

SS
Sharing Stories

October 2020

World Harmony through Writing

SHARING STORIES

COMMUNITY OF

1000

WRITERS

BOOK

AWARDS

WRITING
CONTEST

AUTHOR INTERVIEWS
BOOK REVIEWS
SHORT STORIES
POETRY

Editor's Desk

The year 2020 is moving towards its last quarter. The most highlighted phrase of the year has been 'Social Distancing'.

Whenever we shall look back to this year, it will bring a different set of memories altogether...memories of these difficult times and how each one of us sailed through the same storm in his or her own boat. We found our own ways to hang on and discovered the hidden strength of patience in us.

However, at Sharing Stories, in these times of 'Social Distancing', a close-knit family got together. We began this journey and... the love and faith started pouring in.

Within a short span of exactly four months, since the launch of our very first edition of Sharing Stories Online magazine, we have grown into a strong and well-connected family of **more than a thousand members of Facebook Community**. It gives me immense pleasure in stating that we have reached the **mark of 1K followers on our Instagram handle** too. This was all possible because of the trust which you all have put into our efforts. Our sincere heartfelt thanks to all the readers and writers of Sharing Stories.

The world is going through one of the most difficult phases. The polarization has set deep root in our society regarding every issue, be it religion, politics, race or arts. Each one of us is a distinct individual having our own opinions and beliefs. Yet, together we create an integral part of this cosmos. Deep down somewhere, the heart knows the difference between right and wrong. But then in this world, right and wrong are blurred by a shade of grey. Nothing is pure 'Black' or 'White'.

How would you perceive the on-goings in the world from a third angle, if you were not a part of this world? They say that things become clear when we see them from an objective and detached perspective.

As writers, we need to hone this skill. We need to observe and bring reality in our words. Our words should move the readers, take a pause and push them to think about a change. Mighty Revolutions can be initiated through the delicate tips of your pen. We, at Sharing Stories, are dedicated to bringing out the thinker part of the writer in you. In every issue of Sharing Stories, we try to curate the content in such a way, that it makes both the writer and reader think with a broader vision. The huge response to the prompts of the contests consolidates our belief in this.

In this issue, we tried to bring the interviews of diverse Authors and a colourful palate of articles and poems to savour on. Through each segment, Sharing Stories is trying to give out the message of 'Harmony Through Writing.'

This month saw the addition of innovative projects on our platform. We have launched the first **Sharing Stories Library in Jaipur** which shall be officially inaugurated soon. We would love to thank our community of authors who have shown their prompt interest and contributed wholeheartedly towards it.

Along with the library, we have announced the '**SHARING STORIES BOOK AWARDS 2020**'. The registration process for it has begun in full swing. The process of picking up the winners is a detailed one and through a panel of eminent jury members. Sharing Stories shall maintain its commitment to do the best for the writer community through its ventures, protecting their interest and promotion of their work sans any financial exploitation.

We, as a team, try to continuously bring better ideas and concepts for the community. I am glad that we are receiving an equal reciprocal amount of love and trust. Together we shall soar high, as even sky is not the limit for the imaginative writer community.

Enjoy this month's edition.

Happy Reading, Blissful Writings!

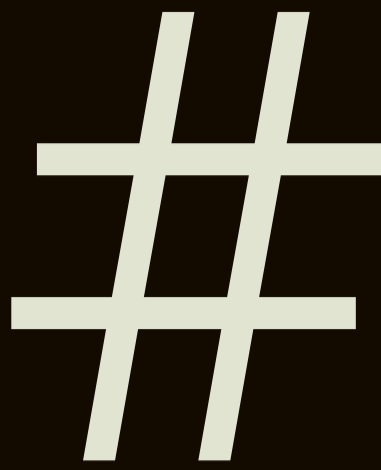


Piya Gajbe



INTERVIEWS

CHILDREN'S WRITER
KHYRUNNISA
TV SHOW SCREEN
WRITER **MANISH**
GAEKWAD
ARTIST & AUTHOR
ROHIT DAWESAR



LOVE FOR LITERATURE

SAY IT WITH IDIOM
WORDSMITH'S CORNER

POETRY-
LOVE HEALS

DID YOU KNOW?



PARTNERSHIPS

#LETSMAKESTORIESDIN

@PRISTINE.BOOKS

#KATHA



CONTESTS

#WORDIMPACT
#PICTUREPROMPTPOETR
Y
#1000WORDSTALES
WINNING ENTRIES OF
SEPTEMBER



GIVEAWAYS

- ARISE FROM THE
DUST
BY LETS MAKE
STORIES DINOS
- STUPID SOMEBODY
BY ROHIT DAWESAR



BLOG SERIES

MY INSPIRATION
PAULO COELHO
HOW TO BETTER
YOURSELF IN WRITING
HISTORICAL FICTION?

HOWZZAT BUTTERFINGERS! KHYRUNNISA A.

Children's Fiction Writer

You created a popular cartoon character, 'Butterfingers.' which eventually got quite famous as a comic strip in Tinkle comic magazine and then a series of novels were published. How was the idea of creating a comic strip conceived? Is the character of 'Butterfingers' inspired from some real life person?

I didn't think of creating a comic strip. What actually happened (here is the set of circumstances that set me on the 'write' path) was that we used to get Tinkle for my young son and one day I read the announcement of an All India Short Story Competition for Adult Writers of Children's Fiction by India Book House (now Amar Chitra Katha) in the magazine. Just for the fun of it, I sent an entry. The word limit was 3000 words and I playfully say my story had 2999 words. The story was titled 'Butterfingers' and it won the second prize. I was thrilled and the writing bug bit me when I won the first prize for seven consecutive years. Since Tinkle was bringing out the story, it needed to be in the comic strip format. A script writer wrote the script for the comic and that's how it all started. When Tinkle requested me to create a regular character for the magazine, I brought back Butterfingers and very soon it became hugely popular. I continued to send long stories that were turned into the comic format by a script writer. Since I had the copyright of the original stories, I approached Penguin with them. I hoped they would be published as a collection. The editor loved the concept but wanted a novel. That was how I wrote 'Howzzat Butterfingers!' I have given my son's name, Amar, to Butterfingers. I have taken only the name from him, not the characteristics, though he, like me, is quite a Butterfingers. But he's a quiet chap while Butterfingers is quite the opposite.



You have successfully forayed in all three of them with a variety of books. As an author, what difference do you feel when it comes to writing novels for children, young adults and adults?

When it comes to stories for children, one should be careful about the themes. They should be children-friendly. When you write for adults, such caps and boundaries are not there, though you do set yourself certain restrictions. It's the same with the kind of language used. My books are all humorous books and when I write humour, I do have to make some adjustments to my mindset when I'm writing for each category, but I don't find it difficult to make the switch

How did publishing your first book change your process of writing?

I never thought of writing a novel, but having successfully written one, it gave me the confidence to go for the second in the series. I just evolved as the demands were made on me. I wrote short stories on different themes, newspaper columns, articles for magazines and the Butterfingers novels were happening too. And I'm happy that I haven't disappointed my editors, publishers or readers. Of course it's a lot of hard work. Every writer will acknowledge that.

According to you which are the 5 books, everyone should read and also who are your top 3 Authors and what impact did they have in your journey as a writer?

There's a plurality of taste and a great variety in the kind of books available. Tastes differ. So I really don't think I should categorically give the names of five books that everyone should read. That's up to the personal choice of readers. But I can give you the names of five books (among the huge lot of books I love) that are personal favourites. They are Jane Austen's 'Pride and Prejudice', Gabriel Garcia Marquez's 'Chronicle of a Death Foretold', Gerald Durrell's 'My Family and Other Animals', P.G. Wodehouse's 'Joy in the Morning' (and all his other books ☐) and Rohinton Mistry's 'A Fine balance.'

My top three authors? William Shakespeare, P.G.Wodehouse and Bill Bryson. I love humour; hence Bill Bryson is naturally a favourite. But P.G.Wodehouse is my all time favourite. I discovered him in class VIII and still read him. I own almost all his books. Since my writing is mostly humorous, Wodehouse's books, and to a certain extent, Bill Bryson's, have had an indirect influence on my writing. As for Shakespeare, he continues to delight, nourish and amaze. He's the ultimate.

WHAT IF ROUND

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

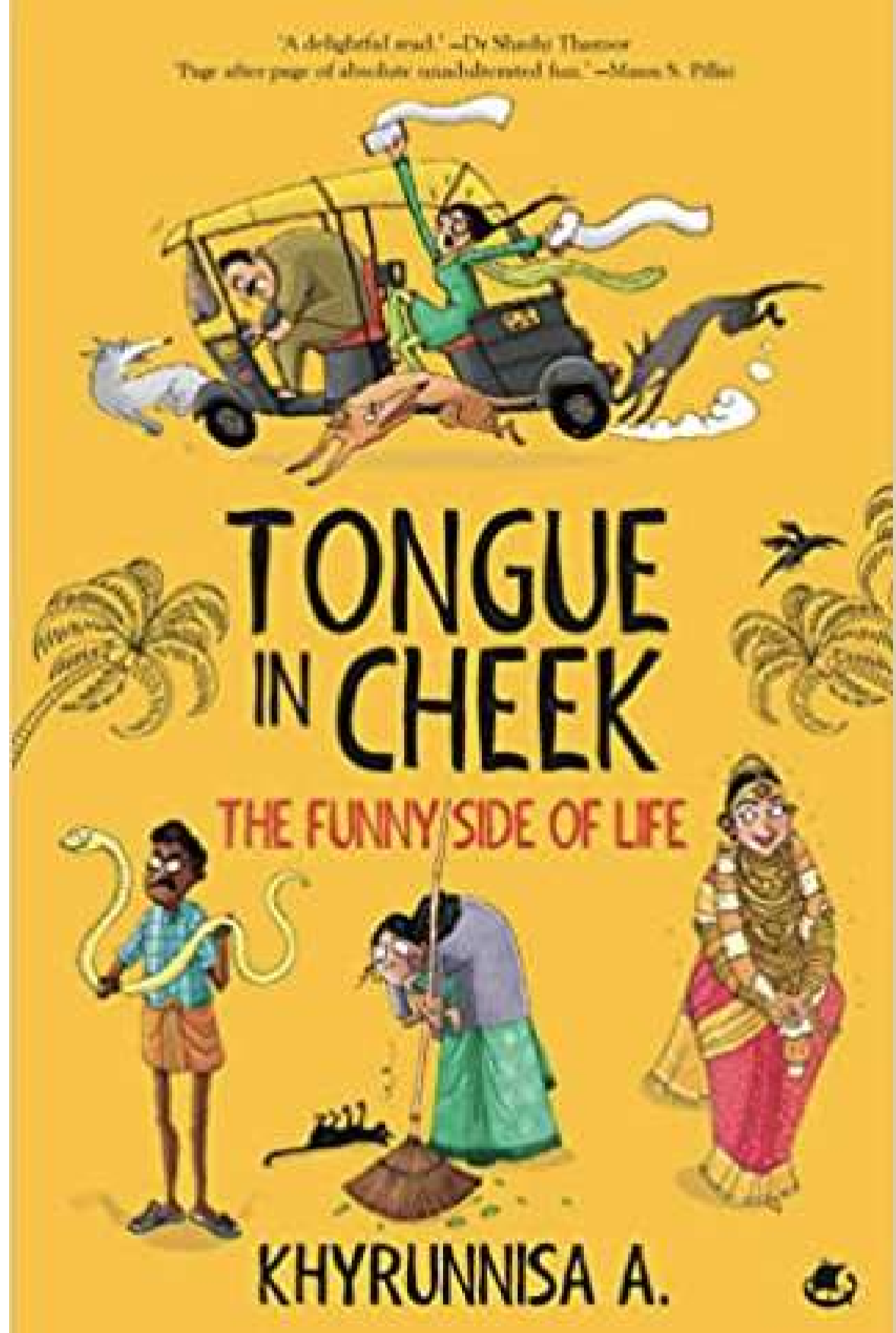
If by things you mean people, of course I'd say my husband, son and daughter-in-law. But if by things you mean things, then I'd go for food, water and a huge bookshelf crammed with books – nourishment for the body and the mind.

