

FRONTLIST

MARCH 2023

International Women's Day

Saluting to all fierce women personalities in the Publishing Industry around the world. Thank you for transcending equity and taking leadership to a new level

Featured Story

The rising demand for
Children's literature
in the publishing industry





WELCOME MESSAGE

Dear Frontlisters,

The year 2023 has just arrived, and look at all upcoming avenues. The Amrit Kaal Budget 2023-24 has created fervour, especially in the education sector. The increased allocation of INR 1.12 lakh crore (\$ 13.66 Bn) in the Union Budget 23-24 shows the Government's relentless commitment to improving the quality of education in India. Therefore, It is expected to lead to significant developments and initiatives in the field.

In addition, the education sphere will look forward to getting hands-on Artificial Intelligence, upskilling the youth and teachers, and improving educational infrastructure. It will prove to be a welcoming initiative to flourish the education sector in India and work towards the future of our young generations. We all are eager to see how the allocated funds are utilized, and the integration of other things to make up for the education loss over the pandemic.

Following the stream of events, the PragatiE Vichaar Poetry Festival 2023 is coming to you virtually on World Poetry Day, i.e., 21 March. It will be an excellent opportunity for poetry enthusiasts to come together and celebrate the art form. Stay tuned for more information about the PVPF 2023.

In addition to it, the largest celebration of books, the New Delhi World Book Fair 2023, concluded its 9-day journey on 05 March, which commenced on 25 February. We've seen tremendous enthusiasm among visitors and had an amazing experience of seeing how our country's reading culture is expanding after the pandemic times.

Alongside events, the March edition will highlight exclusive coverage on "Rising demand of children's literature in the publishing industry." Read the story to gain varied perspectives from the Publishing World.

Without the community, sustaining our publishing ecosystem is quite inconceivable. We will always be there to support all integral developments of the Government and provide you with a plethora of updates from inside the industry.

Keep following us and read our monthly magazine to have a delight of all the latest happenings in the publishing space.

Write to us: navita@frontlist.in

Navita Berry
Business Head

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Editorial & Publishers Office: Frontlist Media, 4259/3,

Ansari Road, Darya Ganj

New Delhi - 110002, India

Tel: 9711676777

Email: media@frontlist.in

Website: www.frontlist.in

Business Head: Navita Berry

Co-founder: Pranav Gupta & Kapil Gupta

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Featured Story

Rising demand for children's literature in the publishing industry

India's Children's literature universe is filled with vibrant stories, ranging from tales about the mightiest superheroes to the mystical beasts. Books have been a medium for children to learn and grow for a long time. The colorful pages of the books expand their minds to new horizons and augment their overall development.

They acquire empathy, learn values and uncover a world similar to their own and yet different. Books have the power to transform young minds, and it aids their cognitive abilities, ignites their curiosity, and enriches their vocabulary. Hence, it becomes extremely critical to expose children to good books and inculcate reading habits in them.

According to Chitwan Mittal, Publisher at Adidev Press, *'Children's literature, whether in the form of stories or poetry, has an enormous role in introducing children to aspects of their own culture. Well-produced books highlighting India's diversity, cultural practices, and traditional festivals can help kids connect with their roots meaningfully. These books can also help build knowledge and spark kids' curiosity about other cultures, which is crucial to making them global citizens. Good books can impact kids profoundly, making them more accepting, inclusive, and empathetic toward different people. Independent publishing has been a forerunner in this regard by producing books that are centered on Indian contexts and tell stories that haven't been told before.'*



Chitwan Mittal, Publisher at Adidev Press,

She adds, *'Unfortunately, so many kids in India don't have access to children's books; many organizations are helping to bridge this gap through print and digital publishing. At AdiDev Press, we're committed to putting books into children's hands and have tried to expand beyond the metros and distribute books to organizations working with underprivileged communities. Through such efforts, we can ensure children grow up with access to stories.'*

Current Scenario of Children's Literature

The face of Children's literature is constantly evolving and adapting to newer technological advancements. Amar Chitra Katha and Tinkle reported that during the stressful times of the Covid-induced lockdowns, reading apps paved the way for children's literature. Parents worldwide downloaded these apps to keep the book-reading culture alive.

Digital publishing offers greater growth prospects to publishers, reducing printing costs and allowing them to produce more significant amounts of content.

Frontlist Media took the opportunity to discuss the dynamics of the world of children's literature with industry professionals



Tina Narang, Children's Publisher of HarperCollins India

Tina Narang, Children's Publisher of HarperCollins India, said, *'Books and stories are one of the most effective ways of making children understand their culture. Stories with relatable characters and themes introduce children to India's diverse states and regions. This makes it easier for them to understand and assimilate these differences and eventually helps them become more tolerant as they grow up.'*

She further stated, *'There has been significant growth in the reading culture over the last couple of years, and the pandemic also helped fuel this change. However, accessibility to books outside the curriculum is still limited, and this area needs to be targeted. A primary step is a school library with a curated set of age-appropriate books. The next step would be to provide public, neighborhood libraries, reading spaces, and clubs for children whose schools cannot offer such facilities. There is much to be gained by introducing books and reading to children early.'*

Himanshu Giri, CEO of Pratham Books, highlighted the significance of creating books in regional languages and stated, *"We are acutely aware of the need for engaging storybooks for children in their mother tongue languages. While a large part of our catalog is translations of English books into 24 Indian languages, we are now working towards publishing more storybooks created and conceptualized in regional languages. We have seen firsthand the difference in engagement between a child and a storybook written in her mother tongue versus a storybook translated from a mainstream language. When characters, places, and contexts are familiar and recognizable, a child is immediately drawn into the storyline and the narrative. We are consciously working towards nurturing ecosystems of authors, illustrators, and editors in regional languages to create a body of work that can help us reach children who have never had access to a storybook in their mother tongue."*



Himanshu Giri, CEO of Pratham Books



Sanya Podar, Founder of Daffodil Lane Books,

On asking how independent publishing contributes to promoting children's literature, Sanya Podar, Founder of Daffodil Lane Books, said, *"As an independent publishing house, we have recognized the importance of creating relevant and relatable books for Indian children by localizing the content to reflect Indian culture, values, and customs. It has helped create a deeper connection between young readers and their books, which can encourage a love for reading."*

"Moreover, we have helped to fill the gap in the representation of diverse voices in children's literature by publishing books that showcase children's experiences from different regions, religions, and backgrounds. It has helped to create a more inclusive and diverse range of books that reflect the rich cultural heritage of India."

In response to the question of how the Lack of access to free books affects the reading culture of the nation, Radhika Menon, Publishing Director at Tulika Books, said, *"Lack of free access to books is one of the most significant problems children in the lower socio-economic segment face. Very few government schools they attend have libraries, nor are there community libraries. Several non-profit organizations are working towards this cause, and Tulika Books collaborates actively with many of these initiatives."*

Post-pandemic India has acquired an appetite for greater supply and demand for children's books. The parents have started acknowledging the advantages of imbibing children with reading habits. Schools and even small towns are hosting book fairs and literature festivals to help students interact with the authors and cultivate a more profound bond with books.



Radhika Menon, Publisher & Managing Editor, Tulika Books



Special Feature

International Kolkata Book Fair 2023

Organised by Publishers & Booksellers Guild, the largest attended book fair in the world, the 46th International Kolkata Book Fair 2023 was held from January 31 till February 12, 2023, at the Central Park Mela Ground, newly named BOIMELA PRANGAB, Kolkata.

The last International Book Fair 2022 had a footfall of 2.2 million book lovers, and books worth Rs 23 crores were sold. Over 26 lakh people attended the book fair this year, and around 25.50 crore worth of books were sold. This is a record in the book fair's history, according to Tridib Kumar Chatterjee, Honorary General Secretary of the Booksellers and Publishers Guild organiser. Around 950 stalls and 200 magazines were present. Several new small and medium publishers were also granted stalls at the IKBK. Guild president Sudhangshu Sekhar Dey said a "6-10 percent increase in sales was recorded in all the stalls at the fair".

