



RHYVERS BEAT

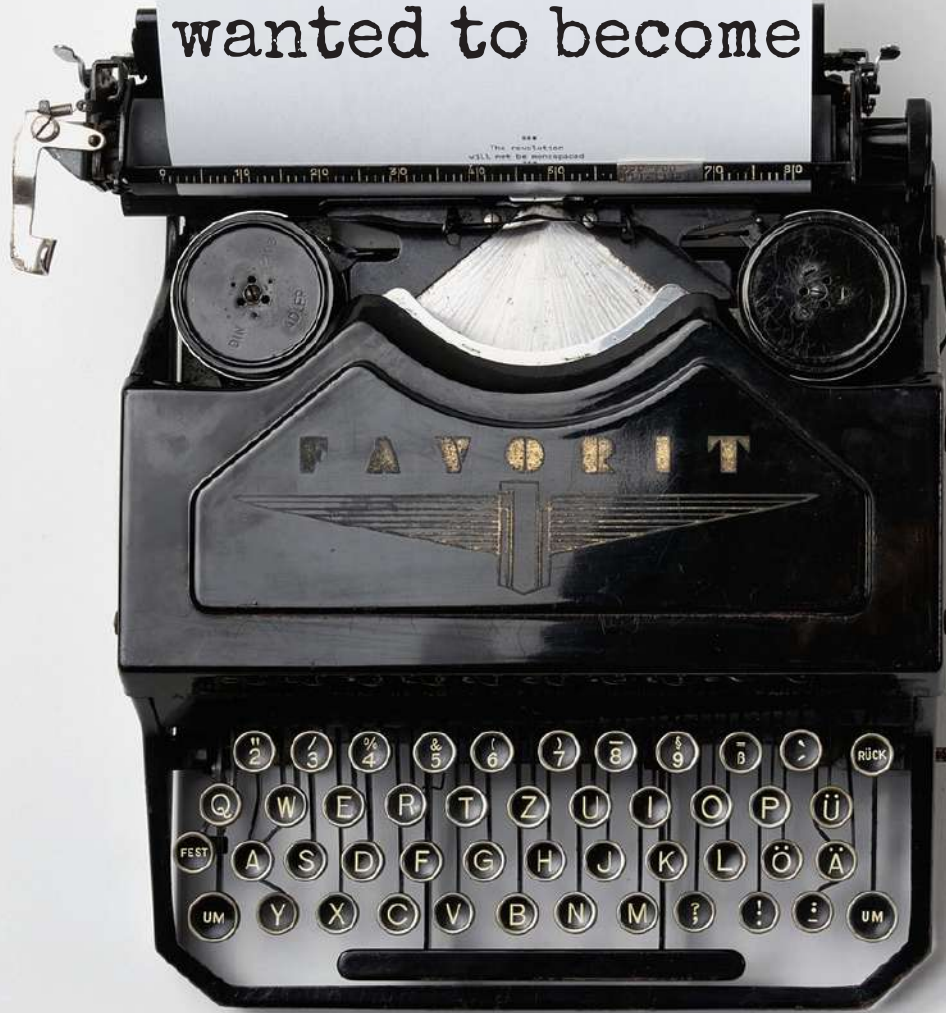
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FROM THE DESK OF EDITOR IN CHIEF

The way we experience the world around us is a direct reflection of the world within us. We consider that the problems come from outside and try in vain to change the world surrounding them, hoping that things will improve. But life continues to reflect our innermost thoughts. Our thoughts shape our actions and our life.

That is why when we try to change the surroundings, it seldom works because the thoughts are out of alignment. Life is a mirror and its reflection shines back our image. If we agree the world is volatile, we will look for evidence to substantiate it. But there are others who claim life is wonderful and as a result, attract pleasant experiences. They choose happiness over adversity.

What we hold in mind comes to life, irrespective of our preferences. We continuously shape the world around us as a result of conscious and unconscious thoughts. Reality is nothing but a mirror reflecting our inner world. As the French-born novelist Anais Nin said: "You do not see the world as it is. You see it as you are."

In our December edition, a host of eminent contributors have come together to share their writings with our esteemed readers. Enjoy the diverse colours of their reflections.

Happy reading.


Affan Yesvi





DR. SONIKA SETHI

FROM THE EXECUTIVE EDITOR'S DESK

Life is a sum total of moments, memories, experiences, opportunities and choices. When Robert Frost talks about 'The Road not Taken' it is a reflection upon the opportunities he was offered and the choices he made. Like Frost, it is the duty of every individual to take a moment not only to express gratitude for the opportunities received but also to reflect on the choices he made.

Since everything is a reflection of our minds...everything can be changed by our minds. (Buddha)

A shining surface, reflects a truthful image. A shining soul, similarly, reflects the true image of our inner self and one that reflects the most has much more to offer to others. Murky waters reflect only a distorted version.

The rising sun, the blooming flower, the chirping birds, the fluttering butterfly and the beaming infant are reflections of the Supreme Being. Their presence is a reflection of the Almighty's effervescent presence surrounding us in myriad forms. Let's spare a moment and reflect on His benevolence. Seek moments in every day life to reflect upon your blessings.

No man on this earth is perfect, no man is infallible. Find moments to reflect and mend fences with those you might have hurt through your words and deeds. An apology is a reflection of the repentant soul. It is said that,

In moments of quiet reflection our minds embrace the sea we have crossed.

Reflecting on one's past actions enriches one with experiences and a treasure trove of memories which, though cannot be passed on as tangible inheritance, but can definitely be shared as intangible legacy for generations to come. Such is the worth of 'Reflections'.

In our December issue, writers and poets from varied backgrounds and demographic index, have etched the reflections of their mind and soul into words, to bring to our readers a stimulating collection of stories, anecdotes and poems. We wish our readers,

Happy Reading! Happy Writing! Happy Musings!

