

HLF Khabar

Monthly Newsletter

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About

Khabar is HLF's latest initiative to keep in touch with its supporters and to reach out to new audiences. Through this online medium, we hope to bridge physical distances and recreate the true spirit of *sahitya*. We look forward to your feedback and your contributions. (Please see [Submission Guidelines](#)).

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KAAVYADHAARA

ବର୍ଷାର ପ୍ରେମ

ମା ବିଲେଇ ପରି
ମୋ ବେକକୁ
ପାଟିରେ କାମୁଡ଼ି
ତୁ ନେଇଯାଉ ମୋତେ
ଯେଉଁଠି ମୁଁ ଖୁବ୍ ସୁରକ୍ଷିତ।

ବେଳେବେଳେ
ବାଉଁଶନଳୀ
କେତେବେଳେ ଚେର ସହି
ଆଉ ସମୟେ ପଥରର ଆଖିରେ
ମୋତେ ଲୁଚେଇ ଦେଉ ତୁ।

କେବେ କେବେ
ମହୁମାଛି ଭଳି
ମୋତେ ତୁ ବିନ୍ଧୁ।

ମୁଁ ରାତିସାରା
ପଡ଼ି ରହିଥାଏ
ନିଶ୍ଚଳ, ନିର୍ବାକ
ମୋ ଉପରେ ତୁ
ବୋହି ଚାଲିଥାଉ
ଅବିଶ୍ରାନ୍ତ।

ରାସଲୀଳା

ଦେଖ ଦେଖ
ବର୍ଷାର ଉନ୍ମାଦ
ଝୁମୁଛନ୍ତି ଦାଣ୍ଡରେ
ଶ୍ରୀ ରାମକୃଷ୍ଣ
ଦଳଦଳ, ଚଳଚ଼ଳ
ପାଉଁଶିଆ ଅବଧୂତ
ସମୟେ ସମୟେ ସ୍ଥିର, ମହୁର
ଯେମିତି ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ସେବାରେ
ମସୃଗୁଲ ମଜୁଲି ରଇତ।

ବର୍ଷା
ସହରା ଗାଈ, ଓଲେଇ
ଚରିଯାଏ ସବୁକିଛି
କୋତରା ଲୁଗା, ପାଇକାମା
ହାଡ଼ାଇ ଚପଲ, ପଲିଥିନ୍

Love

Bishnu Mohapatra

(Translated from Odia by Aparna Uppaluri)

You hold me by the scruff of the neck
and carry me to safety,
like the mother cat.

At times you hide me inside the hollow of a bamboo,
sometimes in the crevices of roots,
other times inside the empty eyes of
laterite rocks.

At times you sting me like a honeybee.
Sometimes, when I lie still all night, motionless,
without a word -
you flow over me.
Relentless.

Raasa Leela

Bishnu Mohapatra

(Translated from Odia by Aparna Uppaluri)

Look, look at that ecstatic dance of rain,
like the *Paramahansa* swaying,
or *avadhootas* with ashen bodies
whirling in abandon.

Rain appears still, at times
like a note held in raag *Malhar*, or
like Manguli the peasant, rapt
in love for his wife.

Rain, an unruly cow in the city, forages,
feeding on everything.
Torn clothes, pyjamas, *hawai chappals*, polythene bags,
crumpled newspaper, computer CDs, condoms,
and old bottles of homeopathic remedies.
Everything whisked together and gulped.

Still, much remains
like the broken arm of Jesus in Kandhamal,
like severed limbs of workers of Kalinganagar,
or the duplicity of our leaders.
The deep sad sigh of those whose
lands are taken by force,
their bulging anger, our blind intolerance
and the torso of broken dreams.

In these turbulent times, times of war
Where does the rain get such courage?

ଲୋତାକୋଟା ଖବର କାଗଜ
କମ୍ପ୍ୟୁଟର ସି.ଡି.
ହୋମିଓପ୍ୟାଥି ଶିଶି, ଔଷଧ, ନିରୋଧ
ସବୁକିଛି ଗୋଲେଇ ଫେଁ ପିଇଯାଏ।

ତଥାପି ରହିଯାଏ ଅନେକ କିଛି
କନ୍ଧମାଳରେ ଯାଶୁଙ୍କ ଭଙ୍ଗାହାତ
କଳିଙ୍ଗ ନଗରରେ କଟା ପାପୁଲି
ନେତାଙ୍କ ନିତିଦିନିଆ ପ୍ରବଚନା
ଜବରଦଖଲ ଜମିରେ
ଜଡ଼ିରହିଥିବା ଲୋକଙ୍କ ଦୀର୍ଘଶ୍ୱାସ
ଆରୋପିତ ଦ୍ରୋହ
ଅନ୍ଧ ଅସହିଷ୍ଣୁତା
ଉଜୁଡ଼ା ସମ୍ପର କବନ୍ଧ।

ଏତେ ଉପାତ ଭିତରେ
ରଣ ଧନ୍ଦାଳରେ
କେଉଁଠି ମିଳେ ତାକୁ ଏତେ ହିଙ୍ଗର
ତେଇଁ ତେଇଁ ନାଚି ନାଚି ବୁଲିବାକୁ
ରାଜରାସ୍ତାରେ ?

