

READING CORNER

HISTORY | LITERATURE | ART | ARCHITECTURE | CULTURE | HERITAGE | BIOGRAPHY | TRAVEL | WILDLIFE | ENVIRONMENT | RELIGION | FICTION | TRANSLATION | CINEMA | FOOD | CHILDREN

On Translating

The work of translation is central to life. Children learn by translating a complex adult world into their evolving terms. Between adults, every relationship is a negotiation in which a translation takes place between 'what I say' and 'what I meant to say' and 'what you understood'. Whole sociological theories, such as Symbolic Interactionism, elaborate these give-and-takes between the transactors.

Equally, history-writing is the act of translating the past into the present. Historians know that a search for 'truth' is elusive, if not impossible. Laypeople often forget this and search, to historians' amusement and dismay, for 'facts' and 'reality'. Philosophers, social scientists, linguists, and all creative writers come together to agree that **'the truth' and 'the authentic' are impossible to find and to define**. That is what makes translation so central to every work of academia and of art.

Today we are talking about a narrower version of translation—language translation, where a novel, short story, poem, play, or essay is rendered into another language. There are two alternative positions here.

The first is the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, the notion that language actually shapes ideas or thought. The powerful historical work of Bernard Cohn on India and of cultural-symbolic anthropologists such as Marshall Sahlins on Hawaii make the point that **speakers of different languages live in different realities**, and there is room for tremendous misunderstanding, conflict, and pain between these realities. In order to prevent some of the violence that can occur between different cultural worlds, one would have to change the nature of the translation that takes place.

However, we may balk at the idea of a world divided up into different realities. Among other criticism, I would call postcolonialism the second position regarding the significance of translation.

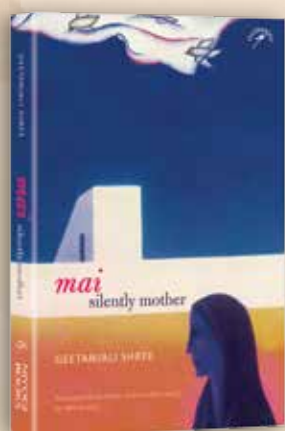
According to this view, cultures cannot be considered as radically opposed, because each culture is already diverse within itself, and not a homogeneous unit. Thus, British culture and Indian culture are not the correct entities to compare. British culture must first be located historically. Then, as colonial culture, it should be broken up again into working-class culture and ruling-class culture, and then further according to gender and region. The same applies to Indian culture. Indian working classes can then be seen as having more in common with British working classes, and the elites in either culture with each other. Indian men have more in common with British men than with Indian women. The possibilities of communication are strong between those of the same class and gender, and flimsy across class- and gender-based cultural groups. **Language is a powerful determinant of who can communicate with whom**. In this perspective, the challenge becomes different for translators, and perhaps greater. The problem is not whether I can translate the Russian 'dom' as the English 'home' or 'household' without losing many levels of meaning. The problem is *also* to ascertain whether I mean a gentrified mansion or a labourer's hut, a home from the

perspective of the master of the house or his wife—only then will I perhaps get the nuances right.

I used to think, during my last translation, published by Niyogi Books, that it was impossible to translate certain Indian terms without importing a weight of undesirable Orientalist imagery into the new English term. Orientalism, as we know, is the perverse categorization of everything non-Western as traditional, bizarre, and backward. In my translation of *Mai* by Geetanjali Shree, I used the example of *angan* (courtyard), a common feature in every north Indian village and even city home, but not a normative domestic space in the Western English-speaking world. The Hindi *angan* evokes warmth, intimacy, solidarity, and a protected space open to the sky and air in which women find freedom and young people a flight into their dreams. The English courtyard evokes a feudal past, the Cloisters, Keats, or Shelly, and trips to Italy...

Imagine my surprise then to find, 20 years later, that non-English speaking staff at our campus NIRMAN comfortably calling our old *angan* 'courtyard'! Why? They are all semi-educated working class people. Because **people can live in multiple worlds**, the *angan* at home and the courtyard of English speakers. Because **every language welcomes and assimilates foreign words**. Soon there will be another Hindi word, *koteyad*.

The problem, in a nutshell, is the richness of cultural worlds. The translator is likely to become overwhelmed by the cultural noise from the original text. But instead of merely agonizing over it, **the translator must ensure that the cultural wealth of the new, translated text matches the richness of the original text**. Therefore, the more attention the translator can give to the historical, class, gender, and community contexts of the novel or short story, the richer the translation—down to every chosen word—will be.