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Mystical Reflections

*Through the windows of the vision,
A world perches itself on the eyelids
A vanity fair - farrago of facades
A masquerade of masked identities
Enticing me with its tawdry wares,
Material, emotional, and ephemeral
I succumb to the bait.*

*The heart, an imprudent imp
Hops from desire to desire
Bruised, broken, and bleeding
The obstinate fool refuses
To learn any lessons*

*The inward eye- a flight of fancy
Leads me gently into an idyllic land
A world pure and pristine
The utopian land of my dreams
Always in my thoughts, but still so far!*

*The mermaid soul
Dives deep into the divine ocean
Picking up pearls of spirituality
The acquiescent self, embraces the deluge
Yearning to merge with my Master.*



NARINDER JIT KAUR

is a retired Associate Professor of English, based in Patiala. Her published work includes *Dawn to Dusk*, and five books of translation from Punjabi into English.

Sacred Reflections

*Every day, the sun's rounded fullness
Gathers itself into a wrinkled, soft sheet
And segues into a steely lake,
Filigreed tree shadows
At the fringes
Tighten into an embroidered wrap,
Hiding a world of reflections below
That lies at the cusp of existence,
In all its infinitude,
Defying the matrix,
Full of possibilities*

*I step into it and melt into the water
It leaps up to meet me
This surreal lake world, in all its muddied glory
It is here, in these reflections
Where all day long
I hunt for small words
Really tiny ones*

*In crooks below, where hearts ache,
To write a poem so long
It would rise up and go around the lake,
Around the sky and around the earth
Like a perfect hug
And heal
Everything in its loving embrace*

*Then maybe, I will smile and
Lie at the bottom,
Below all the reflections,
Exhausted but warm,
And fall back into
A long dreamy sleep*



SHALINI RAWAT

is an editor and has critiqued books in English, Hindi and Punjabi.

MY MOTHER & THE CROW



My mother, every morning, sat at the kitchen window and had her cup of morning tea. Liquor tea, slightly sweet with a buttered toast. One day a crow came and sat on the window. She snipped off a bit and gave it to the crow, who gobbled it and flew away. A few days later the crow flew in at the same time and the action was repeated. Thereafter, every day for many years the ritual continued and the crow and my ma sat at the window in amicable silence munching away.

Sometime later she was unwell, woke up late every day, and the morning tea routine was discontinued. A raucous crow came every morning at the same time my ma had had her tea and created a commotion at the window. Shooing it did not help and it would stop after a while, fly away only to return the next morning again and caw away. A few days later, the cook on orders from my ma gave it a

slice of bread. The crow snatched the same but returned a short while later and dropped the uneaten morsel at the window sill. At the same time, everyday thereafter, the crow returned, cawed, was given a piece of bread and the same was dropped dutifully at our window.

Perplexed, the staff and my ma conferred and decided to toast the bread. It was declined yet again, many times. In a Eureka moment the toast was buttered and put on the window sill. It disappeared and wasn't returned. This continued everyday till the day my mother died. The crow went away and has not come back since.

I wonder if it was someone with a spiritual connect, maybe someone she owed food to, in her past life. Karma and its cycle, as our religion ordains. The sceptics will say it's a coincidence. But, I am not too sure!

It sure was a fussy crow!



VIBHA MITRA

is a freelance writer from Kolkata and her book is titled *Odds and Bends*. She can be reached at: www.vibhamitra.com

Surrender

*The reflection of a reflection
quenches its thirst by surrendering
to the Satiated,
it gazes back at the moon
in the dark quiet sky.*

*Beloved, I am nothing
but a reflection of your beauty
breathtakingly, beautiful sky
stretched across the easel
deft strokes of salmon and rust
to usher in the kohl eyed dusk
you depart, in the hazy horizon
leaving a little bit of you in me.*



MITU

lives in Pune. Her book, *Promise of Dawn*, is an eclectic oeuvre of seventy five poems.

Time To Reflect

In retrospect, when I think of the life gone by, was it as beautiful as I think of it now? The choices were few, needs fewer. But every moment was new, pulsating with hope and freshness.

Is it nostalgia that hits me again, knocking at the doors of memory? Or is it the absence of those present in my life once, as precious beings, which is making my heart fonder for the past? Or is it that I have wound up my professional life and domestic responsibilities that I have more time to reflect? I'm not sure.

Blurred though they are, circled by the cobwebs of remote memories, the days of childhood and youth crop up for my attention often these days.

Once again, I'm pushed into the Garden of Eden in that spacious government house of erstwhile years. Even the misty memories have been unable to erase the sight when foursome— me and my siblings, lazing in the bright winter sun, huddled together around a transistor, almost the size of a modern-day Kindle, listened intently to an audio movie.

Flowing hair, after an elaborate Sunday wash, we three sisters looked like giant octopus limbs. Our brother, the youngest sibling, usually did not join us in these feminine pursuits and played in the garden, catching butterflies and distracting our aural attention.

Ostensibly on a vacation, today, sitting in the scenic surroundings of Sausalito, San Francisco, surrounded by my dear ones, why is it that my mind yearns for that Garden of Eden again and again? Why do I feel lonely as a cloud despite so much laughter

and love surrounding me? Even the purest of air and picturesque beauty of the bay is no match to the quiet and peaceful surroundings of that half-groomed and half-wild garden of my memory?

Suddenly, the memory of four of us, my siblings and I, sitting around a large platter of food, eating together and listening to our eldest sister's dramatic retelling of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, popped up today while having lunch in a restaurant at the scenic Golden Gate?

I could not have absorbed *Macbeth* so well when I did my Masters in English Literature later. I was the privileged one during my college days as I had the knowledge of more than half of the syllabus which I had ingrained through the oral retelling of 'stories'. Every day, there was something new accompanying the sumptuous dinner, *Wuthering Heights*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *Anna Karenina* and many more.

Now, sitting with my grown-up twins with their respective partners and their children, cracking jokes and partaking in all the fun and frolic surrounding us, something, I feel, is still missing.

