

Media Freedom in South Asia

By Rita Payne

This is a dangerous time to be a journalist. Since 2018 at least 43 journalists have been killed in relation to their work, many others, have been attacked, arrested and intimidated. Hostility towards media workers has been stoked by authoritarian leaders like Trump who coined the term 'fake news' to dismiss any reports which he does not like. The victimisation of journalists is widespread in South Asia. According to figures published by UNESCO between 2013 to 2017, Pakistan tops the list with 23 journalists killed, 18 in India and 8 in Bangladesh.

Pakistan

The threats to journalists take many forms. Pakistan, in its 71 years of existence, has suffered oppression ranging from special coercive laws to blatant censorship. The media have endured an unprecedented level of imposed "self-censorship" as a result of state pressure. Unjustified cover-ups and the suppression of truth regarding crucial questions of public accountability have seriously affected the perception of the quality of democracy in Pakistan.

As one of the most dangerous countries in the world for media workers, Pakistan has witnessed the murder of 72 journalists since 2002. Except for five cases, most of these killings remain unsolved. Successive governments have seemed reluctant to probe the murders of journalists.

The PPF report focuses on instances of crimes against the media, where journalists are killed, abducted or detained and threatened by law enforcement agencies, militants, feudal lords, and tribal leaders.

Online harassment is increasing throughout the world, including Pakistan. The central government recently approved the formation of a new regulatory body, known as the Pakistan Media Regulatory Authority (PMRA). From now, all media, including print, electronic and social, will be regulated by this newly established body

Media outlets remain under pressure from the authorities to avoid reporting on several issues including criticism of government institutions and the judiciary. There were at least 31 instances of journalists, anchors and television channels being issued show-cause notices, suspensions of anchor persons, blocking of websites, and disruption of the distribution of newspapers.



leading to fears that this could be a new tool to curb and control the freedom of press.

gives press conferences or media interviews.

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Editorially Speaking

Dear readers,

This issue is a special issue for us even though it was delayed for many reasons. We try very hard to release each issue on time and we thank all our writers who have sent their work on time. I am really pleased to say that for the first time we have used our internal resources to produce this magazine rather than outsourcing the design work. This means it took us a little longer to get each page checked for content accuracy and overall look. We hope our readers will understand the constraints under which we are working and suggest ways to improve the presentation of the magazine in future.

Recently I received the following comment from one of our valued contributors. It read, *"I noticed one change from your father's time to now in the production that now it is taking more political bend, starting from the first page, while before it used to be page-after-page full of literary, and creative works!"* I was really happy to receive the this comment even though it sounded like Confluence is changing its course from being a literary magazine to a current affairs magazine. Well, we are still a literary magazine, but we can't ignore certain unprecedented events that are taking place around us. In South Asia as well as in the western world, political culture seems to be deviating from accepted norms. While we like to have diverse content, which will interest our readers we also would like to highlight these changes, as one day these events could become part of a literary work.

We would like to have your submissions for the next issue starting from the beginning of next month so that we will be better prepared for our May issue. In the meantime, we will be happy to receive your comments and we will strive to maintain a high standard in every issue.

Happy reading!

Vijay Anand

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Letter to Editor

Dear Dr. Anand, I congratulate you on your another very informative issue of Confluence! I always enjoy reading your Editorials, always beautifully worded, comprehensive and informative! I noticed one change from your father's time to now in the production that now it is taking more political bend, starting from the first page while before it used to be page-after-page full of literary, and creative works! I wish you all the best for your next issue, and for all your struggle, and efforts to keep your father's dream alive! I am lucky to have known your father, and I respected his enthusiasm for literature, writing and editing! May his soul rest in peace wherever he is!

Best regards,
Meenaksh Mohan

Continues from P1

In spite of Mr. Modi's deliberate sidelining of the mainstream media, large sections, especially TV, have adopted the tenets of the more right-wing elements within the BJP such as Hindutva, anti-Pakistan rhetoric and narrow nationalism. Journalists who challenge these trends are threatened, vilified and even been killed. The most high profile case was the killing of Gauri Lankesh journalist-turned-activist from Bangalore. Gauri who was known for being a critic of right-wing Hindu extremism and an opponent of caste discrimination was shot dead outside her home in 2017. Other lesser known journalists in rural areas have been murdered after exposing corruption involving local politicians, businesspeople, criminal groups or even the police.

L K Sharma, a senior journalist, has been writing about the challenges faced by journalists who strive to maintain their independence in the current hostile environment. In a recent article he observed: "On the other hand," is a phrase banished from journalism. Fair journalists are hunted and silenced. Those of the other kind are bought and deployed to make maniac noises in favour of the ruling establishment and against its critics."

He notes wryly that, "In India today, one cannot talk of science, history or politics without a reference to mythology. Godmen and astrologers make their daily pronouncements on the TV channels. So, how does one report the emergence of an independent journalist in a sea of embedded media. One attributes it to the divine intervening to reform His degraded profession!"

Bangladesh

In neighbouring Bangladesh, the persecution of the prominent photojournalist, Shahidul Alam, made international headlines. Since he was a familiar figure on international channels like Al Jazeera and the BBC his detention and alleged torture for making critical comments about the government of Sheikh Hasina provoked outrage across the world. Campaigning groups including Index of Censorship, the Committee to Protect Journalists and Amnesty International succeeded in obtaining his release on bail but charges against him have not been dropped. Alam is fortunate to be alive, several journalists, writers and bloggers who espoused secularism or denounced religious extremism have paid with their lives.

Editor-Publisher of The Daily Star, Mahfuz Anam, was entangled in a controversy after he admitted in 2016 that reports published in his paper in 2007 alleging corruption by Sheikh Hasina were based on uncorroborated leaks fed by the military Directorate General of Forces Intelligence. He admitted that it was a bad editorial judgement but despite this he faced a barrage of attacks from the government and by 18 February 2016, 79 cases were filed against him including 17 sedition and 62 defamation cases. He has refused to

resign. In an editorial in his paper he spelt out why a free media was essential for a healthy democracy:

"Independent journalism serves the society through raising questions... independent journalism has a symbiotic relationship with a democratic government."

"In my 25 years of editorship, I still haven't managed to convince the government that independent journalism benefits the state. Still, the government sees us with suspicion. They consider independent journalism to be a nuisance," he said." Constructive criticism is taken as an attempt to tarnish the image of the government, without realising that this is for their own good."

Sri Lanka

In the case of Sri Lanka, there is still widespread suppression of the media, particularly those critical of the government. In 2014, Sri Lanka was ranked 165 out of 180 countries in Reporters Without Border's Press Freedom Index.

Freedom of the press is guaranteed under Sri Lanka's constitution giving every citizen "the freedom of speech and expression including publication". At the same time, significant limits are placed on the exercise of this right. This, together with various laws and regulations, such as the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1979, brought in to deal with Tamil militancy have been used by successive governments to suppress freedom of expression. During the civil war many journalists were killed.. 25 journalists were killed between 1999 and 2011 and dozens fled abroad. The state-owned media takes a heavy pro-government stance. Independently owned media in Sri Lanka, have learned to practise self-censorship.

The civil war ended in May 2009 but many of the laws and regulations introduced at the time remain in place. The attacks on the media have reduced but journalists continue to be harassed and intimidated.

Maldives

In the Maldives, media freedom has mirrored the political changes in the country. The pressure on the media was eased after Mohammed Nasheed became President following the the country's first multiparty presidential election in 2008 following decades of authoritarian rule under former president Maumoon Abdul Gayoom. However, democratic gains were reversed after Abdulla Yameen came to power in 2013. His rule was marked by severe restrictions on opposition activities, the imprisonment of opposition figures, restrictions on freedoms of expression and assembly, politicisation of the judiciary and other independent institutions and increasing Islamist militancy. In April 2017, Yameen Rasheed, a prominent blogger, human rights defender, and critic of religious extremism, was murdered. In 2014, a journalist Ahmed Rilwan, known for criticising the government went missing and has still not been found. Many suspect that Yameen may have played a role in his disappearance.

In elections in 2018, Yameen was ousted by Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, who won 58 percent of the vote. However, in a report by Index on Censorship, Riazat Butt, editor of the Maldives Independent, expressed caution about expecting much change. Butt described the coalition manifesto as "fantastically vague" about press freedom.

Nepal

The state of the media in Nepal is a cause for concern. The Committee to Protect Journalists has urged the government to repeal or amend the new criminal code that came into effect on August 2018 which severely threatens press freedom. According to news reports the law criminalises a range of ordinary journalistic activity. Depending on the infraction, journalists could face fines of up to 30,000 rupees (US\$270) and imprisonment of up to three years.

Namrata Sharma, chair of the Center for Investigative Journalism, Nepal (CIJ) told the CPJ that while she appreciated the need to protect privacy in the internet age, the law threatened to outlaw public interest journalism, including sting operations that CIJ journalists have used to expose wrongdoing that have led to legislative reform.

Conclusion

Commenting on the overall picture, Sanjoy Hazarika, co-ordinator of the South Asia Media Defenders Network, SAMDEN, says pressure and intimidation of media workers has grown across South Asia, especially in rural areas. He says, "That's why through SAMDEN we try and mobilize support and focus on them as well as on critical issues before media and freedom of expression including arbitrary detention and laws or proposed laws which will adversely impact free and fearless reporting including seizure and search of documents, mobile phones and computers." He says, "We advocate the use of Right to Information laws as additional investigative journalism tools for media and design workshops to help this process. That way, the media can get the information it seeks directly from governments. We have done so in India and Bangladesh and hope to expand this to other countries in the region."

The tragedy is that while governments in South Asia and around the world have pledged to uphold freedom of the press they tend to resort to threats and intimidation if they are held to account by the media. The inability of governments and other institutions to accept constructive criticism is possibly the root cause of the persecution of journalists worldwide.

Rita Payne is a Freelance journalist and media adviser; former Asia Editor, BBC World and President Emeritus Commonwealth Journalists Association.



Book review

Anita Nahal's Hey ... Spilt milk is spilt, Nothing else & Life on the Go from New Delhi to America

Reviewed by Gwendolyn Bethea

"I am absolutely blown away by Dr. Anita Nahal's poetry in Hey... spilt milk is spilt, nothing else, and her flash fictions in Life on the Go, flash fictions from New Delhi to America. Dr. Nahal is truly amazing! I have known her for over 15 years, and have kept abreast of her thought-provoking writings, and now with these two books, I feel I am walking with an international poet laureate! Her vision and talent are humbling".

Anita Nahal's recently published books, *Hey ... spilt milk is spilt, nothing else* (poems), and *Life on the Go from New Delhi to America* (flash fictions) are a pure delight, giving a genuine glimpse into Nahal's soul. I am honored to be a witness to her deepest thoughts that reveal sometimes perceptible, and at other times more abstract, but beautifully woven meanings and nuances in these two works. While one can peer into Nahal's own personal story, one can also see a world view of challenges, trials, joys and triumphs that are universal in depth and relevance.

A native of New Delhi, India, Nahal's poetry and flash fiction (the newest genre for short fictional narratives), merge Indian and American culture and history. There is unexpected thankfulness for personal heartache that learns to ride the waves of passion, regeneration, aging, and world issues. For example In "Age," she mourns the passage of time, yet triumphs in the wisdom that only comes with time-worn wings that soar onward and upward despite winds of change and challenge.

There is much to be gleaned from her work, whose carefully threaded lines are both timeless and retrospective. In one poem of her early childhood years, she recounts how she and her sister innocently cherish nature's tiniest creations and whose careless castings aside by an unappreciative neighbor they both bemoan. In the poem, "Dyeing and Undyeing," she writes that she is tired of coloring her grey strands, likely a metaphor for faking happiness when a deep, soul cleansing cry, lies just beneath the surface. Or consider her profound ache for immigrant babies and her own unheeded longing for acceptance devoid of superficial, external promises in the poem, "They say people need to unite?"

She writes of conversations about skin color, beauty and worthiness and delves into the still existing cross-continental phenomenon in her poem, "Darkie," stating, "I did not know that I was a dirty child and then a dirty woman." And then, in the poem "Cacophony," she asks, "Tell me then just why do you flirt with tanning yourself?"

The poem, "Hope," is a nod towards historical prescience, as she quotes Dr.

Martin Luther King, Jr. in his commonly known, "Mountain Top" speech, reminding us of King's words of magnificence: "I've seen the promised land." And one truly comes to believe after reading her works, that one will see one's own promised land, if life and time permit. Indeed, the imagery is palpable in many poems, including the one in which she first holds the small hand of her only child, a precious son, whose hand metaphorically and physically becomes a mature, guiding presence as her own hand wrinkles ever so imperceptibly.

her future granddaughter about being astute in recognizing people tricking her through the use of a Halloween symbolism in the "Trick is treat and treat is trick" story. In another flash fiction, "Blessed Caesarian," Priya meticulously and delicately recounts the birth of her son, with her mother gently caressing and calming her new, motherly emotions, as she eagerly anticipates nursing her newborn son. And in some of the stories, Priya reminisces about her parents wisely acknowledging that all humans err, and that learning and growing has a natural cyclical pattern regardless of age or relationship.