Scan to get the book

In this splendid translation, Nita Kumar brings alive the rich worlds of Geetanjali's layered novel, of an inner home and mind, the fruit trees in the garden, a food-laden table, caste, religion and all its repercussions on life. To Kumar, mai's silence is "communicative".

— *The Hindu*

Redefining feminism in Indian narratives

BLOSSOMS *in the* **GRAVEYARD**

Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya
 Translated from original Assamese by Anu Arai Ph.D.
 by MITRA Pujakalya

BANI BASU

a plate of white marble

"Unmistakable Basu's elegant, enigmatic prose reflects the clarity of Hemingway, Faulkner, and Nabokov."
—Publishers Weekly

TRANSLATED BY ANNE K. K. BASS

ALFRED A. KNOPF

Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya
Translated from original Assamese *Ekani Aka Phani*
by MITRA POLAKHITI

Indian Poet Laureate Award-Winning Author
GOVIND MISHRA

*in the
 Glow
 of your
 Being*

Translated from Hindi
 by **C.B. KARKI**

In the Glow of Your Being by Govind Mishra, translated from the Hindi original by C.B. Karki, probes deep into the question of a woman's freedom and its denial by society.

BANKIM CHANDRA CHATTERJEE

DURGESH NANDINI

*Translated from the Bengali original by
Sarada Choudhury*

Literature of the marginalized

BARBED WIRE FENCE

Stories of Displacement from the Barak Valley of Assam

Edited by
Nirmal Kanti Bhattacharjee
Dipendu Das

elegy
for
the
east

*A Story of Blood
and Broken Dreams*

DHRUBAJYOTI BORAH

*Translated by the author and Mayang Sukhai
from the Assamese original*

KALANTARAK GADIA

and beautiful dreams
of the masses die
in the stony bed of
terror and counter-
terror under an
uncaring State.

Giligadu

Chitra Mudgal

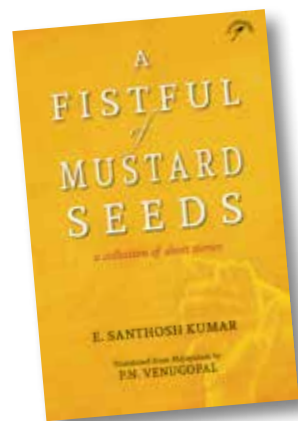
Giligadu
The Lost Days

Akademi Award Winning Author
CHITRA MUDGAL

Translated from Hindi by
Priyanka Sarkar

Penguin

Literature is best, when read in collections



An 'anthology' is a treasure chest that houses a collection of literary pieces of various tastes. Borrowed from Greek, the term literally means 'a collection of blossoms' in reference to one of the earliest known anthologies, the *Garland*, the introduction to which compares each of its anthologized poets to a flower. The literary equivalent to tasting menus, anthologies are today widely compiled and read, as they serve to introduce readers to diverse genres and authors.

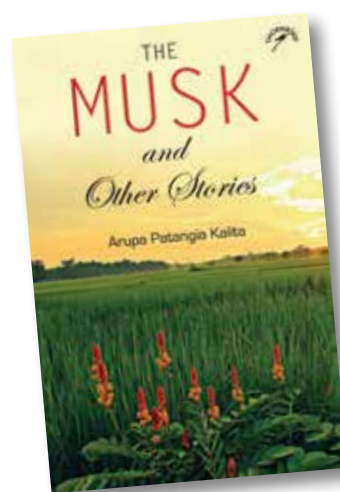
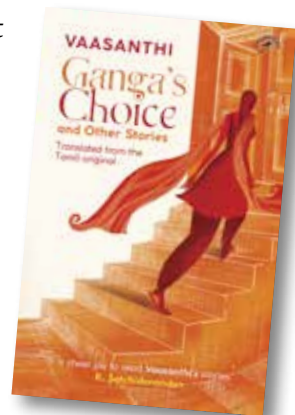
Translated from Malayalam, *A Fistful of Mustard Seeds* is a collection of 12 short stories that represent different phases in E. Santhosh Kumar's writing career. Sensitive, thought-provoking and perceptive, each story is a vignette into a different realm of emotional experience.

