
Even the darkest night will end and the sun will rise.

— Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*

New India, now sixty five year old, began with the promise of a 'Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic' enshrined in the Preamble that the Constituent Assembly gave to the country on 26th November 1949. It wanted to secure to all its citizens:

Justice, social, economic and political;
Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;
Equality of status and of opportunity;
And to promote among them all
Fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual
And the unity and integrity of the nation;
IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY this twenty-sixth day of November,
1949, do HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS
CONSTITUTION (Preamble).

It was a hefty task. All institutions had been derailed due to the parallel holocaust of partition and in its wake the law and order in the country having gone berserk. A herculean effort was needed to rebuild from near scratch after the fall of the British Empire. Even though the nationalist fervor was an all time high, the countries morale was at low ebb. The countryside had been plundered, the homes destroyed, whole villages' devastated and families pillaged monetarily, sexually and spiritually. Edifices can be bolstered, plastered, even built upon, but to rebuild a shaken faith needed tremendous gearing together of forces. Undoubtedly, under the unflinching stewardship of Jawahar Lal Nehru and his key group of leaders the demography and the pathology of the country were quietly and efficiently steered through the traumatic phase.

The political and the economic investments of the first decade proved productive in organizing the new born state and it seemed that 'the knowledge' that the

people at the helm of affairs prophesied were being put to good stead in raising New India. The mindsets of the people seemed to change – *Dukha bhare din bite re bhaiyya* rang out the filmic euphoria and by and large even though the *juta* was *Japani, Patlun Englishtani* the *dil* was *Hindustani*, incipient hybridity was making its presence felt.

LARGEST NET SALES of any daily newspaper printed in Northern, Southern, Central or Western India. REGD. No. 2111

The Times of India

NO. 185, VOL. CIX. BOMBAY: FRIDAY, AUGUST 15, 1947 PRICE TWO ANNAS

BIRTH OF INDIA'S FREEDOM



NATION WAKES TO NEW LIFE
Mr. Nehru Calls For Big Effort From People
"INCESSANT STRIVING TASK OF FUTURE"
Assembly Members Take Solemn Pledge

NEW CABINET OF INDIA
Fourteen Members
PANDIT NEHRU TO BE PREMIER

WILD SCENES OF JUBILATION IN DELHI
From Our Special Representative
NEW DELHI, August 14.
ENTIRE DELHI KEPT AWAKE TO WITNESS THE HISTORIC EVENT OF USHERING IN THE FREEDOM OF INDIA AT THE HOUR OF MIDNIGHT.
Unprecedented scenes of enthusiasm were witnessed both inside and outside the Constituent Assembly Chamber, where speeches, recitedly, loudly and with the blaring of conches.

STATE VISIT TO KARACHI



LORD MOUNTBATTEN GREETES PAKISTAN
Mr. Jinnah Re-Affirms Firm Friendship With Britain

From Our Staff Correspondent
KARACHI, August 14.
TOMORROW two new Sovereign States will take their place in the British Commonwealth of Nations, and young nations but heirs to old and proud civilisations," said Lord Mountbatten, addressing this morning the Pakistan Constituent Assembly.

FRENZIED ENTHUSIASM IN BOMBAY
Crowds In Festive Mood

THE national flag was hoisted over the 74-year-old Bombay Civil Secretariat at midnight when the citizens of Bombay greeted the dawn of independence with intense excitement and frenzied rejoicing.

"MAY BOMBAY PROSPER"
Governor's Message
GOOD WISHES TO FREE INDIA

The message says: "This is the first time that the people of Bombay have seen their own flag flying over the Government buildings."



Hindustan thus flowered through its own fertile soil and with the help of the little foreign 'insecticide'; the harvest grew from large to bumper. The decade saw a change of hands at the top but the grassroots seemed to become more grounded. New ideologies impregnated the air and swept across the rarer strata of society. However, down below the parochial lifestyle still perpetuated. Caste, class, attitude towards women was gripped in traditional values. The spread of education, the impact of sciences, the flurries of economic changes touched only the outside world and within the Indian remained *Bhartiya*.

This was the legacy of the long drawn out debate about Indianness, whereas Gandhi has recognized that Hinduism was part of what it meant to be an Indian the secularity of Nehru advocated protecting cultural and religious differences rather than imposing a uniform “Indianness” (Khilnani, 1999, 167). This wove itself into the indecision regarding the national language as well. After Nehru’s death in 1964 there began a multiplicity of region and caste based preoccupations that invaded the political scene taking precedence over Nehru’s views of Indianness. Indira Gandhi’s Congress hoped to give more respect to the secular notion of Indianness. However, her own diffidence led to more dissents and deep fissures were created among the people of the Indian nation. With her death and the advent of the BJP a new sense of Indianness pervaded the scene standing in opposition to Nehru’s India and not in keeping with Gandhi’s Ideology either. Religious tensions grew and so did the people’s unrest. But, ironically the country was making a head way economically, set on the path of global modernity.

For many in India modernity has been adopted through conservative filters of religious piety, moralism and domestic virtue. This has spawned a novel Hinduism, where holographic gods dangle on well-used key chains and cassettes of devotional *ragas* are played in traffic jams: instances of a religious sentiment freed from its original defining contexts, from the subtle iconography of materials and the punctual divisions of the day into sacred and mundane time (Khilnani, 1999, 187).

It was in the decade of the nineties that liberalization swept across like a mighty force and changed the outlook of the nation. Liberalization, in general, means to gain liberty from previous governmental restrictions usually in areas of social and economic policies. Liberalization of autocratic regimes may precede democratization. In the arena of social policy it may refer to a relaxation of laws restricting for example divorce, abortion, homosexuality or drugs. Economic liberalization refers to the

greater participation of private entities by fewer government regulations and restrictions in the economy in exchange; the doctrine is associated with neo-liberalism. It includes greater efficiency and effectiveness that would translate to a ‘bigger pie’ for everybody. Most First World countries, in order to remain globally competitive, have pursued the path of economic liberalization: partial or full privatization of government institutions and assets, greater labor market flexibility, lower tax rate for business, less restriction on both domestic and foreign capital, open markets etc. Former British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, wrote that “Success will go to those companies and countries which are swift to adapt, slow to complain, open and willing to change. The task of modern governments is to ensure that our countries can rise to this challenge” (Blair, 2005).

In developing countries, economic liberalization refers more to liberalization on further ‘opening up’ of their respective economies to foreign capital and investment. Three of the fastest growing developing economies today; China, Brazil and India, have achieved rapid economic growth in the past several decades after they have ‘liberalized’ their economies to foreign capital. Many countries nowadays, particularly those in the third world, arguably have no choice but to also ‘liberalize’ their economies in order to remain competitive in attracting and retaining both their domestic and foreign investments.

In the Philippines of example, the contentious proposals for charter change include amending the economically restrictive provisions of their 1987 constitution. The total opposite of a liberalized economy would be North Korea’s economy with their closed and ‘self sufficient’ economic system. North Korea receives hundreds of

millions of dollars worth of aid from other countries in exchange for peace and restrictions in their nuclear programme. Another example would be oil rich countries such as Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates, which see no need to further open up their economies to foreign capital and investments since their oil reserves already provide them with huge export earnings.

Privatization came on its heels and further changes were etched on the mindscape of the already changed landscape of the nation. Privatization is the incidence of transferring ownership of business from the public sector (government) to the private sector (business). In a broader sense, privatization refers to transfer of any government function to the private sector including governmental functions like revenue collection and law enforcement. The term 'Privatization' also has been used to describe two unrelated transactions. The first is a buyout, by the majority owner of all shares of a public corporation or holding company's stock, privatizing a publicly traded stock. The second is a demutualization of mutual organization or cooperative to form a joint stock company. The term was first used in the 1930s by *The Economist* in covering German economic policy.

