

## HLF KHABAR

Quarterly Newsletter

**VOL II, NO 4, MARCH - MAY 2023**

### Inside the Issue

#### Kaavyadhaara

- Ayyappa Paniker
- Mani Rao
- Kavita Yarlagadda
- Malini Gopalakrishnan
- Shriyanshi Shukla
- Vaishnavi

#### Meet My Book

- Nandini Sengupta
- Naveen Kishore
- Sudeep Sen
- Sukruta Paul Kumar
- Usha Raman

#### Reports

- Anvikshiki Publishers

#### Humara Hyderabad

- Raymond's Tomb

#### New Initiatives

- Chaduvu
- Navarasa: The Theatre Group

#### Book Reviews

- *The Living Air: The Pleasures of Birds and Bird Watching*
- *Everything That Light Touches*

#### Film/Podcast Reviews

- *Paravai Kootil Vaazhum Maangal*
- *Project Spark Podcast*

#### HLF Online Sessions

- *The Blue Women* by Anukrti Upadhyay
- *Shalimar* by Davina Quinlivan
- *Chandausi Junction* by Preeti and Shankar Sahay

#### New Publications

- *Abid Hasan Safrani: Netaji's Comrade-in-Arms*
- *All Stray Dogs Go to Heaven*
- *Banned & Censored: What the British Didn't Want Us to Read*
- *Burning Pyres, Mass Graves and a State That Failed Its People: India's Covid Tragedy*
- *Oblivion and Other Stories*

#### Literary News

- Sahitya Akademi Awards 2022
- International Booker Prize 2023

#### Forthcoming Events

- 21 June 2023: World Music Day
- 24 June 2023: Meet the Author Session

#### Submission Guidelines

#### 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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**Khabar Artwork:** Poosapati Parameshwar Raju  
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## നരസിംഹം അയ്യപ്പപ്പണിക്കർ

അച്ഛനിൽനിന്നെന്നെ രക്ഷിക്ക നീ മഹാ  
 വിഷ്ണോ നിമിഷം കളയാതെ യെന്നൊന്നു  
 മർത്ഥിച്ചതില്ല പ്രഹ്ലാദൻ വെറും ശുദ്ധവിശ്വാസ  
 ശക്തിതൻ കണ്ണുകമിട്ടവൻ  
 രക്ഷപ്പെടുവാനൊളിച്ചോടിയില്ലവൻ  
 കത്തുന്ന കണ്ണാൽ പുരികം കരിക്കുന്ന  
 മട്ടു പടർന്നാളിനിൽക്കും കശിപുവിൻ  
 ധിക്കാരജ്യംഭിതക്രോധം സുശീതള  
 ഭക്തിയാലുതിക്കെടുത്തും മകനുടേ-  
 യിച്ചപോലെത്തി നരസിംഹമെങ്കിലും  
 ഇത്തിരി മാത്രയ്ക്ക് താമസമുണ്ടാകി-  
 ലൊക്കെ നശിച്ചെന്നെയെന്നോർത്തൊരീശ്വരൻ  
 പാലാഴി മങ്കയെത്തളളിമാറ്റി, തന്ററ  
 കാലിൽ ഒട്ടിപ്പിടിച്ചെത്തുന്ന വ്യാമോഹ-  
 ഭക്തരെ കാലുകൂടത്തു തെറുപ്പിച്ചു  
 ചിക്കെന്നു തൂണിനകത്തു കടന്നു വാൾ  
 വെട്ടുന്ന മാത്രയിൽ തൂണുപിളർന്നു തൻ  
 ഭക്തനെ രക്ഷിക്കുവാൻ ഭഗവാനുള്ള  
 വെപ്രാളമെന്തെന്നറിഞ്ഞാൽ നിരാശ തൻ  
 ഗർത്തത്തിൽ നിന്നും വിടുതി ലഭിക്കുമ-  
 ഗ്രമാം പാപം വിരചിച്ച ദേവനും.  
 ഏതു തൂണേതു തുരുമ്പെന്നറിയില്ല  
 രാവോ പകലോ പഴുതെന്നറിയില്ല  
 വീട്ടിനകത്തോ പുറത്തൊന്നറിയില്ല  
 വിണ്ണിലോ മണ്ണിലോ എന്നുമറിയില്ല  
 വാളോ പരിചയോ കൊണ്ടെന്നറിയില്ല.  
 വെട്ടിയോ കുത്തിയോ എന്നൊട്ടറിയില്ല  
 മർത്തനോ ദൈവമോ എന്നുമറിയില്ല.  
 മൃത്യുവോ മോക്ഷമോ വേണ്ടതറിയില്ല  
 എന്തറിയില്ലെന്നു പോലുമറിയില്ല  
 കല്പിതമെന്തെന്നറിയാതറിയാതെ  
 കല്പങ്ങളിങ്ങനെ പോകുമ്പോഴോരോന്നു  
 കല്പിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു ദൈവവും ശത്രുവും.  
 ഭക്തനിതൊന്നുമറിയേണ്ടറിയുവോൻ  
 ഭക്തനല്ലുരാജനുമരണമേ തേടുവാൻ  
 എന്നെ ഭജിക്കുവിനെന്നെ ഭജിക്കുവിൻ  
 എന്നിലുടല്ലാതെ മുക്തിയില്ലോർക്കുവിൻ  
 എന്നു പ്രചാരപ്രഭാഷണം ചെയ്യുവാൻ  
 അല്ലീശ്വരനെന്നറിയുന്നവൻ ഭക്തൻ  
 താൻ താനനുഷ്ഠിക്കുവാനുള്ള ധർമ്മങ്ങൾ  
 താനൊഴിച്ചാർക്കും കൊടുക്കുവാൻ വെമ്പാതെ  
 മറ്റുള്ളവരുടെ ധർമ്മം കവർന്നെടു-  
 ത്തുഗ്രഹണൈരാശൃത്തിലേക്കു വഴുതാതെ  
 ശാന്തരസത്തിൽ നിർവേദാത്മകനായി  
 ഭ്രാന്തികൂടാതെ കഴിയുന്നവൻ ഭൻ  
 അങ്ങനെയുള്ളൊരു ഭക്തനെക്കിട്ടുവാൻ  
 ബ്രഹ്മശിവാദികൾ പ്രാർത്ഥിച്ചു കേഴുന്നു  
 എന്നതുകൊണ്ടു പ്രഹ്ലാദനാഹ്ലാദമായ്  
 എന്നതിനാൽ ഭഗവാനുമാഹ്ലാദമായ്  
 അമ്പലംതോറും വഴിപാടുകൾ നേർന്നു  
 "തമ്പുരാണെൻ്റെ കാര്യം കൂടെ നോക്കണ-  
 മെന്നു പറയാതറിയിുന്നവൻ ദേവ  
 നല്ലെന്നു ഭക്തർക്കറിവുള്ളതല്ലയോ.  
 ഇങ്ങനെയൊക്കെപ്പറഞ്ഞിരിക്കുന്നതി  
 നുള്ളിൽ പൊടുന്നനെ പൊട്ടുന്നു തൂണുകൾ  
 ആഞ്ഞുവീശുന്നു വാൾ സാക്ഷാൽ ഹിരണ്യന-  
 ത്യാഹ്ലാദമോ "ടെവിടെ നിൻ്റെ വിഷ്ണുവെ"-  
 നാർത്തലവുന്നതു കണ്ടുനിൽക്കും മറ്റു  
 തൂണുകൾ, ഭിത്തികൾ, വൃക്ഷങ്ങളൊക്കെയും  
 പൊട്ടിത്തരികുന്നു രുഷ്ടൻ ഹിരണ്യനും  
 എങ്ങുമേ കാണുന്നതില്ല ഭഗവാനെ