ବର୍ଷା
ତରଳ ଯାଉଥିବା ଜହ୍ନରାତି
ତାରାକୁ ଖସି ପଡ଼ିଥିବା ମୁକ୍ତା
ଅସ୍ତ୍ରାବଲରୁ ଛୁଟି ଯାଉଥିବା ତରୁ ଘୋଡ଼ା
ବସାରୁ ଉଡ଼ିଯାଉଥିବା କପୋତ
ପ୍ରଥମ ଛୁଆଁ, ଭିତରେ ଖଜବଜ, ଉରଜ

ଅନ୍ତରଙ୍ଗ ଝଲସା
ସଂସାରର ଅଦେଖା ମୁହଁ
ମୃଦଙ୍ଗ ନିନାଦ
ଉଲଗ୍ନ କଇଁ
ସବୁଜ ସଙ୍ଗୀତ।

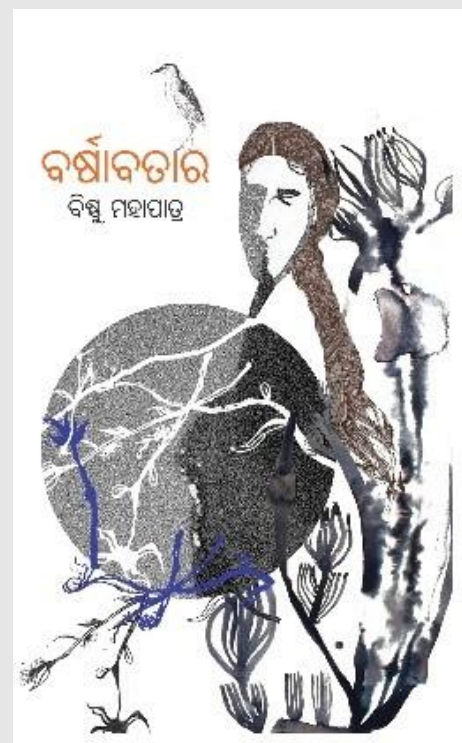
“ବର୍ଷାର ନା ଅଛି ଛଳନା
ନା ଛଦ୍ମନାମ”
କିଏ ସେ କହିଗଲା ଏ କଥା
କାହାର ଥିଲା ସେ ତାକ
ସ୍ତ୍ରାବକ !
ଦେଖ ଦେଖ
ବର୍ଷାର ଉନ୍ମାଦ
ଦେଖ ତା’ର ଉଲଗ୍ନ ରାସ ଓ
ଚାରିପଟେ ତା’ର
ସ୍ତ୍ରାବକଙ୍କ ହସ !

To dance wildly on the high streets of the City?

Rain
melting moonlight,
pearl fallen off the stars,
horses let loose from the stable,
dove flown away from its coop,
first touch and the stirring of breasts,
intimate flicker,
unseen face of the world,
rumble of drums,
naked water lily,
green melody.

“Rain does not deceive, has no alibi.”
Who says this?
Who flatters rain?

Look, look, again at this ecstatic dance of Rain
Its naked *Raasa*
And the wild laughter of its sycophants all
around.



Bishnu N. Mohapatra is a social scientist, poet, and currently professor at School of Interwoven Arts and Sciences, Krea University. The poems here are from his *Barshavatara* (Meditations on Rain), 2021.

ଶିଲିଂରେ ବର୍ଷା

ଅନ୍ଧାରର
ଚକମିକିଆ ଶିଡ଼ିରେ
ସତରଞ୍ଜରେ ଓହ୍ଲାଇ ବର୍ଷା ।

ଶିଡ଼ିକୁ ଆଉଜେଇ ଦେଇ
ପାଇନ୍ ଗଛରେ
ତଗତଗ ହୋଇ ବଢେ ।

ଏଇ ଚଢ଼ିବା, ଖସିବାରେ
ବିତିଯାଏ ଅନେକ ଯୁଗ
ଅନେକ ପ୍ରଳୟ
ମୋତି ହୋଇଯାଏ
କେତେ କେତେ
ସଭ୍ୟତାର ଭାଗ୍ୟ ।

ବର୍ଷା ଓ ଆକାଶ
ଖୁବ୍ ମିଶାମିଶି
ଜାଣିବା ମୁଷିଲ
କେଉଁଠି ବର୍ଷାର ଶେଷ ଓ
ଆକାଶର ଆରମ୍ଭ ।
ମଝିରେ ମଝିରେ
ପାହାଡ଼ ଦୁଶେ
ଦୁହିଁଙ୍କ ପରିତ୍ୟକ୍ତ
କିଛି ସମୟ ପାଇଁ
ଅଲଗା କରେ ।
ଭଙ୍ଗା ଛାତ ତଳେ
ଦଳଦଳ ଉଛୁଟିତ ଘରଟିଆ ।

ତା'ର କଳାଗାଉନ୍ ଓ
ଟୋପିପିନ୍ଧି ଠିଆହୁଏ ବର୍ଷା
ଟୋପି ଭିତରୁ
ପ୍ରଥମେ ବାହାର କରେ ସେ
ନୀଳରଙ୍ଗର ଠେକୁଆ,
ତା'ପରେ ମାଟିଆ ବେଙ୍ଗ ଓ
ଶେଷରେ ଉଡ଼େଇଦିଏ
ପଂଥା ପଂଥା ସୁନେଲି ଭର୍ଷିର ।

ଧୀରେ ଧୀରେ
ତା' ଲମ୍ବା ପକେଟରୁ
ବାହାର କରେ ସେ
ଗୋଟି ପରେ ଗୋଟି
ମେଘର ନିବନ ।

କେତେଟା ମୁହଁଠିର
ଗଦାଗଦା ରିବନ୍
ଆକାଶ ଛୁଏ ।

ଖେଳ ଦେଖାଉ ଦେଖାଉ
ଜହ୍ନକୁ ପକେଟରେ ପୁରେଇ
ଉଭାନ୍ ହେଇଯାଏ ବର୍ଷା ।

ଘରଟିଆଙ୍କ ହସରେ
ପାଟିପଡ଼େ ସାରା ଶିଲିଂ ।

Shillong's Magician

Bishnu Mohapatra

(Translated from Odia by Aparna Uppaluri)

Rain makes its gingerly descent in glittering
darkness

The ladder is put away,
yet it climbs again quickly,
clambering up the pine tree.