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

Remove the greenhouse gases in the atmosphere that are causing climate change and species extinction.

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

I would use it to buy books and build libraries in every nook and corner.



Can you share a few tips for budding authors?

I always tell budding writers to be readers first. Reading widely broadens your mind, opens it to new ideas, and exposes you to different genres and writing styles. And, of course, your language becomes sound and your vocabulary keeps getting better. Writing should always be built on the solid foundation of reading. Writing is hard work. Self-discipline, perseverance and diligence are necessary. Be observant, patient and keep writing.

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. We would love to hear your thoughts about this initiative.

It's an excellent initiative, and I hope it works. Writers have always been trying to make the world a better place.

RAPID FIRE

Favourite....

Place: Thiruvananthapuram. I love the city where I live.

Person: My husband, son and daughter-in-law, and that makes it three. But if you meant someone outside the family, it would be my former teacher, colleague, mentor and now my very close friend, Prof Leela Subramoni.

Food: Idli. I can eat it for any meal and whether I'm well or ill. But of course, it must come with a tasty accompaniment.

Beverage: Adam's ale; in other words, water. Love it.

Your other Talents: Teaching, maybe. You should ask my students whether that's a talent I have! As for cooking, it is passable and my family has managed to survive.

Favourite Quote: "It's more a misquotation. 'Never do today what you can put off until tomorrow', an adaptation of Benjamin Franklin's quote, 'Never put off until tomorrow what you can do today'

Favorite character from a book- Captain Haddock from Tintin comics.



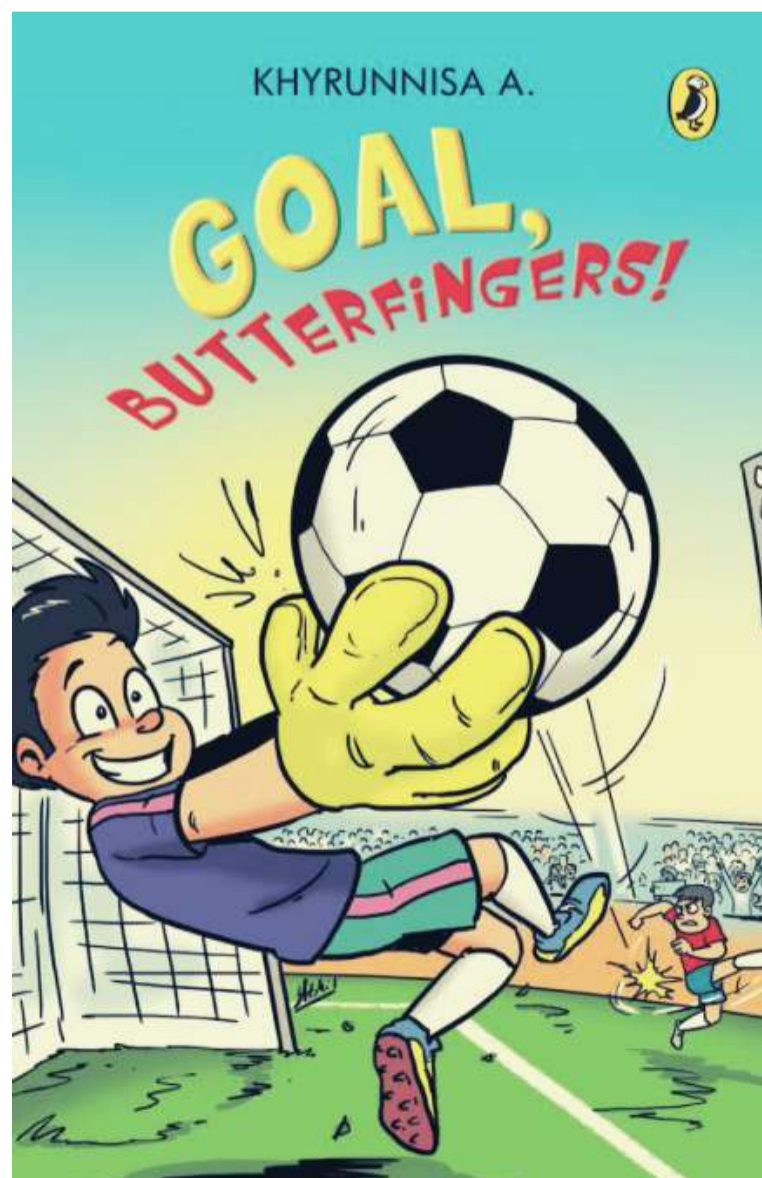
Tell us a bit about your family, likes and dislikes as a person.

If it is the family I was born into, I come from a family of eight children – seven girls and a boy. I am the youngest. My father was a postmaster who decided to settle down in Trivandrum for the education of his children. My mother had her hands full and a 24/7 job, bringing us up.

As regards my family, my husband, P.Vijaya Kumar, is a former professor of English and we have a son, Amar, an engineer in the US. Amar is married to Arpitha, also an engineer.

My likes? I like too many things to enumerate them here. I love people, animals (from a distance) and books.

Things I dislike? Not that there aren't any, but I keep them to myself and am forever trying to get to like them.



Ten year old Shristi Sharma and Smriti Sharma lived in ecstasy in the city of Mumbai with their parents who doted on them. Their palatial home gave them ample space to play and hide their little secrets. They were blessed with everything in life and couldn't ask for more. The love and joy shared among the Sharmas was a unique example of a happy family.

The little heaven of the Sharmas met with a tragic fall. The 'Doom's Day' arrived when Mr. and Mrs. Sharma succumbed to a disastrous road accident, and the little girls were orphaned. They were now left at the mercy of the greedy relatives who left no stone unturned in making their lives miserable.

One evening Shristi and Smriti were thrown out of their own home. Holding the photograph of their dear parents, Shristi left the house with her little sister. They had nowhere to go. The poor girls paced up and down the pavement, crying for their parents, who were probably looking down helplessly from their heavenly abode. The Sun-God began drifting towards the western sky, giving way to the Moon-goddess to begin her journey in her silver chariot. Darkness began to creep in. The stars twinkled brightly in the dark sky. The Moon-goddess embraced the children in her silver light. Shristi and Smriti sat in a corner of the pavement hugging each other in fear of the unknown. Eventually they fell asleep on the lap of Mother Earth, oblivious of everything around them.

The morning rays of the sun awakened the children with optimism unknown to them. Their hungry bellies took them to their bungalow in anticipation of a morsel of food, only to be turned away rudely. Doors shut on them. Hungry and tired, the little ones drank some water from a tap on the pavement and went back to their corner tearfully. How they missed their parents!!!

**BY
GITA PILLAI**



"Mama -Papa, where are you?" cried Smriti. Shristi held her sister close to her heart and hushed her and prayed for an angel to come to their aid. As though, in answer to her prayer, an angel in the form of Daisy came towards them. Her heart reached out to the tear-stained innocent faces. She took the five year old in her arms and spoke gently to the older girl.

"Why are you here darling?"

Shristi being a little cautious wondered, "Must I confide in a complete stranger. Mama has often cautioned us against strangers. "A little coaxing from Daisy did the magic. Shristi looked up at her tearfully and said, "Ma'am, our parents died in a road accident and our aunt and uncle turned us out of our home that stands yonder."

Without a word Daisy picked Smriti in her arms and held Shristi's hand and walked towards her home, a few steps away. Her husband, Robert, who loved children, was delighted to see them.

"First things first, " said Daisy. She gave them a bath, put on some fresh clothes, bought from the nearest store and fed them with some hot breakfast and a glass of milk each. Tired and worn out, the girls went to sleep.

Robert watched the sleeping girls thoughtfully and said, "Daisy, I wish we could bring them up as own." This was a wish close to Daisy's heart. They both agreed to call the children their own. Bringing up them was no easy job. They had to deal with their emotional swings, that was only natural after the trauma they had gone through. However, under the canopy of love and care of their Daisy-ma and Robert -pa, they learnt to smile away their sorrows, although their parents remained alive in their hearts.

Days, months and years slipped by.

LETSMAKESTORIESDINO

#100wordsquills

#ArisefromtheDust

Daisy and Robert watched their daughters grow and blossom into beautiful young ladies. They had received a sound education under the guidance of their Daisy-ma and Robert -pa. "The Lady of Fortune" stood before them with all her brightness. Shristi was a lecturer in a college. Her love and skill for teaching fanned across the institution. She had students rushing to her for extra classes. Apart from teaching, she was passionate about music and dance. Her performances received many a standing ovation. Her fame as a writer, spearheaded in black and white enclosed in colourful covers in the bookstores.

Smriti too climbed her way up as a successful neurosurgeon. Her fame as a neurosurgeon spread like wildfire across the country and was frequently invited by hospitals and nursing homes. She attended medical conferences, wrote books on medicine and even found time to be interviewed by journalists. Robert was filled with with pride, for he had secretly wished that one of his daughters to follow his footsteps.

Shristi and Smriti were at the peak of their success. They owed everything to their Daisy-ma and Robert -pa.

One evening as Shristi and Smriti relaxed on the sofa after a long weary weekend, their eyes glistened with tears as their thoughts travelled down, 'Memory Lane.' They shuddered to think what would have become of them, had the angel in the form of Daisy had not appeared before them on that fateful day.

"Daisy-ma and Robert -pa has given us all that our own parents would have," thought Shristi. The girls walked across the room and hugged their foster parents and cried, "Had it not been for you, our dear Daisy -ma, we would have been left in the dust, never to rise again." They too were proud of their lovely daughters who filled the void in their lives and vowed to keep them away from their greedy relatives.