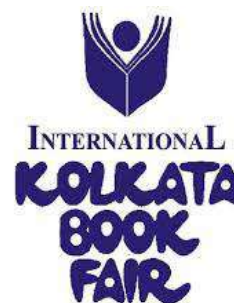
The focal theme of the International Kolkata Book fair this year was Spain. The book fair was inaugurated on January 30, 2023, at 2 pm by Hon'ble Chief Minister Smt. Mamata Banerjee, in the presence of Ms. Maria Jose Galvez Savador, Director-General of Books and Promotion of Reading, Spanish Ministry of Culture & Sports, Shri Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay, eminent author of Bengal, along with other renowned authors, dignitaries, and Hon'ble Ministers of Kolkata State.

All the multinational players in the publishing industry, like Penguin Random House India, Harper Collins, Pan Macmillan, Rupa, and Bloomsbury, had their pavilions along with direct participation from countries like the United Kingdom, United States of America, Bangladesh, Japan, France, Italy, Australia, Cuba, and other Latin American countries. Thailand has participated for the first time in the IKBK 2023, and a total of 20 countries across the globe participated this year.

Rare punthis and manuscripts of Bengal were also exhibited in a pavilion in collaboration with the Asiatic Society. This year, a special 'CESC Sristi Samman' was awarded to Shri Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay.

Nine entry and exit gates were provided in the IKBK 23 for easy movement of visitors. One of the gates will be a replica of the famous Toledo Gate of Spain. Among other gates, the Biswabangla Gate was based on the brand promoted by the Mamata Banerjee-led state government.

Additionally, IKBK 2023 hosted the 9th Kolkata Literature Festival on its premises from February 9 to 11.





New Delhi World Book Fair 2023

The **31st edition** of the **New Delhi World Book Fair (NDWBF)** officially commenced on **February 25th** and concluded on **March 5th, 2023**. Organized by the National Book Trust, India, in collaboration with the India Trade Promotion Organization, the Fair was held at the centrally located Pragati Maidan, New Delhi.

The NDWBF 2023 provided exhibitors with special opportunities for B2B and B2C interactions in expanding their business and cultivating relationships. Also, the Fair was the best location for trade, co-publication agreements, and title promotions. This Fair not only provided access to the diverse publishing and intellectual communities but also offered a variety of literary and publishing seminars and programs. **Dr Raj Kumar Ranjan Singh**, Minister of State for External Affairs and Education, Govt. of India, officially inaugurated the 9-day New Delhi World Book Fair on 25th February. A total of **2000 stalls** have been set up, and more than **1000 publishers** were a part of the book fair.

Team **Frontlist Media** visited the New Delhi World Book Fair 2023, interacted with the exhibitors, and learned about their experience of participating in the event, which is being held after the pandemic.

At the New Delhi World Book Fair, **Turkish Exhibitor Nizar Kara**, Culture and Tourism Expert Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Turkey, shared his experience attending the book fair and said, *"We aim to promote Turkish literature among Indian readers. So far, we have collaborated with sixteen Indian publishers to publish 93 Turkish across 7 Indian languages, Bengali, Hindi, English, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, and Tamil. We hope to do more such collaborations in the upcoming year. We are also planning to participate in literary festivals."*

Mariam, a Spanish Teacher at The Institute of Cervantes, located on Hanuman Road, New Delhi, said, *"The footfall this year is excellent since the Fair is happening after Covid. Many people are visiting our stall, and we hope to promote the Spanish language among Indian book lovers."*

Alok Srivastava of All World Gayatri Pariwar stated *"Here we have displayed more than 1000 books, all of which have been written by one person. He has written over 3200 books in his lifetime, and his name is Pandit Shreeram Sharma Acharya. These 3200 books have been written in 71 categories related to health, scientific spirituality, personality development, life management, religion, science, etc. Through this book fair, we aim to spread the learnings of Pandit Shreeram Sharma Acharya among the readers."*

Piyush Kumar, Director of Prabhat Prakashan, said, *"After nearly three years, this book fair is being held. Even after the online sale, readers have the desire to come to the Book Fair and physically check out the books and get a taste of them. The book fair drew a large crowd in just two days, far exceeding expectations."*

One thing is certain: people have a strong desire to read more books. Having a more significant number of book readers enriches any culture. We also have customers who want to buy books for themselves and their family and friends and who want us to deliver them to different cities and countries."

Chaitanya Arora, Social Media and Digital Marketing Executive at Vitasta Publishing, talked about his experience at the book fair and said, *"The book fair is quite a buzz this time, happening after 3 years. We are expecting some good sales. However, due to the ongoing Board exams, we are not expecting much of a young crowd."*

Soumya Tiwari from Mithaas services' management team said *"My experience here at the book fair has been quite good so far. It's exhilarating to be a part of the event. Being someone who loves to read, it was unfortunate not to be able to attend the book fair due to Covid."*

From Spring Time Software, Delhi, **Chander Shekhar** said, *"We have been serving the publishing industry since 2002. Our software solutions are used by over 1200 publishers in 12 countries worldwide. The New Delhi World Book is happening after three years and has been beautifully organized in the halls. We have had a lot of interest from the publishing industry and a lot of foot traffic. Since we are a B2B company, we would like more publishers' booksellers to come in."*

Deepika, Manager for publisher relations at Nielsen Book India, stated, *"After three years, we are returning to the book fair. This time around, many new publishers have joined and participated. This year, we are focusing on doing a lot of business."*

Sheikh Fatehuddin, Vice President of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Delhi, said, *"We are here to spread the message of peace and the teachings of Islam among the readers."*

Saksham Garg, Editor at Penguin Random House and Debut Author, shared his experience attending the book fair and said, *"He got a good response from the readers toward his book Samsara. One massive learning he has acquired from the book fair is that reaching out to readers directly works and is often really appreciated."*

Narendra from Paper Towns, Jaipur, stated, *"We are exhibiting at the New Delhi World Book Fair. It's the event's second day, and the experience has been great. We are getting great responses from readers of all age groups. And I believe that the upcoming days will be great as well."*

Deepak Yadav, CEO of Bigfoot Publications, said, *"I've been running this publishing house for the last five years. I'm an author myself, and I started this firm to help fellow authors struggling in the publishing industry. We have published more than 2500 books. We are participating in the book fair for the first time, and our experience has been great till now. We are looking forward to selling a good number of books at the Fair."*

With the **Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav** theme, the Fair has various attractions, including Children's Pavilion, Authors' Corners, YUVA Corner, Child Authors' Corner, International Events Corner, CEO Speak, Cultural Programs, etc. Since its inauguration, the event has witnessed good footfall in the last three days. People all around the world are partaking in the event. Panel discussions and various book launches by domestic publishers and writers are also hosted at the festival.



Media Coverages

Author Pratibha Karan's The Book Of Dals Released At Olive Bar & Kitchen, New Delhi, published by Penguin Random House India

The Book of Dals by Pratibha Karan was released on **4th February** at a function held at **Olive Bar & Kitchen, New Delhi**. The book, published by **Penguin Random House India**, was unveiled by the Chief Guest, **Vir Sanghvi** (India's best-known food writer, TV host, Author & Columnist), Guest of Honour **Habib Rehman** (Former Director, ITC Hotels, Foods, Travel, and Tourism), **Milee Aishwarya** (Publisher, Ebury Publishing and Vintage Publishing, Penguin Random House India), and **Peter Burleigh** (Former Acting United States Ambassador to the United Nations).

The evening included riveting reflections from all the dignitaries and the author's experience in writing the book.

Speaking at the launch, the author **Pratibha Karan** remarked, "Dals are an intrinsic part of everyday meals in all Indian homes, including us, and cooking is about giving love, nurturing the loved ones and it gives me great joy to share these recipes with everyone."

