

READING CORNER

HISTORY | LITERATURE | ART | CULTURE | HERITAGE | BIOGRAPHY | TRAVEL | WILDLIFE | RELIGION | SELF-HELP | FICTION | TRANSLATION | CINEMA | FOOD

Winter in Literature

Wishing all our readers
a Happy Diwali!

In the physical landscape the seasons vary in their textures, if not their very existence, depending on geographical locations. So, the Global North does not experience the mellifluous music of the monsoon rains, as the Global South, the tropics and the equatorial regions, do not experience the sunless days and weeks of the winter season, specifically in the temperate regions and the Arctic. Poets and creative artists, however, internalise seasons according to their varying temperaments—meditative, mercurial, assertive or philosophic. Shakespeare in his play *Richard III* refers to the release from the 'winter of our discontent' with the advent of the 'glorious sun' shining. Also, in a poem often attributed to Shakespeare, he is known to have observed, 'Youth like summer morn, age like winter weather; Youth like summer brave, age like winter bare.'

In his sonnet, *The Human Seasons*, Keats describes how the seasonal changes affect the mind and body as 'four seasons fill the measure of the year; There are four seasons in the mind of man'. After 'lusty Spring', the zest of summer and the mellowness of autumn, winter overtakes the human being inexorably, its 'pale misfeature' needs to be accepted in a mood of surrender and resignation. Winter in western literature has more often been represented as a season of bleak, eerie snowscape where the woods are lovely, dark and deep. It creates an image of a sun-less winter signifying an enveloping darkness and stillness, but poets like Robert Frost (*notice the surname*), resolve to carry on the word-play and not hibernate, as promises must be kept.

The romantic-rebel poet P.B. Shelley in his characteristic resonant style challenges with the rhetorical query, 'If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?' However, perhaps the most soulful and charming personification of winter has been scripted by Lewis Carroll, as he writes in *Through the Looking-Glass*, 'I wonder if the snow loves the trees and fields, that it kisses them so gently? And then it covers them up snug, you know, with a white quilt; and perhaps it says, "Go to sleep, darlings, till the summer comes again."' In these lines the landscape and soulscape, Nature and human nature, seem to merge and mingle in anticipation of the rejuvenating magic touch of spring.

Also, Walt Whitman's description of the chugging locomotive in winter; Winter Pollen pieces by Ted Hughes and, of course, the vivid description of winter in Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*, have become iconic in their classic symbolism of how

One can feel the chill of winter in the height of summer, the vibrancy of spring can be perceived in the middle of languishing autumn, the exuberant nostalgia of rain-washed monsoon can be sensed in sizzling summer or even all four seasonal changes can be experienced on the same day as human moods often swing faster than an oscillating pendulum!

nature aligns itself with human nature, how the cold clasp of winter portends depression, death and destruction at multiple levels. The poet Ogden Nash, however, sees fun and frolic in the frost and sleet, as we find in his poem, *A Winter Morning*:

*Winter is the king of showmen,
Turning tree stumps into snow men,
And houses into birthday cakes,
And spreading sugar over lakes.*

*Smooth and clean and frosty white,
The world looks good enough to bite.
That's the season to be young
Catching snowflakes on your tongue.*

*Snow is snowy when it's snowing
I'm sorry it's slushy when it's going.*

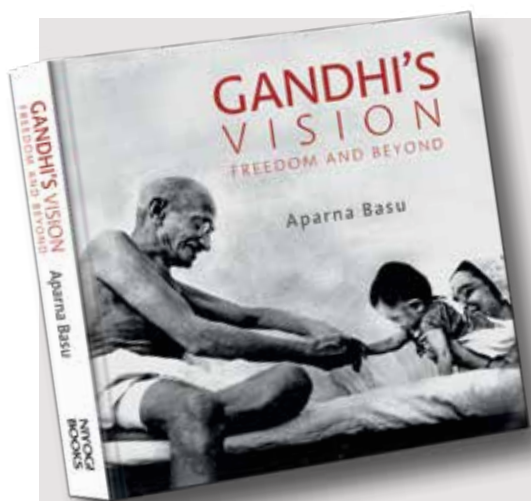
Among the poets of South Asia, Rabindranath Tagore, 'the rooted cosmopolitan' poet of all times, projects a complex and ambivalent representation of winter in his many poems where winter can herald the fear that the freezing cold winds will lead to the flowers fading and dying and leaves dropping off the dry branches. The bare trees look like skeletal forms, shorn off the glorious green, they seem to have been transfigured as ghostly sentinels in a wasteland, awaiting resurrection. Tagore's several songs about the arrival of winter after the tropical autumn (*Sarat* and *Hemanta*) are more a caveat about the derelict condition of the trees in the woods and forests, as the

branches of the trees are compelled to dance to the rhythm of the winter winds as the helpless leaves tremble, shiver and fall. But then all is not bleak and snowed under, for sportive winter denudes only to ensure rejuvenation and the poet, too, feels it is time to surrender to total destitution leading to the glorious re-awakening. In the poems, *The Dancing Rhythm of the Winter Wind* (*Shiter hawoay laglo nachon*) and 'In fear of the arrival of cruel winter the sheuli flowers in the woods, turn pale with the terror' (*Shiter boney kon shei kothin asbe bole sheuli guli bhoy molin*), Tagore imagines the fear of freezing winter conditions rather than the cheer with which the winter season is usually welcomed in the tropical plains.