I'm the lone survivor. My parents and my siblings from that eternal Garden of Eden are gone, one by one. I, as if amputated to the core, keeping a brave face, am trying to negotiate happiness with the new family, my twin daughters, my son and their families.

Past remains sometimes as a sweet memory, sometimes as a pain for the departed and sometimes as deep nostalgia. But sometimes it mingles intangibly with the present...I reflect.



DR. SANGEETA HANDA

retired as Principal, Govt Mohindra College, Patiala. She is the author of 2 books and several articles in national and international journals.



What My Poetry Reflects

*A poet in his study,
A pen in his hand getting ready,
Ready to pen down his exuberant thoughts
Was steady to unravel his quenching knots.
A question, suddenly, struck his mind....
What does my poetry reflect to mankind?*

*Thinking hard and long about the same
Got an answer from his mind's frame.
My poetry reflects the reality of lives
A message of God from hundred miles
My poems connect man to nature divine
Astonishing him by the alluring design.*

*Overwhelmed with a sense of joy and satisfaction
He felt warmth, love, and feeling of affection...
My poems are mine, flourishing tenderness
That is sublime.
My poems, full of quest, are of a different kind
My poetry is eternal, reflects the essence of mankind...*



PRATHAM BIDLAN
is a student of Literature
and a music composer
in Ambala.

An Indomitable Spirit

During the auditions held in the college to spot the budding poets for the Youth Festival, I came across a young handsome boy, Chetan from a village around Sonapat in Haryana with a discernible gift for penning down and reciting poems, both in Hindi and Haryanvi.

When I asked him why he had not participated in the Talent Hunt contest held almost a month back in the college, he replied that he had joined the college only two days back and was still looking for an accommodation. My first impression of him on hearing this was that, probably, he belonged to the type of students who gave two hoots to their academics and came to college after admissions as per their own whims and fancies.

On further probing, he said that he had to be in his village so far to look after his sick father and also because he couldn't afford even the hostel fees. Now, he was on the look out for a rental accommodation on a sharing basis.

I asked what his paying capacity was. He said, it would depend on the job he gets as he had to fund all his expenses with his family being hard up and his elder brother fending for the family expenses somehow.

This made me feel ashamed of myself for having let even a passing thought about his assumed non-seriousness and frivolousness cross my mind. I asked him if given the circumstances he would be able to devote time for the event. At first, he hesitated and then taking a minute or two, agreed. I was reminded of the lines from Uday Bhanu Hans's poem "*Kavita peera ki santaan*" (Poetry is an offspring of pain.)

During the course of preparations for the event, I learnt more about his family. I was heartbroken to know that his mother had been diagnosed with a malignant brain tumour and was a serious patient, who needed utmost care with one side of her body having lost 50% of its mobility.

My voice choked and eyes welled up to hear this. Contrary to this the boy's face was calm and his expression poised. Like a warrior, he said that he and his brother would do everything possible in their means to restore her health.

Chetan went home twice in between and meanwhile kept preparing for the contest. Finally out of the topics announced for the contest, he chose to write an inspirational poem in Haryanvi.

One of the stanzas read like this-
"Kitna bitha liye bhagwaan
Uthan ki taakat sai bheetar,
Kar lai jitna dukhi karna sai
Jab tak saans diye chaalunga
Sun lai Hare nahi maanunga."

(You may try hard to make me fall, O Lord!
But I have in me, strength enough to rise again
Do whatever you can to trouble me
I would keep walking till I can breathe
I won't accept defeat!)

On the day of the competition, when Chetan received first prize, I actually found him far bigger than the contest and that platform. Everything appeared too small and unchallenging for an indomitable spirit like his and I earnestly prayed in my heart for his victory in the battle of life.

P.S- (Name of the student has been changed for privacy concerns.)



HARPREET BAWEJA

is an Associate Professor of
English at Govt. P. G. College,
Sec-1, Panchkula.

The Actor and The Academician

Rumination is the essence of life as it unfolds the mystery and novelty of old things in a subtle way. One such thought that preoccupied my faculty, aptly synchronizes with the Bard par excellence, Shakespeare:

All the world's a stage

What the Bard said 500 years ago is veritable in the most celebrated professions of the mankind— the actor and the academician. The classroom is a stage for the academician whereas the stage itself is a world for an actor.

Both stalwarts of their respective professions begin their arduous journey with a new challenge each day. The challenge is to face a class and audience, who are eagerly waiting to assess the credibility and forever expecting something different than the previous day.

The feeling is like appearing for a competitive examination and the constant effort to excel the past performance and to pass with flying

colours. Consequently, the audience and the class, eternally keep their mentors on their toes. The relentless pursuit of excellence and the zeal to give a flawless performance, forever, remains their companion. Despite being an ace in their respective fields, the constant quest is to explore the best pedagogy or method to win the hearts of its audience.

Apart from being thespians, both are involved in the meditative process of enriching the experience of people who are at the receiving end. Through their cerebral approach they simplify and translate the intricacies of the subject matter and offer them to their listeners. Afterwards, they add colours of emotions, understanding, instances and innumerable farfetched metaphors and similes to raise the level of comprehension.

Along with intellectual credibility, both have the ability and potential to be a non-entity. An immaculate art 'Negative Capability' which John Keats first expounded, yearned and then achieved in his works is duly exercised by both the altruists. The unbending spirit to contribute towards the upliftment of their audience, always restrains them from showcasing their personal upheavals. To overrule subjective emotion to achieve objectivity has been their chief preoccupation as the show must go on.

History has witnessed the twin flames' indispensable contribution in the sphere of society. Their roles cannot be confined to watertight compartments propounded by standard dictionaries. As a matter of fact,



they have surpassed their own conventional position by being an epitome of change. Being true exponents of adage “Change is the only constant” they create awareness, chisel mind and build faith among the people in society.