Praising the book, **Vir Sanghvi** said, "*Pratibha Karan is a brilliant cook, I don't think there is a better book on dals, and I don't think there will be a better book.*"

Applauding the book, **Habib Rehman** said, "*The book characterises the typical larger awareness of Pratibha about the heritage of Indian cuisine. She takes us on a tour of the country and beyond, which she has already described, and you will read it in the book. As you will see in the book, Dal is much more than a vegetarian and a non-vegetarian. You can see how Dal has been for ages and was appreciated by Emperors, Kings, Commoners, and the poor.*"

Praising the book, **Milee Aishwarya** said, "*Dal is like a comfort food for many of us and something that we can relate to in various forms. The book has amazing recipes from all across India and some from outside India like Nepal and Sri Lanka and veg and non-veg, and you can all take your pick.*"

Applauding the book, **Peter Burleigh** said, "*The variety that Pratibha Karan covers in the book is simply amazing, and I highly recommend it.*"

Announcing her third culinary book, the author says, "*Cooking is a creative art, and I find joy in Cooking just as I love working in the garden and my office. After my last book, Biryani, my family urged me to write this third book on Dals as it is an intrinsic part of every meal in all Indian homes, including ours. Cooking is about giving love and nurturing loved ones. I love cooking various lentil dishes for my family, which they have always relished, and it gives me great joy to share these recipes with others.*"



ABOUT THE BOOK

Dals have been an essential part of the human diet for centuries and are an integral part of Indian cuisine. There are many enticing varieties of dals to choose from. In *The Book of Dals*, Pratibha Karan takes you on an incredible journey to different regions of the country. She shows how locally available spices and herbs, vegetables, and fruit impact the food of that region. The variety of dals and dal-based dishes you can make with these is phenomenal and mind-boggling.

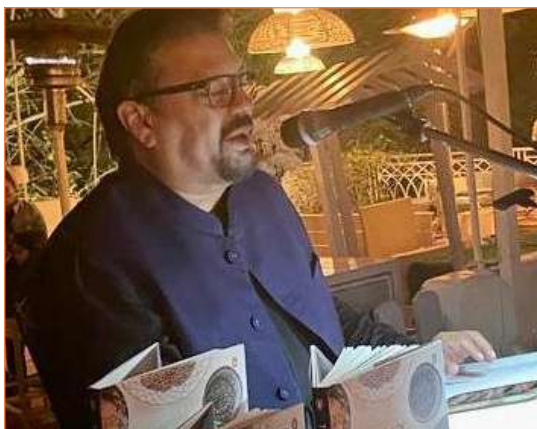
This book offers a wide variety of beautiful, fragrant, and beguiling dals that will have anyone savoring them in raptures. From southern India, you will find Telangana Sambar, Khatti Dal, and Dalcha with Vegetables and Meat. They are made using delicious combinations of chillies, tamarind, cloves, cardamom, pepper, coconut, curry leaves, and drumsticks. It also has recipes such as Kootu from Tamil Nadu and the famous Bisi Bele Huliya from Karnataka.

You will also find Lentils in Coconut Milk, Katachi Amti, Moong Sprouts from Maharashtra, and Dhansak, a Parsi dish, from Gujarat in western India. Dals from eastern India, such as Chana Dal Bengali-style and Assamese Mati Maa, are included. Delhi Rajma and Punjabi Dal Makhani from northern India find a place in the book.

This book is not limited by borders, and it includes exotic dal recipes from the neighbouring countries like Nepal and Sri Lanka and some delicious and wholesome dal-based soups.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pratibha Karan studied economics at Lady Shri Ram College. She is an IAS officer of 1967 batch and retired as Secretary Ministry of Food Processing Industries in 2003. She is the author of *A Princely Legacy: Hyderabad Cuisine* covering the history, culture, and cuisine of Hyderabad and Biryani-India's most beloved dish.



Publisher Niyogi Books' FIRST CHILDREN'S BOOK – Why can't Elephants be Red? By Author Vani Tripathi Tikoo in collaboration with National School of Drama

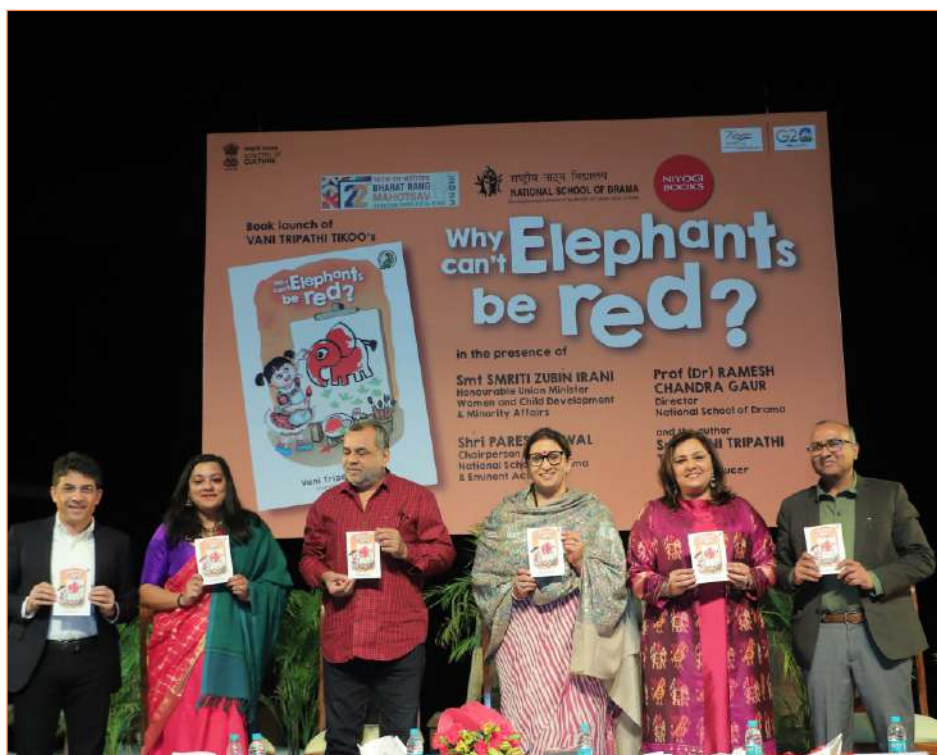
Niyogi Books is proud to announce its first illustrated children's book, **Why can't Elephants be Red?** by **Vani Tripathi Tikoo**. The book "**Why Elephants can't be Red?**" was launched at the Kamani Auditorium, Copernicus Marg, New Delhi, on 15th February 2023. Smt Smriti Zubin Irani, Hon'ble Union Minister of Women and Child Development & Minority Affairs, Shri Paresh Rawal, Chairperson, National School of Drama & Eminent Actor, and Prof (Dr) Ramesh Chandra Gaur, Director, National School of Drama was the special guests at the book launch event.

A debut book by actor, producer, and Board Member, CBFC Board, **Vani Tripathi**, **Why can't Elephants be Red?** takes a deep dive into the subliminal world resided in by gritty children much more resilient than adults. The author delves into their world from a childlike perspective, keeping her parental hat aside.

The author is also a practitioner of GRIPS Theatre, a renowned emancipatory children's and youth theatre based in Berlin where adults perform as children, with children, and for children. This book can be considered to be an extension of her work in the space of theatre and education.

Vani Tripathi Tikoo, about writing this book, says, '*This book is a salute to the tolerance and resilience of children who can adapt to new surroundings and situations that are sometimes out of their control. They are in sharp contrast to adults like us who constantly crib and complain about things not going their way. Perhaps the adult mind sometimes forgets that we once were children too. I pray to bring back that innocence we have lost and forgotten in our hurry to grow up and become adults.*'

On publishing the book, **Trisha De Niyogi**, Director and COO of **Niyogi Books**, says, '*We are delighted to present to you an illustrated children's book that takes readers into the adorable and magical world of a little girl for whom everyday life is full of wonder, surprises, and fun. It will, in all probability, bring out a feeling of nostalgia for a time when we were young, curious, amiable, and agile. An interesting book for all age groups, it can be enjoyed by children and young parents alike. Also, let's not forget the uncles and aunts, grandmothers and grandfathers and brothers and sisters who all play important roles in the raising of a child. As the saying goes, 'It takes a village (read: family) to raise a child.'*'



ABOUT THE BOOK

Akku is a lively, imaginative, and adventurous two-and-a-half-year-old little girl. Growing up partly in Gurgaon and mostly in Singapore, she is the darling of her big joint family consisting of her parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, her caregiver, and her friend.

