

FRONTLIST

OCTOBER 2021



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

BODOUR AL QASIMI

President, International Publishers Association



MAA ANAND SHEELA

INSIDE PEEK INTO HER LATEST BOOK

"Life is multi-dimensional. There's no black and white. They have shades of colours, shades of information"

*Diwali
Special*

Featuring



Publisher of Indian comics and graphic novels

Welcome Message

Wishing you and your family a very happy Diwali.

At the time of the festive season, I feel exhilarated to share this month's magazine, which celebrated Diwali.

In order to rekindle the Hindu Culture and connect people to the festivities, we've featured Amar Chitra Katha's Books as Diwali Exclusive. These books delineate the Celebrations of Diwali and Hindu Traditions among Children with vivid illustrations.



We also took another initiative to promote the authors digitally. The clubhouse sessions were held to give authors another Frontlist platform to speak and share their firsthand experiences.

October is Mental Health Awareness Month and we did the spotlight session for Author's Mental Health, where they shared their perspectives and how an author goes through while writing a book.

New events are in the way to entertain and educate the audiences. Pune Book Fair 2022, PragatiE Vichar Literature Festival (PVLf), Christmas Carnival and many more. Keep watching our social handles for more information.

I am very excited to share that Frontlist will be a part of the 30th edition of New Delhi World Book Fair organized by National Book Trust, India. We will be showcasing some authors and their books. It will be a huge platform for authors to promote themselves and connect with the Publishing ecosystem.

Stay connected with us to know more about upcoming events and Publishing Industry buzz.

Got some suggestions? Write to me: navita@fronlist.in

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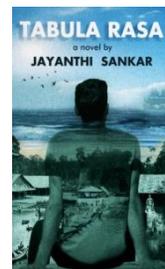
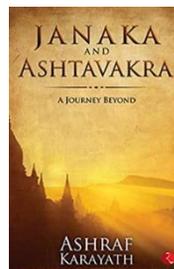
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Celebrating 125 years of International Publishers Association

Bodour Al Qasimi,

**President of the International
Publishers Association**

Frontlist: As IPA completes its 125 years, do you think copyright is still one of the main points of the publishing industry, the other being the freedom to publish?

Bodour: Absolutely. The publishing industry cannot flourish without two essential pillars: copyright protection and freedom to publish. These two main pillars have always been important to the publishing industry, even before establishing the IPA 125 years ago. In fact, our founding fathers launched IPA to address these two issues specifically. Unfortunately, there is a surge in digital piracy today due to the readers' massive shift to various digital channels. At the IPA, we work hard with all our partners to ensure that governments create the right legislative frameworks and enforcement mechanisms so that digital piracy doesn't go unnoticed and unpunished. Likewise, freedom to publish has been under a lot of pressure in both the digital and physical space, so we work with our partners day in and day out to push back on some of the legislations suggested by some governments to pressure writers into self-censorship. The very idea of writing is about expressing an opinion, a voice, and the job of publishers is to help bring these voices to the public and invite everyone to debate their merits. Without this, I don't see how we can advance societies and human civilization.

Frontlist: 125 years later, IPA has held 32 International Publishers Congresses, as well as many other conferences, seminars and symposia, in cities all over the world. What can the World foresee in the upcoming IPA Congress 2022?

Bodour: I think next year's congress in Jakarta will be really special. It will be the culmination of the IPA's work following on from the covid crisis, and so will be a pivotal moment in which we can see how our industry has evolved.

By November 2022, we should start seeing the impact of the IPA Academy due to launch later this year, which has been designed to

help our members and their workforces upskill so that they can adapt to the digital age through a wide range of practical online masterclasses. The congress will also be an opportunity to assess how the Inspire Plan (International Sustainable and Industry Resilience Plan) is supporting the development of the global publishing industry. As you know, the IPA developed this plan in collaboration with many publishing sector stakeholders worldwide. It was launched during the recent Frankfurt Book Fair, and we are planning a symposium in early 2022 to drive the program forward.

We will also discuss other industry updates during the congress, and of course, it is always an excellent opportunity to catch up with colleagues, old and new from around the world.

Frontlist: There's only 9 years (2020 – 2030) left to achieve the ambitious SDG targets. How do you think publishers can and should be contributing to this effort?

Bodour: Publishers are an integral part of achieving the SDG targets. We have a responsibility and a desire to continue taking positive steps towards achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. The IPA partnered with the UN to create the SDG book club, launched to help children understand the importance of sustainability. Last year, the IPA and the UN also partnered to create the SDG Publishers Compact, which more than 100 publishers signed at its launch at the Frankfurt Book Fair. This Compact aims to inspire action around ten commitments for publishers to create a more sustainable future for our industry by 2030. We have also continually consulted with our members on this subject, and interestingly, we are learning now that more publishers believe SDGs are increasingly relevant to the publishing industry. So, I think the bigger question is what more we can do? And what does sustainable publishing really mean? Our focus centered initially around providing books and

information, but we know we can do more. In fact, at the recent Frankfurt Book Fair, key players from the publishing ecosystem united to sign a joint declaration for concrete action on climate change.

Frontlist: At the Arab Publishers Association Conference Sharjah, you called for action for a “serious discussion” on “redefining the principle of freedom to publish.” Can you guide us more?

Bodour: Freedom to publish has always been and will continue to be at the heart of the IPA’s mission. However, now more than ever, exchanging ideas and allowing different cultures and writers to have their voices heard on the international stage is essential. Humanity is at a turning point, and we need to create a new way of relating to each other to ensure a harmonious world. The IPA will always support authors who suffer discrimination and persecution because of the words they write.

Indeed, the freedom to publish can sometimes be context-dependent. Therefore, we need to have the wisdom and patience to listen to others and engage with them to understand their points of view about publishing books they may deem too controversial in their societies. Despite this, we must reinforce the value of freedom to publish as a natural state of affairs in all cultures, and establish censorship, in all its forms, as a deviation from this universal and natural state for humans.

What drives the IPA is that the written word should continue playing its crucial role in education, knowledge, and cultural understanding. This is why our main priority is to collaborate globally to create the right environment for publishers and authors to continue doing what they do and produce works that enrich public debate and support a healthy evolution of our societies.

Frontlist: What are some of the most prominent steps and initiatives that IPA shall

take to develop global publishing, considering it completed its 125 years?

Bodour: Firstly, I want to reiterate what I have said many times during 2021 about how exciting it is to be celebrating the IPA’s 125th anniversary this year. It is an honor, and I feel the weight of responsibility to continue the work of our founding fathers and all previous IPA leaders in collaboration with all our members and colleagues from around the world. As we celebrate this milestone anniversary, we know that we are facing some serious challenges, so our founding fathers But we can certainly have a more direct impact on sustainable development than simply an informational role, and that's through the whole supply chain – publishers, printers, bookstores, libraries, authors, and educators. So, it's a key priority for us and something we will continually look at in the months and years to come.

Frontlist: As the second woman to assume the role of IPA President in 124 years, what is your vision towards the publishing industry, especially in the Middle East region.

Bodour: I recently read a quote on Forbes that said, “Never make an important decision without a woman at the table.” I think this quote says it all. In the publishing industry, whether in the Middle East or elsewhere, women have energized the sector and been part of the solution, particularly during this pandemic. But they have been traditionally underrepresented at the top echelons and the decision-making level of the publishing industry. We cannot simply accept this as a fact. It is more of an accepted cultural norm, but in the 21st century, this trend is changing, and the publishing industry is also changing to mirror this social evolution. Given this context, I established the PublisHer network in 2019 to improve the chances for female publishers’ to succeed in their careers all the way to the top. But my vision is now broader, so diversity and inclusion have become a critical priority for our sector – which includes giving women and

people from any minority group the opportunity to lead and leave their mark on the industry.

In the Middle East region, the situation is similar to many other markets. The good news is that I can now see an improvement in the work culture and mindset of the Arab publishing sector. Sometimes I feel the change is not happening fast enough, but I think social change dynamics are different depending on the market, but globally, our focus should be on making progress towards achieving a more balanced publishing sector.

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As we celebrate this milestone anniversary, we know that we are facing some serious challenges, so our founding fathers’ tenacity and commitment to grow the IPA and the publishing industry despite the odds is a constant inspiration to all of us. At this point in our history, our biggest challenge is digitization. This has been a challenge for some time, but the pandemic highlighted that many publishing houses are struggling to adapt due to varying factors. In response to this challenge, the IPA is launching the IPA Academy. It’s the first of its kind and is an online platform with masterclasses in multiple languages to support our members in their digital transformation journey. It will include guidance on online marketing, e-books, online sales, and almost everything a publisher could need to manage a modern-day publishing house.

We are also working to strengthen solidarity and collaboration between publishers and all links in the publishing value chain. Each link in the publishing ecosystem is a world of its own, with challenges and opportunities. This is why we recently launched the International Sustainable Publishing and Industry Resilience plan, known as the Inspire Plan, during The

Frankfurt Book Fair. We believe there is so much more we can do collectively to create more value for all our members and our industry – at its core, the Inspire plan aims to encourage more dialogue and create more synergies. I believe these two initiatives, among others, will give our industry the boost it needs to create a new chapter in its history.

Frontlist: It is said that you are one of the best-traveled and most dedicated sitting leaders of the organization in its 125-year history of IPA. As you have flown to meetings with member-association representatives in Russia, Turkey, Egypt, Kenya, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Georgia, and now Saudi Arabia. How true is the statement?

Bodour: I have prioritized visiting as many publishers' associations as I can during my IPA presidency tenure. I want our members to know that we are here for them and will support them through thick and thin, and if my physical presence helps reassure them, I am happy to make that trip if and when possible.

The beauty of the digital age is that we can now communicate through video conferencing very easily and more frequently. However, face-to-face meetings still have a tangible impact as they give us the chance to dive deeper into our conversations, leading to more understanding of the IPA and its members. Sometimes, during in-person meetings with our members, an informal and unscheduled side chat with a publisher or group of publishers in any market may give us new insights that enhance our understanding of that market and lead to a new opportunity for collaboration, and that's very valuable in our business.

Frontlist: The work of publishing before the pandemic is not the same now. Consumer behaviors have changed very fast. Do you think publishers need to adapt to the new mindset and skills to operate at a global level?

Bodour: That's a good question, and the short answer is yes. The publishing industry has been adapting to its environment since its inception in the fifteenth century, and that's why we are still here today.

The bigger picture now definitely points to a shift in consumer behavior. However, I don't believe this is simply the picture of a post-pandemic world, but covid was a huge wake-up call. I think these changes in consumer behavior have been coming for some time. What the pandemic did was to make the need for change urgent. So, yes, publishers do need to adapt. That is why the IPA is establishing the IPA Academy, which we will launch by the end of this year – it will go a big way in helping our members adapt to the digital age and its mindset. In my many visits you alluded to in your previous question, this was one of the main issues raised by publishers who have been struggling with their digital transformation due to skills and knowledge gaps. We plan to continue supporting them to adapt through the IPA Academy and other initiatives, but publishers should also take steps to help themselves. One concrete action they can take now is to encourage young talent to take the lead in their publishing businesses - they are naturally tuned to the needs and trends of readership now and can think like modern readers.

Frontlist: What shall be the line, with which you want people to remember you.

Bodour: I hope to be remembered as someone who paved the way for more diversity in the publishing industry and someone who passionately believed that books can help change the world and create more harmony and peace for all of us.