Privatization is a direction for public policy which draws its inspiration from several different visions of a good society, justified by the normative theories. By far the most influential is the vision grounded in laissez-faire individualism and free market economics that promises greater efficiency, a smaller government and more individual choice if only we expand the domain of property rights and market forces. A second vision, rooted in a more socially minded conservative tradition, promises a return of power to communities through a greater reliance in social provision on

families, churches and other largely nonprofit institutions. Privatization, in this view means devolution of power from the state to ostensibly non political and non commercial forms of human association. Yet a third perspective sees privatization as a political strategy for diverting demands away from the state and thereby reducing government 'overload'. This last view, identified particularly with recent non conservative thought, does not necessarily conflict with the other two-- indeed; some advocates of privatization draw on all three-- but each vision suggest a different frame work for analysis and policy.

At the turn of the century, globalization became the buzz word. Globalization literally means the process of transformation of local or regional phenomena into global ones. It can be described as a process by which the people of the world are unified into a single society and function together. This process is a combination of economic, technological, socio-cultural and political forces. Globalization is often used to refer to economic globalization, that is, integration of national economies into the international economy through trade, foreign direct investment, capital flows, migration and the spread of technology.

Tom G. Palmer of the Cato Institute defines globalization as the diminution or elimination of state enforced restriction on exchanges across borders and the increasingly integrated and complex global system of production and exchange that has emerged as a result. Thomas L. Friedman examines the impact of the 'flattening' trade of the globe, and argues that globalized trade, outsourcing, supply chaining, and political forces have changed the world permanently, for both better and worse. He also argues that the pace of globalization is quickening and will continue to have a

growing impact on business organization and practice. Noam Chomsky argues that the word globalization is also used, in a doctrinal sense, to describe the neo-liberal form of economic globalization. Herman E. Daly argues that sometimes the terms internationalization and globalization are used interchangeably but there is a slight formal difference. The term internationalization refers to the importance of international trade, relations, treaties etc. International means between or among nations.

Globalization helps in the growth of cross-cultural contacts. Cultural diffusion embodied by the adventures of new categories of consciousness and identities, the desire to increase one's standard of living and enjoys foreign products and ideas. Due to globalization people throughout the world adopt new technologies and practices, and participate in a 'world culture'. Some bemoan the resulting consumerism and loss of languages.

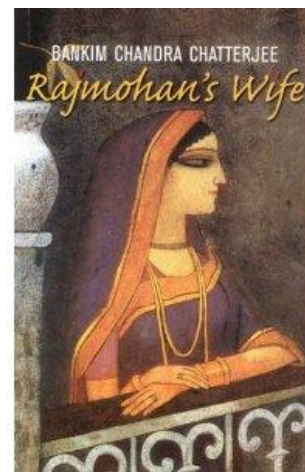
The impact of globalization has also been seen in the literary field. It can be traced with the reference of the locale; the language and technology have been used, foreign publishing houses etc after the 1991 economic reforms. But we will start from the very beginning of this genre in India till date and its influences on the society.

If we trace the broad spectrum of Indian writing in English right from the first novel, *Rajmohan's Wife* by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1864), we can see how India figured as a subject in this novel. Whether it was Toru Dutt's *Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* (1882) or Sarojini Naidu's lyrics based on Radha and Govinda or Sri Aurobindo's *Kali, Laxmi, Durga, or Mother*, these novels explored India through the myriad forms of Indianness. Despite being written in English the writing variously

explored notions of Indianness through its people, its geography, its culture and its traditions. This is true even today and not only for Indians living in India but for those across the seas too, the homeland and its politics is the recurrent theme in imagining one's nation creatively. This perhaps is the way that Indian writers choose to self-position and self-validate themselves viz-a-viz their counterparts abroad. The sociology and the economy of their vast country inspired their imagination and continue to do so despite the fast changing literary scene.

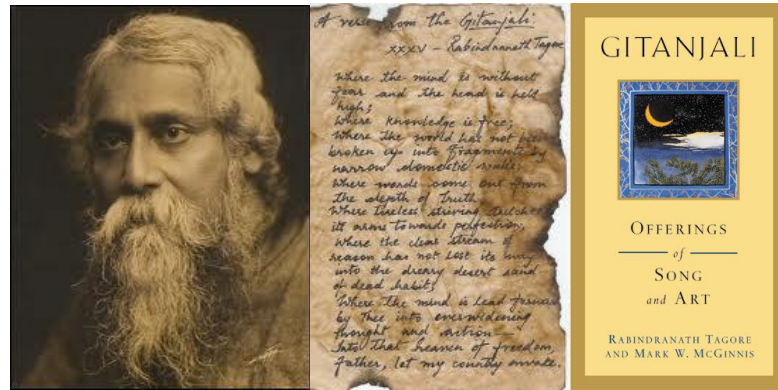


Bankim Chandra Chatterjee



Rajmohan's Wife

The canon of writing that emerged in the thirties and the forties including Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, later to be followed by Khushwant Singh, Anita Desai, Kamla Markandaya, Arun Joshi, and Ruskin Bond, all involved themselves with the historical legacy, the chronological changes and the culture's transition into a modern nation state. As sub text everyone used the impact of the western economies over which was positioned the Indian cultural dialectics. The resistance to one and the power of the other became an ongoing dialectics that persists even today.



Rabindranath Tagore

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high
 Where knowledge is free
 Where the world has not been broken up into fragments
 By narrow domestic walls
 Where words come out from the depth of truth
 Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection
 Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way
 Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit
 Where the mind is led forward by thee
 Into ever-widening thought and action
 Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake

www.totalbhakti.com

Tagore's *Gitanjali* (1912) was the first modern Indian text to be acknowledged in the West. It brought Indian writing to the eyes of the other world and since then the attention it has drawn has never abated, so much so that today we are storming across the barricades into a realm hitherto considered 'English.'

M.R. Anand through his first novel, *Untouchable* (1935), *Coolie* (1936), *Two Leaves and A Bud* (1937) opened up questions of caste and class and he continued to work through the endeavor to reconcile the village with progressive, urbanizing India. He grounded his work in social realism and infused Gandhism with explorations of tradition and modernity Raja Rao began with focusing on the Gandhian philosophy and non-violent resistance to the British occupation of India and later, also dwelt on the relationship between Indian and Western cultures. *Kanthapura* (1932) and *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960) typify the two ends. *The Chess Master and his Moves* (1988) was his final way of projecting the ways of handling different identities. R.K Narayan's fictional territory Malgudi was the then location where Indianness thrived and which could later on in more advance times be taken as a Mumbai, a Kolkata or a Delhi and his bachelor of arts or painter of signs could well be the present day corporate and professionals. In these three stalwarts of early Indian writing in English one can easily get a glimpse of the polemics that was going to shape future writing in English. The genes of new millennium Indian writing in English were as evident as writing on the wall.

Moving on to Khushwant Singh, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, we are well into the seventies' and eighties' India, Indianness and its associated problematic. The scene largely shifts from the village (Malgudi, Kanthapura) to the urban cities, from the villagers to the modern middle class, from the traditional to the modern. These writers of the seventies and eighties explored the changing social consciousness which was the outcome of labor intensive industries, the manufacture of low priced goods, and its accompanied psychological changes. The religious piety and the

domestic virtues were receding, left behind in the earlier defining contexts. The sacred was losing its battle with the mundane. Though the White Sahebs had left, the *Kale Angrez* had taken over.

Come the nineties and the literary scene underwent a sea-change. As India opened markets to foreign trade, it embarked on a path that has led it to where it is now. It provided the necessary impetus to the commercial acumen of Indians. Added to this was a 'sense of vision, a belief in themselves' and they became "exceptionally nimble in seizing the right business opportunities" (Varma, 2007, xxii). Arundhati Roy's novel, *The God of Small Things* (1997) embodies this shift and itself inaugurates an era of Bookers, Commonwealth, Grammy and Oscars. We can now put our 'Thums Up', be the 'Gold Spots' ('India Shining') and 'Coca-Cola' the world with our 'Pepsi'. Alongside the 'India Shining' with its globalized capitalism, its upwardly mobile professional classes, its new leisure sites and practices it is also 'India Rising' and shedding its old persona, a more heterogeneous new middle class that has surfed the weaves of economic liberalization and has done well for itself. So well that it can now flaunt its well-being in the face of millions of poor friends and neighbors.