I agree with what others have said about her writings (as given on the inside covers of both books), that, "Anita Nahal's poems and flash fictions are valuable contributions to the literature on immigration and diaspora writings. Her books can easily be part of sociology, anthropology, literary and inter-disciplinary classes, as Nahal's work pushes us to ponder upon issues that emerge from moving places that we might not even think about. It's the universal, ethnographical appeal in her work that will make Anita a major writer of our times" or as another says remembering her father, Chaman Nahal who was a well-known writer, that, "she has creativity in her genes...and her pen will become more prolific, making the literary scene richer and life beautiful."

Nahal has an unusual ability to take a metaphor like "spilt milk" and settle our souls into a calm acceptance of the inevitabilities of our lives. Yet, she encourages and challenges us to create and believe in new opportunities for life, love, and laughter.

I believe Nahal is already writing her third collection of poetry and second collection of flash fictions, as well as her first novella. I look forward to them, and I am sure these will be as insightful, deep and soulful in their evocations as her just released works.



Dr. Gwendolyn Scotton Bethea is the founder of Scotton Communications Network, an organization that specializes in editing, writing, and public relations. An editor/writer and communications specialist, she is presently serving as editor of the Howard University Graduate School Research Magazine (hugsresearch.org) and the manager of the Speakers Bureau of Howard University.



In the flash fictions book, *Life on the Go...*, Nahal through the voice of the protagonist Priya touches upon myriad themes of immigrants moving between countries, observing life and culture, and experiencing the excitement of travels, yet she also poignantly brings out the pitfalls of universal experiences that plague humankind. For example, in the piece, "Homelessness can happen to anyone" Priya is horrified to see a former classmate trudging the streets, after her own return to her native India from an exciting, yet also trying, eight years in America. And then Priya also narrates her guilt in wrenching herself emotionally from the poverty of a homeless man on the streets of New York. Nahal cleverly employs symbolism of a young girl being down with individuals feeling down in the "Feeling down, being down" story. And she has conversations with

Education

A Paradigm Shift: Traditional to Contemporary Education

By Meenakshi Mohan, Ed.D.

“Technology is just a tool. In terms of getting the kids working together, and motivating them, the teacher is most important” Bill Gates

A new era has begun . . . where the first word uttered by children is “dotcom” . . . where their vocabulary consists of words like, “gopher,” “hyperlink,” “giga and megabytes” . . . and where their demands of “cookies” no longer elicit thoughts of colorful cookie jars in the kitchen. In this era, the young generation can access plethora of information with only a touch of a finger on the iPhones. The bygone era – when the librarian with gold-rimmed spectacles, hanging low

with this aim because it helps students develop critical thinking skills. J.H. Patterson, in his book *Putting Computer Power in Schools*, commented, “Never before in our lifetime has any innovation taken education by storm as much as computer technology . . .” Seymore Papert, a professor of mathematics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and a follower of the Piagetian theory in its application to teaching, commented that in the LOGO

system. His advice is that teachers should have more opportunities to learn, and become more technology-empowered. He remarked that although in schools, colleges, and teacher training institutes a lot has been achieved, however, in this Cyber age, a lot has still to be done to improve the education system.

The teachers should embrace new challenges of this era, move forward, and start speaking the same



over her nose, peered through antiquated ledgers after ledgers to keep track of the library acquisitions, and the list of borrowers – seems perhaps the Stone Age for them. It is not too long ago when doing research meant, literally, living in the library. The newer generation associates more with “tablets” as a portable computer device for them to do homework, and submit through “Drop box.” Nice cursive handwriting does not matter anymore. Dictionaries are outdated when all the information is easily accessible on “Google.”

Today, a quiet revolution has taken place. Teachers are discovering that it is not enough for students to be just computer literate; they need to understand the technicalities in order to manage the information flow. Many schools have already shifted their focus from a computer literacy curriculum to technology-integrated curriculum. The aim of education is to develop constructive learners. Education technology is in congruence

environment, (LOGO is a special computer language) students are in control. They embark on an exploration about how they think . . . and thinking about thinking turns them into epistemologists. According to Computer Networks and ISDN Systems (Integrated Services Digital Network), “The new learning paradigm presented by the Internet is that both teachers and students engage in a form of consensual hallucination, where the interaction of the teachers and students are considered almost equal . . .”

Dr. Bruce E. Ahlborn, an Apple Award Distinguished Educator commented that technology has already affected the education system. The newer generation has an inborn knowledge of technology unlike their teachers and parents. His concern is not how technology is going to affect the education of children, but how we can best provide the opportunities for students to experience the benefits of technology in today’s education

vocabulary their students already speak. Elliot Masie reflected, “eLearning is changing, and, we will see new models, new technologies and designs emerge, so let’s drop “e” . . . give it a new and wider definitionWe need to bring learning to people instead of people to learning.” So, teachers need to be knowledgeable enough, so they can seamlessly integrate technology into the curriculum, and help their students to think out of the box, so the students can apply their learning into unique experiences.

Meenakshi Mohan is an educator, freelance writer, art critic, book reviewer, children's writer and a painter. Most of her paintings are in private collection.



Biography

Hema Nair meets Prathapan G – Artist and Activist

Prathapan does not strike you as a nature warrior when you first meet him. In the wilderness just outside this edition of Kochi Muziris Biennale, standing in the old world rooms of David Hall among his paintings and sketches, he offered to draw my caricature. Luckily for me, I managed to see beyond the bramble of his soliciting to his captivating brushstrokes and the nobility of the ideals they depicted. What he saw and experienced found expression in his art as a way of both venting and letting the world know the ugly truth.

Walking along a river one day, he came upon a discarded polyester shirt with a turtle trapped within the long sleeve. Although he could extricate the turtle and give him another lease of life, the experience left him disturbed and uneasy. Such disquiet translated into environmental activism for him. Kochi, where he lives and works boasts abundant rivers and picturesque backwaters. Once quiet and relatively remote, it is now teeming with activity from tourists, locals and the burgeoning immigrant population. Standards of living are poor here with a seasonal spurt in the economy interspersed with periods of penury and hardships. For them, a few plastic bags thrown after use into the nearby canal is a small problem compared with how would they earn the rent for the coming month or keep their boat afloat to go out fishing every morning. Waterways and canals are used to dump household and business waste. The lack of effective legislation and awareness amongst the people, means you see all manner of garbage being thrown into the rivers, poisoning or trapping marine life. Prathapan remembers seeing small fish swimming in and out of a condom once, floating gossamer like, in a pond near his home.

Prathapan grew up in a small village called Konni, a few hours drive away from Cochin. His talent may have been inherited from his father, who used to draw pictures of local birds and animals. Perhaps he also passed onto his son a love of nature and the desire to preserve it.

He left home as a youth to study art at the Radha Lakshmi Vilasam college of fine arts, Thripunithura, which was established by the erstwhile King of Cochin and then taken over by the Government in 1956. Then he earned a bachelor's degree in Fine Arts from Mahatma Gandhi University in 2007. From 2002, he has exhibited his work in group and solo exhibitions all over Kerala, winning several awards from the state government as well as the Kerala Lalithakala Academy. His most

cherished accolade to date has been his inclusion in the Kaarishta Biennale that was held in 2017 in Finland, his first venture out of native shores. His display there was his series of black and white



sketches depicting the menace of plastic in our water – birds, fishes and animals trapped in bottles, bags, fishing tackle and paying the price for our mindlessness.

His maturing as an artist over the past couple of decades, has been multidimensional. Alongside his skill and technique, he has also honed a philosophy which bolsters his artwork. In his growth, one can see his study of the great masters - not just art, but their lives. Da Vinci, he feels was a more effective and inspirational artist, having consorted with grave diggers and walked the thin line between darkness and right, and giving the world remarkably accurate and beautiful drawings of our bodies. In the same vein, he feels that someone as famous and successful as a M.F. Hussain may fall woefully short, his art speaking only for beauty and not so much for progress. He believes art loses its gravity if empty of purpose. An artist is first of all a

beholder of the world he inhabits, its land, the sky and its people. Lack of such discernment could reduce art to mere craft – to the physical perfection of brushstrokes and clear lines – but bereft of soul.

He speaks of Van Gogh as someone with a lot of emotion, which he could bring onto his canvases to give it such life that it moves people to this day, more than a century after they were painted. He feels the artists today who are able to touch viewers with such impact are those similarly impassioned, almost bordering on hysteria, but which we don't see because they wear masks over their true faces. He looks almost pensive as he says this, perhaps revealing personal introspection.

Another significant inspiration for the artist in him is Edmund Joseph Clint. Prathapan gets animated and his eyes take on a sparkle as he speaks about Clint and his genius. Clint was a child prodigy who drew around 25000 pictures before dying at the age of 7. What was remarkable about Clint was not just his talent and control of lines that his small child hands could achieve, but the unbelievable insight in his drawings. He drew a perfect circle on the floor with a chalk while crawling on his belly at 2 years, and introduced colour into his pictures at age 5. His depiction of speed in a pair of running elephants or the protectiveness in the eyes of a tigress playing with her cub is something even seasoned artists struggle to do. Clint died in the year 1983, long before internet, or even television had made an entry into Kerala, where he lived his entire life. That Clint was able to get these visuals and ideas onto paper is a measure of his genius, says Prathapan, and in all these years of painting and drawing, he feels he has not achieved even a fraction of that talent. Prathapan equates Clint's art with divine gift, and his own as something to be developed from observation, perseverance and honing. Prathapan uses that little boy as his lodestar, and with something transcendent like that guiding him, it is unlikely he will lose his way.

Artist's E mail: prathapan2012@gmail.com

Hema Nair is a cardiac anesthetist working in Narayana Hrudayalaya, the world's largest heart hospital, well known for its philanthropy.

In addition to medical writing, she enjoys writing prose and poetry on anything that catches her fancy. She's also a movie buff, avid reader and enjoys cycling.



Malathy's Musings

An Indo-British Education

By Malathy Sitaram

It seems an age since I was in college in Bombay (Note non-usage of Mumbai). This was quite a while ago in the late fifties. After school, students wanting to study for a degree in the Arts or Science could choose one from about half a dozen colleges. Well, at that time the two best colleges were St. Xavier's and Elphinstone. St. Xavier's was a Catholic institution known for its good results. Elphinstone College was a government institution with equally good results. Both were and are co-ed. My elder sister and I had been pupils at a Catholic convent school by the name of St. Anne's. I think both of us would agree that our school days were some of the happiest times in our lives. In those days the Convent schools were well run and attended. I guess that would be the same today too. My father was a civil servant and my parents felt that Elphinstone College was where we should go after school. However, my close school friends had selected St. Xavier's and I could not imagine life without them. We were heartbroken. We had always been a close band of five girls. My friends came to our house and wept and begged my mother to permit me to join their college. To no avail. My sister finished School at the age of 14 and was a very young candidate for college. She had had a couple of double promotions in school which was why she finished schooling so early. I was fifteen when I joined college.

Both my sister and I graduated after a four-year course. We chose our specialized subjects after taking the Intermediate examination at the end of two years. My sister took up Economics and History and obtained her B.A. degree in the year that I joined college. I opted for a Philosophy and French degree course. We had already studied French in school. Looking back now I realize how modern our parents were in their outlook. They encouraged us to study and wanted us to benefit from a good education. My mother was one of the first women in her community to go to college in Madras. I am still amazed that her chosen subjects were Physics and Chemistry. From college to marriage. That was the norm then. In the early days of my first year in college I missed my school friends. College was of course so different from school. My convent school was for girls only. In college both sexes attended though if I remember rightly there was a Catholic college in Bombay for women only.

We loved Bombay for its modernity in comparison with other Indian cities and its very multicultural atmosphere. Hindus, Muslims, Parsees, Maharashtrians, Gujaratis, Bengalis, Goans and Jains lived here side by side and got along well. There was a certain part of Bombay where the wealthy lived in beautiful mansions. Sadly, most of them are now extinct as the rich decided to invest in flats. We had lived on the first floor of a five-storey block of flats. At that time five storeys were the norm and the houses in our road and along the sea-face were very attractive. The wealthy owners had them painted every few years. The street where we lived has not changed.

The flats today are much taller in the newer areas. Marine Drive is a famous long road with attractive buildings and very beautiful street lamps. It runs parallel to the sea. There is a low wall running alongside the sea on which people can sit and gaze outward at the Arabian Sea. Its colour seems to change at different times of day from steel grey to blue. During the monsoon the waves are so high that they lash over the sea wall. At weekends it gets very crowded with families with children taking the sea air. Bombay has a splendid racecourse and Gulf Arabs used to send (and probably still do) in their horses to take part in races. They owned and probably still own some lovely houses in Bombay.

On January 4th this year, Elphinstone College celebrated its 163rd Anniversary! A couple of friends in India wrote to ask if I would be attending the celebrations. No, I was not planning to. I asked my friends to let me know how it went. I heard that it was a huge success and old friends met. I felt only a slight pang over not being there. It is so long since I was there that it feels like a lifetime! The UK is my home now. When I go to Bombay now very occasionally, I find I am lost in some places as so much has changed. There has been a huge amount of construction of buildings which has led to the extraordinary work of reclaiming as much land as possible from the sea, pushing it further back. I feel like a stranger in these areas and tend to lose my bearings! It must cost vast amounts of government money but houses have to be built.

Here in the UK I took two further degrees in Education with an interval of about 10 years

between the B.Ed. and the M.Ed. I had embarked on a long career of teaching English in schools. It was exhausting. I would have to take home the children's exercise books to correct and mark classwork or homework most evenings. Usually there are thirty pupils per class. There are primary schools for children starting from the age of five. Secondary schools take children from the age of eleven. Private schools exist and the famous ones such as Eton, Harrow, Cheltenham Ladies' College are privately run and the fees are very high. Their examination results are usually good. The strange anomaly is that these famous schools are called Public Schools. Note the capital 'P'. Those parents who can afford it send the children to such schools and many Oxbridge students have attended these schools. In state schools there were usually thirty children in each class.