In this endless ascent and descent of rain,
yugas pass and apocalypse strikes,
wringing the fortune of civilizations.

Rain and sky lap over one another
rain ends and sky begins?
Only when the mountain is visible, we glimpse
its solitary being.

Under a broken roof, anxious
house sparrows perch.
Rain wears its black gown
out of its conjurer's hat
leaps a blue rabbit, then a purple frog
and a drift of golden bumble bees are set to
flight.

Out of its deep pockets rise ribbons of clouds
one after the other
one after the other.
In a while a pile of ribbons reaching for the sky,
Rain pockets the moon and vanishes.

The city of Shillong is soaking in the laughter of
the house sparrows

It is 1966

K Srilata

I am not born.
My father knocks on the door of a house
I have never seen.

There at the door, stands
my mother, slender,
a sprig of jasmine in her hair.

I take a taxi to the park
where they are sitting on a bench,
a foot apart from each other,
he with his face resolutely averted,
she with her eyes on the poorly tended flowers.

It's the beginning, I know, of that great quarrel.
My mother no longer a new bride,
the edge of her sari already a grieving afterthought.

She doesn't see me.
She sees only the crumble of her years.
I am to hold forever the grating harshness of it all.
I walk up, older, already, than them both,
tell them I am their only daughter—
and will they please please *look* at each other
the way they had the day he had knocked on the door
and she had let him in,
jasmine in her hair.

My mother looks at the flowers, the crumble of her years.
My father, away, from us both.

(after Agha Shahid Ali's "A Lost memory of Delhi")

A Disappeared Person

K Srilata

They say
a person can disappear
and leave no trace at all.
Such things are known to happen.
Missing persons cast no shadows
They don't leave used dishes in the sink,
nor square bits of body soap,
nor toothbrushes that have flowered slightly
nor notes declaring love, etc. on the fridge.
But surely, growth, and all sorts of things,
are possible in the life
of a person who has disappeared?
And so,
like the blade of a knife,
that shadow presence,
leaving used dishes in some other sink,
and square bits of body soap,
and toothbrushes that have flowered slightly,
and notes declaring love etc. on someone else's fridge,
ruining,
ever so slightly,
the geometric alignment
of our lives.

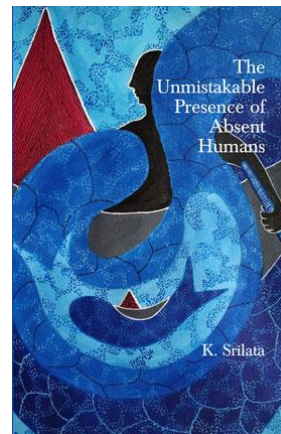
Looking for Light, Sunbirds

K Srilata

*I wish I could show you, when you are lonely or in
darkness, the astonishing light of your own being.*
(Hafiz of Shiraz)

Looking for light,
sunbirds hop
on hopeful, spindly legs.
I am no different.
The same distaste of darkness,
and, at dusk, the same torment
of light fading.

Often, the only light to be had,
is desperate and feeble,
too deep to access,
my body, a vanishing sun from which
I must rescue that one sweet ray
or remain forever bereft.



K Srilata is a poet, novelist, and Professor of English at IIT Madras. The poems here are from her collection *The Unmistakable Presence of Absent Humans*, Poetrywala, 2019.

Do I Miss you, Aai?
Abhishek Tripathy

Do I miss you, Aai? No, actually.
In fact, not so far; not so much, yet.
But I know that when the tiniest birds of memories fly out,
emptying crevices of space that you command,
then I shall yearn for you like a loss that I haven't ever known.

You encompass us like the air around,
Like the day light, and the dark night
Your presence has always been life giving, and profound
Your thoughts, your calls on our cell phones, your prayers for us,
Looking up *rahu kalam* and *guli kalam* in the *panjika*—
Memories come in spurts, like waves breaking on a barren ground

Your walking stick, and wheelchair—they are possessed by a vision of you
the ethereal feeling that you are still around
is like a cup of tea in the morning, comforting, yet waking one up to reality
that our days are not going to be the same anymore
they shall thirst for your satiating presence for all of eternity now

Like a cyclone, you would come to haunt us
Smashing our hearts, and inundating us with a sea-like surge of loss
a tempestuous storm reminding of the emptiness within us
and the gnawing vacuum of losing you—
that could encompass many universes, many times around

I close my eyes, and I can still see those days of returning from school,
to a sumptuous meal of rice, dal and mashed potatoes, soaked in the ghee made by you
And cooked with a rare spice of love, affection and warmth,
That could make even your many Gods slobber and become envious of my food.

The *pithas*—*monda, arisa, chitau, chakuli*—I run out of names
Yet you never ran out of the patience and love to prepare them for us
The payesh that you fed, comes haunting with its nectarine richness
My mind feeds on these memories, yet my heart aches with the hunger
To have you around—if only to just to be with you, that moment when your breath left you
And your soul merged with the candyfloss smoothness of clouds

That time in January I met you this year,
you promised that ritual birthday letter
You said you will find your strength to write it for me
I made you promise that you must present it to me, like all the years before
My day would mean not much without the paragraph or two of your handwritten love

It eludes me, for now and forever now
But something tells me, you would keep my letter ready
For a time when we meet again, and feed me the morsels of affection
Pending for all the time in between now, and then

Until then, I must unlearn hoping to see you waiting at the door when I arrive,
come rain or sunshine, checking after me, no matter how old I became
Or hear your soft voice, sing many songs and lullabies
For that matter, almost everything and every moment that you have filled with your presence

I must let go, so that you can move on too, and wait for me
At a time and space where we shall meet again
I will only remember to run to your arms, like I did as a child.