This briefly sums up the chronology of major changes in the history of India well into the new millennium. Literature has always been alluded to as the mirror of the society which reflects the diversity of life. The larger events in which individual players enact their single lives are fashioned with passion into a consistent narrative. The passions of the author/narrator and the actions of the protagonist/societal being are nuanced together and organized into a significant discourse that projects the whole

through the parts. Like fiction being written through the ages, the Indian novel, in different regional languages and in English, is no exception. A large canon of Indian writing in English today epitomizes New India, it demonstrates marked departures in writing in English often in genre, form and voices *Q&A* (Swarup, 2005), *Five Point Someone* (Bhagat, 2004), *Two States* (Bhagat, 2009) caused a great commotion as their 'young India' narrative took its audience in new and challenging directions. Now, the plots are set in metropolitan cities with their spate of advertising media and journalism and the protagonists are professionals with a new life style and craving for new opportunities. These confirm to an India that is changing both socially and culturally.

In the earlier Nehruvian model of Indian nation building, the "old" middle class was made up of government workers who served the nation by working for it. In a globalized model of the Indian nation, the middle class engages in a global economy of work and consumption, serving the nation by, ironically enough, directing itself away from it. (Radhakrishnan, 2011, 42)

Just one look at the new fiction will point towards new India.

Looking through the rear view mirror one can see that the Indian novelist never approved of the 'Art for Art's Sake' hypothesis, his inspiration stemmed from what was and this he made his 'is' for his creative work. Man becoming the measure of all things. It was more the Victorian concerns that took the upper hand in his novels - the Dickensian realism, the Hardyian regionalism, and the morality of Jane Austen superseded the more abstract concerns. And perhaps, it is this that has stayed as the essential Indianness in novelists even in the new millennium. A combination of regional realism with a backdrop of how morality is being flayed by the new insurgent global practices is what we read in the fiction of today. The commitment to a cause or

a catharsis through narration is now not the thrust which has shifted to presenting slices of the country with slivers of activities that has been generated by the circumstances of the times. These slices often are macrocosmic and the slivers the worms eye view of what is festering under the becoming garb of 'India Shining'. The social protest of Mulk Raj Anand, the distress that R.K. Narayan felt when the world of evil overtook the good or the inhumanity that Bhabhani Bhattacharya tried to expose through the depiction of merciless hoarders, profiteers and black marketers does not ring through the writing of today. Yes, corruption, evil and inhumanity are writ large across every page, but the concern is not with the 'why' it has come to be or the 'how' it can be resolved. It is there, has come to stay, for better or for good and it is the 'what' that makes modern India. It is in the description of the 'what' that the writer's narrative moves.

This is not to say that literature has taken over the concerns of historical or sociological writing, it is still literature because it psychologically penetrates into the minds of its protagonists and lays bare their souls in crisis. The novel is not dead but has changed its mode into a more journalistic endeavor taking off from the dozens of 24x7 news channels summing up what India is. The snippets are brief and their impact transitory. It is the expansion of this pan-Indic experience that the writers of today bringing to the readers. If the national news can thrive on rape, murders, scams and terror why can the novels not become a part of this nationalistic endeavor of laying bare the seething, teeming panorama of the India that has come to be? One look at the newspapers and TV news of a couple of decades ago is enough to say where we have moved into and similarly a few pages from the novels of the past and the present is sufficient proof of the miles traveled ahead.

Chetan Bhagat is the present iconic writer who is churning out bestsellers one after the other, consistently engineering successful books by crafting stories that strike a chord in his target audience. His skills are different from those of a Mulk Raj Anand or an R.K. Narayan or even those of a Milan Kundera who are densely literary and yet he is a greater success story who has used language that does not tax comprehension and fits in with the general scenario around. His revolutionary novel *Five Point Someone* (2004) has reshaped the entire literary canon. He has captured the voice of an entire generation in his *One Night @ Call Centre* (2005). His novel, which sold 1,00,000 copies in a single month, and this in a country where the best – seller threshold is 5,000, is set in the world of the call centre, wherever growing legions of well educated urban Indians waste their talent and knowledge. The locale is real life Gurgaon, a satellite town lying 35km south of Delhi, where gargantuan shopping malls and call centers herald the Indian version of the twenty first century. But Bhagat, himself formally active in the IT field, denounces this new lifestyle as a kind of decolonization of his country only this time, it operates not by means of violence, but instead by exploiting bodily desires. In stylistic terms, Bhagat's novel is conspicuous for its use of colloquial English, the true lingua franca of the urban middle classes, and for its renunciation of the type of elaborate diction associated with the works of many Anglo-Indian authors. It may well be that novels such as *One Night @ Call Centre* (2005) are less concerned with literariness as such and far more with the possibilities of identification. For, India's younger urban populations in particular are exposed to enormous social mutations. Increasing numbers of call centers are hiring full time psychologists as the parallel existences of their employees – here global lifestyle, there traditional social roles – is

taking a psychic toll. So called "chick lit" – stories of young, single professional women, or Indian Bridget Joneses – has begun to circulate on the market. As reading material goes, it is distinctly lighter fare. Still, the social displacements articulated therein do weigh heavily. Gone are the Big three – Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand and R.K. Narayan – who distilled the polemics of their times to produce rooted Indian literature; gone are also the post independence writers who struggled against the British legacy and the colonial hangover attempting to 'Indianize' Indian literature written in English. The time has come of writers between the ages twenty five and thirty five years, fluent in English, professionally educated and trained who have access to a wider world at a mouse click and who are at home within the most divergent cultures. It is these who are depicting the inter-cultural world in their writing. One thing is obvious that they are rooted in India to an astonishing degree but they can still connect with the new and the innovative in surprising ways. However their writing is also localized in the sense that they make their lived world their microcosm and their individual towns and cities their macrocosms that govern their mindset. It is Mumbai, Delhi and Kolkata that becomes their backdrop from where they foreground the inner quandaries of the young urbanities who find themselves caught between restrictive parochialism and enlightening globalization. They tell the stories of their own lives hinging on themselves and the milieu around them. These are not tales of the past generations, of the throes that India went through or what it is shaping into-desirable or undesirable. Their stories are, however, grounded in the biography of the city, in how life is going on, in how one can fight ones way up, the top being the desired goal.

The differentiation of lived experience is accompanied by a corresponding differentiation on the book market – a reliable index of the growing professionalism of the business as a whole. New genres are conquering the market – the comic book, and especially the fantasy and science fiction genres. And Samit Basu, born in 1979 and currently a resident of Delhi, has certainly performed a service by providing Indian literature with its first fantasy novel, *The Simoqin Prophecies* (2004). Here, we find an arresting and innovative mélange of myths new and old, Indian fables and Western pop culture, the *Mahabharata* and James Bond.

All in all, a new level of freedom is in evidence. This is also confirmed by 34 year old literature critic Nilanjana Roy, also a resident of Delhi, who has followed the development of Indian English language literature for years. This freedom, she emphasizes, can only mean that prior obligations to specifically "Indian" content have ceased to apply: "I'm delighted to see that today's authors, at long last, are writing out of a sense of freedom that they're doing exactly as they please. They can live in India and write about Bulgaria. They can write about their own world, and in which Bob Dylan and jazz are just as prominent as Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan and Bollywood songs.