It is interesting how the acclaimed Bengali writer and poet Nabaneeta Dev Sen transforms the withering, wasting notions of winter in her novella *Sheet Sahasik Hemantolok*, translated as *Defying Winter*. The novella tracks the journey of five women in an old age home named 'Twilight Shelter'. It is truly outstanding how the women resist the onset of failing health and the evaporation of the sparkle of youthful springtime from their bodies and rediscover themselves through a sense of communitarian kinship, a sisterhood that bonds and binds them in the season of mist leading to the chill of winter. After all, the human seasons are incorrigibly chaotic! However, an intriguing reflection seems to trouble the mind: whether the negative image, symbolism and metaphor about the experience of winter, both in the natural environment and the human body, used in western literature, can be adjusted to ethnic self-fashioning and appropriation? For, winter in the tropics, specifically South Asia, is when merry tourists are everywhere, weddings and wedding anniversaries happen almost every day and, most important for those of us whose passion is to play with words, we await the annual arrival of winter with impatience. It is during winter that literary festivals happen, feasts, fiesta and cultural events make the short and sweet winter in the tropics so deliriously desirable. We must not just raise the glass but also raise the question that underpins hope and happiness, 'If winter comes, can literary festivals be far behind?'

Dr. Sanjukta Dasgupta

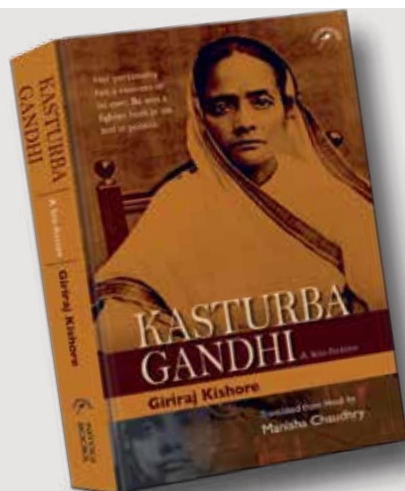
Former Professor and Head, Department of English, Calcutta University, she is also a poet, critic and translator in English.



Dr. Aparna Basu
Chairperson of the National Gandhi Museum, Raj Ghat, New Delhi, she is on the Advisory Board of the *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*.

This book chronicles the principal events leading to India's independence under Gandhi's leadership and his vision of a free India. It **commemorates 71 years of Indian independence** and is replete with portraits of the Mahatma in action—invoking the spirit of patriotism, uniting people from all religions, regions and social groups across the country.

This book, embodying the above vision, is brought out as a part of Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary celebrations.



A fictionalised biography of Kasturba Gandhi, **A lady as strong and great as Mahatma Gandhi**. She earned a place in history because of her personal sacrifices and strength of conviction in what was right. She was also the first Indian woman who voluntarily faced a jail sentence in a foreign soil—in South Africa—in her fight for the basic rights for Indian women.

Giriraj Kishore

He has been Convener of the Hindi Committee of Sahitya Akademi, Delhi, a Fellow of the Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, and Emeritus Fellow of the Ministry of Culture.

**Manisha Chaudhry**

She heads Manan Books, a publishing house and is a leading bilingual editor, writer and translator.

Reflections on Mahatma & Ba

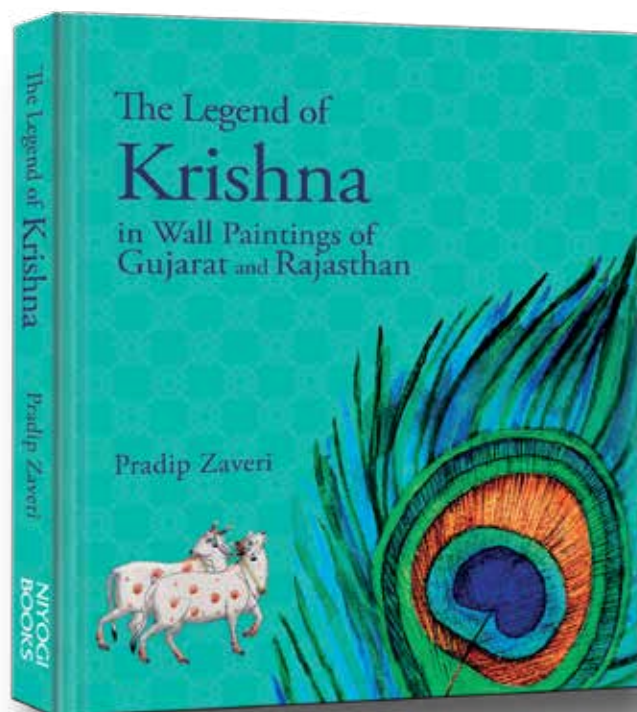
A young, idealistic lawyer was insulted during a train journey from Durban to Pretoria in South Africa and history was written. That was his moment of truth and it awakened in him a feeling of self-worth and the desire to fight for his dignity. The lawyer was none other than Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi who returned to India in 1915 after a short stay in England and went on to lead India's nationalist movement against British rule in the country. He nurtured the vision of a free India; his techniques were indeed novel and rightfully earned him the sobriquet of Father of the Nation. Gandhi's ideas left a deep impact on the world and are relevant even today.

Kasturba Gandhi was illiterate and a teenager when she married Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. Even though she had to live through many tough years of separation, she became a huge support for her husband's causes. She was the first person on whom Gandhi experimented his ideologies of life. Her sacrifices are legendary. Like her husband, she too strongly believed that truth and non-violence should be one's motto in life.

This year calls for double celebration: We not only commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of M.K. Gandhi, but also celebrate Ba's 150th birth anniversary.

Trisha De Niyogi

2 Winter Releases

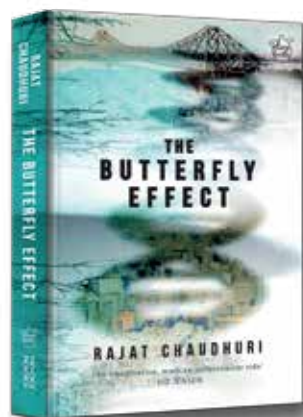


A comprehensive documentation of the Krishna theme in an art form that is now on the verge of extinction, this book **explores the Krishna myth in its historical and cultural context**. It includes paintings that illustrate the deeds of Vishnu and his other avatars.