HAPPY ONAM MAHABALI



Image Source: DeviantArt.com

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That was a lazy afternoon during winters. Most of the residents of Shivalik Hills Housing society were sitting in the park enjoying apricity.

Prof. Kumar took his eyes from the book he was reading, when he heard a group of ladies arguing with a boy.

"You have come again," Mrs.Saxena said in anger," Didn't I tell you not to enter. I gave you money yesterday, and you have come here again."

"Yes, Mrs. Saxena, he may be a thief or a member of a criminal gang." Mrs. Sharma spoke in agreement.

Mr. Kumar looked at the boy. He hardly appeared nine-year-old. He was wearing a torn shirt and shorts, in spite of weather being cold...

Prof. Kumar had an instinct of saving him from the humiliation. He had a feeling that he hadn't eaten for a long time. "Ay, boy, come here," he called out, much to the chargin of the ladies.

The boy reluctantly moved towards him. "Will you help me cleaning my lawn? I will pay you for that." The boy was eager to do anything. Prof. Kumar took him home in spite of protests. He called out to his wife, "Manjula, is the lunch ready?" Manjula welcomed the guest wholeheartedly.

Prof. Kumar came to know of his circumstances. His name was Rakesh. His family lived in a rented shanty nearby. His father had met with an accident; therefore, was unable to go to work.

Their savings were soon exhausted. He was forced to beg. He had even stopped going to school. His mother had tried to get some work, but had not been successful so far.

The Kumars felt a strange affinity to the boy. They found work for his mother and helped him go to school. They paid his fees and helped him in whatever way they could. "Remember one thing Rakesh, whatever your circumstances; howsoever hard you have to work, never leave your studies," they advised him.



BY
SARITA KHULLAR

Rakesh visited them frequently. His innocent ways and keenness to help endeared him to Manjula. She eagerly waited for his visits.

No doubt the things were looking up for Rakesh's family, but their struggle was not over. They were hardly able to have enough .Many times they had to go hungry.

But he always followed Prof. Kumar's advice.

Thus the time went by. Prof. Kumar was transferred to another city. He became busy with life. His own children had grown up and shifted to bigger cities for their jobs.

Life kept playing games with Rakesh. His father was slowly recovering, yet was not able to earn enough to send the children to school.

Prof. Kumar had left a deep impression in his mind. In spite of all odds he didn't stop going to school.

He started distributing newspaper in the morning. Got up at dawn in the cold mornings and slept late at night. Did every kind of jobs. Never shirked from hard labour.

At school, he was bullied and threatened by the children of influential and rich people and ignored by the teachers.

He learnt to take insults in a stride and kept striving.

It was only when he reached eighth standard and stood first in the district that the authorities took notice. They decided to grant him scholarship and provide books and uniform.

Things were not very encouraging back home too. His father wanted him to work full time and leave his studies. Every day there were bickering and tension at home.

Only saving grace was his mother. She kept protecting him at every step.

LETSMAKESTORIESDINO

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After twenty years, Kumars returned to their hometown. They came to live in their old house. Prof. Kumar had retired from his job.

Times had changed. Their friends in the housing society had either gone to different places or grown too indifferent with time. They felt left out and lonely.

It was a hot sultry Monday when most of the inmates of the society were off to their work. A few who were home would not dare to come from the comfort of their cool rooms.

Prof. Kumar suddenly felt sharp pain in his chest. He perspired all over. Manjula knocked at the door of her next door neighbour. She pleaded them to take him to the hospital.

He was immediately taken to the operation theatre. For hours, Manjula wavered from hope to despair. Involuntary tears were flowing down her eyes.

She shivered at the thought of bleak future.

As the door opened, she tried to rush in. A nurse stopped her...

"He is out of danger. Don't worry." came the reassuring voice of a doctor who had come out of the theatre. "Thank God, thank God."

As she spoke these words the doctor who was going away, stopped and looked back," Are you Manjula auntie, prof. Uncle's wife?" He was able to recognise her voice.

"Yes, but how do you know me, are you one of his students?" He immediately turned and touched her feet." I am Rakesh, do you remember me?"

He was overcome with emotions, his eyes were almost moist.

"How foolish of me that I could not recognise Prof. uncle ," he spoke as if he had committed a crime." I am glad that I have saved him."

Manjula couldn't believe her eyes. Half her worries disappeared on meeting him.

That emaciated poor boy in tattered clothes which evoked pity, had become a doctor. How could he do that? It was sheer diligence and determination that took him where he was.

He took over the responsibility of looking after them. He told them the story of his struggle, Most importantly, he told them that it was because of them that he had reached where he was. They had encouraged him to face all the odds and help himself.

He was in a position to help and encourage others.



Kathakali

MANISH GAEKWAD



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’

Writers, without naming anyone and including everyone, have influenced me. Reading is half the work done, then writing is the other half; to be inspired by others but not to copy them is what makes us develop our own individual style over time and with regular practice.

Your book, ‘Lean Days’ revolves around the LGBTQ+ community. The book is compiled in an interesting manner, and the chapters titled innovatively. Was there any incidence that compelled your thoughts to come up with this book?

Yes, I saw the film Eat, Pray, Love, based on Elizabeth Gilbert’s book, and watching Julia Roberts. Anything is inspiring actually, but in this particular case, I wondered if I could do what she was doing in the film – travel, meet people, eat cheesy pizza without guilt. After about saving for a year or so, I decided to do the same. I did not have the same budget as her but then I risked it, traveling across India. So many stories emerged from that one-year of travel that writing the book was perhaps the easiest part of the experience.

What is your personal favorite part from your books and why?

I like the fifth chapter, Ajmer Days, because it was the first chapter I wrote. A friend showed it to a literary agent at the Jaipur Literature Festival and that’s how the rest of the book got a thumbs-up sign to continue. The fifth chapter is also a bit Sufi in essence, involving a romantic story where there is freedom in letting go.



WHAT IF ROUND

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

Music, Poetry, and Dark Chocolate

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

Men. Turn them into women, even if just for one day. What chaos, what fun!

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

Travel and spend it by sharing the money with everyone across the world

According to you, which are the 5 books everyone should read and also who are your top 3 authors and what impact have they had in your journey as a writer?

Now this is a subjective question. 5 books everyone should read, is more likely to be what genres they are interested in. In literary fiction, I'd say the works of Anita Desai, Saadat Hasan Manto, Damon Galgut, Herta Muller and Alain De Botton should be read. My top 3 authors are Michael Ondaatje, Franz Kafka and Friedrich Nietzsche simply because I read them very early on and their works deeply impacted my understanding of how to write poetically, questioning everything but also trying to be reasonable.

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

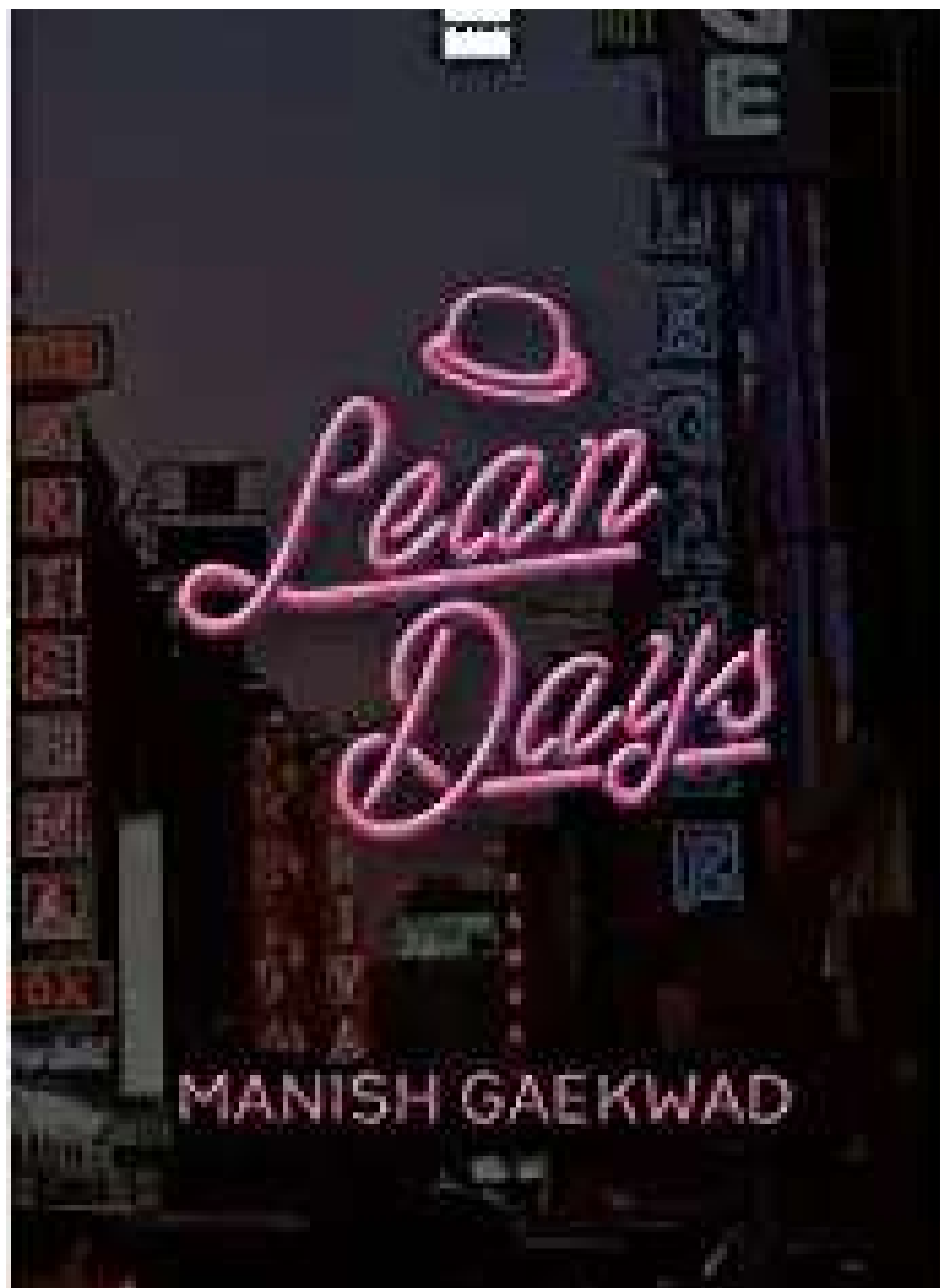
My mother is my only family. I dislike nothing and like almost everything so long as it harms no one.

Could you share a few tips for Young Authors?

Travel, read and write. It is just that simple.

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. We would love to hear your thoughts about this initiative.

This is the recipe every writer needs to follow, and it rightly answers the previous question. I have been trying to do the same for some 15 years now.



RAPID FIRE

Favourite....

Place: Bangalore

Person: Michelle Obama

First Love: Music and poetry.

Your other Talents: Eating, sleeping, day dreaming.