Aai: maternal grandmother in Odia.

Rahu and Guli Kalam: specific timings of the day designated as auspicious, or otherwise, as per planetary alignments.

Panjika: Almanac.

Monda ...: Traditional savoury and sweet snacks in Odia cuisine. Collectively called *Pithas*, they are common in eastern India.

— **Abhishek Tripathy** is a civil servant, currently posted in New Delhi. His *Padma & Other Poems* was published in 2019.

I Love Raining Time Chennuru Sravan

Here come the soaked clouds
Breaking out the tears of joy
Sharing theirs onto mine
Yippee! I love raining time!

Spout! Hit the rain drops
Like how the water from sprinklers
Drops on leaves, pouring in life
Making my soul lively again.
Yippee! I love raining time!

Gush! There's the raging breeze
But see how it chimes my heart
Swooping around, like my playmate
On a musical carousel.
Yippee! I love raining time!

Splash! I end up falling in a puddle
And my clothes soaking with muddy water
But who cares? For I am all jumpy and jolly
Forming heavy ripples with my dance.
Yippee! I love raining time!

Aww! The clouds seem to be worn out
As the drizzling has stopped
But not without the appearance
Of the multi-coloured showstopper
For there's a glimpse of the rainbow up
A treat exquisite for my eyes.
Yippee! I love raining time!

— **Chennuru Sravan**, is a final year student of the Integrated Masters Programme in Economics at University of Hyderabad.

Until this is over Jayanthi Manoj

Until this is over
Let us play the spiritual rhythm of healing poetry
In any voice, in any verse
Tuning into therapeutic renditions
Of the finer-souls' restorative songs.

Until this is over
May we turn inward for the meaning
Of the underived complexities of daily living

Listening to the heart thump its beat in litany
And grateful for every cure and answered prayer.

Until this is over
And until this icy-cubed living is thawed
May we share this rimy space with balmy words
Summerlike smiles, scented with unsolicited love
Warming as a hearth within.

Until this is over
May we retrace kindness
Barter our gold for all our old comforts of companionship
Pace down on the tracks of race, and move into gentler woods,
Quietude spaces and be in gratitude for the lifespan of grace.

Until this is over,
Isolated and compressed within the tension of volatility
May we rise as a tensegrity structure of healed humanity
Notched in strength, gained in the share-and-care of the times;
May we meditate on the refrains of breathing and giving
A fractal of healing, recursive, curative, a harmonic blessing.

— **Jayanthi Manoj** is a poet, Assistant Professor of English and Vice-Principal at Holy Cross College, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu. Her *Sketches: From the Pages of My Diary* was published in 2008.

The Pyre **Manvika Athwani**

I went to Banaras in search of a lost home
Hoping to get a glimpse of people left damaged by time, left scarred by one another
I expected the ghosts to seek me out and heal,
The imperfect stories I found among the living

I took my hope to the Ganges
Amidst a fevered hundred
I hid myself in the crowd, wearing their devotion like a cloak
I surrendered to the spectacle
To the scent of marigold and rose, to the heady fumes of the holy fires
Before God, we shone, bright red and yellow

Their voices rose to the sky, escaping their frail forms
Each a plea to lighten the burden of existence
I wondered if God could tell them apart
Their faces or their prayers

Satisfied with their display, they left their posts, giving way to the hundred that would come tomorrow
All that was left was a river sullied by faith
And the destitute, suffering at the feet of heaven's door

Banaras is a city, where the dead acquiesce to the celebration of life a few feet away from them
The distance that separates them, the road traversed by the pallbearer
It is a city which carries the scent of faith and death
And I wanted to breathe it in.

I was drawn to the Manikarnika Ghat
Which Indian women grace only in their death
The divine passage monitored by men
Unsullied by a woman's grief
I carried mine to the pyres

Feeling every inch of the pathway
I grazed my hand on the stacks of wood
Fated to accompany the departed, who were beaten,
To fit a space designated for them
Even in death, there is no room for careless limbs

All those who reach this shore, yield to the flame
Laying its claim on tender flesh
Asserting its hold over vision
Till it was all that could be seen

I left long after the dead settled in my lungs
I was betrayed by the ghosts I sought out
They were laughing at me, at my hope
It was my naivety that I believed them when they said,
I could seek out answers
That I could understand my inheritance

— **Manvika Athwani** is an economics graduate from Delhi who is currently working for Amazon.

Minutes Before Sleep Minal Sukumar

'Is there no way out of the mind?' - Sylvia Plath

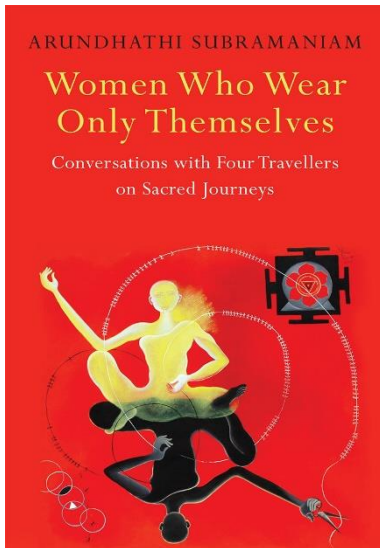
Tomorrow will be a good day,
pockets of giggles, maybe even joy,
remember Judith who filled pockets
with stones and waded into blankness,
why do the insides of my lungs feel wet,
come now, think of him and how it is
to breathe knowing love, this is happy
even if you cannot quite recognise it,

eyes only half open, watching him hold
a wonky heart under a surgeon's beam,
he doesn't yet write it off as irreparable,
I hold my breath, a voice from the past
dances in, he will discover the cracks
in the arteries one night while I sleep,
wait for it, wait for it, words tumbling
recklessly from a wounded tongue,
a reflection forever in flux, I'm afraid
I don't know what I look like, grasp
at his whispered poetry, love letters
he will take with him after goodbyes,
children in the street and crippled
men selling roses, a ghost smoking
by the window, the air tastes sour
and I can do nothing to sweeten it,

when you leave, my love, take me
with you, what if the sun forgets to rise.

