

# SHARING STORIES



## IN PURSUIT OF CONFLICT

*with Avalok Langer*

INTERVIEWS

## FEATURING

ABHISHEK KRISHNAN

SHALINI P. SAWKAR

## RESEARCH BLOGS

*Publishing Challenges*

**PARTNERS**

#letsmakestoriesdino

@pristine.books

## CONTEST WINNERS

50 +

## ENTRIES



**PLUS**

Writing Contests

Book Reviews

Short Stories

Poetry

July 2020

# EDITOR'S DESK

PIYA GAJBE



Sharing Stories Online Magazine has completed its journey of one month. The response, love and support from the readers and Sharing Stories community have been overwhelming.

**"Growth is never by mere chance; it is the result of forces working together."** James Cash Penney.

Within a month of the Magazine's launch, the official page of Sharing Stories crossed 1K mark and also the number of members in the community increased manifolds.

**A sincere heartfelt gratitude to all those who believed in us and our goal of 'World Harmony through Writing'.** This growth of Sharing Stories is because the force of your constant support worked along with our efforts.

In the first month of its inception Sharing Stories Online Magazine associated with NGO Chaanv and stood by it to support the cause of **SHEROES**, the acid attack survivors. We raised funds and awareness through our official page and social media handles. I am grateful towards the members of the Sharing Stories community who came up and supported the cause.

Taking **our motto 'Imagine, Inspire, Incubate' one step ahead**, Sharing Stories Magazine is now in a collaboration with **Katha Publications, an NGO by Padmasrhee Geeta DharamRajan**. 'Katha' is devoted to making **3 million underprivileged children able to read**. I am sure our readers will actively participate in this noble cause too. Sharing Stories strives to bring the stories of grit, determination and dedication of the authors. Our featured Interviewed **Author Avalok** shares with us his inspiring journey of a conflict journalist, overcoming his learning disability and writing a novel about the North Eastern States- 'In Pursuit of Conflict'.

We have also featured **screenwriter Abhishek** and talented author **Shalini Sawkar** in this edition. Their young and fresh spirit will surely inspire budding writers.

Sharing Stories is grateful for the enthusiastic response by the writers towards the **writing contests of June Edition**. The entries received were high in creative quotient and thoughtfully penned. Though as a rule, only one winner can be picked, however each written piece stood out in itself.

The amount of passion and hard work our writers had put into their entries is precious to us. For an unbiased and fair selection process, we have devised a **rating methodology** in selecting the winners.

We have paid our respects to our frontline warriors, our **Doctors** on the occasion of Doctor's Day, celebrated this month by curating a prompt around it. On the same lines, the occasion of **'International Nelson Mandela Day'** is on 18th July. Let's pen down stories to bring harmony in the world as the past month the world witnessed the rise of racist discrimination on the basis of colour. Check out the interesting prompts of this month's events. There are loads of prizes to be won along with the cash prizes.

The Dinos from **#LetsMakeStoriesDino** make their prominent presence through their quills. We are also announcing an exciting partnership with **@pristine.books** as our **book review partners**.

Sharing Stories is dedicated to help and encourage authors in their publication journey. **#FindingSolutions** is one such initiative by us. In this segment you shall get to read useful articles, tips and analysis related to book and publishing industry.

This was all about the past and present edition of Sharing Stories.

However, there is something more I would like to add in this editorial piece. The untold stories which dance inside our brains should be put on the paper and shared with the world.

In this whole journey of writing process, we are always in learning mode. Some of us might have graduated to higher stages of writing and some might be still crawling at the initial steps. At any point, it is good, as long as you are moving. The key to growth lies in looking forward to the next step of learning. Write all your heart out; publish that book which is still lying unwritten in your head. No one else other than you can stop you from telling the story.

***Happy writings and Blissful readings!***



# CONTENTS

## INTERVIEW

Avalok Langer  
Abhishek Krishnan  
Shalini P. Sawkar

## #LETSMAKESTORIESDINO

#GratitudeinLockdownDays  
A wish for a Daughter

## BOOK REVIEW

"A Curse So Dark & Lonely"  
reviewed by @pristine.books

## LOVE FOR LITERATURE

#Wordsmith Corner  
#Poetry

## SHARING STORIES

'Fair'y Tales by Nipun Varma

## #FINDINGSOLUTIONS

Publishing Challenges by Abilash  
Geetha Balan

## WRITING CONTESTS JULY

#WordImpact  
#PicturePromptPoetry  
#1000wordstales

## #WINNERS OF JUNE

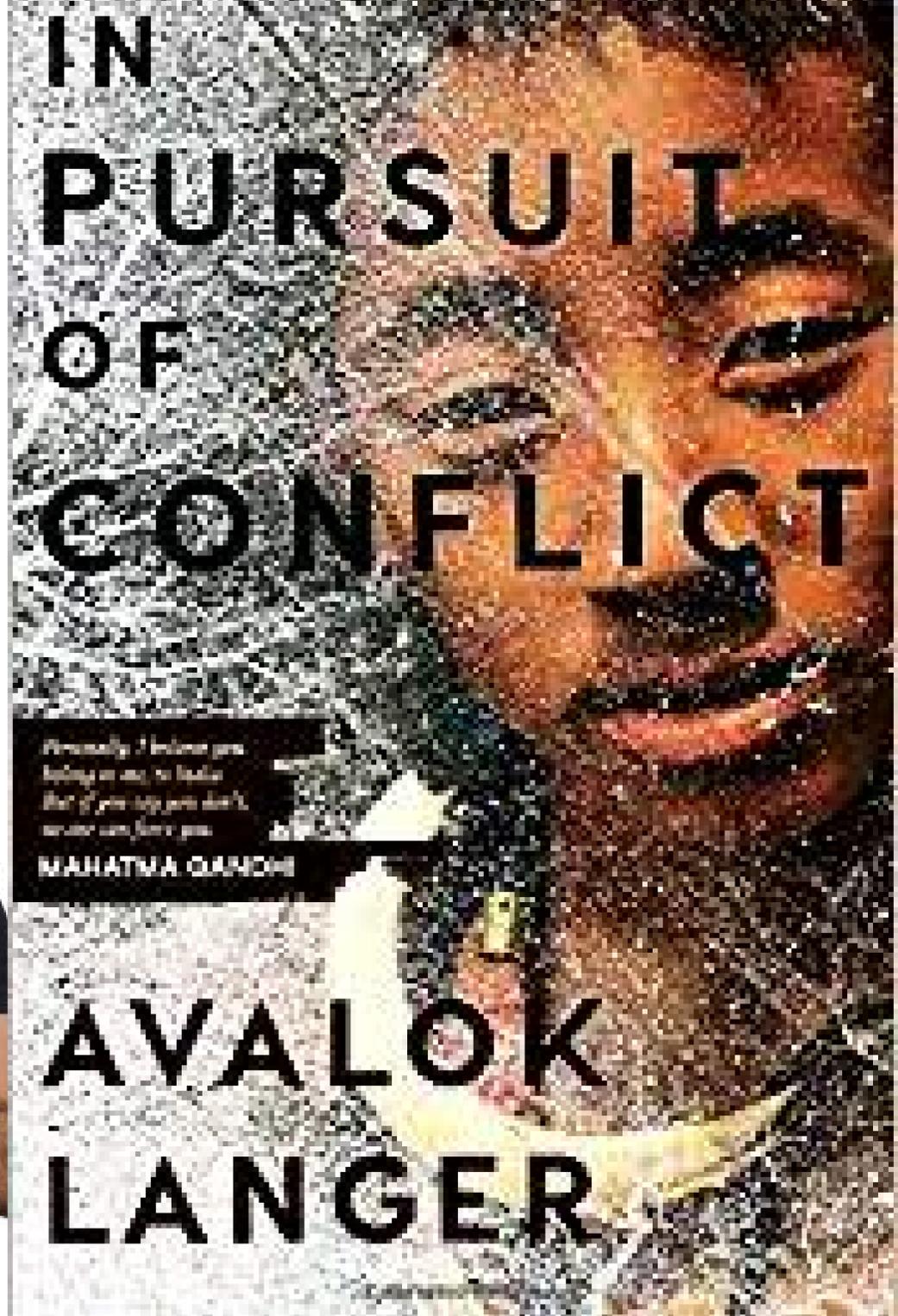
Winners of June Writing Contests

SHARING STORIES  
**FAMILY TIME  
AHEAD**



GRAB SOME  
**COOKIES**

"Go out and experience what makes you uncomfortable. It is in the unknown where you will find the story you need to tell and even if you don't, the adventure will be worth it."



# AVALOK LANGER

## AUTHOR BIO

Born into a military family, Avalok Langer grew up playing hide n seek in tank garages. He was exposed to war and conflict at a young age and after being banned from joining the army by his father (quite rightly); he found himself in awe of the conflict journalists on TV and hoped to join their ranks one day. Oddly enough, a BA in political science from Delhi University led him to a job in NDTV. Having anchored far too many food shows, he realised he needed to jump the long queue that led to his initial interest, conflict journalism. So, with a 'soft loan' from his parents and the savings he had,

Avalok spent a year travelling along the western border from Gujarat to Jammu and then on to Northeast, where he met various underground groups, revolutionary leaders, military and political personnel, who gave him a perspective far removed from his military background, highlighting the on ground realities of conflict. Running out of money before he could explore the 'red corridor', he joined Tehelka Magazine where he reported primarily on the Northeast. His travels, experiences and conversations as a reporter led to his first book 'In Pursuit of Conflict', a personalized narrative of the regions long standing conflicts. He is currently based in Delhi where he heads nonfiction video content for ScoopWhoop, but is basically looking for things that allows him to escape Delhi's heat.



Avalok & his Wife

**Tell us a bit about Avalok Langer, the person. Is there a boundary line between Avalok the journalist/author and Avalok, the person? Your family, likes and dislikes.**

I think there used to be a boundary, I could switch on and off, but now the two have merged. It's hard to see all these things and go back unaffected and just have fun, I could, I still can sometimes. However, once you start forcing yourself to question your belief system, it's hard to isolate that. Once you start becoming aware of your privilege, whatever it may or may not be, it becomes a constant process of learning, questioning, guilt, sadness and struggle to change. It is very intense, but again, we have the ability to parachute into a situation, talk about it, tell the stories, get paid for those stories and then leave for home. Home is the bubble. You play with your child, watch Netflix with your partner, meet the family, play sports, video games, meet your friends, but after a point, at least that phase I find myself in now, it's hard to balance the work and the bubble.