Favourite Quote: In the times we are, live and let live should be everyone's mantra

Favorite character from a book- Franny and Zooey in J D Salinger's eponymously titled book.



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

Yes, I am writing a book about my mother, who used to be a courtesan in the 90s. It is about how she was brought into a kotha as a child, how she was a child-bride before that, and how she survived the ordeal despite not belonging to the culture.

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

Thank you. LGBT voices are just the same as from any other community. I hope we are able to move away from categorization and be included into the mainstream. Writers have always written about it since time immemorial. But it is a good thing if more and more people are speaking up about it through their work. Yes, more LGBT writers need to be promoted equally because there is a huge audience for them.

"Manish Gaekwad is a freelance reporter, writing previously for the newspapers The Hindu and Mid-Day. He has also worked for the news website Scroll.in. His roman-à-clef novel Lean Days was published by Harper Collins India and he has also written a Netflix show with filmmaker Imtiaz Ali called 'She'."

.....Manish Gaekwad



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Why You need this?

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9840888123

SAY IT WITH AN IDIOM

“POT CALLING THE KETTLE BLACK”

- criticizing someone for a fault that you have too

Example of use:

All politicians blame each other and tell themselves good, it's like pot calling the kettle black. Stop accusing each other - you are both responsible for this accident. Pot calling the kettle black!

Interesting fact:

Origin: There are two possible meanings for the idiom. The first dates back to a time where both kettles and pots were made of cast iron. They were placed in the fire to be warmed. Thus, they would both become black with soot. If the pot called the kettle black it would be a trait that they both shared. Another definition would be that the pot would see its own reflection in the shiny kettle. In this case the kettle would not be covered in soot, but the pot would see its blackness reflected.

The earliest appearance of the idiom is in Thomas Shelton's 1620 translation of the Spanish novel Don Quixote.

WORDSMITH'S CORNER

AGELAST

Meaning

a person who never laughs

Word Origin

The humorless agelast comes from the Greek word agélastos (“not laughing, grave, gloomy”), and not, as one might suppose, from the fact that spending any time around such a person feels like it lasts an age. Agélastos in turn comes gelân (“to laugh”), the same word that gives us gelastic (“arousing or provoking laughter”).

Example Of usage:

“I’m not sure if she’s an agelast because she is grumpy or because she’s vain.” “I wouldn’t prank Tony he’s an agelast, he’ll be furious.”

My inspiration, Paulo Coelho

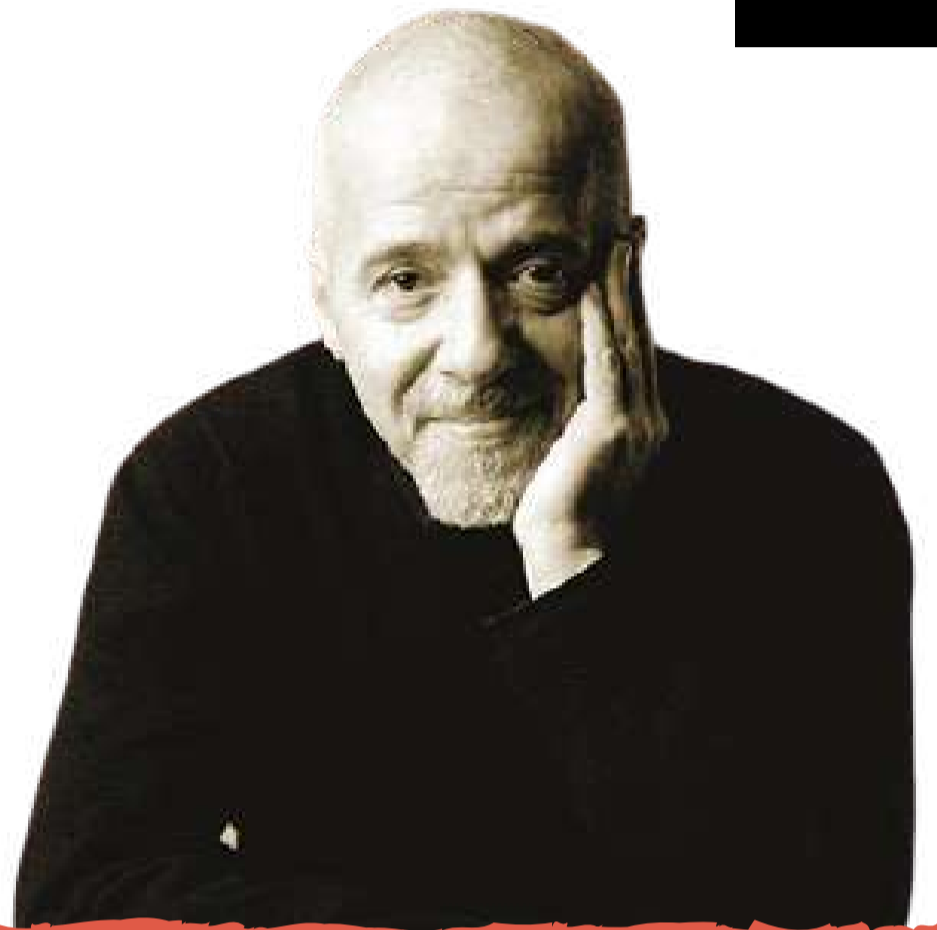


When it comes to book reading, I am a vivid reader who gets engrossed in every genre all around. I have developed the habit of daily reading from the very age during my childhood. Within the course of time, I started reading different genres of books, from thriller to romance, from autobiographical to detective stories. I have developed numerous favorite authors in the early days, but my choice of selecting my most favorite author remains the same, Paulo Coelho. His stories have inspired me in every aspect of my life and his views have added extra sparks to my ideology.

While I finished reading 'The Alchemist', I was totally inspired by his philosophies throughout the story of a Spanish shepherd who creates his legend through his 'Andalusian Travels in Egypt'. The story revolves around the "philosophy" that people only discover themselves when they understand how to listen to the world. Later I started reading his further novels as 'The Winner Stands Alone', 'Eleven Minutes, and Manuscript Found In Accra', I found each of his creations attractive and quite interesting to explore more innumerable. The most impressive findings I love from his work are its distinctness and the way of expressing his views motivated me to learn more and more in each and every way of presenting writing.

'Eleven Minutes' depicts the life of a prostitute who falls in love with a young painter who happens to be as lost as she is. The plot is all about the reconciliation of love and enigmas of two souls. 'The Winner Stands Alone' remains my forever favorite due to its outcome of a soulful view of money, power, and fame of success.

Then I read the historical drama, 'Manuscript Found In Accra' which revolves around the life values during ancient times, Paulo Coelho manages to connect the same emotions through our views on how we remain the same even after decades and decades of survival.



Source : Worldreader.org

And recently I have finished reading 'The Spy' by Paulo Coelho, which introduces me to the factual consequences of the exotic dancer MATA HARI. With this book, Coelho proves his contemporary lessons once again; 'The Spy' is truly an amazing read.

From the time to time, Paulo Coelho's creations inspire me to create new views across the vastness of ideologies around, the distinct stories help me to enhance my ideas and shape me as a well-curated writer. I have been truly invigorated by his writing skills and the way he expresses his conceptions are much refreshing.

BY JOYITA BASAK





One autumn morning,
A great tit, in my window sil,
With blood drowned, groaning with
pain, innocent, a free being,
I was still, looking at him,
His groaning, his pains,
As if I'm not me,
within my self!

So pure, as a new born, oozing
blood covered him,
"Where will you go from here?
You soon will die, and I don't let
you..." murmured by my own.
You still have more to cherish, more
to sing, still have to fly high!!
speak to myself,
I immensely being involved with him

His pains are mine, his wounds I
embraced!
I still watching his diamond eyes,
glittering,
So poorly, maybe he can't see me,
As darkness slowly started to gulp
him.
As soon as possible, I took him in
my lap,
The window sil peeped at me,
To be in love, to get to live is a
blessing,
Water, towel, cotton, medicines

Everything I brought, started to heal
the wounds,
He took shelter in my lap,
Undoubtedly he started to trust me,
Trust....Indeed an essential element
to be in bond.
The bond with him built,
undoubtedly!
A happy sees only happiness,
and a living nourishes a living
To heal the wounds.
As I started my heartiest try
To heal him, slowly he hid his face
in my lap..
A big sign of Love.
"Feel free, dear, it's your place
I know once you get heal, you'll be
no more to stay here"
But the moments we attacked,
The moments we got closer,
It's the most sensitive moments,
ever I had!
Love only cures the pain
It has the Supreme power to heal the
wounds,
Neither I did, but my Love,
Nor I healed him but my Compassion,
They both loved the wounded
soul, Helped him to fly,
Again in the high!!

BY SONALI CHANDA





ROHIT DAWESAR

Sketching Artist &
Author

“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 agree with that. We usually don't thank people in our lives who really matter to us (which, in my humble opinion shouldn't be the case). But, luckily in my case, it was in the 'Acknowledgements' section of my books where I got an opportunity to thank those few superhumans who had helped me in my journey called life. From my family to friends to my readers, I am grateful to the Lord to have sent them to me.

Tell us a little bit about your book. Who is the favourite character from your book and why?

My latest novel titled, 'No Matter What... I will always love you!' is based on my famous short story series - Love Story of Rishi and Mishika. Readers gave immense love to these two characters which ultimately made me bring them to life again, this time in the form of a full-fledged novel. My favourite character amongst the two is Mishika. Mishika, because she is honest; honest towards her feelings and with everyone she meets. I like honesty in a person and love when they value who they really are. Mishika for me is that one person.

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

It would be too early to say, as of now. But yes, I am working on a few projects apart from planning on how to take 'No Matter What' to every reader who loves to read romance, and even to the ones who don't read romance. Perhaps after reading this book they will start reading Indian romance. :)

What kind of research do you do, and how long do you spend researching before beginning a book?

It depends on the genre and on the characters in the story. For example, since Rishi and Mishika were based in Manali, I had spent a few days at the beautiful hill station. In my opinion, love stories are comparatively easy to research unless you pick up characters that are based in a whole different setup than yours. On the other hand, researching for a thriller novel is a herculean task. While penning down a thriller recently, it took me a couple of months just to do some research about the characters, preparing the outline, thinking of proper character arcs, etc. I think it will take me a few more months of research as I bring that book to its completion.

From understanding the character, his/ her mindset, to staying true to the characters, places where the story is set- research for me involves a lot of things. Storytelling is all about making the readers believe in the world you have created. If the characters are kissing each other standing on a Goa beach, a reader must feel the sand, water beneath their feet along with remembering the moment when their beloved's warm, soft lips were locked with theirs'. Otherwise, what's the point? So, research is a key aspect for me.

Have you read anything that made you think differently about fiction?