## Narasimha Ayyappa Paniker (Translated from Malayalam by Chitra Panikkar)

No, Prahlada didn't plead:  
 "Save me from my father, O Vishnu!  
 Please, be fast, don't lose time!"  
 Convinced of the strength of faith,  
 He didn't seek to hide or escape,  
 Though the man-lion descended  
 Exactly as the son desired him to—  
 The son with the cool breeze of  
 His devotion blew out the wrath  
 Of Kashipu, his father, who stood  
 There is such enflamed fury, with  
 Fiery sparks in his eyes, as could  
 Burn down his own eye-brows.

Far away thinking a moment's delay  
 Might cause a good deal of disaster,  
 The Lord pushed away his Queen,  
 Born of the sea of milk, kicked away  
 The greedy devotees glued to his feet,  
 In a trice got himself into the pillar,  
 So that when it was broken, he could  
 Emerge to save his devotee dear.  
 The Lord's restless anxiety to get this done,  
 Put at rest even the best-sinned of souls.

What pillar, what straw? What is better,  
 Day or night? Whether inside the house  
 Or outside? Whether on earth or in heaven?  
 With sword or shield? With a cut or a stab?  
 Whether as god or man? Death or  
 redemption,  
 Not knowing what is destined, with every  
 Passing era, what is decided by God or his  
 Foe.

The devout never worry; he who worries  
 Is no devotee, but a seeker of gains.  
 "Worship me, sing my praises;  
 Redemption comes only through me,"  
 No God flaunts thus, and the devotee knows"  
 Whatever his assigned task, he isn't  
 Eager to pass it on to another,  
 He doesn't rob another of his duty;

Nor does he fall into utter confusion,  
 But stays serene and uninvolved.  
 For procuring such a devotee, Brahma,  
 Shiva and all gods offer tearful prayers.  
 Hence, Prahlada here was glad, so  
 Was his Lord too pleased. God is he,  
 Who is not offered bribes in temples,  
 But he who knows not without being told,  
 "O Lord, please look after my affairs too,"  
 Is no God at all, and the devotees know this  
 well.

Amidst such musings, crack open the pillars;  
 Hiranya in a stormy rage, roars in thunderous  
 Laughter, "Where, where is your Vishnu?"  
 While the rest of the pillars, walls, trees  
 Stand witness, the ferocious Hiranya swirls  
 His sword—no God to be seen anywhere  
 around—

എന്നോർത്തു സന്തുഷ്ടനായ ഹിരണ്യനെ പിന്നിൽ നിന്നാരോ പിടിച്ചു പൊക്കുന്നവൻ തന്നെ മടിയിൽ കിടത്തി ലാളിക്കുന്നു പിന്നെ നഖങ്ങളാൽ മാറു പിളർക്കുന്നു എന്തു സുഖം മുക്തിയിങ്ങനെയോ എന്നു ശങ്കിച്ചുപോയി ഹിരണ്യകുശിപുവും. രാക്ഷസരോടിത്ര കാരുണ്യമെന്തിനെ-ന്നാക്ഷേപമായി സ്ഥിരം ഭക്തരൊക്കെയും സന്ധ്യവന്നെത്തി നരനും മൃഗവുമല്ലെന്തൊരു സത്യമെന്നോർക്കുന്നു നാട്ടുകാർ വാതിൽപ്പടിമേലലസമിരുന്നു കൊണ്ടേതും ധിറുതി കാട്ടാതെ സടകളെ മാടി വകഞ്ഞൊതുക്കി ദംഷ്ട്രകൾ കോർത്ത സ്നേഹസുസ്ഥേരം പൊഴിച്ചുമടിയിലെ രാക്ഷസബിജത്തെയേറ്റവും കാരുണ്യ-വാത്സല്യഭാവത്തിൽ നോക്കിയിടം കണ്ണാൽ ഭക്തനായിന്ന് പ്രഹ്ലാദനെ നോക്കി വി-ഭക്തമാക്കി ഹിരണ്യൻ പ്രാപഞ്ചികം.