From playing with her fishy friends and beloved puppy to discovering the wonders of swimming pools, sea beaches, food courts, and restaurants, every new experience fills Akku with joy and curious questions. She gobbles them all up, be it omelets, pakoras, or curd rice. She loves to scribble, draw, and mix colors to create new ones. Her imagination runs riot with elephants that are red, crabs that have moustaches, and unicorns that don't have horns. Whether it's an art class or a playdate with her friend, Akku has fun and learns new things about her world. But the biggest adventure awaits Akku—her first day at school.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Vani Tripathi Tikoo is a versatile theatre, television, and film actor with extensive teaching experience at the Theatre in Education Company of the National School of Drama, New Delhi. She considers *The Little Prince* as the Bible for all adults who want to understand children. Keeping her work with children alive after having written plays that turned into performances and conducting theatre with kids for over two decades, she has finally forayed into writing for children. This is her first book as an author. She considers children to be the gurus who save us from the perils of adulthood!

Invincible Fest concludes at DLF CyberHub celebrating the essence of Literature, Art & more

The festival concluded with 50 speakers, artists, writers and finance gurus sharing their knowledge with a massive crowd on the grounds of DLF CyberHub

Gurugram, 22nd February 2023: With the onset of spring, the people of NCR celebrated the biggest Literature and Music festival of the year - **Invincible Fest at DLF CyberHub on 17th-18th February**. The festival witnessed a starry lineup with experts sharing valuable insights from the space of literature, music, and art. The two-day extravaganza demonstrated knowledge sharing from book discussions, entertainment industry to finance, crypto & technology.

With over 50 speakers and panelists engaging in thought-provoking conversations around literature, finance, tech & art, the event was a cultural hub inducing community empowerment. There were book launches by Ranveer Brar, Durjoy Datta, Manoj Tiwary, and many more. It was followed by other enriching sessions by eminent personalities, namely Kabir Bedi, Anu Kapoor, Karan Tacker, Anant Ladha, Stock Market Expert among others.

The festival witnessed the book launch of Jayam Amma's *Palakkad Palate* by Ranveer Brar.

There was a large crowd that amassed near the Amphitheater at DLF CyberHub, who were enthusiastic and excited to absorb the knowledge that was imparted. The fervour in the air was further celebrated with a musical performance by 'Prayag the band' on the first day, followed by a dance performance by 'Sadanand Dance Performance' on day two.

Celebrating the association Ms. Pushpa Bector, Executive Director DLF Retail, said, "*The Invincible Festival was a synthesis of literature, thought, and culture for our new age audiences at DLF CyberHub. By bringing outstanding individuals together on this special stage, Invincible Fest celebrated the diversity of the social fabric and literature. This further affirms DLF Malls' ongoing effort to elevate consumer experience across all our properties.*"

Shedding light on the event, Mr. Ajay Setia and Sagar Setia, CEO & Founders Invincible Festival said, “The Future Depends on What we do in the Present by Mahatma Gandhi; this is what we are trying to do at Invincible. We are curating a platform for authors, content creators, artists, and musicians to come together under one roof and curate an offline networking channel where one can get to meet the best of the lot. These two days were spectacular, and most importantly, we were able to pull in a large crowd and put on a fantastic show. Thanks to DLF CyberHub and Team Invincible, special thanks to some of our notable speakers like Saurabh Shukla, Kabir Bedi, Ranveer Brar, Ashish Vidyarthi, Pushkar Raj Thakur, Karan Tacker, Ravinder Singh, Durjoy Datta, Kaveree Bamzai, Ananth Ladha, Dear sir and many more.

The venue and the vibe of the festival was amazing. Special thanks to our partner Rigi, an app that helps you monetize content for creators, gifting partner, and DLF CyberHub as our Venue partner. Let’s celebrate this together with Art, Literature, Music, and Much More.”

Invincible Fest is a nod to maestros from the space of literature, music, finance, art & technology by providing them a platform to connect with the audiences and create a budding community.



Oxford Bookstore presents an exclusive conversation with Jean-Claude Perrier

New Delhi, 23 February 2023: Oxford Bookstore, in association with the Embassy of France, French Institute in India, and Niyogi Books, hosted an exclusive interaction around **Jean-Claude Perrier's** latest book, "**Like Barbarians in India.**"

The author was engaged in a freewheeling conversation with noted author, academic, and writer Aditi Sriram on how travel inspires literature.

This book reveals the author's love for India, through his travel and observations. The book is translated from the French original **Comme des barbares en Inde** by **Sriparna Chatterjee** and published in English by **Niyogi Books**. The smooth translation deftly conveys the author's engaging insights into India.

This marquee event commemorated Oxford Bookstore's century-old journey with books and bridging cultures through collaboration. The audience enjoyed a lively, insightful, and captivating conversation between the speakers at the iconic bookstore of Delhi.

About the book

Like Barbarians in India is a heartfelt tribute to India and to four French writers—Pierre Loti, Henri Michaux, André Malraux, and André Gide—who felt a common attraction to this country of 'ancient civilization.' The author discusses these writers and their interaction with India and his love for the country. Each chapter in the book details the impact or influence that India had on these French writers individually. Pierre Loti, whose original name was Julien Viaud, discovered India in 1931 and wrote *India (without the English)*, which describes India as if it had not been colonised. About half of Henri Michaux's *Barbarian in Asia* is devoted to India. André Malraux knew Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi and had read Tagore and the Indian sacred texts. André Gide also knew Nehru and had translated Tagore and Kabir into French. The author has traveled and lived in India and was a friend of the sitar maestro Pandit Ravi Shankar. In this work, he comments on India of the past and present and shares his deep love of this land, its people, and culture.



About Jean-Claude Perrier

Jean-Claude Perrier, born in 1957 in Paris, loves literature, reading, and writing. He started working as a journalist and is also the author of several books, including novels, biographies, essays, and travelogues. He discovered India in 1981, and it was a revelation for him. In love with the culture, music, and people of India, he has authored several books with an Indian theme: *André Malraux and the Temptation of India*, *Travels in French India*, and *Like Barbarians in India* (translated into English, Hindi, and Bangla). He received the prestigious French Academy Prize in 2010 for an essay, 'The mysteries of Saint-Exupéry,' translated into Italian, German, Russian, and Slovenian.





'The Garden of Tales': Vijaydan Detha's folk tales translated by Vishes Kothari launched

On the occasion of International Mother Language Day, Vishes Kothari's new translated book, 'The Garden of Tales: The Best of Vijaydan Detha,' was launched at an event at Kunzum in Delhi on February 22, 2022.

As the title suggests, 'The Garden of Tales: The Best of Vijaydan Detha' is a collection of short folktales of men and women from in and around Detha's village Borunda in Rajasthan. These stories were written initially in Rajasthani by Detha and are now translated into English by Vishes Kothari.

Vishes Kothari and journalist Poonam Saxena discussed translations and the magic of Rajasthani folklore at the book launch event.

As he described his encounter with Detha's work and his motivation for translating the book, Kothari said, "These stories are popular folk tales that we all grew up with.". My father introduced me to Detha's work, and initially, I bought books for leisure reading. While teaching at Ashoka University, I discovered Detha's stories in the curriculum. This intrigued me. Publishers were looking for Indian literature, and a very small amount of Detha's work was available in translation. So I was at the right place at the right time.

On being asked why he picked Detha's writing, Kothari remarked, "In the 1950s and 1960s, when nobody talked about regional languages and everything was mostly in Hindi, Detha said, 'If I have to write, I will write in my own tongue.'" He was interested in hearing tales from the locals and the desert.



He is not a writer; he is merely an archivist or a folklorist. Although his plots are not original, he discovered a fresh style of writing in Rajasthani. Detha's decision to focus on the people's tales struck a chord with me, and he started to seem like a grandparent to me.

I've seen that women have agency and articulate wants in Detha's stories, Saxena remarked. Is this typical of all his tales?

Detha's works were never told from a single dominant point of view, according to Kothari, who also appreciated his writing. His tales were told not only from the perspective of an upper caste Brahmin but also from that of oppressed classes, adivasis, etc.