— **Minal Sukumar** is a poet and fiction writer from Bangalore. She holds an MA in writing from the National University of Ireland, Galway.

MEET MY BOOK

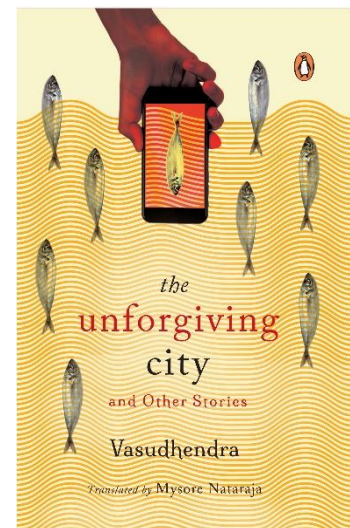


My book is a collection of conversations with four contemporary women—courageous, undocumented spiritual travellers, who refuse to outsource their self-definition. I talk to a naked woman mystic, a nada yogini who works with primal sound, a contemplative writer whose spiritual journey unfolded after a traumatic brain injury, and a monk who sees her path as one of joyful abundance rather than ascetic self-denial. These are decidedly oddball women—at times, downright eccentric. But that is precisely what made them fascinating to me. I believe their remarkable journeys will offer fodder for seekers of all persuasions and all genders.

— Arundhathi Subramaniam

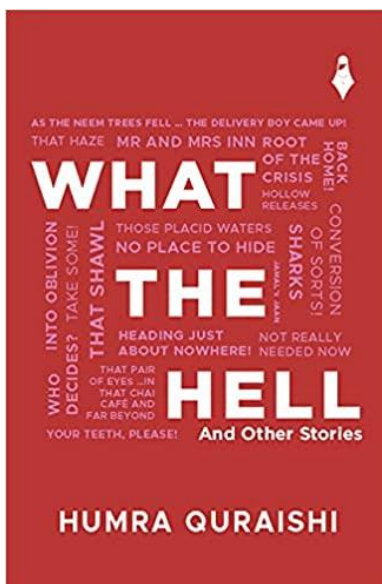
This anthology of 12 of my eclectic stories, written over a span of 11 years, were loved by Kannada readers. I am eager to see how they work in English. Indian languages have always been hospitable to the short story form and most of the prose writers begin their journey there. In contrast, those who write, and read, in English seem to prefer the long form, the novel. The stories in this volume celebrate the life of both rural and urban Karnataka, and people from my native Bellary district and the present city of Bengaluru play important roles in them. I believe that most of those who live in the cities dwell similarly in two worlds, which are connected at times and unconnected at other times. I hope English readers will find these translated stories interesting.

— Vasudhendra



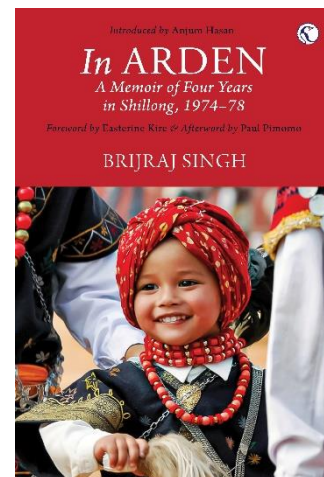
I have been writing these stories for the last several years. I believe that dark realities and stark happenings ought to be told, offloaded, unleashed on paper. Nah, not kept tight and shut. And definitely not concealed. In this collection, my stories whisper ever so gently about what's on and ongoing, the pains and struggles, deaths and disasters, the untouched touched with the naked eye, till tears and moans overtake. Interwoven are events revolving around collapsing structures and the death of wants. Not to overlook the mafia on the prowl, intruding, leaving imprints.

— Humra Quraishi



Newly married, my wife and I went to teach English at a recently established university in Northeast India. During our four years there, we made many friends, and got to know some unique features of the countryside, as well as the tribal culture of the locals who were fast modernizing. In this memoir, I tried to communicate, as vividly as I could, my experiences, discoveries, and disappointments. So here is a somewhat unusual introduction to the Khasi Hills, its people, and those years, which should interest those who wish to discover more about a fascinating part of India that is still too little known

— Brijraj Singh



PROFILES

Young Orators Club of Secunderabad (YOCS)

YOCS, established in 1969, is one of the oldest, community-led, oratory clubs of the country. During the pandemic, the club, with members spread across the globe, has shifted its sessions to the online medium. The sessions include various forms of oratory such as debates, group discussions, discourses on an eclectic mix of topics ranging from philosophy, politics, economics to science, technology and many more. Members engage in public speaking activities, and any topic is acceptable as long as it conforms to the rules of the club. YOCS is a place not only for developing one's oratory skills but also for improving one's communication and critical thinking skills. At YOCS, one learns through experience by delivering speeches, learning from the evaluation, and also by listening to fellow orators. Besides, the opportunity to interact with peers of a certain intellectual accomplishment or to just wind down and spend an evening with friends are the other reasons for becoming a member of YOCS.