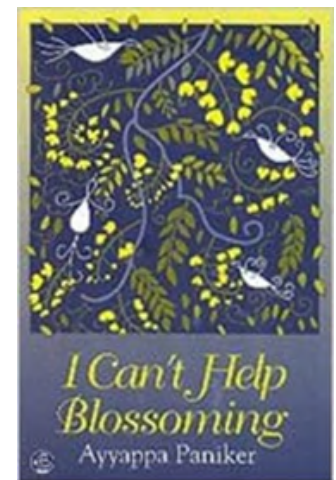
ദൈവത്തിനല്ലീ നവരസ വൈചിത്ര്യം? ദിവ്യത്വമില്ലാനരനേകമേ രസം. ആരീയുന്നു ഹിരണ്യനും ഭക്തനാ-ണാരിയാത്തവർ -ദേവനോ ഭക്തനോ?

Suddenly, the exultant Hiranya is quietly lifted  
From behind, the same hands lay him down  
On a cosy lap, split open his chest with claws,  
While Hiranya wonders, "Alas! Such pleasure:  
Is this my redemption?" At this the everyday  
Devotee grumbles, "Why be so kind to the  
demon?"  
But as dusk descended, folks around wondered,  
"What is this creature, neither lion nor man?"  
The lion-man seats himself poised on the  
threshold,  
Relaxed and at ease, combing his lovely mien,  
Smiling sweetly with his fangs, caressing with  
love  
And kindness the demon seed on his lap,  
His left eye turned towards his devotee,  
Prahlada:  
Thus was Hiranya's earthly mould torn apart.

All the nine rasas dwell in the Lord, but for man  
Without divinity there is only one; who knows.  
Hiranya too may be a devotee? He who doesn't  
Know this—could he be either God or devotee?

**Ayyappa Paniker** (1930-2006) was a noted poet, literary critic, translator, and scholar. He took his MA and PhD from the University of Indiana, USA, and did his doctoral research at Yale and Harvard Universities. Considered one of the pioneers of modernism in Malayalam poetry, he has published more than 25 books and received numerous awards including the Sahitya Akademi award for poetry. He was also the Chief Editor of the Indian Literary Encyclopaedia published by the Sahitya Akademi. The current poem is from his collection *I Can't Help Blossoming* (2002).

The translator **Chitra Panikkar** is a professor of English at Bangalore University.



**Postcard from India  
Mani Rao**

Greetings from our penthouse terrace  
with a view of the mountains and temple.

When you visit we'll sit in the hammocks  
and sip a fresh infusion of Tulsi  
while temple-speakers blow us mantras.

Translucent roofing lets in the sun  
for the plants, but we have fans  
and can move inside into AC.

Everything is now available here,  
thanks to online shopping we are spared  
exposure to pushy crowds and

bad handling practices. We have it all.  
Pressure washer, patio scrubber, herbal  
insecticides. Always on the lookout for more

efficient masks. No clothes dryer though.  
As I said, there is the sun.  
We had to train the staff a bunch.

Used washcloths to a separate section of the clothesline.  
Buckets used for chemicals marked with hashtags.  
Fresh mop-water from room to room.

First thing in the morning, our driver wipes  
the front gate with bleach. "All-rounder", he  
even cleans fans if we ask him to.

We taught our cook how to make pasta.  
How sauté does not mean fry.  
(I discreetly inspect her nails).

It's hot. My heels are cracked, but  
cold-pressed coconut oil soothes.  
I wear my kung-fu shoes in the house.

It's hot. Too dusty to go walking  
and always too much trash so I don't.  
I can no longer sit cross-legged to meditate.

My dear, I close my eyes and recall  
how much you wanted to do service  
in the slums of Bombay.

## Not for Sale Mani Rao

Our front door faces South.

Not in Agni's corner but  
we cook wonders

in our kitchen  
Northwest.

All beds face North  
and yet we sleep deep

and wake up bright.

She watches.  
She is all directions.

In our house of the omnipresent  
we are more than vastu compliant.

## Some of What I Learned from Books Mani Rao

Give books away before they gather mold.  
Will I be lucky or live to be old?

So you were fooled by the cover.  
You're the fool and it's also over.

Not all great poets are renown.  
Oh the snoring when you sleep on your own.

## This Week's Mosquito Mani Rao

Monday when you buzzed my skin was warm.

Tuesday, you landed. I blew you off, you flew.  
Go chew thread, you one-week wonder.  
Like Sherlock I flashed back after your act. The soft  
landing on a hair, how your lightning proboscis  
siphoned tank-full before I  
thundered.

Bloody Wednesday. You lurched, we locked  
eyes mid-air.

Thursday you rode, rode on my fuel.  
Sipped nectar, surveyed water.

Friday I contemplated on give and get  
in forgive and forget. Did you drop eggs?

What was the Saturday visit about—  
Blotchy, frontal, pensive

Up you rose and toppled  
into the open-jaw trashcan.

As duly noted, Sunday.

\*The poems featured here are published first in  
*HLF Khabar*.

**Mani Rao's** book *Living Mantra: Mantra, Deities and Visionary Experience Today* (2019) was based on research into contemporary tantra sadhana in Andhra-Telangana. Her poem translation of "Saundarya Lahari" was published in 2022, and a new edition of her translation of the Bhagavad Gita will be released in late 2023. She has a PhD in religious studies from Duke University, and an MFA in creative writing from Univ of Nevada, Las Vegas.

## The Bench Kavitha Yarlagadda

I watch children play around me,  
run towards me,  
jump all over and under me, play peek-a-boo.  
I see people walk or jog along,  
and gladly help them rest their sore muscles.  
I welcome the good old men and women, who walk a bit,  
and come seeking my comfort to chat a bit.  
I then witness the young couples,  
who make my heart rate soar with their antics.  
There's never a lonely moment for me with so many around.  
But I can call it a day only after my  
trusted friend, the homeless man, comes home to me.

— **Kavitha Yarlagadda** is an independent journalist based in Hyderabad

## Icarus Malini Gopalakrishnan

Maybe we are all born fools,  
Flying, wax-winged, to meet the sun  
Betting our bottom dollar on a hopelessly bad hand  
Waiting to get home long after the last train has come and gone  
Looking for magic in places that smell of stale smoke and lost hope  
Gathering clouds of dreams in our arms; trying to hold watery promises in our hands  
Believing each time, as if for the first time, that there is a chance we will make it through.