Kothari stated that he doesn't have a specific translation procedure because he is not a trained translator when asked about it. I translate each line in the most accurate English I can. The fact that I was familiar with these stories helped me. Consider Jadao Masi from Detha's stories as an example. For instance, take the character of Jadao masi in Detha's stories. Our village used to have a similar personality. Hence, I imagine how I would go about making these characters speak in English. This aids with my rhythm development. Kothari also mentioned that Detha believed the Rajasthani language was not receiving the respect it really deserved. "Rajasthani is not a dialect of Hindi; it is a different language. Its own literary heritage is present. Its status as a language is beyond question. People in Rajasthan led the Hindi language campaign during the independence movement. Institutions from the Marwari community were crucial in the fight for independence. Hindi had to be a unifying language but it did conflate other languages that pre-existed and those regional languages were made into bolis of Hindi," said Kothari.

When Poonam Saxena questioned whether Kothari would translate any other Detha works, the translator responded, "Translation is an extremely exhausting procedure. I translated this book over the course of three years. I believe I'll take a break for a few months before returning. Detha's body of work is enormous and still needs to be translated.

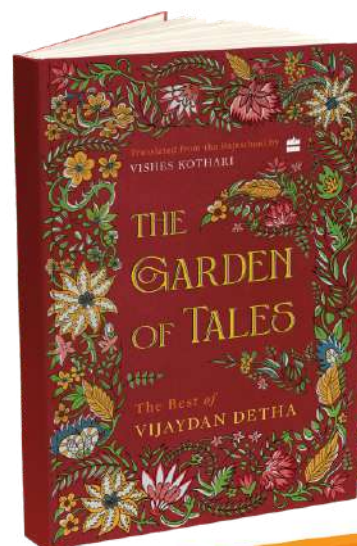


Nonetheless, I believe I will first look at other Rajasthani writers before returning to him.

After the book discussion, we had a quick talk with Kothari. We questioned him about his opinion of the current state of regional literature, particularly folklore writing. He responded by saying, "Publishers are very actively bringing regional literature in translations. So regional literature-- Yes. But oral literature is going more into anthropology archives, and university researchers are working more on it rather than the publishers."

"I have noticed that things have altered a lot since the introduction of new media," he continued. Take Instagram, for instance. We're currently jamming out to folk music. Instagram profiles from Rajasthan have incredible followings. Today, there is a sizable market. Slowly, people are beginning to utilise it. Also, OTT outlets are considering it.

'The Garden of Tales: The Best of Vijaydan Detha' is published by HarperPerennial.



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Partha Basu, author of "Outskill : Future Proofing Your Career in the Post-Pandemic World"

Partha Basu is a senior industry leader who has worked in seven industries in Fortune 500 organizations like Coca-Cola, Whirlpool, AkzoNobel, and Tata Group in new initiatives like IFB-Bosch and SpiceJet.

Partha has earlier authored five books—Lifescapes: The Long and Short of It (2021), Mid-Career Crisis (2015), Make It or Break It (2012), With or Without You (2010), and Why Not! (2008).

He has delivered lectures in India and abroad, and his articles have been published widely. At present, he is based out of Amsterdam, Netherlands.

Frontlist: How did the idea for writing a guidebook for people that will help them stay flexible and future-ready for new career challenges come about?

Partha: Over the last many years, I was noticing change everywhere...be it due to advances in technology, evolving socio-economic scenarios, shifts in demographics, the birth of new sectors, or slowdowns in economies. Organizations that did not even exist fifteen years ago are now giant corporations, while on the other hand, long-established brands and organizations have taken a beating. Physical boundaries are disappearing at a faster pace with the advent of technology.

And then, in June 2019, I was at an aero-gliding club in Netherlands, and I saw a quote from Wilbert Wright "It is possible to fly without motors, but not without knowledge and skill."

That set me thinking further, and I asked myself

1. Do I have the skills required in this changing world?

Author Interviews

2. Will me or my team only survive if we re-skill ourselves?

4. How do I help prepare the next generation for a workplace that we haven't even begun to imagine?

And the thought of OUTSKILL crystallised.

Frontlist: How did you acquire leadership abilities early in your career highlighted in your book?

Partha: Professionals acquire leadership skills over time as they walk through life. We might know certain parts of it and learn leadership skills as we complete our education, but real learning comes from life as we go through the grind.

I am no different; I acquired them over time and still acquiring every day.

Frontlist: Could you please share insights on the job market following the post-pandemic?

Partha: The past hundred years have completely transformed how humans produce goods and services. We survived, we grew, and we excelled.

The modern workplace is different from what it was ten years ago. Certain jobs and functions have appeared and disappeared over time, and some sustained. With the rise of automation in all its forms, repetitive jobs are believed to be on the verge of extinction.

People often are worried about technology, thinking it will replace humans.

While automation and new ways of working may take away many jobs, it is also expected to create new roles that do not exist today. We need to be future-ready and skill ourselves to suit the future workplace without panicking. Remaining ignorant or procrastinating won't helpit is all about being prepared to be future-ready.

Frontlist: How much do you believe your book "Outskill" will aid people in their future endeavors?

Partha: Many often hear about the need to unlearn and acquire new knowledge to ensure our skills are refreshed to fit our changing job requirements. We all undergo various trainings; some venture into self-learning, which entails acquiring new skills. Outskilling is about going beyond traditional learning and development processes, further widening our horizons. It is about understanding the future need for skills—what your current or future employers might need. Outskilling prepares you for a new role, whether within or outside the organization. You embrace the skills required to remain relevant in this rapidly changing world, narrowing the skill gap so you can fit into various organizations.

Many organizations today are actively investing in their employees to make them ready for the next challenge. They want to ensure that their employees are future-ready.

It is our life; it is our career. We are the only losers if we sit back and do not do enough to embrace the future. Hence, should we wait for organizations to help us outskill? Why can't we take a few steps ourselves and be ready for the next challenge? What is stopping us from 'becoming' future-ready?

There is no time to wait. We need to outskill and be ready to fit into the post-pandemic technology-driven world. I believe we need to adapt and learn new skills, or else the road ahead will be tough.

Frontlist: What guidance do you have for recent graduates regarding the skills and knowledge to help them cope in a post-pandemic job situation?

Partha: The basic leadership skills proven over age will remain the same, but how we approach the new world has changed. I speak about 16 skills that need a renewal and a fresh perspective as the world continues to evolve to lead through Technology and guide through processes, and leaders will need to show from the heart. The advice to the young talents will be straightforward...keep unlearning and re-learning every day.... learn from every interaction, stories you hear, and incidences you go through. And keep outskilling – so that you are ready for the following role – within or outside of the organization. You do not know when the next opportunity will knock on your door.

Frontlist: You've mentioned several leaders catering to different leadership skills in the book's second section. How do you classify all of them?

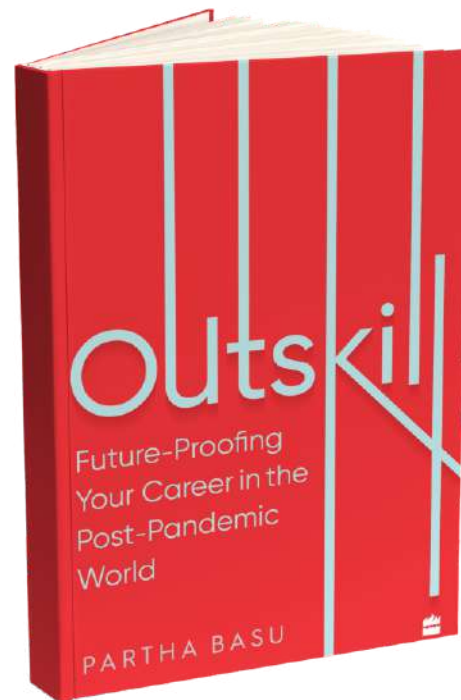
Partha: When the idea to include voices beyond me came to mind, I thought, who should I incorporate? I decided to include leaders like you and me to get their real-life experiences. I have seen some books include celebrated known names. I wanted a contrarian approach, including leaders from Managers to CEOs from across industries, for readers to get a broader perspective. I wanted to share experiences/stories that everyone can relate to and would say, "that's me" or "I have seen this."

