

HLF KHABAR

Quarterly Newsletter

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About

Khabar is HLF's latest initiative to keep in touch with its supporters and 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](#)).

Team

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ಕಾಡು

ಮಮತಾ ಸಾಗರ

ನನ್ನೊಳಗೊಂದು ಕಾಡು
ದಟ್ಟ ಗಿಡ ಮರ ಬಳ್ಳಿ ಹಬ್ಬಿಕೊಂಡು
ಹಗಲಲ್ಲೂ ಕತ್ತಲು ಹರಡಿ ಕುರುಡಾಗಿ ಸುತ್ತದೆ
ಕಾಲು ದಾರಿಗಳೆ.
ಕಣ್ಣಿಗೆ ಕಾಣದ ಜನಗಳು ಹಾದಿ ಹುಡುಕುತ್ತಾರೆ,
ಎಡೆವಿ ತಡವರಿಸಿ ಓಡಾಡುತ್ತಾರೆ.
ಅಡಗಿಕೊಳ್ಳುತ್ತಾರೆ, ಹುಡುಕುತ್ತಲೇ
ಇರುತ್ತಾರೆ ಕಾಣದ ಅದೇನೇನನ್ನೋ.
ಅರಚುತ್ತಾರೆ ಕಿರಚುತ್ತಾರೆ ಸದ್ದೇ ಮಾಡದೆ.

ಅಲಲಿ ಅಪರೂಪಕ್ಕರಳುವ ಅನೆ ಹೂಗಳ
ಕೊಯ್ಲು, ಮುಡಿದು, ಕಿವಿಯ ಮೇಲಿಟ್ಟುಕೊಂಡು
ಭಜನೆ ಮಾಡುತ್ತಾ ಜಾತಿ ನೀತಿ ನುಡಿದವರು,
ಕೊರಳ ಹಿಸುಕಿ 'ಪಿಚಾಕ್' ಅಂತ ಕರುಣೆ ತೋರುತ್ತಾರೆ.

ಕತ್ತಲಾವರಿಸೊಲ್ಲ ಇಲ್ಲಿ!
ಈ ಕತ್ತಲೆ ಕಾಣುವುದಿಲ್ಲ ಕಲಿತ
ಕಾಣ್ವೆಯ ಉಗೋಚರ ಹಗೆ, ಹೋಗಿ
ಹಗರೇದ ಧಗೆ!

ಈ ಕಾಡ ಕತ್ತಲ ಕೀಟಲೆ ತಡೆಯಲಾಗದೇ
ನಾನೀಗ
ಸೂರ್ಯನನ್ನು ನುಂಗಿದ್ದೇನೆ
ಕಡಲ ಕುಡಿದಿದ್ದೇನೆ!

ಕಾಡು, ಕತ್ತಲು, ಕಳೆದು ಹೋಗುವ ಕಾಲಾರಿಗಳು
ದಿಕ್ಕು ದೆಸೆ ಹುಡುಕುತ್ತ ತಾರಾಡುವ ಜನ, ಕಾಡೋ ಕಟುಕರು
ಈಗ ಈ ನೆಲದುದ್ದಕ್ಕೂ ಹರಡಿಕೊಂಡಿದ್ದಾರೆ.

ಅರಳುವ ಹೂವ ಕೊಯ್ಲೋ 'ಹಲಾಲ್' ಕೋರರು
ಚಂದ್ರನ ಬೆನ್ನಟ್ಟಿ ಹೊರಟಿದ್ದಾರೆ.
ಸೂರ್ಯನ ದೊರೆ ಕಾಯುತ್ತ
ಅವನು ಮುಳುಗುವ ಕಡಲ ತಡಿಯ ಹುಡುಕುತ್ತಾ
ಮೋಡಗಳ ಮರೆಯಲಿ ಹಾಸು ಹೊಕ್ಕು
ಒಂದೇನು ಓಡುತ್ತಿರುವ ಚಂದ್ರ
ಬೆಳಕ ಚೆಲ್ಲುತ್ತಾನೆ ತೆಗಾಗ
ದಣಿದ ಚಂದ್ರನ ಕೈಗೆಟುಕದಿದ್ದರೂ
ಸೆರೆಹಿಡಿದ ತರಾತುರಿಯಲಿರುವ ಈ ಜಾತಿವಂತರಿಗೆ
ತಮ್ಮನ್ನು ಕತ್ತಲು ನುಂಗಿದೆ ಅನ್ನುವುದು ಇನ್ನೂ ಗೊತ್ತಿಲ್ಲ.

ಬಿಡಿಸಲಾಗದ ಹಾಡು

ಮಮತಾ ಸಾಗರ

ಒಂದು ಮೋಡ ತೇಲಿ ಬಂತು ಹಾಳೆ ಮೇಲೆ;
ಪೆನ್ನಿಲಿನ ದಪ್ಪ ಸೀಸದ ಮೊನಚು ತುದಿ ಮೊಂಡಾದಂತೆ
ದುಂಡಿಗೆ ಮೋಡ ದಟ್ಟವಾಗುತ್ತ ಕಂದಾಗುತ್ತ
ಹಾಳೆ ಮೇಲೆ ಮಬ್ಬು ಕೆವಿತ್ತು.