Pradip Zaveri

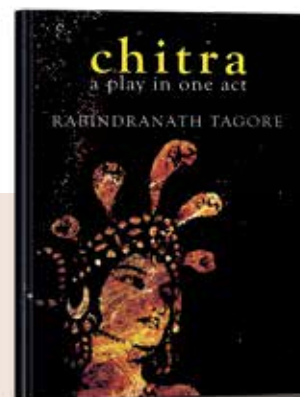
He has painstakingly collected images from temples, palaces, havelis, mansions, schools and houses during his extensive travels in Gujarat and Rajasthan. The Bhopal-based Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya appreciated his work and sponsored many of his exhibitions and workshops.



From the utopian communities of Asia to the prison camps of Pyongyang and from the gene labs of Europe to the violent streets of Darkland—this **time-travelling novel crosses continents, weaving mystery, adventure and romance**, gradually fixing its gaze on the sway of the unpredictable over our lives.

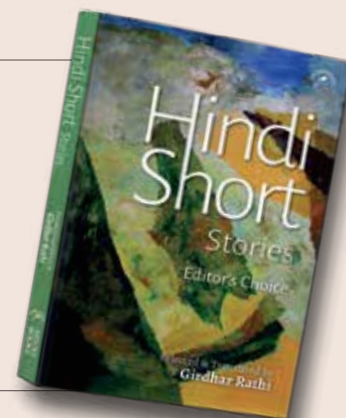
Rajat Chaudhuri

A former Fellow of the Sangam House International Writers' Residency, he has published several short stories.



A **one-act play written by Rabindranath Tagore**, which is partly adapted from the *Mahabharata* and focusses on the character of Chitrangada, a female warrior who tries to attract the attention of Arjuna.

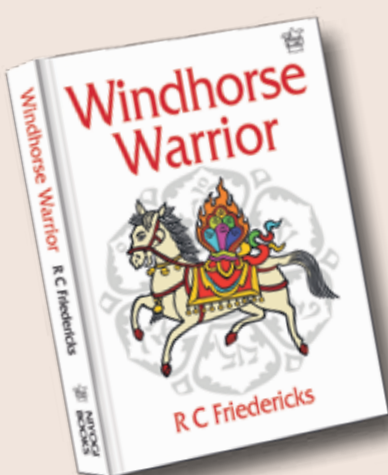
Presented here are **17 short stories, based on the period between 1960 and 1970—a highly eventful decade in the history of independent India**. Translated from Hindi into English, these stories are the outcome of the era of the new story in Hindi literature. They represent the desolation of the educated Indian at a time when society was going through changes on a global scale.



This book illustrates **Sita's journey to learn about the condition of women in 21st century India**. She relates her own experiences to those of women today, creating a contrast between the past and the present.

Charu WaliKhanna

Former member of the National Commission for Women, she is a leading human rights lawyer who currently practices in the Supreme Court of India.



A **look at the aspirations of the Tibetan people during the 1950s**, it is a tale that weaves together the politics of occupation and resistance, a romance between a Chinese communist and an educated Tibetan woman, and the soaring vision of the Tibetan spiritual heart.

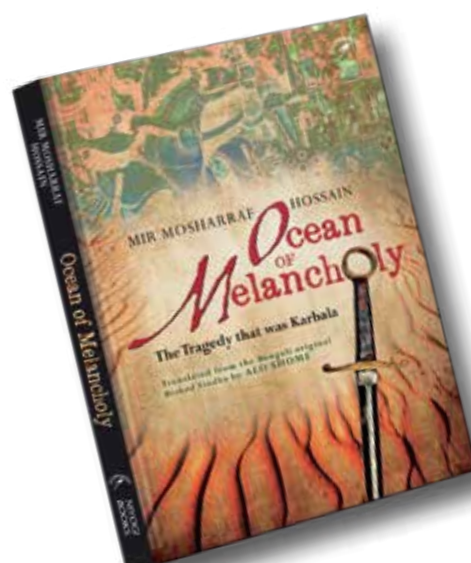
R.C. Friedericks

He has a lifelong interest in the plight of the Tibetan people ever since the early 1960s, when they came for treatment at the hospital founded by his father, an American doctor, in Nepal.



Cold nights, hot tea and a world of words

A **historical novel centred around events that led to the battle of Karbala in Iraq and its aftermath**. The plot is dramatic and deeds of heroism and supernatural occurrences render an epic flavour to its narrative. The storyline explores the sufferings and agonies of human life and the covetousness and hatred of men.



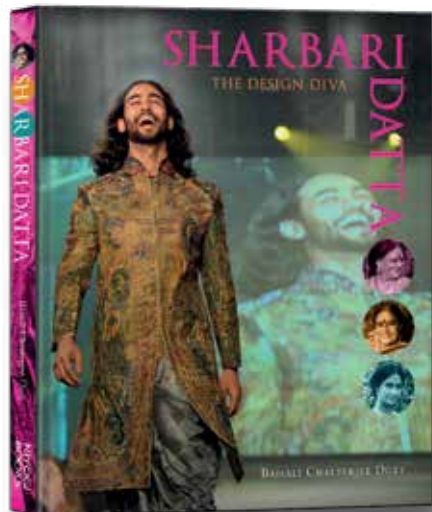
Mir Mosharraf Hossain
Deeply interested in Arabic, Persian, and Bengali literature, he has contributed his writings to various journals, mainly *Sangbad Hitokar* and *Gram Barta Prakashika*.