They take forward the legacy of wisdom, virtues and values much needed by the society, through their craft. As true social reformers, they employ their most lethal weapon— knowledge, attired in words to instill and evoke emotions and desired motivation. The fiery passion to inspire and aspire the young minds and being eternally relevant has been their dominant driving force.

The hallmark of their vocation and disposition lies in the fact that they are considered erudite. However, they are perennial learners. Non-verbal acknowledgement in the form of applause, appreciation and respect are the true remuneration they yearn for. At the end of the day aesthetic and intellectual satisfaction is their only survival instinct.

Indeed they have withstood the touchstone of time with sheer dint of perseverance and resolution. By the virtue of their quintessential role and selfless contributions they are in the high echelons of society.

The entire deliberation of their existence can be condensed in the lines of Robert Frost:

*And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.*



RUPINDER KAUR
is an academician

The Promise

“You will always look after your brothers and your Mom, Promise me” coaxed Amu’s Dad, holding his five-year old’s hand and pressing her small sobbing chest against his heart. Amu heard her father’s heart-beat and stopped crying. She was comforted with the familiar rhythm, so reassuring, so very protecting. She looked into her Dad’s eyes and saw her own reflection in those grayish brown eyes.

She did not understand that so many relatives, friends and neighbours had gathered to see her Dad off as he was leaving his family behind to work in an alien country. Mom seemed heart-broken, failing to hold the torrents of her tears back. Amu felt miserable watching her three year old brother howling and clinging to his Dad’s legs. The youngest one was just a new-born, entirely oblivious of all this hullabaloo and smiling blissfully, secured in Mom’s arms.

Amu was the first-born of her parents and her Dad’s darling. He was her superman and superhero who could conjure up anything on earth to cheer his princess. He could make little dots shine and twinkle at night, and would make them vanish in the morning as Amu was supposed to go to school riding her Dad’s bicycle.

Whenever Dad wanted her to do anything or needed her help or advice, she

was always there. She never broke her promise. She would never touch the wiggling tooth with her finger or tongue as he has taken a promise from her. In the morning she would gulp down the bitter neem concoction without whimpering as her Dad desired, though she would get a sweet treat after that.

Amu was now, the eldest one and she promised her Dad that she would look after her brothers and Mom always. She brought Mom spoon and bowl to feed her younger brothers. She also served her Mom glass full of water spilling as little as she could manage. She helped her manage home, tidying up her corner and sitting by her brothers' side. That night as Dad was leaving, the defeated fairies started shedding tears. Some fell on her Dad's face as well and when he bowed down to kiss her youngest brother's brows, she saw fairies' tears dropping from her Dad's cheeks, but they were plenty...

Soon they shifted with her grand-parents. After a month a letter was received from her Dad. Mom was happy but Amu did not know how to read a letter. Her Mom told her that he would come after two years. Amu did not know how long this time period was. She only knew that stars appeared in the sky only when Dad came home. Quite often she would upset her Mom or get scolded by others whenever she asked them how many starry nights would she have to wait for her Dad to come to her.

She learnt names of days and months in her school and also that she would have to wait umpteen number of starry and star-less nights to be reunited with her Dad.

Amu has been waiting for her Dad ever since though he would join her after every two years for a few days. Now she knows that it is her Dad's turn to wait for her... She has kept her promise for more than forty years by now...

She now understands what her Dad meant when she had once asked whether all the conquerors get the Crown and he replied 'No, sometimes the conqueror simply steps aside and lets others win and rejoice'. She still remembers and cherishes the hug from her Dad and his words 'YOU are my Crown Amu'...



ANJU JAGPAL

is Associate Professor
of English in Govt. P.G.
College, Ambala Cantt.

Metamorphosis

34 years of being a working lady...
not girl, not woman...LADY.
Teachers are Ladies in inverted
commas.

Summer 1987

Nervous but wearing a confident expression, white chikan kurta and red salwar with a red dupatta blowing in the wind, I cycled into the realms of Army Public School, Ferozpur Cantt. I clutched my black ladies' cycle for support with one hand and an application in the other hand.

On that balmy morning I walked into the principal's office. Dainty chiffon clad Mrs. Saroj Kapoor was the wife of a Brigadier. I handed her my application, introduced myself and said, "I want to work here as a teacher." I feared, she would hear my heart thumping belying my ability to conquer the world.

She smiled and said, "I will inform your dad". My father was an army officer and was recently posted at the Station Headquarters which was a privileged office to be in.

Had I made no impact? I had a professional degree and yet, she had just dismissed me.

I politely asked if I could look around the campus before leaving. I was very careful with the use of permissive "may" and did not use "can". The convent educated school impression. She complied smiling, probably realizing my need to impress.

I took in the hues and perfumes of the flowers neatly laid out in the flower beds by the *fauji malis*. I prayed for my thoughts to manifest into reality.

That afternoon, as I trudged down the road from APS to my home with my black, wheeled companion I hoped that I would traverse this turf for another year or two.



Next week, the Station Commander, who headed the panel of 6 highly amused officers, grilled me at the interview.

By evening I was a much-talked about name in the cantonment– the intellectually aware and bright daughter of Major Sehgal.

Since the day, after getting ready I ask myself only one question– Do I look intelligent?

As I reflect, I find my time in the school packed with memories that continue to bring smiles. I discovered the teacher, the organizer, the leader and the creator in me. Working was joy under the two principals there, for after Mrs. Saroj came in the dainty, Mrs. S. Devasar. She groomed me into a professional with very high standards and imbued culture, caliber and confidence. Great teachers are made by great mentors.

Looking back at the 34 years, I find myself musing– Does destiny play a role in our lives? My mother wanted me to be independent and to reach the top. I worked diligently for this aspiration and soon it became my dream, too as I moved on the chequered game of chess from, soldier to queen. That day, the journey had begun, never a trot always a gallop. Today I call myself a maverick!

Yes, I am good to go for many more. And then some more...