Unlike Indians, it seems the English do not learn new languages easily. The French teacher in the school I was at would complain that because the English department did not teach grammar any more, they found it hugely difficult to teach a foreign language. In the Sixties over here, the idea took hold among educationalists that it was not necessary to teach English grammar as a part of English teaching. It was abandoned. Fresh from India, in the seventies, I was astonished and critical of this idea. If we did not talk about adjectives, nouns, adverbs, prepositions, how on earth could we expect the children to write fluently and understand the techniques of good writing? Some parents who would have studied Grammar in school wondered why we were not doing our jobs properly.

Today my teaching years feel like a distant dream.

Malathy Sitaram was the first Asian teacher of English in Wiltshire schools. Also she was the first Asian to be appointed to the Swindon Bench of Justices of the Peace.



Jaipur Literary Festival

Recipe for Good Writing: Sustained Thought, Sustained Freedom, Observation, Imagination and Evaluation

Dr Deepa Vanjani's conversation with renowned authors Ben Okri and Anita Nair

Two days of intellectual champagne, that's how I would describe the two days I spent at the Diggi Palace on the 24 and 25 January 2019. The Pink City comes alive at this time of the year with the Jaipur Literature Festival [JLF], the world's largest amalgamation of authors, translators, publishers, editors, historians, poets, some 2000 this year, and more than a million visitors. Now in its eleventh year, the festival also featured the Rajkamal JBM [Jaipur Bookmark] Haveli sessions to focus on publishing and translation.

Apart from attending some brilliant sessions, I got the opportunity to converse with two renowned and path-breaking fiction writers at the press terrace-Ben Okri, winner of the Man Booker for fiction in 1991 for *The Famished Road*, and Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award winner [2012] Anita Nair. Here are some excerpts from the two conversations:

The Nigerian Civil War had an impact on

"intellectual laziness". "But a number of critical theories are built around these and are taught to literature students across universities", I insist. Okri makes his point: "Students don't read, they just have a mindset.

Since many youngsters are into writing these days it was only natural to ask him about the writing process and publishing one's writing. "There are lot of lies about writing. Writing is about deep thinking, extremely rigorous thinking that involves scientific conjecture and clear thought. You have to make it a constant task," says the author of several renowned works of fiction, adding, "Every great piece of writing has the strength of sustained thought and sustained freedom."

One is often carried away by the temptation to publish one's work. Okri warns that patience is crucial as "it is not about how fast you publish, but how good you are. Take the trouble of learning the craft of writing.

Talking about the creative process and the art of writing she responded, "There is no way you can build on imagination without observation. The personal connection has to be turned around through imagination in order to create. Writing is an amalgamation of both. And one needs to research well for writing."

Which element lends timelessness to writing? "Dwelling on a larger than life theme, dealing with humanity and the human condition which doesn't change, gives a work shelf life," opines Nair.

Readers tend to add much of the author's autobiographical element into the writing, and Nair is no exception to this. I asked about her take on this, to which she responded that she would have been a nervous wreck by this time, if all that's she has written about was related to her own life.

As the conversation was nearing an end, I



Okri's writing. On being asked about it he responded that it was a long story and it was "his first experience of death as a child", seeing a river of dead men and women and dead bodies with eyes wide open. "It made me understand the courage as well as the cowardice of people," says the 59-year-old author, "and it led me to asking questions." He started reading philosophy which led to the realization that "society is made up of lies". Thereafter he refused to accept the world as it is, deciding to go beneath the surface.

Okri believes that "society is always lying to keep up the order of things. It is a giant prison." All the ideas of propriety according to him are built into us to prevent us from voicing the truth. "That is why society is the way it is because we never challenge ideas," he adds.

A mindset that challenges authority and the established order is always a threat to society which could lead to difficulty in fitting in. Has it been thus for him as well? "Fitting in is always a problem," replies Okri. He feels like an outsider and an outsider can be both an intellectual and spiritual person too.

What did he make of such descriptions as post-colonial and post-modern being used for his writing and his quick response was that it was "terrible", as such terms are just

A writer is always conscious. Every sentence is chosen, where you begin, is chosen, it is deliberate. And don't read-re-read!" he suggests as we drew the conversation to a close. Profound words from a profound writer!

Anita Nair, poet, novelist, and short story writer, including children's fiction, read from her latest novel 'Eating Wasps' in her session at the Charbagh. Later I met her at the Press Terrace. The charming author articulates her thoughts with clarity. "I don't like being classified or branded. In writing there are nominations like literary writing or women's writing etc. I feel it's the style that matters," she answers when asked about how she feels about being categorized or straight-jacketed as a writer. Are the new forms of writing as flash fiction or micro-blogging posing a threat to novels and technology to reading habits? She feels they are not. "A real writer would enjoy the creative process of writing a novel. There are two kinds of writers- those who enjoy the creative process, and others who have discovered they can speak to an audience." Which one of these is she? "I enjoy writing and telling stories. It is the most important thing in my life."

Technology, she believes, "is not a threat because one may read more on Kindle; reading will remain nonetheless."

shared an observation about fantasy and mythology having captured readers' imagination, to which Nair responded, "I wonder if our lives are so mundane that we need fantasy."

Finally, a word of advice for budding writers, "While there is no age to start writing, there certainly is the age to evaluate oneself against others, to know there is gravitas in one's writing, something to keep it alive, so that one feels confident about it for it to go through the layers of a publisher's evaluation. Hence it is good to wait to be mature enough to evaluate, and then publish."

Someone sang the song 'Words are all I have', and this is particularly true for writers. It is these words that make all the difference.

Dr Deepa Vanjaani is the Head of the department of Languages in a leading colleges in Indore, India and a visiting faculty with Educational Media Research Centre, UTD and School of Comparative Languages, Indore.



Short Story

The Skinny Man

Subhash Chandra

Our Housing Society was getting the bi-annual repairs and renovation done. Being on the ground floor, we faced tremendous inconvenience because of dust and noise. Labourers kept going up and down the stairs all the time. One day, the doorbell rang. A skinny, famished man, wearing a ragged vest and dusty, torn pyjamas stood at the door. I had seen him lugging bags of cement, sand, badarpur etc., up the stairs. "Madam ji, can you give me a cup of tea?" he said in a weak voice. The others have gone for lunch. But I don't have any money. The tea will suppress my hunger."

Though it was Sunday, Dilip was away, covering a triple murder case in East Delhi. He was a crime reporter for one of the English dailies and worked flexi hours. Whenever a contact informed him about a crime, he dashed to the site to be the first or at least one of the first to file the report. Or else the Head of the Crime News Desk would blow his top.

I called him in and gave him some toast with tea. After finishing tea, he stood up. "Namaste Madam ji," he said with folded hands.

At night Dilip came late, looking exhausted. After dinner he was slouching in the chair and, as usual, giving me the gory details of the murders, which I did not like. But perhaps that had a cathartic effect on him.

I casually talked about the labourer. He sat up with a jerk.

"Have you gone mad? Getting a stranger into the house and feeding him as a guest?"

"But Dilip he was hungry."

"So what? Millions are hungry in India. We can't be feeding them all."

"But we can one of them."

He lost his cool, which he easily did. He was short tempered and suffered from high blood pressure."

I promised not to repeat it.

#

After a couple of days, the man rang the bell again.

"Namaste, Madam ji", he said and lingered for a few moments.

When I did not take the hint, he started climbing up the stairs. But a feeling of scorching guilt made me call him back and feed him a proper meal, as I had finished cooking early that day.

From then on, it became a routine. Vidisha watched him with compassionate gaze.

One day, she gave him her chocolate.

"Dessert," she told him and then said to me, "Mummy I saved it for uncle."

He did not understand her, but took it and smiled.

#

Being generous gave me a rare, blissful feeling of joy, though I shuddered at the thought of Dilip dropping in unexpectedly. He did one day. He stood silent for a couple of minutes, glaring at me and at him. His silence was menacing. He shouted at the man who had already stood up in fright.

"Get out this minute. Next time I see you, I'll have you arrested."

The man slunk out, leaving his half-eaten

"You are a wilful, reckless woman! You are the type who go on repeating the same blunder and bring doom on the family. Now tell me, what do you want exactly?"

I could not understand and looked at him questioningly.

"I mean do you want to live here?"

He was going too far. After all, nothing untoward had happened.

I said hesitantly, "Please don't get so angry, Dilip. You know I love my family."

"I am waiting for your answer!"

"Okay I will never ever do it again. Please believe me this time. I swear by Vidisha."

That calmed him a little, but it took him some time to calm down

For a whole week I did not see the man at work. Perhaps, he had got terribly scared of Dilip and taken up work elsewhere. Or he was not well; or had gone back to his village.

One day, I inquired about him from one of the labourers who told me that the man had died.

"He contracted dengue. We admitted him to a government hospital. But he survived only four days."

One day I broke into cold sweat when I didn't find Vidisha at the bus stop where the school bus dropped her. The stop was four kilometres away from our house and Vidisha was all of five years. She could not find her way back home on her own and, therefore, I would put her into the bus and pick her up. I looked at the cell phone and realised to my horror that I was late by about twenty minutes. I would find later that the wall clock, which I had glanced at while leaving, was running slow.

I panicked! I felt on the brink of a nervous breakdown. My mind was like a disturbed beehive. Thoughts buzzed around crazily. Should I rush to her school? Or approach the police for help? Or better still call Dilip. But I could not get him because either I connected with a wrong number repeatedly or his phone was busy. Suddenly I found myself jogging back home.

A stream of tears burst forth and flowed unchecked. Vidisha was sitting on the stairs. I pressed her to my heaving bosom. When Vidisha was having lunch, I asked her who had brought her home.

"Uncle."

"Which uncle?"

"The one to whom you served lunch and I gave my chocolate."

I broke into a cold sweat a second time!



Subhash Chandra retired as Professor of English from Delhi University. He has published two collections of short stories, *Not Just Another Story*, and *Beyond the Canopy of Icicles* and about fifty five short stories in foreign and Indian journals. Also published four books of criticism and several research articles.

lunch behind. Vidisha looked at Dilip with terrified eyes.

Then turning on me, he spoke in a voice dipped in cold rage, "Really, women can be absolutely idiotic and self-destructive! You are endangering yourself and our child too. You know very well that Delhi is the crime capital of India. The number of rapes has been spiralling. Small children are not spared either.

The police don't tire of repeating that people should fix a magic eye or latch-chain on the doors and never allow strangers inside the house. Robbers and rapists gain entry in the guise of courier men, telephone linesmen, or electricians. And here you go out of your way to invite a stranger to lunch!

Column

Mumbai Expressions

By Anju Makhija

As we welcome the new year, it seems that the only thing 'new' these days are gadgets, mobiles and other spin-offs of technology. There seems to be a relative slowdown in other fields. One seldom hears of great breakthroughs in science, architecture, philosophy and other areas. There are developments, I'm sure, but they escape the ordinary man's life. The mainstream media is largely filled with news about politicians, filmstars and celebrities. Social media has so much redundant information that it's difficult to separate the wheat from the chaff. Add to this fake news, and one soon realizes that despite the growth of internet, exposure to worthwhile ideas is minimal.

It's only when one visits pockets of experimentation like Auroville, South India, that one feels the excitement of discovery. I had a chance to interview Anu Majumdar, author of Auroville: the City of the Future, at the recently-concluded Pondicherry Poetry Festival. The town is based on the vision of Shri. Aurobindo, the great Indian mystic and Mirra Alfassa, also known as 'The Mother'. The inauguration took place in 1968 with a formal ceremony attended by about 5,000 people. An urn was put in the centre into which handfuls of earth were placed--symbolizing the unity of mankind--by representatives of the 124 countries. Once a barren plateau, it has become home to people from 55 nations. The community has made phenomenal progress in many areas especially environment and education. It has been acclaimed for its wasteland reclamation and forest development work and provides consultation to groups around world. Even our P.M. Modi visited it last year to examine their mode of development.

Close family life, which has dominated our country, is fast breaking up. The past year has seen rapes, murders, and crimes grow by leaps and bounds. We are all aware of the dangers of quick technological growth. Mumbaikars, too, seem to be fed-up with the new highways, metros and the whole city being dug up! What's the great hurry, one wonders. Till now, the BJP govt. has been focusing mainly on urban areas so farmers an unsatisfied lot too! Over 50 per cent of Indians earn their livelihood from farming activity. Surveys show that over 75 per cent of their children don't want to follow in the family footsteps. With the eye on the forthcoming elections, political parties are granting instant loan waivers rather than planning a consolidated policy.

While most farmers are driven to suicides, Pandurang More is a person with a difference--he has penned a novel to air their woes. Born in Solapur, his parents ensured that he finished school and graduated. His first novel, Kingdom In Dream, was written in English so that he could reach a wider audience. His second novel, White Money, will soon be out. Folk artists, like Teejan Bai also comment on society via their art form. The 61-year-old folk artist from Chhattisgarh was awarded the Fukuoka Prize in Japan, one

of the country's greatest honours. Her art, Pandavani, is a rustic form, popular in the tribal areas which improvises stories from the Mahabharata. Tejan Bai was also awarded a Padma Bhushan in 2003. Luckily, these people keep our tradition alive and provide us with answers based on the wisdom of our ancient texts.