*Diwali
Exclusive
Coverage*



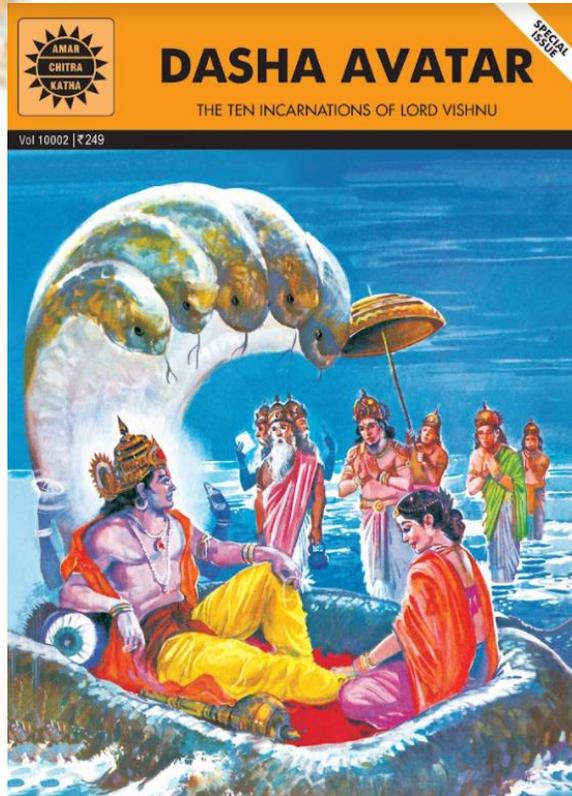
Diwali Exclusive

Ask thousands of Indians how they were first introduced to the world of Indian mythology and history, and the answer will almost always be **Amar Chitra Katha**. For over five decades, Amar Chitra Katha has been a household name when it comes to Indian comics. The Amar Chitra Katha library boasts of nearly 500 titles across genres such as mythology, history, folktales, fables, biographies, literature, and more, appealing to people of all ages. What started as a physical repository of Indian heritage in 1967 by our founder Anant Pai, has now expanded across mediums, be it movies, TV shows, web series, audio stories, podcasts, mobile apps, and more.

Amar Chitra Katha has been retelling India's favourite stories for more than half a century, narrating the most complex stories in the comics format. The vivid illustrations bring the stories to life, making children genuinely interested in reading. The artwork is so iconic that people can recognise a classic Amar Chitra Katha illustration just as easily as they recognise the Mona Lisa!

The Amar Chitra Katha website is an expansion of this experience, taking you beyond the books with fascinating articles, trivia pieces, picture stories, interviews, profiles, free comics, and much more. In addition to this, the website is also home to their online store, where you will get exclusive discounts and offers!

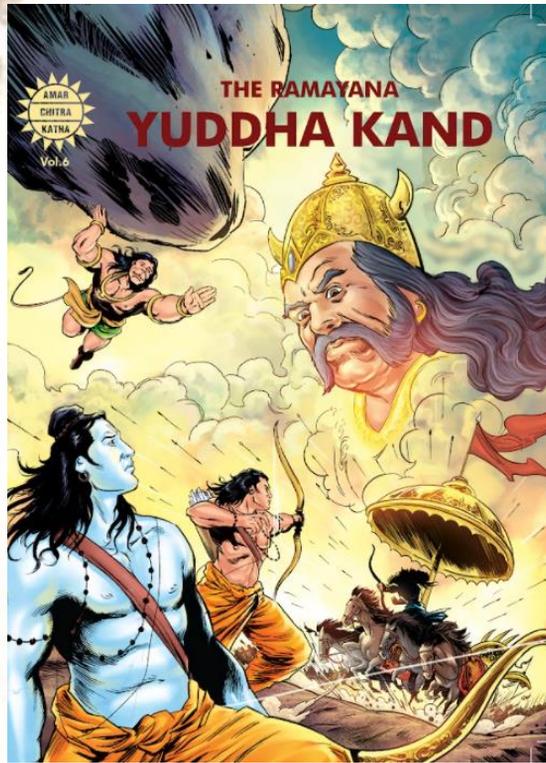
Check their website: <https://www.amarchitrakatha.com/>



About the Book: In Puranic lore, Vishnu is the preserver of the universe and the cosmic order. The Dasha Avatar is the Puranic story of the ten incarnations of Vishnu who descends to the terrestrial world to establish stability and order, time and again. The avatars occur in a sequence – the first was matsya or fish representing life in water, followed by kurma or turtle signifying life in water and on land, then varaha or boar alluding to terrestrial life and so on. The sequence of the avatars could be taken to symbolise various stages in the evolution of life culminating in the advent of the perfect being. The story relevant to Bali Pratipada is the story of the Vamana Avatar.

Script: Kamala Chandrakant

Illustration: Pratap Mullick



About the Book: Valmiki's Yuddha Kand in the Ramayana tells of the final war between Rama of Ayodhya and Ravana of Lanka. The battle is fierce and unrelenting and both sides suffer losses. In the end it is good that wins over evil and Ravana is vanquished. Rama and Sita, along with Lakshmana, the entire army and the population of Kishkindha, return to Ayodhya. Diwali celebrates the return of Rama after spending 14 years in exile.

Script: Harini Srinivasan

Illustration: Arijit Dutta Chowdhury



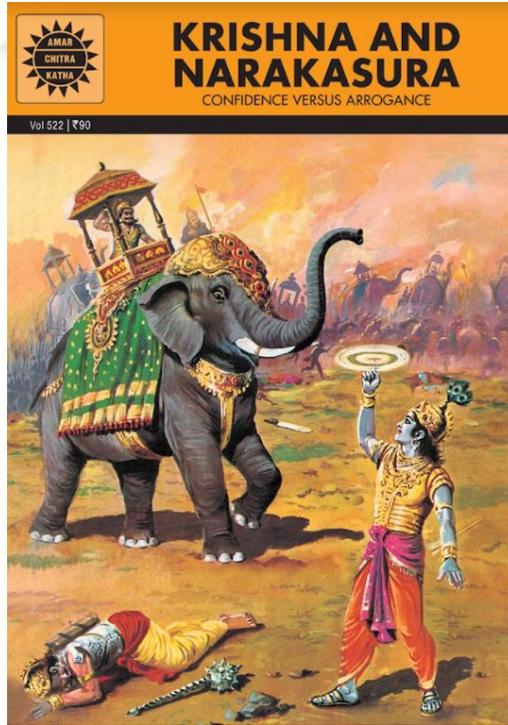


About the Book: It all began with petty family jealousy. The Kaurava brothers tricked their Pandava cousins out of a kingdom, and even Lord Krishna could not stop the horror and bloodshed that followed. Veda Vyasa composed an epic poem, the longest in the world, to describe the events that unfolded. In this epic tale of superhuman heroes and gory action, Veda Vyasa explores human ambitions, relationships and conflicts to find the true purpose of life. The Pandavas also spent 13 years in exile and returned to Indraprastha.

Script: B.R. Bhagwat

Illustration: S.B. Tendle

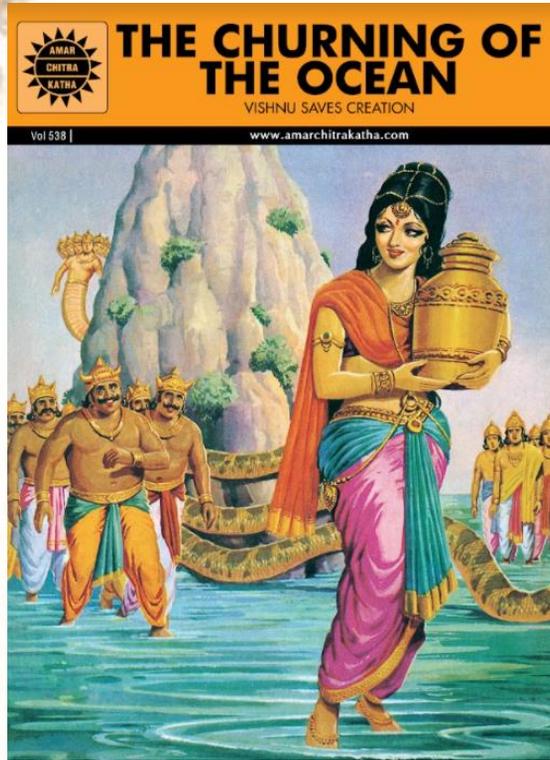
Cover: V.B. Khalap



About the Book: Indra was at his wit's end – the impertinent demon Narakasura had stolen his mother's earrings! Lord Krishna, always helpful, agreed to confront the enemy. But seated on Garuda, his trusty eagle, and accompanied by the gentle Satyabhama, would Krishna be able to overcome Narakasura's formidable defences? Would his gleaming discus ever find its mark? Naraka Chaturthi celebrates the victory of Krishna over Narakasura.

Script: Kamala Chandrakant

Illustration: M.N. Nangare

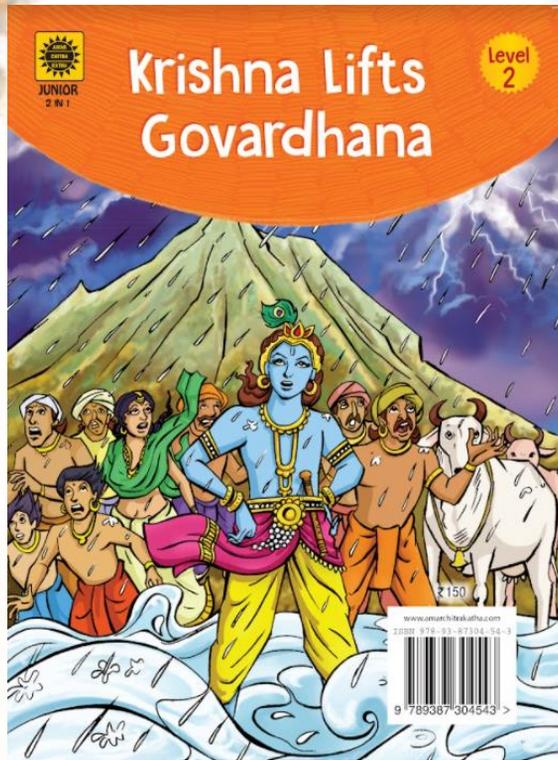


About the Book: : The three worlds of the universe were reeling from shock: the asuras had taken control! Even the plants were withering away. Only the great Lord Vishnu could make things right again. He got both devas and asuras to churn up life-giving nectar from the ocean of milk, and then ensured that the asuras were kept away from this gift of immortality. One of the beings that emerged from the churning was Dhanvantari who carried the pot of nectar to the surface.

Script: Toni Patel

Illustration: Dilip Kadam





About the Book: : Krishna convinces the people of Brindavan to hold a festival for Mount Govardhana in gratitude for the protection it gives, instead of Lord Indra. When Indra hears of it, he becomes angry and decides to destroy Brindavan with rain and floods. How will Krishna protect his people and Brindavan from Indra's anger? Govardhana puja is a part of Diwali celebrations.

Script: Gayathri Chandrasekaran

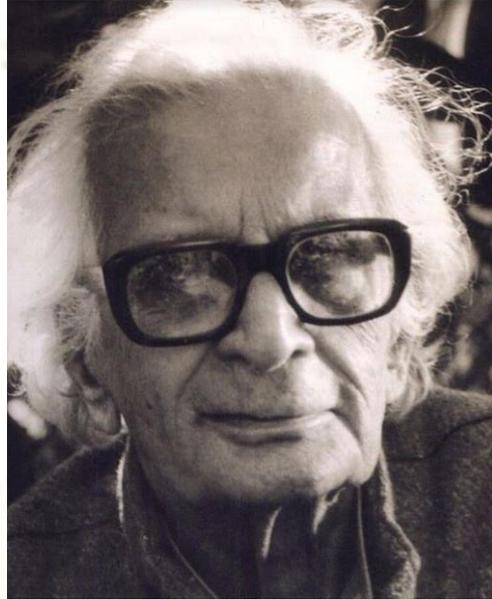
Illustration: Sabu Sarasan



Author: Harini Gopalswami Srinivasan

A writer and organic farmer. Besides Valmiki's Ramayana for Amar Chitra Katha, she has written three books for children: Zoo Duck , The Smile of Vanuvati , and Gind: The Magical Adventures of a Vanara . She's at the moment exploring the idea of turning Gind's adventures into a comic series, while trying to get a small share of groundnuts, mangoes, ragi, etc, that she grows at her farm. The other contenders for these goodies are wild pigs, parakeets, peacocks, and sometimes elephants. Not to mention rats, rats and rats.





Author: B. R. Bhagwat

He is best known for the character he created called Faster Fene. The stories were reproduced in the comics format in Tinkle. Born in 1910 Bha Ra as he was fondly known, joined All India Radio in New Delhi as a newsreader in 1941. Following the broadcast of Mahatma Gandhi's arrest, Bhagwat went underground to join the freedom struggle in Mumbai. He was arrested and jailed for almost two years. Bha Ra devoted himself to translating the science fiction of Jules Verne and H.G. Wells into Marathi. From 1950 to 1957 he published a very popular Marathi magazine for children, called Balmitra.

Bha Ra wrote around 200 books and the scripts of many ACKs including Mahabharat, Shivaji, Baji Rao, Pareekshit and The Pandava Princes. He passed away in 2001. Bhagwat is the winner of many literary awards.