Metamorphosis!



SONIA VERMA

is an edupreneur of high repute with almost 34 years of teaching and administrative experience. She is the author of *Compendium of Speeches*.

I AM STILL DISCOVERING

On a daily basis like Alice in Wonderland, I am discovering new things about the dance form

Rama Vaidyanathan took Bharatanatyam to a new era of conscious thinking. She found her own meaning in Bharatanatyam and used the same to showcase her outlook on the mystical that permeates through each of us, Rama tells Rhyvers Beat Editor-in-Chief Affan Yesvi

Photos credit: Imtee Singh



It is said that each artiste has a philosophy. Each dancer has a philosophy of dance. What's your philosophy?

My philosophy of dance is to use dance as a medium to understand myself. To understand the purpose of my life. To understand this journey of life and use dance as a medium to establish a connection between myself and the supreme consciousness.

A gushing review on your dance performance some years ago was most engaging. After referring to you as a "blaze of energy", the reviewer said, "Rama has always been inclined to fireworks in her nritta..." What is this element of fireworks in your dance?

Fireworks means vivacity and an expression of joy, an expression of complete surrender. Fireworks is always attached to light. Therefore any kind of nritta or pure dance sequence has to shine with the brightness of the Bharatnatyam vocabulary. So I try to use my body to showcase the beauty of the Bharatnatyam vocabulary.

In an interview, you said that your personal mantra is this: "My dance is bigger than me." This is an intriguing sentence. Please explain.

Yes of course. Because Parmatma is bigger than the jivatma. The supreme consciousness is bigger than this one life. For me, art is that supreme consciousness. And the artist is that human life. This artist will die. But the art which I showcased through my body during my lifetime will always remain. It will always evolve. It will always roar like a continuous river, until it manifests itself in another body, and then in another body. So art is eternal, and artist is not. Therefore the art is always bigger than the artist.

It has been famously said about you, "Rama Vaidyanathan took Bharatanatyam to a new era of conscious thinking." How?

I feel that yes, as dancers we need to be mindful

of what we are doing, why we are doing, how we are doing, to whom we are doing, where are we dancing. It is not just a mechanical exposition of movements. It is a dance of the soul. And only then it becomes a dance of the body. Which is why I feel that dance is like a movement of conscious thinking.

We have read about your repertoire: She would derive unconventional pieces, pick phrases from different languages and texts, seek meaning in places that people tended to ignore... What started you off on this amazing quest?

I have always been very interested in literature, very interested in reading, very interested in deconstructing literature and finding the hidden meaning of what the poet has said. Also, finding my own interpretation sometimes, in the poet. That is what led me to pick up some very unconventional themes and unconventional poetry, and translate that into music. It is something that is extremely exciting for me.





Photos credit: Varun Khanna

“I hate being static. I always want to evolve with the dance... Dance is like a movement of conscious thinking... I try to use my body to showcase the beauty of the Bharatnatyam vocabulary... Dance evolves...It has to absorb the world around it. It has to be a living tradition”

You are regarded as “one of the most formidable creators in Bharatanatyam”. Please tell us of your journey that has earned you these words of acknowledgement and praise.

I actually started creating my own pieces very early in life. I was just about 18 or 19 years old. And I always felt that a true artiste has to take dance out of the classroom. Because when you learn English, you learn A to Z, you learn C-A-T CAT, B-A-T BAT, but then what after that? After that, you need to write poetry with the language you have learnt. Or maybe you need to write comprehensions. Or maybe you need to write haikus. Or maybe you need to write essays. Or maybe you need to write a film script, or whatever.

It is the language that you learn, and then you use it in a creative process. Similarly dance

is a language that I learnt, but that’s not enough. That’s what I learnt in the classroom. So how long am I going to repeat what I learnt in the classroom on to the stage? How long am I going to repeat the typical things that I learnt in the classroom? They are very beautiful and they are extremely essential to learn the vocabulary, to learn the grammar. But then you need to take dance above that. You need to go beyond the form. So that is what has triggered me. To go beyond the form. To go outside the classroom. Which has triggered me in all my creations.

About your dance form, a reviewer noted that you “decided to break free from the shackles of conventions and define your own art.” How did this happen, and in what ways have you defined your art?



Some people have said that classical dance is very traditional, bound by very strict rules. And we need to adhere to this technique extremely diligently. Yes, I agree. Technique is very important. Keeping the core principles of the dance form is also very very important. But dances evolve. It cannot remain like a static piece in a museum. It has to move. It has to thrive. It has to emanate with energy. It has to absorb the world around it. It has to be a living tradition. So that is how I consider I dance.

I like to add to it every time I create something, every time I perform. Whatever I add is not something that I actually created myself. I think it's always there. I just discovered it in my dialogue, in my relationship with my dance. On everyday basis, layer by layer, dance reveals itself to me. I think even till the day I die, I would not have realized and understood and imbibed everything that my dance form has to offer me. I am still discovering. I am still discovering on a daily basis like Alice in Wonderland, and every minute I am discovering new things about the dance form. So I hate being static. I always want to evolve with the dance.



It has been said about your repertoire: “Her compositions are among the foremost in sparking conversation on the meaning of life itself.” Please enlighten us on this.

Like I said before – meaning of life, yes, that is very important for me. I think a spiritual and philosophical perspective to everything that we do is important. It doesn't have to always be connected to religion. The religiosity of the dance form definitely is there, because you know it began in the temples. The basic stories are of mythology and Hindu traditions and Hindu Gods and Goddesses and enumerating their form and also the stories evolving around them – yes. But as I said, it is important to also use dance as a secular medium of communication. And for that you don't really need to be attached to any particular religion. I like to explore that a great deal in my dance.

From Human Being to Being Human

We are citizens of Mother Earth, and we have been on this beautiful planet the most recent– 0.002% of its time. We comprise a very small share of life on earth- 0.01%; plants and bacteria account for a whopping 95%. Mother Earth is loving– nurturing and protecting its diverse inhabitants from times immemorial and like a mother, nourishes and rears all species without discrimination.