One of the oldest theatre festivals of Delhi, the Old World Theatre Festival, has honored many traditions over the years. The fest opened with Kutiyattam, one of the earliest forms of Sanskrit theatre. The all-women productions included Avantika Bahl's Say, What, about two people who alternate between using and discarding language. Political parties are also using traditional folk communication for their assembly polls. The popular Hela Khayal, and Bhopa-Bhopi of Rajasthan, a form of narrative and storytelling through puppetry, was used for live shows across the state.

Rajasthan is also in the news for its many



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festivals specially the Jaipur Literature Festival (JLF) which is expanding every year. The 12th edition had a host of celebrities from India and abroad. A couple of years ago, I had participated in a session with feminist writer, Fahmida Riaz. She passed away recently but the memories live on. Other events like the World Sufi Fest are catching on--Sardar Khan, a Sarangi maestro, performed at the Jodhpur Folk Festival. The Sarangi is at least 300 years old and passed down through seven generations of musicians. There are three main strings: one is of steel wire and two are made from the guts of goats. The Langa musicians were also present at Mehrangarh Fort, along with others from various parts of the country.

This year, the Tata Literature Live Festival! (TLF) started on a sombre note. Theatre icon,

Alyque Padamsee, passed away at 87 years. TLF paid a tribute to him and there was a feeling of great loss among all of us connected with the arts. I recall working on a script with him for the play Unspoken Dialogues. He really loved his craft and worked hard to fine tune it. In his autobiography, A Double Life: My Exciting Years in Theatre and Advertising, Padamsee described his eclectic journey. Known as the 'Father of Indian Advertising', he built more than 100 brands. As a director, he staged the rock musical, Jesus Christ Superstar, one of the earliest Broadway-style musicals to be staged in India.

Rima Das's Village Rockstars, India's nominee this year for the Foreign Film Oscar, has also been picked by Museum of Modern Art, New York, as part of their annual Oscar contender screenings. It was described as one of the 'innovative films with lasting historical significance'. It has travelled to more than 80 festivals worldwide, winning over 40 awards; the Oscars, was the right culmination for this incredible journey. For this home-grown film, Das wrote, directed, edited and also took on the roles of cinematographer and production designer. Village Rockstars is an unstructured film, without background music. Alas, we in Mumbai, have not had an opportunity to see it--Bollywood blockbusters continue to hog the limelight.

The past few years have witnessed an unprecedented growth in poetry. Volumes of verse are frequently published mainly by small press. Gayatri Chawla, Mumbai-based poet, has written about displacement and loss due to partition. She often recreates folktales in her yearning for ancestral roots. Her new book, The Empress, was a winner of the US ('18) National Poetry Competition organized by Raed Leaf Foundation for Poetry and Allied Arts. Recently, Sophie Naz (twice nominated for the Pulitzer Poetry Prize), had a reading of her work in Mumbai from her latest book Pointillism. She is an American poet of South Asian origin who was born in Karachi to migrant parents from Allahabad and Bhopal.

Books of translation are also likely to be centre-stage. From being unappreciated poorly-paid writers, (with names in small font, below the original authors), translators are now in the spotlight. Earlier this year, the winner of the Man Booker International, Polish writer Olga Tokarczuk, shared the stage and the prize money with translator, Jennifer Croft, thus sending out a significant message. The graphic novel seems to be the medium of communication for the future. A unique collection titled, Longform, edited by Sarbajit Sen was released; it includes authors like Deb Kumar Mitra, Pinaki De and Sekhar Mukherjee. Adapting novels for screen has become easier. Mumbai Film Festival has added an author's corner, where writers interact with producers and directors and pitch their books.

A very fruitful new year to all my readers!

Essay

STRIKE!

By Dawood Ali McCallum

Recent images of the *Gilets Jaunes* taking their grievances to the streets of Paris, scenes of people on the march, challenging authority and demanding change, brought back memories of my own brief flirtation with such activism.

I joined the Trade Union as soon as I got a job and remained a fully paid up member throughout my employment in the public service. For the first year or two of my working life pay, terms and conditions for those in the Civil Service were negotiated by a management/union committee arrangement called Whitleyism: It sounds ridiculously naive now, but that was the system then and by and large it had held up pretty well for more than six decades.

But by the 1980s Trade Unionism was under threat and compromise, collective bargaining and political consensus were no longer the order of the day. Margaret Thatcher was in Downing Street and suddenly the number of civil servants, their cost and indeed the very need for a significant public sector at all were deeply political issues.

Two colleagues and I had sauntered along to the Union meeting called just before lunchtime. We still had one or two old codgers around the place who were true socialists, one of whom claimed to have fought with the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War, something which he never failed to mention whenever anyone disagreed with him. They called the meeting as a new mood of Activism was in the air. It was time to take a stand! Time, they cried, to take our demands to the streets! Time to march.

My two chums were decidedly unenthused, concluding it all sounded like far too much effort. I however saw things differently. 'Look,' I suggested, 'we'll be out on Strike for the afternoon. This is a proper, legitimate industrial action, but only for half a day so we won't get our pay stopped! Back of the march, first opportunity, bye-bye brothers. All the best at the barricades, comrades, we're off to the beer garden behind the King's Arms. Think of it: we can spend the rest of the day in a pub with a completely clear conscience. We will be putting bread on the table back home whilst supporting our fellow wage slaves in their legitimate industrial action. In fact, the more I think about it, the more it seems like our duty to do this. After all, what can possibly go wrong?'

Persuaded, I'd like to say inspired but that's probably going too far, they joined me at the very rear of the gathering marchers, our superannuated class warriors reliving their glory days up at the front. There must have been a couple of hundred of us. I reiterated our plan: Bring up the rear, first opportunity, peel off, find pub, amiable afternoon.

Being good, law-abiding revolutionaries, our organisers put a call in to the police to tell them of our intention and we all hung around for a while waiting for forces of repression to turn up. When they finally arrived their first question was where exactly we proposed to march to: After some discussion it was agreed that our destination would be the Town Hall. This was not ideal for several reasons. Firstly, our dispute was with central government and the Town Hall was traditionally the seat of local administration. Secondly, even the local authority had long abandoned the building for bigger, purpose-built offices and the grand Victorian structure was now given over to a dance studio. Thirdly, it was more or less around the corner. Anyway, to the Town Hall it would be. The police duly set out the route we should take, gave us permission to proceed then promptly ordered us all to turn through 180° and face the other way.

Trotsky's chums, finding themselves suddenly at the tail end of their own march, were somewhat peeved. Their irritation however was as nothing compared to ours, suddenly trapped in the vanguard like some latter-day Forlorn Hope. We set off, a half dozen police officers escorting us, me in sullen silence and my colleagues grumbling sulkily that they should have known better than to listen to me.

'Nice day for it,' observed the Constable marching alongside me. 'Shouldn't you blokes be chanting something?'

'Gosh! That's a good idea. Umm...'

'I'm guessing you haven't done this before?' He asked. I shook my head. 'How about 'What do we want?'

The three of us gratefully roared this out. There was a contemplative silence in the ranks behind us. 'Well, our demands are multifaceted...' one marcher ventured. 'Absolutely!' agreed another. 'Not really the sort of thing one encapsulates simply.'

The police officer gave a long sigh. 'I'm assuming money has something to do with

it?' We nodded. 'Right, so when you chant *What do we want?* Everybody else shouts at *More Pay!* Not really that hard, is it?'

Instructions were passed back through the lines of marchers and we let rip. It went pretty well but after one chorused response we reverted to silence. The policeman shook his head. 'Shall we try *'When do we want it?'* I couldn't help but notice a rather snide tone had crept into his voice.

'Oh, right. Super! *When do we want it?'*

Again, confused murmuring. 'Um. Phased in incrementally over the next two financial years?' someone offered.

'It's *Now!*' cried the policeman, exasperated. 'The answer is *'Now! Blimey! You guys are civil servants, right?'*

We nodded.

'That explains a lot. In particular, why nothing ever gets done in this bloody country.'

That stung. Wounded, we gave it our all. In fact, we were just getting quite a good rhythm going when the Town Hall came into view. We stood around its steps in a confused mass as the town clock struck two. We thanked the police officer, who shook his head again sadly and wished us a good afternoon. Surely now we could sneak off to the pub? Sadly, our Union organisers, serious men of great integrity if little imagination, concluded that as we'd completed our demonstration before the official end of the lunch hour, we were honour-bound to return to work for the afternoon. The demonstration, they decided, counted as an extended lunch break.

My peevish, petulant and now rather peckish friends said little to me on our walk back to the office. The sun shone on through a glorious autumn afternoon into the beer gardens of the town. But it looked for the three of us, alas, in vain. As hereafter did the Trade Union at all future marches.

Dawood Ali McCallum is the author of three novels published in India and one (*The Last Charge*) published last year in the UK. His first story, *The Lords of Alijah*, is available to download free for a limited period at www.dawoodalimccallum.com



Travelogue

South-bound: a journey along the Sri Lankan coastline

Shalomi Daniel

A blinding light, a piercing hoot and a tale-tell clanging herald the arrival of the express train as it pulls into the Maradana railway station, ready to begin its first run for the day. The city is just awakening, lazily rubbing the sleep away from its eyes, still shrouded in the darkness preceding the dawn. The station, dimly lit, echoes the tranquility outside, almost a calm before the storm; before chattering children, harried employees, and industrious vendors crowd the roads and spill into the station, adding to the hustle and bustle that is the Colombo city.

The express train halts to a grinding halt, a brief reprieve before it chugs off South bound.

the carriages, as the Ticket Inspector makes his rounds, checking tickets and reprimanding errant passengers, who have attempted to sneak into the second-class carriage with a third-class ticket.

Almost suddenly, the train takes a turn, and the Indian Ocean looms into view. The breath-taking splendour of the blue ocean glistening in the morning sun as it stretches out endlessly towards the horizon never fails to stun the beholder. The calm waters of the ocean reflecting the soothing blue and cloudless sky and lining one side of the train, is jarringly juxtaposed with the metropolitan scene unfolding on the other side of the train,

slung around their neck, drinking in the local landscape and culture. A dog or two wanders onto the platform, snooping around for tidbits, watching the passing trains and the steady flow of passengers in and out of the stations.

As the train heads further south, the heat of the sun which now beats down vehemently along the southern coastline, the cooling breeze from the Indian ocean, and the rhythmic clanging of the train as it chugs south bound, lull the passengers into a lazy stupor. Some are jolted awake every time the train screeches to a halt at a station, whilst others slumber on placidly.



A throng of passengers surge forward, clamoring to get into the train and find themselves a comfortable seat. Bags are hoisted onto the overhead racks, and windows are pushed up with silent grunts and groans as passengers struggle against stiff window latches.

As the train finally pulls out of the station, dawn has begun to gradually creep out, the sun shyly kissing the world; a gentle embrace; a promising omen of a sunny day. As the train picks up its speed, racing down the tracks, it keeps pace with the increasingly speedy advent of the day, as the last shadows flee away before the bright and fierce rising of the sun; no more the bashful lover of the early dawn.

Next stop: Colombo Fort. The central and busy railway station of the capital city. As the train chugs into the station, vendors descend on the train, pushing carts loaded with mouth-watering food. The enticing smells of freshly baked fish buns, sugar coated buns, vegetable rotis, and aromatic coffee wafting in through the train windows, reminding passengers that breakfast might not be a bad idea. Food and money are exchanged through the windows, the vendors walking away happy with their sales, whilst the passengers settle down to a hearty morning meal.

Having picked up more passengers, the train is ready to set off again. A little boy munches on his egg bun contentedly as he gazes out of the window into the busy world unfurling outside.

As the train begins its journey once again, the steady clomp of boots is heard echoing down

along Marine Drive as vehicles jostle with each other, as rush-hour traffic hits its peak. On the right, the blue ocean, dotted with frothy white waves, sparkling in the golden sun, provides a picturesque view. On the left, the tooting of horns, the screeching of tyres, and the blaring of music from shops are a cacophony of noises typical of a busy city revving to life.

As the train snakes its way further South, the busy streets are replaced with a verdant landscape, with a straggle of seaside slums. Almost hugging the railway tracks, the scores of little houses with dilapidated roofs and peeling wall paint are a constant and sad reminder of the poverty that plagues segments of this beautiful paradise island. Little children, donning worn out clothes and sporting lanky limbs, perhaps playing truant or not able to afford an education in the land of free education, scamper about, seemingly oblivious to their dire poverty, as they soak in the wealth of the yellow beaches and the azure ocean.

As the train passes through each station, the monotonous recording of the various stations along the southern line is heard, in the Sinhala, Tamil and English languages. The stations are very similar, with yellow painted walls, white nameboards indicating the name of the station, a low brown roof, and a few wooden benches scattered along the length of the platform. In each station passengers await the approach of the train: some dressed smartly on their way to work; some on their way to visit family and friends carrying gifts and picnic lunches; and others tourists, wearing broad straw hats, with cameras

Finally, the train reaches one of its main destinations in the South: Galle, the capital of the ancient Southern kingdom. The passengers stir, shaking their slumber away, and reach for their bags, as they prepare to disembark. The train, sighs heavily, as it proudly brings in its charges into the ancient royal capital, preparing to rejuvenate briefly before proceeding further South. For many in the train the journey is over; they've reached their destination. However, for the cheerful express train chugging contentedly down South, there are many more miles to go.