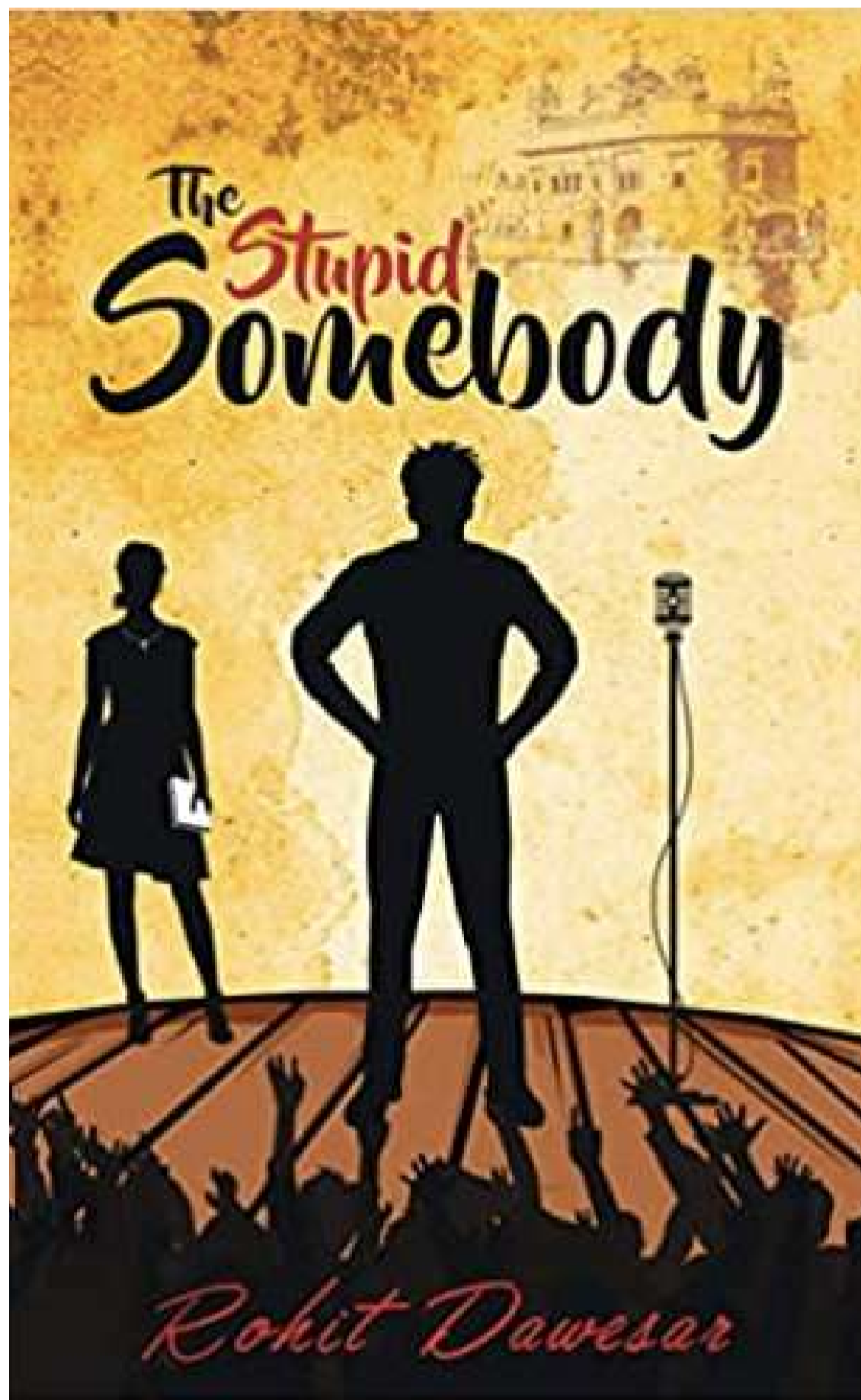
Every story does that to me. The best thing about writing according to me is that there are rules, but there are no rules. A writer is the one who is free to make his own rules. And, that freedom to create something which can be any damn thing (to the point where you are able to convince the readers about the world you have created) is the beauty of this profession.

According to you which are the 5 books, everyone should read and also who are your top 3 Authors and what impact they had in your journey as a writer?

Here my take is - to each its own. I mean, it depends upon the genre you like. My top five in different genres are The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho, The Kite Runner by Khalid Hosseini, Stranger Trilogy by Novoneel Chakraborty, An autobiography of a Yogi by Paramhansa Yogananda and Good to Great by Jim Collins. Authors whose work I really admire are Khalid Hosseini and Paulo Coelho. I also liked John Green's work on certain occasions.

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

I have a loving mother, a sister who is happily married and lives with her husband in Greater Noida. Recently, they got blessed with a baby girl and me with a beautiful niece. My father passed away last year. I like to read, write, have coffee while I travel to unknown, unexplored places. As a person I dislike dishonesty. According to me, there can be no relationship until there's trust.

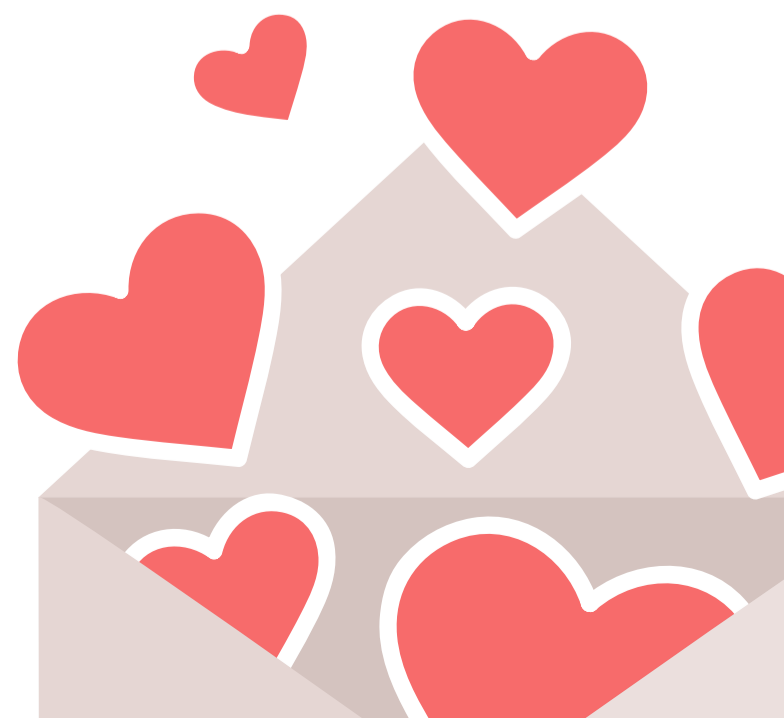


Could you share a few tips for Young Authors?

What one thing would you give up to become a better writer?

My advice to young authors is (no matter how cliché it may sound, it is the most important) - Read, write. Apart from this, I have written a full blog-post on the subject which is on my website www.rohitdawesar.com.

About your giving up one thing question - if I would have known that, I would already have given that up. 😊



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 your thoughts about this initiative. Do you view writing as a kind of spiritual practice?

That's really an amazing initiative. I congratulate Piya, Abilash and the whole team of Sharing Stories for doing such great work not only for writers but also for the readers. I believe, this world needs more and more amazing stories, and team SS is helping writers do the same. Writing for me is surely a spiritual experience where you, not only come to know about different people, different cultures, but you also understand a lot about yourself, which according to me must be the primary thing an individual must strive for. So, best wishes to you guys for the amazing initiative.



WHAT IF ROUND

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

Books, Cellphone - to write in it, Coffee.

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

Well, that's an interesting one. I would definitely like to make people start reading. Reading because I believe books are a spiral staircase to some amazing feelings and wisdom. And, people who don't read are deprived of experiencing the wonders of imagination. That one thing of people not reading much, especially in our country is what I would like to change.

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

Build schools where real-life, practical education will be given (like our old Gurukuls)

RAPID FIRE

Favourite....

Place: Manali

Person: My mother.

Food: Aloo Paratha

Beverage: Black Coffee

First Love: Music and poetry.

Your other Talents: Sketching, cooking (fast food mostly. Some say, I make hell-amazing Alfredo Pasta. 😊)

First Love: Writing, of course.

Favourite Quote: This world is full of talented but unsuccessful people. Because they never dream and do what's required for it. - The Stupid Somebody

Favorite character from a book- Mishika from 'No Matter What... I will always love you!'