ಸುಯ್ ಗುಡದ ಸುಂಟರಗಾಳಿ
ತರಗಿಲೆಗಳು ಸರಬರ ಅನ್ನದು
ಕಾದ ಮಣ್ಣು ಘಮಗುಡುವ ನೆನಪು
ದನಿ ಗುಡುಗಿ ಹನಿ ಬಿತ್ತು

ಹಾಳೆ ಮೇಲೂ ಗಾಳಿ ಬೀಸಿ
ಅಕ್ಕಪಕ್ಕದ ಬಳ್ಳಿಗಳಿಂದ ಅರಳದ ಮೊಗ್ಗುಗಳುದುರಿ
ಹಾಳೆ ತೆಂಬಾ ಅಕ್ಕರಗಳು ಚದುರಿ
ಮನದಲ್ಲಿ ತುಳುಕಲಾರದ ತರಂಗಗಳು ಮೂಡಿತ್ತು

ಖಾಲಿ ಹಾಳೆಯ, ಕಪ್ಪು ಮೋಡದ,
ಬೀಳದ ಮಳೆಯ, ಬಿದ್ದ ಅಕ್ಕರಗಳಲ್ಲಿ
ಬಿಡಿಸಲಾಗದ ಹಾಡು ಸಿಲುಕಿತ್ತು

The forest

(Translated from Kannada by the poet)

A forest within me
dense plants, trees, creepers, covers
daylight with dark blinding
trails.
Invisible people look for paths to traverse
They stumble stutter and struggle
Hide, they keep looking for many hidden things
scream and cry silently.

Pluck sporadically blooming flowers of desires
Wear them on their hair, place it on the ear
Sing hymns of caste and equity
Strangulate in the neck to show sympathy

The darkness doesn't conceal this place!
In this dark what is seen is the imagined
Hatred, smoke of intolerance
Sweltered scandal!

Impossible to bear the scoff of this obscurity
I have
Swallowed the sun
Drank up the ocean!

The forest, darkness, paths leading to nowhere
People wandering in search of directions,
those that celebrate genocide
are now extended all over this land.

Killers who destroy blooming flowers
Are now chasing the moon.
Waiting for the sun,
Looking for the seashore where he sets,
Moon running concealed amidst the clouds
Pours light every now and then.

Though unable to capture the exhausted
unreachable moon, futile casteists
have failed to realize that they are
completely engulfed by darkness

A trapped song

(Translated from Kannada by the poet)

a cloud came floating over an empty page
as the sharpness of pencil blunts
clouds thicken, roundness greys deeper
casting a gloom upon the page

whirlwind doesn't whoosh
rustling of leaves not heard
scent of the moist soil reoccurs as memory
voice rumbles, pit-a-pat drizzles drop

over the page wind whispers
flower buds from creepers around
fall as letters tossed on the page
ripples in mind's expanse refuse to spill over

Upon the empty page, within the dark
clouds, in rains that pour not
in pouring letters, a song
gets trapped beyond portrayal.

Mamta Sagar is a bilingual poet and translator working in Kannada and English. She is the author of several poetry collections including *heige haaLeya meile haaDu* (Like this on the page the song), *nidiya neerina Teiva* (Dampness of the river water), and *Hide and Seek*. She is the co-curator of Rucksack: A Global Poetry Patchwork, Piccolo Museo della Poesia, Italy. She is also the founder director of Kaavya Sanje, a Bengaluru-based community poetry engagement.

Enchantress atop the potted palm Syam Sudhakar

(There is a popular myth in Kerala of a Yakshi, a demoness, who, with her enchanting beauty, seduces young men (mostly from the elite class). Asking for wet lime, she takes them to her home on the top of a palm tree and sucks their blood. Her beauty comes from long flowing hair, captivating eyes, alluring smile and the fragrance of *pala* flower.)

"When you hear of Leela, do not mistake me; let me tell you, she is my sister."

— M.T. Vasudevan Nair in *Ninte Ormakku*

One such enchanted night
I woke up to discover
you and me
a hill apart

cannot touch
cannot speak
cannot eat
cannot sleep together

a bath together ... never.

'Why so?' I asked
(as you sat over Dad's Ceylon trunk
like a doll)
just as someone
pointing to a sixty-four storeyed tower
rising into the sky asked,
'Wouldn't all die
if a plane crashed into it?'

Like sluiced virgin waters
your dilated eyes
gazing into infinity,
fixed on the vast expanses,
dreamt of a dusk full of wings;
a mermaid, though denying,
counted my wanderings,
gathered my tears.

After marriage
in the quiet of night
you would call,
'Is it raining,
has the mango tree flowered,
how are Chinnu and her little ones?
I forgot the name of the dumb valet
who drowned in the well.

Our writing table in the corridor
give it to me
if not in use.
I know not what I feel ...'

How Alikutty of Vadakketh house
resigned from the Panchayat
due to a quarrel with Dad,
how Regina once cried
on and on,
how we managed
with a single pair of slippers,
how I wept at her marriage
I, who did not shed even a tear
when our father died ...

The spark of inebriate words
creeps up the spine
slowly
transparently.

One such enchanted day after she died
Amma planted a palm in a pot.
'It will only be up to her waist.'
For Amma, she was even now the scale.

At night
as I stepped out,
a girl, just a finger long,
on the rim of the pot,
stretched out her hand to me
for wet lime,
hair spread out,
blue light scattering.

In the heavy fragrance
of the bridal chamber
atop the palm
is heard a brittle laughter.

Cartography Syam Sudhakar

Behind the neck
where thoughts bloom
a birthmark maps an ocean.
There, a kiss evaporates
into the salty wind.

Two exiled bodies
meet in the blue meridian.

Though weary
their bodies and language
mirror dance and poetry.
Their forbidden love tastes of salt,
smells of unslakable thirst,
echoes the depth of blue
where compasses vanish.
Their entwined fingers whisper
like mountain to the wind.

Secretly they smile,
together they cook
their salty dreams
caught in fish eyes.

