपने जीवन के कई अनुभव साझा किए और नताशा जी ने भी अपनी किताबों के प्रति रुचि और पुस्तक क्लब की स्थापना के बारे में भी बात की।

वर्षा जी ने अपनी जीवनी का परिचय देते हुए कहा कि उनके पिता कोलकाता में थे फिर चंडीगढ़ आए। उनके शुरुआती 5 साल, उनकी नानी ने उन्हें पाला था। लेखिका भारतीय परिवेश पर, आगे कहती हैं कि "हमारे यहां बच्चे बहुभाषिक व्यवस्था में पलते बढ़ते हैं। घर में कई भाषाएं सुनाई देती हैं 'अवधि', 'भोजपुरी', 'बुंदेलखंडी' मात्र खड़ी बोली ही नहीं बोली जाती!! ये मिट्टी की सुगंध लिए बोलियां " दिल और दिमाग में बस जाती हैं। फिर कुछ भाषाएं हम विद्यालय में सीखते हैं। जो प्रांतीय भाषा होती है! जैसे बंगाली, मराठी अन्य।

वर्षा जी ने अपनी साहित्य रुचि के बारे में बताया कि उनकी मां हिंदी में पीएचडी कर रही थीं, इसलिए वे घर में प्रेमचंद, रेणु आदि कई साहित्यकारों की पुस्तकों से घिरी रहती थीं। बचपन से ही साहित्य में रुचि विकसित हुई। शायद इसलिए अनुवाद की ओर आकर्षित हुईं।



Chandni Chopra



Vinti Kathuria

वर्षा जी ने बताया कि "मुझे किताबें पढ़ना बहुत पसंद है। लेकिन मेरा मानना है कि जैसा प्रेमचंद ने कहा, एक ऐसा वक्त आता है जब हम अपने आप से डिस्कनेक्ट महसूस करते हैं। तब हम चाहते हैं कि साहित्य या फिक्शन हमें कुछ ऐसा दे, जो हमें अपनी वास्तविक जीवन में नहीं मिल पाता। यह हमें सांस लेने का मौका दे, हमारी सच्चाई और सामाजिक सच्चाई को आगे रखने का कोई संदर्भ प्रदान करे।"

वर्षा जी का मानना है कि लेखन और अनुवाद के लिए मेहनत करनी पड़ती है। अनुवाद एक तरह का रियाज होता है, जिसे लगातार करते रहना चाहिए। तभी इसका असली आनंद आता है।

उन्होंने कहा, "हिंदी साहित्य मेरे दिल के करीब है। जब भी मैं हिंदी पढ़ती हूँ, तो मुझे लगता है कि यह कितनी समृद्ध है। इसमें इतने विस्तार और संवेदनाओं के साथ जीवन की तमाम घटनाओं और परिस्थितियों को पिरोया गया है। इसे बहुत विस्तार से लिखा गया है। ऐसी किताबों का अंग्रेजी में अनुवाद किया जाना अंग्रेजी साहित्य को भी समृद्ध करेगा। ऐसी किताबों का अधिक से अधिक अनुवाद होना चाहिए।"

वर्षा जी ने अपने अनुवाद के कुछ हिस्सों को भी पढ़कर सुनाया, जिसे दर्शकों ने काफी पसंद किया। इस अवसर पर दर्शकों ने भी लेखिका से कई प्रश्न पूछे। कार्यक्रम के अंत में लेखिका वर्षा जी और नताशा गोयल को दिल्ली पब्लिक स्कूल की प्रधानाध्यापिका निधि सिंह ने दुपट्टा ओढ़ाकर सम्मानित किया। धन्यवाद ज्ञापन आगरा की अहसास वूमन चान्दनी चोपड़ा ने किया।

“

भारत में जो भी रहते हैं,
उन सभी का परिवेश विभिन्न भाषाओं के बीच होता है;
हम बहुभाषिक होते हैं

”

कलम आगरा का आयोजन अहसास वूमन की सहभागिता, वेन्यू पार्टनर आटीसी मुगल, हिंदी प्रिंट मीडिया पार्टनर दैनिक जागरण और वेस्टलैंड बुक्स के सहयोग से सफलता पूर्वक सम्पन्न हुआ।



"भारत में मेरी जड़ें इतनी गहरी थीं कि अमेरिका मुझे छू नहीं पाया" - उषा प्रियम्वदा

मेरे पात्र मेरे साथ रहते हैं, मेरे साथ वार्तालाप करते हैं, फिर पन्नों पर उतरते हैं।

भा "भारत की सभ्यता और संस्कार से मेरी जड़ें इतनी गहरी थीं कि अमेरिका में वर्षों प्रवास करने पर भी, यहां का परिवेश ! मुझे छू भी नहीं पाया।" ये भावनात्मक अभिव्यक्ति है भारत की जानी मानी वरिष्ठ लेखिका उषा प्रियम्वदा जी की, जो प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन द्वारा आयोजित दिल्ली के कलम सत्र को संबोधित कर रहीं थीं। दिल्ली के सत्र में स्वागत संबोधन श्रीमती नीलिमा डालमिया आधार द्वारा संपन्न हुआ। नीलिमा जी दिल्ली एहसान वूमेन का अभिन्न अंग हैं तथा वे दिल्ली एन सी आर की मानद संयोजिका के रूप में सक्रिय हैं।