Anthropocene is the present period in earth's history, when human activities have had a very strong impact on its environment. Given a highly developed cognitive ability, it is not surprising that our species, though occupying a miniscule proportion of life on earth, have not only dominated but manipulated and exploited its resources for our benefit, with little heed to its consequences.

The effects of mindless urbanisation and mobile radiation are becoming known to us, gradually. We all miss the childhood memories of the familiar house sparrows or butterflies over our verandas and balconies.

In her book, *The Sixth Extinction*, Dr Elizabeth Kolbert talks about the investigation into declining population of amphibians, world over. A study of frog skin samples in a zoo traced the culprit to a fungus– chytrid. Further enquiry into the source of the fungus, which was not endemic in the areas where frogs were declining, showed that the fungus was introduced via intercontinental travel (import-export) that may have been accidental or via frogs being imported for consumption or testing.





The story is remarkable as it brings forth a very important fact– we may be the cause of devastating effects on other species, unknowingly and unaware– in the name of progress. Scientists also warn us of ‘background extinction’.

Every year, hundreds of new chemical products are introduced in the market which make their way into our personal care products such as sunscreens and shampoos. Many top brands are withdrawing their products as they have been associated with serious health hazards. Chlorofluoro carbons (CFC) used as propellants in aerosols such as deodorants have caused depletion of ozone layer.

The widespread use of DDT, famous as “mosquito killer”, lead to its entry into the food chain and caused thinning of eggshells of birds like bald eagles and near extinction of pelicans. The irony is that DDT, now a banned chemical, is still being used for fumigation in many parts of India. Long-term effects of the chemicals disposed by factories

on the delicately balanced ecosystems can only be imagined! Contamination of groundwater with pesticides and weedicides is supposed to cause cancer.

The lessons from COVID pandemic have been a wake-up call to all of us. When we face a global adversary, we need to rise above our selfish thoughts and contribute towards the greater good, in any way possible. As we continue to disrespect the natural order of things, we realize that we are headed in the wrong direction and remedial action needs to be taken.

We have inherited precious resources from Mother Earth and it is our duty to live in harmony with its occupants and protect them as well. In *The Lion King*, Mufasa says “We are all connected in the Great Circle of Life”. We are legal guardians of the earth and we need to co-exist, not collide with it! Let us reflect on the message given to us by our sacred scriptures– *vasudhaiva kutumbakam* (the world is one family).



SURUCHI ADITYA

is a senior lecturer in a Dental College in Chandigarh and the co-author of the book *Install Antivirus on your Heartware*.



Homecoming

The crimson streaks of the evening sky submerge into the ever deepening shades of grey, inviting the crazy humanity to go berserk. For, it is time to celebrate Diwali!

The lights are switched on and lo the houses get distorted outlines—curves and shapes by cables of LED lights in all hues and twinkling modes. Some ledges and parapets get adorned by the humble oil filled clay lamps. Within an hour the atmosphere is charged with whistling noises, loud bangs and ear-splitting ‘banshee’ cries from a wide variety of fire crackers.

Above all these sounds, one can hear the laughter and shouts of inflated egos. All belie the true state of happiness. The only chanting one can hear is, “let’s have more!” Humans become oblivious to the suffering caused to creatures and creations of the Lord as well as to the Lord Himself.

This crazy form of celebration prods

my memory to recall my meeting with Maajhi Mondal in my childhood. As a ten year old, I was all agog with excitement. My father had promised to shop for the fire crackers from the most famous store. Having finished shopping we pushed our way through the jostling crowd.

“Are you happy?” father asked, looking down at my flushed face.

“Yes”

“But Dad, we forgot to buy those *Tigris* wheels!” I wailed.

“Can we go again and shop?”

“I don’t think so. It is time consuming to push through the crowd.”

I glanced over my shoulders, the doorway was choked with people. My father was right, I thought to myself but I would miss those wheels.

“Hey! Bachha (child) why are you so crest fallen? I have something that will interest you.”

The man, who called, was sitting on his haunches across the road, a mere five feet away from where we stood. The man, Maajhi Mondal, clad in a dhoti, a red checkered towel over his thin shoulders, stretched out his hand in a welcoming gesture. His wares were laid out in small heaps over a soiled sheet spread on the ground. While my gaze travelled all over the piles of crackers I heard my father say, “How can you expect to earn by sitting opposite this most famous retail shop?”

He held out the *Tigris* wheels to me and smiled, then turning to my father he said, “There is no competition what so ever! God gives me my share, that shop keeper gets his. See, how you overlooked buying those crackers and now you are doing business with me!”

I could not comprehend then. With passing years, the recollection of his words, his happy and content countenance made its indelible mark. On Diwali I light only one oil filled earthen lamp in the Puja room and two each at front and back of the house, as he must have been doing to celebrate Lord Rama’s home coming.



DALJIT KAUR
is a writer and an
artist

The Insight

Sprawling lawns of unending green culminating into a wildflower meadow, where blossoms of all hues danced to the tune of the soft breeze under the bright sun, was all an embodiment of a serene and pious soul.

500 acres of a picturesque ground that filled me with wonder and intrigue, the peace that enthralled my senses, the sunlight, the breeze, the soft grass and the quiet that held subtle notes of memories and emotions was something I never knew existed in my heart. The aura that the healing quiet delivered made me reflect upon the simplest moments of my life and how I had never before realised that they were the most beautiful of my treasures.

The rugged oaks and the towering redwoods that touched the beautiful sunny sky, standing so strong against hundreds of years of gusty winds, storms and snow were once young saplings just like myself. It was as if they were showing me the wonders I am capable of, and how much I have, yet, to see in life. The storms, the healing sunny days— all beautiful in their own way.