Author: Gayathri Chandrasekaran

She is a writer, editor and storyteller. She started her career at Tinkle Comics and worked there for almost a decade finishing her stint as Assistant Editor. She has been a freelance writer ever since, writing mainly for children. One of her cherished assignments was writing the Amar Chitra Katha on Anant Pai, the founder of ACK and her first boss. During the lockdown, Gayathri started telling stories online as a relief to children locked up in their homes. A certified Potterhead, she's a mum to an inquisitive 8 year old and together they have been exploring the myriad realms of fantasy.





Editor: Sanjana Kapur

She has designed and conducted various workshops in different schools across India. She has contributed to collections and authored several comic books and picture books for Amar Chitra Katha— Saraswati, Amba, Param Vir Chakra, Divine Beings, Shakti, Gankhu Gives it Back and The Proud Mountain are a few.

She is the Associate Editor at Amar Chitra Katha and never tires of telling people that she writes comics for a living!



Executive Editor of Amar Chitra Katha : Reena Puri

Frontlist: What was Anant Pai's Vision? How did you use his vision to create Children's Books?

Reena: Mr Pai's vision was to tell every Indian child about his heritage. He believed that it didn't matter whether the child grew up to appreciate it or reject it, he needed to be aware of it. Mr Pai believed that with an awareness about their roots, children would never lose their sense of identity or their self-esteem. I have continued his work. His vision is what guides me and, I feel, that if I am focused on it I can never lose my way.

Frontlist: How come you decided to write comics?

Reena: As a child I was on a steady diet of comics and have always loved the format. However, there was no Amar Chitra Katha or Tinkle when I was growing up. My own boys were great fans of Tinkle and so when I saw the advertisement for an Assistant Editor for Tinkle and applied, they were most excited. I couldn't have disappointed them!

Frontlist: You've been working as an Editor. What challenges have you faced till now?

Reena: There are so many titles that I am raring to do. So many stories I want to tell. I see time rushing by and want to do more and more. That is my greatest challenge - to make the most of whatever time is left and to leave Amar Chitra Katha richer in content. To do that, one needs a good team of writers and artists. So, my second challenge is to find these people and create a large pool of excellent researchers, comic-script writers, artists and colourists.

Frontlist: How do you edit the manuscript? What factors do you consider while editing any book?

Reena: There are multiple stages of editing. One is when the synopsis of the book is written and the storyline is divided into pages to accommodate all the action. Next are the multiple versions of the script that have to be gone through to the satisfaction of the scriptwriter and myself. Then comes matching the script to the illustration. Finally, there is the trimming down of words and ensuring that the pictures talk. When I go through a script or its illustrations, I keep the age of the reader in mind and edit and check accordingly.

Frontlist: Tell us something about the recently released book 'Women Path - Breakers' ?

Reena: This is a title that was conceptualised long ago but was waiting for the right moment to be created. It contains the stories of seven remarkable women who broke barriers, demolished patriarchal rules and forged a free and unshackled path for themselves and for millions of women after them, to study, to work and to make a mark for themselves in an unfair world. It contains the stories of Anandibai Joshi, Pandita Ramabai, Rukhmabai, Janaki Ammal and others who were instrumental in making Indian women realise their own potential. Every child in our country should be familiar with these names and be inspired by them.

Frontlist: How's your experience working with Amar Chitra Katha thus far?

Reena: Amar Chitra Katha has given me 30 priceless years. Years that have helped me grow, taught me so much and given me the feeling of being useful. I have always loved words and stories. Working with Amar Chitra Katha is like plunging into a world of words and colour, of laughter and of intense emotions. Be it Tinkle or ACK, my editorial teams have been the brightest and most creative of young people (largely women). Most importantly, I spent 15 wonderful years working with and learning from our Founder Editor Anant Pai. A gentle giant, he allowed me to be myself and create my own path. And yet, if I look back, I realize that he is mirrored in everything I do. That is the sign of a true guru!



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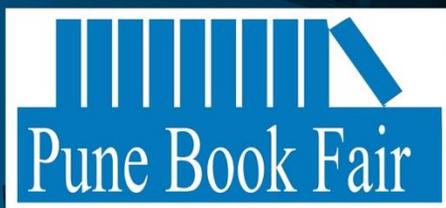
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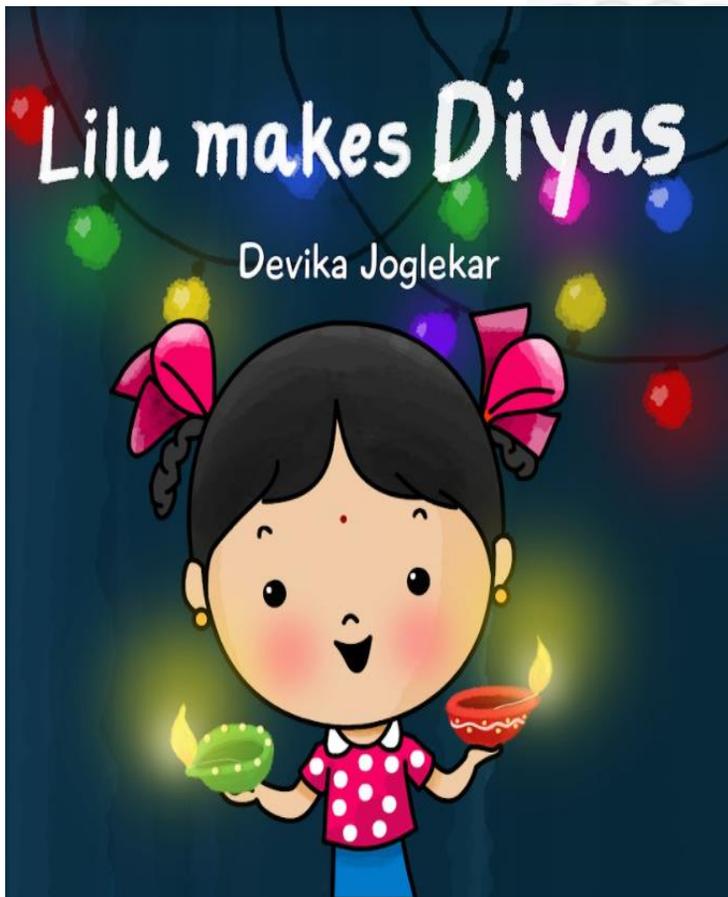
Devika Joglekar

An animator and illustrator., she has always aspired to author children's books, which are not only fun to read but also inspire young readers to learn and discover interesting things.

She has been bringing ideas to life through her labor of love, Miheika Publications.

Originally from India, she now lives with her husband in the San Francisco Bay Area.

About the Book: Lilu Makes Diyas



Diwali is the festival of lights. This Diwali, Lilu and Little Kuku decide to light their home with handmade diyas.

Through wonderful, vibrant illustrations and rhyming text, **LILU MAKES DIYAS** and teaches kids to make handmade diyas.

Frontlist: Tell us something about yourself and your book?

Devika: I am an animator and illustrator. I am originally from Pune(India), now based in the San Francisco Bay Area. I've been writing and illustrating children's books for over 4 years and have published 15 books including the Lilu series and Mimi & Soni series. 2022 will be the busiest year for my publication, Miheika Publications and I can't wait to share with my readers all the books I've been working on, some of which will be bi-lingual!

Frontlist: Diwali is the biggest festival in India and has a huge impact on everyone's life. Why did you choose the 'making handmade diyas' concept to write this story?

Devika: Since Diwali is one of the biggest Indian festivals, I always wanted to write something on Diwali for kids around the world. I cherish my childhood memories of making Diwali lanterns with my grandpa and so I decided to kick off the Diwali series with a story based on those fond memories. That was Lilu's Lantern. From then on, every year, I've been writing a new DIY Diwali book - Laddoos, Rangoli and Diyas. That's the Lilu series.

Frontlist: How do children resonate with the story protagonist - Lilu? What kind of social message will they receive?

Devika: The Lilu series is one of our most popular. Lilu and her brother Little Kuku are like any kids next door. Lilu loves to do DIY projects which make her little brother happy. Their cat Meow is always around too.

All the things they make like Diwali Lanterns, Diyas, Rakhi, and Ganesha statue are eco-friendly and are made from easily available materials at home.

The Lilu series is essentially a series of fun stories around DIY projects, sibling bonding and environmental awareness.

Frontlist: How did you start Miheika Publications? What have you experienced so far in this industry?

Devika: Miheika Publications is a labor of love sprouting from my passion for children's books. I am a self taught artist. I have always aspired to create children's content and animation that are fun to read and inspire young minds to explore new things.

Miheika Publications is focused on creating children's content based on Indian characters and culture. Indian culture is vibrant, multi-faceted and diverse. I would love kids all over the world to know about our food, clothing, art, literature, yoga, ayurveda as well as our rich heritage.

So grateful that our books have received tremendous response across the globe, especially from the US, Europe and Canada.

Frontlist: What should an author keep in mind while writing for children?

Devika: Always keep reading children's books from around the world and write something that you would love to read :) It's also important to know about your target age group before writing. Never lose track of the message you wish to convey through your story and avoid being preachy. Last but not the least, keep it short and simple :)

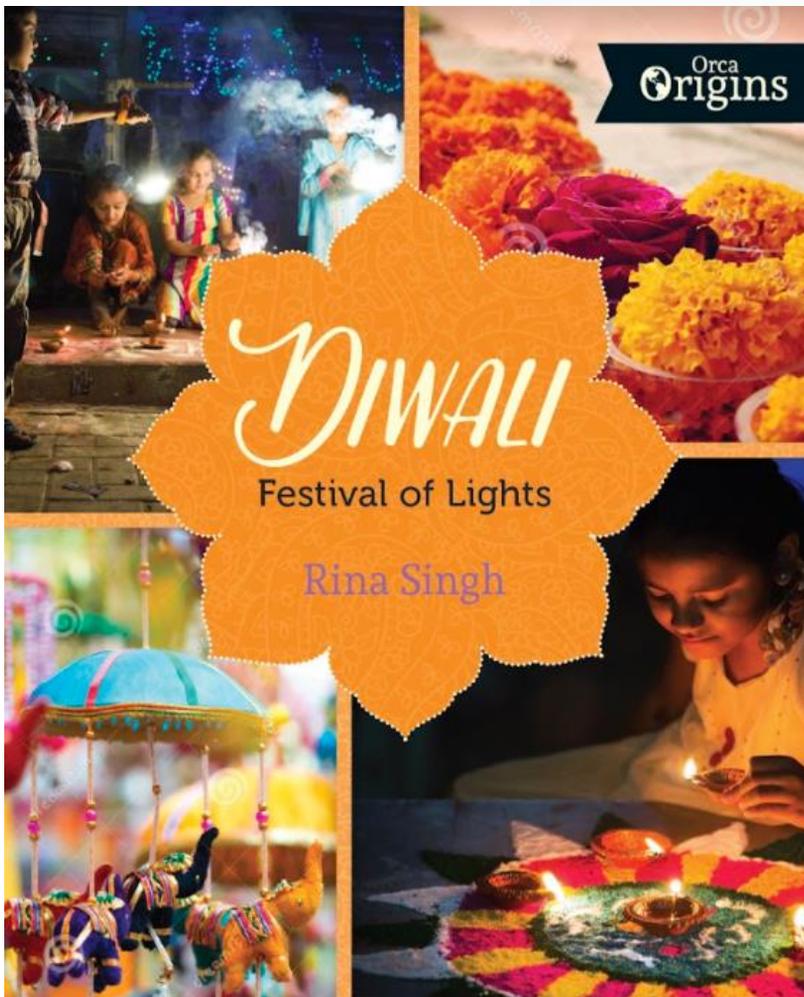




Rina Singh

An award-winning Children's Author and Spoken Word coach. She has an MFA in Creative Writing and has written many critically acclaimed books for children. As a writer, she is drawn to real life stories about social justice and the environment. Grandmother School, (Orca Books) affirms the life-changing power of education.

About the Book: Diwali: Festival of Lights



During Diwali, Hindus, Sikhs and Jains celebrate the legends and stories that describe the triumph of good over evil and justice over oppression. Critically acclaimed author Rina Singh explores her Indian roots as she tells the Diwali stories, which remind us that eventually light will prevail over darkness.

Enriched by personal stories and spiced with festive recipes, including two by acclaimed chef Vikram Vij, *Diwali: Festival of Lights* brings to life the holiday's traditions, food and rituals and takes you on a journey to see how this festival is celebrated around the world!