Five Novellas about Women, translated from Assamese by Dibyajyoti Sarma, cover a range of Indira Goswami's

writing that paints various pictures of the plights of Indian women, highlighting the struggles of the rural poor, the widows and the urban underclass.

Comprised of 15 slice-of-life stories set in India and abroad, Vaasanthi's *Ganga's Choice and Other Stories* is a collection translated from Tamil that showcase the courage and strength of ordinary people.

D.Jayakanthan's *The Heroine and Other Stories* is a collection of tales selected and translated from Tamil by the author's daughter, Deepalakshmi J. The 10 stories sensitively explore situations in the lives of both the marginalized and the middle class.



Moisture Trapped in Stone: An Anthology of Modern Telugu Short Stories, translated and compiled by K.N. Rao, is a collection of 28 short stories about the issues plaguing everyday lives of ordinary people by eminent writers of Telugu fiction.

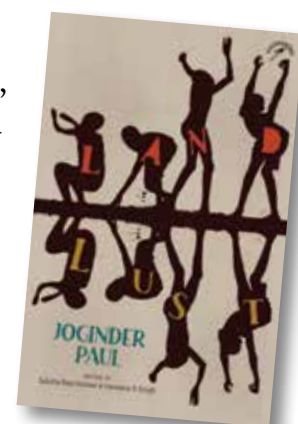
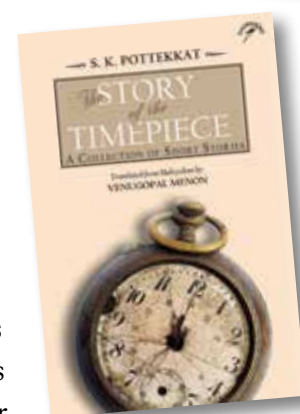
An eclectic mix of short stories and a novella, *The Musk and Other Stories* by acclaimed Assamese writer Arupa Patangia Kalita sheds light on some of the burning political issues that reverberate through the lush landscape of Assam.

Ritwik Ghatak is globally known as one of the best filmmakers in India, but his short stories remain relatively unknown. The narratives collected in *Ritwik Ghatak Stories*, translated by Rani Ray, mirror the ethos of the tumultuous decade of India in the 40s while revealing a vision of life that encompasses a deep commitment to humanism.

Fantasy, folk tales, detective fiction, ghost stories, historical narratives and tales of social consciousness are just a few among the 34 diverse translated stories that populate Dipankar Ray and Saurav Dasthakur edited, *Timeless Tales of Bengal: An Anthology of Bangla Children's and Young Adults' Stories*.

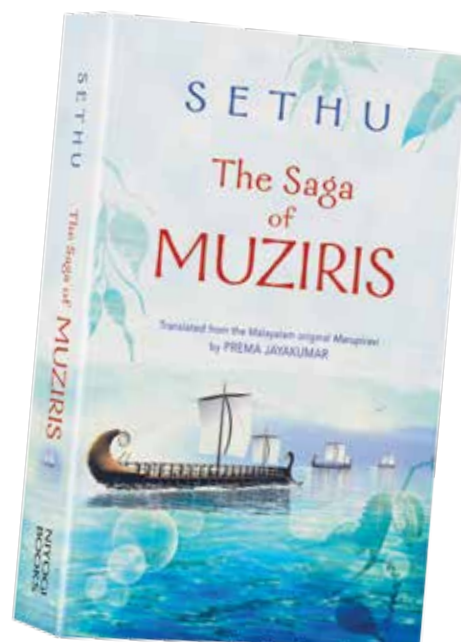
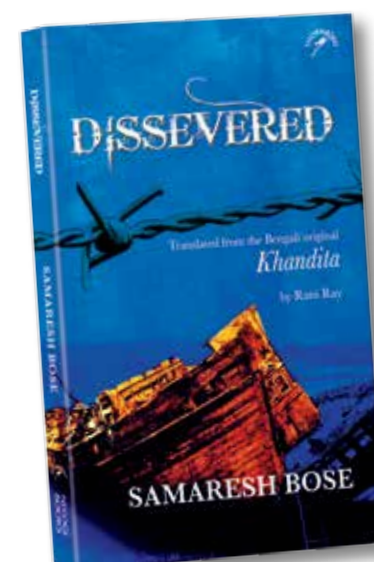
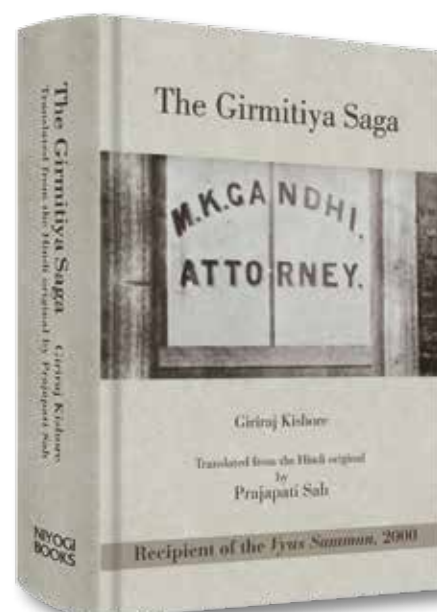
The Story of the Timepiece: A Collection of Short Stories, written by award-winning writer S.K. Pottekkat, and translated from Malayalam by Venugopal Menon, aptly showcases the author's penchant for melding realism with romanticism.