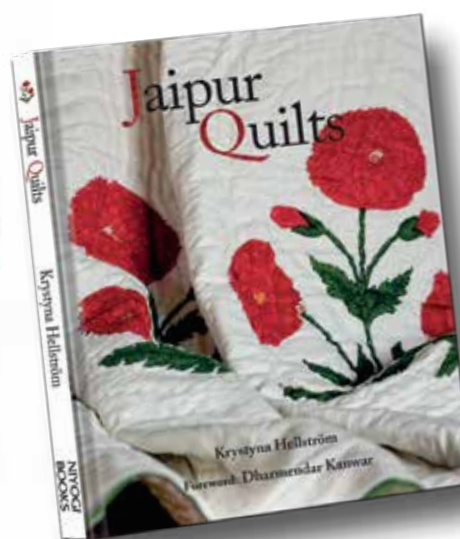
Alo Shome
A freelance writer and poet, she is best known for her selected and translated collection of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's essays and her translation of Bankim's study of Sri Krishna's personality.



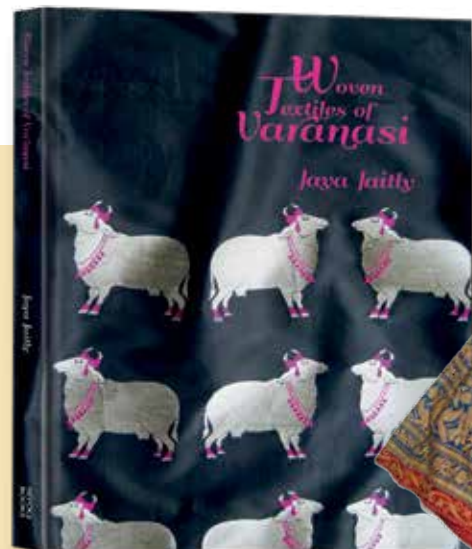
3 Lifestyle



Sourav Ganguly, ex-captain of the Indian cricket team, adorns a Sharbarati Datta creation and looks stylish and ready for any festive occasion, of which there are plenty in the winter months. He models a white silk *angrakha* whose embroidery has been inspired by the Madhubani style of painting and (below) a black *angrakha* with *zari* work.



Every winter, as the mercury plummets to a new low in northern India, the demand for Rajasthani quilts rises. These quilts also serve as **stylish pieces of traditional handicraft and art**, as is evident from the beautiful quilted robe worn by this young girl, which is featured in *Jaipur Quilts*. The Jaipur textile industry has inspired artists and designers to create products of beauty and utility. Timeless garments come in a variety of designs, extensively using the traditional Indian colour palette and motifs.



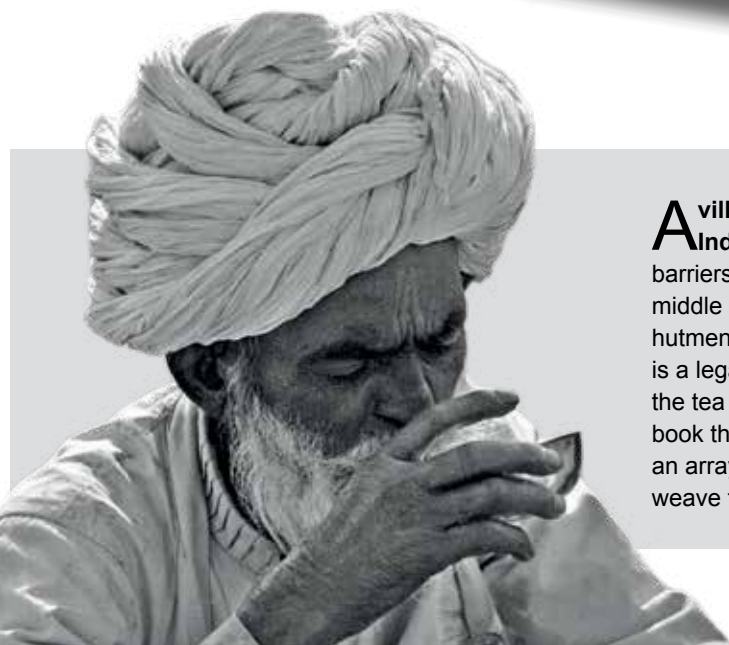
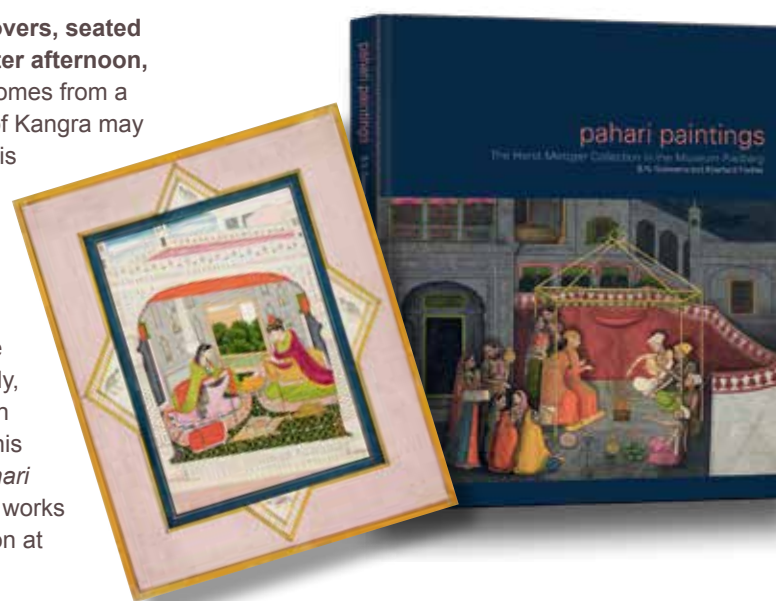
A blue *lehnga* from the late 18th century stitched from specially constructed woven panels with 'jungle' motifs combining a variety of animals and birds is part of the textile treasures offered by Varanasi. The city is known for its exquisite weaves, emerging out of age-old traditions and techniques. The rich colours blend in beautifully and are the creations of the master craftsmen of the oldest living city in the world who weave life into fabrics. This *lehnga* is among many that appear in *Woven Textiles of Varanasi*. These combine the past and present, linking them to different moments in the city's history.