The glare of the sun and the bustle of the modern Galle city greet the passengers as they troop off the train. Amidst all the noise and bustle of city life, there awaits them a city steeped in history and culture; a port that is said to have beckoned many a seafaring trader with the seductive fragrance of cinnamon in yester years. Towering majestically over the coast arises the Galle Fort, once a formidable structure; now, an elegant relic of past glory.

Back at the station, the express train having changed its engine, prepares to depart. The loud hoot, and the familiar clanging are heard, as the train exits the Galle station, heading further South, whistling a happy tune.

Shalomi Daniel is a lawyer practising in Sri Lanka. She enjoys reading and writing in her spare time.



Book Review

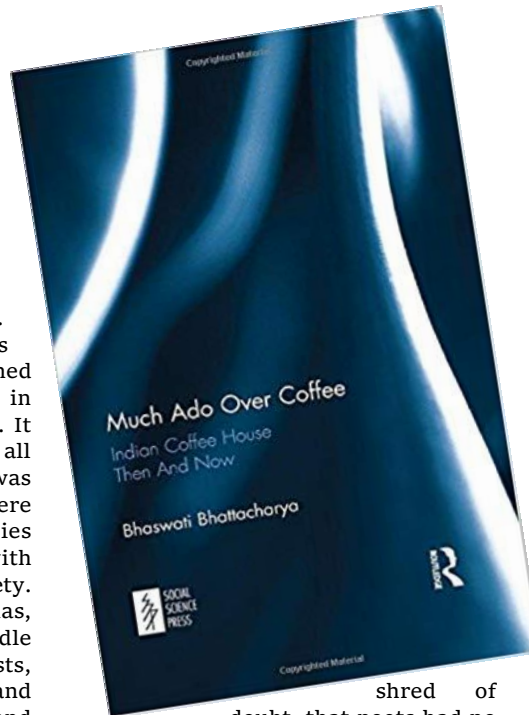
Reginald Massey's Book Page

Tea is regarded as the national drink of India but not many know that coffee has a longer history. Both tea and coffee are not of Indian origin. Tea came from China and coffee came from Ethiopia to Yemen and from Yemen to India. Baba Budan, a holy man from south India, travelled to Mecca on a pilgrimage and on the way back stopped in Yemen where he was offered coffee to drink which he found refreshing. He asked whether he could take some seeds to India but was informed that it was strictly prohibited for anyone to take coffee seeds out of Yemen. Baba Budan found that unjust and risked his life by taking seven seeds to India. The story goes that he hid the seeds in his beard. Anyway, it is recorded that the seeds were planted in 1670 and flourished and coffee soon became popular in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. It was the favourite beverage of all castes and classes of society. It was much later that coffee houses were opened in some north Indian cities where the drink became popular with only the educated sections of society. The coffee houses became addas, meeting places, for the urban middle classes where intellectuals, artists, academics, journalists, poets and politicians met, argued, debated and hatched schemes for the future of the country.

Bhaswati Bhattacharya has recently authored *Much Ado Over Coffee: Indian Coffee House Then and Now* [Social Science Press and Routledge, ISBN 978-1-138-09947-0 (hbk) and 978-1-315-14527-3 (ebk)] which is a thoroughly researched document that details the importance of these addas. I must declare my interest though I have never met Dr Bhattacharya. I was a regular at Simla's coffee house and later at the New Delhi coffee house which was located on Queensway (now Janpath). Indeed, I spent more time there than attending lectures at Delhi University's St. Stephen's College. The coffee house was my first university. Over half a century ago I met many of the personalities mentioned in this book. It was there

that I first heard Eliot's poetry being recited and wrote the following:

And so in India's coffee houses / Far,
far from London, Vienna, Paris, Rome,
/ We measured out our lives with
coffee spoons / Believing, without a



shred of
doubt, that poets had no
home, / Knew no nation, recognized no
border. / Hence the entire earth was
theirs, / And they were the sons and
heirs / Of the new world order /
Resurrected from chaos and disorder.

The third line is taken from Eliot's *Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock* which was his first major work.

The Delhi coffee house was frequented by Jaipal Nangia, Rakshat Puri, Roshan Menon, Surojeet Sen, Uma Vasudev, Inder Gujral, Richard Bartholomew, Rati Batra, Mir Mustaq Ahmed, Daljit Singh, Trilokinath Purwar, 'Uncle' Frank Thakurdas, Veda Thakurdas, Atal Behari Vajpayee, Charles Fabri, Keshav Malik, Michael Overman, Maqbool Fida Husain, Satish Gujral, Krishna Sobti, Surinder Nihal Singh, Inder Malhotra, Ajit Bhattacharya, Tarlochan Singh, Girilal Jain, Kamla Mankekar, Satish Gujral, Krishan

Malik, S.P. Dutt, G.V. Krishnan, Irshad Panjatan, R.G. Anand, Sushil Nangia, Balraj Komal, Satinder Singh, Joginder Singh, Hardev Singh, Ashoka Mehta, Satyanarain Sinha and several others like them who made their mark in the country's politics, literature, and the fine arts.

I first met All India Radio's Saeed Jaffrey and Reggie Carrapiet in the Queensway coffee house. Later in London they often appeared on stage and TV with my wife Jamila. Jaffrey starred as Shahjehan in Dilip Hiro's acclaimed play *To Anchor a Cloud* and Jamila co-starred with him as Queen Mumtaz. Carrapiet had by then adopted the name Rashid Karapiet.

The India Coffee Houses also flourished in other cities such as Allahabad and Calcutta and this book describes their addas as well. Apart from the clientele, the staff and management who worked in these outlets are also featured. There is a useful glossary which gives the English meaning of words and terms in Hindi, Urdu and Bengali. One wishes that the photographs and their captions were clearer. However, this is a most unusual book, an exceptional work that concerns India's recent history. Most highly recommended.

It is relevant to mention here that coffee houses in England had a pivotal effect on the Age of Enlightenment. Coffee came to England via the Ottoman empire and the first coffee house opened in Oxford in the 17th century. Soon a number of similar establishments opened in London where they were called 'penny universities'. Gentlemen, mostly from the emerging middle classes, congregated there to discuss politics, literature and business. The London Stock Exchange started in Jonathan's coffee house as did the famous auction houses Sotheby's and Christie's. Lloyd's of London was founded in Lloyd's coffee house. The influential journals *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, edited by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, were avidly read and discussed in coffee houses. Coffee had indeed come a long way from distant Ethiopia.

The Reluctant Chief Guest

By Suresh Subrahmanyan

Suresh Subrahmanyan narrates a true life experience which puts him in mind of a P.G. Wodehouse novel where a similar train of events has been brilliantly captured by the 'Master of farce.'

Those of you who regularly read my columns know, only too well, that P.G. Wodehouse has been a lasting influence on the way I approach any subject that I wish to devote my undivided attention to. By and large this statement holds true to the extent that I am partial to writing in a style that attempts, not always successfully, to bring a smile to the reader's lips. During my callow youth, I would slavishly imitate the Master's turns of phrase, snappy dialogues and amazing similes. Rather like a musician who is so enamored of some maestro from years gone by, that he virtually tends to mimic his hero. However, it rarely happens that something you read from one of your boyhood hero's novels plays back in real life, many decades later. But that is exactly what transpired, as will become plain as this narrative chugs along. Serendipity? Perhaps. Uncanny? Definitely.

Take what happened to me recently. A good friend of mine, whose family runs a successful co-educational school in Bangalore, decided to invite me to be the Chief Guest at their annual day function. A day on which students from every class who distinguished themselves in academics and extra-curricular activities would be honoured with certificates of merit. As to why I was chosen for this signal honour, I was at a complete loss to fathom. I was never a particularly bright student at school, barely scraping through my exams. Neither was college any great shakes. As for receiving certificates of merit, in my dreams maybe. Perhaps it was my silver grey hair coupled with an ability to string a few amusing sentences together that brought home the bacon. In the words of Professor Henry Higgins, *'An average man am I, of no eccentric whim / Who likes to live his life, free of strife / Doing whatever he thinks is best for him / Just an ordinary man.'*

Notwithstanding all that lyrical stuff, my goose was cooked. The invitation to give away the prizes was more in the nature of a royal command. To demur would have been a betrayal. Family friends and all that, the people who ran this estimable school. My role as the Chief Guest, going by the brief given to me, was not only to hand over certificates to the spotty-faced students while shaking their hands or giving them an avuncular pat on the back or head, but also to address the large gathering with a few well-chosen words of wisdom. The school management was also explicit that time will not be a limitation, so I should be free to generally let myself go - high, wide and handsome. Rather on the generous lines of Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, or Martin Luther King's 'I Have a Dream'. If I had any intention of mumbling something on the lines of 'Hi kids, I do not wish to detain

you interminably, my address is Oakwood Apartments, Bangalore, thank you and goodnight', that was clearly not going to sit very well with the school administration. They might even have considered administering a public caning! I ran the awful risk of inviting catcalls, boos and bits of samosas and hamburgers being thrown at me. Wolf whistles were also a clear and present danger. You know how kids are.

The evening started with a long introduction by the principal, who launched into a speech praising somebody (I knew not who) as 'the ideal person' to have been chosen to give



away the prizes. It took me awhile to realise, with a start, they were referring to me. I had been called names before but never anything remotely like this. I have requested the school to provide me with a recording of this introduction. If I ever slumped to one of those low self-esteem, depressive phases all of us are prone to now and then, listening to this speech about this fictional 'yours truly' would buck me up no end. The principal then went on to list all the accomplishments of the school over the previous year. An annual report, as it were. At the end of it all, the students applauded warmly, as much for the content as for the relief that the speech had come to an end.

At this point, while I was saying something conspiratorial into the right ear of an important gentleman who was sitting next to me, he suddenly decided to prod me in the ribs to indicate it was my turn to take the podium. Fortunately, I had taken no chances and had buckled down the previous evening and prepared for this. I managed to scribble some notes, primarily exhorting the children to read as much as they could, not just their text books, but pretty much anything they could lay their hands on. The point being that with the advent of mobile telephony, reading had become all but extinct and so had the power to imagine and visualize. So READ, I screamed. Pretty hot stuff, I thought. The teachers and staff gave me a generous

applause, the children were rather muted, but yelled with delight when I nearly tripped over the sound system wires. Children! Prior to the speech, I must have shaken the hands of at least 150 boys and girls. Dry hands, clammy hands, hands with tomato ketchup smears, warm hands, cold hands and, I kid you not, one gloved hand (which unnerved me a bit, an infectious rash?) - you name it and I had clasped every texture of hand you can possibly imagine. This had to be accompanied by a brief word of encouragement from my side ('Well done, Sandhya', or 'Jolly good show, Nikhil'), and a pose for a photograph by parents, friends and the official photographer. One child even had the temerity to take a selfie with me! To say nothing of the television crew with their blinding flash lights. Quite nerve wracking. At around the 93rd handshake, or it could have been the 102nd, I had lost count, I felt a bit woozy in the head. Nothing serious, just the endless, reverberating announcements, child approaching stage, self proffering hand, giving out the certificate; it started feeling a bit like going round and round on a ferris wheel. I turned to one of the authority figures and motioned for a glass of water. A couple of gulps and I was back to mid-season form.

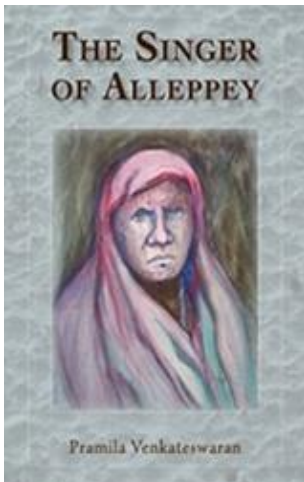
Finally, it was time for the last student. I could not believe my good fortune. 'Great work, Nandita,' I said to her, or it might have been Sangita. 'Last in the line, but not last in class eh?' I told her, not sure if she got the joke. She tried to touch my feet, but I was too quick and side stepped adroitly. I mean, enough's enough. I was dashed if I was going to let this strapping of a lass, who topped her class, pay obeisance to a Chief Guest who never managed to go better than 11th.

One last thing about being honoured. They give you this bouquet of flowers, after which you slyly try and leave it under your chair or on the table and just walk away without it in a casually absent-minded fashion. But you know what, you can bet your last paisa that some officious staff member or the other will come running after you, all the way up to your car with a 'Sir, you forgot this.' Which leaves you with no option but to take it with a silly grin and plonk it into the back seat, while thanking the gentleman with a 'You shouldn't have, you know.' This reluctance, however, did not apply to the expensive Cross pen that was presented to me. I clasped it to my bosom with hoops of steel. I conclude with Wodehouse and his novel, 'Right ho, Jeeves', which has a chapter titled 'Gussie presents the prizes', containing some of the most hilarious passages ever written. Read it, and you'll know what inspired me to write this piece.
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Through the Poetic Lens Sitala and SHE

By Yogesh Patel

Pramila Venkateswaran was poet laureate of Suffolk County, Long Island from 2013 to 2015. She has already six collections of poems to her credit. In her latest outing, *The Singer of Alleppey*, she takes us on a passage through distressing feminist challenges. However, as the title suggests a singer emerges. In fact, it is a celebration of life with a footprint in violence. There is a play of stark disparities and juxtaposes brewing simultaneously in these poems. The poems are from a viewpoint of poet's paternal grandmother, Sitala. We are



made witness to a pain that is cast in the linguistic lyricism. The emerging contrast is extremely effective. The calm we experience in these poems has an anticipation of the imminent storm. The allegory here is of devastating chaos in life, but not a pandemonium in expression.