Like the sea
opening into a desert,
they quench each other,
breathing heavily,
entangled—
a submarine volcano
unwinding its heat
into an ocean, deep.

Two exiled strangers
meet in the expanse.
Their bodies
marked by tears.

Syam Sudhakar is a bilingual poet who writes in English and Malayalam. He is the winner of the 2022 Srinivas Rayaprol Poetry Prize, and the author of six poetry collections including *Drenched by the Sun* (2013), *Slicing the Moon* (a bilingual video, 2013), and *Avasanathe Kollimeen* (The Last Meteor, 2014). He has edited an anthology in English titled *Shakespeare in the Age of Covid-19: Poems and Flash Fiction by Young Indians* (2020), and four anthologies in Malayalam.

NEW INITIATIVES

Stories in many forms: Dark 'N' Light magazine

Given that the digital space affords expression in multiple forms—text, moving and still image, sound, and graphics—that can come together in inventive ways, it's no surprise that media initiatives today take full advantage of this to tell stories that make use of all these vocabularies.

The digital platform [Dark 'N' Light](#) is many things—a collection of projects, a house for multimedia stories, digital art, podcasts and photo essays—so to describe it as a “magazine” seems to fall a bit short. All these together, according to their description, “playfully traverse traditional boundaries” that challenge “linear, binary worldviews”.



DARK 'N' LIGHT

Of note is their podcast series Subverse, now two seasons down, and its spinoff, [Stories from the Subverse](#), the first of which, released 13 October, follows naturalist and eco-activist Yuvan Aves on a walk along Chennai's beaches with a group of children whose curiosity is both charming and informative. Another mini-series, [ARCX](#), features conversations with six South Asian writers of science fiction, fantasy, and speculative fiction, including Samit Basu, Indra Das, and Kuzhali Manickavel.

The text and multimedia content spans an interesting range of themes, from the personal to the microscopic to the cosmic. A short film [Oculus Flight](#), exemplifies the kind of collaborative, interdisciplinary and multi-modal explorations that the platform hosts. Here, a macro camera lens is trained on the surface of water to make visible the vibrations on its surface, resulting in a mesmerizing dance of light set to “cosmomodernist” sound.

Dark 'N' Light offers a meditative pause, a refreshing turn away from the endless scroll of digital life.

— Usha Raman

HUMARA HYDERABAD

The Campaign to Save the Banyans of Chevella

Hyderabad has the distinction of being home to a unique feature: 914 banyan trees – several more than 100-years old – and 9000 other trees, line the old Hyderabad-Vikarabad road that runs through Chevella. Over the decades, the massive old banyans have collectively become micro-habitats and ecosystems that sustain biodiverse life forms and provide valuable green cover to the increasingly parched and drought-prone state. Most of this is set to vanish once the road-expansion on a section of NH 163 is taken up by the National Highways Authority of India.

Nature Lovers of Hyderabad, consisting of a group of citizens of all ages and walks of life, have been campaigning to save this unique stretch of natural heritage. Their request is to retain the banyan and other trees and instead take up eccentric widening of the existing road. They believe that translocation of trees is not an option, as the giant iconic trees will not survive the trauma of being divested of their branches and root systems in order to be translocated. Nature Lovers of Hyderabad have been tirelessly working to save the trees since 2018, and have also filed a petition with the National Green Tribunal in Chennai.

The group hopes that with Hyderabad winning the ‘World Green City Award 2022’, protection of fully grown and mature trees will also become part of Haritha Haram's (Green Necklace) mandate, and that the banyans will become part of the necklace that won us the award.

— Sadhana Ramchander

REPORTS

“Cheppandi Bitte” is a new hybrid series launched by Goethe-Zentrum Hyderabad on 8 September 2022.

A beautiful combination of Telugu and German words, this series is about communication, speaking, and receiving the spoken word. It is a platform for thoughts that need to be talked about and to actively listen in. This is an effort by the institute to create spaces for themes that we otherwise gloss over. The act of listening beyond just hearing is active participation and meditative engagement with the subject.

We launched the series with Vidya Rao, a performer of thumri-dadra and ghazal. She has performed widely, lectured and conducted workshops, and composed and sung for the theatre, film, and dance. Launching the series with someone like Vidushi Vidya Rao was particularly very meaningful since hearing in her métier is as important as singing. The event saw around 30 people in the audience with 45 people watching on the GZHYD YouTube channel.