Translated from Urdu and edited by Sukrita Paul Kumar and Vandana R. Singh, Joginder Paul's stories in *Land Lust* offer poignant glimpses of the unequal multiracial relations in colonial Kenya.



Translation, the teleporter of imagination across languages

Published after 70 years of Independence, Samareesh Bose's novella *Dissevered*, translated by Rani Ray from the Bengali original *Khandita*, portrays the pains of the common people during the emergence of a new nation.



The Saga of Muziris by A. Sethumadhavan, translated from the Malayalam original *Marupiravi* by Prema Jayakumar, is a fascinating tale of the glory and decline of a major port in Kerala, which mysteriously disappeared from the face of earth during the 14th century.

Translated from the Hindi original that earned the author the Vyas Samman and the Mahatma Gandhi Samman, Giriraj Kishore's *The Girmitya Saga* (translated by Prajapati Sah) highlights the importance of Mahatma Gandhi's actions in South Africa by retracing the country's sociopolitical scenario in the 19th and 20th centuries.

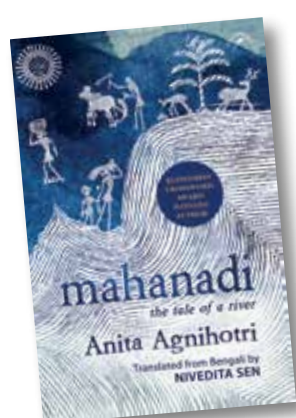
Transcendence through translation

Nabaneeta Dev Sen's works often deal with a wide variety of social, political and psychological problems.

Ami Anupam (*I, Anupam*), her debut novel on the Naxal movement was a first in Bengal. Dev Sen developed this into a trilogy. The second book *In a Foreign Land, by Chance* (translated from the Bengali original by Soma Das) is set in the Soviet era of Eastern Europe offering a glimpse of communist Czechoslovakia, with the Naxal movement in its backdrop. The last one in the trilogy *The Parrot Green Saree* (translated into English by Tutun Mukherjee) explores the ethical and existential dilemmas through a turbulent mother-daughter relationship.



If you descend along the eastern flanks of India, you will inevitably reach Odisha, through whose lap flows the Mahanadi, one of the largest Indian rivers.



Anita Agnihotri's novel *Mahanadi*, translated into English from Bengali by Nivedita Sen, is a narrative where the din and bustle of a mofussil town, the solitary life in a standalone village, people's struggle for survival and the sighs of the displaced people of Sambalpur during the Hirakud dam construction mixes with the cries of the endangered people on the banks when the river overflows.

Alike the enigmatic river, the soil of Odisha holds great significance for the Odia people.

Born of the Soil, translated into English from the Odia original—Kalindi Charan Panigrahi's *Matira Manisha*, presents the story of an Odia peasant family whose simple joys and sorrows are bound up with the soil.



Borders – drawing lines between time, history and people

Bridge Across the Rivers: Partition Memories from the Two Punjabs, edited by Tripti Jain and Jasbir Jain, is a collection of 16 stories that explore the pre-Partition conflict and violence and the undercurrents of cultural oneness that formed a counter discourse.