कलम सत्र में संवादकर्ता के रूप में पत्रकार जयप्रकाश पांडे जी थे। उन्होंने उषा जी के जीवन से जुड़े कई प्रश्न किए, उषा जी ने भी अपने खट्टे मीठे अनुभव साझा करते हुए वार्ता को रोचक बनाए रखा।

"आपकी प्रेरणा का क्या स्रोत था?" जयप्रकाश जी द्वारा पूछे जाने इस प्रश्न का उत्तर देते हुए, उषा जी बताती हैं कि "मुझे दो लोगों ने बहुत प्रभावित किया। मैं जब इलाहाबाद में पढ़ रही थी, तो मैं अपनी बड़ी बहन के घर में रह रही थी। उनके पति रघुनपति सहाय फिराक के छोटे भाई थे जो हमारे घर के पास ही रहते थे। मेरे बहनोई जी के करीबी मित्र सुमित्रानंदन पंत, और हरिवंश राय बच्चन जी भी थे। बच्चन जी का प्रतिदिन आना जाना रहता था। मेरा पसंदीदा काम था, एक कोने में बैठकर सबकी बातें सुनना। फिराक साब मुझे बहुत सलाह देते थे ! उन्होंने शायद मुझमें एक चिंगारी भांप ली थी। जिस से तबतक मैं स्वयं अनभिज्ञ थी। स्वतंत्रता के बाद का हिंदुस्तान एक नया हिंदुस्तान था, नए उत्साह का वातावरण था और हिंदी भाषा को प्रोत्साहन मिल रहा था। निर्मल वर्मा की कहानी पढ़ने के बाद मुझे लगा कि मैं भी कहानी लिख सकती हूँ।"

उषा जी ने आगे बताया कि "मैंने हमेशा हिन्दी में लिखा, क्योंकि मेरी जड़ें भारतीय मूल की थी इसीलिए मेरी सोच व अभिव्यक्ति पर भारतीय संस्कृति और मूल्यों का गहरा प्रभाव था। जो अंग्रेजी में, मैं नहीं व्यक्त कर सकती थी।

आधुनिक लेखक, लेख, लेखिकाओं पर अपनी पक्ष रखते हुए उन्होंने कहा "आजकल जो लोग लिख रहे हैं, वे बहुत जल्दी में लिख रहे हैं। वे विषय को पकने का समय नहीं देते हैं। विचार आया और उसे छपवा दिया। मेरे लिए ये बहुत आसानी से भूला देने वाला साहित्य है।"

उषा जी अपने जीवन के संघर्ष के बारे में विस्तारपूर्वक बातें कीं। उन्होंने बताया कि मां के विधवा होने पर किस तरह समाज का तिरस्कार उन्हें सहना पड़ा था। किस तरह विदेशी धरती पर उन्हें अपमान और संकीर्ण मानसिकता को सहन करना पड़ा। उषा जी का मानना है कि ये सारी विषमताएं और द्वेष ही उनके लेखन को परिपक्व और परिमार्जित करने में सहायक हुए। उनके लेखन को पाठकों से सीधे जोड़ती रहीं।

पौराणिक आलेखों और आख्यानों पर अपनी राय साझा करते हुए उषा जी कहती हैं कि "



Sonali Chauhan



एक लेखक को अपनी कृति स्वयं ही बार-बार पढ़ना और संपादित करते रहना चाहिए...



आजकल हमारे पुराण और ग्रन्थ नई दृष्टि से लिखे जा रहे हैं, जो मुझे बांध नहीं पाते। मानस तो मैंने पढ़ा है और पढ़ाया भी है। उसका धार्मिक तत्व छोड़ भी दे तब भी उसकी भाषा और उसके रूपक मुझे बहुत प्रभावित करते हैं। महा भारत तो मैंने अनुवाद में पढ़ा है।"

वे स्वयं को अपना सबसे बड़ा क्लिष्ट मानती हैं। वे कहती हैं, "मैं अपने लेखन पर काफी सोचती हूँ। मेरे पात्र मेरे साथ बातें करते हैं, मेरे साथ रहते हैं और आस-पास बने रहते हैं। जब तक पूरी तरह से कथा तैयार नहीं हो जाती, तब तक मैं नहीं लिखती। और जब लिखती हूँ, तो वे पात्र खुद ही पन्नों पर उतर आते हैं। मैं खुद को ही अपना सबसे बड़ा क्लिष्ट मानती हूँ। जब तक संतुष्ट नहीं होती, तब तक उन्हें छपने नहीं देती। एक लेखक को अपनी कृति स्वयं ही बार-बार पढ़ना और संपादित करते रहना चाहिए।"

इस अवसर पर दर्शकों ने भी लेखिका से कई प्रश्न पूछे। कार्यक्रम के अंत में 'द कनॉट, आईएचसीएल सेलेक्शन्स' की जनरल मैनेजर सोनाली चौहान, वरिष्ठ साहित्यकार उषाजी और पत्रकार जयप्रकाश पाण्डेय को दुपट्टा ओढ़ाकर सम्मानित किया गया। धन्यवाद ज्ञापन दिल्ली अहसास वूमेन और दिल्ली एनसीआर मामलों की मानद संयोजिका नीलिमा डालमिया आधार ने किया।