*A bird bangs itself against glass and falls.
That's how I feel when he slaps my face.*

That's how an innocent girl is delivered into a violent drama as a woman.

*The hall spins, bride, groom, flowers,
guests, husband. Then routine happens.*

The abrupt refrain before 'Then the routine happens' is very effective here. These simple words drop us into anticipation of violence. There is a dramatic interim question between the above two couplets:

*Do I have all the ingredients
for the feast?*

This marriage, a new life, is not a metaphorical feast for Sitala. It is a slap. In fact, further on the narrator offers plain words: My marriage is dung. The book is divided into Night, Morning, Noon, Evening, Midnight, and Dawn to represent the cycles in Sitala's life. In the beginning, there is a separate standalone poem on its own. It prepares the backdrop of violence to come in other poems.

*How will they pick their paths
through evil sown by ghosts?*

In art, when feminism is explored as an indirect narration or is celebrated without any imposed blind worshipping of a woman, the result is compelling. Many feminist writers and poets forget the primary requisite of art, and so fall in a trap of a plain or angry narrative. Both these collections reviewed here are beguiling.

If the violence is always at the elbow, the beauty of poetry is also not far.

I want to twirl around

in the rain that's pouring perfume.

In *Kummi Dance* Sitala sings: We are birds widening the sky of earth, feet flying. The earth turns into the sky under one's feet! Then there is a perfect husband others paint, but only she can see the demon coming: I see what they don't/his words that emerge from their mine. It saddens me often how humans do not choose their words wisely! Each word spoken is a mine. Each sentence is a minefield. However, there are normal routines in Sitala's life; watching boat races, finally giving birth to a son and watching the hypocrisy of men chanting Vedas by day and visiting mistresses by night. The 'Morning' section is about Sitala's son growing up. However, she has a final message for him. She tells him to spare her granddaughter the trappings and baggage her name carries.

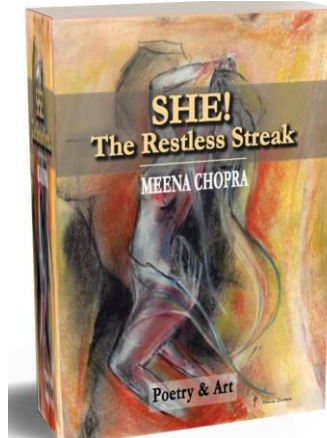
*Son, don't let my grand-daughter carry my name,
my past, religion, duty, customs, tribe, line,
deaden her heart, play someone else's game,*

A public humiliation with a slap brings back what started in private to a new heightened reality. All she can do is to withdraw "into my tent of shame."

*Like love silenced by a train whistle,
His slap among the jollity of the wedding hall*

Through Sitala's lens, Venkateswaran has not only allowed her to tell her view of her life, but also allowed the readers to look into her inner world to witness the shame, pain and joy to make own judgement on feminism in general.

Meena Chopra approaches feminism through abstract art. Her sense of colour and their perfectly balanced contrast evoke the sensual reality of a feminine shape. The poems that sit opposite each plate in the book extend the meaning of that painting. Through which she speaks a volume. These are the entwining shapes of a woman formed with clouds of colours and shades. They reach out to something spiritual to find a self-definition that forms a meaning for what Chopra defines as 'SHE'. The key clue of these poems and artworks is in the subtitle of the



book: 'The Restless Streak'. Chopra has explained this SHE vividly as 'the everlasting stark female element of the entire universe, with all light and shadows, joys and pains./SHE is the "effect" constantly in search of its "cause", the cosmic existence as well as liberation'. Her poems are therefore also abstract and very little to do with the physical reality. Chopra's deliberate use of "SHE" in capital letters has a deeper meaning too. This is not the "She" with the ego of one capital letter but "SHE" in capitals letters and thus the energy within in equal tension. There are poems known as ekphrastic poems. For those who are unfamiliar, an ekphrastic poem describes or interprets an object, sculpture or a painting vividly. Chopra's book

creates an impression of such undertaking, but these are not ekphrastic poems. Many poems here, in fact, can sit with other paintings in the book. Each one is almost stand-alone in nature but wanting to take meaning from other paintings in the book. These

poems are highly influenced by what is known in Hindi literature as Chhayavaad. Vinay Dharwadker, a scholar, explains in The Oxford Anthology of Modern Indian Poetry he edited with A K Ramanujan, it is "a poetry of intimate moods and obscure desires, a lyrical nature of poetry, an other-worldly poetry of love and longing for divine, a confessional poetry of despair and anguish." You will not generally see such poetry in English literature. Chopra defies the trend and offers this work as any self-assured artist who finds her medium of expression would.

The following lines are a good example:

A sketch
Etched
On her body and flesh
Rhymed
An oceanic silence.

The following beautiful lines again substantiate Vinay Dharwadker's observations about Chhayavaad.

She inhales sun and moon
In the midst of trivial time

However, Chopra never fully unshackles 'SHE' from the earthly bounds: after all, majority of her paintings have created an impression of 'SHE' as a figure!

Is it the smell of the earth
that she eats?

Notice that smell has no solid form yet it is related to eating which involves solid forms!

The best way to capture what happens in this collection is through these lines:

Word took on wings
Soaring down the valley
The blank flat pages
Flying away

Overall, this collection is more a joy, a celebration, a real feast for the eyes due to abstract art plates, and when you land in a text, a fling to nowhere where everything is energy!



In February/May 2019, Yogesh Patel's work will appear in coveted journals The London Magazines and Shearsman. In April 2019, he will receive the Poet-of-Honour by Matwaala Literary Festival NY hosted at Hunter College NY. A recipient of many awards and widely published internationally, Yogesh Patel is a poet from the UK. A former editor of Skylark, he currently runs Word Masala Foundation and Skylark Publications UK to promote the diaspora poets. By profession, he is an optometrist and an accountant.

DELHI TRAIN STATION

By Cyril Dabydeen

At the Delhi train station,
hurly burly, with busyness
everywhere.

From the West I am--
furious about losing my luggage.
Gone where? *What's done* -

Distraught I am, as I raise
my voice, crying out
to the harassed porters.

Poor, pathetic India!
To another, and another,
I shout out more words,

Curse words, *damn!*
Oh, English I am with
my pukka ways, d'you know?

When this man, raggedy,
with soft, alluring eyes,
approaches me...a woman.

A sadhu, with a long beard,
and at once I feel--
a warm breath come

From this holy man blowing
at me, gently, and a shiver
runs down my spine.

Believe me, what seems to
come from a far place, and
where else I will never know.

A stranger spirit indeed,
with the busyness gone--
just like that, what I feel

In my heart and lungs--
as this man tells me about
with a smile...like how I

Never felt before in the East--
a finger at his lips, and yes,
trains going by.

Book review

PEREGRINATIONS

Lakshmi Kannan

Country Drive Poems by Sukrita and Yasmin Ladha.
2018, Red River, New Delhi.

ISBN 978-81-939403-0-3, Price Rs. 300/- \$ 15. Pages 133.

Country Drive is a charmingly designed book of poems for the road, as it were, with Sukrita and Yasmin as two itinerant poets. A gypsy spirit takes them out on a journey in which they travel

together or separately, sharing their thoughts, poems, or just spending some 'me time' sipping wine over a chat.

Based in Delhi, Sukrita has published several collections of poems, her latest being *Dream Catcher*. A recipient of many residencies and Fellowships including the Iowa International Writing Program, she has published extensively on Partition literature, cultural diversity and women's literature. She is also a translator and a painter.

Yasmin Ladha based in Alberta, Canada, has published poems, essays and fiction. *Sunflower Startle* is her most recent novel (2010).

A word about the way the book is structured would be in order. There are twin poems (occasionally more) broadly based on a shared theme. Each theme is preceded by what is called a "Talking Point" in which the poets give their take on the theme. Interestingly, some of their Talking Points have telling lines that may – or may not – find their way into the poems that follow. For clarity, I'll mention the themes within quotes, and give the titles of the individual poems within parentheses.

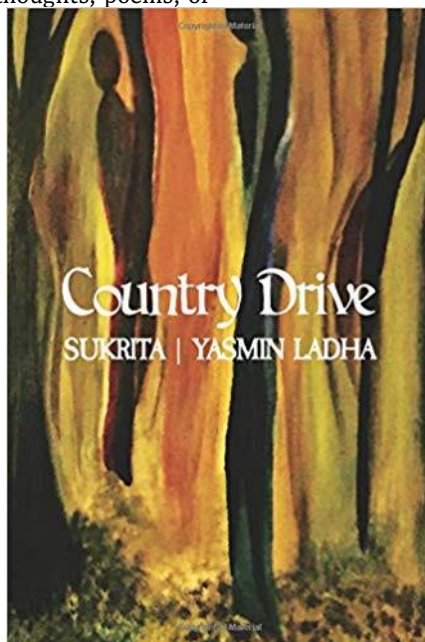
A Preface titled "Dear Reader" describes how they set off on this book. - 'We followed an unseen trail, creating without obligation...we crafted in a womb for two,' they say, adding thoughtfully that the pairs of poems are both joined and un-joined.' That gives a good start to the reader.

"In Search of a Shaman" is their first theme. (Did they know they were speaking for many of us?) For some reason, the Talking Point makes the poets ponder over language. 'Words defy dictionary meanings', declares Sukrita, while Yasmin addresses a very alarming issue. 'An entire people is forced to

abandon their mother tongue,' she laments, describing how 'Arab Gulf countries only hire native English

speakers.' We relate to her anguish, for entire civilizations are getting submerged following the loss of a mother tongue.

"I borrow words shamelessly from other languages," says Yasmin, and that applies to many of us ! We now live in multiple registers. She texts a line from Hindi for her beloved who is about to meet her: '*ghali meni aaj chand nikla*.' The warmth of this image will surely not be lost on him.



In "Women" Sukrita seethes with indignation that

*"Sisters and daughters, even mothers
Are hurled into daily abuses and jokes*

*Trapped in muscular gaze
Frozen as soft targets in epics"*

She puts Lal Ded and Akka Mahadevi on a motorbike, and they

*"Whizz past through centuries
Multiplying in numbers
As also in Shakti" (Women on a
Motorbike)*

And Yasmin describes the exasperated Pandav princess

*"Fed up with five idealistic husbands
Draupadi walks out of Mahabharat.
Like me, is she killing time at Schiphol?"
(Is Draupadi at Schiphol?)*

In "Water", Sukrita takes us through an apocalyptic Kedarnath, concluding with two superb lines of admirable economy

"Torrents of rain

Wash the crutches of faith away." (Himalayan Tsunami)

And Yasmin in "Summer of 2013, Alberta" writes of how *"numbers went wonky in Alberta
twelve months of rain in one pour
like bits of cake, houses skedaddling past signposts"*

The Talking Point for "Tandav" is interesting. *"Dance away destruction, Shiva,"* says Sukrita.

"Be always on the go.

Meditate with a quirky smile.

While Parvati is the homemaker.'

And *"Shiva dips into the roaring Ganga
like it is an exotic Bond pool fraught with delish danger"* says Yasmin. (Drowning)

In "Fugitive" Sukrita's concluding lines for her woodpecker resonate:

*"Out of the iron bars of the cage
that had a saucer of water, of food
but no keys to the holes in trees, nor
to bits of the sky*

The Talking Point for "Turn Maro" brings the poets back to where they started, about getting lost on highways, and returning to the starting point. This poem will deepen the meaning with every repeated reading. After many turns and twists in the maddening Delhi traffic, Yasmin says "*I do not hug my friend. I need the loo.*" (Where the Heck Is It?)

"Paris" addresses the complexity of friendship. Sukrita has an issue with Yasmin regarding Simone de Beauvoir who she likes very much, while Yasmin declares stoutly that 'Good friends are tough as farmers. They make you work.'

They are friends, yes, but they don't get smarmy. Nor do their poems sound similar. Yasmin, bohemian, with a reckless, naughty humour to match, is *bindas*. Yet, we catch our breath to absorb the scene in "Pashmina", words rolling off her tongue spontaneously:

*"the colour of sandy-blonde Himalayan goats
grazing where gods live"* ("The Shawl")

Sukrita, ever vigilant about the politicized times we live in, writes powerfully:
*When lines of hatred rise
against prayer flags
Wagah happens.* (At Wagah, "Wagah")

A review is a restricted space for more excerpts. Anandana Kapur's sketches enliven the pages. Small birds fly out of the edges of the pages. We see one half-done bird within an embroidery frame growing into its full form, perched on the rim of the frame, all ready to take wing! The cover art by Sukrita has her signature style.

I have a question for Yasmin and Sukrita: Someday perhaps would you like to write *about* each other? Friendship is something that happens, like a sunlight that washes over you generously, whether you wished for it or not. A friend from my writing program in Iowa is now a protagonist who stands tall in my story, actualising some of his impossible-looking targets. Likewise, I seem to have stolen into his novel. He was unafraid to acknowledge in his Thanks to the Iowa program that the woman protagonist is based on me. He will live on in my story, long after we have left this world.