Diwali is the second book in the Orca Origins series, which examines how ancient traditions are kept alive in the modern world.

Frontlist: 'Diwali: Festival of Lights' is the biggest Hindu Festival. Why did you choose the Diwali Festival to write about?

Rina: When I was a child growing up in India, Diwali was not only the most important festival and lasted the longest, but it was also my favourite. There was something magical about Diwali — the lights, the shopping, the sparklers, the fireworks, and mithai, the sweets that gave me the sweet tooth. My favourite memory is watching my mom pour mustard oil into diyas and arranging cotton wicks in them. She set them in large platters that I eagerly carried to my father. I stood by his side as he lit the diyas and placed them around the house. After that I would stand back and let myself be dazzled by the lamps lighting up the darkest night of the month.

When I got married, I moved to Canada. For many years after leaving India, Diwali lost its luster. Friends took turns hosting Diwali dinner and that was it. No lights, no sparklers, no prayers. Years passed.

One day, my daughter Amrita, who was in grade one at the time, came home and asked me: *Mom, what is Diwali?*

Her question made me realize what I had left behind and what I could lose if I didn't do anything about it. Ever since that day I have celebrated Diwali with such devotion that even my non-Indian friends and their children have grown to love the festival.

So, when the opportunity to write this book came my way, I felt goddess Lakshmi was shining a light on me.

Frontlist: What writing approach did you apply while writing this book?

Rina: The book is divided into four sections:

1. What is Diwali?
2. The History of Indian Immigration in Canada
3. The Evolution of Diwali
4. Diwali Around the World.

In the first section I explored the legends of Lord Rama, Lord Krishna, Goddess Lakshmi, and the five days of Diwali.

I also wrote about the traditions of the Hindu Diwali, Sikh Diwali and Jain Diwali.

Every section has one personal story.

The second section talks about the history of immigration to Canada from India including the story of Komagata Maru.

The third section to me was very exciting because it explained how Diwali celebrations have changed over the years. There is one section called: *Mithai gets a Makeover* in which I talk about how *The Wall Street Journal* picked up the success story of westernized versions of mithai being created in New Delhi like the laddoo and mango glazed donuts and firecracker shaped chocolates packaged in retro style boxes. My favourite part was writing about the widows of Vrindavan and how they celebrated *Diwali* for the first time in 2014 since they became widows.

The last section explains how Diwali is celebrated in India— in Jaipur, Goa, Varanasi and in foreign lands like Nepal, Great Britain, Singapore, and Thailand. My favourite part was writing about Diwali in the slums of Mumbai.



While doing research I stumbled upon the website *Dirty Wall Project*, an NGO run by Kane Ryan and his mother Cindy Ryan who happen to be Canadians. Every year around Diwali they take the kids of Saki Naka on a “picnic”. I wrote about their 2014 trip to a posh mall where they had McDonalds meal for the first time!

Kids are fascinated when I read that story to them. Along with my students I had fundraised for this cause, and we managed to send 10 kids to school for a year.

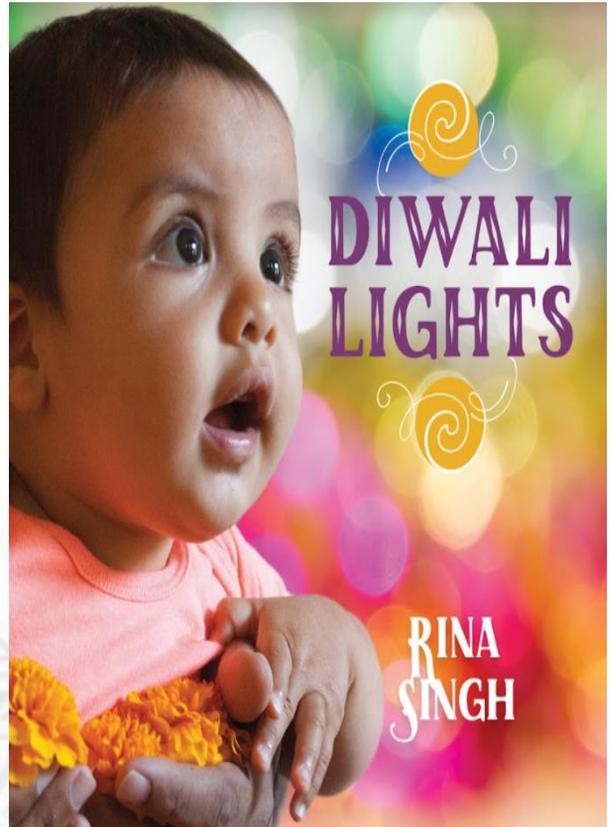
Children’s literature is written with child readers in mind. It is often written with children of a particular age group in mind, taking their reading ability into account. It is also written on topics that would most likely be of interest to children.

Literature overall is not written with child readers in mind. The language does not make concessions to the reading ability of children, and the plots and characters are usually written with adult readers in mind.

In children’s literature, whatever the situation, it is seen from the child’s point of view and the child solves the problems in the situation—not the adults. It’s very empowering for a child to solve his or her own problems.

Frontlist: How did you draft the whole story and mold it in a way that kids can easily resonate with?

Rina: This book took me almost one and half year to write. There was a lot of research to do and for personal stories, I met with people or connected with them online to get their stories. The book has some spectacular photographs. The variety of information — the stories, the legends, the facts, recipes, and photographs inform and entertain the children at the same time. The book has been out for a few years, and it has resonated with children.



She has written two books on Diwali. Second book is known as Diwali Lights

Frontlist: You've written two books on Diwali. How is this book different from the previous Diwali Book?

Rina: Diwali Lights is a board book for babies and toddlers. It introduces little ones to this brilliant festival through dazzling photographs and lyrical prose.

It starts like this:

My jaan, my life,
it's Diwali today
Open your eyes
and greet the day
and the baby spends the day with the parent—
—looking at and learning about Diwali traditions.

Frontlist: As a Children Books Author, what have you learned so far. Share some advice to aspiring authors.

Rina: Writing comes from someplace deep inside us. Most writers write because they must. They invest themselves emotionally in their stories. They need to fall in love with their characters and struggle with plots and then polish them to make them the best stories they are capable of writing.

First thing is to WRITE and keep writing. You become a writer by writing.

First drafts are bad. They are bad even for the most famous authors. Don't be too hard on yourself too soon. Let your story find its way into the world. Nourish it by writing it again and again. Write as many drafts as you need to. With each draft, you'll learn more.

Have diverse interests. Have a hobby and love a lot of things. Be curious about the world around you. That's where you will find your ideas.

Find someone to mentor you. Yes, you need encouragement to flourish but you also need someone to look at your work objectively and critically. It could be a teacher, a parent or a seasoned writer friend.

It may sound like a cliché advice but Read! Read! Read! It's vital to fill that well of creativity within you. By reading other books, you'll learn what works, what doesn't, and trigger new ideas. Read different genres – fiction, non-fiction, biographies, poetry – especially poetry. It brings lyricism to your work. And who doesn't love that?

Frontlist: As a Children Books Author, what have you learned so far. Share some advice to aspiring authors.

Rina: That's the hardest question to answer—I have so many! The poet Pablo Neruda has shaped my poetic sensibility. Gulzar, whose work I have translated (*Silences*, Rupa Publishing) has taught me to always write from the heart.

For children, my favourites are Jen Bryant who is also a poet and has written brilliant biographies and novels in verse. From her I learnt how to write in a lyrical manner. And from Amy Novesky, a gifted writer who also happens to be one of my editors I have learnt to write concisely and to pack a lot of soul into writing. I am still a work in progress!



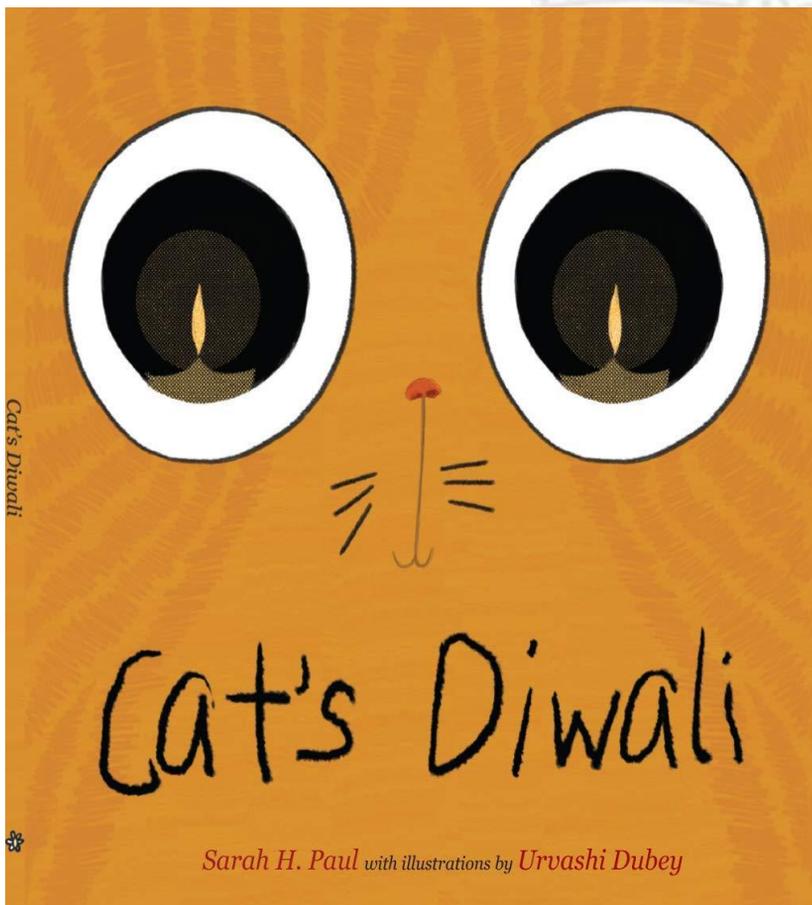


Urvashi Dubey

The Illustrator of the award-winning book *Cat's Diwali*, is not only a passionate illustrator but also a mum to two tabby cats.

Boasting 6 out of 7 DLB titles to her credit, Urvashi's talents go beyond illustrating. She lends a distinctive, personal style to the book that is unmissable. Although she has illustrated multiple titles, *Cat's Diwali* was her debut and her most cherished book.

About the Book: *Cat's Diwali*



Cat is the furry family member of an Indian home. She is just like any other cat - she likes to eat, play and make a mess. But what changes for Cat on Diwali? Can she go about her day as she normally does? Told through a house pet's eyes, this simple story takes us through what our four-legged companions experience during our very human celebrations. Children will especially enjoy watching their favourite festival through the eyes of a festive feline. 'A treasured little keepsake for little ones this Diwali' It's purr-fect for all! "A lesson in probing into the humanness animals can bring about and the humanity they ought to be shown" Mid-Day.

Frontlist: Tell us something more about Cat's Diwali Book?

Urvashi: This story is a different take on our favourite festival. It is told through a house pet's perspective and takes us through what our four-legged furry friends experience during our human celebrations of the festival.

Frontlist: Why did you choose the animal Cat to represent the Diwali Occasion? What kind of illustrations are used in this book to describe the Cat during Human Celebrations?

Urvashi: To be honest, it could have easily been a Dog's Diwali or a Bird's Diwali but, I was able to contribute best with a cat since I have a pet cat of my own - When I saw the manuscript, I knew it had to be an orange tabby and my pet cat was my inspiration - I drew from instances where I saw my cat making a mess or getting entangled in all sorts of things. They made for funny illustrations that I just knew children would enjoy! I kept the character style simple and graphic to make it easier for little readers to recreate and draw on their own.

Frontlist: How would readers resonate with this Book? What kind of social message does 'Cat's Diwali' indicate?

Urvashi: Told through a house pet's eyes, this simple story takes us through what our four-legged companions experience during our very human celebrations. Children will especially enjoy watching their favourite festival through the eyes of a festive feline.