'कलम दिल्ली' का आयोजन अहसास वूमेन की सहभागिता, वेन्यू पार्टनर 'द कनॉट, आईएचसीएल सेलेक्शन्स', हिंदी प्रिंट मीडिया पार्टनर 'दैनिक जागरण' के सहयोग से सफलता पूर्वक सम्पन्न हुआ।



Bharat Bariya

Dance as Identity: Bharat Bariya & Akshay Patel Inspire Young Minds



Akshay Patel

Prabha Khaitan Foundation, in association with Karma Foundation, hosted an **Aakhar** session in Ahmedabad with Gujarat's acclaimed artists Bharat Bariya and Akshay Patel, who shared their remarkable journey in conversation with young interviewer Kishan Kalyani.

Both artists spoke candidly about their early struggles, the challenges of pursuing dance as a career, and the perseverance that carried them from humble beginnings to international acclaim. They emphasized how art, when nurtured with dedication and passion, can break barriers and bring global recognition, even for those hailing from small villages.

The discussion left the audience inspired, highlighting the transformative power of dance and music in shaping not only individual lives but also cultural identity on a world-wide stage.



Kishan Kalyani



Audience



This session of Aakhar was organized in association with Karma Foundation

Folk Wisdom, Poetry & Dialogue



Chandra Mukhopadhyay



Anshuman Das

Akhar, an initiative of the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, continues to be a unique platform that celebrates the profound power of words—spoken, sung, remembered, and rediscovered. The latest edition of Aakhar Bengal brought together two remarkable voices: Chandra Mukhopadhyay, renowned retired teacher and one of the leading researchers on Bengali folk songs, and Anshuman Das, poet, essayist, and practitioner of alternative cultivation and ecosystem protection. What followed was an evening of thoughtful conversation, cultural reflection, and an exploration of Bengal’s rich intellectual and folk traditions.



Saiful Islam



Soumitra Mitra

The session opened with a welcome note by Soumitra Mitra of Purba Paschim, who set the tone for a meaningful dialogue rooted in heritage and contemporary thought. As the conversation unfolded, Chandra Mukhopadhyay drew from her extensive work on Bengali folk songs, sharing insights from her celebrated publications. Her reflections illuminated the socio-cultural depth of women’s songs, the lived realities encoded within them, and the silent resilience they carry through generations. She spoke passionately about how folk music remains one of the purest testimonies of community memory, everyday struggles, and the emotional landscape of Bengal’s women.

Joining her was poet and essayist Anshuman Das, whose artistic journey intersects poetry, theatre, and environmental engagement. He brought to the conversation a refreshing perspective on ecology, alternative cultivation, and the relationship between land,

human experience, and creative expression.

Together, the dialogue between Mukhopadhyay and Das created a seamless blend of folk wisdom and modern thought. The audience experienced a dynamic exchange that highlighted not just artistic contributions but also the thinkers behind them—their philosophies, sensitivities, and commitments to society.

The event concluded with closing remarks by Saiful Islam of Purba Paschim, who expressed gratitude to the speakers, the audience, and Prabha Khaitan Foundation for creating yet another meaningful cultural moment through **Aakhar**. He emphasised the importance of platforms that bring literature, music, and reflective conversation into the centre of public discourse.

With each edition, **Aakhar** continues to reaffirm Foundation’s commitment to nurturing intellectual dialogue and preserving the rich diversity of India’s literary and cultural ecosystems.

An Evening of Harmony: PKF & ITC present Ricky Kej Live in Delhi

Prabha Khaitan Foundation, in collaboration with ITC Hotels, hosted a soul-stirring musical evening with three-time Grammy Award-winning composer Ricky Kej at ITC Maurya. The exclusive gathering brought together diplomats, **Ehsaas Women**, associates, and distinguished guests for an unforgettable night of world music. Ricky Kej's powerful compositions—celebrating nature, sustainability, and global harmony—filled the space with energy and inspiration. His engaging interaction with the audience and the immersive musical experience made the evening truly memorable.

The event reflected PKF's commitment to fostering cultural exchange and bringing globally acclaimed art to Indian audiences. Sharing glimpses from this magical night in Delhi.





Musical Magic in Hyderabad: PKF & ITC Host Ricky Kej Live

Prabha Khaitan Foundation, in collaboration with ITC Hotels, presented a captivating musical night featuring internationally renowned composer Ricky Kej at ITC Kohenuur, Hyderabad. The event witnessed an enthusiastic turnout of art lovers, **Ehsaas Women**, patrons, and members of the city's cultural community. Ricky Kej's performance—infused with themes of the environment, humanity, and universal connection—created an atmosphere of awe and reflection. His seamless blend of global sounds and Indian influences resonated deeply with the audience. The evening highlighted Foundation's dedication to promoting meaningful artistic collaborations across India. Here are some beautiful snapshots from the enchanting Hyderabad evening.