Maheshwari saris and dupattas, silk and cotton, designed by Meera Mehta, show how the rich and diverse textile craft traditions of India have been adopted/adapted in the 21st century. Traditional techniques and motifs, presented in *Unfolding: Contemporary Indian Textiles*, are reworked to create a fresh new visual language that is still identifiably Indian.

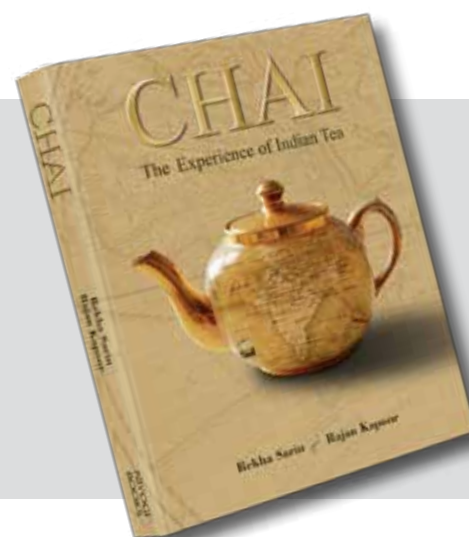
The abundant joys of living in India during winter



An idyllic image of two lovers, seated playing chess on a winter afternoon, wrapped in warm shawls, comes from a *Baramasa* series that Sajnu of Kangra may possibly have painted. There is a great deal of decorative detail, almost an excess of it. But the figures of the lovers are rendered with feeling. The work is strongly reminiscent of the hand of the painters of the Nainsukh family, largely because—as has been speculated—Sajnu received his training in that workshop. *Pahari Paintings* features 60 chosen works from Horst Metzger's collection at the Museum Rietberg.



Avillager in Rajasthan sips tea as he takes a break from the beating sun. In India, tea is a way of life. It permeates every strata of society and transcends all barriers of economic disparity—from the gleaming kitchens of the super-rich and upper-middle class to the humble kitchen of the lower-middle class. It is drunk in the sparse hutment of the labourer as well as in a slick, corporate boardroom. This tea drinking habit is a legacy that has been left behind by the British colonisers who were the architects of the tea industry in India. This picture is featured in *Chai: The Experience of Indian Tea*, a book that brings alive the entire panoramic view of the ever-special Indian teas through an array of brilliant photographs and meticulously researched text that together spin and weave the tea story.

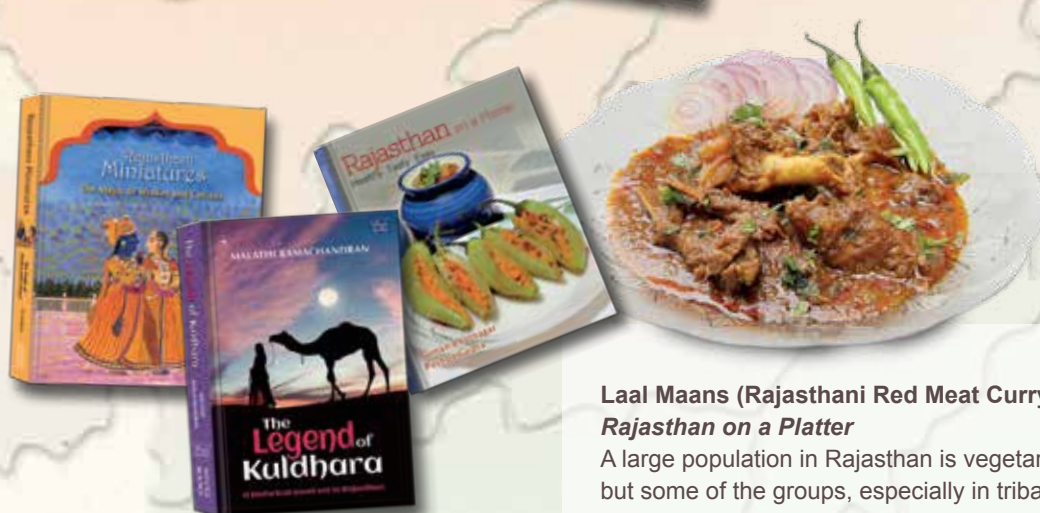


The India Experience

Books from across the country that represent the different states and give you a flavour of India and its rich diversity. These books, both fiction and non-fiction, are imaginative and inspiring and make for interesting reading.



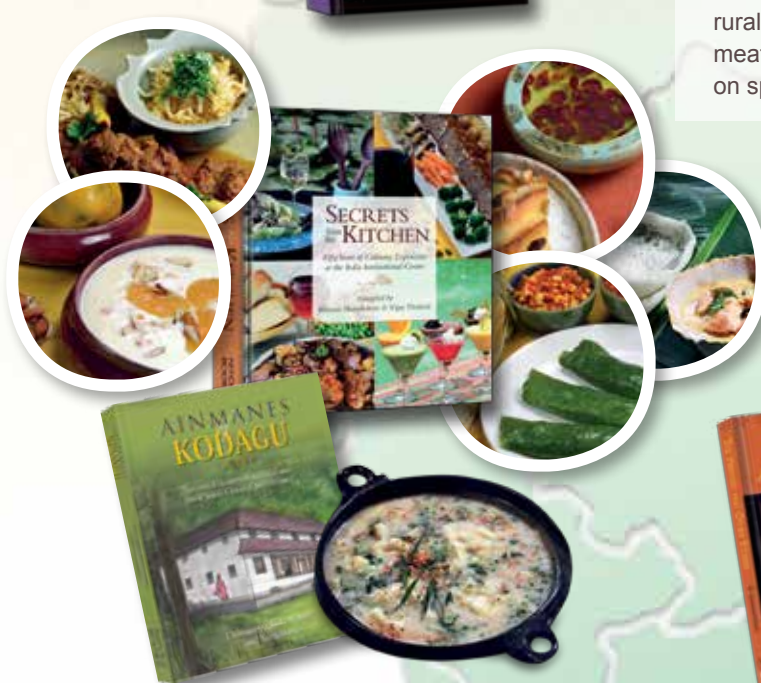
Murg Zafrani (Saffron Chicken): Flavours of Avadh
This dish is traditionally cooked in dum style. The pot is sealed with dough, a layer of hot coals is arranged on the lid and the pot is set over ashy coals, typically of tamarind wood commonly used in Lucknow. Sealing the pot with aluminium foil and baking it in a slow oven also works well.