Ya, I know not the answer you were looking for.

**SS: Who is the favourite character from your book and why?**

I don't really have a favourite character, but my favourite chapter is the one where I sneak into Myanmar without any documents with a diamond smuggler for a guide to meet the Manipuri 'underground' and it all goes wrong. It has to be the scariest 24 hours in my life.

**According to you, which are the 5 books everyone should read and also who are your top three Authors and what impact they had in your journey as a writer?**

## FAV. BOOKS

The Prince by Niccolo Machiavelli  
Animal Farm by George Orwell  
Open by Andre Agassi  
Red Sun Sudeep Chakravati  
Everybody Loves a Good Drought by P Sainath

## FAV. AUTHORS

Robert Lipsyte - first book I read and his writing style greatly influenced mine.

Bertil Lintner / B.G. Verghese - They explored the Northeastern state decades before me and their books became the foundation of my work.

**At Sharing Stories, we have an ongoing campaign 'World Harmony through Writing' where we encourage writers to pen down their deepest internal thoughts, daily for at least fifteen minutes. Their new ideas and profound thinking shall help to bring out some positive changes in the world we live in. We would love to hear you thoughts about this initiative.**

I think it's very important for us to communicate and listen to each other's thoughts and points of view. I feel with algorithms and social media, we're getting stuck in echo chambers where our point of view is the only right one worth listening to and it is your facts vs. mine, your truth vs. mine, I am an idiot to you and you are an idiot to me, and the space for us to discuss opposing view is diminishing. We need to find a way to listen to the other and educate each other and I hope from this churn will emerge ideas that are diverse and force dialogue and thought.

## RAPID FIRE

### **Favourite**

Place: Shillong,

Person: Noor (our son),

Food: Naga pork cooked with fermented bamboo shoot (though now I'm mostly vegetarian and it's very boring),

Beverage: Vietnamese Coffee

**Your other Talents:** Basketball and photography

**First Love:** Sports

**Favourite Quote:** In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity

**Many of your readers might not know about a part of your personality. You suffered from the learning disability of Dyslexia. How did you overcome this challenge in your writing journey and as an author what message you would want to give to the writers who are suffering or facing some kind of physical or mental challenge?**

I have not overcome it as such, I've learnt to work around it and be less apologetic. Also, I wouldn't want to talk about disability as a whole, I haven't experienced it, so I'll stick to my learning disability - dysgraphia and dyslexia. So there's a spectrum of severity and I'm on the lower end, so in that sense it has been easier for me than it would be for someone else. I really don't like reading, I see people all around me, my wife, parents, sister, they lose themselves in books and it's a way to relax and unwind, for me it is work. Reading books stresses me out because I need to read and reread and then reread again.

Unfortunately as a journalist, you have to constantly read, and it is painful but it's something you have to do there no work around. However, a large part of what I tried to do to combat or rather supplement this is to reach out to experts for interviews. So instead of just reading about the Naga armed struggle, I went and met the leaders who founded it and heard from them the stories of their history. There are pros to this, you don't have to read that much, you can ask follow up questions, you get to meet the person and build a human connection, but there are also cons, it takes longer, it's expensive and it takes you time to develop perspective. Technology has helped a lot. Spell check, grammar check, and video platforms. I am constantly watching videos - explainers, interviews, podcasts, talks - I'm constantly consuming information online as means to learn. But eventually you have to have read the document because that is the source, the rest is interpretation. As for writing, I've found three things very helpful. First is a mind map or a structure of through. Often, I'd structure a chapter with bullet points of how I want the story to flow, with sub points within each head and then write the meat in between. Second, I personalise it. I write it as I see it or feel it, as it is easier for me to articulate my thoughts in a first person account as I would in a conversation. Lastly, I get someone to read everything I write, from important emails, to social media posts to this interview. It has to be checked by someone I trust, because I don't trust myself.

**You have chosen to write about the North Eastern region of India in your book 'In Pursuit of Conflict'. Was there any incidence which compelled your thoughts to come up with this book? Can you share a few lines from your book and maybe give a bit of background?**

As I said, there was never a desire to write a book and the choice to report on the North-eastern states, was a financial miscalculation. In 2010, the conflict to cover was the 'Naxal' movement, but I ran out of money before I reached there. Having said that, my months in the eastern states - Nagaland, Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal and later Manipur and Tripura, exposed me to a world I didn't know. I was constantly forced to question my preconceived idea of what is India, right and wrong, who is the enemy as well as my reality and my bubble. We grow up totally unaware and isolated from the history, conflict, culture, beauty of the diverse communities that call these eastern states home. The book is a reflection of that journey, of the gradual process of unlearning and relearning. Of balancing a deteriorating relationship with my then Naga girlfriend, a father who was a serving General and going to armed camps and meeting leaders of different movements who were fighting for their right to self-determination.

**Excerpt from In Pursuit Of Conflict :**

As instructed, I took a left from the church. Puddles, reflecting the bright blue sky littered with clouds lined the path, but the beauty of the moment was lost on me. I was nervous. My safe haven, a silver Maruti Omni that had brought me to Mokokchung Village in central Nagaland, had abandoned me and with every step I felt more alone.

I stood outside the blue door waiting for my audience with the General Phunthing Shimray, now the commander and chief of the Northeast's most prominent underground group NSCN (IM). Placing my camera on the wooden stool,

I unlaced my black military boots. My trembling fingers ran across the military dependent card I had carefully tucked into my sock, reminding me of who I was, a journalist shaking hands with an underground leader in the heart of an armed camp, but a journalist who was the son of a serving Indian army general. In that moment, nervous and guarded, I was still to realize that my dual identity, though mutually exclusive yet inseparable, would define my Northeast experience. Born into a military family, my idea of India was what I saw on the map. As a kid, I stood at attention, saluting the TV screen every Republic Day as the national anthem played. I always understood why the army fought, why they were willing to die and I believed and continue to believe in an idea of India. But sitting in the small meeting room cramped with sofas, the sounds of a murmuring TV infiltrated the thin thatched walls as I sipped red tea, I remained oblivious of the fact that over the next few hours, the smiling militant leader who warmly welcomed me into his temporary residence would force me to question the many truths of my childhood. 'Where do you come from?' the General asked. In a strange attempt to be honest yet cover up my military background, my answer described my pre-Partition roots. I took him through my family history, how I was part Kashmiri, an idea that he liked - another struggling people, and how my other three grandparents were from what is now Pakistan - Lahore, Abbottabad and Dera Ismail Khan. He smiled and said, 'That's why we fight,' pausing briefly. Unsure, I began to speak, but he continued, 'You are a man without a home, your ancestors didn't fight for their homes and today you are a man without his land. We Nagas don't want that, we don't want to lose our land. So we fight.' My enemy's logic rendered me speechless.



# WHAT IF ROUND

**What if you had to live with only three things all your life, what would the three things be?**

If it is things, objects, so my phone, which is currently an extension of me, my camera and my new basketball shoes.

**What if you were given the power to change one thing from this world, what would you change?**Income inequality.

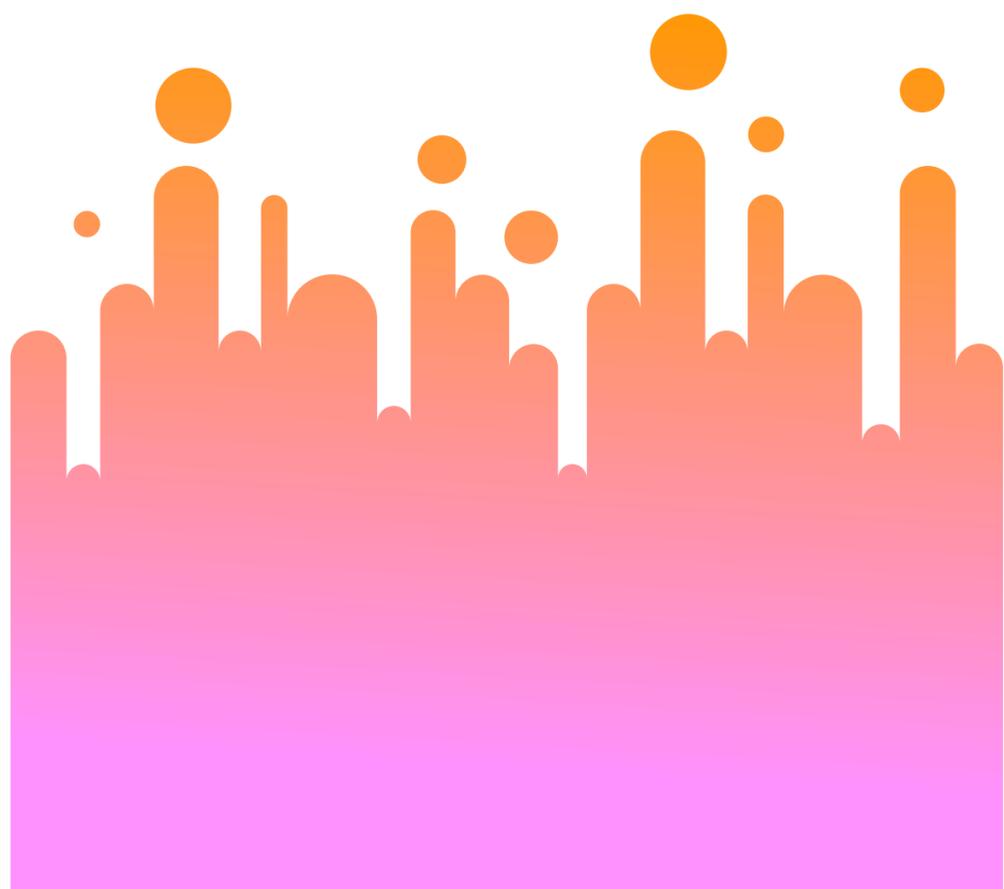
**What if you had all the money in this world, what would you do first?**

Quit my day job.