An Evening of Melody with Shubha Mudgal – Bengaluru

Bengaluru was treated to an unforgettable night of soul-stirring music as the legendary Shubha Mudgal graced the stage with her timeless melodies. Accompanied by renowned artists Aneesh Pradhan, Sudhir Nayak, and others, the performance was a celebration of classical brilliance and artistic harmony. The evening began with a warm welcome by Mourya Boda, **Ehsaas Woman** of Hyderabad. The artists were felicitated by Anindita Chatterjee, Executive Trustee of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, along with Anil Kathotia, Mourya Boda, Amandeep Kaur (General Manager, ITC Gardenia), and Sabrina Dey (General Manager ITC Windsor). The magic of the music left the audience mesmerized, creating an atmosphere that resonated long after the final note.



Shubha Mudgal



Aneesh Pradhan & Sudhir Nayak



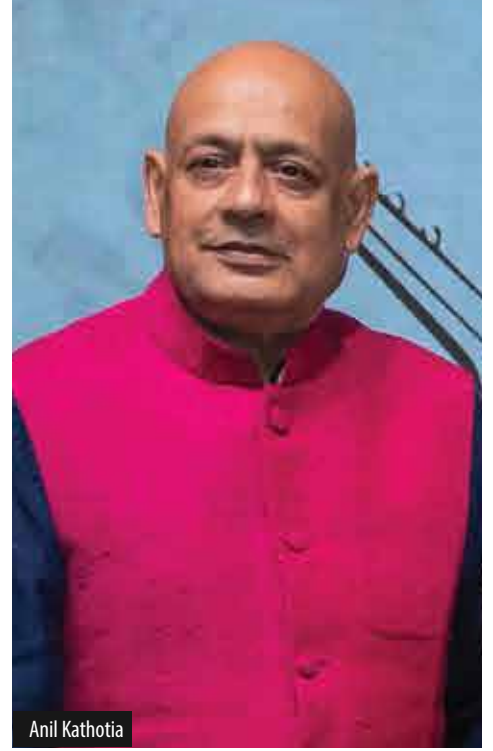
Mourya Boda



Anil Kathotia



Anindita Chatterjee



Anil Kathotia



Sabrina Dey



Amandeep Kaur



Anil Kathotia



Audience

PKF–FCC Quiz Brings Together Diplomats, Journalists & Bright Minds



The chief guest with the winners

The sixth edition of the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation (PKF)** and **Foreign Correspondents' Club (FCC)** quiz drew an enthusiastic crowd, with vibrant participation from journalists, diplomats, and professionals across various sectors. The event was skillfully hosted by the quiz master, Srinjoy Chowdhury, and proved to be a grand success.

Eight teams competed fiercely, showcasing their wit and knowledge. The winning team comprised Aditya Chauhan and Kavin Aadithyan, while the team of Kaushik Chatterjee, Mudit Narain, Karthik Ramamurthy, and Azeez Narain secured the second position.

The event's prestige was further elevated by the presence of distinguished guests, including Oleksandr Polishchuk, Ambassador of Ukraine to India, Minsun Kim and DCM Sangwoo Lim from the South Korean Embassy, and David Chen from the Singapore High Commission, among others.

The success of this sixth edition underscored the spirit of healthy competition, the power of knowledge-sharing, and the importance of fostering community engagement in an increasingly interconnected world.



David Chen



Participants

Shared Victory & Shared Knowledge: A Memorable PKF–FCC Quiz



Srinjoy Chowdhury

The seventh edition of the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation (PKF)** and **Foreign Correspondents' Club (FCC)** Quiz was a resounding success, attracting an enthusiastic crowd of journalists, diplomats, and professionals from diverse fields. The event, masterfully hosted by quizmaster Srinjoy Chowdhury, celebrated the spirit of knowledge and camaraderie.

Eight teams competed fiercely, displaying remarkable wit and intellect. This edition saw two teams sharing the First Prize: Team Neptune, featuring Praveen Dass, Kunal Malhotra, and Samar Roy, and Team Earth, comprising Jayant Verma, Pavit Singh, and Shubham Jha.

Adding to the event's prestige was the esteemed presence of Ambassador Mariano Augustinian Caucino from Argentina.

The quiz highlighted the spirit of healthy competition, the value of knowledge-sharing, and the importance of fostering meaningful community engagement in our interconnected world.



Team Neptune with Ambassador Mariano Augustinian Caucino



Neelima Dalmia Adhar



S Venkat Narayan

PKF–FCC Quiz Continues to Foster Community, Knowledge & Cultural Dialogue



The Winners

The Eighth edition of the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation (PKF)** and **Foreign Correspondents' Club (FCC) Quiz** was a resounding success, attracting an enthusiastic crowd of journalists, diplomats, and professionals from diverse fields. The event, masterfully hosted by quizmaster Srinjoy Chowdhury, celebrated the spirit of knowledge and camaraderie.

Eight teams competed fiercely, displaying remarkable wit and intellect. This edition First Prize: Team Venus, featuring Raja Sri Charan, Dr. Nishad Keelath, and Second Prize: Team Mars featuring Kavin Aadithiyam C, Kaushik Chatterji and Abhinav Dhar

Adding to the event's prestige was the esteemed presence of Ambassador Diana Mickeviciene of Lithuania.