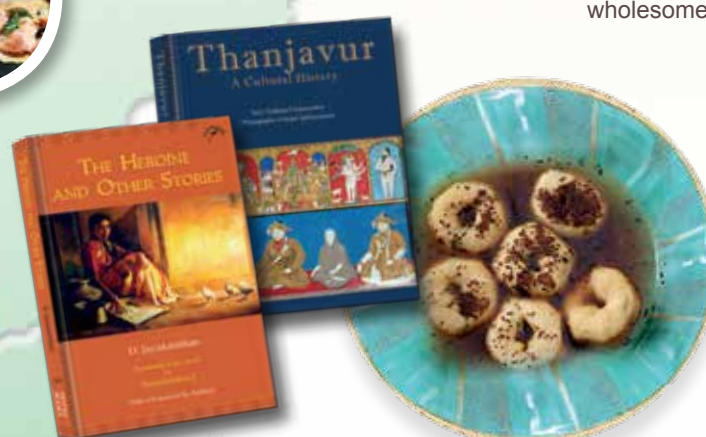
Laal Maans (Rajasthani Red Meat Curry): Rajasthan on a Platter
A large population in Rajasthan is vegetarian but some of the groups, especially in tribal and rural areas, enjoy non-vegetarian food such as meat, chicken, eggs and fish. They have these on special occasions.



Qubooli (Bengal Gram Pulao): Pull of Pulses
An all-time favourite, this dish is exotic, colourful and wholesome. It is a great meal for vegetarians.



Baimale Curry (Tender Bamboo Shoot Curry): Secrets from the Kitchen
Tender bamboo is available in Kodagu at the beginning of the monsoon. It is cut into thin slices about an inch wide and two inches long and placed in an earthenware pan, covered with water and left for 24 hours. It is drained out completely (as one-day-old bamboo water is toxic), rinsed in fresh water, and left to soak in enough water to cover for another 48 hours. The bamboo and water ferment a little, turn slightly sour and are ready for use.

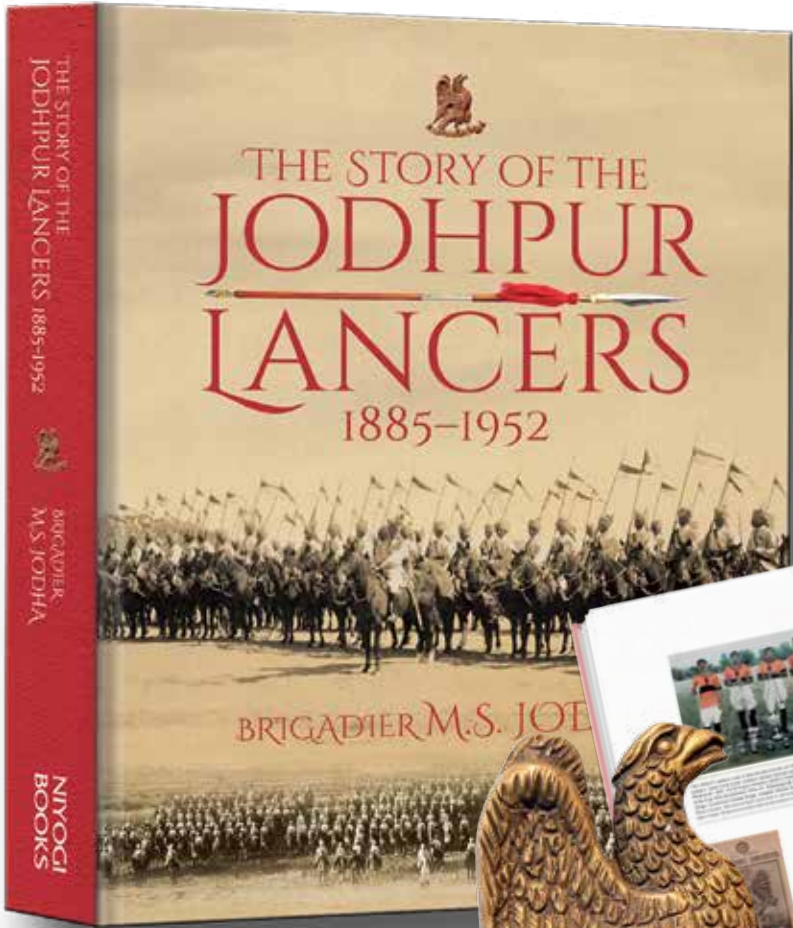


Uppu Vada (Black Gram and Sesame Balls): Pull of Pulses
A tasty and quick snack from South India, it can be made available for guests even at odd hours.

Do you read about a place you travel to?