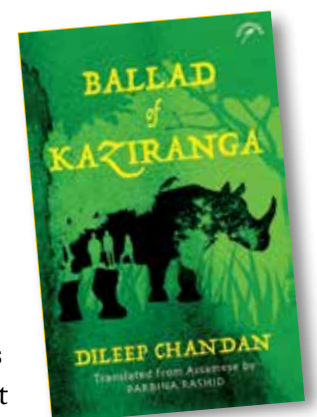
Rakhshanda Jalil's *Jallianwala Bagh: Literary Responses in Prose & Poetry* is a collection presenting literary responses to the tragedy of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre and the national freedom movement. It includes poems, stories and extracts from novels in English, Urdu, Hindi and Punjabi.

Jalil's narrative expertise furthers in *Pigeons of the Domes*, a collection of 19 stories that offers a glimpse of the different hues and shades of communalism in India. It includes stories dealing with Hindu-Muslim tensions, the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits from the Valley, and the persecution of Sikhs in the anti-Sikh riots of 1984.

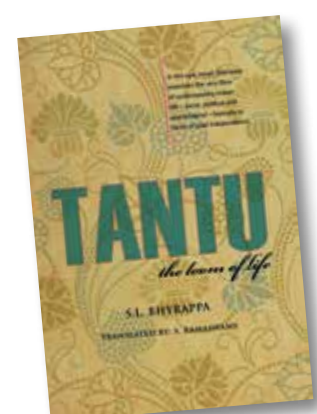
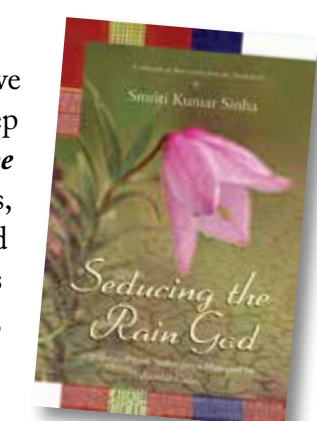


Our world is not given by our ancestors, but borrowed from our children. Yet, we humankind have exploited Mother Nature to the core and today, the planet is suffering for it. Soon enough, our 'children' will live in a world sans fresh water, natural food and fresh air to breathe. In the face of a seemingly dystopian future, literature reminds us of nature's bounties.

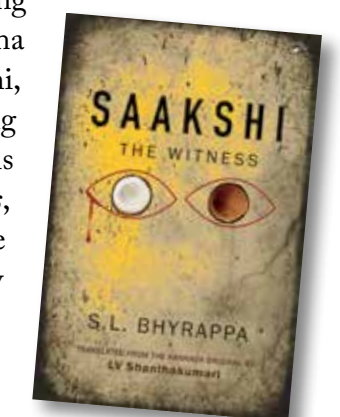
Dileep Chandan's fiction, *Ballad of Kaziranga*, translated from Assamese by Parbina Rashid, gives us an insight into the renowned national park, home to the world's largest population of Indian one-horned rhinoceroses. It is a story of three friends, whose lives are shaped by their unique experiences of midnight raids and face-offs between poachers and forest guards in Kaziranga.



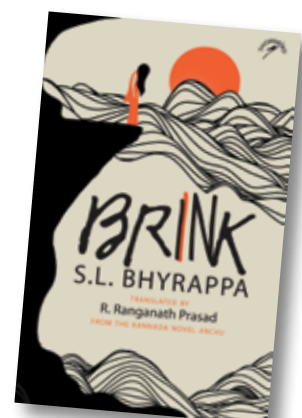
The languages we speak and the culture(s) we are part of also require preservation as they are deep reflections of our association with nature. *Seducing the Rain God* is a collection of 14 translated short stories, originally written in Bishnupriya Manipuri, enlisted by the UNESCO as an endangered language. It is imperative to read these stories, even if in translation, not just for the preservation of the language, but simply for the beautiful tales they tell us.



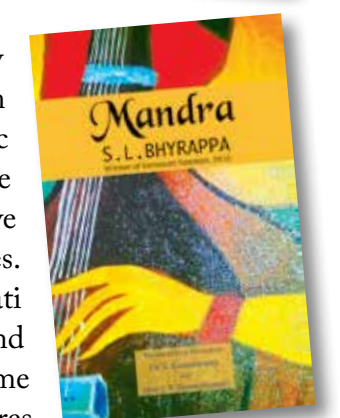
A bestselling Kannada novelist for 25 years and one of the most translated authors in India, S.L. Bhyrappa's *Tantu*, translated into English by S. Ramaswamy, is a novel about modern India—surveying the country from Mahatma Gandhi to Indira Gandhi, ending with the beginning of the 'Emergency'. His *Saakshi: The Witness*, translated from the Kannada original by L.V. Shanthakumari, is a metaphysical novel dealing with the debate between truth and falsity.