The quiz highlighted the spirit of healthy competition, the value of knowledge-sharing, and the importance of fostering meaningful community engagement in our interconnected world.



The Participants

Spreading Warmth: Chhat Puja Clothes Distribution Programme

A Clothes Distribution Programme was organized on the occasion of Chhat Puja, bringing the community together in a spirit of care and support. The event was graced by Arup Roy, Hon'ble Minister, Government of West Bengal, as the Chief Guest. Essential clothing items were distributed to beneficiaries, ensuring comfort and warmth during the festive period. The programme reflected a shared commitment to social welfare and community upliftment.





Shreedevi Sunil



Folktales Come Alive: Magical Puppetry Session for Young Learners

Prabha Khaitan Foundation, under the aegis of Muskaan, organised a delightful puppetry session for children in Grades 2 and 3 across India. Conducted via an online platform, the event featured renowned puppeteer Shreedevi Sunil, who brought two captivating African folktales to life using her vibrant puppets.

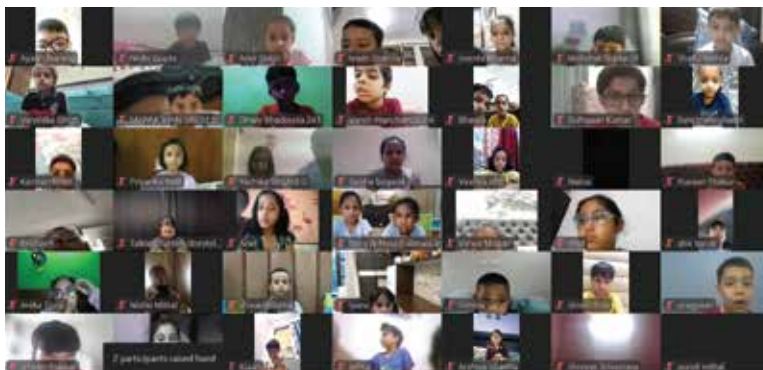
The children were thoroughly engaged as they enjoyed the stories of Brother Crocodile and Sister Chicken, an African folktale about friendship, and The Magic Heart of the Tree, a heartwarming tale of nature's wonder. Through the use of puppets, Ms. Sunil made these folktales both interactive and educational, sparking the children's imagination and enhancing their listening skills.

The young audience participated enthusiastically, responding to the puppeteer's cues with excitement, hand movements, and expressions of joy. The session not only entertained but also encouraged creativity, making it a memorable experience for all the children involved.

Shreedevi Sunil is the Founder and Chief Storyteller at Talking Turtles Storytellers. With over a decade of experience, she has performed more than 500 puppet shows, sharing folk tales, myths, and improvised stories with audiences across India and internationally. Notably, she performed The Gruffalo, at The Royal Opera House, Mumbai. Her storytelling and puppetry have been featured in classrooms, theatres, festivals, and now virtual platforms, with over 250 online shows since 2019.

At **Muskaan**, we continue to promote cultural and creative learning, enriching young minds through innovative and fun-filled experiences.

“The session aimed to enhance children's creativity and listening skills through engaging narratives. The puppeteer used vibrant puppets to narrate interesting folktales which captivated the young audience. The children were actively involved and responded with excitement using hand movements during the interactive parts of the story. The session not only entertained but also encouraged imaginative thinking. The show was incredibly successful, leaving the children thrilled and eager for more performances.” – DPS Sector 45, Gurgaon



This event was a joint initiative with Education for All, and supported by Austin Plywood and Veneer



Muskaan's Special Teachers' Day Celebration: A Joyful Evening for Underprivileged Children

In a heartwarming initiative, under the aegis of **Muskaan, Prabha Khaitan Foundation** organised a special Teachers' Day celebration dedicated to bringing joy and awareness to children from the red light area and JJDM's economically challenged backgrounds. This event aimed to uplift these young lives through a series of thoughtful activities and educational sessions.

The evening was marked by the distribution of essential items such as clothes, food, and toys, ensuring that the children experienced the warmth of care and generosity. Beyond the material gifts, the event featured a session led by an expert teacher, who spoke on crucial topics including healthy lifestyle habits, morality, and respect for others. This session was designed to impart valuable life lessons and encourage positive personal development.

The celebration was generously supported by the Shiwlal Chandrakala Devi Sarada Charitable Trust, whose contribution was instrumental in making this event a success. The trust's support underscores the importance of community collaboration in addressing the needs of marginalised children and fostering a nurturing environment for their growth.

The Teachers' Day celebration not only highlighted the spirit of giving but also emphasised the significance of education and moral development in shaping a brighter future for these children. The event was a testament to the collective effort to bring smiles and inspire positive change in the lives of those who need it most.

Muskaan is a joint initiative with Education for All



Madumita Seal



Where Emotions Meet Science: A Creative Learning Experience



In a vibrant and insightful session, Suchita Maheshwari led a discussion that engaged young participants in exploring emotions, hormones, and the power of kindness. The event, introduced by Sumitra Ray, Student Programme Advisor, began with an engaging activity that set the tone for a deep understanding of emotions and their connections to our physical and mental well-being.

Suchita initiated the discussion by presenting two short videos, one featuring a green dot and another showcasing a ladybug. Participants were asked to reflect on the emotions they experienced while watching the videos and to identify where in their body they felt these emotions.