Diwali at its core, is celebrated for its values - to reaffirm our commitment to family and the community we live in, and this book reinforces these values in a unique entertaining way - without being preachy. There are messages of empathy, love, grassroots activism with undertones of our guiding principle - *'be the change you want to see in the world.'*

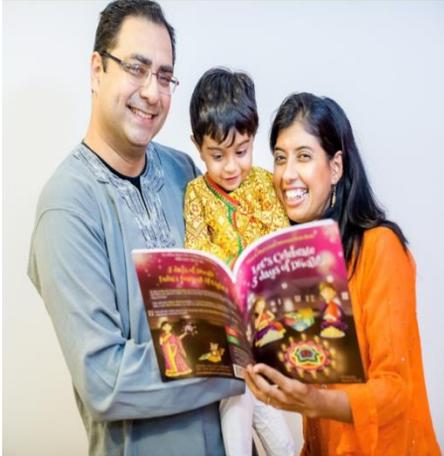
Frontlist: How did you do all the research for writing this book?

Urvashi: For this book, there was no research per se, but I tried to recall my childhood Diwali and recreate my own childhood memories and experiences. Like spending hours and hours over a rangoli only for a naughty friend to walk all over it. Or how a sudden firecracker would frighten me to the core or even the simple joy of hanging lanterns and stealing hot food from the kitchen!

Frontlist: How has been your experience as a Debut Author thus far? Share any challenges that you faced.

Urvashi: For as long as I can remember I've dreamt of a career in children's literature. I worked on a few projects after college, but because I was inspired by so many things then (and continue to be), the most challenging part was trying to find my voice and style. Until Daffodil Lane Books and I found each other and it just felt like the right fit. While working on the book, I tried many different styles but narrowing down on just one was tough, as I loved them all so much. I found this tricky as a beginner, but I've learned over the 6 out of 7 books I've done with DLB, to stay committed to my aesthetic while also incorporating my editor and author's insight.

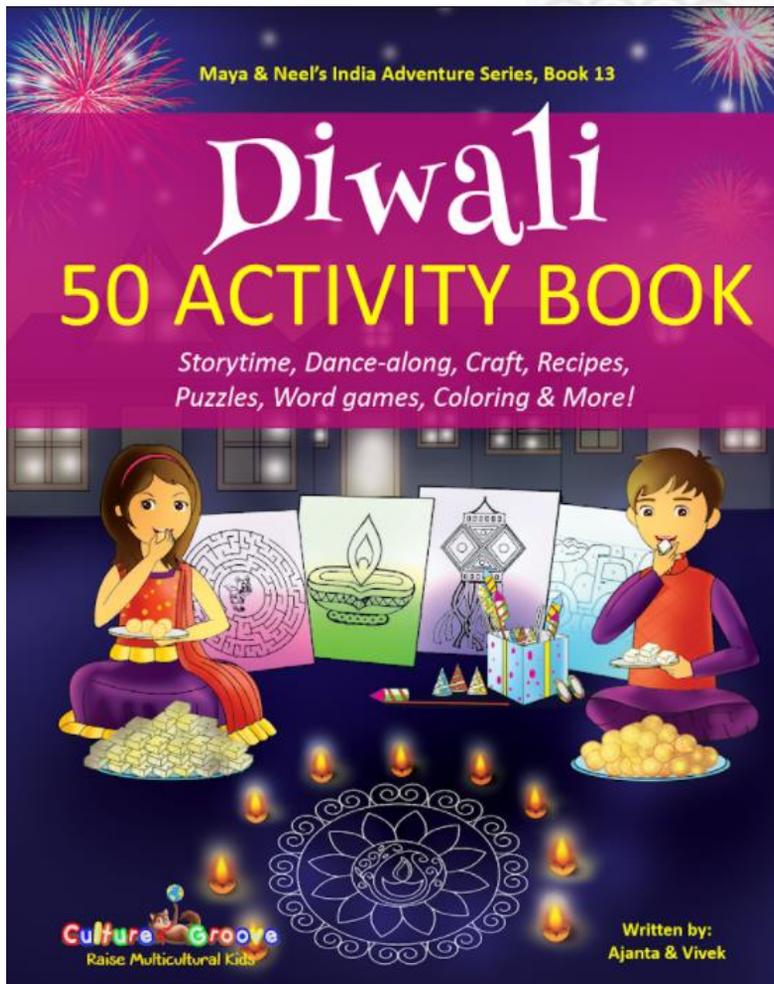




Ajanta Chakraborty

Ajanta Chakraborty and Vivek Kumar are the award-winning co-authors of Maya & Neel's India Adventure Series with 13 titles. Several of their titles have been Amazon bestsellers with their Diwali book ranking #387 out of all 8 million books. They are also the co-founders of Bollywood Groove, an Indian dance, fitness and education company in Chicago that has been spreading the joy of Indian culture to kids and adults for more than 10 years.

About the Book: Diwali 50 - Activity Book



Immerse yourself in endless hours of fun and learning with this Diwali 50-Activity book. Celebrate Diwali along with Maya, Neel and their cute little partner, Chintu the squirrel, through Storytime, Dance-along, Craft, Recipes, Puzzles, Word games, Coloring & More! Designed for a global audience, the activities are fun and meaningful, reinforcing the cultural concept of Diwali and it's wonderful celebration. This book is part of a Diwali book series that also includes two storybooks: Let's Celebrate 5 Days of Diwali and Let's Learn about Ramayana, the story of Diwali.

Frontlist: Tell us something about your book?

Ajanta: The Diwali 50-Activity book provides 50 fun and engaging activities for kids to learn all about Diwali through Storytime, Dance-along, Craft, Recipes, Puzzles, Word games, Coloring & More!

Frontlist: Why did you use the occasion of Diwali as the subject to write a book?

Ajanta: Our books have two missions: for kids of Indian origin to connect even more strongly with their roots; and to help parents and educators of non-Indian kids Raise Multicultural Kids! A kids' book can be successful only if it is engaging and exciting and nothing is more exciting to kids than a celebration of any kind. This is why so many of our books focus on festivals including our three books on Diwali.

Frontlist: How did you get the idea to use mathematical activities to illustrate Diwali Celebration in the book?

Ajanta: Kids love fun hands-on activities! The games and puzzles in the book continue to reinforce the cultural concepts of Diwali and even without realizing it, the kids internalize the learnings.

Frontlist: What would children be learning from this Diwali Book Series?

Ajanta: Our Diwali book series comprises of three books and kids will learn different aspects of the festival from each book. Our book "Let's Celebrate 5 Days of Diwali!" teaches kids what happens on each of the five days. Our latest release "Let's learn about Ramayana, the story of Diwali!" teaches children about the story behind the Diwali celebration. Finally, our Diwali 50-Activity book presents 50 fun and easy ideas to celebrate Diwali.

Frontlist: What writing approach did you apply to write this book as children were the target readers?

Ajanta: We write all of our books with the following goals in mind: the book has to be fun and interesting; it has to explore a concept at just the right depth - not too detailed and not too shallow; it has to retell stories for a global audience without any scary parts; it has to be strictly cultural and not religious.

Frontlist: When did you both start writing for Children's audience and did your child encourage you to write this Diwali Series?

Ajanta: We published our first book (Let's Celebrate 5 Days of Diwali!) in 2016. The book received an overwhelmingly positive response and went on to rank #387 in all of Amazon's 8 million books. While our son was only 2 at the time, he definitely added to the inspiration to create cultural content about India that can be suitable for children around the world. From then on, we went on to publish 12 more books (CultureGroove.com/books).

Frontlist: Have you faced any difficulties while writing as it is a children's book and persuading them to do something is a daunting task?

Ajanta: This is where our prior experience came in handy. Vivek and I have spent more than a decade running a dance and cultural education company in Chicago called Bollywood Groove (BollyGroove.com/virtual). Each year, hundreds of students studied with us, giving us ample experience in how to engage kids.





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Ashraf Karayath

He has more than 25 years of extensive business experience coupled with a background in Management Philosophy. During his professional career, he developed a keen interest in the subjects of Principle-centered Leadership and Spirituality. This sparked an exploration of the timeless knowledge of ancient Indian culture, bringing forth his passion for writing. And therefore, *A Journey Beyond* came to light.

Frontlist: What inspired you to learn about Indian Ancient Culture?

Ashraf: It was about 17 years ago that I had the opportunity to read the Ashtavakra Gita, and I found it surprisingly enlightening in many ways. In it I found the roots of many of the philosophies that I have studied, such as: New Age Science, Theory of the Law of Attraction, Existentialism and Quantum Physics. When I came across the profound message of the Ashtavakra Gita, I came up with the idea to write about it.

Frontlist: What message do you want to convey with the book?

Ashraf: “Janaka and Ashtavakra” is a novel that tells the story of the ancient King Janaka obsessed with his quest for spiritual liberation. Janaka is the father of Sita in Ramayana in Bala Kanda. My story is about his turbulent life, the impending war in his kingdom, and the betrayal and intrigue in the mysterious world of his palace. When the entire world believes that calamity is imminent, Janaka clings to his deeply held conviction and belief that there is a connection between what is inside and outside of a person and realizes that war is not a solution. Thus, he delves into himself with his Guru Ashtavakra, unraveling a new world and finally a new reality unfolds for the kingdom and the palace. Based on the great Ramayana epic of our living narrative tradition, my novel renews and deepens the characters

loved by modern readers. The story also tells how a person can remain calm in each crisis and dive deep into himself to find solutions to his problems.

Frontlist: How do you view religion and spirituality? How far spirituality is relevant in the modern age?

Ashraf: I believe the word spirituality is often misunderstood. When people hear about spirituality, they usually associate it with religion, a sort of dogma, ideology, or self-righteous morality. Some people associate it with strange ways of clothing, a strange way of living, or extravagant paraphernalia related to cults or movements. My view is coming from a different perspective—that the subject of spirituality is so simple and the idea is to make the whole process easy, so I am trying to explain those steps through a story. I believe that everybody has a spark of divinity and everybody deserves to be enlightened, and this is what Ashtavakra advises to the King in the story.

Every one of us has an energy stream incessantly flowing, but we don’t realize it due to our bondages. To me, spirituality means how one can connect to that energy stream and use it as his/her guidance system, so that we can find more meaning in what we are doing in our day to day life. Good artists, scientists, businessmen are highly spiritual, as they have realized their potential consciously or unconsciously; hence they pursue what they do.

Frontlist: In one of the interviews you said, “I realized that it is not hard work that makes a person successful, but inspired action that comes from within when a person realizes their innate strength and vision. Please explain.

Ashraf: Most management theories deal with quick-fix approaches, and what a business leader needs is wisdom that really connects them to his inner vision. We do not know that wellness is our essential nature because we have been programmed to believe that we must fight to be successful. Being spiritual is exploring the world within us, understanding the innate strength we have, and expressing ourselves in the fullness of who we are.

Frontlist: Please elaborate what you said: “The Ashtavakra lessons were more advanced and insightful than what (Jean Paul) Sartre or other thinkers told us at the beginning of the 20th century.”

Ashraf: Existential thinkers who lived in the 19th century and after the war, had negative philosophical conclusions. Ashtavakra Gita gives answers to many of these absolute questions about life.

Ashtavakra lessons, when properly understood, will set you free and lead you to infinite mastery in a matter of seconds. You don't have to live a rustic life or do any hard exercise. When you have the proper knowledge, you will be released. And I think it's the essence of life, and that's what I believe about this book.

In my book, the protagonist Janaka seeks enlightenment outside of himself until, with the help of his guru, he realizes that peace and enlightenment are within him. He goes through a lot of turbulence and manages to stay calm and composed in the midst of the crisis.

Frontlist: Do you think today's world that is facing a lot of challenges has a lot to learn from the ancient Indian wisdom?

Ashraf: Definitely. If we read ancient scriptures, we'll often find knowledge that are deep and timeless, and may draw lessons to affect our current situations. When the entire world is gripped by fear and unpredictability, people lose their expectations and faith, and that they will have anxiety, stress and fear. These are all apprehensive emotions and that they will impact our psychological state very badly, which successively , will affect our system .This is the time where we all need to reckon ourselves to the strength of our inner wellbeing, which is dominant and inherent.

Frontlist: How is it different from regular mythological fiction?

Ashraf: At first glance, it may seem like a mythological story, but it's a story about the search for knowledge, liberation, emancipation, awareness and more. Janaka understood the follies and the insignificance of the luxury that surrounded him and he was also a saint who always looked for the right way to free himself and enlighten himself.

Frontlist: What is the philosophy of Ashtavakra?

Ashraf: The Ashtavakra Gita is an extraordinary discourse on non-dualism, consciousness, emancipation, and the absolute realities of life. The Ashtavakra Gita's knowledge will assist a seeker in elevating himself from the relative to the absolute, paving the way to liberation. It teaches how a person can have control on his consciousness in a matter of seconds or a flash.