— **Malini Gopalakrishnan** works as an editor with a Hyderabad-based publishing firm.

## Of Poets and Love Shriyanshi Shukla

You arrive  
Like a misfit meter  
A misconstrued metaphor  
A forced simile  
Enjambéd between unrequited emotions.

You stay  
Like a glaring typo  
Unrhythmic alliteration  
Your existence remains  
A synecdoche of  
My regrets.

You leave  
With unexplored ellipses  
A blank verse  
A dangling modifier  
A vain rhetoric.

— **Shriyanshi Shukla** currently works as a  
Communications and Content Strategist.

## A Butterfly's Tear Vaishnavi

I once saw a butterfly cry,  
drop the most beautiful tear.  
Then I saw it disappear  
into the leaves of a bougainvillea.  
The teardrop rested on a leaf  
while I looked into it to see  
the world through a new lens  
perhaps, a better one.

— **Vaishnavi** recently cleared her 12th  
board exams.

## MEET MY BOOK



Consort, queen, goddess – Rani Durgawati's story would have been remarkable in any age. That she lived, loved and ruled in 16th century India makes her story even more incredible. A Rajput princess, she eloped and married a tribal Gond prince. After her husband's death, she neutralized a palace coup and ruled so well that she is worshipped as a goddess to this day. She fought off more than 50 skirmishes, finally losing only to the Mughal general Asaf Khan. Although she lived nearly 450 years ago, Veerangana Durgawati seems as modern in her choices as any 21st-century woman. That she was reduced to a footnote in our history is a travesty. *Rani Durgawati: The Forgotten Life of a Warrior Queen* is my attempt to retell her story in narrative nonfiction format. Why? Because her voice, like so many other feminine voices in our history, has been silenced for too long. It's time she was heard, for she deserves nothing less.

— **Nandini Sengupta**

My book *Mother Muse Quintet* is a book of memory, imagination, longing, death, and life. Memory, for me, is like a set of veils surrounded by an ever-present fog. Lifting, settling, allowing itself to be 'unveiled'. Multiple generations who appear as storytellers, companions, mysterious versions of the self and, poignantly, as Mother Muse — both birth mother and mother tongue. I write. Every day. And I dream. Every waking moment of this 'dreaming' turns into writing. A language that is both vulnerable and intuitive. I wrote this set of poems for an older sister who was always elsewhere. After my mother's descent into a fog and her eventual passing. To both share memories and embrace the grieving and the loss.

— **Naveen Kishore**

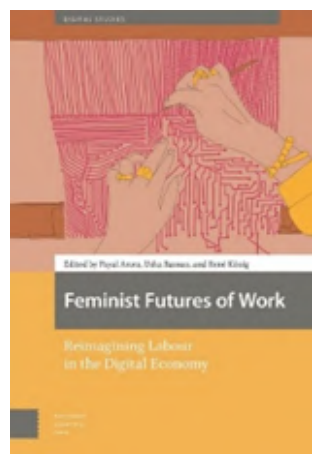


My book *Red* is about South Africa — the socio-paleo geological highveld landscape of the 'Cradle of Humankind.' This UNESCO Heritage site, which occupies 180 square miles, contains a complex system of limestone caves, believed to be the home of the world's largest human ancestral remains anywhere in the world. *Red* is about the landscape of the Nirox Sculpture Park and its environs — simultaneously wild and tamed. *Red* is equally about India and the World — the borderless land, skies, and oceans that connect us. It is about the secrets of 'dolomite' and 'my intimate skies,' the community of artists (present and absent) engaging through works of ekphrasis. *Red* is about politics of colour, language, and body. *Red* is an extension of my previous book, *Anthropocene* — a wider and deeper mediation and man and nature.

— **Sudeep Sen**

I am delighted to share my book, *Salt and Pepper*. It is a collection of selected poems that grow like meditations on existence, nature, life experiences and memories of my time in Kenya. The poems, as the reviewer puts it, are “luminous,” “densely textured,” and dwell on a deeper understanding of the self and its complex functions in the human world. My poems are layered, fluid and carry words without the burden of meaning. I leave my verse, open, untied — a field for readers to play and interpret. Each poem is a varied manifestation of the common yet necessary shades of salt and pepper.

— Sukrita Paul Kumar



One of the big concerns in recent years has been the declining participation of women in the Indian labour force, despite rising levels of education and new forms of employment, including gig work, becoming available. This volume of essays in *Feminist Futures of Work: Reimagining Labour in the Digital Economy*, resulting from a 3-year project (<https://femlab.co>) funded by the International Development Research Council of Canada, explores the future(s) of women’s work in an increasingly technologized world. Edited by Payal Arora, Usha Raman and Rene Konig, the essays in this Open Access book published by Amsterdam University Press come from academics, activists, policy analysts, designers, and tech entrepreneurs, many drawing from the lived experiences of women in different kinds of informal work. The book can be downloaded in full or as individual chapters, from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/jj.2711713>

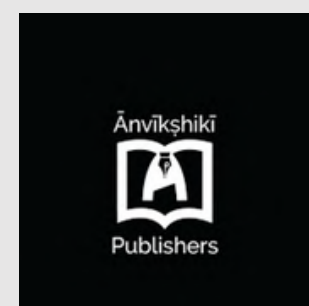
— Usha Raman

## REPORTS

### Anvikshiki Publishers

Anvikshiki, an independent publishing house dedicated to reviving Telugu literature, recently celebrated its fourth anniversary. Founded by Venkat Siddareddy, Mahy Bezawada, Vandana Bandaru, and Bala Reddy, Anvikshiki has made remarkable strides in promoting emerging Telugu writers. The publishing house's efforts have resulted in over 50 new authors being encouraged to write, a feat that seemed improbable before Anvikshiki's inception. Despite the challenging landscape, where selling 300 copies of a Telugu book is difficult, Anvikshiki has defied the odds by publishing over 100 books in the past four years. Furthermore, many of their publications have reached the impressive milestone of reaching third and fourth editions. Anvikshiki's success has breathed new life into Telugu literature and given a platform to previously untapped talent.