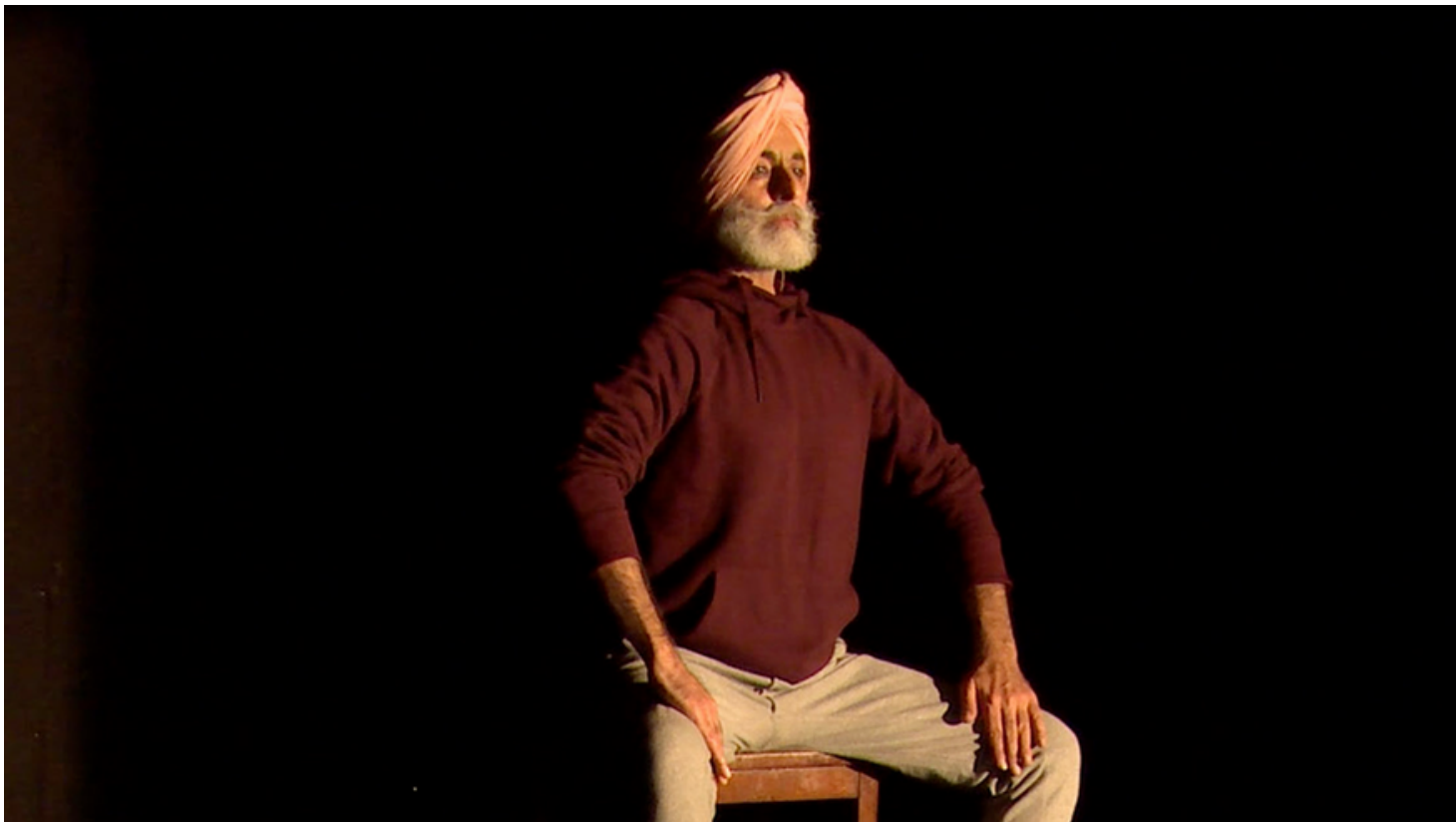
Ms. Vidya Rao spoke intensely about being present, being available, and being open to listening. As a performer, she addresses the relationship between the performer and the listener/viewer as integral. The connection and the relationship that is built between the performer and the audience or the speaker and listener or the reader and the author is so pure and magical that it is considered to be a force beyond scientific understanding or the laws of nature.

“I cannot listen until I care deeply and I cannot speak until I care deeply”. — Vidya Rao

— Amita Desai

Tanashah

A solo performance by Navtej Johar on the jail diaries of Bhagat Singh



A project of Goethe-Zentrum Hyderabad’s Freedom at 75 was a solo performance, Tanashah by Navtej Johar. It was a 3-day affair, with 2 performances on 23 and 24 September and a workshop on 25 September 2022. It was a sold-out event, and nothing less would have been justified for such a masterpiece. Around 220 people watched Tanashah over 2 days at Rangbhoomi Spaces, and 20+ people attended the workshop at Goethe-Zentrum Hyderabad.

With a standing ovation on the second day, Navtej left the audience speechless with his performance. His piece was particularly based on Bhagat Singh’s essay titled, “Why I am an Atheist”, which was written in 1930 while Singh was in the prison of Lahore Central Jail.

Navtej has chosen to use Carnatic Padam, and Bharatanatyam gestures along with Punjabi text, parallelly depicting his personal journey as the only male Punjabi Bharatnatyam dancer. Tanashah, which literally translates to “Dictator”, shows how Bhagat Singh was repressive when it comes to resistance against the British.

In the performance, both the narratives—the powerful ardor of a revolutionary and the unbridled *pukaar* or call of the love song—were textually dark, masculine, uncompromising, and almost heckling in nature and somatically interwoven in anticipation of a poised resolve within poetic consummation. The piece is so organically created that an audience member said, “This was so surreal, that I came to watch it twice and felt like I was watching a new piece again.”

Our partners, Rangbhoomi spaces, Vibrant Ford & Avasa Hotel came with us on this journey. Hyderabad is Navtej’s favourite audience and we hope to bring him back to his favourite city with yet another performance!

— Amita Desai

BOOK REVIEWS

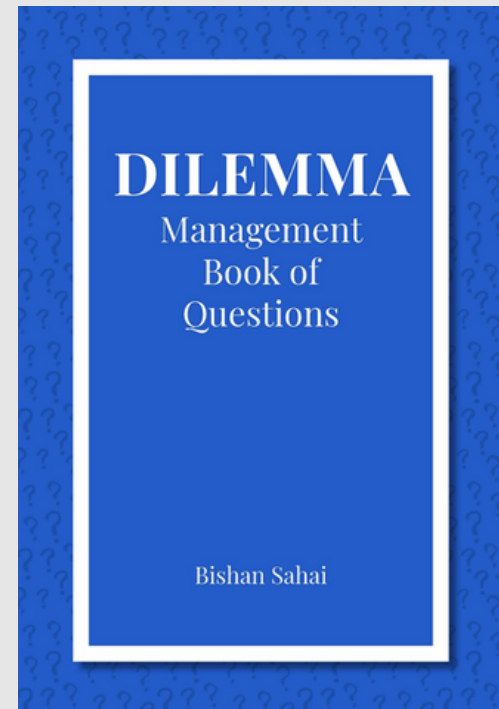
Dilemma: Management Book of Questions by **Bishan Sahai**. Academic Foundation and Institute of Public Enterprise, 72 pages, hardcover, Rs 995.