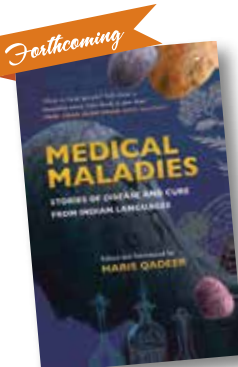
Brink, translated by R. Ranganath Prasad from Bhyrappa's *Anchu*, is an epic tale that deliberates on the nature of male-female love from different perspectives.



Mandra, the Saraswati Samman winner, translated by Dr S. Ramaswamy and Smt. L.V. Shantakumari, wherein the governing theme evolves like a banyan tree in all directions and pictures many home-truths that are inseparable from art, artist, art-tradition, art criticism and the world of connoisseurs. With deep roots in the Indian soil, Bhyrappa's works are must-reads for everyone!



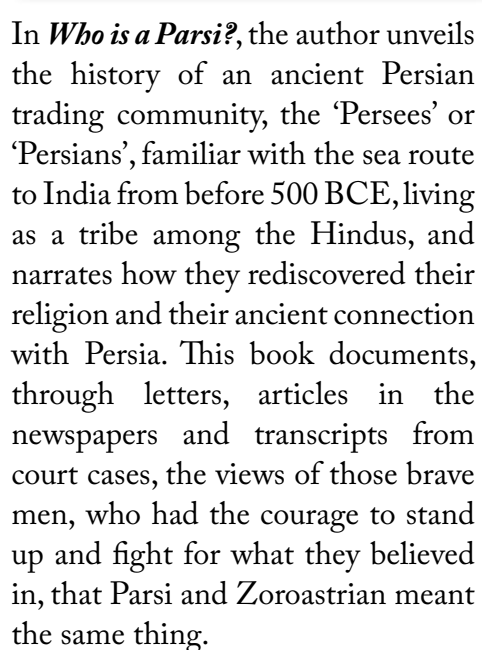
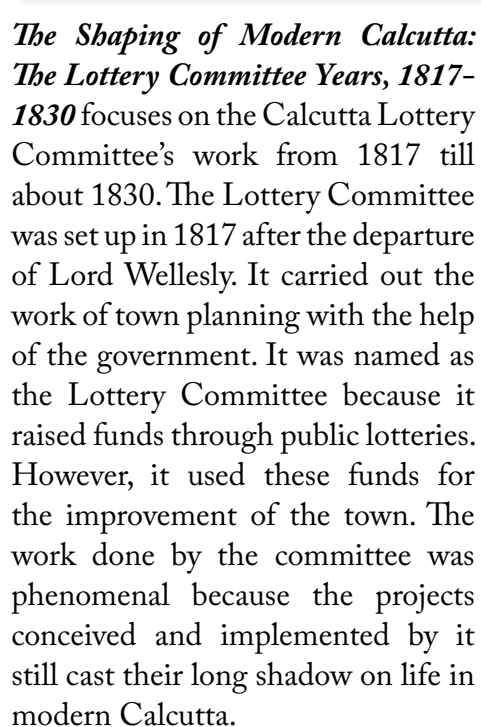
Healing, the indigenous way...



Medicinal herbs have been used since time immemorial in India. Bringing together 19 fascinating short stories, *Medical Maladies: Stories of Disease and Cure from Indian Languages* (forthcoming), addresses a wide array of themes and topics including the tales of modern medical professionals as well as traditional practitioners such as vaid, hakims and folk healers.


Kayakalpa: The Elixir of Everlasting Youth (translated from Assamese original by Biman Arandhara) delineates the journey of a renowned scientist back to the spiritual roots, the yogic Kayakalpa to find answers—to find himself.