— Venkat Siddareddy



## HUMARA HYDERABAD



Pic by Jhilam Chattaraj

**Raymond's Tomb**, 9G78+W34, Asmangadh Road, LIC Colony, New Malakpet, Hyderabad 500 059

**Raymond's Tomb** is a black granite tombstone, conical in shape, about seven meters high with the initials JR on it. The pavilion was built by the Nizam. The tomb is located near the Asman Garh Palace on top of a hillock at Moosa Ram Bagh, Malakpet. In 2022, the tomb received a facelift. It is now surrounded by gardens, benches, and a spectacular aerial view of the city. Monsieur Michel Joachim Marie Raymond who lived in Hyderabad during the reign of Nizam Ali Khan (second Nizam) of the Asaf Jahi dynasty (1724-1948), was sent to the city in the 1780s by the French from Madras to take over the French troops long before the Nizams and the British formally sealed an exclusive agreement in 1798. Raymond gained popularity due to his congenial nature. It is believed that the Hindus called him Moosa Ram and the Muslims, Moosa Rahim. The metro station near Raymond's Tomb is called Moosa Ram Bagh. It is worth paying a visit to this offbeat heritage site of Hyderabad, otherwise known for its palaces and forts.

— Jhilam Chattaraj

## NEW INITIATIVES

### Chaduvu

Chaduvu, India's pioneering regional ebook and audiobook app, has made waves in the literary world. Founded by Venkat Siddareddy and Sanjay Madala, the platform aims to promote Telugu literature and connect with Telugu readers worldwide. Within a short span of five months, Chaduvu has amassed an impressive user base of over 25,000, offering a wide range of Telugu classics, popular fiction, and contemporary works by talented young authors.

— Venkat Siddareddy



### Navarasa: The Theatre Group

Navarasa is the theatre wing of Nation Rock Beats (NRB), a creative house of artists in Hyderabad. The group aims to nurture young theatre aspirants and help them learn the craft of drama. Devika Das is the Creative Head of Navarasa. Currently the team comprises Satyajit, Sindhuja, Jai, and Irfan. The team has performed monologues, audio plays, and stage plays at Youngistan Nukkad at the Hyderabad Literary Festival. Titles include 'Saste Jahaj Ka Sapna', 'The Final Cut', 'Haar Jeet', and 'Mard aur Aurat'. The group recently performed at the Corporate Office of Paradise Biryani at Jubilee Hills.

Email: [nrb.navarasa@gmail.com](mailto:nrb.navarasa@gmail.com);

Instagram: [https://instagram.com/the\\_nations\\_rock\\_beat?igshid=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==](https://instagram.com/the_nations_rock_beat?igshid=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==)

— Jhilmam Chattaraj

## BOOK REVIEWS

***The Living Air: The Pleasures of Birds and Bird Watching*** by Aasheesh Pittie. Juggernaut Books, 296 pages, Rs 599.

Reading Aasheesh Pittie's *The Living Air: The Pleasures of Birds and Bird Watching* is like listening to a melodious aalaap, or seeing the beautiful strokes of a paintbrush bringing alive the joy of what the artist is looking at. It makes you laugh in places and is deeply philosophical in others. The author is one with the natural world as he talks tenderly about his slow wanderings, and the many common birds around us – sparrows, ioras, drongos, shikras, black kites, owls, barbets. He tells us that the drongo is called 'Zulfikar' in Hyderabad and 'Kotwal' in North India, and about the time he heard it imitate the sound of a lawnmower!

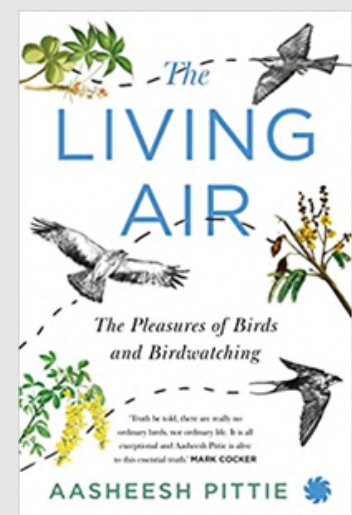
Aasheesh's consistent jottings since the 1980s add much value to this book. His description of vultures commonly seen in our cities and towns before they became endangered are precious. So also, the story of our sparrows and how, along with the old traits like the Hyderabadite tehzeeb, their numbers too have dwindled, unable to keep up with manic 'development'.

He is politely but firmly critical of the human interference affecting our landscapes, flora and fauna; of pigeon feeding, which results in an imbalance among bird numbers and causes serious diseases; and of the 'channel-surfing' mindset of people who get bored easily and desire to see a new bird on every trip. Hence the need for slow birding where one savours every moment outdoors.

One section is dedicated to eminent ornithologists who inspired him – Humayun Abdulali, Siraj Tahir and Zafar Futehalli.

A rhetoric runs through the book – that there is extraordinary in the ordinary, and the challenge should be to create something spectacular out of the existing ordinary. *The Living Air* contains living words that are poetic and masterfully crafted, ably supported by Sangeetha Kadur's charming illustrations.

— Sadhana Ramchander





***Everything the Light Touches: A Novel*** by **Janice Pariat**, Fourth Estate, 512 pages, Rs 799.

Four people, separated by time and space, each searching for something bigger than themselves: Shai, a young woman from present-day Shillong; Evelyn, a botany student in Edwardian Cambridge; the German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in the 1780s; and the Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus in the 1730s.

Shai has quit her job and returned to Shillong but finds herself without a purpose. When her nanny falls sick, Shai travels to a remote village in Meghalaya to take care of her. Evelyn is a student at a time when women were barely tolerated in universities. Determined to not give into a future of domesticity, she sails to India in search of a rare plant. Goethe, feeling confined by his job and life in Weimar, slips away to Italy, where he works on his book, *The Metamorphosis of Plants*. And Linnaeus travels to Lapland in search of plants.