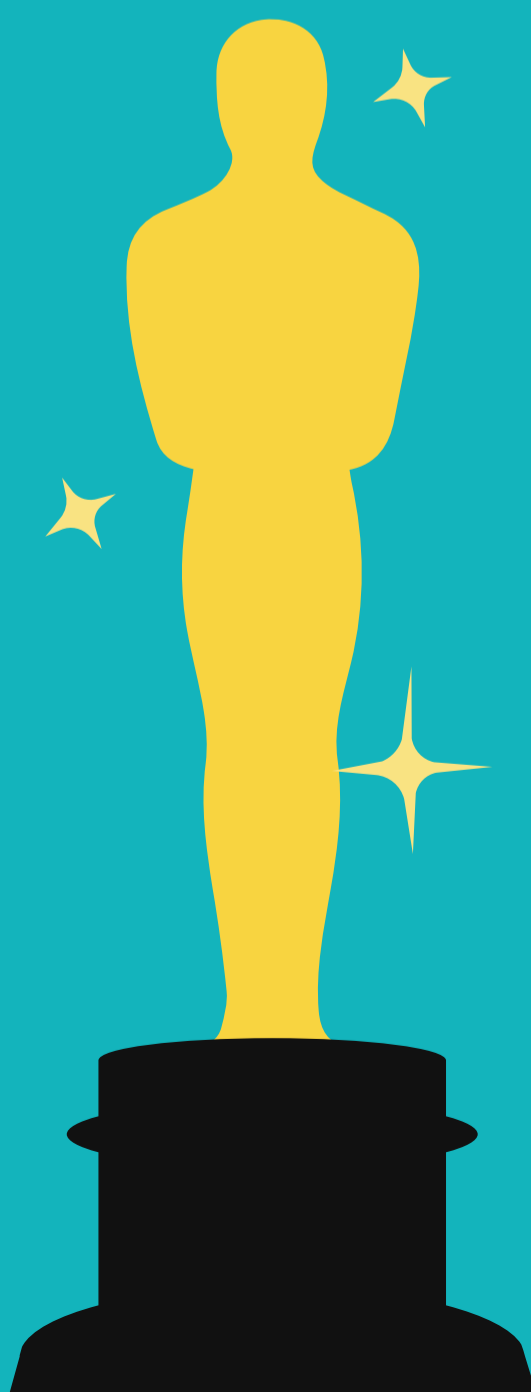
SS
Sharing Stories

SHARING STORIES

BOOK AWARDS 2020

**PARTICIPATE & WIN EXCLUSIVE
PRIZE & MARKETING
OPPORTUNITY WITH SHARING
STORIES**

**CLICK THE TROPHY BELOW TO
PARTICIPATE**



THE HOUSE OF EARTH AND BLOOD

Publisher: Bloomsbury

Genre: High Fantasy, Urban Fantasy

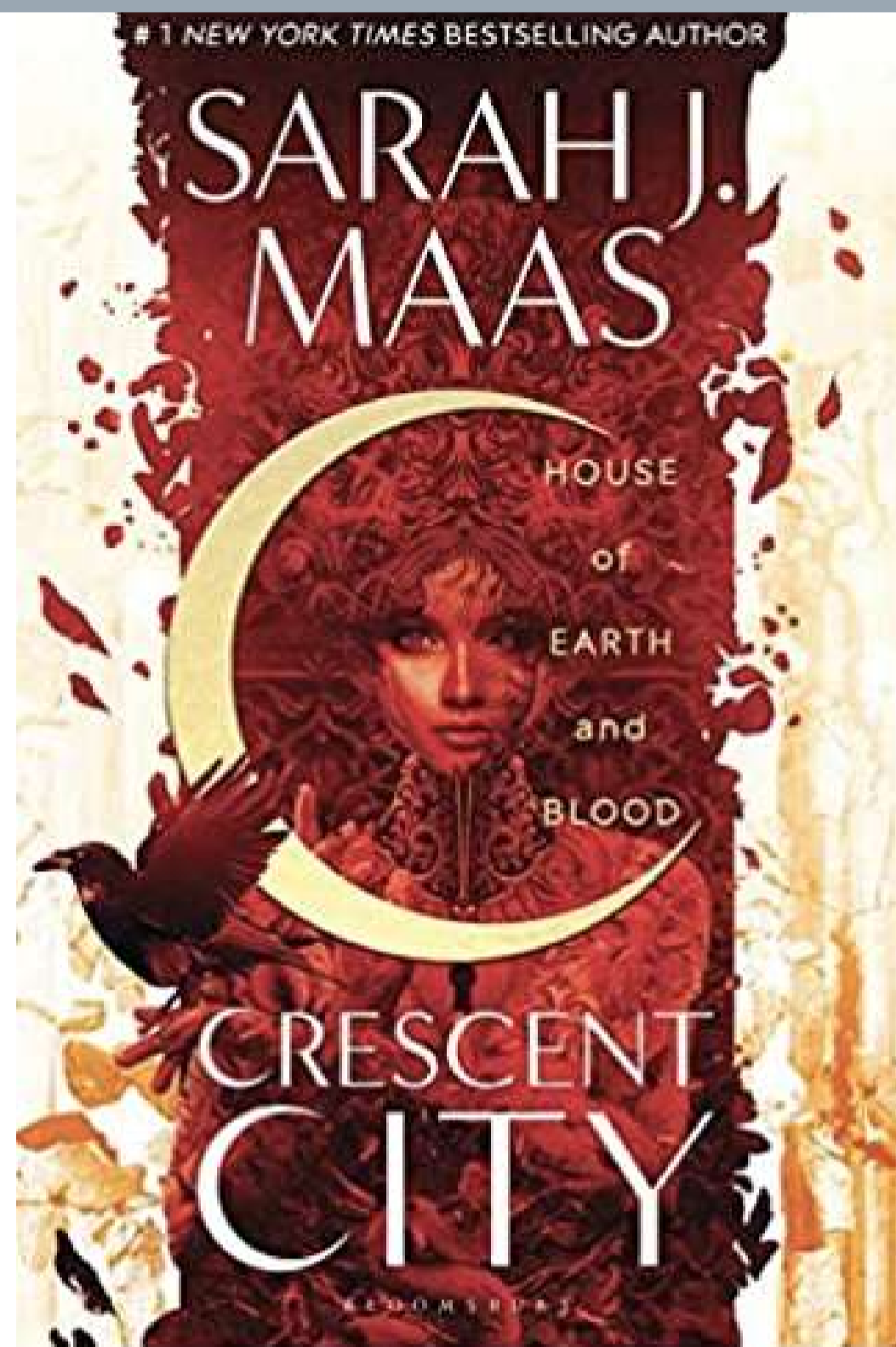
The book begins with Bryce Quinlan and Danika Fendyr (the alpha of The Pack of Devils). Friendship is one of the central plots of the book, hence the chemistry between the characters should be convincing enough that the resultant roll out of the story makes sense. SJM surpasses that standard. Readers will love Bryce and Danika the moment they are introduced. The words and emotions flow out effortlessly, the circumstances are casual and natural without unnecessary exaggeration. It's like a perfect combination of words to incite the exact feelings conveyed in the book. Bryce's relationship with Danika is the strongest of all till the end of the book, even with other equally important characters being in her life.

The book is 800 pages long, so it's quite a big commitment to start it. Hence, the importance of first few chapters is prime. No one wishes to continue reading if one is bored in the first few chapters. However, that will not happen with this book. There's so much mystery and information, not to mention a good dose of sarcasm that readers will be hooked immediately.

There is a multitude of characters, and many play a vital role in the story, Ruhn (Bryce's half brother), Lehabah (sprite and Bryce's friend at the gallery), Jesiba Roga (Bryce's employer), Hypaxia (Queen of the witches) etc. Each of them brilliantly written. Every character is unique. The differences are profound yet seem subtle.

Coming to the two main characters in the book- Bryce Quinlan and Hunt Athalar Bryce Quinlan is one of the best written female protagonists. She is sassy, bold, with an I don't give an f attitude the right way. Good thing is, her courage and bravery does not overshadow her femininity. Often female protagonists are given masculine attributes in an attempt to highlight their strengths, and their prowess but being feminine, yet kicking ass is a total thumbs up. Bryce was just that, one moment you find her getting her nails manicured meticulously and another moment, she's plotting to lure the infamous and feared viper queen out of her lair. She is clumsy yet graceful, knows how to dress to impress, and carries herself with confidence.

Hunt Athalar is a fallen angel who works as Archangel Micah's personal assassin. He is nicknamed the 'Umbra Mortis' (The Shadow of Death). Hunt's introduction in the book does justice to his reputation. The gloomy, moody, dark angel that observes everything and will rip you apart in the blink of an eye. But as the story progresses, he is as ordinary as anybody, with casual dressing sense, easy joking demeanour, loving attitude etc. the concept of bringing a terrifying figure to some commoner's laptop is too much of a cliché, but in this case it works because Hunt's personality is twined with the plot intricately. Lehabah calls Athalar as Althie and flirts with him, he flirts back and the scene is so darn funny. His relationship with Bryce is a classic enemies-to-lovers saga.



Blurb

Bryce Quinlan is a half-fae, half-human party girl. She spends her day in the gallery and nights drinking and dancing. Two years after her best friend is killed, she is ordered by the Archangel to help with the investigation when the murders start again. A fearsome, dark fallen angel Hunt Athalar is appointed as her protector against both their wishes. As they slowly try to unravel the mystery, they inch closer to the truths they would rather not know. To top this, both of them have to keep in check the feelings they develop for each other while being in the same apartment.

The story has plenty of history spread out the entire length of the book. It has a good amount of mystery, detailed world and character building and brilliant character dynamics. 3/4th of the book passes without much action, at one point it was just about the brewing chemistry between Bryce and Hunt while the actual story takes a back seat. It would have seemed like dragging had not the banter between them been good. It had everything, sarcasm, jokes, anger, drama, the really slow romance, the sadness etc, a genuine representation of two highly different personalities.

There are both major and minor twists in the last quarter of the book, they do amp up the excitement every time. The plot is quite straight forward, the character roles too, yet it all seems as if there's a bigger plot and this is just the beginning.

The last battle at the gallery in the ending is the best written part in the book. Bryce's fight in the gallery is the most elegant and beautiful and deadly. Her grace as a fighter is un-paralleled, like she knows what she's doing. Along with that, the atmosphere at The Summit where Hunt is, hours away from Bryce, is rife with shock and tension that the readers will feel in the bones. The ending makes it so totally worth it. Emotion, drama, and that warm fuzzy feeling and the epilogue promising more action and more mysteries to be revealed. Truth be told, 800 pages seem like a drag but SJM surely knows how to keep the pace going. Sneakily, she's laid out all the clues throughout the book which come together perfectly in the end, and it's the placements of these clues that require the book to be huge.

If the artwork at the cover doesn't catch your eye, or the title, then nothing will, because here in lies the first marvel, the meticulous work gone into the book right from beginning.

GHAZALA ANJUM



Sadhya



How to better yourself in writing Historical Fiction?

by Souhardya De



Penning down History is often defined as a gargantuan task, involving detailed interpretations of various events that occurred in the past, generally written in an academic format, with lots of references taken from extremely rare manuscripts and legendary works by court poets and historians of the era we specifically study.

Fiction, on the other hand, is vastly an imaginative conception. It can describe anything, ranging from a society built in a Utopian landscape to the devilish vales of Tartarus, and that too, according to the author's visualised representations. In a fictional narrative, descriptions are variable and so are the events that occur.

Now, what exactly is Historical Fiction?

Academicians have often questioned me regarding the authenticity of books that are authored in the historical fiction genre, since people are generally of the notion that historical fiction is just another author's conception of what might have happened in the period he's writing about and not an intricate introspection into the same.

As is clear from the term itself, this genre is a blend of history and fiction (which people often misinterpret as 'reality' and 'imagination').

The terms could better be called 'defined' and 'imagined', since 'defined' is what people mean by 'reality' nowadays, especially in social sciences, where a scholarly set standard is not to be fussed about! Last week, when I was scrolling through a social media post by an eleventh grader based in Delhi, to my amusement, I found out that he had entirely classed the historical fiction genre as baseless and irrelevant, when it came to his preferences of reading books.

To justify my point, I would bring up an illustration where the characters involved are Al Beruni and Utbi. History fanatics would instantaneously recognise the former, whose notable work 'Tarikh-i-Hind' has been the subject of many a thesis and curriculums across the globe but not many would recognise the latter.

Utbi and Al Beruni are contemporary 'historians' who've written detailed accounts on the invasions carried out by the Mahmud of Ghazni, into the Indian territories, although both had their own version of the battles. Utbi, whose work is called Tarikh-i-Yamini, hadn't ever actually gone into the war field and wrote this scholarly work, miles away, in the comfort of the Sultan's palace, bedizening himself with the embellished riches the Sultan showered upon him, as a reward for furthering his propagandas. Thus, his descriptions of India and its topography are highly flawed and purely based out of a Ghaznavid imagination.

Besides these, the entirety of his text is orthodox in nature, conforming itself with the jihadi principles that talk about invasion into another nation, as a way to propagate Islam.

Now, what if I tell you this is what I mean by historical fiction?

Utbi had entirely written down things he'd never really seen or even have the slightest idea of! But since it abided by the strict Islamic principles that the later kings of Hindustan preferred, this was the most popular 'scholarly work' during the timeframe of the Mughal period!