What the readers seem to want is something short, snappy and affordable, says Shobha De, something one can read waiting for a doctor or awaiting a delayed flight – *Fish in Paneer Soup* – not a meal take away but a book one can snack one's mind on, says Anuradha Varma

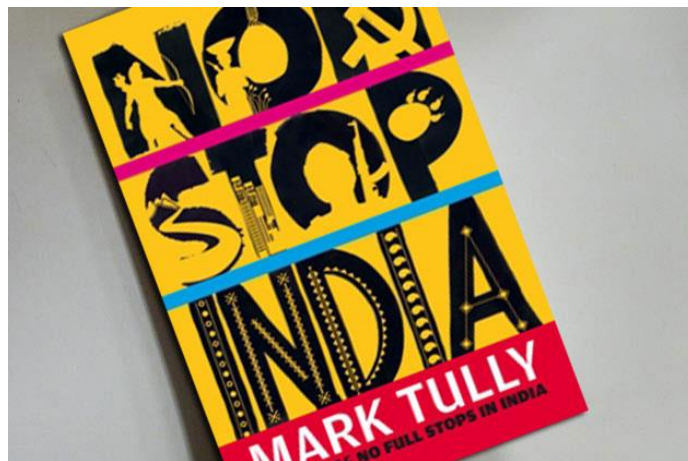
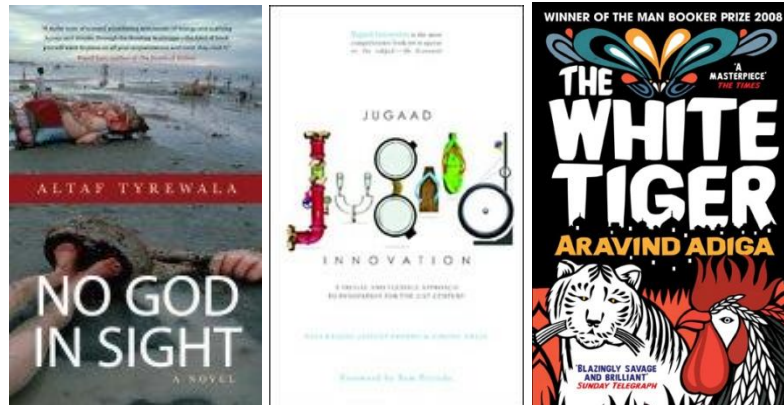
From office politics to teen chick-lit and urban angst, these books are often less than 200 pages between the covers priced between Rs. 95 and Rs. 250 and written by authors drawn from the very readers they aim at – college students and those starting their careers. Interestingly, they are brought out by leading publishing houses that have caught on to the

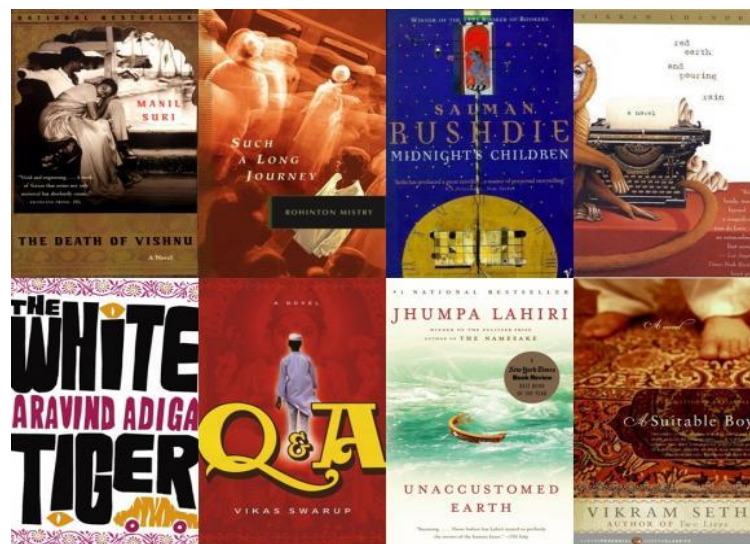
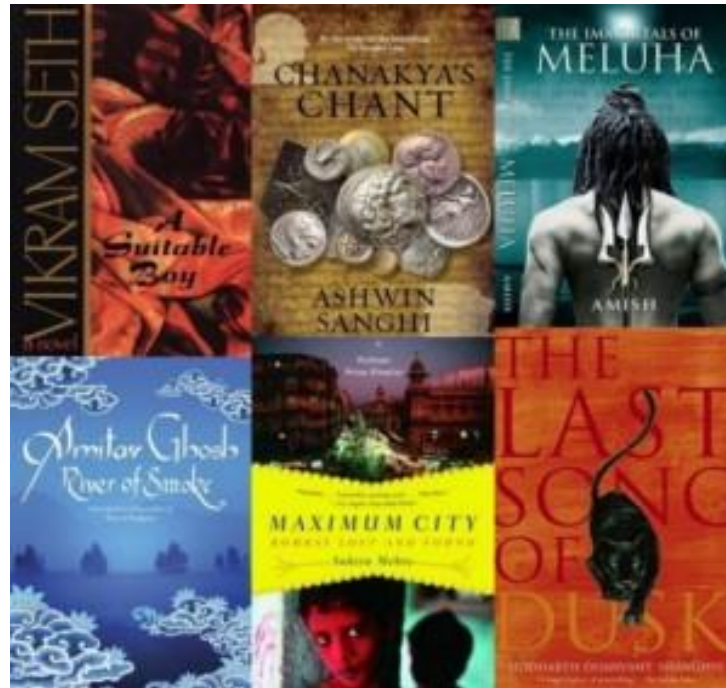
market survey catering to the young and restless with attention spans to match (Varma, 2011).

Vaishali Mathur, the senior commissioning editor at Penguin books India which has launched *Metro Reads* justifies the direction which writing in the new millennium must take. She says

For the reader who travels around, has a shortage of time and doesn't have the patience to lug around heavy books, we have these books that have a good, gripping storyline and accessible stories that they can read in their everyday lives (Varma).

These books are popular because the stories are very close to the target readers and the characters are very relatable. Of course, the word within literary circuits is that writing like Chetan Bhagat's isn't really literature but the word on the street says otherwise and it is the latter that have made a difference in the way the new millennium novels work. Chetan Bhagat in an interview to Swati Daftaur says that “the real middle class India that has been looking for a voice i.e. its very own response more actively to the novels that he writes. He acknowledges that if ask to write that J.K. Rowling’s he would be at a loss but then ‘J.K. Rowling couldn't write about IITs’” (Daftaur, 2012). What is important today is that one is able to relate to the larger readership which is the youth and it should be in a language that India talks and about situations that the young India acosts in everyday walk of life so we have *Love Over Coffee* (2011), *Losing My Virginity and other Dumb Ideas* (2011), *Boots, Belts, Berets* (2008).





My name is Douglas Misquita and I'm an action-thriller writer from **India** ...



William Dalrymple



Literature Festivals take **India** by Storm

Yet this is not the whole story about Indian English Literature in the new millennium. The other side is the books talked about and advocated for in the new literary phenomenon's Lit for Life and The Jaipur Literary Festival which have beautifully catered to Salman Rushdie, U.R. Ananthamurthy, and Keki Daruwalla on the one hand and made the presence of newer writers like Aravind Adiga, Advaita Kala, Daljit Nagra, Rana Das Gupta felt. In their reason for instituting the 'Hindu Literary Prize' it is said:

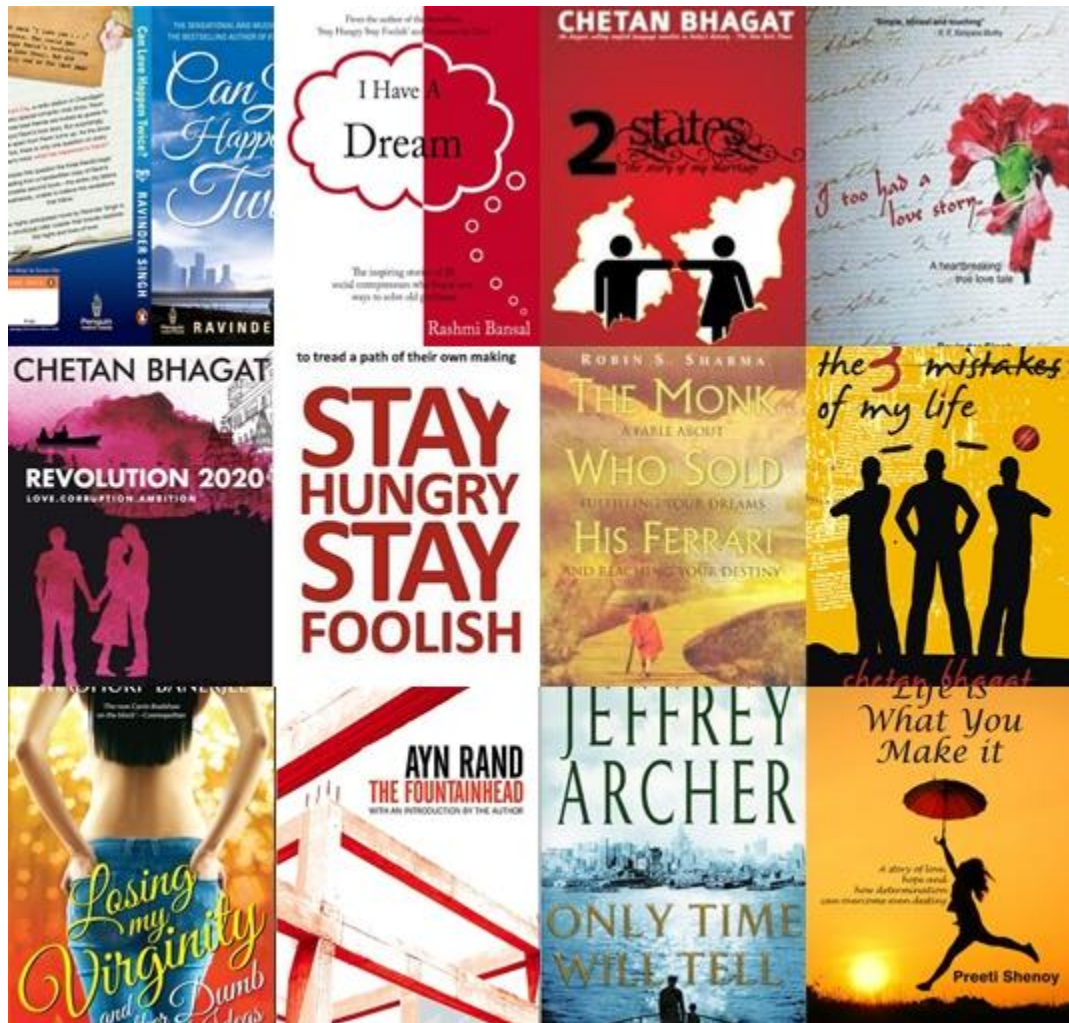
To celebrate the best of Indian writing in English; Around 130 nominations – novels and short story collections both in English and those translated from other Indian languages, published between June 2010 and June 2011, were received (*The Hindu*, 2011).

They argue that for a long time, when one spoke of literature, the references were mainly to foreign writers. As children, the majority read Enid Blyton, Billy Bunter and the like. Classics meant Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, and George Eliot. Some American and European writers too figured in this mix: Mark Twain, Tolstoy, Hemingway, and Dostoevsky etc. But where were the Indian writers? Of course one hears of Tagore and reads an odd poem by Sarojini Naidu in the English textbook, but on the whole one knew more about authors from other countries than about those from India.

It took a while before Indian writers made their appearance on centre stage. Writers in Indian languages had always been popular but they were known only in their respective states. As Indian writing in English began to gain prominence, the Indian publishing industry also began to grow. And this led to literature gaining more prominence in the media, especially newspapers.

As a result the Indian readership has never headed so good before. From best sellers to theatre to poetry to serious fiction, the world has opened up and

much of what has happened in the two *Melas* is what literature of the new millennium is all about.



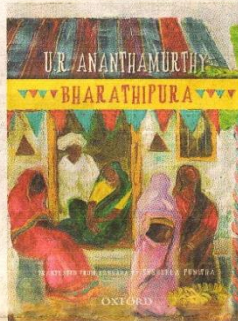
THE HINDU LITERARY PRIZE FOR BEST FICTION 2011: THE SHORTLIST

Seven that stood out

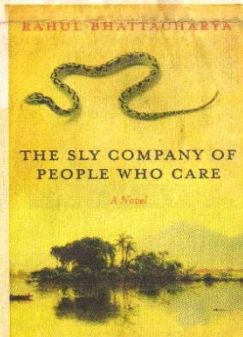
Here they are (in alphabetical order), some of the best books published in India over the last one year in English... The gruelling process of reading the books and interacting across continents began in June and culminated at the Lit for Life conclave in New Delhi on September 25, where Manu Joseph announced the shortlist. Announcing The Hindu Literary Prize for Best Fiction 2011 shortlist...



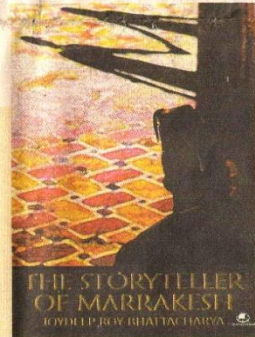
Bharathipura,
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THE HINDU
LITERARY PRIZE 



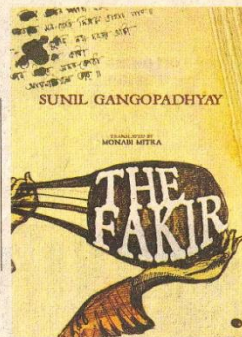
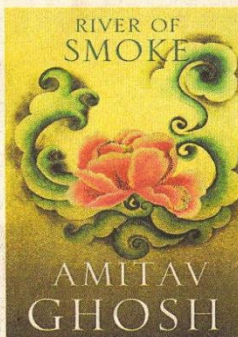
The Sly Company of People who Care, Rahul Bhattacharya, Picador



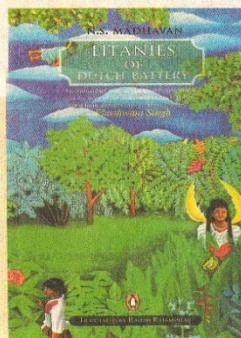
The Storyteller of Marrakesh, Joydeep Bhattacharya, Tranquebar



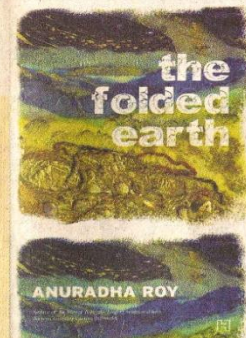
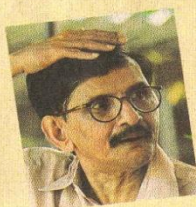
River of Smoke, Amitav Ghosh, Penguin.
PHOTO: DAYANITA SINGH



The Fakir, Sunil Gangopadhyay, Harper Perennial.



Litanies of Dutch Battery, N.S. Madhavan, Penguin



The Folded Earth, Anuradha Roy, Hachette

LITERARY REVIEW

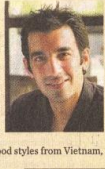
THE HINDU • SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 2011

Who'll be there in Delhi?

Profiles of the speakers at the various sessions of Lit for Life at India Habitat Centre on September 25...

Are You Really Going to Eat All That?: 10.30-11.20 a.m.

NIKHIL CHIB is a celebrity chef, restaurateur, columnist, television food show host and an active board member of the Spastics Society of India. He founded Bussba, the popular resto-lounge in Mumbai. His penchant for travelling, hunting for the right spices and setting only for the freshest ingredients turned into a driving passion and pushed him to travel across Asia and experiment with various authentic food styles from Vietnam, Burma, Thailand and Korea.



JOYASA GIRI is a writer by profession and a partner at Priya, a publishing house. Her first project was a cookbook of traditional vegetarian Andhra recipes. Her book, *Cooking at Home with Peradtha*, won the Best Vegetarian Cookbook in the World in 2006 and *Sabham Ayu* stood second best in the world for Best Health and Nutrition Book in 2009. She is also a founder of Devanyasa, a Kathak dance school in Chennai.



ESTHER DAVID won the Sahitya Akademi Award 2010 and the Prix Eugène Brazier in France for her novel *Book of Rachel*. It is now being made into a French film. Before writing books, she was art critic and columnist. More recently, she documented Gujarat's Bene Israel Jewish community for the Diaspora Museum, Tel Aviv, Israel. She has also authored *The Walled City*, *By the Sarnamati*, *Book of Esther*, *My Father's Zoo*, *Shalom India* and *War and Society and The Man with Enormous Wings*.



MANU CHANDRA is an Executive Chef at three restaurants over two cities: Olive Bar and Kitchon, Mumbai and Olive Beach, Bangalore. At St. Stephen's College, he wrote, designed and helped photograph a book on fusion cuisine. Manu then enrolled at the Culinary Institute of America (CIA), Hyde Park, New York. In 2007, Manu was selected as one of the Top 10 chefs in his home country by *Taste and Travel* magazine.



Political Dynasties: 2.30-3.20 p.m.