The central theme of the book is the interconnectedness of everything, especially in nature. The four people are also linked: Goethe's book is a response to Linnaeus's categorization of plants. Goethe believes that each plant is a whole, living entity that constantly changes and should not be broken up in constituent parts. Evelyn has read Goethe and is influenced by him. Shai's father tells her about trees that "speak" and how they link to each other through roots. The book is structured as a set of nested narratives. We leave Shai, Evelyn and Goethe at crucial periods in their lives, and resume their stories after we get to Linnaeus. Linnaeus's section is entirely in poems, setting him apart from the others.

This is a rich, wide-ranging book that includes indigenous rights and knowledge, the exploitation of nature, the position of women and the way we perceive nature.

— **Suroor Alikhan**

## FILM/PODCAST REVIEWS

### ***Paravai Kootil Vaazhum Maangal***

There never is a happily ever after!

I was reminded of this phrase after watching "Paravai Kootil Vaazhum Maangal", directed by Bharthiraja, from the web series *Modern Love Chennai*. This episode is a 'modern' version of Balu Mahendra's movie *Marupadiyum* because it is free of all conventions!

Firstly, there is no strong reason nor a backstory for the married Ravi and divorced Rohini to fall in love; rather it happens organically over the beautifully recreated song "En Iniya Pon Nilave"! Ravi and Rohini redefine it in the most beautiful way possible, letting the viewers cherish the newer version of love over a metro ride! We enjoy the blooming love between the two because there is no reason for it, as neither Ravi nor Rohini is unhappy in their married life. In fact, Ravi and Revathy were once in love, which has disappeared from their marriage!

Another reason why I love this episode is because of Revathy. She is truly a modern and mature woman. Though we see her struggling to process the fact that Ravi is in love with Rohini, she also understands that her marriage with Ravi has lost its meaning. She lets it go and embraces the emptiness that Rohini previously experienced. Revathy carries an immense strength that empowers her in the new chapter of her life. Another aspect that I loved is how Revathy defines marriage. Revathy's modern definition of marriage broadens the term by emphasizing that the bigger picture is about the person and not the marriage itself.

Love sets the boundaries free and *Paravai Kootil Vaazhum Maangal* sets free the boundaries for love!

— **Ramya**  
(A chartered accountant and an aspiring film critic)



## The Project Spark Podcast

Co-hosted by two wonderful women, Smriti Raghunandan and Pooja Sriram, *Project Spark* charts the life journeys of women entrepreneurs. The word 'entrepreneur' evokes images of successful people behind established organizations or popular brands. But after listening to the podcasts of *Project Spark*, you will relate entrepreneurship to your day-to-day life, hobbies, interests, and ambitions. Every business idea begins small, and if it has a spark, grows big if we pursue it. At the same time, every idea doesn't need to succeed. Each episode of the podcast reveals how the person had that spark of creating something on her own, how it was sustained, and who helped them to turn an idea, which could just be a hobby, into an established brand. More than 25 episodes have come out in just a year and each one is inspiring.

Jayashree Ratan started knitting as a hobby, and one day she made a huggable 'knocker' and showed it to her friend who is a radiologist. He then offered it to one of his patients who had undergone a mastectomy. The patient's sense of regaining a sense of self made Jayashree Ratan realize the significance of what she made as a hobby. Recognizing the need for a large number of such breast prostheses, this incredible woman started the "Saaisha India Foundation" and gathered over 400 knitting and crocheting enthusiasts from all over the world, and the group has so far offered 10000 huggable knockers absolutely free of cost to 5000 breast cancer patients! Such stories make you realize that one doesn't always need to have money to help. An idea, a hobby, and a team of like-minded people will do as well.

— **Anitha Mandapati**  
(An IT professional)

## HLF ONLINE SESSIONS

For updates on HLF online sessions, subscribe to HLF YouTube channel <[youtube.com/c/hlf-India](https://www.youtube.com/c/hlf-India)>



**Anukruti Upadhyay**

(Writer of fiction and poetry in English and Hindi)

in conversation with

**Usha Raman**

(Professor of Media Studies, University of Hyderabad)

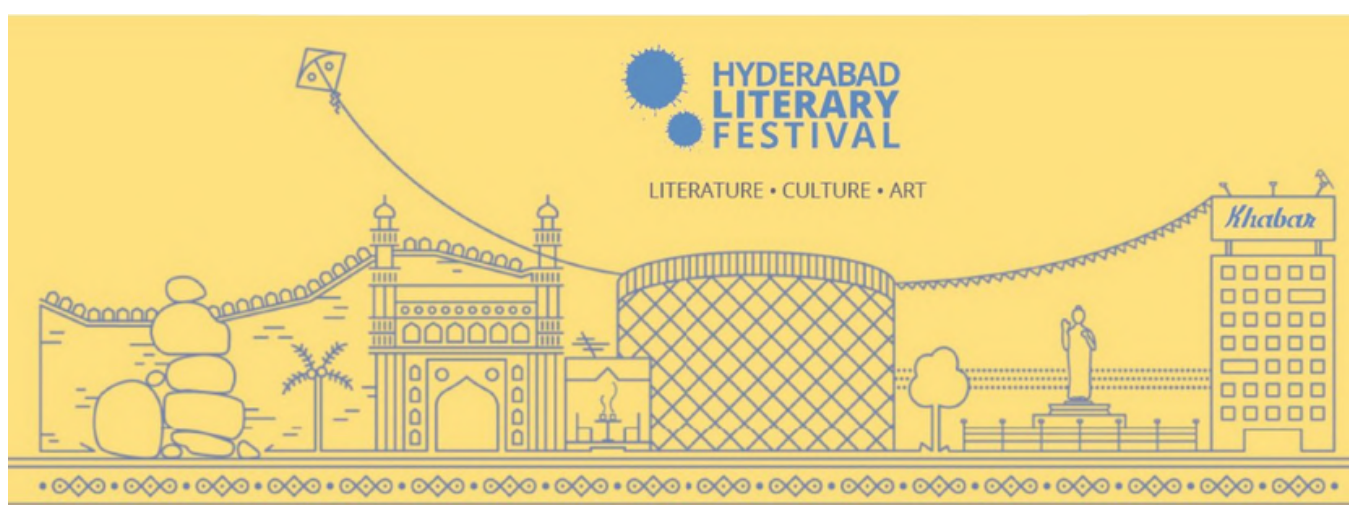
**17 March 2023**  
**The Blue Women**

**Anukruti Upadhyay**, author of "The Blue Women", in conversation with **Usha Raman**, Professor of Media Studies, University of Hyderabad