- explore the culture
- experiment with its cuisine and weather
- familiarize with its literature and attire
- discover a unique experience that each place has to offer





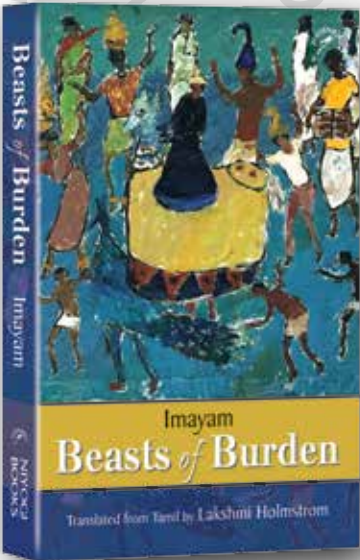
Featuring rare photographs, maps, documents and sketches, this is a remarkable narrative of the warriors of the princely state of Jodhpur—prior to, and during the First and Second World Wars—and of how the friendship between an Indian prince, Sir Pratap Singh and British royalty contributed to the Allied War efforts. The book provides a comprehensive historical account of the Jodhpur Lancers—their origin and their deeds in the armies of British India and their state.



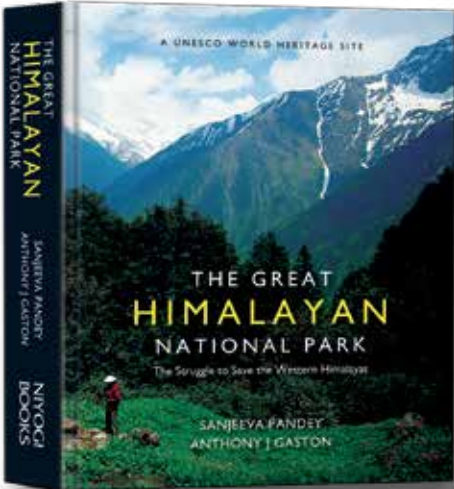
The author and the Maharaja of Jodhpur, among other dignitaries and army officials at the wreath-laying ceremony, Haifa memorial, Israel.



Brigadier Mahendra Singh Jodha
A third-generation officer from his family, he has had varied staff, instructional and command experience over a period of 33 years in the army and has received several prestigious awards.

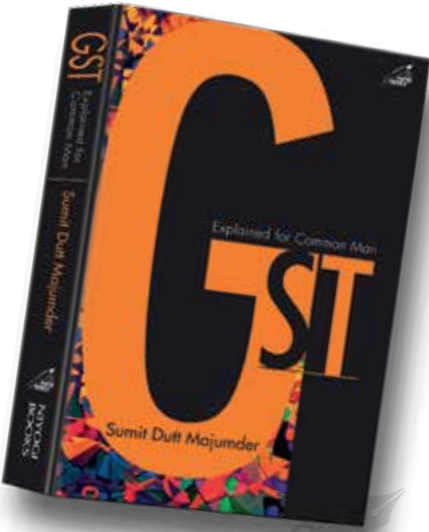


Set in the early 1970s, when ritual status and payment in kind were giving way to cash wages, this book is a tapestry of despair, courage and a journey, both outward and inward. It is a story of decline and change in a village seen through the eyes of a washerwoman who serves a Dalit community of agricultural labourers. The novel gives us an extraordinarily detailed picture of a lifestyle that has now passed—reclaimed and told with pride.

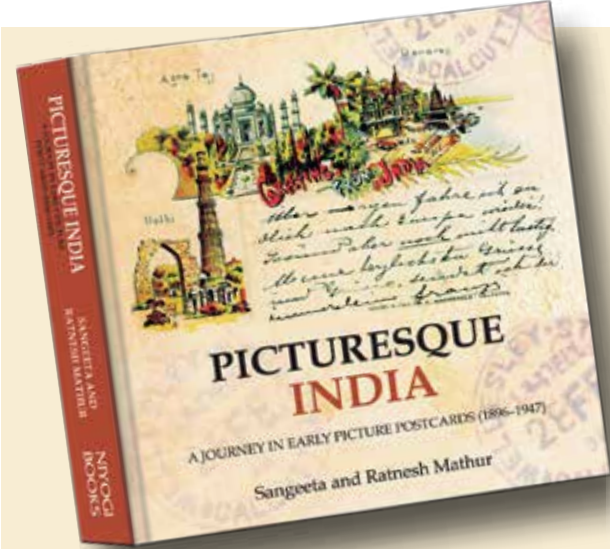


The Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area (GHNPCA), a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is among the most protected areas in the Himalayas and one of world's great biological realms. This book is intended both as a history and an ecological overview of the Park as well as a plea for continuing the conservation of the rich legacy of Himalayan plants and animals.

This winter, engulf in books



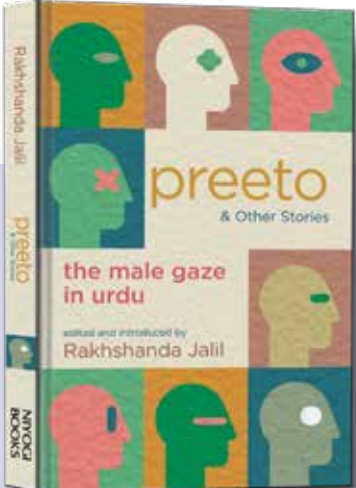
This book explains the critical issues and concepts of GST in a simple language, often in a storytelling style. It covers the concepts of Supply, Input Tax Credit, IGST for inter-state trade, Business Processes and subjects like Composition Levy, Reverse, Charge Mechanism and more. Besides Manufacturing, Services and Trading, this book has also explained the GST application issues in sectors such as Education, Health Care, Cooperative Housing, Telecom, Tourism, among others.



With the dawn of the twentieth century, came significant changes in the landscape of India—new capital cities and summer retreats, evolution of towns, development of ports and creation of cultural, educational and trading centres. The 550 postcards featured in this book visually document this growth, while also capturing evidences of earlier times in India's fascinating polytemporal towns. The postcards are divided across six chapters representing six regions within India and Pakistan, as they were a century back.