Frontlist: What obstacles have you faced while writing this book?

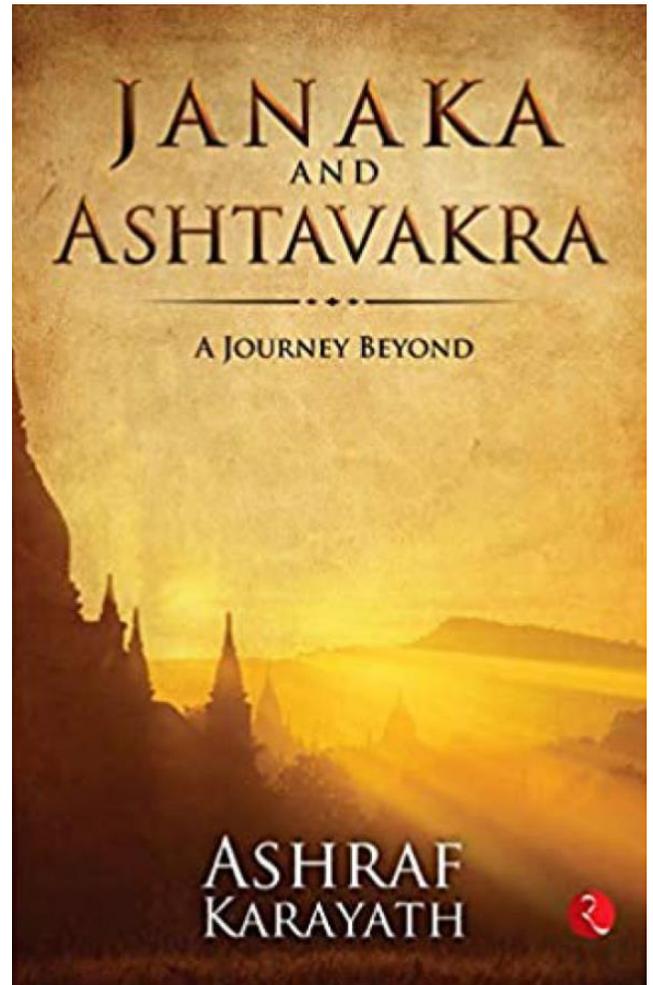
Ashraf: I had only a dream, a notion. But I nurtured that idea and started developing it. Janaka's story was fragmented in various scriptures and puranas, and Ashtavakra Gita was difficult to understand. It was difficult to incorporate Ashtavakra's messages into a

novel, making it dramatic and fascinating for the reader without breaking from the primary plot.

Frontlist: There are so many books available in the market about Ashtavakra, what is unique about him in your Book?

Ashraf: Although there are a few books in English regarding Ashtavakra philosophy, they are neither readable nor easy to learn, and if one does not understand them thoroughly, one may be misled. The mission and purpose of my work is to simplify subjects such as consciousness, enlightenment, and how one can achieve peace and a balanced life as covered in Ashtavakra Gita (The Song of Ashtavakra); to give them within the context of an engaging story, so that every reader can understand them with ease.

Ashraf Karayath was born in Nadapuram, a village in Kerala, India. After finishing his education in the early 90's, he migrated to Dubai—a dream city for most people of his time. Ashraf's formal education includes Master of Arts in English literature from Farooq College, Calicut University.



About the Book: The story of a sage Ashtavakra and his disciple king Janaka is one of the most gripping yet unknown episodes from the Ramayana. A young boy Ashtavakra goes to king Janaka's Court to debate the kingdom's most learned sages but is ridiculed by the courtiers for his deformed body. After the boy triumphs in the debate, Janaka realizes that the boy has an extraordinary intellect and becomes his disciple. While Janaka is obsessed with his quest for spiritual liberation, a treacherous plan unfolds inside the secretive world of the royal palace. Very soon war clouds gather on the horizon of Mithila, but all Janaka does is devote more and more time to the young sage. Even though the whole world believes a calamity is imminent, Janaka stays on the path to spiritual enlightenment. Ultimately, with Ashtavakra's guidance, the king enters the realm of a new world which alters the reality for him and his kingdom. This novel is rooted in ancient Indian spiritual wisdom and philosophy, but with new interpretations of the concepts of liberation, enlightenment, consciousness and the realities of life. Among others, it seeks to answer the question: is everything we see indeed an illusion? This compelling story sheds light on the modern readers' existential questions, leading them to relate to the king and his struggles.



Devika Das

A bestselling author, she has 5 publications under her name. Devika self-published her first book titled '7 Vows of Marriage' on Amazon Kindle. Her poetry book titled 'Reminiscence' has received critical acclaim and her poems have been published in national dailies and featured in anthologies too. Her recent title 'The Mind Game' has received appreciation from India and abroad as well. She has participated in key literary events at Hyderabad and around India as well.

Frontlist: Tell us something about yourself and the book – 'The Mind Game'?

Devika: I am a free thinker and a passionate writer and theatre artist. I am working for an IT Company at Hyderabad.

The Mind Game is a book on spreading awareness about mental health and importance of emotional intelligence.

Frontlist: 'The Mind Game' Book helps to master emotions and deals with stress. Have you felt it difficult to handle emotions? However, how did you overcome this?

Devika: Yes. I have dealt with difficult emotions, sometimes successfully and sometimes not. I have a strong support system that has built over time. They are my go-to persons when i am in trouble. Now, disappointment does stay for more than a day in my case.

Frontlist: You are an IT Professional, theatre artist and also an author. In a nutshell, a versatile person. What inspired you to be an author in the first place?

Devika: I like to explore different things in life. It is a continuous journey. I guess I have become a Pro at Time and Energy Management.

Frontlist: Your First book – '7 vows of marriage' is self published. What are your views on the emergence of self publishing in

the Publishing Industry?

Devika: The industry is too competitive. Every write may not be selected by the traditional publishers. So, self-publishing has given them hope to make their writing public.

Frontlist: What obstacles have you faced in your writing career thus far?

Devika: 1. Finding a good publisher.
2. Book marketing
3. Starting the writing process.

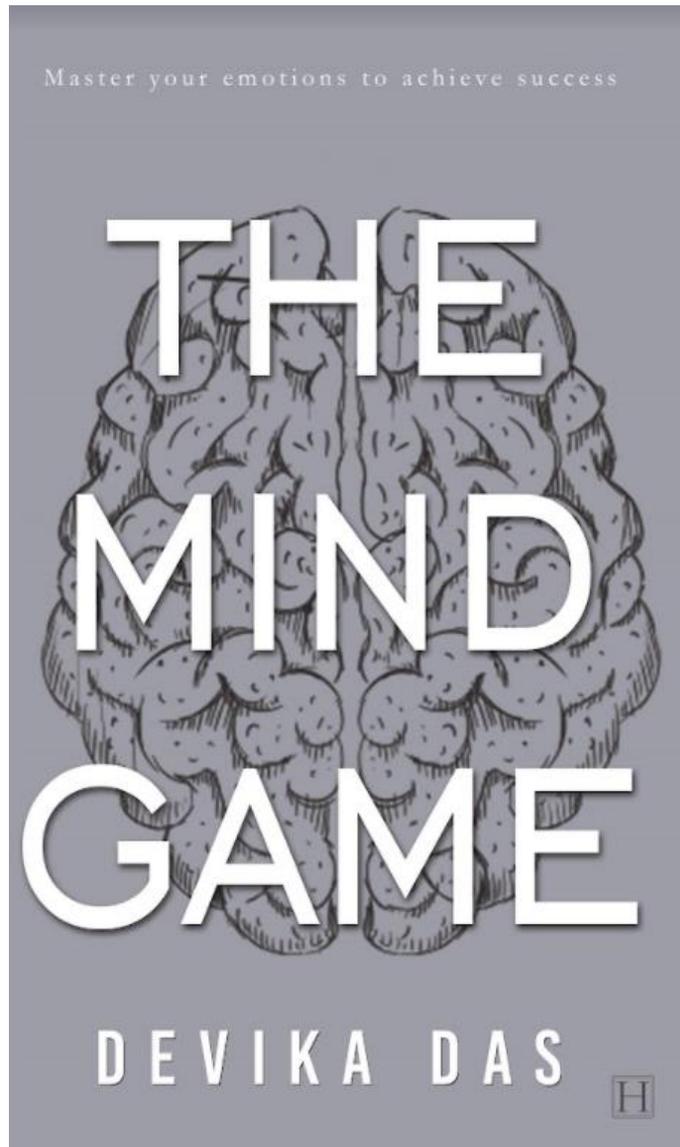
Frontlist: Have you started on your next book? Share something about it?

Devika: Yes. I am currently doing research for my new book.

Frontlist: Who's your favorite authors and how do they affect your writing style?

Devika: The list is long. Agatha Christie, Arthur Conan Doyle, RK Narayan, Ruskin Bond, Paulo Coelho etc. I haven't been inspired any 1 author. I have liked bits and pieces of each.

Devika pursues her passion for acting and is an active theatre artiste in Hyderabad and has featured in several short films.



About the Book: Happiness, stress, ecstasy or depression, it's all a mind game. As long as our mind is under our control, everything else is. That's what *The Mind Game* is all about. It is not an average self-help book that preaches life-enhancing methodologies based on complex science or long philosophical verses. The book's genius lies in its simplicity. It offers quick, actionable and instantly applicable tips that will help readers lead better lives, instantly.



Jayanthi Sankar

Her critically acclaimed short stories collection – Dangling Gandhi was the winner out of the seven finalists in the category of fiction: short story in 2020 International Book Award American book fest. Literary Titan award is another international award it was bestowed with apart from a few nominations like NE8x 2020, The Indian Awaz-Guwahati 2020, Voice of words-Dehradun. She's been published in several magazines and ezines like the indianruminations, museindia, The Wagon, in Opinion.

Frontlist: Tell us something about you and your book 'Tabula Rasa' as well?

Jayanthi: As a passionate lover of fiction, both in writing and reading, I believe in the ever expanding scope of my creative world. While living in my fictional world, I interact with the characters I form and shape most of the time. So, I truly live and love the process, and when I start writing, I'm all into experimenting, both in form and content, especially in my storytelling. For example, since my previous work turned out to be feminine and feministic, I challenged myself to write my subsequent work focusing on the male-centric world, which has spread out such a refreshing world for me in Tabula Rasa. I enjoyed the process, so my readers would love my work. And Tabula Rasa is a Singapore-based, historical, postmodern novel is now ready to meet its readers.

Frontlist: 'Tabula Rasa' outlines the history of Singapore and male psychology. Is everything depicted through the stories of men - Li Wei and Muthu? How did you come up with the idea of a story?

Jayanthi: The protagonist Li Wei and the second main character Muthu are vital characters. There are many male characters in the novel. My novels are stories and beyond. Readers who are after only stories will not enjoy my novels. My novels are not those you read and forget because I believe stories

should play a more important role than just being a story. They must bring some shift in the thinking patterns of my readers. Those with the open mind to try new genres and storytelling will enter the world of my novel. It's the same for every work of mine.

Frontlist: You discussed Colonial Singapore and comprehended some sights of 14 - 15th Century. However, there must be an abundance of research and how did you research the key points. Share something.

Jayanthi: Tabula Rasa was supposed to be published before my previous novel. So, 'Misplaced Heads' had cut the queue. Around the same time last year, I'd resumed my work on the chapters after several years. So, it was like starting anew. I've been carrying Tabula Rasa in me for a decade or more, including research, reading, and interacting with people. Those times, we used to stay in another estate, and that's where I had an elderly Chinese uncle who used to be fond of talking. He used to start sharing so much the moment he saw me. And, he knew I would eventually write them. His stories used to be amazingly endearing. I have had innumerable opportunities to interact with transient/migrant workers. So, research for me is never only for 'key points,' but it is a process over a long period because writing a novel is a process for me.

Frontlist: When did you start the journey of

being an author?

Jayanthi: I have authored three books in three years. I had my first collection of short stories ready in hand, sending proposals, collecting rejections for over 3-4 years, and it finally got published by zero degree publishers. They have given me incredible support, and their trust in me shows, they have published three of my books in consecutive years.