Lakshmi Kannan is bilingual. Besides English, she writes in Tamil under the nom de plume 'Kaaveri'. She writes across genres and many of her works are a part of the syllabus in universities and schools. Her books in English include her latest novel *The Glass Bead Curtain* (2016, Vitasta, New Delhi), four collections of poems, and in translation, a novel and collections of short fiction that she translated from her original in Tamil - *Going Home* (1999), *Nandanvan & Other Stories* (2011) and *Genesis: Select Stories* (2014), all of them published by Orient BlackSwan, New Delhi. She has published a novel and several collections of short fiction in Tamil. They have been widely translated into French, English, Hindi and other regional languages. E.Mail: Lakshmi.kaaveri.kannan@gmail.com



HIMALAYA

-for Dharja

By Cyril Dabydeen

In her own space,
vibrations only--
in the cave.

An ashram where
she dwells with
an inner glow.

The heart's own place
I've come to know;
the soul's journey

You see, wandering far;
but how far really,
will I ever know?

Looking up at the mountain:
harmony, it seems,
moksha no less.

The universal being--
hands, knees, feet, and
a face reflecting

The stars, I imagine,
being in Himalaya--
she tells me about

With ease, once again,
as I make memory
out of nothing,

Believing and not
believing, being myself--
like never again.



A former Poet Laureate of Ottawa, Cyril Dabydeen was born in Guyana, South America. He teaches Writing at the University of Ottawa. He has written a number of books including novels and poetry. He is included in the Heinemann, Oxford and Penguin Books of Caribbean Verse. His novel, *Drums of My Flesh* won the top Guyana Prize and was nominated for the 2007 IMPAC/Dublin Literary Prize. Contact- cdabydeen@ncf.ca

South African Newsletter

Is Poverty an Excuse for Crime?

By Devi Rajab

I have become yet another statistic in the unabating rise in crime. As twilight set at the end of a beautiful balmy Durban day, I was making the evening meal when 5 balaclava clad burly men armed with AK47 and other guns entered my kitchen. At first there was total shock at what seemed like a surreal clip from a scary movie. Then the mind jolted into a reality check. This is a home invasion. It was now our turn to come face to face with a daily occurrence in our once beloved country. Images of other people's experiences raced through my mind, of beatings, dragging, and endless, unspeakable violence. Like a lamb before its slaughter I became catatonically calm. After all what can the defenceless do but use one's wits. Guns are the cursed instruments of cowards through which we empower the weak and disable the strong. We are herded into our study. Rough demands are made for jewellery, money and the safe. Instead I show them walls lined with books. "We have no money and jewellery "See we only read books", I plead lamely still armed with a baguette in my hand from my dinner preparations. "Calm down" I say in my trained mesmeric voice of a psychologist used to de-stressing others. "We can't harm you. We are old". They gathered their loot from every corner of the house and left after what seemed like an eternity. The aftermath however is what one is not quite prepared for.

At first one is so grateful to be alive and then the value and sentimentality of the stolen items induces a sense of material loss. Now another person who may be totally unaware of the sentimental value and origins will wear my jewellery. I have been told that there are many corrupt jewellers waiting to receive such loot. There is camaraderie among criminals. I will experience feelings of insecurity about the loss of personal privacy and the invasion of one's sanctity in the home. Daily South Africans both young and old are being served a national diet of crime and the collective anxiety of one's future in this beautiful land of ours is seriously being questioned. Why has this happened after a peaceful

change of power and the painstaking construction of a fair and just constitution for all?

The government has yet to declare war on crime. How much longer should we wait before we call up a moratorium on crime? Our prisons are overflowing. Lesser criminals become hardened, the hardened become irredeemable. Recidivism is high. We spend more money on security than food and criminals are emerging like the proverbial Hydra monster; the more you lop of its head the more heads emerge. How should South Africans



Dr. Devi Rajab is a respected South African journalist and former Dean of Student Development at UKZN and the author of several books.

respond to ubiquitous crime? Other than employing private security companies, retreating to gated communities, building walls and electrified fences and filling up our jails with inmates, what should we do?

Perhaps the best way of tackling the problem is to ask why post-apartheid SA has sprouted so much violent crime. Crime is not about criminals alone. Crime is about a society that breeds criminals. Thus far we have tended to

look at the criminal in isolation from the source. By focusing on the demographics of the criminal element and negating the socio-economic and political circumstances that have given rise to crime are we not missing the whole point? If we attempt to seek reasons for our violent behaviour in the apartheid past, we will remain victims. There is inequity and poverty everywhere in the world but not all people choose to deal with their status through crime and violence. How is it possible for gold merchants in the Middle East to simply toss a cloth over their wares and go to pray without anyone daring to touch the stuff? In another scenario of global poverty we see Bangladeshis rummaging through sewers to sift out a minute piece of gold shaving to feed their families. Why haven't they learnt to rob the merchants of their ware as we do here on a daily basis? South Africa turns a blind eye to crime at her own peril. There can be no lasting peace or true development in violent societies.

Crime cannot be solved by policemen alone neither can the death sentence eradicate the problem. In the SA context there are many elements to the rising crime rate that involves poverty, joblessness, rising cost of living, social anomie arising out of high expectations and limited opportunities, a collective low self-esteem of victim communities, broken families or no families, poor financial management, lack of creative resources, limited family and community links and educational deficits. There has to be a willingness on the part of wealthy South Africans to embrace voluntary simplicity and live with less, and instead invest in strategies for making sure that everyone's needs get met, including the need for economic and personal security for all. Until we solve poverty, we will not solve crime. To stop robbery, we need to remove the need to rob. Without education or opportunity, the poor with a history of high expectations will turn to other means to survive.

Kartarpur opening is a step towards peace

India, Pakistan can benefit from more cultural and economic ties as they shed inhibitions

Tariq Osman Hyder

Pakistan's decision to open and construct a direct corridor from the Indian border to the Kartarpur Sahib Sikh shrine in Pakistan is a significant event. How did it come about? What is its religious significance? What can it lead to in the often tense relations between these two nuclear armed nations?

The Gurudwara was built to commemorate the site where Guru Nanak, founder of Sikhism, settled after his missionary work. He assembled a Sikh community there, and lived for 18 years until his death in 1539. It is 4km from and within sight of the border; and the Sikh community has long demanded that they be able to walk to this major shrine directly from Dera Baba Nanak in India rather than through the Wagah border crossing.

There was neither a positive response from the Pakistan government nor any request from the Indian government, due to security concerns. When Imran Khan became prime minister this summer, in his inauguration speech he called for better relations with India: stating that if India took one step forward, Pakistan would reciprocate with one and a half. He wrote to the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi with a road map for discussing all disputes and calling for talks. A meeting between the two foreign ministers was set until India pulled back, cancelling it.

However at the PM's inauguration, his cricketing friend turned politician Navjot Singh Sidhu was assured both by Imran Khan and General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Army Chief, that Pakistan would open the Kartarpur corridor and complete its construction by Guru Nanak's 550th birth anniversary next year. Sidhu was criticised by some but his efforts were highly appreciated in East Punjab.

The Indian government was in a quandary, displeased with this development but unwilling to alienate the Sikh sentiment. Finally it accepted the proposal; announcing it would construct the road on its side, and send two ministers to the groundbreaking ceremony by Imran Khan on Pakistan's side. The East Punjab government invited the speaker of Pakistan's Punjab Assembly to its inauguration ceremony.

For long, India, not Pakistan, pushed

applied and need to be liberalised. Talks between Pakistan and India on logistics, visa, and other details of the Kartarpur corridor now have to take place, a change from the past five years of no talks despite Pakistan's reiterated proposals. The overall significance of this development is twofold. East Punjab with the Sikhs' agrarian orientation has missed out on industrialisation elsewhere, and being a potential conflict zone it is also investment shy. Thirty years ago it was the granary of India but comparative economic indicators have dropped. It would thus benefit from better India-Pakistan relations. And apart from the Sikh emotional attachment to most of their shrines now in Pakistan, culturally — with spoken Punjabi and the great Punjabi poets — there is a foundation for shared inter-Punjab contacts to foster understanding on both sides.

On the national level there are hard truths however difficult they are to accept. India may become more economically and militarily powerful, but expecting Pakistan to be cowed down would be a mistake. Rather it would lead to more instability in South Asia.

Both countries face similar problems: environmental vulnerability, water scarcity, inequitable income distribution, high unemployment levels, and development distortions due to defence threat perceptions. For India, despite China's size and growing influence, it is of much less real concern than Pakistan. To adequately address the needs of their people, both countries require stability in their relationship. Modi appears to be aware of that and has on occasion reached out to Pakistan but his hands are tied by the dynamics of his party till the national elections are over. One hopes the Kartarpur opening is a step towards peace.

Tariq Osman Hyder is a former ambassador who led Pakistan's delegation in Nuclear and Conventional CBM negotiations with India 2004-2007.

Courtesy: Gulf News



people-to-people contacts. But in the last formal talks, five years ago, it was Pakistan that called for more people-to-people contacts.

The potential for religious visits is huge. Under the 1974 bilateral Protocol, group visas can be granted to 27 religious shrines in India and 37 in Pakistan. Most visits take place on specific religious festivals or other ceremonies, and cover more than one shrine. The reality is that for logistic, security, and other reasons — including the political climate — there are informal caps on the visas accorded.

The Kartarpur opening was a bold and wise move by Pakistan, with all stakeholders onboard and aware there would be criticism of ignoring the Kashmir overhang. But as the Pakistani foreign minister said in Parliament, both countries need a more humane approach, and had been encouraging that Kashmir is also a priority. Agreements to permit families crossing over and for cross 'line of control' trade, are in place but restrictively

BUDS BLOOM INTO BLOSSOMS

Innamburan

*'...Full many a flower is born to blush unseen
And waste its sweetness on the desert air...'*

-Thomas Gray

*'...her mother was ordered to withdraw her
from school for serfdom at her employer's
house; penniless and roofless, she is terror-
stricken ...'*

- An SOS in WhatsApp

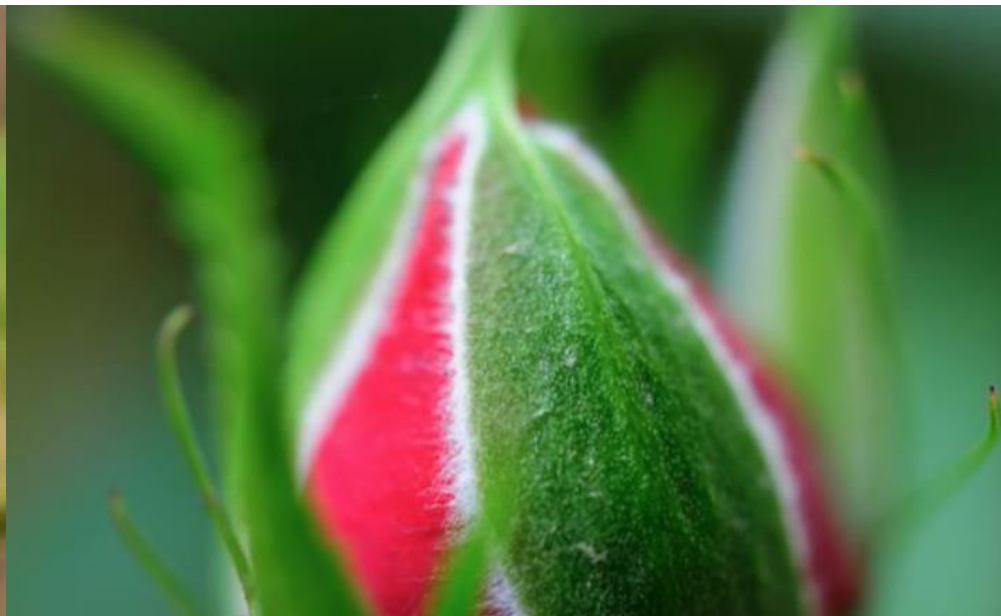
The State should ensure free primary education compulsorily to all children in a robust democracy. The Constitution of India unwittingly denied it to generations of the poor, women in particular, by dumping this obligation into the backyard called the Directive Principles of State Policy instead of listing it as a fundamental right. The Constitution 86th Amendment Act, 2002

surprise visit to its orphanage near Delhi was a humbling experience - migrant labour flocking the only dispensary, free data entry classes for village girls and a father figure shepherding them.

Udayan means 'Eternal Sunshine' in Sanskrit. Udayan Care gives home-life to orphans and offers fellowships, professional guidance and handholding to girl-children having the potential but trapped in vulnerable environs. It also reaches out to the villages with Information Technology. It is sunshine, for sure. There is a personal touch also. Udayan, a scion of the Padma Bhushan Gujar Mal Modi -**Raizada** Dr. Kedar Nath Modi Group, eked out a student's life in USA on a shoe-string budget as he was

smooth functioning, retaining touch with parents and schools: she is also the librarian. Carefully chosen expert-mentors guide the Shalinis for the long term, on various professional openings and prospects. My portfolio comprises the mentoring of those aspiring to join the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) etc., the elite governance apparatus. Two factors stand out: The unquenchable thirst for enriching one's life by the oppressed class and that being matched by the diligent and empathetic devotion of the mentors to their tasks.