Following the discussion on emotions, Suchita shifted focus to the science of hormones, using cortisol as an example of a hormone released during moments of stress or nervousness. To simplify the concept for the young participants, she introduced “hormone helpers” through a creative story about four friends—Endo, Oxy, Dopa, and Celso—who work together to maintain happiness and health in their kingdom.

This engaging metaphor made it easier for participants to grasp the roles of hormones like dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin, and endorphins. Participants were then asked to create their own hormone helpers using paper or sticks, labeling them with hormone names to reinforce their understanding.

Building on the discussion of hormones, Suchita introduced the acronym DOSE, representing dopamine, oxytocin, serotonin, and endorphins. She explained how different activities can release these “feel-good” hormones, encouraging participants to incorporate these activities into their daily routines for overall well-being. Suchita further encouraged them to create posters or printouts highlighting these hormones and their associated activities as a fun and visual reminder.

In addition, a dance activity and a video were planned for later, adding an element of excitement and movement to the learning experience. The session also included personal stories from participants about kindness and their experiences with animals.

Suchita wrapped up the discussion by showing a video on the science of kindness, encouraging participants to think of ways they could incorporate acts of kindness into their daily lives. Participants eagerly shared their thoughts and made plans to practice kindness moving forward.





Kunal Motling and Shubham

A peejay School of Kolkata came alive with an extraordinary mime performance by Kunal Motling and Shubham. Hosted under the **Muskaan** initiative, the artists captivated students with their silent yet expressive storytelling, delivering powerful messages through their art form.

Sumitra Ray, Student Programme Advisor of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** introduced the artists to the students and highlighted the significance of mime as a medium of communication. The performance not only entertained but also encouraged students to appreciate the subtleties of communication and the depth of emotions conveyed without words. It was a memorable experience that resonated with the core values of **Muskaan**, nurturing creativity and cultural appreciation among children.

“Children of the junior section of Apeejay School Park Street (Classes 3-5) had a delightful start for the week-long celebration to mark the Children's Day4 with the Mime show hosted. The interactive session by the team was full of fun with enthusiasm and positive orientation for the children. Children enjoyed the show with full energy and participation. We are thankful to MUSKAAN for this lovely venture on behalf of our school.” - Sudipta Chakraborty, Apeejay School Park Street



A Theatrical Delight at Apeejay School in Kolkata



Bajit Arora and Sudipta Chakraborty



Sumitra Ray



Mime Magic at Indus Valley World School, Kolkata

The students of Indus Valley World School were treated to a mesmerising performance by renowned mime artists Kunal Motling and Shubham. The event, part of the **Muskaan** initiative, brought storytelling to life through the art of silence, captivating young minds with its unique blend of expression, creativity, and emotion.

Sumitra Ray, Student Programme Advisor of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** introduced the artists to the students and set the stage for a performance that emphasised the importance of non-verbal communication. The duo left the audience spellbound, inspiring them to explore the beauty of art beyond words. It was a day filled with smiles, laughter, and endless imagination, perfectly aligning with **Muskaan**'s mission to enrich young minds through culture and creativity.

“The mime show hosted in Indus Valley World School was a resounding success. Kunal Motling's expert performance captivated students from Grades 3 to 5, leaving them both entertained and inspired. The interactive nature of the event encouraged active participation, allowing children to explore non-verbal communication in a fun and engaging way. The creative scenarios and expressive gestures showcased the power of silent storytelling, sparking the students' imaginations. Overall, the event was an educational and memorable experience that highlighted the beauty of mime artistry. Our school is grateful to Kunal Motling for the marvellous show which will stay etched in our hearts. We are looking forward to many more of such performances in future.” - Harpal Kaur from Indus Valley World School



Madumita Seal





Young Voices for the Planet: Muskaan's Insightful Climate Change Dialogue

Under the aegis of **Muskaan, Prabha Khaitan Foundation** hosted an enriching session titled **Understanding Climate Change: Its Impact on Us and Steps for a Sustainable Future** was recently organised, featuring the distinguished environmentalist, Anirban Bhattacharyya. Sumitra Ray, Student programme Advisor introduced the speaker and the session delved deep into one of the most pressing global issues of our time—climate change—and left the audience inspired and informed.

Anirban Bhattacharyya captivated the students with his engaging presentation, unravelling the complexities of global warming and its underlying causes. Using relatable examples and vivid illustrations, he explained how human activities, such as deforestation, industrial emissions, and unrestrained consumption of natural resources, have disrupted Earth's delicate balance.

More importantly, the session was solution-oriented. Bhattacharyya shared actionable steps individuals and communities can take to mitigate climate change. From simple measures like reducing single-use plastics and conserving energy to advocating for renewable resources and sustainable practices, the discussion emphasised the role of collective effort in creating a sustainable future.

What set this session apart was its interactive nature. Students actively participated, posing thoughtful questions and sharing their own concerns about the environment. Bhattacharyya addressed their queries with clarity, offering practical advice and encouraging them to think critically about their own contributions to environmental stewardship.

The session concluded with a powerful message: each individual, regardless of age, has the potential to be an agent of change. Anirban Bhattacharyya urged the young audience to adopt eco-friendly practices and spread awareness, emphasising that small actions, when multiplied across communities, can lead to significant change.