**Anukruti Upadhyay:** Usually for me stories start from a visual image, so for example "Janki and the Bats". The story, you know is as literal as that. I saw this beautiful magnificent peepal tree and the bats hanging all over it, you know like some kind of grotesque chandelier; from the lowest branch to the top most there are all these bats like somebody has decorated the tree for Halloween. And from that visual somehow came this girl Janki, and you know her connection with this bat. So, most often, it's visual and sometimes it's a set of words which seem too interesting to not delve into further, to find out why, you know, what happened, for it to emerge this day.

So, if I look back, the stories are an incident in the present and then they go back and back, and back and forth, so I think what I attempt to do in almost every short story is to investigate that one moment. But in order to investigate that one moment, the motivations and the transitions and context has to be figured, and that's how I guess the stories come about.

Catch the complete conversation at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x\\_9JEzVDFVQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_9JEzVDFVQ)



14 April 2023

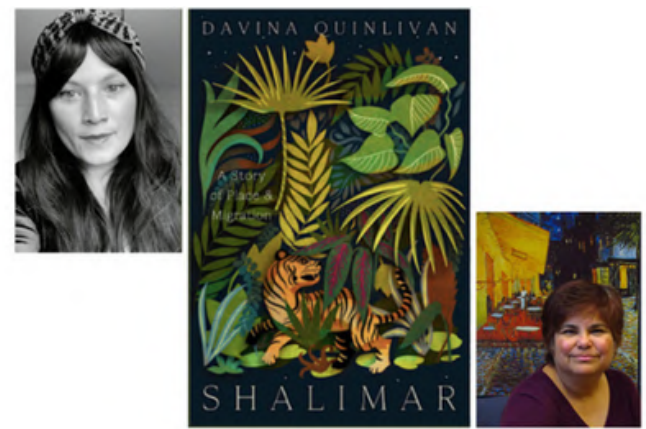
### **Shalimar: A Story of Place and Migration**

**Davina Quinlivan**, author of *Shalimar: A Story of Place and Migration*, in conversation with **Suroor Alikhan**, freelance editor, blogger and social media manager.

Davina Quinlivan: I start by talking through the idea of food and remembering those sensations ... and again dealing with the idea of the unusual and the things that ... are not really part of you but have some resonance in your life. ... and most of those things don't exist in any kind of formal document ... anymore. They're just things they made ... and they even pronounce them in ways that aren't accurate because they had such accents. They had very strong, very particular accents. They said things in different ways. The cultural memory of food is just such an important part of the book, but I'm also just so fascinated with how those stories and narratives can be expressed through that form too, and there

are some brilliant writers who do that. There are some amazing films about food and cooking... The Lunch Box is such a lovely movie, and it looks at how food creates this bridge or bond between people.

Catch the complete conversation at [https://www.youtube.com/live/m\\_JMGR2Z4Xg?feature=share](https://www.youtube.com/live/m_JMGR2Z4Xg?feature=share)

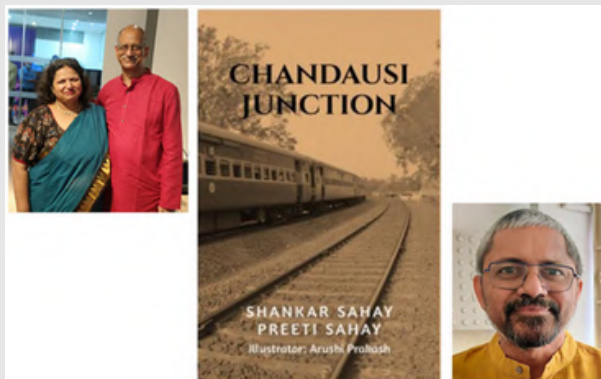


Author **Davina Quinlivan**  
(The University of Exeter)

in conversation with

**Suroor Alikhan**

(Former Web and Social Media Editor at Inter-Parliamentary Union)



**Shankar Sahay and Preeti Sahay**

(Authors of *Chandausi Junction*)

in conversation with

**A Giridhar Rao**

(Azim Premiji University, Bengaluru)

19 May 2023

### **Chandausi Junction**

**Shankar Sahay and Preeti Sahay**, authors of *Chandausi Junction*, in conversation with **A Giridhar Rao**, Azim Premiji University.

**Preeti Sahay:** "Sakhi Saheli" is about the ladies of my mother's generation. They hadn't had the freedom to go out...it was never considered important for them to have friends apart from the family. The idea that the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law can never be friends is actually not true... They had never even thought in that direction that the daughter-in-law can go out of the home, so just a little awakening of their intellect was needed and the changes happen.

**Shankar Sahay:** All the stories have been told to us by our parents and we were lucky enough to experience some of them ourselves. The story "Vapsi" is about a person in the 60s-70s who leaves his hometown, goes abroad to study, is working there happily, but it is the love of his family and nation that brings him back. "Batwara" set in 1947, is an actual real-life story about my grandfather, a respected person who took upon himself the responsibility of conducting the rites of someone of another religion. .... I was around 20 years old when my mother narrated this to me, and I couldn't understand why he got involved. But after 30 years, my children conveyed the emotions of my mother. And they were ready to convince me ... that's how we thought of writing this story... but the ending is not grim, it is open-ended.

Catch the complete conversation at <https://www.youtube.com/live/Q4yxk6uaD-4?feature=share>

## NEW PUBLICATIONS

**Abid Hasan Safrani: Netaji's Comrade-in-Arms**, compiled by **Ismat Mehdi** and **Shehbaz Safrani**  
Orient BlackSwan, 190 pages, Rs 895.