SIDDHARTH VARADARAJAN is the Editor of *The Hindu*. He is a member of the International Founding Committee of The New News, a board member of the inter-governmental B.P. Kotraia India-Nepal Foundation, member of the Indian Council of World Affairs and a member of the editorial board of *India Quarterly: A Journal of International Affairs*. He has been awarded the Elizabeth Neuffer Memorial Prize Silver Medal for Print Journalism, the Bernard O'Higgins Order for contribution to journalism and promotion of India's relations with Latin America and Chile and the Ramnath Goenka award for Journalism of the Year.



VASUNDHARA RAJE was initiated into politics by her mother in 1982. She held a variety of posts in the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and was elected to the Rajasthan Legislative Assembly in 1985. From 1989 onwards she won four consecutive elections to the Lok Sabha from Jaipur, Rajasthan. Under Atal Bihari Vajpayee's premiership, Vasundhara Rajee held independent charge of numerous cabinet departments. Vasundhara Rajee's five-year term as Chief Minister of Rajasthan was marked by a strong focus on infrastructure-building and social initiatives. Vasundhara Rajee now holds the position of Leader of Opposition in Rajasthan state assembly.

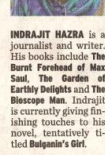


Realities: Fictional or Otherwise: 3.30-4.20 p.m.

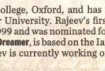
AMAN SETHI is currently the Chhattisgarh correspondent for *The Hindu*. A *Free Man*, his first book published by Random House India, has been described as witty, humorous and insightful.



RANA DASGUPTA is a British-Indian novelist and essayist. His first novel, *Tokyo Canoeed*, was short-listed for John Llewellyn Rhys Prize and Vodafone Crossword Award. His second novel, *Solo*, won the prestigious Commonwealth Writers' Prize.



RAJEEV BALASUBRAMANYAM is a graduate of Oriole College, Oxford, and has a PhD. in English and Creative Writing from Lancaster University. Rajeev's first novel, *In Beautiful Disguise*, won a Betty Trask Prize in 1999 and was nominated for the Guardian First Fiction Prize. His second novel, *The Dreamer*, is based on the Ian St. James award-winning story of the same title. Rajeev is currently working on his third novel, *The Story*.



Children of the Lamp (Workshop): 11.00 a.m.-5.00 p.m.

ATANU ROY is an illustrator and political cartoonist by profession. He has a keen interest in photography and computer graphics and has hundreds of children's books to his credit. He has also designed books for National Book Trust, Limca Book of Records, HarperCollins, Penguin/Puffin India, Scholastic and many more. He has won many awards like Children's Choice Award for book illustration (AWIC) in 1989, Sir Bob Geldof's Cartoonist, Book of Cartoons in 1988, International Cartoon Festival, Semarang, Indonesia in 1988 and is also a record holder in Limca Book of Records.



ANUSHKA RAVISHANKAR is an Indian children's writer. She has written over 15 books of verse, fiction and non-fiction, many of which have been published internationally. Some of her books are *I Like Cats, Elephants Never Forget, The Tenth Rasa: An Anthology of Indian Non-sense and Wish You Were Here*. Apart from children's books, she also writes plays and has many international awards to her credit.



Popularity Factor: 11.30 a.m. - 12.20 p.m.

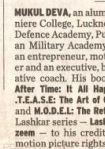
ANGELIA SAINI is an award-winning journalist based in London whose work focuses on science, technology and its impact on society. She is the author of *Geek Nation*, a story of a journey through India to find out whether the country is set to become the world's next scientific superpower. She was short-listed for the Best Feature Award from the Association of British Science Writers in 2010.



ANUJA CHAUHAN, an advertising professional and bestselling author, made her debut with *The Zoya Factor*. Her second novel, *Battle for Bittera*, is an irreverent take on the electoral process in the world's largest democracy. She is currently working on a new novel and a feature film screenplay for Bollywood producer/director Nikhil Advani titled "Gujarat Mein Liar Nahin, Shayar Hoon".



MUKUL DEVA, an alumnus of La Martiniere College, Lucknow, the National Defence Academy, Pune and the Indian Military Academy, Dehra Dun, is an entrepreneur, motivational speaker and an executive, business and creative coach. His books include *Time After Time: It All Happens*, *S.T.A.L.P. T.E.A.S.E. The Art of Corporate Warfare* and *M.A.D.E.L.L. The Return of Employee*. He is also a *Lashkar* series - *Lashkar, Salim Mehtab, Bloodback, Tarzameen* - to his credit. Mukul Deva recently sold the motion picture rights to *Lashkar*.



MAHESH DATTANI is a playwright, stage director, screenwriter and filmmaker. In 1998, Mahesh Dattani won the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award for his book *Final Solution* and *Other Plays*, the first playwright writing in English to receive this award. His film 'Mango South' was shown in several international film festivals all over the world and was adjudged best motion picture at the Barcelona Film Festival 2003. His film 'Morning Raag' had its international premier at the Cairo Film Festival in 2004 and he won the award for Best Artistic Contribution.



New Wave Cinema: 12.30-1.20 p.m.

RAKESH OMPRAKASH MEHRA is a filmmaker and screenwriter. He established Pictis Motion Picture Company Private Limited in 1986. He is best known for writing and directing 'Rang De Basanti' (2006) for which he won the Filmfare Best Director Award, National Film Award and also received British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BFTA) Award nomination, for Best Foreign Language Film. Rakesh Ompakash Mehra Pictures (ROMP) has cultivated an attitude to pioneer the way for a new wave and new age cinema from India.



A Life in Theatre: 4.30-5.20 p.m.

SAJNHA KAPOOR joined Prithvi theatre in 1990s. She is involved in the running of the theatre and its various activities. She has added a host of programmes and workshops like Prithvi Players and Little Prithvi Players: Theatre for Children. Sajnha has now become the face of Prithvi Theatre.



Revolutions and New Beginnings: 5.30-6.20 p.m.

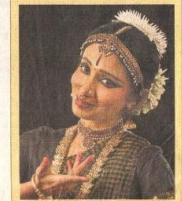
MANSOURA EZ ELIDIN is an Egyptian novelist and journalist. She is working as literary editor for *Akhbar al-Adab*. Her first collection of short stories, *Shaken Light*, was published in 2001. This was followed by two novels, *Maryam's Maze* and *Beyond Paradise*, which was short-listed for the prestigious Arabic Booker Prize in 2010. In 2009, she was selected for Beirut39, as one of the 99 best Arab authors below the age of 40.



ALI AL NUORI is a Yemeni novelist and poet. Since 1997, he has been the editor of *Al-Hikma*, a literary publication of the Yemeni Writer's Association. He has also headed a literary journal called *Ghaiman* since it was established in 2007. His latest novel, *The Handsome Jew*, is set in 17th century Yemen and addresses the issue of tolerance of other religions and social classes. He was long listed for the Arabic Booker in 2010.



Dance: 6.45-7.30 p.m.



ALAMEL VALLI is a leading Bharatanatyam dancer and choreographer. Among the numerous awards she has received are the Padma Shree and the Padma Bhushan, the Chevalier of Arts and Letters from the French Government, the Grande Médaille de la Ville de Paris, the Sangeet Natak Akademi award and the Kalanidhi from the Tamil Nadu State Government.

The Hindu Literary Prize Shortlist: 8.20-8.30 p.m.

MANU JOSEPH attempted to study journalism at the Madras Christian College but left when he found a job as staff writer for *Society* magazine. At the age of 21 he moved to Bombay, which he considers home. He now lives in Delhi. *Serious Men*, his first novel, won The Hindu Best Fiction Award, 2010. The novel was picked by *The Independent*, *Huffington Post* and the *California Chronicle* among others as one of the best books of 2010. He is working on a second novel and edits the national newsweekly, *Open*.



The decision makers

Our distinguished panel of judges who will decide the shortlist and the winner...

MRIDULA GARG

Mridula Garg does not adhere to any tradition: Marxist, feminist or region specific. Some of her works are *Chittachora*, *Anitya*, *Half-way to Nowhere*, *Country of Goodbyes* (in English translation) and *Milij Man* (Hindi). She has written seven novels, 82 short stories, three plays, four collections of essays and a travel memoir. Among her various awards are Yashwantrao Chavan Award in 2004 as an outstanding Hindi literary work of the last decade and Helman-Hammatt Grant from Human Rights Watch, New York.