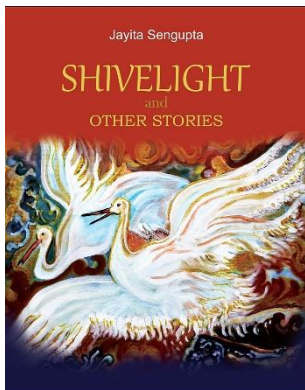
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Dr. Samuel Johnson's Literary Club, Department of English, St. Pious X Degree and PG College for Women established in 2006, is a vibrant space for students to nurture their literary, creative and aesthetic senses. The club has regularly organized literary festivals, theatre workshops, book/art exhibitions, guest lectures, field trips, debates, and book/film review sessions. Students of the club have enjoyed their visit to and participation in the Hyderabad Literary Festival. In 2020, during the pandemic, members started the Insta-Page "Lockdown Diaries." They also attended an interactive virtual tour of Shakespeare's *Verona*. The club aspires to start a Reading Club and an international, e-literary magazine. Contact: myliteraryactivities@gmail.com



BOOK REVIEWS



Shivelight and Other Stories by Jayita Sengupta. Indiana, 2020. Pages 83, Rs 299.

This book comprises four stories and fourteen paintings (including the cover). The stories are full of references to music – so much so that we cannot think of the stories without the music, without the paintings. These are stories that speak to us about identity, about the worth of an individual, about relationships, about morality, about how the past lives in our present, about how writing, painting, and music give meaning to our life. They help us to transcend the mundane and access the mystical.

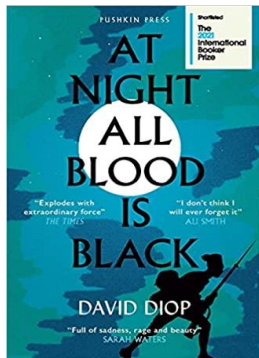
"Shivelight" is a word attributed to the mystic poet Gerard Manley Hopkins who, it is said, created it in 1888 to describe the lances or shafts of sunlight forcing their way through thick foliage or canopy of wood. The author says that for her "shivelight" is the "divine ray of light through a canopy of thoughts" which helps her to create stories based on the "images and music" in her memory. The stories are thus a set of illuminations.

But don't get me wrong. The stories are nothing if not concrete, nothing if not insights into our contemporary lives. The title story is about a mother-daughter relationship, the anxieties of a daughter who lives away from an ageing parent who is lapsing into dementia. "Monsoon Clouds" is about the angst of a growing boy and his connect with music and the role his mother plays in his life as that of his teachers. "Nayika" is about the stresses of a long-distance relationship, about the excitement of diversion, about desires, about dance and about music. The last story is again about desire and power, about the web that we weave and the way it traps us in our pursuits.

These bald summaries do no justice to Jayita Sengupta's intricately woven narratives. Get the print copy if you can, otherwise there is always Kindle.

— **GJV Prasad**

Poet, novelist, translator, and former Professor of English at JNU, Delhi



At Night All Blood Is Black by David Diop. Tr. Anna Moschikova. Pushkin Press, Pages 160, Rs. 280.

"I know, I understand, I shouldn't have...", "God's truth, now I know". The incantatory words form a haunting refrain, as do others, in this slim stream-of-consciousness novel that gives voice to a young Senegalese soldier on the frontlines of the trench warfare in the First World War. Alfa Ndiaye has just witnessed his best friend, his more-than-brother, Madembe Diop, die a horrible, lingering death on the first day of the war while he had watched helplessly. Guilt-ridden and unhinged, Alfa goes on a killing spree returning every night with the severed hand of a "blue-eyed enemy" soldier. He is soon labelled a *dëmm*, a devourer of souls, by his increasingly

uncomfortable trench-mates and the officer who pushed him daily into the battlefield. "Because madness on the battle-field, after the captain blows the whistle to retreat, is taboo".

Recipient of the Prix Goncourt des Lycéens in 2018 in France, David Diop's searing tale takes the readers on an unsettling journey of words and emotions. Drawing on the tradition of the *griots*, the African storytellers, Diop suffuses his French with the rhythm of Wolof and imparts to his sentences a terrible beauty even as they describe the grisliest acts. The story hurtles relentlessly towards a shocking denouement denoting a final unmooring of the mind, ending however on a note of hope drawn from folklore and the promise of love. Underlying the story are issues of the legitimacy of war and the racism faced by the west African "chocolate soldiers", recruited into the division of the Senegalese *tirailleurs* in WW1 and projected as savages out to finish the enemy, machete in hand and madness in their eyes. Deliberately set in a no-man's-land, this powerful lament transforms into a universal tale of love, loss and the meaninglessness of war.

Superbly translated into English by Anna Moschikova, the book won the International Booker Prize in 2021, jointly shared by the author and the translator.

— **Uma Damodar Sridhar**
Assistant Professor of French, EFL University, Hyderabad

TV SERIES REVIEW

Schitt's Creek is a brilliantly enacted Canadian television sitcom. Critically acclaimed, it has gained almost a cult following for its humour, dialogue and acting. At the 2020 Primetime Emmy Awards, the latest season swept awards in all the seven major categories.

The Rose family is nouveau riche, their affluence coming largely from running the second largest video empire in North America. Johnny and Moira Rose have a garish and privileged lifestyle and their two adult children, David and Alexis, have been handed everything they ever wanted on a silver platter and have never worked for a single day in their lives. Their business manager embezzles their family business and the government confiscates everything they own.