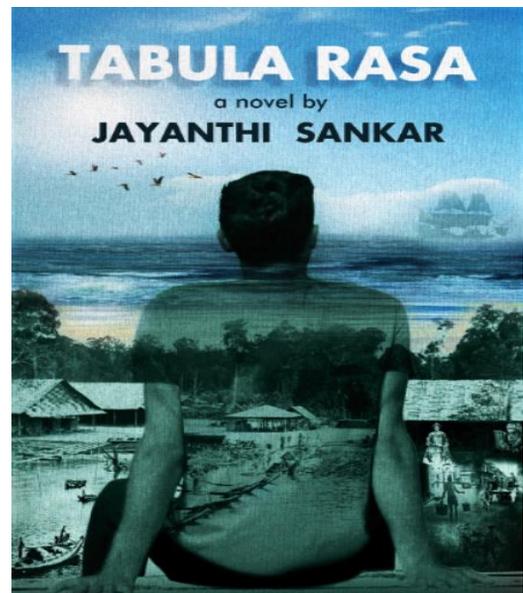
Frontlist: What helped you the most to shape your writing career?

Jayanthi: Reading. Reading brought the writer out of me and shaped me and shaped me as the person I am. I have always felt reading as my world, my home and my saviour, and everything. If I am the most grateful for something in life, it is reading. That's the boon of my life that has redeemed me time and again. I live thousands of lives through reading. And that's precisely why I owe my entire life to the NLB of Singapore, and I am not exaggerating here. I read for the joy of it, not for some incentives, not for Instagram, not for some glamour, not for bragging, not for some instant gratification, but the pleasurable experience that widened my mind and perspectives. I have been reviewing works of fellow authors and author friends in recent years, sparingly, though, in social media.

Frontlist: You've been working in this industry for a long time. What changes have you seen in the Book Industry?

Jayanthi: Reading is no more like it used to be, and that saddens me profoundly. And to be active amidst such circumstances brings down my spirits at times. Decades ago, when I used

to read voraciously, like a child, and went on to review countless books, for the pure joy of reading, I would never have thought that reading and reviewing would turn out to be an insensitive affair. I've still not been out of the shock of watching young people constantly approaching me through SM either for a free copy or a paid review service. They disappear the moment I decline both. Rather than using SM as a tool, a vast population emerges that live for SM. They read, jump, cry, laugh, eat, talk, and breath only for SM or mostly pretend to do them all, more for peer pressure. It can sometimes be traumatic for a person like me who prefers to keep personal stuff off the professional parts of life. It's more about showing off for them rather than genuinely experiencing. Genuine, organic readers like me are now endangered species. And yet, my passion pushes me forward into my creative world that alone redeems me.



About the Book: With the protagonist Li Wei and the secondary character Muthu, this postmodern historical novel transverses two centuries and gives a glimpse of the 14-15th century. What are Li Wei's challenges as a self-employed local, and what does Muthu have in mind as he lands in Singapore as a migrant worker? While the former face many issues with women and relationships, how does the latter manage his relationships fairly easily? How are these two guys different in nature? Do they have any similarities? Li Wei has other friends like Adnan and Suresh, who are at loggerheads, yet close to him. While this men-centric Singapore novel manages to capture their lives, it depicts colonial Singapore at its best, picturizing the island's transformation and diversity.

October Events

The Frankfurt Book Fair 2021



Frankfurt Book Fair also known as the Frankfurter Buchmesse, the fair opened from October 20th to October 24th in a reduced capacity in accordance with the latest coronavirus safety measures. Since its inception in 1949, Frankfurt Book Fair has grown to be the biggest book fair in the world and that's covered in the massive spectrum of products that are the focus of the event.

Frankfurt Buchmesse, as it's known in German, goes well beyond fiction and magazines. Publishers showcase non-fiction, religion, youth and children's books, science and technology, art books, tourism, visual art and international literature. This is where you come to negotiate and sell rights to buyers from every single literary market.

Riyadh International Book Fair 2021



The Riyadh International Book Fair (RIBF) is held annually in Riyadh and represents a platform for companies, institutions, and individuals working and interested in the literature, publishing, and translation sectors to present their books and services. In addition to the book fair's primary role in promoting and developing the passion for reading in the community, it raises awareness of knowledge, culture, literature, and art, by motivating individuals to visit the book fair in order to view and acquire cultural, literary, and educational works and to attend conferences, workshops, seminars, cultural, literary and artistic lectures and the initiatives accompanying the fair.

Helsinki Book Fair 2021



Helsinki Book Fair is one of the most important events for lovers of literature and book industry professionals in Finland. It brings together the brightest stars of Finnish literature and the most promising new talents.

Helsinki Book Fair features 14 programme venues and almost 40 international literary guests. The programme consists of 900 debates and interviews, In addition to authors, speakers include politicians, artists, journalists and prominent figures. The total number of performers is more than 1,100.

More than 300 publishers, bookstores and second-hand booksellers take part in Helsinki Book Fair every year. Wine and Food Fair will be arranged at the same time with the Book Fair.

Upcoming Events



Sharjah Book Fair

The Sharjah International Book Fair (SIBF) will showcase 15 million books from 1,576 publishing houses in its upcoming 40th edition, said Ahmed bin Rakkad Al Ameri, chairman of the Sharjah Book Authority. **Held under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Dr Sultan bin Muhammad Al Qasimi, Member of the Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah, SIBF 2021** will bring together 85 writers, artists and creatives from 22 countries, and present 970 events, including cultural sessions, shows, performances, seminars and workshops.



Guadalajara International Book Fair

The most awaited literary event of RIYADH and the most important book fair in the Middle East began on 1st October till 10th October, 2021.

The book fair features hundreds of national and international publishing houses, distributors and retail booksellers to facilitate and promote exchanges between professionals and represent latest releases along with vintage books. The exhibitors at the book fair put on display a large number of books on Islam, Arab culture, history, medicine, law, science and technology in Arabic, English, French, Turkish etc.



China Shanghai International Children's Book

China Shanghai International Children's Book will take place on 19 November to 21 November at the Shanghai World Expo Exhibition and Convention Centre (SWEECC).

The fair will cover 25,000 square metres, and we expect more than 450 domestic and international exhibitors to meet with more than 30,000 professional visitors and readers. We can't wait to meet you in Shanghai in this autumn.

Launched in 2013, China Shanghai International Children's Book Fair (CCBF) is the only fair fully dedicated to books and specific contents for children aged from 0 to 16 in Asia Pacific.

In 2020, CCBF was held as scheduled, making it one of the very few international book fairs to take place physically since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. It brought together 386 exhibitors including 99 overseas exhibitors from 21 countries and territories. In three days, the total number of visitors reached 18,963, among which 8,305 were professionals from 17 nationalities, representing publishing, educational and other children's entertainment-related industries. Simultaneously, online matchmaking meetings and online broadcasting events gathered about 520,000 views.



**Inside story: Maa Anand Sheela,
Author - 'By your own rules'**

Frontlist: What helped you the most to shape your writing career?

Maa Sheela: "By my own rules" talks about my life's ups and downs after I left Bhagwan in 1985. How I got my life in the face of world's rejection and negative atmosphere. The basic values of life had held me together in dark days of my life. The motivation to find way for my future survival is narrated in this book. Some important events of my time with Bhagwan also may be there. People have asked many questions in the past 35 years. Many of them are same. I address them in this book.

Frontlist: I am you, you can't be forgotten. But how would you like to be remembered in history?

Maa Sheela: I have no expectations from people or history. They can remember me or forget me. For me both are Same.

Frontlist: If there is one teaching of Bhagwan that you will choose above everything else, what would that be?

Maa Sheela: Bhagwan's all teachings are important to understand and live life. Life gives an opportunity to use all his teachings."We create our own hell and heaven" feels the right teaching. Recognition that a beautiful rose must live and grow up among thorns....Beauty of Bhagwan's teachings is they are always there to assist me in crisis.

Frontlist: What new will people learn from your new book?

Maa Sheela: Peoples learning from my book depends on them. If they want to learn there is plenty, they can learn. For one they can learn not to judge others. They can learn the value of being there for the other for now.

Frontlist: Why did you choose Germany to settle down?

Maa Sheela: I chose to be in Switzerland. I am a Swiss citizen. Germany is where I returned to

after my imprisonment as my lawyer lived in Germany.

Frontlist: How do you think Bhagwan's legacy should be taken forward to the newer generation? By you or by others.

Maa Sheela: Bhagwan's legacy will be carried by his teachings. They are available by books or internet. He was and still is. In spite of death he has created his own international legacy. He is a man who cannot be ignored.

Frontlist: Of all the things that you have been blamed for, which of them would you have liked to do but actually didn't?

Maa Sheela: I have been accused of keeping Bhagwan safe and protected from harm until 1985. I put his vision and his life's work in action. I was able to do that as I was in love with him. Credit goes to my love for him. Love was the crime, and I am proud of committing it.

Frontlist: Could you please share the intricacies of your relationship with Bhagwan? Explain some good and ugly parts.

Maa Sheela: My feelings for Bhagwan were and are unexplainable for me. Any word to describe will fall short. This feeling was not of this world. When I fell in love with him at age of 21, it was a moment I had not lived before. It was clear in this moment if death came to me, I had lived a full and complete life. It seemed life and death had become one. I felt deep trust in the moment. It was the moment of love and trust. Life suddenly became vibrant. Love became my strength. In this love I could move mountains. Bhagwan's vision of creating community where all colors, religions, all walks of life, country living in harmony together made sense and it still makes the only sense came alive not just in me but all around Bhagwan. There was no place near Bhagwan for bitterness and ugliness. We all were ready from flower powers creativity and free life. City of Rajneeshpuram was born from that love and Creativity.

Zanzibari novelist becomes first black African writer in 35 years to win prestigious award

The Nobel prize in literature has been awarded to the novelist Abdulrazak Gurnah, for his “uncompromising and compassionate penetration of the effects of colonialism and the fate of the refugee in the gulf between cultures and continents”.

Gurnah grew up on one of the islands of Zanzibar before fleeing persecution and arriving in England as a student in the 1960s. He has published 10 novels as well as a number of short stories. Anders Olsson, chair of the Nobel committee, No black African writer has won the prize since Wole Soyinka in 1986. Gurnah is the first black writer to win since Toni Morrison in 1993.

Gurnah’s fourth novel, *Paradise*, was shortlisted for the Booker prize in 1994, and his sixth, *By the Sea*, was longlisted in 2001. Olsson said that *Paradise* “has obvious reference to Joseph Conrad in its portrayal of the innocent young hero Yusuf’s journey to the heart of darkness”. He has consistently and with great compassion penetrated the effects of colonialism in East Africa, and its effects on the lives of uprooted and migrating individuals,” Olsson told journalists in Stockholm. He was in the kitchen when he was informed of his win, he said that he believed it was a wind-up.

Growing up in Zanzibar, an archipelago off the coast of Tanzania, Abdulrazak Gurnah never considered the possibility that he might one day be a writer. “It never occurred to me,” he said in an interview. “It wasn’t something you could say as you were growing up, ‘I want to be a writer.’” He assumed he would become “something useful, like an engineer.” “The thing that motivated the whole experience of writing for me was this idea of losing your place in the world,” he said.



**Abdulrazak
Gurnah**

***Nobel Prize Winner
Literature***

PragatiE Vichaar Literature Festival 3.0



A literature festival outlined to capture and raise awareness or promote action in prominent social issues from the eyes of the authors. It is a flagship conference that was established in the year 2020 during the 1st Virtual Delhi Book Fair. It aims to bring together the best of authors from across the country & worldwide to initiate a forum of discussion and intellectual debates around various topics that concern the publishers, the authors, the readers and the society at large. **PragatiE Vichaar Literature Festival will open its doors on 4th of January till 5th January 2022.**

PragatiE Vichaar Literature festival (PVLf) has had two incredible editions alongside the Delhi Book Fair. And now for the first time probably in the history of the literature festival we are having a 24 hour Author's Marathon. PVLf is dedicated to enhancing Dialogue, Literature, Free Speech, Storytelling and promotion of the world's most powerful tool of communication that is writing.

Festival Directors of this PVLf 3.0 are:



Kapil Gupta



Pranav Gupta



Shabri Prasad Singh

Author Awards & 24 Hours Marathon

Author Excellence Awards will be given in the following categories through a prominent jury consisting of thought leaders and prominent authors! There will be a fair process of screening the books. Each submission will be thoroughly read by our esteemed 3 panel jury.