The book is highly enriched with their contribution; they are my co-authors.

Frontlist: You've worked in various companies and projects; how was your experience, and how important is a job for a person's success?

Partha: Job played an integral part in my life as I learned a lot every day. Success is relative; the definition of success varies from person to person. Indeed I have been fortunate to work in some of the world's biggest

brands and in Fortune 500 organizations and start-ups. The experience and learning at each organization have been amazing and have shaped me to become a better leader and human being.



"Books serve to show a man that those original thoughts of his aren't very new after all." – Abraham Lincoln



Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, author of the Book "Independence"

Chitra Divakaruni is an award-winning writer, activist, teacher, and the author of 21 books, such as *Mistress of Spices*, *Sister of My Heart*, *Before We Visit the Goddess*, *Palace of Illusions*, *The Forest of Enchantments*, and *The Last Queen*. Her newest novel, *Independence*, depicts the experiences of three sisters in strife-torn Calcutta as India frees itself from the British yoke. She writes for adults and children.

Her work has been published in over 100 magazines and anthologies and translated into 30 languages, including Dutch, Hebrew, Bengali, Hungarian, Turkish, Hindi, and Japanese. Her work has been made into films, plays, and dance dramas and performed as operas. Her awards include an American Book Award, a PEN Josephine Miles award, a Premio Scanno, and a Light of India award. In 2015 *The Economic Times* included her on their List of 20 Most Influential Global Indian Women. She is the McDavid professor of Creative Writing in the internationally acclaimed Creative Writing Program at the University of Houston and lives in Houston with her husband, Murthy.

Divakaruni has been an activist in the fields of education and domestic violence and has been closely associated with the following nonprofits: Pratham, which educates underprivileged children in India, and Daya and Maitri, which assist survivors of domestic violence in starting life anew.

Frontlist: How do you define the story of *Independence*?

Chitra: *Independence* is the story of three sisters who lived through India's turbulent and exciting period when we all were becoming free, throwing off the British yoke and ensuring that the foreign powers left the country. Hence, it is at once the story of the nation and the story of a family of three women. All of them are learning what independence means, what it means for the country, and what it means for the women of that country. And what it

means for the women of that country. And what it means for each woman as she pursues her dreams and goals.

Frontlist: Why did you choose the subject "Freedom Struggle and the Partition of India" to write a novel?

Chitra: We have come to the 75th year of Freedom anniversary. On this significant occasion, it was a perfect time to revisit how that independence struggle started. And how the whole country binds together, no matter what the religion, no matter what region of the country, no matter what language people spoke, people came together to create this amazing independence for the country to create freedom. I was born into a free India, and I didn't appreciate how difficult it was and how much sacrifices were involved. Hence, it was the perfect opportunity for us to commemorate India's unity and the birth of freedom.

Frontlist: The characters in your books have always been strong. How do you illustrate "Priya, Jamini, and Deepa, three sisters" in the story?

Chitra: My books are symbolic of women-centered and powerful characters. Throughout the book, we see the women develop into their strengths. It's not that they're born powerful. The primary message I want to impart to our readers is that we don't have to be born powerful; we can learn to become stronger. Sometimes we learn to encounter challenges our way, which is certainly true for Priya, Jamini and Deepa.

The story starts with ordinary girls living in a village. About half a day or a week before direct action, riots, and terrible tragedies occur in their life. Owing to circumstances, they discover strength inside of themselves. This is how unexpected things allow us to be independent. I believe, Every woman has a source of strength that needs to be discovered.

Frontlist: What is the meaning of independence according to you?

Chitra: Even as I have grown older and evolved, it's slightly different. Independence is the ability to live a life where I can follow my values. If I'm not allowed to follow my values, then it's not living an independent life

Frontlist: How is the story of *Independence* different from other partition-based fictional stories?

Chitra: One of the things I wanted to highlight, and it makes independence a unique text that most of the partition stories, especially those written in English, focussed on the Punjab border. It is entirely understandable because terrible things were happening there as it was close to the Capital. However, the eastern border was equally important, where the same tales of partition were happening. People were going back and forth; there was a lot of trauma, sadness, a great sense of heroism, and

helping, especially between the Bengali Hindus and the Bengali Muslims. Nobody's told that story in English, and I felt the importance of sharing a story that everyone in India from different regions, everyone who reads, could share, hear and live. I wanted to respect that part of my history because that's part of India.

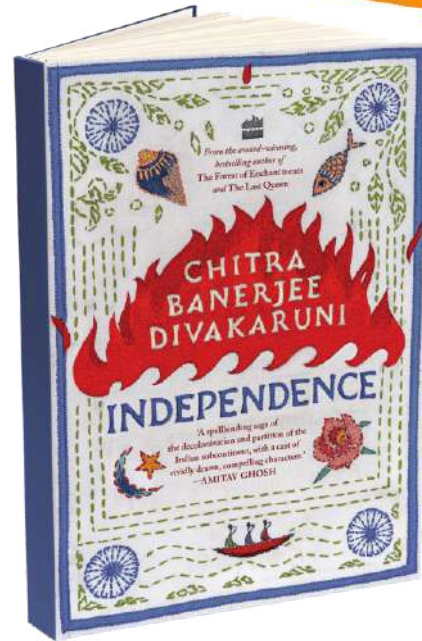
Frontlist: Being an author, it isn't easy to choose one favorite character. Suppose you ask to choose one very remarkable character. So what would you say?

Chitra: Three sisters are each special to me in their ways. It is difficult for me as they're like my children. I changed the question. And Among the women characters, the three sisters are equally important. One is more of a favorite, but I wouldn't give it away because I don't want to influence the reader. However, among the men, the father of the three girls in the story, Naval Kumar, is undoubtedly my favorite due to some personal reasons. His character is based on my grandfather, who lived through the freedom struggle and told me many stories about that time and how amazing it was that people of different backgrounds came and marched together. They didn't mind putting them in Jail together. It was a very inspiring time. In addition, he was a village doctor, just like Naval Kumar. Eventually, I have a special warm spot in my heart for the girls' father.

Frontlist: Please discuss the essence of the book and how it can readily hook readers till the end of the story.

Chitra: Readers will have to answer that question, what is hooking them? But for me, a book is always character based. If the characters are complex, learning, doing, and surprising, both themselves, then it is a satisfactory read and successful book. Our three protagonists - Priya, Jamini, and Deepa, their lives go in ways that they had not expected. They always faced new challenges. But they grew, and they adapted to those challenges. And in the process, they become stronger. The plot has some real twists which will surprise the reader. Even I only knew until that moment, the story of how things would work. So I had to learn along with the reader.

*Our civilization has been enriched,
preserved, interpreted and handed
down to us mainly by writers. Our
future too is in their hands.
Without copyrights, writers cannot
afford to write, and how then shall
we learn who we are?*



Krishna Candeth, author of 'All Stray Dogs Go to Heaven'

Krishna Candeth was born in Kerala. He studied English Literature at Madras University and Film making at Columbia University, New York. He has made short films and documentaries, and his poetry has been published in England and the United States. All Stray Dogs Go to Heaven is his first novel. He now lives in Colombia.

Frontlist: Why did you choose the title “All Stray Dogs Go to Heaven” for your book?

Krishna: At the very outset, anything an author says about his or her novel should be treated with suspicion! This is mostly because a novel sets out to be one thing but becomes about many other things in the course of the writing. As for the title of the novel, most of the characters in the book are vagabonds in an emotional sense, not wandering the streets of any particular city but the streets of their own imaginations. They may have a roof over their heads, but they all conspicuously lack a roof over their feelings. Also, the sense of a house of one's own in which one can stretch one's legs without worrying about the moods of others or inhabit a space where one can daydream and give one's feelings free rein is a recurring theme in the book.

Frontlist: Your first novel was published at the age of seventy. How did the idea of composing a book at such a unique time of your life come to your mind?