Al Beruni, on the other hand, had been long accompanying Mahmud as the court astrologer, into his Indian expeditions. His accounts reveal the cultural diversity and topography of the country that he saw and was immensely influenced by. Unbiased, as *Tarikh-i-Hind* was Beruni's works gained importance only once the Mughal orthodoxy had ceased!

Very briefly, historical fiction is a genre where you are expected to nurture your own creativity while maintaining an equal balance with researches on the cultural aspects and the architectural features and political incidents that happened back then.

So, what are the best things one has to keep in mind while writing in this genre?

Extensive Research: Going deep down into the era you're planning to write on, will have a greater advantage and impact for your readers! Historical fiction readers tend to have an enthusiasm into knowing what socio-cultural, political or economical background your setting carries. The best way to grasp that would be to swoon over some texts and read authors who've written books in the same timeframe that you're planning to write on.

Vocabulary: When writing historical fiction, vocabulary plays a crucial role in gaining reader impressions. If I give you an instance, for a plot set during the Mughal period, you cannot directly write 'cannon', when talking about the indispensable artillery. In this case, 'culverin' would be a good choice.

However, it is important to identify which word suits the period best. Talking about the example I gave above, 'culverin' is used to denote a 16th century cannon with a considerably long bore. Hence, when writing about an Indian dynasty in the 16th century, using 'culverin' would be a good shot (although 'cannon' would not be entirely incorrect).

Redefining the Background: Once you're thoroughly done with researching on the cultural aspect of your period, it'll be beneficial to redefine it in your own standards/opinions. The approach can be difficult at first hand, since you need to embed the customs, traditions, dresses, weapons and all the other things that were prevalent during that epoch, to create a perfect ambience. Other than this, you might need a strong creative mind to find your own similar world which you can possibly intermix!

Fictionalise your setting: While most historical fiction novellas are based on actual plots and renowned, heroic characters, you need to fictionalise it a bit. Consider for example, Amish Tripathi, the hugely successful author in the genre! Amish creates a perfect characterisation. There is Rama, there is Sita, there is the Ayodhya and everything Ramayana has. However, his plots often take a U turn and revolve around a purely fictional set, not mentioned anywhere in the actual text from where the plot gets borrowed. This creates an instant impact upon your reader who sees the texts played like a video slide, talking about visualisation, and wants to move forward. You can also create your own characters (fictional) but do not forget to present them with a strong quality, something that is unique to the character itself

Historical fiction, if you ask me to opinionate, is always an interesting but challenging genre to take up with. While you have a wider scope for writing down history the way you want, keeping in mind the aforementioned points might create a bit of ease.

Other than this, it's all the same thing. It's ultimately about your passion to write that wends you forward! If there's an aspiring historical fiction writer out there, I'm sure you're already quite versed with what I've wanted to say throughout this article! Howbeit, before signing off, the last piece of advice I can give is: read as much as you can and do not procrastinate! Writing is a talent few possess! Utilise that to your fullest! Good luck!

POOKALAM



DEAR EARTH- AVVAIYAR

Art By Murali Nagaphuza

Translated by Geeta Dharamrajan

This is a 2300 year old magical song from the Tamil Literature. It is translated beautifully and the meaning teaches us about the love for Mother Earth.

The song is written by a wise Tamil woman called Avvaiyar. The book has provides detailed information about this wonderful poetess who has written thousands of poems.

The 'Tadaa' feature of the book makes us understand the concept very well. This book also has shown us 9 ways to be kind.

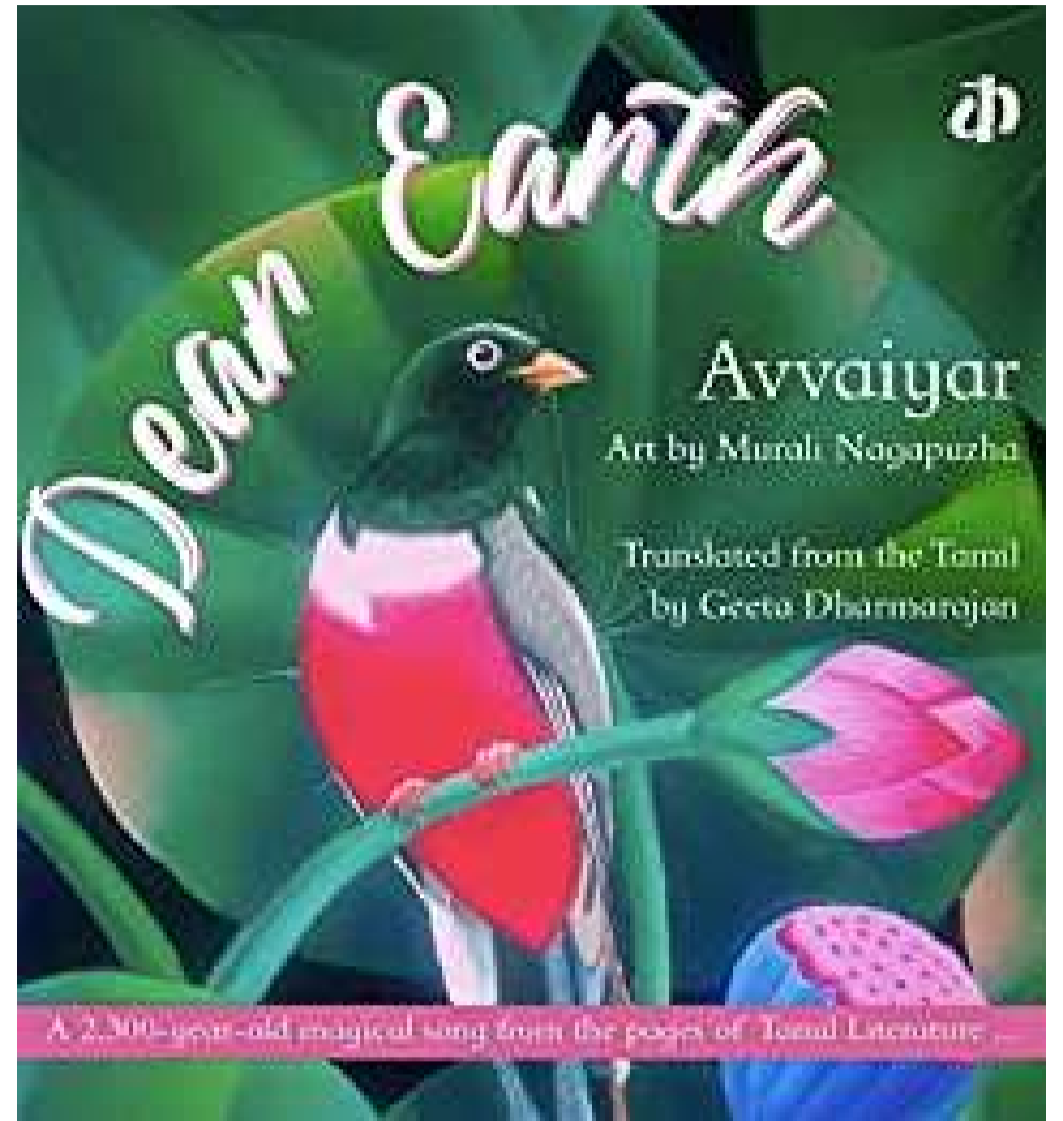
The book carries detailed information about the history of Tamil poetry, of about 2500 years old, when the whole region was called Tamilkam. The book talks about the three Sangam Age, and how 400 poets sang in one such Sangam. Poetess Avvaiyar was invited by the Kings to be a part of these gatherings.

Avvaiyar, the poetess has a mystery to her. No one could find out where she lived. She was widely respected by the Kings and they also obeyed to her wise words.

The book beautifully tells about this wise old woman and her way of life and poems written by her. The book also carries a folk lore of Avvaiyar's meeting with Goddess Parvati. Her love for mother Earth impresses the Goddess too.

The book is filled with vibrant colours and beautiful paintings. This makes it even more joyful experience to read it.

In today's time, this book should be read by every child to know more about our history and culture.



Here is a beautiful poem by Avvaiyar from the book:

"Dear Earth!
Green field or forest
Tall hill or valley
You look after us
when we look after you!
Dear Earth,
May you live long!"

BY YASHAN GAJBE
(8 YEARS OLD)



Did You Know ?

"Some trivia, something serious but always interesting"- brought to you by Chandrika R Krishnan

1. The Eiffel Tower is six inches taller in summer than winter.

This is because : Steel expands in hot weather and contracts in cold weather

2. The first oranges weren't orange in colour.

The original oranges from Southeast Asia were a tangerine-pomelo hybrid, and they were actually green. In fact, oranges in warmer regions like Vietnam and Thailand still stay green through maturity.

(If you would like to know which Orange came first, the colour or fruit..tune in next month!)

3. Spaghetti, confetto, and graffito are the singular forms of spaghetti, confetti, and graffiti.

Ha! According to Merriam -Webster dictionary, they are the singular forms.

4. Chewing gum is banned in Singapore.

Along with spitting and urinating outside, Singapore has banned chewing gums except for dental and therapeutic uses.

5. The 1939 novel Gadsby is the longest book ever published that doesn't contain the letter 'e.'

American author Ernest Vincent Wright published Gadsby, a 50,000-word novel that doesn't use the letter 'e' once. Author Georges Perec also wrote the French-language book La Disparition without the letter 'e' in 1969.

6. The longest place name in the world is 85 letters long.

Taumatawhakatangihangakoauauotamateaturipukaka pikimaungahoronukupokaiwhenuakitanatahu is in New Zealand and is 85 letters long.

7. Cupboard is one of the most mispronounced words.

When you say "cupboard," the "p" should be silent—it's kuh-burd, not cup-bird. Check when you say it next...

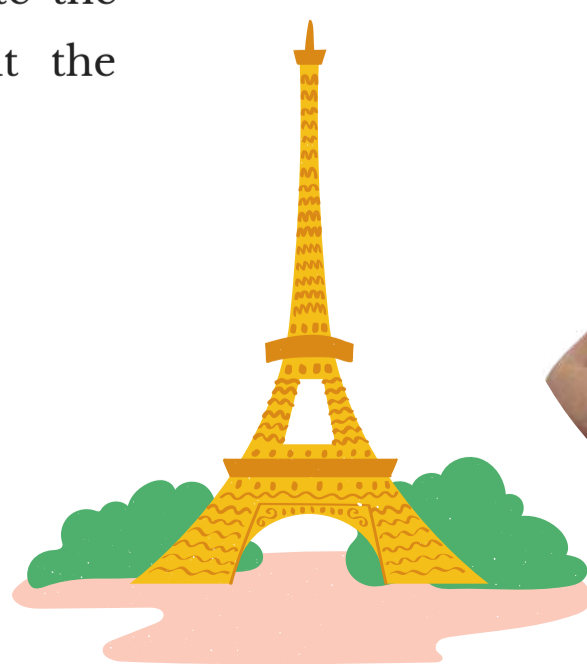
8. Peanuts aren't technically nuts.