1. PVLFF Best Debut Fiction
2. PVLFF Best Debut Non Fiction
3. PVLFF Best Fiction in Mythology
4. PVLFF Best Fiction in History
5. PVLFF Best Non Fiction
6. PVLFF Best Fiction
7. PVLFF Best Poetry

To achieve this feat, we are promoting new authors to enhance their public visibility and promote Indian Literature across the world.

Time Duration

Authors will get 30 minutes to showcase their work and

They will take the first 5 minutes to talk about themselves, 5 minutes to talk about their book and 10 minutes to talk about their book's favourite/important chapters.

5 minutes for Q&A session and rest 5 for changeovers.





In this month, we discussed utterly different subject as October is all about Mental Health Month. The topic of this month's spotlight session was '**Writing, Creativity and Mental Health - exploring the possibilities**'.

We've seen that nobody has spoken up about the mental health issues of Authors. The main objective to select this subject was to shed a light how an author goes through with multiple stages while writing a book and how they keep themselves motivated to write such amazing stories. We had three prestigious authors as our panelists for this Spotlight Session -

1. **Kapil Gupta - Parallel Entrepreneur, Mental Health Activist, CEO of Frontlist, Author of India Vision**
2. **Jayanthi Sankar - Author and Former Journalist**
3. **Devika Das - Poet, Author, Active Theatre Artist**

Frontlist: Researchers found that writers have a lower risk of Depression and Suicide. Is it a myth or Reality? Share your views.

Kapil Gupta: I think it is a reality. I think the authors just by virtue of the fact that they are going out and expressing themselves, they tend to have lesser mental

health issues of their own. That is about being able to express whatever else is going on in their life. On the flip-side, being an author by itself would come with a series of mental health issues, with a series of conversations that the author would continuously have in their head.

October Spotlight

people like what I have done? And all of those things. In that sense, it would relate to mental health issues being propagated in authors.

Jayanthi Sankar: Writers, also human beings with all pains and struggles real, are as vulnerable as others. They might be wiser at managing depression, but that does not take away their risks. Even among non-writers, we can observe that wiser people are smart at handling depression and anxiety.

Devika Das: It is subjective. Yes, writing takes a toll on mental health if you are writing on a sensitive topic. However, I feel writers gradually develop a coping mechanism and once the book is complete they are free. For me personally, writing is therapy.

Frontlist: What mental challenges have you faced while writing a book? Thoughts like my book will not meet the expectations of readers. How did you fight these thoughts?

Kapil Gupta: I guess my book is a little different. It's not a fiction book. It's called "India Vision - New Age Equality". It talks about contemporary issues facing India and the world. And, the entire purpose of writing the book was to give people an alternate view, a different perspective. I guess the only thing I worry about is running into a reader who is going to agree with everything I have written. That is not the intent of my book. I feel fulfilled and really happy when somebody reads the book and says he agrees with three points but doesn't agree with the other five points. Because they are totally against their set of beliefs, their set of emotions and all. And I say thank you so much because that's really the objective of what I have done. And I am a kind of non-author in all this. I wrote the book, not for the purpose of any commercial gains. In fact, if it ends up making money from a book, that royalty would actually be used somewhere else. Writing for me is not about making money. I am an entrepreneur separately and I think my business is doing

reasonably well. While I can see how some people have issues. Issues like will people like my book or will they be happy with it, or will it become a bestseller, or will something happen with it. I don't think those are questions that have ever even occurred for myself.

Jayanthi Sankar: I normally have an editor and reader in me who I write for. I do not cater to readers. By posing fresh challenges to my writing process, I grow and therefore I would love to see my readers grown. If I write to fulfill the expectations of my readers, not only do I get stuck, I let my readers stay in their comfort frame.

Therefore, satisfying myself becomes more and more difficult. That creates anxiety. Going for long walks, noodling away through the nature reserves watching the trees, listening to music, painting helps me fight.

Devika Das: I have never taken the pressure of external validation while writing. I am writing on atopic because I feel passionate about it and not because the publisher wants it.

Frontlist: People say writing down the thoughts that are bottled up inside makes a lot of people into well-known authors. How true is this?

Kapil Gupta: I don't know if I call my writing therapeutic for me. I guess I am a little too practical for that. But I can certainly see how book reading, as well as writing, will be therapeutic for most people. In a lot of ways, reading is a mechanism for people who want to gain insights, insights into various aspects of their life, insights into the surrounding audience, or read alternative complementary, supplementary perspectives of their thought processes. In that sense, whether it is therapeutic or not, I guess the first point is, reading by itself is about expanding the horizon of the readers. If it ends up expanding the horizon of the reader, it will provide more mental solace. Because it will give them a different perspective and it will give them

other aspects to consider. So, reading for sure is therapeutic. Writing, if you are putting your heart out, if you are putting your emotions out, if you are writing for the purposes of gaining solace, for the purposes of gaining peace, for the purposes of gaining mental balance. In that case, I guess writing will absolutely be therapeutic as well.

Jayanthi Sankar: I choose to differ here. If bottled thoughts translate to texts, I think a blog or daily Facebook posts should suffice. If letting out is all the person is interested in, then that's where he/she belongs. But from there, the aspirant might progress to writing. Authorship, on the other hand, is much more than that. It's about crafting, sequencing, composing, and creating.

Devika Das: Cannot comment as I have never experienced it. I guess in a country of 1.3 crores, every author will find their audience.

Frontlist: Ernest Hemingway, Sylvia Plath, Emily Dickinson, Edgar Allan Poe, Leo Tolstoy, and many more - these authors have proven the triumph over mental illness. What can we all learn from these authors?

Kapil Gupta: This is a tricky one. I guess I have always looked at myself as a little bit too practical to actually get into anxiety or depression myself. While I have a full appreciation for how people would get into that kind of phase. I have always looked upon myself as somebody who is calm. And for me, the best therapy is really not reading, not writing, or anything. For me, the best therapy is coming to the office every day. People need to spend a couple of days in my office to actually realize and live the life that I live. I have seen a lot of people who have gotten into depression. And I have seen quite a bit of people who have gotten out of it. It takes a lot of courage. While of course, I will appreciate the courage of the person that entered into the phase of depression in the lockdown, I would rather more strongly appreciate the

patience, hard work, and courage of people around the person who got into depression because that support structure is really what helps the person get out of it. I remember I had a very close friend who once got into depression and I was trying to counsel him. And I was doing something and I got a tight slap on my face. And I chose not to react at all. I empathised with that person and simply didn't react.

Jayanthi Sankar: Authors or non authors, we have much to learn from those who have fought to come out. While normality is very subjective, they perceive mental illness as abnormal and far from normal. We cannot deny the fact that some kind of abnormality many a time brings about remarkable oeuvres, as it did in people like Vincent van Gogh. Therefore, any human being who is aware of his/her mental illness can possibility overcome it and inspire others.

Devika Das: I am happy they were strong enough to acknowledge and accept their issues related to mental health as acceptance is half-battle won. Once you accept that you have a problem, you will try to find a solution to overcome it.

Frontlist: Writing can be relaxing yet exhausting. What activities do you do to get away from mental burnout while writing?

Kapil Gupta: I guess I am not a fiction writer. I have so much appreciation for people like Jayanthi and what they do. I don't think I can ever do that. As I said, my writing is purely putting across my point of view regarding a variety of issues. And if I write a second book it would again be the world view from my perspective based on what I have seen around. So, I guess I haven't been in this zone of character identification or doing something. For me, a lot of people when they read my book, in fact, good friends, who have read my book, come to me and say this book is exactly how you speak. And I say that's exactly the

objective.

Jayanthi Sankar: When I burn out, I go to read. If I am not doing those two, I might paint with my favourite music in the background. Going away to the nature reserves, gardens and parks rejuvenates me.

Devika Das: I engage in theatre performances, music and travelling.

Frontlist: Reading and writing is a tool of healing and works like a therapy. Do you agree with this? Share your views.

Kapil Gupta: I have never really experienced mental burnout. It does not happen to me. I sincerely hope that it never happens to me. However, I have become a mental health activist of sorts over the years. I do see a lot of people going through life changes, specifically in the COVID era. Mental health is becoming a huge problem, specifically in the youth. Kids who were supposed to go to 9th class and who were supposed to start recognizing the difference between boy and girl and then go to 10th class, start flirting with each other. Then go to 11th class and have affairs, then go to 12th class and ready to have sex, have missed two years. Whichever arena you come from, your life would go through a significant change. We have recently started an initiative called "Solh", which is actually a mental health marketplace. It is India's first mental health marketplace. I am hoping that we will revolutionize the mental health space once it goes live later this year. We are looking at creating a support structure like none-other that exists right now. It's going to run like an Uber. So, it will be a mental health marketplace. You wouldn't have to worry about being judged. You wouldn't have to worry about the conflict of interest and you wouldn't have to worry about being in a space where you may or may not get the right kind of person. A lot of times people suffering from mental health get to hear that their problems are tiny. For them, the minor problems are like

life-altering, it's a question of life and death. If they go to somebody who tells them, "It's just your age, you will get over it". Well, that's not what they are looking for. They are looking for something more insightful, something more concrete, something more relatable. And that's what is our focus at Solh. But we are looking at providing a space. I think such kind of space is much needed, specifically for the younger population.

Jayanthi Sankar: Through reading, I live thousands of lives, and through writing, I live hundreds of lives. These not only heal me but also hurt me. It's healing again and hurting again. So, the same Empath in me who helps me create credible characters hurts and heals me while reading. It's never about only healing for me who lives more in the fictional world.

Devika Das: Definitely. It works very well for me as it helps me advance in my journey of self-exploration.

Spotlight
by **FRONT LIST**

"HOW TO FIND A PUBLISHER FOR YOUR BOOK IF YOU'RE A FIRST TIME AUTHOR?"

Join Our First Clubhouse Session

📅 9th October, 2021 @ 7 pm | 🌐 clubhouse



KAPIL GUPTA



DWIJISHA



MEHAK VARUN



ARUNDHATI SAHOO



NAMITA DAS



SWATI SHRAMA

Hosted By: **FRONT LIST**

This month, Frontlist has come up with '**Clubhouse Session**' for all authors who've been associated with us over the past few months.

Our main objective was to bring authors from different areas at common ground and share their insights with audience. The topic of Session was "First Time Author - How to find a publisher for your Book".

We had author Kapil Gupta, Namita Das, Arundhati Sahoo, Dwijisha Katkar, Swati Sharma and Mehak Varun as our speakers for this Session.

They highlighted some primal points pertained to being a First Time Author -

- Challenges you have faced while publishing the first book?
- Advice to aspiring writers on how to get their book published?
- The favorite publisher that you'd like to get published with and why?
- Importance of Copyright Laws in Publishing Industry.
- If you were reaching out to a number of publishers to get your book published for the first time, how did you cope with the whole process?
- How to reach out to a publisher for a Book Publishing Deal?

October Clubhouse

BE READY FOR NEXT

clubhouse

— session —

**MOTIVATIONAL TRAINING OR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING
HOW LEADERS GROW BEST**30TH OCTOBER, 2021 | 7:00 PM**DR. SUJATA
SINGHI****DEVIKA
DAS****SHUBHA
VILAS****PRASANTA
BHATTACHARYA****CHITRA
PADMANA**

Our last session gained a lot of appreciation from Author and Book Fraternity. Therefore, we decided to host 2nd Clubhouse session that has proven even more remarkable than the previous session.

On account of widespread penchant of motivational books, Frontlist chose the very interesting topic “ **Motivational Learning or Experiential Learning - How Leaders Grow Best**”.

We had author Dr. Sujata Singhi, Chitra Padmana, Devika Das, Shubha Vilas and Prasanta Bhattacharya as our speakers for this Session.

The main objective was to throw light on Motivational and Experiential Learning, initiate a discussion between the different learning approaches, persuade people to become more productive and highlight the importance of knowledge as the key to continuing learning trajectory.

Some highlights about what authors discussed and tried to guide people in order to become a good leader -

- **Which one is better - Motivational Learning or Experiential Learning and why?**
- **Importance of Experiential Learning to grow as leaders?**
- **How do motivational books inspire us to become better and more productive?**
- **Practical strategies we should undertake to feel motivated?**
- **Do you think youth these days struggle since their learning is tid-bits education through digital?**

October Clubhouse

INDIA'S FIRST NEWS E-PORTAL FOR THE PUBLISHING INDUSTRY



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