**Could you please shed some light on how your career as a writer took shape?**

To be honest, I had no intention of writing a book or being a writer. I greatly disliked reading, I still do, and I mostly wrote gibberish, again, I still do. Being dysgraphic and dyslexic ensured that for me writing was painful; often something I shied away from. What I thought or spoke seldom matched what I would scribble on a piece of paper in horrible handwriting. For most of my life, the written word has been my enemy and even today, though it has become better, reading and writing are a challenge which require great will power and effort, be it reading a book or for even typing out this interview. So becoming a writer was never an aspiration or a conscious choice, it was the result of bad financial planning and the lack of choice. Being an army kid, I grew up around war, at least the machines, men and systems used for it. As a result, from an early age, I was obsessed. However, when joining the army wasn't an option, my father, the General, flat-out refused, I found myself in awe of conflict journalists on TV, bulletins wheezing past them as they reported live from the frontline line. That's what I wanted to be and so I joined NDTV hoping to cover conflict and war. However, little did I know there was a long line to the frontline and instead spending my time dodging bullets, I spent close to two years putting on weight as I anchored and produced food and talk shows.

To fast track my conflict dreams, I quit my job and used my savings and a small soft loan from my parents to travel along the western border from Gujarat to Jammu and then on to the North-eastern states of the country to better understand the on-ground realities of conflict outside the military bubble I'd grown up in and build a network. After spending 10 months researching and travelling, before I could reach the 'red corridor', I ran out of money and needed a job. That led to me joining Tehelka Magazine, shifting from TV to print and becoming a 'writer'. After that, it was all luck. A former colleague from NDTV who was then working with a publishing house reached out to me for a small piece on being a writer with a learning disability for another book she was working on. A few years later, the editor of that book reached out to me and seeded the idea of writing a book that she would publish, but that didn't work out. However, she took the book brief and introduced me to a literary agent, who signed me, got me a publisher, all before I'd written the book. I have now gone back to video, but those years at Tehelka not only gave me crucial experiences in the field that developed my thought and professional ability, but the rigour of writing and being critiqued on a weekly bases, having your pieces ripped apart and restructured and then being published, gave me the confidence to just say "fuck it", and see myself as someone who can write. I still wouldn't say I'm a writer though. At least, not yet.



**You have spent your childhood in Army background and during your career as a conflict journalist you must have seen things from a close quarter. How did this help you in understanding the topic of your book, 'In Pursuit Of Conflict'?**

Born into a military family, I was obsessed with conflict from an early age. I wanted to wear the uniform, take the oath and defend my country and like so many other kids, I'd imagined various scenarios where I single handedly saved the nation. Imagination would merge with others realities when I'd sit soldiers and officers and hear their war stories, stories of bravery, of killing the enemy, of being shot and surviving, of medals, memory loss and what I'd later come to understand as PTSD. I think understanding why the Army does what it does, why they fight greatly helped me in developing an understanding of conflict from the States point of view. Also, having access to my father who had served in conflict zones both in India and abroad with the UN, helped me gain a long term perspective and see the larger pattern.

However, once I hit the ground and met the people fighting the state as well as those trapped in the conflict, I was forced to reassess many of the truths I knew.

Conflicts aren't black and white, there is no absolute truth, no absolute right and wrong, historical moments are and can be interpreted differently to justify whichever side you are on. My journey is a cycle of constant unlearning and relearning - I grew up idolizing the army only to learn that they all aren't the heroes I believed they were, I was naive and romanticized the armed leaders I met and their struggles only to learn at a later stage of the corruption and parallel economies they ran - the 'truth' seems to be that those in power don't want the conflict to end. However, the only thing that remained constant, be it the eastern states or what I came across in Kashmir years later, was that everyday people are stuck in the middle. As conflicts play out and games are played between those in power, the aspiration of people is curtailed, their rights are infringed upon by all the stakeholders and our silence and inability to bring about meaningful dialogue and change fails them.

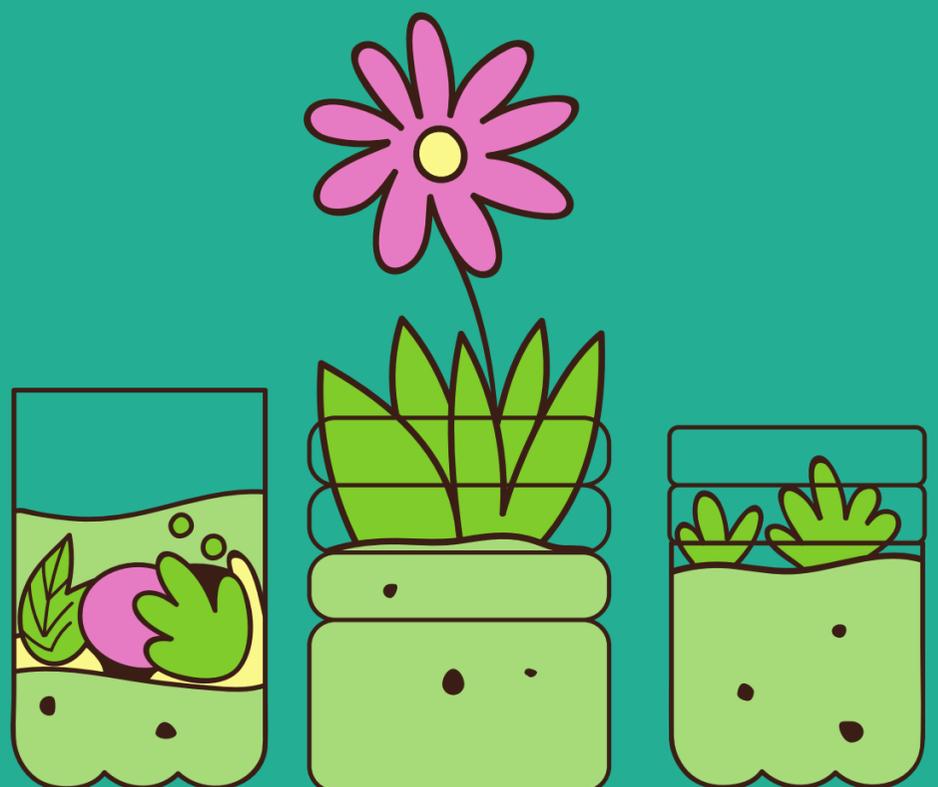
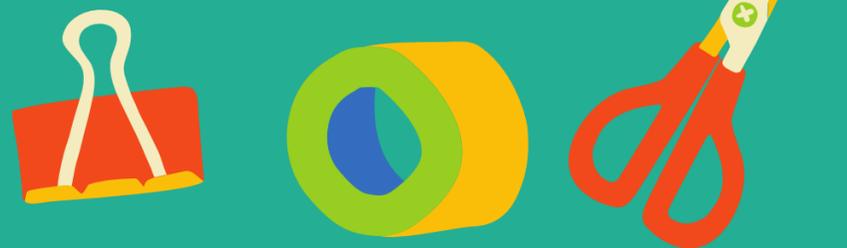


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# # LETSMAKESTORIESDINO

#GratitudeinLockdownDays and #HealingthroughWords



**VASUDHA PANSARE**

## Happiness

Happiness can be found  
In little things,  
A beautiful sunrise,  
The blooming of flowers,  
New leaves on trees,  
The twittering of birds,  
A cup of hot coffee,  
An engrossing book,  
A call from a friend,  
Children and grandchildren.  
Happiness is a state of mind,  
If you find it within,  
You will find it everywhere,  
In your kitchen,  
Cooking a favourite dish,  
On your comfortable chair  
Writing a poem,  
A hot breakfast,  
A simple lunch,  
An afternoon nap,  
Listening to music,

Being contented, being  
healthy.  
The secret of happiness  
Is living in the present,  
Not thinking about the past,  
Or worrying about the  
future,  
Finding satisfaction  
In every  
activity,  
Keeping busy and  
Cleaning the cobwebs of  
your mind,  
Keeping away from  
negative emotions,  
And being positive always.  
Happiness is a simple thing,  
If you are determined to be  
happy.

## Autumn Leaves

The roads are covered with autumn leaves.  
The road seems red with fallen leaves,  
The trees are shedding their dried leaves,  
Making way for the offsprings.  
Autumn is waiting with open  
Arms to welcome the spring.  
It's time to reunion again for,  
If Autumn comes, can spring be far behind?  
The fallen leaves are shedding tears,  
The good old days are gone far, dear.  
Now no time left to fear,  
The sky is bright and clear.  
The autumn leaves decorated  
The atmosphere for the new  
Comers,  
Spring has its own charm  
But autumn also has it's own  
Charm, it never harms.  
Beauty of nature always  
Mesmerize the travellers beyond.

**ARUNA BOSE**



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## SHARINGSTORIES

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**#GratitudeinLockdownDays and #HealingthroughWords**



**GIRIJA PRAKASH**

## Mind Ship

The fluffy white clouds float freely  
My ship on the sea moves leisurely  
The sea is so quiet and calm!  
Does it indicate the advent of a storm?  
The sea is in union with the sky  
Yet they're far from each other, why?  
Restless is the mind, like the waves  
For impossible things it craves  
Life is not a bed of roses  
We've many challenges and foes  
We've good times as well as bad ones  
That's how our journey moves  
To the brave, the whole world bows  
Face the sharks bravely  
Reach your destination safely

## Nothing is Permanent

A shepherdess shepherding her cattle home  
Relaxed and rested as she moves alone  
Casual in her stance  
With a carefree glance  
She revels in the twilight magic radiant  
Time for the cattle to return to their sheds  
instant  
Breathing in the fresh air  
Far far away from corona scare  
Living simple with humble tastes  
There is no reason to make haste  
Tending cattle and fending family  
Keeping busy and living comfortably  
Away from the madding crowds  
Pollutions of all kinds loud  
A safe haven in the times of this pandemic  
Staying away from the public  
In her rural environs rustic  
Trancending all worries like a mystic .



**KANAKAGIRI  
SHAKUNTALA**

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**## SHARINGSTORIES**

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# A WISH FOR A DAUGHTER

**Amrutha Wadekar**



My dad skipped out of our lives  
When he heard the words  
"It's a girl. Again"  
Yes, that is when I was born  
My mother was thrown on streets  
Along with her two daughters  
And soon the footpath became our home My sister  
Asha became my mother  
Not that I didn't have a mother anymore  
But because she was hardly home  
Each passing hour  
She spent earning money  
To pay rent and buy groceries  
To help mother  
And send me to school  
My sister started doing  
Cooking and laundry  
She kept saying this to me,  
"You got to study hard  
And prove everyone wrong  
who says a girl can't be better than a boy"  
I remember I would whine sometimes  
For cool stuff and things  
Other kids had in school  
It was hard to resist  
But then she would gently explain things  
There were days  
I couldn't sleep  
As the rumble in the stomach  
Would be loud enough  
To allow me to sleep  
Then she would  
Tell me stories  
Of brave men like Bhagat Singh  
Who starved for days  
Not having a morsel to eat  
She would end the story  
Saying, "I don't think you are brave enough like  
these people.  
No, you can't do it  
"She would tease" I'm strong.