This session stands as a testament to the power of education in inspiring action and shaping a sustainable future for generations to come.





Jaya Seal Ghosh, Sonu Nigam, Bickram Ghosh Sundeep Bhutoria and Rupam Islam

Melodies and Conversation: A Tête-à-Tea with Sonu Nigam

Prabha Khaitan Foundation's much-loved interactive series **Tête-à-Tea** has always been about candid conversations, meaningful exchanges, and memorable evenings. On this occasion, the series presented an unforgettable session back in 2014 with the legendary singer Sonu Nigam in conversation with acclaimed percussionist and composer Bickram Ghosh at Kolkata.

Tête-à-Tea was envisioned as a space for free-wheeling dialogues where celebrated personalities from diverse fields engage in enriching conversations, while also connecting with an intimate gathering of guests.

The evening was graced by a distinguished audience including Jaya Seal Ghosh, Gargi Roy Choudhury, Debojyoti Mishra, Arindam Sil, Madhu Neotia, Kaushiki and Partha Desikan, Rupam Islam, Gopal Poddar, Britta Leicke Milde, Neel Adhikari, and many others.

With Sonu Nigam sharing his journey, experiences, and perspectives in a warm and personal interaction led by Bickram Ghosh, the evening stood out as one of the most engaging moments in the series – blending music, art, and stories in the true spirit of **Tête-à-Tea**.



Sonu Nigam



Sonu Nigam with Bickram Ghosh Sundeep Bhutoria and Madhu Neotia

World Mental Health Day: Breaking Stigmas, Building Support



On World Mental Health Day, the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** emphasizes the importance of acknowledging and addressing mental well-being as an essential part of overall health. In today's fast-paced and demanding world, stress, anxiety, and depression have become increasingly prevalent, yet conversations around mental health remain clouded by stigma and silence.

Globally, millions struggle with mental health

conditions, often in isolation due to fear of judgment or lack of access to care. The consequences are far-reaching, affecting not only individuals but families, communities, and societies at large. In India, where cultural taboos often discourage open dialogue, it is imperative to foster awareness, acceptance, and support systems that prioritize mental well-being.

The **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** advocates for a future where mental health is treated with the same

seriousness as physical health. By promoting awareness, expanding access to counseling and care, and nurturing compassionate communities, we can break barriers and create a culture of empathy and resilience.

“

There is no health without mental health.

— Dr. Brock Chisholm

”

World Mental Health Day is a reminder that reaching out for help is an act of strength, not weakness. Together, let us stand for a world where no one suffers in silence, and where every individual feels seen, supported, and valued.



ARTWORK BY **SUDIPTA KUNDU**

End the Silence, Stop the Violence: A Call for Justice and Compassion



The **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** strongly believes that silence in the face of violence only perpetuates cycles of suffering and inequality. The campaign to “End the Silence, Stop the Violence” underscores the urgent need to address issues of domestic abuse, gender-based violence, and all forms of oppression that erode the fabric of our society.

Violence thrives where silence prevails. Survivors often remain unheard due to fear, stigma, or lack of resources, while perpetrators continue unchecked.

This culture of silence not only harms individuals but also undermines the principles of justice, dignity, and equality.

As a society, it is our moral responsibility to empower survivors, amplify their voices, and ensure accountability for those who commit violence. The **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** is committed to supporting initiatives that provide safe spaces, legal aid, and rehabilitation for survivors, while also working to transform attitudes through awareness

and education.

Ending the silence is the first step toward creating a just, compassionate, and safe world. By speaking out and standing united, we can break the cycle of violence and build a future rooted in respect and equality.

**Injustice anywhere is a threat to
justice everywhere.**

— Martin Luther King Jr.



Human Rights Day: Upholding Dignity, Advancing Equality



On Human Rights Day, the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** joins the global community in reaffirming its commitment to the principles of freedom, dignity, and equality for all. Human rights are not privileges granted by states—they are inherent to every individual, regardless of gender, caste, creed, or nationality.

Yet, across the world, these rights are routinely violated. From poverty and discrimination to violence and suppression of voices, countless

challenges remind us that the pursuit of justice and equality is an ongoing struggle. In India, the diversity that enriches our culture must also inspire us to ensure inclusivity, fairness, and respect for every citizen.

The **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** believes that safeguarding human rights is not just the responsibility of governments but of every individual. By advocating for education, equality, and justice, we can create communities where every person's dignity

is honored and protected.

Human Rights Day is both a celebration of progress and a call to action. Let us commit ourselves to building a society where freedom, justice, and equality are more than ideals—they are lived realities for everyone.

**To deny people their human rights is
to challenge their very humanity.**

— Nelson Mandela



Strings Across Cultures: A Journey of Resonance

The **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** proudly presents a fusion masterpiece composed by Grammy Award Winner, Ricky Kej, where music transcends borders and eras. This evocative piece brings together the hammered dulcimer—an instrument with multiple origin stories that has travelled across centuries—with the soulful voice of a Celtic singer, the rhythmic depth of the tabla, and the grandeur of an orchestra.