Towards the end of the day that passed too soon, and after the strength of my lungs couldn't keep up with that of my heart, I decided to call it a day. Then caught my eye, a charming couple that could be an embodiment of true love. An old man who had brought his wife on a wheelchair to feed the birds. It was probably not food, but their radiating contentment and happiness that attracted the fauna, making this, their simple and happy moment. Ends don't always have to be lonely and sad.

I wonder how many souls this Abbey has reborn and how many lives it has revised. Words fall short as I reflect upon the place that made me reflect upon myself.



SIMRITA TOOR

is a student of
English Honours

Reflections on the lives we lead

Kapil Sibal, is a noted politician who frequently posts his couplets on social media. His previous books covered subjects such as the girl child, deprivation, religion, politics and social movements. *Reflections*, his third book of poetry, is in a sense more personal, includes recurrent themes like justice and love. There are vignettes of current political scenario and the fear that it induces in people, which is something one would expect of a politician turned poet.

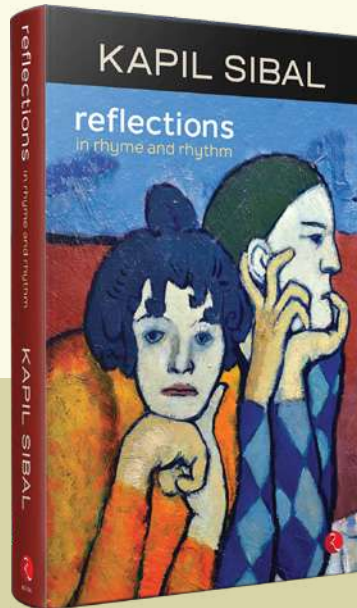
The book reflects Sibal's belief that we come into this world for a short time and therefore it is only a stop to reflect upon all things happening around us.

"We are here for a short time. In this short journey, what are you going to take with you? Nothing. You were born naked and you'll die the same way. That is what's going to happen... Poets have the ability to see reality as it is. Religion is about supposition. Philosophy is about the proposition. Poetry is about the way we are. A poet sees something from near and also from afar," Sibal writes.

The romantic, e. e. cummings, is Sibal's confessed favourite among poets but, on the other hand, he also enjoys reading T.S. Eliot, especially 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', which he considers unique.

However if anyone thinks that he favours American poets, he is also a fan of Alfred Lord Tennyson and William Wordsworth, while Vikram Seth is the Indian poet whose writings Sibal finds to be the most compelling.

With this wide choice of poetic influence, for



Title: **REFLECTIONS**
 Author: **KAPIL SIBAL**
 Publishing House: **ALEPH**
 Price: **INR 395**

the most part Sibal's poetry is rhymed and keeps to conservative verse patterns. Rhymed poetry has fallen out of favour despite Vikram Seth's *Beastly Tales*, so it is gratifying to find Sibal trying his hand at rhyme and keeping scansion perfect. Little wonder that Keki Daruwalla wrote a blurb for the book.

For Sibal, the vein of poetry runs deep and he feels that it is something that everyone can write since it expresses emotions that are basic and vital. He believes,

"Every person has a poet in him or her. You don't often recognise it, but it is very much there. Poetry comprises a

multitude of emotions, and we humans are sentient beings. Now, how you translate those emotions into words is a process that requires some effort."

Verse also allows him the freedom to be satiric and romantic by turn.

Sibal is of the opinion that poetry has a certain beauty that genuinely transcends everything else and while it might be unfair to those who feel prose has its own poetry, Kapil Sibal is certain that people lose out as a result of constantly reading prose since he finds prose far less expressive in its not so free structure.



ANJANA BASU

has published 10 novels and 2 books of poetry: *The Chess Players* and *Other Poems and Picture Poems*.

Rhyvers Media Group honoured for contribution to Literature

Rhyvers Media Group is proud to be associated with 2nd edition of Ambala Literary Conclave-as Media Partners.



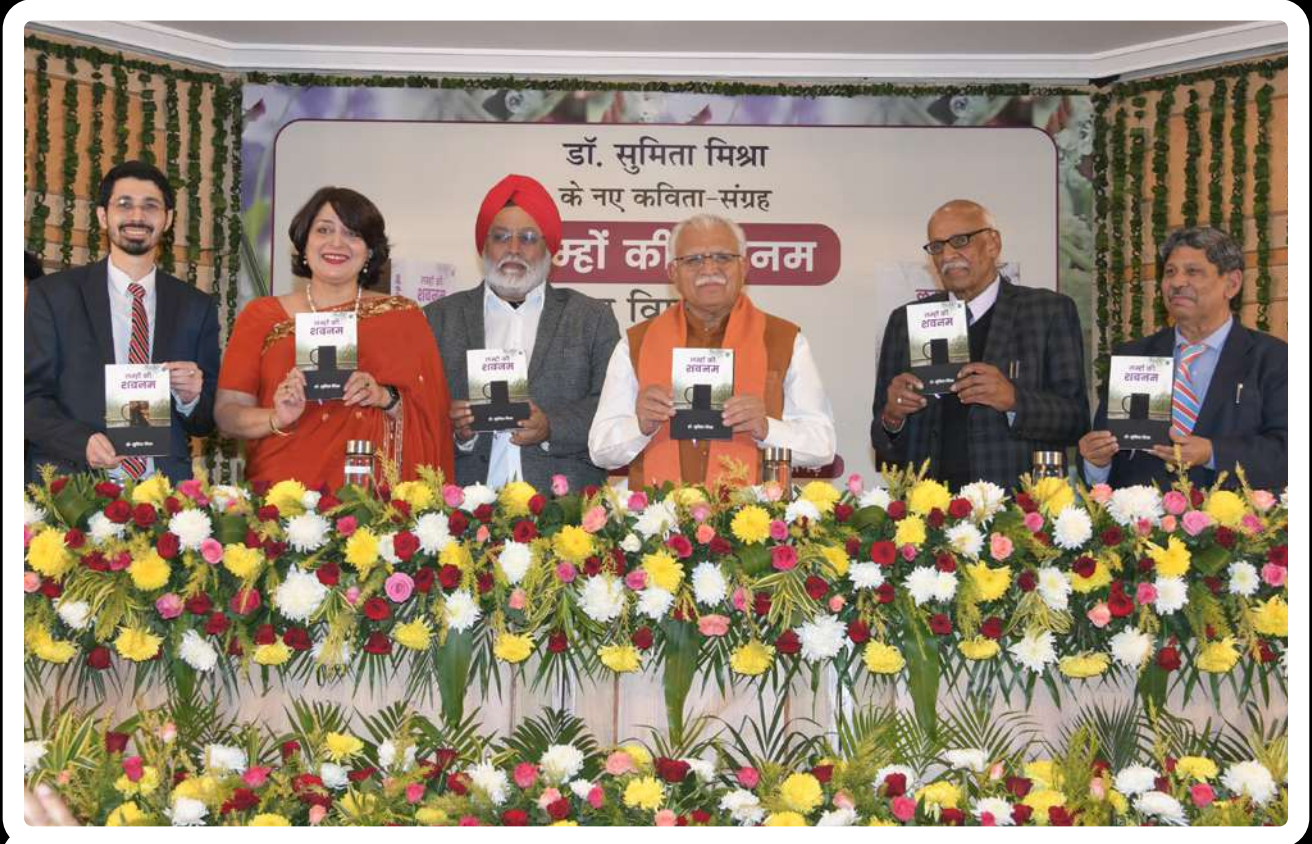
It is a matter of immense pleasure and pride for Rhyvers Media Group to be associated with Ambala Literary Conclave-2 held on 30 October 2022, sponsored by Haryana Sahitya Akademi, Panchkula. The event was organized by Prof. Vir Sen Vinay Malhotra Trust (VVM Trust) at the Phoenix Club, Ambala Cantt. and was inaugurated by Sh. Anil Vij, Home Minister and Minister of Health Services & Medical Education, Haryana.