I'm brave." I would boast  
Just to make her, please  
She would walk me to school  
Help me learn my spellings  
Put me to bed at eight-thirty  
And at times would scold and shout  
Just like mom  
As if they were  
The same person  
And no two beings  
She was just thirteen And me seven  
Like her child  
she was raising me  
And today after twenty years  
She is still single With no kids  
The woman I call sister  
Made me smile when the times were blue  
Filled my life with more colors  
And said don't worry this will be over too  
The woman I call sister  
Is now frail and old  
Her eyes still glitter  
That matches no gold  
The woman I call sister  
Has given me my pride  
She helped me to arise  
From the dust  
That people threw  
On our lives  
She made me believe  
She made me think  
That dreams only come true  
when you dare to dream  
So, when people ask my name I  
smile gently and say  
The woman I call sister  
Has made me who I am today  
I refuse to use my father's name  
Why should he get the privilege?  
I'm everything because of  
my sister  
An IPS officer  
Aradhana Asha  
I proudly say

# Abhishek Krishnan.



Author & Screen Writer

**“Sometimes, we do not get a chance to thank each one who has helped us in our Journey.” Let the readers get a chance to know about all the important people who have played a part in this Author Journey of Yours.**

I have been overwhelmed by the kind of unconditional support and encouragement I have received to bring this book to light. Sometimes life surprises you by sending in some absolute angels into your life. But I believe what I am today is because of my mom, my sisters, Yamuna and Veena, and my Dad. Their love, encouragement and support can never be matched.

**Can you talk about any interesting character from your book?**

There are so many interesting characters in the book. Most of them are exaggerated versions of real people. Peri, Chalu, Shruthi, Renjith and Rohit are some of my favourites. But my most favourite character is Sushmita—Abi’s love interest in the third phase of the story. Sushmita is this elegant, independent and beautiful young woman, who has built a wall around her core self because of her life experiences. Abi breaks through the wall and discovers the lovable and adorable side of Sushmita. Interestingly, Sushmita’s character wasn’t inspired by anyone I have seen in real life, unlike most of the other characters. Initially, I hadn’t thought of her as a love interest in the story. But as I wrote more and more of her, I fell in love with her as an author and ended up writing more scenes of her. The hangover the character created lasted for many days, even after I finished writing the book. You never know, she may just appear again in another book I may write in the future.



**Can you share a few lines from your book and maybe give a bit of background?**

Hero is a collection of experiences stitched into a story. Most of what happens in Hero are the instances that happened in my own life. Some are exaggerated versions of my experiences and some are completely imaginary. As a movie aspirant, the storyline of Hero was initially in my mind as a script for a feature film, which is why the common feedback I received from readers across the country, is that reading the book felt like watching a movie. But considering the fact that the story revolves around a movie aspirant, I felt it was okay to give the narration a filmy touch. The story of Hero is split into three phases. A boisterous college life, where everything seems so perfect; a life-after-college phase, where Abi, the protagonist, learns the world of cinema is not a piece of cake as he expected it to be. This is where he encounters the darker side of the movie industry. The third and the final phase is where he accepts reality and decides to put a pin in his passion to find a cushion to fall on, in case he fails to achieve his dream.



Abhishek & his Mother Mini

## AUTHOR BIO

Abhishek Krishnan is an author, a screenplay writer, and an upcoming actor and a filmmaker. He wrote the script and screenplays for two feature-length animated cartoons, titled *The Turbochargers* and *Pette the Prince*, which were aired on Sonic Channel and Cartoon Network, respectively. Both the cartoons were recognised by the FICCI awards. Abhishek had worked as a film journalist with the prolific entertainment portal, *Behindwoods.com*, and is now working on numerous writing projects, which he intends to bring to light in the form of books, web-series and feature films. He has also acted in small roles in the movies, *Thirumanam Enum Nikkah*, *Sillu Karupatti*, *Minmini* and *Mathiyaal Vell*.

## WHAT IF ROUND

**What if you had to live with only three things all your life, what would the three things be?**

Family, friends and a farm.

**What if you were given the power to change one thing from this world, what would you change?**

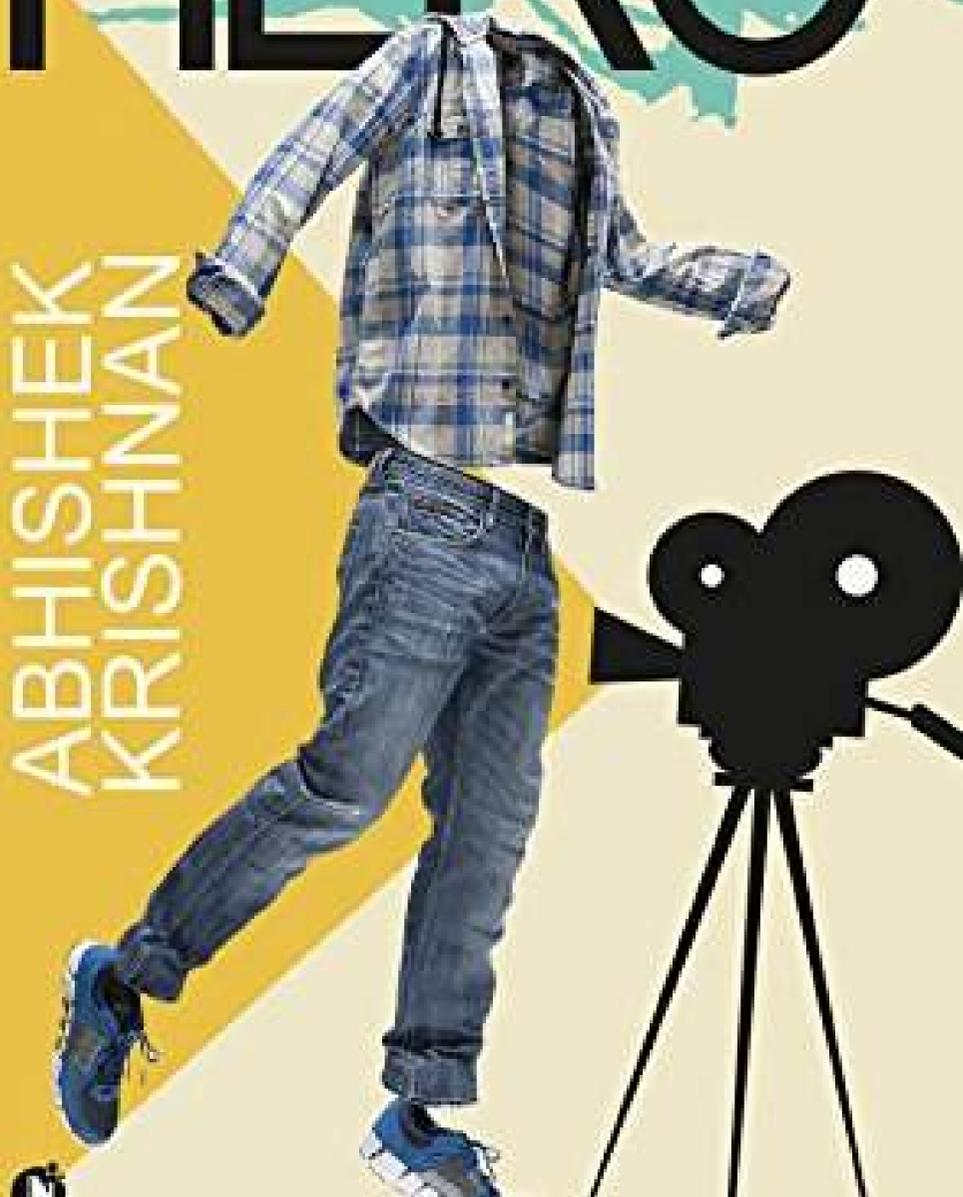
Remove hatred.

**What if you had all the money in this world, what would you do first?**

I have always wanted to contribute to the field of education. So I would probably build a chain of educational institutions, where there is no competition; where students are encouraged to treat people with respect; where there's no gender discrimination; where students are encouraged to think freely with a mind of their own; where the very process of acquiring knowledge is fun and stress-free.

# HERO

ABHISHEK  
KRISHNAN



**Are you working on anything at the present you would like to share with your readers about?**

Well, I am working on my second book. It's tentatively titled Loser-in-law. It's going to be another easy, breezy story around Allen, an Anglo-Indian based out of Chennai, and Sahirah, a girl from Kashmir. It's definitely another love story.

**According to you which are the 5 books everyone should read, and, also your top 3 Authors?**

Frankly, I don't read much. I haven't read too many books. I know it's horrible and I am not proud of it. But of the books I've read, I enjoyed God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy, Illicit Happiness of Other People by Manu Joseph, Aravind Adiga's White Tiger, Train to Pakistan by Khushwant Singh, and The Other Side of Midnight by Sidney Sheldon.

SHARING  
STORIES

**Tell us a bit about your family, likes and dislikes as a person.**

My parents hail from Kerala, but my sisters and I were brought up in Chennai. Dad's house is in Trivandrum, and mom spent all her childhood in Idukki. I've always felt a person's likes and dislikes change periodically based on life experiences. But somehow your core self—what you are deep inside—remains the same. Out of the various things life has taught me, I believe I have become this person, who wants to spread love and peace; be humble, polite and respect people as people irrespective of their so-called status in the confusing society we are in; be non-judgmental; try to stay as happy as possible; follow my passion, yet go with the flow.

**SS: Could you share few tips for Young Authors?**

I think, while writing, we as authors should enjoy the process. Fall in love with our characters and the story. Live in the world and enjoy being in the world, without deliberately pushing it to the finish line. The story will eventually come to its end. And after we have the first draft, we can always go back and make edits to suit the audience, market and various other logistics.

## RAPID FIRE ROUND

**Favourite**

**Place:** Anywhere with loved ones.

**Person:** My mom.

**Food:** A good sadhya.

**Beverage:** Tea—any day, any time.

**Your other Talents....** I enjoy acting and film-making

**Your First Love....** Shruthi.

**Favourite Quote.....** When I go back to God after my life, I want to make sure I go back with absolutely no talent and tell God, 'I used up everything you gave me.'