Krishna: What's age got to do with it?! A more direct answer would be that I am a filmmaker by training and spent many years writing screenplays and doing short films and documentaries. However, you need money to make films, and I must confess that my talent for raising money has always been suspect. During one of these lulls, when there was no money forthcoming for a documentary I was working on, I decided to ditch the project and write a novel instead.

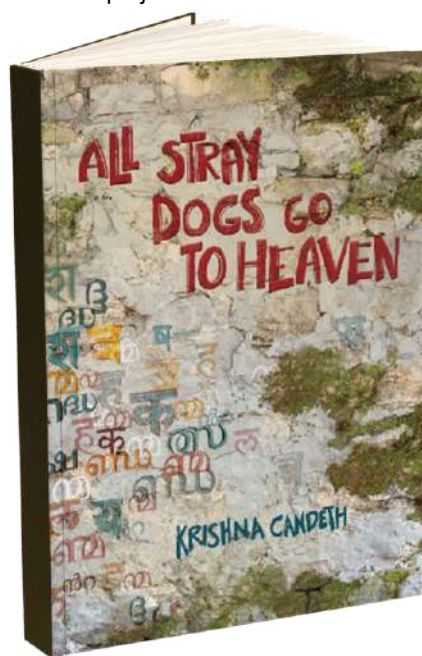
Since I studied literature before becoming interested in making films, I have carried the seeds of this novel safely with me over the years. There are stories all of us want to tell – no matter how old or young- and it's sometimes a question of biding one's time until you find the right voice or structure to hold the narrative in place. I suppose themes or sections of the book may have occurred to me when I was much younger, but devising a narrative method that would link them all together- that came slowly and much later. As for writing a book at seventy, I might mention the French writer Henri-Pierre Roché, who wrote the famous Jules et Jim (on which Francois Truffaut's film of the same name was based) when he was over seventy-four. So I guess I'm in good company! At any rate, I'd like to think that there are men and women in India and elsewhere in the world well beyond the age of seventy who think not only about writing books but of ways to make the world a better place to live in for those who come after them.

Frontlist: You have crafted a matriarchal society in the book. Is building a matriarchal society the answer to all the outrageous discrimination women face every day in the modern world, or should we prioritize making a world where all genders are accepted equally?

Krishna: Matriarchal societies have always been a healthy antidote to the impunities of the patriarchal system. But whether patriarchal or matriarchal, both societies are grounded in the inequities of a pernicious caste system. The matriarchal Ammalkans in the novel, actively or unwittingly, subscribe to the many atrocious modes of behaviour prescribed for the lower castes by those at the top of the caste ladder.

The novel is not, in any way, an apology for the matriarchal system. But, it is an exploration of the matriarchal world that the young protagonist (Nitya) grows up in, which is sad, strange, cruel, and unfair. The matriarchal system, at least as delineated in the novel by the five Ammalkan sisters, is an insulated, obsessive world. These are characters who live in the past and feed voraciously on it. The circumstances of their lives as children, what they did, and what was done to them in the past make them predictable in each other's eyes and incapable of any substantial change in the future. The novel follows the careers of the Ammalkans and documents the prolonged pain and anguish they inflict on each other through their cruel and mindless actions.

One can only hope we are working towards equalizing all genders, but this is a long-term goal that depends primarily on education and creating a public consciousness that will lead in time to the slow erosion of intolerance and prejudice.



For the moment, we should continue to challenge the vicious patriarchy that is the bane of our private and national lives. And it is to the credit of the Ammalkans- the matriarchs in the novel- that they consistently challenge the status that has been allotted to them; in fact, it wouldn't be a stretch to say that some of them were 'feminists' long before they even knew what the word meant.

Frontlist: You have shed light on Buddha's journey of "Change." How do you perceive life, and what message do you think his story imparts to readers?

Krishna: It is important to remember that it was not the transcendence Buddha sought – it was Change. I am fascinated by the historical facts and events surrounding the life of the Buddha. We have this rather unfair image of him as a permanently enlightened being. Still, it is useful to remember that he was Gautama once, a man in the real world, married for 13 years with a son Rahula, waiting for when he would ascend the throne and become king. But he is also a young man with a dilemma – things have never been the same after it becomes clear to him that nothing is more absolute in the world than suffering. He is 29 years old when he walks away forever from the kingdom he was born to rule. He is barely 35 when he declares himself enlightened. And what people forget is that he lived on as an enlightened man for another 45 years. He worked very hard during that time, like all material or spiritual promoters, preaching sermons and courting patrons for his newly founded religion.

One of the characters in the novel refers to him affectionately as Dr. G. Buddha because he was "an uncommon doctor who took the most revolutionary reading of his pulse, diagnosed his disease as a case of chronic suffering, and then wrote up, for himself and humanity, a series of prescriptions to alleviate that permanent condition."

The Buddha speaks of a clear mind and a kind heart in his newly illuminated state. He says he wants us to be awake, which is his greatest message – To wake up little by little and be aware enough to see the world for what it is.

Frontlist: In a phrase in your book, you referred to humans as "Stray Dogs." What was your notion behind this remark?

Krishna: Milan Kundera talks somewhere about how the characters in his novels are his unrealized possibilities, which is why he is both fond of them and equally horrified by them! The stray dogs of the title are the rootless characters of the novel, stray men and women scavenging like dogs in the streets of their own imaginations, not for food or bones but for scraps of real emotions.

I think writers often create a parallel universe which is unique to their own imagination or experience, a universe that wouldn't exist without them. In that universe, most of the characters in the novel are stray dogs, barking at an unjust world and sniffing at the great heap of discarded emotions that litter the streets of their imagination!

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Spotlight

by **FRONT LIST**

“Impact of Amrit Kaal Budget on the Education sphere”

In February, Frontlist Media organised quite an insightful discussion on the “Impact of Amrit Kaal Budget on the Education sphere.”

Ever since Our Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman released the Union Budget 2023, we are all exhilarated about how allocating funds in every sector strengthens the Indian economy status. This year's budget for the education landscape is relatively high from the previous year. A total of INR 1,12,898.97 crores has been allocated to the education sector. This is a massive step towards making India an education leader and will assist the country's holistic development.

As we know, the Publishing Industry plays an integral role in shaping the Education sector, and the Union Budget 2023 will directly influence all verticals of the literary community. Through this discussion, we tried to delineate the impact of the allocated budget on our Indian Education sector and the integration of Government institutions like National Book Trust India and Children Book Trust to encourage the reading culture among us.

List of panelists who participated in the conversation



Neeraj Jain
Managing Director,
Scholastic India Pvt. Ltd;
Chair, FICCI Publishing
Committee



Pradeep Arora
President, Federation
of Publishers' & Booksellers'
Associations, India



Kapil Gupta
President, Federation
of Publishers' &
Booksellers' Associations,
India

The Spotlight highlighted the following discussion points:

- Will the Union Budget 2023 assist in eradicating issues such as unemployment, poverty, and income disparities?
- In the union budget 2023-24, India has allocated 2.9% of its GDP to the education sector, while countries like the US and China spend a considerable amount of their GDP on education. Will the allocated money be enough for it, considering the education loss India faced during the pandemic?
- Vision of the Indian Government behind setting up digital libraries, and how will they benefit in creating new prospects for the students?
- Thoughts on the PM e-Vidya programme, 200 DTH channels dedicated to classes 1 to 12 that will provide supplementary education in regional languages for classes 1 to 12, according to our Union Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman.
- Government institutions like National Book Trust, India, and Children Book Trust will encourage the reading culture among Indian Citizens. However, private publishers have also evolved the Indian Publishing Industry over 75 years. How do you look upon the role of private publishers at this moment?
- With the new budget, the Government announced the opening of new nursing schools and 100 labs. However, will the Government be able to sustain them?
- English is the preferred language and is spoken worldwide. Will promoting indigenous languages in the Union Budget 2023-24 be wise since this notion doesn't support global standards?

Conversation

Frontlist: Will this year's union budget assist in eradicating issues such as unemployment, poverty, and income disparities?

Kapil: I look at the Budget over the last 40 years, and every year's Budget would've been saying to support women, youth, scheduled tribes & castes, and farmers. There is nothing new in this sense. However, I've seen a good change in formulating the National Education Policy. If we could've done ample from there, we would've come a long way.