They are legumes! A nut is only a nut if it's "a hard-shelled dry fruit or seed with a separable rind or shell and interior kernel." That means walnuts, almonds, cashews, and pistachios aren't nuts either. They're seeds.

9. If you have the feeling you've experienced an event before in real life, call it déjà vu. If you feel like you've previously experienced an event in a dream instead, there's a different term for it: déjà rêvé.

10. Both the skin and fur of a tiger are striped. Moreover, you will not find 2 tigers in the world with identical stripes.

.....Chandrika R Krishnan





LET'S CELEBRATE

Contest Winners

www.sharingstories.in



WINNING ENTRIES

WRITING CONTESTS SEP'2020

WORD IMPACT

Papia Ghosh - Winner

Chandra Sundeep
Amrita Lahiri Bhattacharya
Smridhi Goel
Riddhi Bhatti

PICTURE PROMPT POETRY

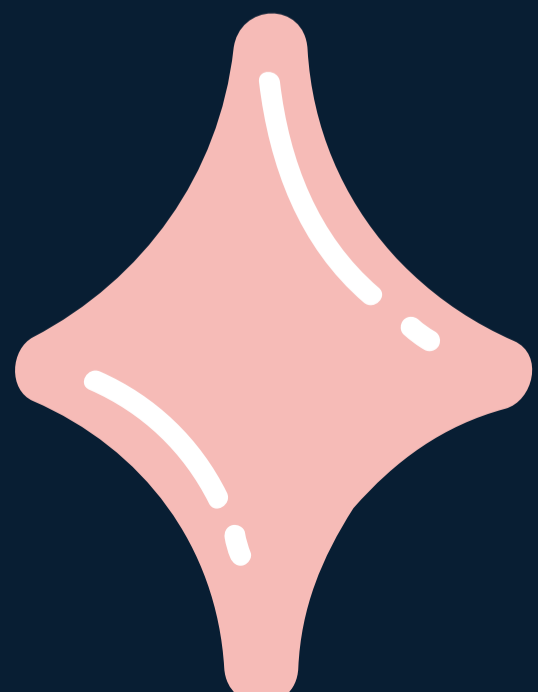
Ratna Prabha - Winner

Indrani Choudhary
Alifiyah Shabir
Daisy Bala
Deepa Gopal

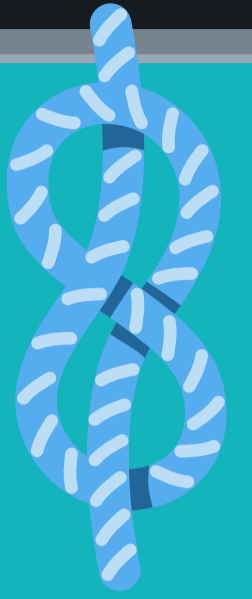
#1000WORDS TALES

Narayani V Manapadam - Winner

Preethi Warriar
Chandra Sundeep
Santosh Bakaya
Alipi Das



Entanglement.



Invisible bonds,
Stronger than fetters,
Herding us together,
Calling it 'family',
Entanglement.

The jungle of roots,
Gripping the dark earth,
The pillar of strength
For the huge banyan tree,
My parents, Entanglement.

The creepers of Hemlock
Suffocating my existence,
With tears and sharp retorts,
Struggling for a fresh breath of air,
Entanglement.

Worldly dreams,
My wardrobe and perfumes,
My jewellery boxes,
Brimming with pride and greed,
Entanglement.

Lazy snakes of green,
Tight embraces,
Wild blossoms of accidental love
Trying to trap
An elusive dream,
Entanglement.

Wild grass racing
Across generations,
Drinking in the sap of life,
Nurturing humanity
Entanglement.



PAPIA GHOSH

Although Papia Ghosh is a postgraduate in Economics, she has always been an avid reader with a penchant for penning down her thoughts and experiences through her poems and short stories.

She believes that writing is a journey and it is a reflection of her inner world coupled with the pearls of experiences strewn around us in our daily lives. Writing has helped her to find a voice for those voiceless moments rearing their eager heads for a pertinent expression. At present, she is actively involved in nurturing children and adults to pen down their imagination for future readers and thereby living the life of her dreams.

Picture Prompt Poetry



My Overflowing Cup

*The bounty of nature to nourish me,
The vast, blue sky embellished with glowing comets, dazzling stars to mesmerize me
,A roof over my head to protect me.*

*The gentle heat from the hearth to keep me warm,
The comforting warmth of my beloved to make me feel cherished and desired.
What more do I need?*

*And yet, why am I so unhappy?
Why do I cry and complain?
Why do I feel incomplete?*

*Aah yes! The culprit is my overflowing Cup of Desire.
Lord, teach me to empty this Cup of Desire,
And fill it with Overflowing Gratitude instead!*

WINNING ENTRY



RATNA PRABHA

Ratna is an ex-banker who is now dabbling in writing. She has been at it for over four years now. She is a freelance writer on Upwork and has her own set of clients who provide her with a regular stream of writing work. She has written in multiple formats including blog content, fiction and non-fiction eBooks mostly as a ghost-writer.

#1000wordstales

Dead Alive

WWW.SHARINGSTORIES.IN



Situation :

One morning you wake up to find that you are bestowed with a power to bring back any one dead personality from the past for one day. Weave a story around day spent with the conversation or the questions you might ask to him/her." You can use any personality, be it political, religious, scientist or any person from your own life's experience.

THE MAN, THE WAR, THE SAGA

I explored the options on the front camera which my ordinary smartphone offered. I need not have bothered, for it offered nothing ingenious like 'selfie flash' or 'a panorama angle'. Yani, You should savour the precious moments, an inner voice reasoned with me. Yeah, I agreed. Dead men do not appear in camera, after all. It was 5PM. He should be here any moment. After all, military men are known for their clocklike precision. There it was! That distinctive sound of boots stomping on the concrete road. I muttered a silent hymn and turned around. And gasped!

Was he the one I had requested for an interview?

No, it couldn't be. I had clearly mentioned Harpal Singh Saini from the Sikh Regiment of 1971. A young man in his 30s, when he gave up his life for his country. A shaheed. This man advancing towards me didn't look a day younger than 50. It must be a goof-up, I thought to myself.

The man took his seat in front of me. "Can I have a glass of water? I am parched."

WINNING ENTRIES

I stood rooted to the spot. The sun had just set, leaving behind a mild hue of saffron. The cool breeze from the Thiruvanmiyur beach hit my face. Water! Oh yes! Hastily I took out a Tupperware from my bag. The soldier greedily grabbed it from my hands and gulped its contents down in one go. As the final drop of water trickled down his throat, his eyes lit up.

"I have one extra bottle."

He returned the Tupperware to me and shook his head. "Shukriya."

I couldn't stop the lump that was threatening to form in my throat. I put on my sunglasses and sat down, facing him.

"Mmmmm.... You are Shri Harpal Singh?"

"Yes, madam."

"Uh.. I don't know how to begin. Mmm.. How many of you had the same name in the Sikh Regiment of 1971?"

"I didn't get you, madam."

"Oh ok. I had requested an interview with Shri Harpal Singh Saini."

"I am."

"Oh. I must have been mistaken. I though I read that you were only 30 when you were martyred."

"29!"

"Excuse me."

"I was only 29 when I took the bullet."

Words failed me. He must have guessed my dilemma.

"I look old, right?"

I looked around, wishing the earth would This was clearly spiraling out of control.

"You know, madam. I am forever thirsty. I should have requested for at least 40 bottles of water before agreeing to this interview."

"Don't worry. I can buy them. The stall is nearby." He looked delighted. "I kept on requesting them for a glass of water. But they never offered me a single drop." He paused, looking at my shell-shocked face. "I was captured by the enemy, you see."

Visions of excruciating torture tactics deployed by the army appeared before me. And then on an impulse, I looked at his hands. A fleshy mass hung where the nails should have been.

"This is nothing, madam." He had a bemused look on his face.

"Didn't the government fight for you?"

"Ministers don't negotiate for measly soldiers."

"Still. Only recently, Abhi....." I bit my tongue. As the stark reality hit me hard.

"I have heard that it's now easy to spread awareness. Something called social media."

"Yes."

"Too sad we didn't have it in those times." He shrug his shoulders.

"Harpal saab. I have often read in textbooks about tales of bravery. How chests of fathers swelled with pride as they distributed sweets amongst their neighbours when their sons returned in coffins."

Did I discern a tear in his eye? Did I speak too much?

After a pregnant pause, he resumed. "What is so praiseworthy about being martyrs, may I ask?"

He took my silence as my ignorance and continued in a drone-like tone. "When you are at the frontline, you still feel hunger, thirst, fear and excitement. You are still a human, not a war machine."

The clouds in my mind started lifting.

"I was captured by the enemy during the 1971 war. Do you recoil when you see scenes from Hindi films where the police torture the criminals?"

I nodded.

"This is nothing. They pulled out my nails. I revealed nothing. They tore at my hair. I passed out."

With that, he removed his turban. Three strands of hair and loads of scars to be displayed on his resume. I bit my lips to prevent myself from bursting into tears.

"All I wanted was to quench my thirst." Harpal Singh broke down.

I extended the second bottle of Tupperware towards him. He wiped his eyes, took it, muttering a 'thanks' and took three sips. He kept the bottle down. I said

"Do you know what happened to your wife?"

"She might have cried for days. I know her too well. But my son, Daljit, was quite strong for his age. I reckon he must have been 8 when I last set my eyes on him."

"He has joined the Indian Air Force. He is a Wing Commander."

Harpal Singh looked up and his hands joined together in a Namaste, as if offering his heartfelt thanks to the Almighty.

"Are you happy?"

"I am proud of him. He had always been the courageous one."

"Are you scared that"

"..... he might die a martyr too?" Harpal Singh completed my question for me.

Silence reigned.

"Madam. It's the duty of a soldier to protect his motherland. And he will die for this cause willingly. But my request is....."

"Go on, Harpal saab."

"Do not EVER glorify the events in a battlefield."

The mobile buzzed. It was time to bid adieu to Harpal Singh Saini. The time machine had come to take him back to heaven.

Not a word was exchanged between us, as he walked away. Leaving me enlightened. And a tad ashamed of my naivety.

Narayani V Manapadam

Narayani is an IT professional who seeks to escape occasionally from the boring world of Excel by finding refuge in Word. She is a crazy cat lover, a badge she wears proudly on her sleeve.



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WordsTales

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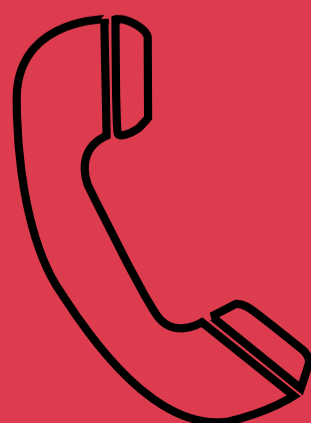
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