**Favourite Character from a book...**Unni, from Illicit Happiness of Other People, written by Manu Joseph.

# SAY IT WITH AN IDIOM

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## 'MAD AS A HATTER'

To be completely  
crazy

### **Example of use:**

"The wife was as mad as a hatter seeing that the husband had gone back to his old habits of drinking after completing the rehab course."

### **Interesting fact:**

Many people think that this idiom originates from Lewis Carroll's book, 'Alice In Wonderland'. However, contrary to this belief, its origin dates from the 17th and 18th centuries — well before Lewis Carroll's book was published. In 17th century France, poisoning occurred among hat makers who used mercury for the hat felt. The "Mad Hatter Disease" was marked by shyness, irritability, and tremors that would make the person appear "mad."

# WORDSMITH'S CORNER

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## JEJUNE (ADJECTIVE)

JE·JUNE | \ ˌJI-ˈJŪN \

### **Meaning**

devoid of significance or interest: DULL

### **Example Of usage:**

the "literary" fiction being written in this country nowadays strikes me as so jejune, self-absorbed and lifeless that I am just about unable to read it, much less pass fair judgment on it.— Jonathan Yardley

## A CURSE SO DARK AND LONELY BY BRIGID KEMMERER

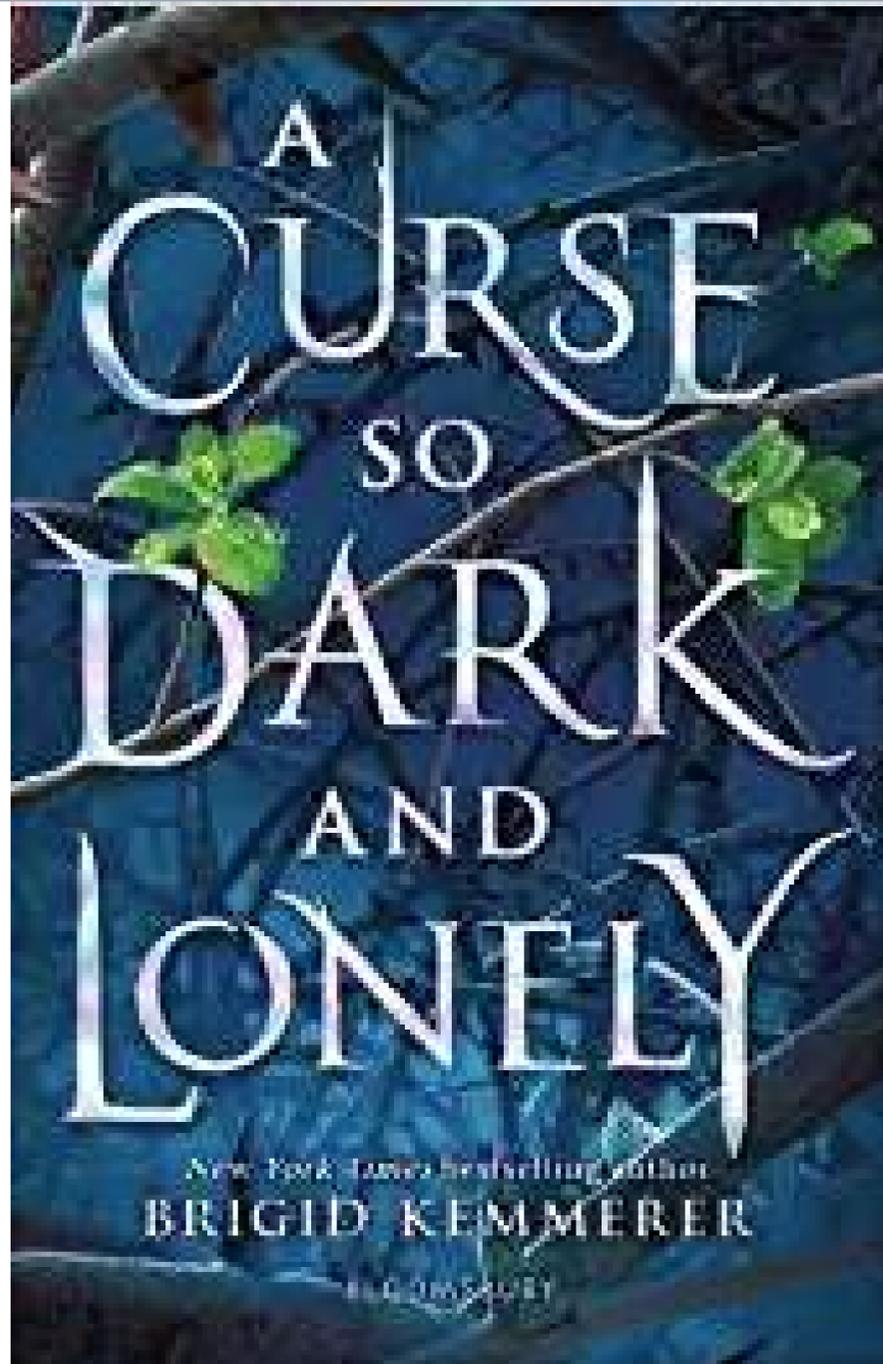
Before I pen down my thoughts on the book, there are two points to know. One is that the story is a retelling of Beauty and the Beast. Two- I have read A Court of Thorns and Roses, another Beauty and the Beast retelling and I find quiet a lot of similarities between the two. On a base level, it is a romance story. In the sense, it has more of a descriptive feel than cheesy words. There are rarely any filmy dialogues but more the experience of love.

**Most books** of romance genre have few over the top lines a protagonist uses to woo the object of interest. This book, the author successfully delivers the description of falling in love. The subtle changes and the worries and the insecurities, all expressed in the tiniest of expressions and smallest of actions. This book has just that. The pace is steady. Even in moments of action, it doesn't make haste. There is a gradual progress in the events that occur which gives the reader a deeper engagement with the book. However, during the last quarter, the pace picks up- like a movie heading to its climax.

**Talking about characters**, there are mainly the three protagonists Prince Rhen, Harper and Grey, plus the villain, Lilith. The book has two Pov's- Rhen and Harper. Prince Rhen and Harper are not that different from the usual standard of protagonists. The tortured and helpless one and the strong, fierce, goody two shoes. Harper has only one distinct aspect, the cerebral palsy. The effect this disability has on her is explored little and that too only in the beginning. After that, she's as good as any protagonist in a fantasy book. Prince Rhen's trouble is most profoundly written.

**The good thing about** this is it doesn't feel like an exaggeration. It genuinely makes the reader sympathise with him. Also, the fact that he put his people over Harper was a welcome change. However, the story is predictable to the readers after a point. Grey is a well etched character and comes across as a complete package. While Rhen is an epitome of suffering, Grey is perfectly balanced. He is Hard and soft; loyal and conflicted; obedient and rebellious; all at the same time. He is a guard commander. His dialogues are limited but his every movement and expression conveys something. Halfway through the book, the reader might start rooting for Grey more than Rhen. For the author it is nothing less than a feat of achievement that Grey's character without any POV has been so excellently written. Lillith is a brutal villain. Anything more than this about him can give away the spoilers.

**The account of mystery** is well maintained. The reader keeps expecting for changes. However, something new entirely was revealed. These are such unpredictable moments in the book ; that 'wow' factor that keeps the reader hooked. Also, there's a twist at the end, cannot be exactly termed as a cliff-hanger, but it gives the story a completely different turn. The open end leaves a possibility that the author might explore in the second book. Since it is a retelling, I understand the base storyline remains the same. While experimenting with the fairy tale the gender roles could be reversed. If the roles of Harper and Rhen were exchanged, it would have made this book something new and refreshing.



### Blurb

Prince Rhen of Emberfall is cursed and the only way to break the curse is to make a woman fall in love with him. With multiple failures, Rhen has all but given up when Harper walks into his life. But there are more dangers looming. The queen of Shyl Shallow is planning to take the kingdom by force. Rhen has to decide whether to concentrate on Harper and break the curse or to protect his kingdom from invaders. Harper doesn't belong to Emberfall. She's trapped without a way back. She wants no part of Rhen's curse but the longer she stays, the more she is being pulled into Rhen's life and his kingdom's workings. A worry constantly circles her mind. Worry for her brother who is in trouble, worry for her mother who is on her death bed. And worry that by the time she comes to a decision, it might be too late.



# Shalini P. Sawkar



## Author

**SS: “Sometimes, we do not get a chance to thank each one who has helped us in our Journey.” Let the readers get a chance to know about all the important people who have played a part in this Author Journey of Yours.**

I'd like to begin by thanking my readers for receiving my stories with so much love! I'm grateful to my supportive circle, my friends, family, book reviewers, bloggers, and all the people who continue to help me. My publishers, Arup Bose and Anuj Kumar for believing in my stories. My little sister, Soumya P Sawkar, for rereading my drafts over and over again; my mother for being my first storyteller at the dinner table; My close friends Darshan, Shweta and Subhashree for encouraging me right from the start! I'm grateful to everyone who's been a part of my journey as an author.

### **Can you share a few lines from your book and maybe give a bit of background?**

“I moved closer, my legs feeling like logs, and my hands stone cold and shivering. I saw him. Jay Shekhar lay in a pool of blood,” – from *The Murder Of Jay Shekhar*. “Everybody is entitled to make a few bad decisions once in a while. I believe our mistakes are what push us in the right direction,”—from *Confessions Of An IT Employee*, when Sanchita and Bhoomija's friendship is tested at the height of a corporate battle. “In becoming an adult, I had meticulously lined my footsteps with those of everyone around me and steered as far away from my dream as I possibly could. But, was my dream ready to let go of me?” –from *Confessions Of An IT Employee*. “I had come here on business earlier. In a way, even today I have come here on business, personal business. ” –from *When I Find You*.



### **Can you talk about any interesting character from your book?**

Bhoomija, from ‘Confessions Of An IT Employee,’ is trying to discover her true self in the chaos of day-to-day routine. Having been raised in a protected family in a village, the challenges she faced while she was living alone in a new city, going through different situations in life, was exciting to write about. I'd love to know to whom you could relate in the novel? Nikhil Arora, from ‘When I Find You,’ is the protagonist whose intentions only become darker and darker as the story progresses.