This slim edition, comprising 55 management dilemma situations, is exactly what the title suggests – a book of questions. No answers are given as they tend to vary with the context of the situation and one's own moral compass. The idea of the book is to get managers to give thought to possible situations and be better prepared to deal with them with considered and well-chosen alternatives, rather than deal with them as and when they occur. It is in the mode of Indian ethos of worldly teaching through stories, parables and puzzles, which provoke the listener/reader to think through possible answers. The book is kind of a primer for managerial grooming. The word used by the author is *dharma sankat* – a moral dilemma that managers often find themselves in contrarian situations.

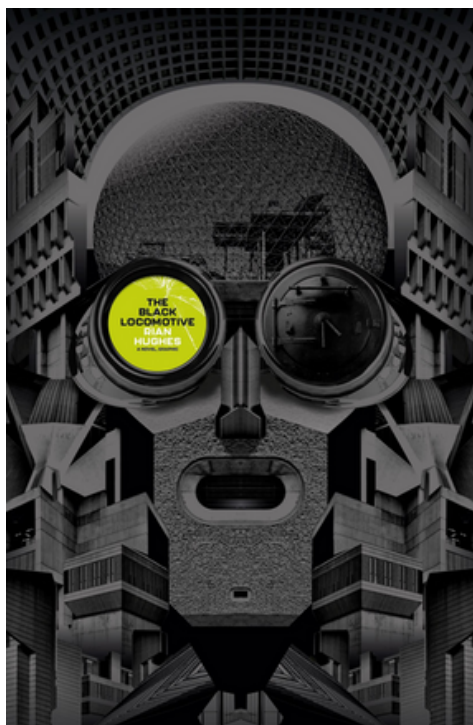
The 55 situations are drawn obviously from the author's management experience in various corporations, though it does include one or two famous case studies in marketing, for example the one on hair dye sales in rural India. Nevertheless, it is a useful primer for managers, especially for those who have not had case study based management education. The book is easy to read and understand. Krishan Kalra, in his foreword to the book rightly observes, "The book is indeed a mirror for keeping in constant scrutiny our personal value system, the very core of any good manager."

The book is produced neatly except for an avoidable spelling mistake in one of the titles.

This is the second book of Bishan Sahai. His first book *Our World: A Symphony of Drabbles by Three Generations* (2020) lists out stories with a twist in the tail in 100 words.



— Kinnera Murthy



The Black Locomotive by **Rian Hughes**. Picador, 400 pages, paperback, Rs 707.

This is an unusual book with elements of science fiction, but rooted in the urban space: in this case, London.

Work on a secret Crossrail tunnel linking Buckingham Palace to Westminster is brought to a grinding halt by a large metal obstacle. When the engineers break through the metal, they find a cavernous space stretching out under London. It appears to be a spaceship buried since the Neolithic period. What they find there could rewrite London's history.

Something emanating from this spaceship produces a total power outage in London, taking down all new technology. The internet, smartphones, as well as electric cars, buses and trains all stop working. Austin Arnold, the engineer heading the project, has to call on a secret society of steam train enthusiasts to bring things back to normal.

Although the story centres around a highly sophisticated spaceship, Hughes keeps it grounded in the real world. London is a character in its own right. Hughes draws attention to the various elements that constitute a city: not just its people, but materials such as cement, tiling, paving, etc. It makes you look closely at things you once took for granted.

Hughes is also a typographer and a graphic artist. His book is not just narrative: there are drawings, photographs, artwork and a variety of fonts designed by Hughes.

This is a love letter to London, and to old technologies. The question Hughes asks is: how fragile is our technologically advanced world? Will our dependence on technology make it difficult for us to do without it? This is a thought-provoking book. Hughes does an impressive job bringing together disparate elements to form an engaging narrative, and makes the unimaginable seem completely possible.

— Suroor Alikhan

FILM REVIEWS

Happening (2021)

About the time the debate about women's right to abortion was raging in the USA as Roe vs. Wade was struck down by the U. S. Supreme Court in June 2022 (it has since then been restored in several states), the movie *Happening*, sub-titled from French, was quietly released in many cities across the country, almost as if by timing. The film is based on French writer Annie Ernaux's semi-autobiographical novel about a young university student who discovers she is pregnant with a man she had a chance encounter with, and whose life plan does not include a baby, just yet. Depicting France in the 1960s when abortion was still criminal, the brilliantly directed (Audrey Diwan) and acted (Anamaria Vartolomei) movie follows her desperate efforts to find help at a time when she, or anyone assisting her, risked imprisonment. Her friends are shocked but helpless, and a sympathetic doctor warns her to simply "accept it". The moralising hatefulness and shaming from the rest, including an aged doctor who believes women have no business to decide on these matters, paints an effective picture of her predicament. The help that finally arrives places her in a sordid, dangerous life-threatening situation, a fate common to many women at that time. Not made for the squeamish at heart, the film tells a graphic and harrowing tale of a woman's struggle to reclaim her body and her destiny. In perspective, abortion was legalised in France in 1975, thanks to the efforts of Simone Veil, health minister and author of the eponymous law, and hundreds of French women from all walks of life who actively campaigned for their right (but that's a different story!)