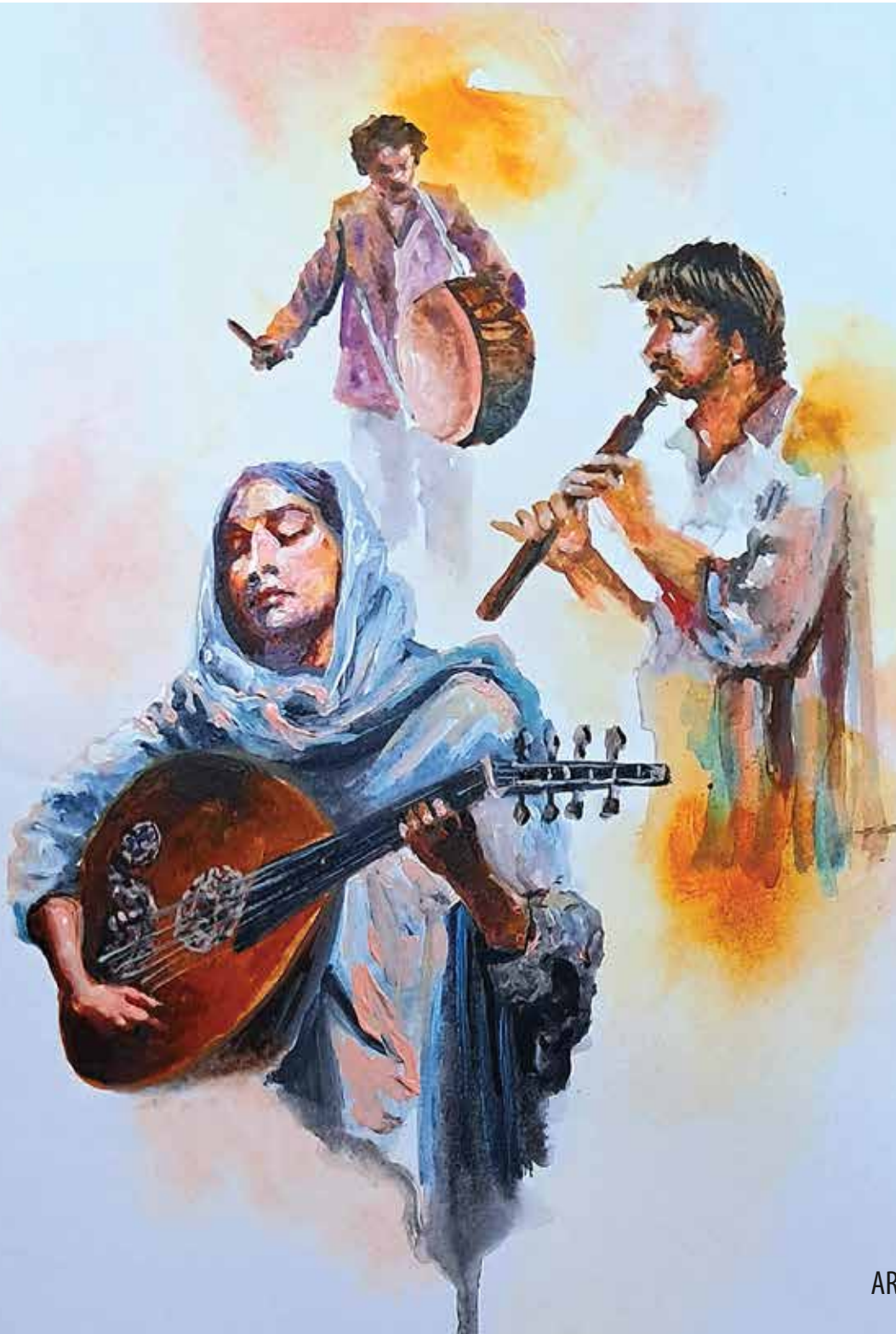
Through this collaboration of sounds, Ricky Kej celebrates the interconnectedness of cultures, showing how instruments and traditions, though diverse in their journeys, converge to create harmony. It is a reminder that music is humanity's shared language, weaving stories across time and continents.



Echoes of Timeless Harmony

To mark the shift in seasons, the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** introduces a soothing yet powerful composition by Grammy Award Winner, Ricky Kej. This piece blends the relaxed cadence of drums with the resonant tones of the oud and the soulful cry of the duduk, crafting a soundscape that feels both timeless and universal.

Each note reflects unity in diversity, as these eclectic instruments—rooted in different cultures—come together to create music that transcends generations. Through this composition, Ricky Kej offers a meditative celebration of inclusivity and connection, reminding us that music is a bridge linking the past, present, and future.



A Grand Ode to Celebration and Hope

As the year draws to a close, the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** presents a vibrant and uplifting composition by Grammy Award Winner, Ricky Kej, crafted to celebrate the beauty of the year gone by and to welcome the promise of a brighter tomorrow.

With jubilant melodies and resounding rhythms, this piece captures the spirit of togetherness, gratitude, and anticipation. Ricky Kej's music invites listeners to celebrate louder, dream bigger, and step into the new year with renewed hope—for ourselves, our communities, and our planet. It is both a farewell and a beginning, a musical reminder that every ending carries within it the seeds of joy and renewal.