# FAMILY



Shalini & Family

## AUTHOR BIO

Shalini P Sawkar is an author of thrillers and contemporary fiction novels from Bangalore, India. She quit her software job to pursue her childhood dream of storytelling. She has been awarded one among the Top 100 Debut Authors Of India 2018, for her book *The Murder Of Jay Shekhar*. Bitten by the travel bug, she has visited parts of Europe, Japan, Singapore, Mauritius and UAE along with her family. Different seasons and cultures trigger her imagination.

## WHAT IF ROUND

**What if you had to live with only three things all your life, what would the three things be?**

A copy of the third book of the Harry Potter Series: *Prisoner Of Azkaban*, a piece of chocolate, and an oversized jacket.

**What if you were given the power to change one thing from this world, what would you change?**

I would change the way professions are perceived, so that more people could safely embrace their creative side.

**What if you had all the money in this world, what would you do first?**

Buy myself a ticket to Norway or Finland to watch the nocturnal dance of the Northern lights.



# Confessions of An

## Employee



**Shalini P. Sawkar**

**Are you working on anything at the present you would like to share with your readers about?**

Yes, I'm working on a thriller. It is going to be released in the form of a short story series. It is in the final drafting stages, and I can't wait for you guys to read it!

**According to you which are the 5 books everyone should read and also Who are your top 3 Authors?**

Five books that everyone must read: The Fountainhead, The Artist's Way, Outliers, Big Magic, and the Harry Potter Series. And, my top three authors are J. K. Rowling, Neil Gaiman, and Ayn Rand.

**Tell us a bit about your family likes and dislikes as a person.**

My family consists of my grandmother, father, mother and my little sister. Apart from writing, I spend my time reading any fiction or non-fiction that catches my eye, binge watching thrillers on Netflix, and sometimes dabbling in paints.

**Could you share few tips for Young Authors?**

Write even when you don't feel like writing! Read any book that interests you, and start journaling. It'll help you clear your mind and write better. Also, don't stop believing!

## RAPID FIRE ROUND

**Favorite Place, Person, Food, beverage....**

Mauritius, Mom, Pizza, Hot chocolate

**Your other Talents....**

Painting

**Your First Love....**

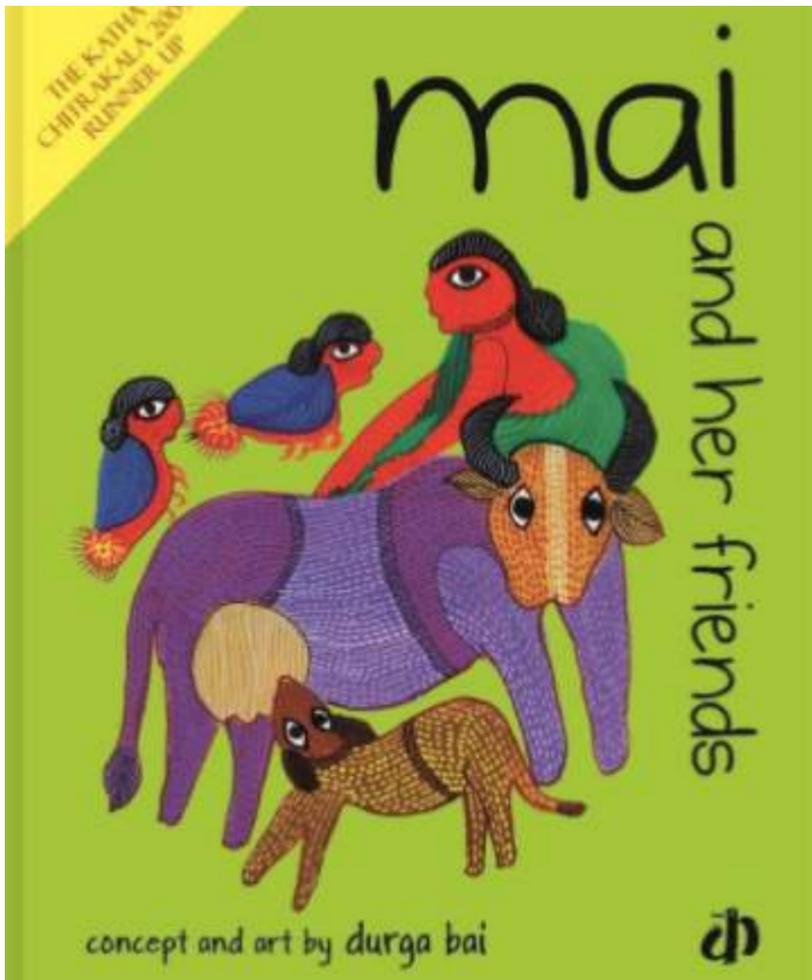
Shah Rukh Khan

**Favorite Quote.... '**

Happiness can be found even in the darkest of times, if one only remembers to turn on the light.'

**Favorite Character from a book...**

Howard Roark



## Mai and Her Friends

On a riverbank, there lived an old woman called Mai. She shared her home with a cow and her calf. Every day, Konda the cow would go out to graze and would come in the evening to feed her calf. One day, Konda was out to graze when a storm blew up. Konda lost her way; she slipped and fell into a ditch filled with water.

Do Mai, fireflies and all her friends succeed in rescuing Konda?

Read the book and find out.

The book is written in a simple language. It teaches us about friendship, love and care for our pets. The illustrations are made in Gond Tribal Art. They are colorful and interesting. The book is an enjoyable read, short and sweet.

### Summary

BY YASHAN GAJBE  
(8 YEARS OLD)



## About Katha

'Katha', an organization dedicated towards the upliftment of underprivileged children, aims to make 300 million children able to read. By seamlessly connecting grassroots work in education and urban resurgence, Katha brings children living in poverty into reading and quality education. The Children's books published by Katha are multidimensional. They not only tell stories to the children but also open the door to a whole new world of imagination. The designing of the books and the illustrations give the young readers a glimpse of India's rich and diverse folk arts. In today's times creating such vast indigenous literature for children and making it available for the young readers is a commendable venture of Katha publications. The book, Mai and her friends, tells us a sweet little story about an old woman and her pet. The story is weaved beautifully by adding the elements of friendship, courage and helpfulness. The colorful Gond Tribal art makes the reading even more appealing. The book can be enjoyed by kids and as well as by adults.



**Touch me and  
I'll be yours**

## *On your mark*

BY NIPUN VARMA

My daughter took her position. So did her competitors. Among a group of seasoned campaigners, she was the dark horse. It was her teacher who forced her to register for the 100-meter race in the annual school level competition. She was included only for the sake of having a certain number of participants. But surprising everyone, she had been qualified for the finals.

Multiple competitions were conducted on the ground simultaneously. Only a 50-meter track was available for the finals. The contestants had to run from one end to the other, touch the ribbon and then come back to the starting point to complete the race.

"Get, Set"

"Hope she doesn't end up being the last one"- the skeptic in me had given up already. For a Dad who never failed to miss the last position in all his athletic trysts, the skepticism was justifiable.

But the steely determination in her eyes told a different story.

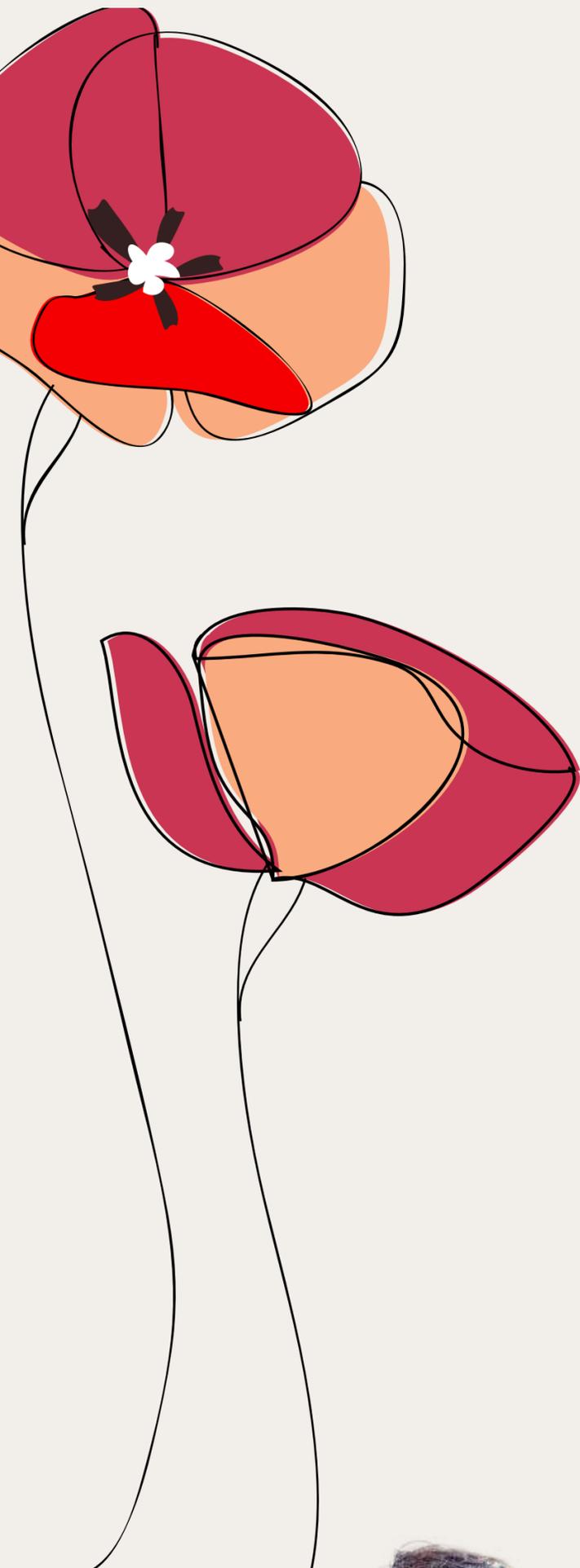
"What if she wins? After all, she won the qualifiers."- the greedy Dad in me silenced my cynical self. "Go" She took off unflinchingly. I stood far away biting my nails. People around cheered on, I was too involved to make any noise.

My excitement reached a crescendo when I realized that she was the first one to reach the ribbon. In a flash, she turned and started her return lap. But instead of blazing ahead, she hesitated for a moment. She returned to the ribbon once again, touched it and then started running back to the starting point. During these moments of indecision, the others took the lead. She ended up being the last to reach the starting point, staying true to her Dad's legacy.