Which brings us to Annie Ernaux, the acclaimed author of the novel *L'événement* that inspired the movie. Known for her searingly honest novels (translated into many languages) that bring out the life of the French working class, she combines fiction and autobiography, historic and individual experiences and writes on memory, body and sexuality. In a sort of poetic double triumph, the film bagged the Golden Lion at the 78th Venice International Film Festival on 6 September 2021 while Annie Ernaux received the Nobel Prize for Literature on 6 October 2022, a first for a French woman writer, "for the courage and clinical acuity with which she uncovers the roots, estrangements and collective restraints of personal memory". (Also, see the Literary News section in this issue.)

— Uma Damodar Sridhar

Ponniyin Selvan (2022)

Mani Ratnam's *Ponniyin Selvan* has been adapted from the popular Tamil literary novel of the same name written by Kalki Krishnamurthy. The film features Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, Chiyaan Vikram, Trisha, Karthi and Jayam Ravi in lead roles. It is a brilliant onscreen portrayal of a magnum opus novel set in the 10th century. This fictionalised version of a true story brings out the glory of ancient Tamil Nadu. An empire that extended well into far east Asia and spread over almost the entire South India



where art, literature, architecture, agriculture flourished and general well being of the people was of a high standard. The women of ancient Tamil Nadu – Kundavai, Nandini, Poonguzhali, Oomai Rani – are depicted as strong, intelligent and brave. Who said women's emancipation is a new thing?!

Mani Ratnam accomplishes the impossible task of condensing five volumes into two parts. Trisha, Jayaram, Karthi and Aishwarya Rai win hearts with their stunning screen presence and spot on acting. The casting is superb and appropriate with every actor excelling in their roles. Humour is sophisticated and apt. Art Director Thota Tharani is truly a wizard in his craft, and there is unbelievable perfection in the sets. Unlike many other period films that use vfx largely, in this film, the sets were erected and brilliantly organised. Normally if one has read the novel, the movie is a let down but Mani Ratnam does not disappoint. In spite of minor changes to the original story, it is a superb presentation.

Romance, history, spirituality, patriotism, treachery, political strategy, statesmanship, aesthetics, literature – so much has been packed into one film. Are there any negatives? Yes, the language could have been more chaste, and the finishing of some of the jewellery is not up to the mark. Otherwise full marks to this epic film.

– Seetha Anand Vaidyam

HLF ONLINE SESSIONS

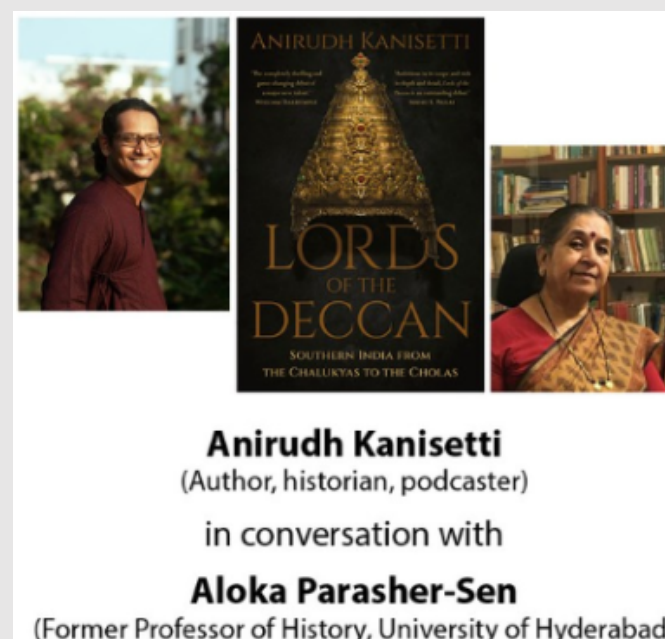
For updates on HLF online sessions, subscribe to HLF YouTube channel <youtube.com/c/hlf-India>

5 August 2022

Anirudh Kanisetti, author of *Lords of the Deccan: Southern India from Chalukyas to Cholas*, in conversation with **Aloka Parasher-Sen**, former Professor of History, University of Hyderabad.

Anirudh Kanisetti: "What is most striking to me about this period is that it defies these very binary ways we have of thinking about anything: gender relations, relations with the non-human world, art, or war. It's this world that simply transcends these simplistic ways of thinking. The more you think about it, the more intuitive it actually is, because in our own world we are so used to all these being intertwined and complex. For example, if you were to look at the cultural products of the USA, it is all driven by the army: how great the army is; the good guys protecting the world and all that. It is not surprising to see an echo of that in the medieval texts of the Deccan. The king's ability to reorder the world even if he is doing it only to loot his enemies. [But] it is always presented as this great and noble undertaking... Unlike today where the way we think of things is utilitarian, the role of the aesthetic and the arts for instance, for the medieval kings it was a matter of great prestige to be able to fund poets."

Catch the complete conversation at: https://youtu.be/Cu3e_hRGw1o



Anirudh Kanisetti
(Author, historian, podcaster)

in conversation with

Aloka Parasher-Sen
(Former Professor of History, University of Hyderabad)

"Women in the City"

Anju Makhija

(Award-winning poet, playwright and translator)

in conversation with

Uma Narain and Kanika Dang

Moderator: **Rochelle Potkar**



Uma Narain
Fulbright Fellow
Founder Dean
School of Liberal Arts
NMIMS University
Mumbai

Anju Makhija
Author: *Mumbai Traps*
Collected Plays

Kanika Dang
Actor, National School of
Drama, worked in theatre,
films, TV serials, commercials

Rochelle Potkar
Poet | Screenwriter
Author of *Bombay Hangovers*

12 August 2022

Anju Makhija, author of *Mumbai Traps: Collected Plays*, **Uma Narain**, Professor of Literature & Drama, S. P. Jain Institute of Management & Research, Mumbai, and theatre and film personality **Kanika Dang**, in conversation with **Rochelle Potkar**, author of *Bombay Hangovers*.