In a world where more women are joining the workforce, where even more are stepping out from their secluded and cloistered world and can be physically seen in larger numbers, this collection seeks to explore how male writers in Urdu view and consequently present or represent the women of their world.



6 Events

Niyogi Books Opens its First Bookstore in Kolkata

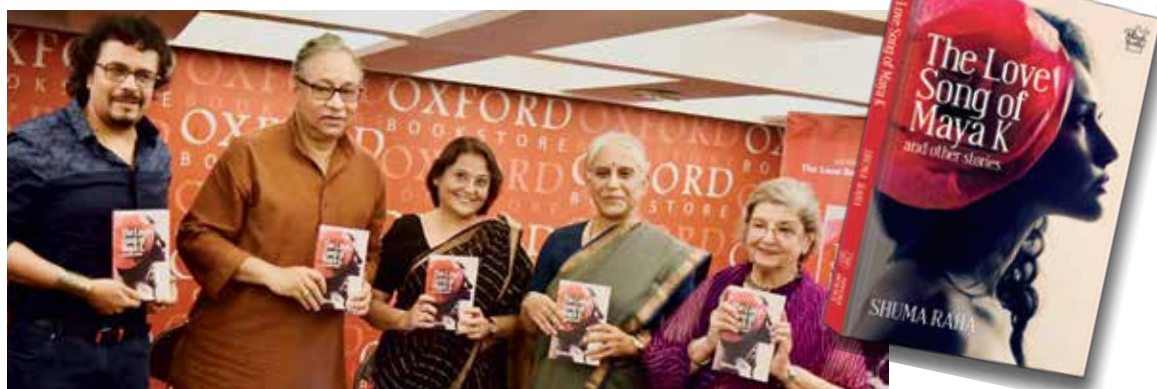
The signature bookstore is an attempt to create an eco-system where book lovers can not only buy books but also read and discuss about them. 'It cannot be denied that Kolkata loves reading perhaps more than any other pursuit. We can derive much more out of our offerings here with book lovers in large numbers,' observed Trisha De Niyogi, Niyogi Books.



The first Niyogi Books' shop in **Kolkata** (12/1A, 1st Floor, Bankim Chatterjee Street) was opened by Sankha Ghosh, scholar, poet, critic and academic. L-R: Trisha De Niyogi, Bikash D. Niyogi, Goutam Ghose, film director and author, and Sankha Ghosh at the inauguration.



The Love Song of Maya K and Other Stories



L-R: Bickram Ghosh, Jawhar Sircar, Shuma Raha (author), Supriya Chaudhuri and Maina Bhagat at the launch, **Oxford Bookstore, Kolkata**.

Rajasthani Miniatures: The Magic of Strokes and Colours



L-R: Dr Daljeet (author), Shri Kaptan Singh Solanki, Dr Sachchidanand Joshi and Prof. Arun Kumar Pujari at the book launch, **India International Centre, New Delhi**.

The Trees Told Me So



Vimlendu Jha, founder of Swachha Foundation and Purva Grover (author) at the book launch held at **Rockview Apartments, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi**. Tree plantation was an integral part of the launch.

This Winter...

9–20 November 2018
North East Book Fair
Guwahati, Assam

6–17 December 2018
CRD Patna Book Fair
Patna, Bihar

5–13 January 2019
New Delhi World Book Fair

30 January to 10 February 2019
Kolkata International Book Fair

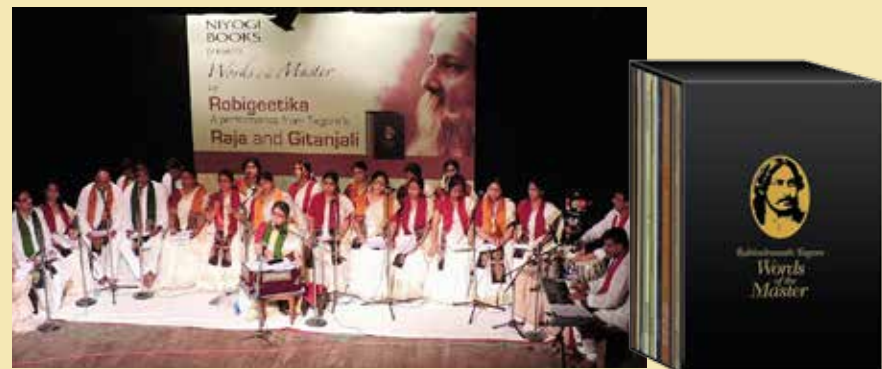
Adda Session I: Missing Trees & Vanishing Forests



Niyogi Books organised an open house on the subject of deforestation and extraction of trees and animals at the **Kunzum Travel Café, Hauz Khas Village, New Delhi**.

L-R: Trisha De Niyogi, Purva Grover, Shivan Mehta and Henna Rakheja.

Words of the Master



Niyogi Books presents its first cultural programme at **Muktadhara Auditorium, New Delhi**. The Robigeetika Group's performance was from Tagore's *Raja* and *Gitanjali*.

Answers to the crossword that appeared in the July-September issue of Reading Corner:
1. Shakespeare 2. Kalidasa 3. Deluge 4. Cloudburst 5. Tornado 6. Zeus 7. Malhar

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USA and Canada



6 West 18th St., Suite 4B,
NYC, NY 10011,
Tel: 212 645 1111,
Email: sales@accdistribution.com

UK, Ireland and Continental Europe



Shalimar Books Ltd.
38 Kennington Lane, London SE11 4LS, UK
Tel: +44 20 7735 2101
www.indianbooksuk.com / shalimarbooks@gmail.com

Bangladesh



Pathak Shamabesh Ltd.
Building 4, 1st Floor, Bangladesh National Museum,
Shahbag, Dhaka 1000, Bangladesh | Tel: +88 0171 303 4440
www.pathakshamabesh.com / info@pathakshamabesh.com

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