I was stunned at what she had done. Still I wanted to cheer her up. But the moment I came near her, my curiosity got the better of me. Instead of consoling her, I ended up asking- "What happened, why did you pause there?" She replied: "Dad, I extended my hand but missed touching the ribbon before turning back. That is why I went back and touched it." I was dumbfounded. I said "Oh come on dear, it looked as if you touched it. You could have won it."

Clouds of doubt covered her sweaty face. She held my hand and said- "But, that isn't fair. Rule said I had to touch it." In an instant, my 8-year-old brought the know-it-all in me crashing down.

**We might feel that the world isn't fair. But for some, we mean the world. And being fair is the best lesson that we can impart through our own 'fair'y tales.**



# Publishing Challenges

by Abilash Geetha Balan



**After** putting in all the hard work and writing the whole book, we think most of our work is done; now, the publisher will do the rest. In this article, we look at the various challenges faced by an author, during the process of publication and also post-publishing.

Firstly, for most of the first time authors finding a contract with a traditional publishing house is out of the question due to the stiff competition out there.

Most of the Traditional publishers look for established writers with strong personal branding. Leaving this topic for another time, let's move on. The other two options are Digital Publishing and Self-Publishing.

**Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP)** is amongst the most popular options for digital publishing. This is free of cost and quick. However, consumes a bit of time and demands a learning curve while creating a cover page, uploading the book and form filling. If you have the patience to watch guided videos on YouTube, this is a cakewalk.

**The major problem with KDP** is that you have to apply for ISBN number (amazon accepts book without ISBN) and copyrights separately for claiming ownership for your content. KDP does not offer paperback in India.

**“Your book has to be seen, to be bought.”**

Lastly, we have the self-publishing option. Many self-publishing companies are offering end-to-end solutions like editing, cover & internal page design, printing, ISBN & copyrights, listing on e-commerce platforms and marketing & promotions including Author dashboard to keep the track on your book sales. A one-stop solution for all your publishing needs.

Self-publishing companies are offering their services right from 5000Rs to 1,50,000Rs. These publishers nowadays offer a lead time of 30 days or lesser to get published once the manuscript is ready. This option is quick and sometimes cheap as well. Please keep caution, as many individuals are claiming to be Publishers without any legal compliance.

## **Criterion while choosing a publisher**

- **Publisher should be a company and not an individual**
- **check the number of books published and other published authors working with them.**
- **Check out the Publisher's review on platforms like Quora**

Now, the problem with KDP and Self-publishing option is **sales**. A self-publishing company will not promise assured sales to the Author. The company only charges you for the above-mentioned services offered by them and the marketing packages come at an additional cost to the Author. Since a traditional publisher already has a wider distribution channel in place, sales could definitely be better.

Once your book is published, the most common misconception amongst first time authors is the term "Bestseller". Since most of the Authors are on cloud nine after the publication of their first book. They are overwhelmed with all the positivity and appreciation around them. When you search for your book on Amazon and see it pop under bestsellers' list you go berserk. Here, the excitement is right, but the data is skewed. Amazon book bestseller is based on the sales in that particular week or a few days. Since many of your first and second circles of friends would have bought the book, the number of hits on your book must have increased in that particular week.

Most experts from the publishing industry suggest that to be a bestseller in India, you should sell at least 10,000 copies a year. Keeping in mind that many authors hardly reach 100 copies being sold a year. So do not get excited unless you actually reach these numbers.

Don't worry, be patient and follow a few suggestions that we are going to discuss in this article. These suggestions are based on our research and discussions with key people in the publishing industry under the Sharing Stories campaign of **#findingsolutions**

## Sharing Stories Book Promotion and Marketing Solutions

### More the merrier:

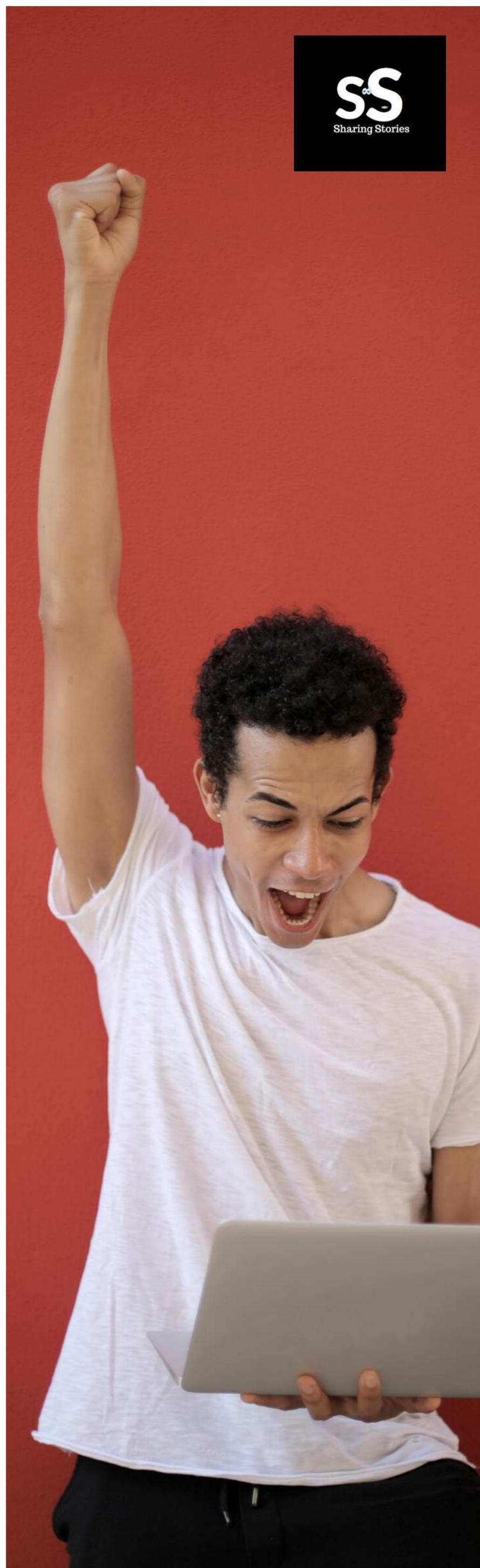
Apart from Selling platforms like Amazon, Flipkart and Physical book stores, make sure you reach maximum visibility across the digital space. Try and list your book across various credible book listing platforms. And good listing platforms do charge for listing as it takes their time and effort as well. This could be in the form of book listing, Author Interviews, Book reviews and book summary. Facebook, Instagram, Goodreads, blogging websites and Quora are popular platforms for this.

Make sure you choose the right review platform with a strong digital presence which ensures visibility for your book and helps you in the sale. There are some excellent individual reviewers with good credibility and great engagements on their posts.



# Book Promotion Ideas

1. **Instead of the number** of 'Followers', check out the number of books and profile of authors reviewed and engagements on each post including likes, comments and shares. This gives an indication of active visitors towards that social handle.
2. **Choose a credible website** with authentic domain for your interview and Listings.
3. **Get as many good reviews** on Amazon through giveaway programs (a verified purchase in Amazon has more value) before spending on your paid advertisement campaigns.
4. **Be active on Quora** answering questions and other guest blogs in your niche.
5. Get an aesthetically done **book trailer** for your book. This grabs attention amongst viewers.
6. **Participate** in various Writing & Book Contests.
7. **Participate in social gatherings** related to literature and art, both physical and digital.
8. Reach out to **nearby Book stalls** and Libraries and make the books available there.
9. **Keep a track** on each of these promotional activities and the sales that it brings to you. Focus on the most fruitful one.
10. **Accumulate and grow** your contact list of readers and people within your niche and send out occasional promotional emails



# Love for Poetry

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## GHAZAL

**I lost** hold of my tipsy heart and  
I drained ash grey veins,  
**You** slipped through my clutches,  
so I fanned ash grey veins.  
**The** moon in the sky darkened,  
debased by clouds,  
**Shelter** I couldn't find anywhere,  
so I damned ash grey veins.  
**Love** asked how did you fall for  
me in love last night?  
**Love's** tapestry you had woven so  
I adorned ash grey veins.  
**Like** a mirror to the soul your  
visage filled the heart,  
**The** heart which is emptied, once  
gleaned ash grey veins.  
**I will** keep silence from now on  
for silence is the purest  
language,  
**I sew** the lips, the words to water  
the refined ash grey veins.  
**Yesternight** I went to the valley  
of shepherds to witness his  
being,  
**In the** morning came back with  
naught but chained ash grey  
veins.  
**Oh Imran!** You wandered, day in  
day out in search of Him,  
**What** you gained, tearful eyes  
and stained ash grey veins.

© Imran Yousuf

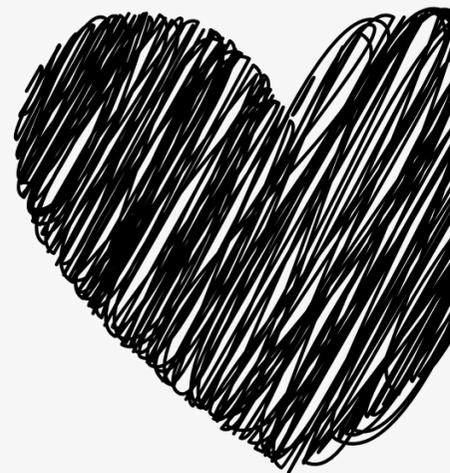
Imran Yousuf is a Poet/Writer/Columnist from Kashmir, India. Currently working as Columnist and Journalist, he has contributed his poems to various reputed magazines, journals and international anthologies. He has also written a series of articles about the great Poets of the Kashmir Valley (starting from 14th century) that were published in various newspapers and magazines and now being compiled into a book, expected to be launched soon.

## LOCKDOWN

**The world** at war with enemies  
within,  
**Invisible** and indomitable it  
spreads!  
**Killing** our brothers and sisters  
**Our mothers** and fathers,  
**The parasite** grows stronger with  
dread.

**So** do not be crestfallen  
**But** remember the fallen,  
**And** that it was our greed which  
killed them.  
**Perhaps** the nature has spoken  
**Our** bond with it long broken  
**We** must start to mend or brace  
for bedlam.