PHOTO: K. MURALI KUMAR

TABISH KHAIR

Born in Ranchi and educated mostly in Gaya (Bihar), Tabish Khair is the author of a number of critically-acclaimed studies, poetry collections and novels. Winner of the All India Poetry Prize, Khair's novels have been short-listed for the Encore Award (U.K.), Vodafone Crossword Award (India), The Hindu Best Fiction Prize (India), Man Asian Literature Prize (Hong Kong). He has been awarded academic fellowships/scholarships at Cambridge, Delhi, Copenhagen and Aarhus. His most recent works are *Man of Glass* (poems 2010), *The Thing about Things* (novel 2010) and the co-authored study, *Reading Literature Today* (2011).



PHOTO: LARS KRUSE

K. SATCHIDANANDAN

Poet, critic, editor and translator K. Satchidanandan was Professor of English at Christ College, University of Calicut, Kerala and editor of *Indian Literature*, the journal of the Sahitya Akademi and later its Chief Executive. He retired as Director and Professor, School of Translation Studies and Training, IGNOU, Delhi. He has published 21 collections of poetry, 16 collections of world poetry in translation and 28 collections of critical essays, travelogues and interviews, two plays all in Malayalam. Apart from this, four collections of critical essays in English and several works in Malayalam, English and Hindi were edited by him. He has won 24 awards for his literary contributions. He is a Fellow of the Kerala Sahitya Academy and an activist for secularism, environment and human rights. A film on him, *Summer Rain*, was released in 2007.



PHOTO: SIKHA KHANNA

PAVAN K. VARMA

Writer-diplomat Pavan K. Varma has held several crucial posts in the Government of India including Press Secretary to the President of India, spokesman of the Ministry of External Affairs, High Commissioner to Cyprus and Director of The Nehru Centre in London. Currently, he is Ambassador of India to Bhutan. Apart from his diplomatic career, he is the author of over a dozen books including *The Great Indian Middle Class* and *Bites Indian*. His latest book, *Becoming Indian: The Unfinished Revolution of Culture and Identity*, deals with the pivotal issues of culture and identity for postcolonial societies. His first work of fiction *When Less is More* is to be published shortly. He was conferred an honorary doctoral degree for his contribution to the fields of diplomacy, literature, culture and aesthetics by the University of Indianapolis in 2005.

PHOTO: V.V. KRISHNAN

BRINDA BOSE

Studied English Literature at Presidency College, Calcutta; the University of Oxford and Boston University. She is currently Associate Professor of English at the University of Delhi. She was a Fellow of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, from 2006-09. Her areas of research are gender, culture and higher education in South Asia, and modern and postcolonial literatures. Her publications include *Amitav Ghosh: Critical Perspectives*, *Translating Desire and Gender and Censorship* (edited), *Interventions and The Public and the Erotic* (co-edited). She is the secretary of the Indian Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (IACLLS) and co-editor of the *margHumanities* project, a global-local initiative for a radical reinvention of the arts/humanities in academia.



PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

2 LITERARY REVIEW

DELHI
THE HINDU • SUNDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2011

THE HINDU LIT FOR LIFE

Literary extravaganza

From food to films to politics and revolutions to bestsellers, Lit for Life, presented by Hirco, in New Delhi had something for everyone.

HIMANSHU BHAGAT



LOOKING AHEAD TO A LITERARY FEAST: At the inauguration.

A clear September Sunday morning at the India Habitat Centre in New Delhi saw the organisers, panellists and attendees congregate for The Hindu Lit for Life presented by Hirco. Organised to mark the 20th anniversary of the launch of *The Hindu Literary Review*, the festival will also host the award ceremony of the annual Hindu Literary Prize in Chennai.

The day began at the Stein Auditorium lawns with a buffet breakfast — Chef Nikhil Chib was at hand serving egg-cheese and ham open sandwiches. Chib, a one-time Wall Street investment banker, runs the popular Busaba chain of restaurants in Mumbai. Post breakfast, he accompanied the crowd to the Stein Auditorium to weigh in on matters of food in the first conversation of the day, titled 'Are You Really Going to Eat That?'

Asparagus versus bathua

Writer Esther David moderated a spirited discussion on what we should eat, what our grandparents and forefathers ate, and why the big, ongoing changes in our food habits are not necessarily such a great thing. Nikhil Chib noted that the 'Indian-Conti-Chinese' fare of the pre-liberalisation era has now been replaced by Thai, Japanese and Italian. 'Are we going to become slaves to Araguilar?' asked Manu Chandra, an executive chef at the upscale Olive chain of restaurants in Mumbai and Bengaluru. There is, of course, a high likelihood that the aromatic salad leaf popular in Italian cuisine features in his restaurants' menu.

The dominant note was one of caution, of not letting go of traditional food and cooking habits. 'Why do we prefer asparagus over bathua (the local spinach-like leafy green),' Chandra continued in the same vein. He then looked at the audience and challenged it. 'How many people in this room eat bathua?' A respectable number of hands — say about twenty-five — went up, and Chandra seemed a little mollified.

David spoke fondly of the famous Bhatnagar Galli in her native Ahmedabad, famous for its biryani and other non-vegetarian 'mughlai' dishes that are part of a 600-year-old culinary tradition.

Ways to kiss and kill

Served up next was an appetizing conversation on the literary equivalent of fast food — popular fiction. What makes a book popular, asked moderator Angela Saini, the London-based science reporter and author of *Geek Nation*, an acclaimed book on scientists in India. Mukul Deva, author of many fast-paced thrillers, was ready with the answer: good setting, pace, good guy, bad guy and a woman. Anuja Chauhan, author of the bestselling *The Zoya Factor*, countered that a fixed formula was a recipe for boring books, but admitted to one guiding rule that she tries to adhere to — that every page in her book should have one 'sparkling bit', be it humour or romance or something else. The challenge for the writer, she said, was to present the familiar in a fresh way. 'After all, there are only so many ways in which you can kiss someone,' said Chauhan. Deva had earlier made a similar point about writing thrillers, pointing out that there are only so many ways in which you could kill someone.

Pigeons, gol gappas and Mig 21

'I am a bad reader. I am ignorant. There is [in me] the darkness of not reading. But I like to listen a lot.' Not the words you expect to hear at a literary festival but then filmmaker Rakesh Omprakash Mehra won over the packed audience with his straight talking. Film writer and journalist Jai Arjun Singh seemed to have picked the thread from the previous panel when he quizzed Mehra about the new wave in Indian cinema — which includes his hit film 'Rang De Basanti' — that has bridged the old divide between 'popular' and 'serious' films.

'I was born and brought up in Old Delhi. I would fly kites, play with pigeons, and have the best gol gappas in the world. In our school we had a Mig 21 in the compound that fascinated us, and during the Mandal agitation we went to protest at AIIMS,' Mehra said. These vignettes all figure in his films.

Bismillah

Aman Sethi, who covers the Maoist insurgency in Chattisgarh for *The Hindu*, talked about the Arab Spring and the conflict in

Afghanistan with the Yemeni novelist Ali Al Muqri, the Israeli playwright Motti Lerner and Afghanistan-based radio broadcaster and imam John Mohammad Butt. Al Muqri introduced himself by recalling an old India connection — how he would skip school as a boy in Yemen to go watch Hindi movies.

But — a former hippie who arrived from England in 1969 and decided to embrace Islam and stay on — narrated a joke: An old Afghan man was stopped at a security check post and told that he will have to disrobe and be frisked. He protested against having to suffer this indignity, but was told that no one involved had any choice in the matter — he'll just have to comply. Resigned, he untied his robe, parted it with both hands, and remembered God, uttering the word 'Bismillah'. Immediately, everyone scattered and scrambled away from him. Amazed, he wondered what he had done. People told him that they ran away because they thought he was a suicide-bomber. Butt said that for Afghans reeling under 30 years of war, this joke was a coping mechanism: a way to talk about taboo topics such as suicide-bombing.