Uma Narain: "Now these plays are Mumbai traps. Mumbai which encourages vaulting ambition, and those ambitions are sometimes fulfilled. Mumbai is about space, home. The flat is a concept which is a geographical signifier of individual and social identity, where you live. And the three bedroom flat means you've arrived there.... Anju has introduced a lawyer friend who says that space in Mumbai can be appropriated, can be negotiated, so space is a concept of negotiation in Mumbai and that has been beautifully brought out. This is what Virginia Woolf calls the "liminal space", by liminal she means you are neither here nor there.... If opportunism is the name of the game in Mumbai then guile is part of opportunism. Guile is not a function of being a rural or metropolitan space that guile is something opportunism is made of so I really admire the layering in this play."

function of being a rural or metropolitan space that guile is something opportunism is made of so I really admire the layering in this play."

Anju Makhija: "When you talk of women in the city, does their life actually improve when they come? They get ambitious, they lie, they steal, they want to get money any old way, any new way, anyway. But does their life improve? Now what I read was very interesting. Women in the city are 40 percent less mentally stable than women in rural areas. Now the question is, we know that stability is not a strong thing in places like Mumbai. You may try to survive, it's not easy though. You can see from the health satisfaction, the diabetes, the blood pressure, the hospitals are full. So what really does this city life offer these women?"

Kanika Dang: "Actually it's very difficult for women. When we talk about equality of women outside, they're getting positions, they're getting these decision-making jobs but within the family the domestic issues still remain the same. So what kind of equality are we getting in the 75th year of Independence? The wages are less and when it comes to when a female working outside she still has to do the household chores she cannot escape those."

Catch the complete conversation at: <https://youtu.be/ZvHT02jz9c0>

4 September 2022

Mahuya Bandyopadhyay and **Rimple Mehta**, editors of *Women Incarcerated: Narratives from India*, in conversation with **Kalpana Kannabiran**, author of *Law, Justice and Human Rights in India*.

Mahuya Bandyopadhyay: "All the chapters reflect some sense of ethical loneliness (...) it signifies the many ethical breaches on our part, those who have the ability to listen and those who hold that kind of power of the potentialities of other lives. So, we are in a sense entrusted with this act of listening and the responsibility lies on us to listen and to hear. The ethical lapse occurs when we choose not to hear or when we hear and repress what is actually being said when we hear and redirect the narrative or we hear through the lens and framework of our own needs, desires, aspirations, disciplines, ideologies. It's everyone's responsibility to listen intently to those accounts of injustice (...) so the mending and healing process then begins with the act of hearing and this obligation to listen is the essence of the art."



Mahuya Bandyopadhyay
(Social Anthropologist and Professor, IIT, Delhi)

and

Rimple Mehta
(Associate Dean and Lecturer at the School of Social Sciences, Western Sydney University)

in conversation with

Kalpana Kannabiran
(Distinguished Professor, Council for Social Development, New Delhi)

Rimple Mehta: "How we see bodies within institutions, especially bodies which are in transition or bodies which do not fit into gender binaries – menstruating bodies, pregnant bodies, disabled bodies, Dalit bodies, Muslim bodies, Tribal bodies, how are we seeing all of these different bodies within that space. It is absolutely imperative that we understand the experiences of these different bodies and the gender-based violence that is inflicted on them based on their different intersecting identities. I think this will only happen when we dismantle our understanding of purity and impurity, safety and security because these are the ideas based on which we justify the idea of punishment on some bodies. As a society we've come to an agreement that these are some bodies that can be kept in abeyance and they can be imprisoned, so I think if you look at it more broadly it is really the idea of reproductive and sexual justice that need to be looked at together to understand the experiences of these diverse bodies within prison and the kind of impact that it has on their life."

Catch the complete conversation at: <https://youtu.be/chTegkW2OQs>

7 October 2022

Gurjit Singh, author of *The Harambee Factor: India-Africa Economic and Development Partnership*, in conversation with political economist and public policy analyst **Parakala Prabhakar**.



Gurjit Singh

(Former Ambassador and Hon. Professor, IIT Indore)

in conversation with

Parakala Prabhakar

(Political Economist and Public Policy Analyst)

Gurjit Singh: "The book essentially came out of my desire to present the Indian point of view on Africa, which I find is neglected in the 21st century. ... What India was doing in Africa is not well-known. ... There was a very big gap of knowledge so I decided to fill that gap because I had the advantage of having served in Africa, in the ministry, as ambassador, as a junior officer. ... There is the education component where 25,000 to 30,000 students come to India. The interesting part is that we provide hardly 1,000 to 2,000 scholarships. All the others come on their own. ... They find Indian education good and affordable. ... Now Indians have started setting up educational institutions in Africa, not only IT training centres, but also medical and nursing colleges. ... There is also the ITEC (Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation) programme which brought people to India. ... Through the two Africa Summits we tried to create capacity in Africa so that people could be trained there without bringing them to India so the numbers would be much bigger."

Catch the complete conversation at: <https://youtu.be/5d5kZFJnRIQ>



LITERARY NEWS

Sahitya Akademi Awards 2021. (Our [May-July 2022](#) issue lists the awardees for the other 20 languages.)