They discover they are broke and the only asset they own is a small hick town known as Schitt's Creek that Johnny had bought for David as a joke. Shockingly, this ends up being their saviour as it's their only asset that has not been repossessed. Their collective lives change. Forced to leave behind their pampered lives, they relocate to this provincial town. Deprived of their luxurious lifestyle, they must now live in two rooms in a rundown motel and adjust to life without money and with each other. The founding family, the unsophisticated Schitt's family still control everything in town. In the meantime, the Rose family has to manage living in their new home in whatever way they can. In the middle of nowhere they meet real people and soon rediscover life. In the process, they learn and also teach those around them the meaning of true love, friendship, humanness and appreciation of the joy in simple things.

This series had me binge watching and glued to my seat.

— **Rita Chhablani**
Authored three books and worked for UNICEF

HLF ONLINE SESSIONS

For updates on HLF online sessions, subscribe to HLF YouTube channel <youtube.com/c/hlf-India>



6 August 2021

India's Power Elite: Caste, Class and Cultural Revolution. **Sanjaya Baru** in conversation with **Nistula Hebbar**.

Sanjaya Baru: “Although I wrote two books about two former Prime Ministers, this one is not about the present Prime Minister. ... But I use Mr. Modi as the peg to hang my argument on, precisely because he is the first Indian political leader who has tried to consciously draw attention to the nature of the power shift. ... [Unlike Mr. Vajpayee and Mr. Narasimha Rao] Modi came to Delhi as a challenger, and that’s the reason why I use him as a peg that draws our attention not just within India but internationally ... to the class, caste composition. There have been several attempts to understand the Indian power elite and the role of different classes in India, but nobody has tried to classify the structure. That’s exactly where I position my book.”

Catch the complete conversation at www.youtube.com/watch?v=XGfwziAVRfU&t=11s



27 August 2021

The Tatas, Freddie Mercury & Other Bawas: An Intimate History of the Parsis. **Coomi Kapoor** in conversation with **Shabnam Minwalla**.

Coomi Kapoor: “The book happened [owing to] a series of lucky coincidences, actually. ... I knew I did not want to write a dry history book beginning with the sugar in the milk story, and I also knew that I didn’t want to do an encyclopaedia of eminent names of the Parsi community. I wanted to do a fun story of a people who are fun-loving, humourous, high-achievers, eccentric, confident of their own righteousness, ethical, but people who have had quite an impact on India. ... Another thing I knew was, I didn’t want to write a book just for the Parsis. I wanted to write a book that others would be interested in as well. And I am happy that readers even in North India where you hardly see any Parsis are quite interested in the book. Then there are the Parsis, of course.”

Find the complete conversation at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Nh5peoWvck

LITERARY NEWS

Sahitya Akademi Awards 2020

Language	Title of the Book and Genre	Author
Assamese	<i>Bengsata</i> (Short Stories)	Apurba Kumar Saikia
Bengali	<i>Eka Eka Ekashi</i> (Memoirs)	Sankar (Manishankar Mukhopadhyay)
Bodo	<i>Gwthenay Lamayao Gwdan Agan</i> (Short Stories)	(late) Dharanidhar O
Dogri	<i>Baba Jitmal</i> (Play)	Gian Singh
English	<i>When God Is a Traveller</i> (Poetry)	Arundhathi Subramaniam
Gujarati	<i>Banaras Diary</i> (Poetry)	Harish Meenashru
Hindi	<i>Tokri Mein Digant 'Their Gatha'</i> (Poetry)	Anamika
Kannada	<i>Sri Bahubali Ahimsadigwa</i> (Epic Poetry)	M. Veerappa Moily
Kashmiri	<i>Tilasm-e-Khanabadosh</i> (Short Stories)	(Late) Hirday Koul Bharti
Konkani	<i>Yugaparivarthanancho Yatri</i> (Poetry)	R. S. Bhaskar
Maithili	<i>Gachh Roosai Achhi</i> (Short Stories)	Kamalkant Jha
Malayalam	<i>Akasmikam Omcheriyute Ormmakkurippukal</i> (Memoirs)	Omcherry N. N. Pillai
Manipuri	<i>Malangbana Kari Hai</i> (Poetry)	Irungbam Deven
Marathi	<i>Udya</i> (Novel)	Nanda Khare
Nepali	<i>Kirayako Kokh</i> (Novel)	Shankar Deo Dhakal
Odia	<i>Samudrakula Ghara</i> (Short Stories)	Yashodhara Mishra
Punjabi	<i>Aam Khass</i> (Short Stories)	Gurdev Singh Rupana
Rajasthani	<i>Sanskriti ri Sanatana Deeth</i> (Essays)	Bhanwar Singh Samaur
Sanskrit	<i>Vaishali</i> (Novel)	Mahesh Chandra Sharma Gautam
Santali	<i>Gur Dak Kasa Dak</i> (Poetry)	Rupchand Hansdah
Sindhi	<i>Jehad</i> (Plays)	Jetho Lalwani
Tamil	<i>Sellaatha Panam</i> (Novel)	Imaiyam
Telugu	<i>Agniswaasa</i> (Poetry)	Nikhileswar
Urdu	<i>Amawas Main Khwab</i> (Novel)	Hussain-ul-Haque

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Swimming Against the Tide: True Story of Para Swimmer Madhavi Latha by Madhavi Latha Prathigudupu. SAGE, Pages 256, Rs. 485.

This autobiography of the Paralympian is an inspirational story of an ordinary woman with extraordinary grit. Co-opting other athletes with disabilities, Madhavi Latha, who is also the Founder President of Wheelchair Basketball Federation of India, launched a movement, "Yes, We Too Can!!!", to create a fair and inclusive world for persons with disabilities and to realize their dreams through access to sports.

Kakka: A Dalit Novel by Vemula Yellaiah. Translated from the original Telugu by K. Purushotham and Gita Ramaswamy. Hawakal Publishers. Pages 232, Rs. 320.