Abid Hasan Safrani, who was born in Hyderabad, was a member of Netaji's Azad Hind Fauj and is famous for coining the phrase "Jai Hind". This book compiles Safrani's accounts of his time with Netaji and fills in crucial gaps in the narrative of India's freedom struggle.

**All Stray Dogs Go to Heaven** by **Krishna Candeth**. BluOne Ink, 552 pages, Rs 695.

This book is about the journey of Nitya, who is haunted by the thought that he has forgotten to live. Narrated from different perspectives, the book interweaves the past and present, dreams and reality. It is about love, friendship, family, and the idea of home.

**Banned & Censored: What the British Didn't Want Us to Read.** Selected and introduced by **Devika Sethi**. Roli Books, 352 pages, Rs 1295.

The book dives into the history of sedition and censorship in colonial India. Seventy-five years after India's independence from British rule, it closely examines seventy-five texts that the colonial state banned, censored, or deemed seditious.

**Burning Pyres, Mass Graves and a State That Failed Its People: India's Covid Tragedy** by **Harsh Mander**. Speaking Tiger, 400 pages, Rs 599.

This powerful, even shattering, book is a necessary record of a national tragedy that too many of us want to forget when remembering is our only defence against a similar disaster in the future.

**Oblivion and Other Stories** by **Gopinath Mohanty**, translated by **Sudeshna Mohanty** and **Sudhansu Mohanty**. Penguin Books, 288 pages, Rs 499.

An anthology of twenty short stories by the doyen of Odia literature. The stories written across a half-century (1935-1988) have marginalization as the running thread: dispossession, disenfranchisement, class/caste social exclusivity, and lack of education.

## LITERARY NEWS

### Sahitya Akademi Awards 2022

Language	Title and Genre	Name of the Author
Assamese	<i>Bhool Satya</i> (Short Stories)	Manoj Kumar Goswami
Bengali	<i>Birbal</i> (Novel)	Tapan Bandopadhyay
Bodo	<i>Sansrini Modira</i> (Poetry)	Rashmi Choudhury
Dogri	<i>Chhe Roopak</i> (Drama)	Veena Gupta
English	<i>All The Lives We Never Lived</i> (Novel)	Anuradha Roy
Gujarati	<i>Gher Jatan</i> (Autobiographical Essays)	Gulam Mohammad Shaikh
Hindi	<i>Tumadi Ke Shabd</i> (Poetry)	Badri Narayan
Kannada	<i>Bahutvada Bhaarata mattu Bouddha Taatvikate</i> (Collection of Articles)	Mudnakudu Chinnaswamy
Kashmiri	<i>Zael Dab</i> (Literary Criticism)	Farooq Fayaz
Konkani	<i>Amrutvel</i> (Novel)	Maya Anil Kharangate
Maithili	<i>Pen-Drive Me Prithvi</i> (Poetry)	Ajit Azad
Malayalam	<i>Ashaante Seethayanam</i> (Literary Criticism)	M Thomas Mathew
Manipuri	<i>Leironnung</i> (Poetry)	Koijam Shantibala
Marathi	<i>Ujavya Sondechya Bahulya</i> (Novel)	Praveen Dashrath Bandekar
Nepali	<i>Saino</i> (Drama)	KB Nepali
Odia	<i>Dayanadi</i> (Poetry)	Gayatribala Panda
Punjabi	<i>Main Aynghosh Nahi</i> (Short Stories)	Sukhjit
Rajasthani	<i>Alekhun Amba</i> (Play)	Kamal Ranga
Sanskrit	<i>Deepmanikyam</i> (Poetry)	Janardan Prasad Pandey 'Mani'
Santali	<i>Sabarnaka Balire Sanan Panjay</i> (Poetry)	Kajli Soren (Jagannath Soren)
Sindhi	<i>Sindhi Sahit Jo Mukhtasar Itihas</i> (Literary History)	Kanhaiyalal Lekhwani
Tamil	<i>Kaala Paani</i>	M Rajendran
Telugu	<i>Manodharmaparagam</i> (Novel)	Madhuranthakam Narendra
Urdu	<i>Khwab Saraab</i> (Novel)	Anis Ashfaq

## Other Sahitya Akademi Awards for 2022

Sahitya Akademi Prize for Translation: [https://sahitya-akademi.gov.in/pdf/Pressrelease\\_TP-2022.pdf](https://sahitya-akademi.gov.in/pdf/Pressrelease_TP-2022.pdf)

Sahitya Akademi Bhasha Samman: <https://sahitya-akademi.gov.in/pdf/BhashaSamman-2022.pdf>

Sahitya Akademi Yuva Puraskar: [https://sahitya-akademi.gov.in/pdf/Pressrelease\\_YP-2022.pdf](https://sahitya-akademi.gov.in/pdf/Pressrelease_YP-2022.pdf)

Sahitya Akademi Bal Sahitya Puraskar: [https://sahitya-akademi.gov.in/pdf/Pressrelease\\_BSP-2022.pdf](https://sahitya-akademi.gov.in/pdf/Pressrelease_BSP-2022.pdf)

## International Booker Prize 2023

**Georgi Gospodinov** and **Angela Rodel** have won the prize for the novel *Time Shelter*. The prize is awarded every year to the best work of international fiction translated into English. *Time Shelter* becomes the first novel originally published in Bulgarian to win the prize.

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

- **Wednesday 21 June 2023:** World Music Day. 4 pm-9 pm, Next Premia Mall, Irrummanzil. Renowned and talented musicians will regale the audiences with a range of genres—Indian classical to pop—in celebration of this year's theme of World Music Day: "Uniting Through Music." Organized by Goethe Zentrum Hyderabad, a unit of Goethe-Institut.
- **Saturday 24 June 2023:** Meet the Author. Pratap Reddy in conversation with Usha Raman. 5:30 pm, Salajung Hall, Nizam College, Basheer Bagh. Organized by Hyderabad Literary Festival in association with Srinivas Rayaprol Literary Trust and Nizam College.

## 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](mailto:hlfkhabar@gmail.com)>.