Language	Title and Genre	Name of the Author
Gujarati	Gandhmanjusha (Poetry)	Yagnesh Dave
Maithili	Pangu (Novel)	Jagdish Prasad Mandal
Manipuri	Manipurida Punshi Warigee Sahitya (Criticism on Biographical Literature)	Thokchom Ibohanbi Singh
Urdu	Taza Hawa Ki Tabishen (Poetry)	Chander Bhan Khayal

Other Sahitya Akademi Awards listed on the Akademi website are as follows:

Sahitya Akademi Translation Prizes 2021: https://www.sahitya-akademi.gov.in/pdf/Pressrelease_TP-2021.pdf

Yuva Puraskar (Young Writers' Prize) 2022: https://www.sahitya-akademi.gov.in/pdf/Pressrelease_YP-2022.pdf

Bal Sahitya Puraskar (Children's Literature Prize) 2022: https://www.sahitya-akademi.gov.in/pdf/Pressrelease_BSP-2022.pdf

Syam Sudhakar, a bilingual poet who writes in English and Malayalam, won the 2022 **Srinivas Rayaprol Poetry Prize** for his "epic vision" and the way he "stacks and links images effortlessly, restoring our awareness of the world as a creative project". <https://www.srinivasrayaprol.in/syam-sudhakar-bilingual-poet-wins-the-srinivas-rayaprol-poetry-prize-2022/>

The 2022 **Nobel Prize for Literature** went to **Annie Ernaux**. "Her work is uncompromising and written in plain language, scraped clean. And when she with great courage and clinical acuity reveals the agony of the experience of class, describing shame, humiliation, jealousy or inability to see who you are, she has achieved something admirable and enduring." See <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/2022/bio-bibliography/> (Also, see the Film Reviews section earlier in this issue.)

Shehan Karunatilaka won the 2022 **Booker Prize** for his novel *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida*, "a searing, mordantly funny satire set amidst the murderous mayhem of a Sri Lanka beset by civil war": <https://thebookerprizes.com/the-booker-library/books/the-seven-moons-of-maali-almeida>

NEW PUBLICATIONS

The Last Heroes: Foot Soldiers of Indian Freedom by **P. Sainath**. Penguin, 256 pages, paperback, Rs 539.

India's fight for freedom was a mass struggle involving many ordinary people: Adivasis, Dalits, OBCs, Brahmins, Muslims, and Hindus. Also, women, men, and even young children. They include atheists and believers, Leftists, Gandhians and Ambedkar admirers who never went on to be ministers, governors, presidents, or hold high public office. This is their story.

Bibi's Room: Hyderabad Women and Twentieth-Century Urdu Prose by **Nazia Akhtar**. Orient Blackswan, 432 pages, paperback, Rs 846.

This book studies the lives and work of three women writers from Hyderabad who wrote in Urdu: Zeenath Sajida, Najma Nikhat, and Jeelani Bano. It contains representative translations; short, nuanced biographies; and critical analyses of their oeuvres—all framed against twentieth-century Hyderabad history, politics, culture, and society. The three writers showcased here offer rich portrayals of Hyderabad urban culture as well as critiques of gender and patriarchy.

OBITUARY

On 24 August 2022, the HLF family lost a precious member, **Radhika Rajamani**. She was 59.

An edited excerpt from **Adhiraj Parthasarthy**'s eulogy to Radhika Rajamani:

Dr Rajamani who was one of the coolest people I knew in Hyderabad. She had done her PhD in classical Sangam Tamil and South Indian history, and seemed to have read everything on the subject.

Finding anyone who had heard of Sangam literature anywhere is tough, but I had never met anyone who had actually read it in the original Classical Tamil. Her memory was prodigious; she opened up a whole new unexplored world of culture to me.

She used to tell me that she knew nothing about Tamil literature growing up, and one day in school she heard her teacher mention the Tamil epic, *Silapadhikaram* in her history textbook. She told her father about it, but she mispronounced the name and her father laughed and said, "Since you don't even know how to pronounce it, now you have to read it." And that began a lifelong interest in ancient Tamil literature.

Radhika Rajamani introduced me to so many books. I had never really read any of the Tamil classics, or the Azhwar poets, or Sangam texts until she introduced me to them. I remember how animated she would get talking about some obscure text like *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*, and she insisted in a school-teacher like fashion that I read scholars like Friedhelm Hardy, a long forgotten scholar of Tamil Vaishnavism.

It's very difficult to find someone with such a tremendous grasp of history and literature anywhere – especially small town Hyderabad. I will always remember all the things she taught me about my own culture.

Dr Rajamani and I bonded in the context of South Indian history and literature etc, so most of the above was in reference to that. There were several other sides to Dr Rajamani – like the work she did for LEPR. She once took me to the Nallakunta Fever Hospital Leprosy Center to show me how people with leprosy were ostracised. This was an issue she was quite passionate about. Her interests included modern day Telangana art.

She told me once that when she lived in Delhi she used to present the silk saree that the Mahalaxmi Utsav Murti at Vaikuntanathji Temple on Vedanta Deshika Marg was dressed up with on festive occasions.

I learnt today that she passed away yesterday. I had not seen her in two years because she was scared of stepping out because of Covid. It really is the end of an era.

Now every time I visit that temple in Delhi and see Mahalaxmi dressed up, I will remember Radhika Rajamani and the world she introduced me to.



Source: LEPR Facebook page

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Friends

Thank you for your overwhelming response to our call for submissions! We could not reply to you individually. But rest assured that every submission will get due attention, and will be considered for publication in future issues.

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).
- Reports on literary and cultural events in and around Hyderabad (in not more than 250 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 (Only for new submissions. Those who have already sent, NEED NOT resend).

- All submissions should be sent only as MS-Word documents. If you are worried 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>.