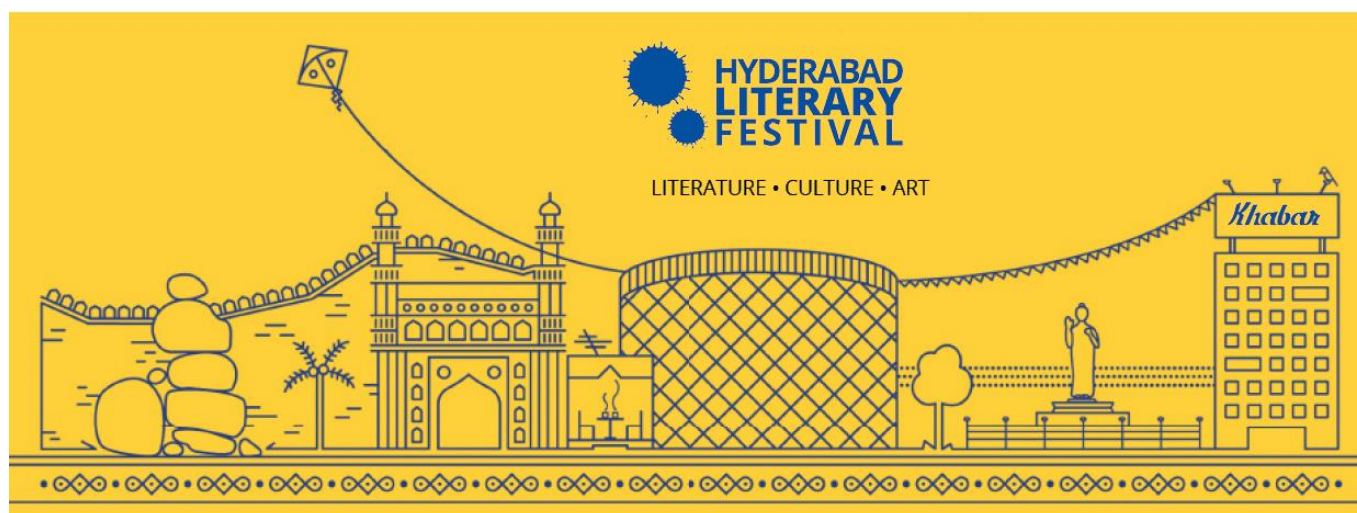
The novel that "turned Telugu literature on its head," is a pioneering record of slavery's myriad manifestations, and of the productive work Madigas render unto the landlords. Never before have the daily inter-caste encounters and the marginalization of a Dalit within his Dalit kinships been written about as in *Kakka*. The sparse translation is as unapologetic as its source, and as exceptionally beautiful.

The Last Prince of Bengal: A Family's Journey from an Indian Palace to the Australian Outback by Lynn Innes. The Westbourne Press, Pages 256, Rs. 1828. Kindle Edition Rs 472.

Weaving in scandals, broken marriages, and political machinations to enthralling effect, Lyn Innes recounts her ancestors' extraordinary journey from royalty to relative anonymity. *The Last Prince of Bengal* is the story of Nawab Nazim who was born into one of India's most powerful royal families but in 1880 was forced to abdicate his kingdom, three times the size of Great Britain, by the British authorities.

Smaller Citizens: Writings on the Making of Indian Citizens by Krishna Kumar. Orient BlackSwan. Pages 168, Rs. 395.

The book explores the theme of citizenship by focusing on a key paradox of modern education: to encourage the young to think freely and apply their minds to the problems of our times, or, to train them to become loyal citizens, complying with and obeying the relevant authority representing the state. It probes the resultant dilemmas faced by teachers, parents and children themselves.



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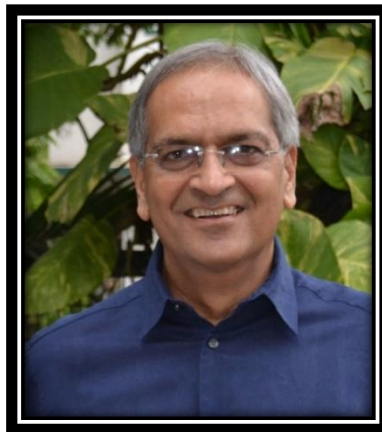
Thank you for your overwhelming response to our call for submissions! Sorry, but we will not be able to communicate the decision of the team (which is final, of course!) individually. But rest assured that every submission, if it has followed all the guidelines, will get due attention and will remain under consideration for three issues after which you are free to publish it elsewhere.

We invite

- Original, un/published poems (two or three poems; 40-50 lines in all; in English or Indian languages, along with their English translation).
- Reviews of recent books, films, web series, podcasts etc (in not more than 300 words).
- Write ups on book and literary clubs and societies and their activities (in not more than 100 words).
- Authors' introduction of their recent books (in not more than 100 words).
- Information about recent publications (in not more than 50 words).
- Announcements of forthcoming events (in not more than 50 words), and so on.

Submission Guidelines.

- All submissions should be sent only as MS-Word documents. If you are concerned about the formatting going awry in transmission, you may also send a PDF as an additional document for reference.
- In the Subject field of the email, describe your submission as: Poem, Review, New Publication, etc.
- Follow the word limit. Submissions that are far beyond the word limit will not be considered.
- Give a one-line description of yourself—your designation, or occupation, etc. There is no deadline for sending submissions. All submissions should be sent to <hlfkhabar@gmail.com>.



Ajay Gandhi
(1956-2021)

Farewell, farewell my friends
I smile and
Bid you goodbye.

— Rabindranath Tagore