President of the Trust, Dr. Vinay Malhotra along with other office bearers felicitated authors from Ambala including the Executive Editor of Rhyvers Beat, Dr. Sonika Sethi for her collection of short stories, Easter Lilies and Other Stories published in 2021. Rhyvers Media Group was also honoured on the occasion for its contribution in the field of literature.



लम्हों की शबनम

By **Dr Sumita Misra, IAS**



Dr Sumita Misra's book **Lamhon Ki Shabnam** launched by Hon'ble Chief Minister Haryana Shri Manohar Lal in presence of Dr. Chandra Trikha, Director Haryana Sahitya Academy, Madhav Kaushik Chairman Chandigarh Sahitya Academy and Affan Yesvi, Director Rhyvers Press.

The event was held at Haryana Nivas, Chandigarh and was attended by a large number of literary enthusiasts.



Shri Manohar Lal



Madhav Kaushik



Dr. Chandra Trikha



Dr Sumita Misra



Affan Yesvi

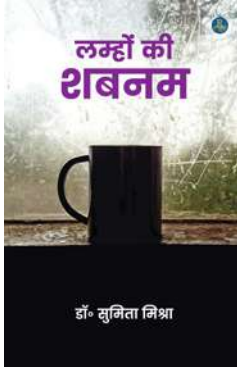


Sumita Misra's book Lamhon ki Shabnam is a Bestseller

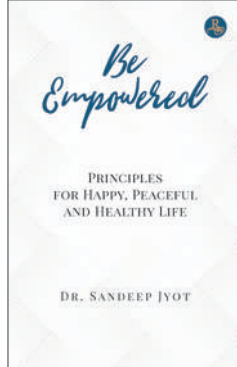


Dr Sumita Misra's latest collection of Hindustani poetry, Lamhon ki Shabnam has been listed as a bestseller with the Number one spot in Hot New Releases and it has ranked among the top 5 in the list of best sellers books under poetry genre in Amazon

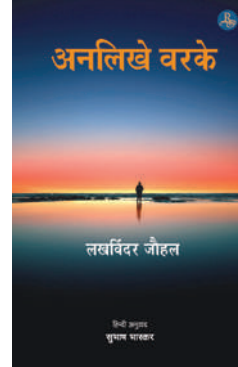
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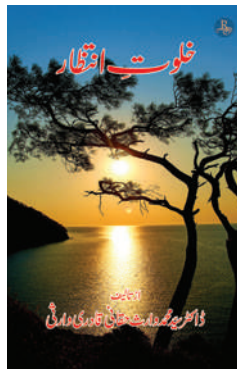
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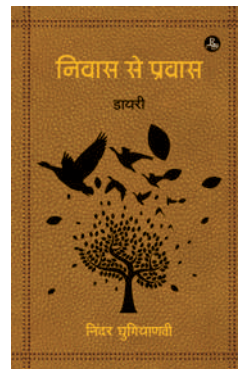
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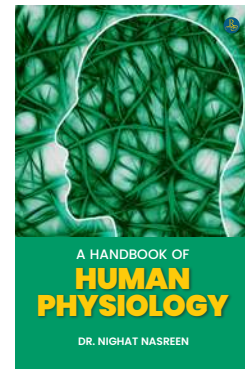
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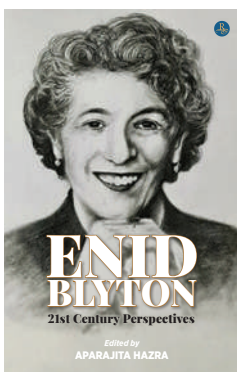
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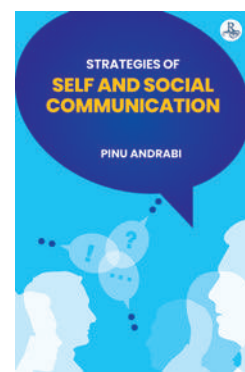
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