Neeraj: It is completely correct that every budget will talk about those same stereotype lines. But the primary aspect is the details of the budget, and everything lies in the details of the budget; as I will always say, if you're looking at eradicating unemployment, poverty, and income disparity over the year, an impossible task.

The essential thing is how this budget is taken towards it. The emphasis is on infrastructure development, agriculture, and financial support and investment in infrastructure and agriculture. Thirdly, startups. If you look at all these three points, these will lay the foundation for moving towards it. Last but not least is the focus on education because poverty, unemployment, and income disparity can be eradicated when education goes down to the last mile.

Pradeep: The overall budget is futuristic and growth-oriented and lays the foundation for 2047 when India will be celebrating its 100 years of independence. The budget has focused on every sector and will benefit every section of society, giving the computers to the Atma Nirbhar Bharat region. So there are two main reasons behind India's rising inequality.

The first and foremost reason is the regressive taxation system, and the second is reduced social spending by the union governments. So higher inequality leads to lower attainment of education. For instance, in 1910, Sweden used to be one of the world's most unequal countries, and today, it is one of the equal countries in the world.

That was made possible by redesigning its tax system into a progressive one, redeveloping a system of public health and education as nobody has seen before. Therefore, the onus is on the government to increase the budget expenditure on education and health. Most developed countries spend around 6% of their GDP on education.

However, in India, the spending on education is only 2.9%, which should be much more. The fight against poverty depends heavily on education.

Spending on education contributes to economic growth and raises the national GDP needs to be improved in the budget. The increase of tax rebate from rupees five lakh to seven lakh is appreciable, however, but that will benefit the middle class to some extent. But the budget highlights the core vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Is it to bring out schemes for the welfare of the poor and the lower middle class? This year, the budget is just beginning to eradicate unemployment, poverty, and income disparities.

Frontlist: In the union budget 2023, India has allocated 2.9% of its GDP to the education sector, while countries like the US and China spend a considerable amount of their GDP on education. Will the allocated money be enough for it, considering the education loss India faced during the sentiment?

Kapil: With 2.9% in a country like India and other issues, we are considered an agrarian society partly. The ground reality is that allocating more than 2.9% is not feasible, considering schemes and problems across our country. We need to look at some of the more underlying ground issues regarding social subsidies and our spending on various other areas before we start harping on this question of what is our percentage spending vis-a-vis other countries.

Neeraj: Every country faces different challenges and issues, and when you're putting down the budget together, you have to consider where you can put what. Similarly, we run our household budgets. Important is not whether it is 2.9 or can it be 3.2 or 3.5? We need to focus on where is this 2.9% that we've allocated in the budget that will be spent in? And will we end up spending the amount? Because what we have seen over the past decades is that we allocate sums of money for education, but towards the end of the budget period, we realize that we still need to spend that amount. What is very important was also one of the questions raised at the FICCI meeting when we were discussing the budget with Our Union Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman. It ensured the allocated money was spent, especially on education.

Because education is a subject that is handled both by the center and state governments. Therefore, the center govt. by itself can only spend some of this money if the state govt comes back with its proposals. The significant fact here is if this 2.9% is available, how does the government plan to spend that money and get spent on the right causes that would pave the future?

Pradeep: As far as COVID is concerned, the impact was everywhere in that period. The worldwide lockdowns because of the global pandemic have affected many important sectors adversely, including the education sector. During the post-pandemic, many schools, colleges, universities, coaching centers, and educational institutions were closed for a long time.

The spending on education contributes to economic growth and raises the national GDP that most developed countries spend. In the US, about 6% of the GDP, and in China, they spend about 4% of the GDP on education. The overall allocation of the education sector in the union this budget 23 has increased by around 8.3%, i.e., 1.13 lakh crore compared to 1.0 lakh crore allocated in the last year. However, it still needs to achieve the National Educational Policy target to increase the spending on education to 6% of the GDP.

Currently, the share of education as a percentage of GDP remains so low, about less than 3%, which is marginal for the higher education sector, which saw an uptick of around 8% in the allocation of 44,094 crores from 14,828 crores in 23. So in order to implement the NEP 2023, the allocation has been made for the overall development of the Best Institutes and Universities. The University Grant Commission has been increased by 9.3% i.e., an increase of around 459 crores so it may be emphasized that the book trade has been missioned as the normal industry and may rightly be graded as No. 2 after the defense sector. Considering the loss in the educational sector during the pandemic, the government has not allocated enough money to it.

Frontlist: What is the vision of the Indian Government behind setting up the digital libraries, and how will they benefit in creating new prospects for the students?

Neeraj: The focus in the budget has been on the digital libraries as well as the physical libraries. Those are the two essential steps if you look at it from the budget perspective and relate it to the learning loss; the pandemic has resulted in the learning loss, which also coupled with the report stated more than 60% of the students in grade five cannot read grade two level text. If you look upon the root cause of that problem lies in readings. Reading is an integral part of building a language; learn to read, and then you read to learn. That's why physical and digital libraries have been brought in. Digital libraries, per se, because it makes books accessible to all.

On the other hand, our country's physical libraries in structure, which needs to be improved, will take time to develop. The easier bit of building up is the Digital Library structure. As part of Scholastic's research into reading, it stands on four pillars the first top first and the main pillar for reading is access. And the second one is choice. With the setting up of digital libraries, the government intends to provide access to books to everybody. It's a welcoming move, coupled with the physical library. Each child gets to use a book in the format they want. And then, they can consume the content, which is again up to their choice. By having both physical and digital libraries, we'll ensure access is available on both sides. Consequently, the child who loves digital can go digitally and read the book, and the child who loves physical books can pick up a book to read.

Pradeep: Our finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced the national digital library for children and adolescents living in all parts of the country first to aid the availability of country books. Digital Library will facilitate the availability of books across languages, geographies, genres, and levels. However, states will also be encouraged to set up physical libraries for the children to provide infrastructure for accessing the national digital library resource. Both National Book Trust and Children Book Trust will have books in local languages as well as in English as to the physical English for the physical libraries.

National digital library of India, all digital library that stores information about different types of digital contents, including books, articles, videos, audios, PCs, and other educational materials delivered for users from reading educational levels, and capabilities. So it provides a single window research facility so learners can revive the digital resources with the least effort in minimum time.

It is designed to hold the contents of any language and provide interface support for leading vernacular languages. It is available on all popular access devices, including mobile apps, Android and iOS platforms. They are also designed to benefit users like students of all levels, teachers, researchers, librarians, library users, professionals, differently-abled users, and other lifelong learners.

It will provide a single-window research facility as a one-stop shop for all digital educational resources. In addition, the government has also proposed a multi-sector focus on reforms through technology-driven and knowledge-based mechanisms during the Amrit Kaal. Our finance minister said our vision includes technology, travel, a knowledge-based economy, strong public finances, and a robust financial sector. To achieve this, we need, as our PM said, "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayaas" to build an Aatmanirbhar Bharat. The vision of the Indian government behind setting up digital libraries is excellent, and it will be beneficial in creating new prospects for students.

Kapil: I have always believed that if you want to remove any equality, provide equal opportunity, and how you provide equal opportunity in this kind of a world is enable to have it available to everyone digitally. We have such an incredible digital reach in our country right now that it promises to be able to remove all barriers across everything. A digital library means the same content is available to the poorest students as to the wealthiest students. It is devoid of any location differentiation, economic and social prosperity, and anything else.

I recall many years back, I was having a long discussion with somebody in UP education, and I'm talking about before they started that other laptop scheme with Akhilesh Yadav. And one of the things I discussed was why you give every student laptops. Why don't you make the classrooms digitally enabled? Put this world-class teacher in some corner of the country, have that class beamed across all classrooms in UP, and change the teacher from a teacher to a facilitator. Every 10 minutes of the lecture, there is a five-minute break in which students interact with their teacher and ask questions, doubts, and everything else. And the classroom works fundamentally well. This idea was extremely disliked then. And then came COVID. And everybody started jumping on that. However, digital libraries will go a considerable way in taking care of such biases.



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