Surreal Delhi

Matching the surreal state of wartime Afghanistan was Aman Sethi's account of biometric identification of beggars in Delhi. Sethi was moderating the discussion about the relative merits of fiction and non-fiction in presenting reality along with two Delhi novelists — author Rana Dasgupta and writer and journalist Indrajit Hazra. 'Beggars in Delhi,' Sethi said, are often caught by the police and hauled off to something called the 'beggars court', their thumbprints are then scanned and filed for future reference, except that, as Sethi discovered, there was no mechanism to retrieve the digitally scanned thumbprints — the whole exercise was essentially pointless.

Inspired at twelve

Both playwright Mahesh Dattani and Sanjya Kapoor, who runs the iconic Frithvi Theatre in Mumbai, recollected formative experiences from when they were 12 years old — experiences that nudged them towards a career in theatre. Kapoor recounted driving around Ireland with her grandparents — her grandfather was the actor-manager Geoffrey Kendal — in a blue Citroen car and performing different bits of Shakespeare in schools. 'I would play Titania to my grandfather's Oberon, and was falling in love with him!' she recalled fondly. Dattani contrasted Kapoor's rich family legacy in theatre with his own childhood, growing up in a Gujarati business family in Bengaluru. When he was 12, the family went to watch a Gujarati 'whoduni' play — there was continuous chattering among the audience in the foyer, which carried over inside the theatre and continued well after the play began. 'Then there was a gun produced onstage and there was pin-drop silence,' he recalled. 'It was mesmerised; it shut up 500 Gujaratis!' It was a valuable lesson in the power of theatre.

The concluding session saw the young Member of Parliament Sachin Pilot and veteran CPM leader Sitarum Yechury take hard questions on politics after Anna Hazare from Siddharth Varadarajan, editor of *The Hindu*, and then face even harder queries from the audience. Rounding off the day were three short Bharatnatyam pieces performed by Alamel Valli — the audience was rapt and mesmerised. Spotted in the darkened hall was Ali Al Muqri, reciting every bit of the recital on his small mobile phone camera.

And then came the much anticipated finale — the announcement of the shortlist for *The Hindu Literary Prize for Best Fiction 2011*. Three of the five judges were present — writer Mridula Garg, the poet K. Satchidanandan and academic Brinda Bose — along with Manu Joseph, editor of the *Open Magazine*, and winner of *The Hindu Best Fiction Award 2010* for his novel *Serious Men*. Garg explained the process by which they had chosen the seven shortlisted titles out of a total of 125 books that they read between them.

The day had something for everyone, from food to politics to films to the straightforward suspense over the shortlist announcement. If one day can pack in so much, one can't wait to see what the two-day concluding session in Chennai on October 29-30 would throw up. Get ready for some scintillating stuff and be there...

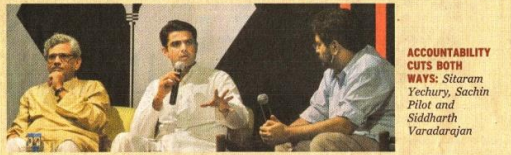
EATING ALL THAT: Nikhil Chib prepares a special dish



TALKING FOOD: Manu Chandra, Nikhil Chib, Jigyasa Giri and Esther David



INSPIRED BY LIFE: Rakesh Omprakash Mehra and Jai Arjun Singh



ACCOUNTABILITY CUTS BOTH WAYS: Sitarum Yechury, Sachin Pilot and Siddharth Varadarajan



OF VITAL PUBLIC SPACES: Sanjya Kapoor and Mahesh Dattani



OF COUNTRIES IN TRANSITION: Aman Sethi, John Mohammed Butt, Motti Lerner and Ali Al Muqri



FOLLOWING A FORMULA: Angela Saini, Mukul Deva and Anuja Chauhan



THE REACH OF REPRESENTATION: Rana Dasgupta and Indrajit Hazra



Nirmala Lakshman, Director, *The Hindu* presents a Rado watch to Rakesh Omprakash Mehra; a section of the audience.



MAN OF THE MOMENT: Manu Joseph with the judges Brinda Bose, Mridula Garg and T. Satchidanandan

SPELLBINDING: Alamel Valli

PHOTOS: RAJEEV BHATT AND R.V. MOORTHY

The habitable world has grown larger and paradoxically the people across the world are coming closer – the cliché 'A global village' fits in squarely with the demographic dialectics of today. Transnational movements have compressed spaces but enlarged mindsets so that acceptability is now being negotiated much more easily both politically and culturally. As a result, New York finds a place in all big cities of the world and an India exists in all the big cities of the world; McDonalds and Starbucks are cosmopolitan brand names as Levi's and Panasonic are and *samosas* and *dosas* have travelled into the farthest corners of the world. When an Indian writer writes about 'the *Bindi*' and 'the *saree*' he does not need to gloss it over and neither does a British writer explain Big Ben or Yorkshire pudding. What all this leads up to is that now the world is fast becoming a single chronotope and its synchronicity is largely accepted. That is to say that just like walking down the Janpath in New Delhi one finds all kinds and creeds, all fashions and foods clubbed together into a harmonious whole and no eyebrows are raised, similarly writing from different parts of the world address to certain common postulates. This is the truth about our present times and this is what is being represented in the fiction of our day.

Indian Writing in English, a regional subgenre of the larger enterprise 'fiction' is no exception. Its locales, its ethos, its very being has been redefined by the concepts of the new millennium. It is 'English' which joins it to other fiction being written in the language and it is 'Indian' that gives it a distinct aura of its own. Travelling down the timeline through the fiction of Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan to the present days of Amitav Ghosh, Mukul Keshvan one can see the changes in both the themes and the narration. Earlier, Indian writing

was insular, parochial and the structuring was linear, conservative. Now, the themes are cosmopolitan, diversified and the narration proliferated, fractured. Whereas the protagonists then belonged to the rural ambience, since India was largely an agricultural country, today the scenes have shifted to the urban, the metropolitan.

Even a cursory stroll through a bookstore or a passing glance at the kiosks that line the pavements in big bazaars, it is evident that there has been a market boom of new literature, especially that written by young writers. Simultaneously along with this publishing enterprise there is an accompanied emergence of literary platforms where this literature can be voiced from and an upsurge of audience who can take cognizance of it. This makes for a thrilling time for all things literary – what with the book festivals, literary awards and prizes gaining currency by the day. The excitement is obvious with the increased opportunities of speaking with writers, publishers and literary critics. Since, the cream of young talent makes its way into the IT industry, the young Turks are buzzing to using their imaginary and entrepreneurial skills in making name and fame through this new avenue that has opened up.

What has added fuel to this creative fire is the enormous upheaval in the country centered on an explosion in the field of information and communication technologies. This has indirectly given rise to a large and consumer oriented middle class with an unprecedented purchasing power. Also, this has triggered the acceptance of English as the Indian language that can help one participate in the global market and those writing in it consider themselves as cultural ambassadors of India who can present to the world a new picture of the sub-continent.

The scene of new millennium Indian Writing in English is truly polyphonic. There is fiction written about the politics (The Emergency, Maoist Rebellion, Terrorism), about the wealthy New India with glories of the corporate world, Chick lit, Crick lit, call center narratives, fantasy and vignettes. But what gives it a unifying identity is that they all interrogate questions of Indianness: what it is to be an Indian, where is real India, what has India left behind and what it is looking forward to- the discursive ways of shaping and forming identities of being Indian in New India. The other unifying thread is the language, English, not the English English but English Vinglish and Hinglish. As Sadana says

This way of reading texts, focusing on place and linguistic context, illuminates a process of indigenization of the English language itself. And it is this process that tells us something essential not only about society and politics, but about the creative process and impulse itself. What is required, therefore, is a new politics of reading Indian English literature that is grounded in the very languages that it seeks to represent, and most centrally, that English itself has become (Sadana, 2009, 15).

The locales are not the old battle fields of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, they are thronging, over populated, urban spaces where many generations, many castes, creeds, classes, rub shoulders in their everyday work life; the heroes/protagonists are not of the Aristotelian brand, warriors, princes, *avtars* and *Maryada Purushottams* but the average Indian trying to fend for themselves, wend their way to the top.