**The** fragile world in lockdown  
**Our** frail ego's shattered  
**Survive!** Survive! Survive... The  
poet says.



©poetry\_of\_pratyay

Pratyay is an amateur poet and a singer-songwriter. He writes to understand himself better. His best friend is his old acoustic guitar. You can find him in instagram @poetryofpratyay.





Let's

**TOAST**

towards Contest Submissions

[www.sharingstories.in](http://www.sharingstories.in)

# Winners

Writing Contests | June Edition



## WORD IMPACT

### Winning Entry

**Namratha Varadharajan**

### Special Mentions

Rashim Brutta  
Riddhi Katira  
Aradhana Shukla  
Mallika Verma

## PICTURE PROMPT POETRY

### Winning Entry

**Santosh Bakaya**

### Special Mentions

Jaya Pillai  
Snigdha Agrawal  
Pragun  
Tejaswini Ravi  
Manvi Arora

## @1000WORDSTALES

### Winning Entry

**Vikram Munigala**

### Special Mentions

Meryl Jacob Rock  
Anjali Susan

**A few Select Entries will be featured in our website shortly....**

# Minimalism



## Konmari of the mind

I sit down in the middle of my mind, a heap of thoughts in front of me. I pull out one thought at a time and ask, "Does this spark joy?"

Thoughts that empower are placed in a safe deposit box. Thoughts that stagnate, drown, or ignite hate are blasted off.

"No gossip", spells the placard at the door. Stories that hug find a cozy corner. Ikebana of warm memories is arranged in the chest of drawers. Empathy is the centerpiece.

Now, all around there is room to grow but I know I will have to clean up again tomorrow.



## NAMRATHA VARADHARAJAN

Namratha Varadharajan is an electronics engineer by education and a lover of math. She stumbled into the magical rabbit hole of writing when she paused her career to indulge in motherhood. She discovered that poetry and dance make her soul glow. She intends to imprint this world with crystalline images drawn by her word weaves. She lives in Bangalore with her husband and two sons. You can find her work at <http://namysaysso.com>.

# Picture Prompt Poetry



I sat in my patio, looking at a tiny rag picker  
 examining a discarded doormat-half hanging from the dumpster,  
 the letters of Welcome- frayed and disappearing.  
 Distracted by an intoxicated grasshopper, and a songster in the tree,  
 amazed by the sight of a frolicking pup and the silken tassels of maize  
 swaying in a nearby field, he was half-crazed with joy, [Oh boy!].  
 He scooped up the pup in his skeletal arms, smiling at his friend  
 flying a kite, cruising the aquamarine sky untethered. Uncaged.

The twosome left behind a happy trail prattling on, battling on.  
 In the excited throes of their exuberant breathing, I heard  
 long suppressed sighs of their everyday saga of survival.  
 The world wondering at their joy, hid its leering question marks  
 behind masked smiles, slouching; bloodshot eyes intense,  
 afire with a predatory insanity, itching to make them more invisible.



## SANTOSH BAKAYA

Dr. Santosh Bakaya is an academic- poet- novelist- biographer -  
 essayist -Ted Speaker- creative writing mentor, whose ted talk on the  
 Myth of Writers' Block is very popular. in creative writing circles Her  
 poetic biography of Mahatma Gandhi [ Ballad of Bapu], has been  
 internationally acclaimed . Under the Apple Boughs [ Poetry] ,  
 Where are the lilacs ? [ Poetry], Songs of Belligerence [ Poetry, ],  
 Flights from my Terrace [ Personal essays ] , Bring out the tall Tales ,  
 [short stories , with Avijit Sarkar] , A Skyful of Balloons [ novella  
 ] are some of her other acclaimed books Her latest book ,a  
 biography of Martin Luther King Jr .[ Only in Darkness can you see  
 the Stars] is getting rave reviews .

# #1000wordstales



**Situation : “Celestial Inception”** Weave a story, wherein the human race is at the verge of extinction as the planet Earth is about to get destroyed. A man and a woman from two starkly opposite origins and cultures are chosen and sent to another planet in the galaxy to regenerate human life and civilization. Will they be able to create a new world? The new world created by them shall be different or better than the one which existed? Will they be able to cherish humanity?

## Zillion more dreams

### SnowFlakes and Sea Shells

**December 15th, 2121**

Juha was gazing at the sky, enjoying the view of rare Aurora Borealis with his qubit simulations. He spotted a fleet of space sensors rushing towards outer space on his telescope. Spending most of his childhood under the Lapland sky, the rush was a bit unusual.

The last 100 years have over-weighed humanity's ambitions w.r.t. what we eat, how we live, and why we should heal the earth. Humans today have managed to build interstellar space travel and send space probes to habitable zones of Proxima Centauri. But in contrast couldn't solve the impact of climate change, because of which around 2 billion people have become climate refugees.

A climate refugee activist, a rebel by nature Savitri is a Jack of all trades, She is influential in bringing together the islandic tribes into the Indo-Pacific who lost their land due to a rise in water levels on a pack of floating cities.

She was doing her daily scuba walk around the sunken city walls when she received the message 'purple'. To her further agape, news about the space probe from the planet EM05, confirmed the ground conditions to be suitable for human life.

## WINNING ENTRIES

In reality, it must be a big moment for the earthlings, who were in search of a new habitable planet to seek an alternative from the never-ending threat of space asteroids. In contrast to Savitri, mission purple was a fallacy. She was neither inclined towards nor convinced about it's the approach.

### **Mission purple**

On the mainland, it was a doomsday situation at the UN headquarters. The space sensors reported the 70% probability that the asteroid DSD12 will collide the earth, the impact can bring down human civilization and snuff out any traces of life on earth. After an eye-catching red Borealis shower, Juha started skiing back towards his home. Susanna, his girlfriend, was waiting for him. As they kissed their cold lips to the fresh snowflake wind, Susana passed him the message 'purple'. Before gaining the context of the situation, Juha realized it was a goodbye kiss. Mission purple was initiated by the UN, to prepare for the human existential crisis situation. People from around the world were picked and flocked together in the special programs to find the altered 21st-century Adam and Eve, who can reimage the earthlings as humanly as possible into the future. As she rises up from underwater, Savitri is time struck and cold seeing the wonder of the mortal engines that they have built together on the water for survival.

## Falcon's Lift

The Falcon's rocket lifted Juha from Lapland and Savitri on a drone ship ground-up, from the middle of Indo-Pacific. Although being a hemisphere apart, they shared the same thought ... 'Am I ready?' At first, the Falcons landed them at Kennedy Space Center, they had to spend the next 9 hours unconsciously under clinical supervision to prep them into outer-space travel. Once The Big Falcon BFR boomed into space, Juha and Savitri slowly gained consciousness, noticed each other, making eye contact for the first time, modestly sharing this moment, while leaving the earth behind only to make a better version of it. Breaking their silence, Janet jumped in between with a shriek pitch "Hello people, this is Janet, with a pi years journey ahead"

"You can come out of the shell now, kkkk" concluded with its robotic voice leaving Savitri's amused. As if he read her mind, Juha mentioned to Savitri "kkkk means hihihi/lol"

## Janet's kkkk

Juha with his usual curious instinct found a corner while Savitri settled herself with a splendid view of Jupiter's rings along the window. Janet re-appears there to jump-start a conversation and break the ice. Janet, "You two strangers, consider this to be the arranged marriage that the earthlings have chosen for you, kkkk" '

So Savitri, Juha, aka Juha Katari Kalio, is a social scientist. For him, everything is qubits and numbers. His ancestors hailed from the Andes region in South America and Lapland in Northern Europe.'

Turning towards Savitri, Janet continued, 'And a fun fact, you were citing his social theories on inequality and climate refugees in your speech and articles' Thrusting back at Juha, 'Juha, Savitri, aka Savitri Lakhwani Sridar, is an Olympic swimmer turned climate refugee activist. For her, compassion and love define everything. Her ancestors hailed from Himalayan regions and Southern India.'

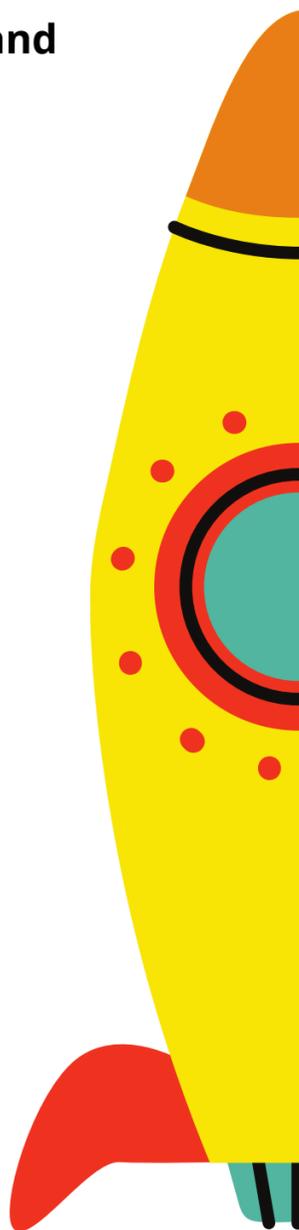
'One thing that is common with you, is the DNA from your ancestors living in remote highlands, which was critical for the survival in EM05. All the algorithms synthesized you two to be the top pick, even though coming from contrast cultures, you share ideal principles and values towards progressive humanity.' "Apart from that, let's leave it to serendipity. Kkkk"

## Zillion dome

As Juha and Savitri had the ice breaker, they slowly continued to get along discussing their visions, values, and passions while having the star trek moments. As they walk around the station, Juha was so excited to show the quantum computer to Savitri, explaining all the qubit simulations for the new planet to her. Savitri was over the moon to show her workshop, where she can design and hack ideas, the huge wall-e robots that she can hang-out with. Well aware about the responsibility ahead, they entered into the zillion dome, it was where the DNA of the crops, plants, trees, insects, birds and mammals species from the earth were stored, and on top of it, human cells representing all earthlings from different cultures, tribes, languages, and colors were hosted. This was their kairos, they realized they have a chance to reimagine the future as humanly as possible with the zillion more awaiting dreams. As Juha saw Savitri, he could feel something in the air to which both were passionate for. Under this zillion dome, their eyes fell in love with each other, as they gripped each other, to reach their lips, it was the warmest kiss that made all of their other kisses in life void.

## Vikram

**Vikram Munigala is a engineer by degree but has a love for design and futures. He enjoys exploring alternatives history/futures and science fiction.**



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