Endnote: Redistribution of knowledge is more urgent than that of wealth. Mentoring achieves that through caring individuals who provide young people with support, advice,



belatedly conferred that right for children in the age group of 6-14 years and a cess was levied from 2004 to meet the expenses; the outcome so far is dismal. The enormity of the cumulative loss over seven decades to society, individuals, national integration and posterity can be gleaned from the UNESCO Report [October 2017-18]. 266 million adults, a fifth of us all, cannot read or write, says the Report. Our own Census reports show limping progress and alarming increase in absolute numbers in some decades. India is host to one-third of the world's illiterates.

Education is a time-tested broad-spectrum remedy for most social ills as it empowers the oppressed classes and enhances the quality of life for one and all. I searched in vain all along for an

avenue that opened exploring pathways. Serendipity led me to Udayan Care: www.udayancare.org that did open many doors for the vulnerable children in 26 cities across 13 states of India since 1994. On last count, 21,000 children had benefited. A

feeding the hungry children in Africa from his allowance. We lost him at a young age in an accident. Dr. Kiran Modi, his grief stricken mother, learnt about his noble gesture from his papers and turned his dream for a more equitable world into a modest reality by founding Udayan Care. I trace Udayan's generosity to his forefathers, who have funded an educational empire as well. An early donation was to the Benares Hindu University.

The Chennai Chapter, whom I joined, rightly chose Chennai North, to start with. The North & South here are so

polarised culturally and economically that the former was neglected for decades.

Our Core Committee conceives initiatives and executes them as planned, with monthly reviews. The work is evenly distributed, with one selecting the Shalinis (all our fellows are so named) after house-visits and a fair test; another casts the calendar for the workshops and the convener keeps things going in the right direction. A full time secretary ensures

friendship, reinforcement and models. Two success stories: A hawker's daughter, Alia Tabassum, the first graduate of the family, secured a pay packet of Rs.2 lakhs per annum from Cognizant Technologies Pvt. Ltd, Kolkata. Reena Burman is the daughter of a penurious beedi-maker. She made her community proud by pursuing a Master's degree in Sanskrit tenaciously, securing a first class! She aspires to become a teacher. Our New Year gift is Sukanya Sabbani, who stood first Physiotherapy graduation in Hyderabad. Sirs, millions of Shalinis are in the wait-list. The Sun God of Learning should shine on them.



Srinivasan Soundararajan (Innamburan) is a Tamil scholar with degrees in Economics, Applied Sociology and Tamil Literature. He has long retired from the Indian Audit and Accounts Service in which he served as Additional Deputy Comptroller & Auditor General of India.

Book review

ONCE UPON A TIME IN INDIA

By Anjana Basu

The Blue Lotus: Myths and Folktales of India.

Meena Arora Nayak

Aleph

INR 999/

Mythology, oral traditions, fables, folk tales, they merge and they converge in different ways. Blue Lotus brings together all these different aspects of Indian tradition in a definitive collection of stories. Meena Arora Nayak has done in depth research into the world of myths and folktales, covering epics like the *Mahabharata* and collections of folktales like the *Kathāsaritsāgara* as well as tales from the different religious books of India. She also includes oral traditions that span grandmother's tales and variants of the same from different parts of the country as these tales tend to vary from place to place.

Nayak also discusses the fact that the British, unable to accept the openness of Indian religious beliefs – the fact that the importance of gods and goddesses kept changing to match changing social mores – attempted to give it some kind of acceptable religious order by taking the *Manusmṛiti* as the definitive text and turning the fluidity of belief into a casteist hierarchy that is still in existence today simply because many are unaware that they are following colonial practices. British adaptations of India folk tales by authors like Flora Annie Steele in many cases simplified traditions and allowed readers to believe that Indian oral traditions were rather naïve.

Nayak says that she has taken her title from a flower that is common to both

Hinduism and Buddhism, though blue lotuses don't exist in nature. The bloom represents an existential state of being – there is the story about the lotus blooming from Narayana's navel at the beginning of the world and opening with the sound 'Om' to mesmerise Brahma for example or the one of Ram offering 108 blue lotuses to the Goddess Durga and plucking out his eye when he was a lotus short.

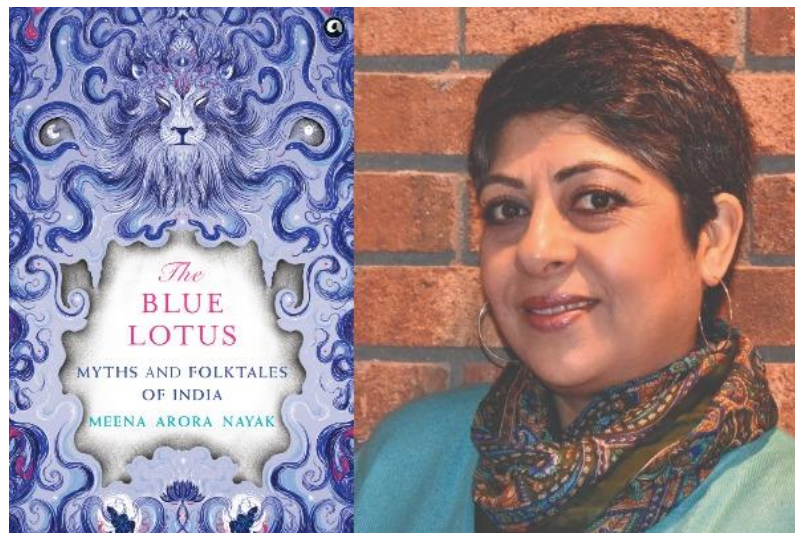
Many of the collections of folktales have vanished and Nayak posits the theory that very few people, barring

tried to take the original language of the story into account though, quite obviously, relying on translations – occasionally she slips in an odd very 21st century phrase. In some cases, she has taken tales from states that she feels have a different viewpoint to offer, like the story of Postomoni from Bengal which tells a tale of opium usage or a creepy zombie tale from Meghalaya. Her grouping is equally eclectic – for example, she follows stories of Kinship with tales of Desire because she feels that Kinship leads inevitably to desire, or Rhizomes and Roots lead to A Thousand Petals.

Blue Lotus is an exhaustive addition to the folk tale collections that India already has and will interest both academics as well as readers with an inclination towards myths and folk traditions. The book is colour coded in indigo with a ribbon bookmark and

will very definitely be a collector's item, a striking addition to any bookshelf. Academics however may quibble over certain inclusions, but that is only to be expected.

Anjana Basu is a Writer and advertising consultant based in Calcutta. She has 4 novels, a book of short stories and two anthologies of poetry to her credit.



Travelogue

A Little Known Community in a Tucked Away Township - Bandra & its East Indians

by
Maya Malhotra

People who have not lived in Bombay, are little aware of Bandra, its “Queen of Suburbs” or of its native “East Indians”, a term adopted to distinguish their unique and cherished ethno-religious identity. Bollywood’s melodies are known to all, but little is known of the gifted musicians from Bandra (and Goa) who put their cultural stamp upon the Hindi film industry while remaining the background.

The story of Bandra and the East Indian community commenced in 1534 when a Portuguese ship captain sailed into Bandra Creek, burned down its harbour town, and began the process of establishing flag, Book and Jesuitical education in the large island of Salsette with its indigenous “Koli” farmers and fisherfolk. “Vandre”, “Bandora”, Bandra (all mean *bunder*, or port) comprise that point of Salsette which is closest to the seven islands which eventually coalesced into “Island City”, Bombay.

A donation of one and a half lakh of rupees by the Parsi benefactress, Lady Jeejeebhoy, enabled the completion of a causeway in 1846 to link Salsette with the port of Mahim on the other side of the wide Creek. Bandra natives, freed from vagaries of tide and monsoon, could now seek employment with the East India Company in the “Fort”, the fortified Bombay harbour district. In 1867 a commuter railway line could transport Bandraiters with unsurpassed speed and convenience to Colaba and the Fort area. When flocks of job seeking Catholics from Goa arrived on the scene, their Christianized culture and education also provided them with a competitive edge over local Hindus and Muslims. To distinguish their separate identity (and perhaps to assert a superior claim to Company employment) Salsette Catholics began



at that point to call themselves “East Indians”.

The East India Company Raj gave way in 1858 to British Raj. Bombay’s trade and business grew rapidly. To expand their revenue base, the new government encouraged the influx of

merchant communities from Kutch, Kathiawar and Saurashtra to migrate in large numbers. From its previous role as a commanding Arabian Sea harbour, the city expanded to develop as an international cotton exchange and major textile manufacturer.

Where India’s other ethnic communities had to migrate to work, East Indians had little need to leave their tucked away comfort zone in Salsette. Everything was at hand. Their independent livelihoods—fishing, rice, vegetable and coconut cultivation continued. Their small black and bristly native pigs roamed the streets, providing a supply of sausage, festival *sorpotel* (a particularly pungent pork and vinegar curry) and roast suckling

pig served at special celebrations with a tomato in its mouth. In their own lands, villages and parishes, their separate ethnic identity with its fun-loving blend of Koli, Portuguese and Anglicized culture flourished. The East Indian native language is a Marathi dialect with Portuguese and Konkani influences. With the coming of English rule and the adoption of English as a medium of instruction in their schools, East Indians were enthusiastic Anglophones.

The early 20th century saw Muslim, Hindu, Parsi, and Bene-Israelis (an ancient community thought to have migrated to India in 1st or 2nd century BCE) settle in Bandra. It was home to a sprinkling of British and other Europeans as well. They lived and built grand mansions upon the two hills and along the seashores. East Indians lived in charming tiled roof cottages in and around Bandra’s many villages.

Traditional East Indian home, Sherli Rajan Village, Bandra

Bandra’s Catholic schools accepted children from all creeds and backgrounds, offering an excellent English language education to all. Like most Indians, I might never have known of Bandra or the East Indians had my father not been smitten by its

picture- book beauty. Looking for a rental in those early war years, he struck out from Ballard Estate in the Fort, drove past the coconut gardens of Worli and Dadar, and eventually reached the straight and steep slope of Kane Road. Halfway up Mount Mary Hill was Villa Vazir, a new art deco bungalow with a kidney shaped verandah and a view down to a rocky shore and a rising sea.

St. Joseph's Convent, Hill Road, Bandra

When 1947 brought a rush of refugees from Pakistan, we were no longer Bandra's only Punjabi family. Before the mid-1940s, there was no hospital or nursing home, so I was born at St. Elizabeth's hospital in Bombay. I came home to Mount Mary Hill when I was eleven days old. When the family lost its own home in Lahore, redeemed by

my foreign mother's inheritance, the family put down roots in Bandra. They

heritage of Maharashtrian folk melodies and dances. The result: bebies of film stars who danced in time to their beat, sometimes under swaying palms and sometimes in Himalayan meadows.

East Indian Band

Change comes. Bandra's narrow main thoroughfares have descended from original bullock cart tracks, adequate for low rise neighborhoods under tree cover. Change arrived by the 1980s as magna Bombay exploded. Mansions, cottages, orchards, coconut gardens, farm plots were razed to make way for low rise buildings, replaced a generation later by high rises of ten to twenty stories. But while municipal bureaucrats think small, developers think big. The streets stayed narrow and traffic became congested. Street vendors took over sidewalks on Hill Road. Bandra evolved into an ultra prosperous "happening place", offering a range of international foods, high end as well as budget clothing stores,

Housing Society, whose founding covenant permits it under the law to limit membership to Catholics. For-profit builder lobbies have failed to dent this legal right. Thus are many "heritage" bungalows in Bandra preserved. An inscription on a white marble plaque on the gatepost of each plot identifies it as a Salsette Society property. Bandra's narrow pedestrian lanes are a mix of 19th to 21st century architecture on a smaller scale. During the Christmas, New Year season Bandra turns into nighttime magic-- streets, lanes and houses are festooned with garlands of colored lights, and adorned with splendid Christmas star Mendonca Villa, D'Monte Park Road Extension`

In the chaos and clamour that is India, the only loud sounds that I ever heard from East Indians were loud speakers at weddings and celebratory balls. They shared their love and talent for American ballads from the 50s, 60s and 70s with the neighborhood. And since



built a bungalow on a slope of Pali Hill. We have been there ever since, now on the top floor of a charmless building situated upon a builder-flattened shelf of land, which once was terraced and full of trees.

By 1954, an ancient mango orchard at the foot of Mount Mary became the site of the blockbuster Mehmood Film Studio. The Hindi film industry needed musical accompaniment, lots of it, for every ten minutes of every movie. Right here was a zesty natural fit, a most musically talented community. Portuguese mentors had introduced them to western music, western instruments and western musical notation. From their Koli Hindu forebears they received a rich

shopping arcades and the major fashion street of Linking Road. Mount Mary Feast, a ten-day celebration of the Virgin Mother's birthday in early September takes place at the steps of Bandra's iconic Mount Mary Church. In November a popular "Celebrate Bandra" festival takes place along its two seashore boulevards and at the leafy terraced amphitheatre beside the remains of the old Portuguese Fort overlooking the new Sea Link Bridge.

Mount Mary Church, Bandra

What remains of Bandra's East Indian history lives on in Mount Mary's imposing Gothic Basilica and the 15th century Portuguese baroque structure of St. Andrew's Church. Its character is preserved by Salsette Cooperative

my tastes were shaped by that same music, I welcomed it. Who can not feel respect and affection for East Indians?

Maya Malhotra
Graduated from Elphinstone College with a BA in history and political science. She worked in advertising for a few years before becoming a Real estate agent in Washington DC. She is now retired and spends her time ween the US, India, Canada, and occasional trips to Sweden.