The
Shoemaker's Stitch
Mochi Embroideries of Gujarat in the TAPI Collection

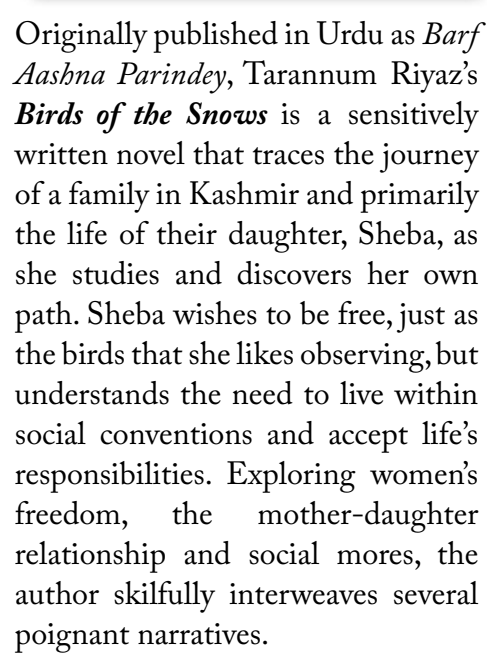
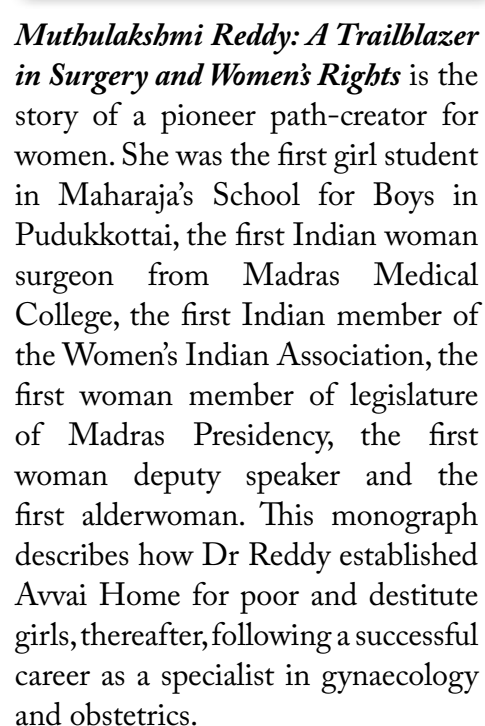
Shilpa Shah & Rosemary Crill



PIONEERS OF MODERN INDIA

SARADA DEVI
Holiness, Charisma and Iconic Motherhood

AMIYA P SEN

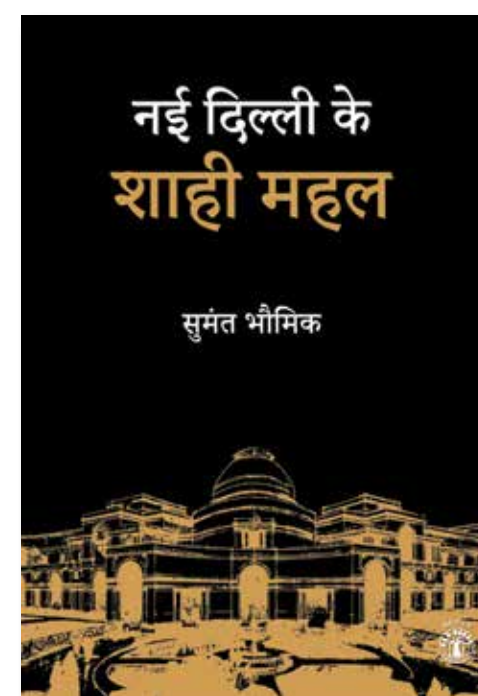


PIONEERS OF MODERN INDIA

RANI GAIDINLIU
*Legendary Freedom Fighter
 from the North East*

SOM KAMEI

सुमंत भौमिक के **नई दिल्ली के शाही महल** इन सवालों के जवाबों के लिए हर कहानी की गहराई में जाती है।



Focus: Libraries

The Somaiya School

Redefining the Meaning of a School Library



Given the team of librarians and the principal, it is no surprise why Somaiya School has unarguably one of the most premium, curated school libraries in India. Their understanding of the students' needs, combined with a welcoming environment, makes the library a space that is quite magical. Here, education seeps beyond the walls of the classroom into the library and gets carried home in the form of books. The following is an excerpt from our interview with the librarians of the school:

1. May we request you to elaborate on the ingenious ways in which you have made the library interesting and attractive to the younger audience?

Twice a year, we review the collection of books to understand the needs of users. Damaged and outdated materials are weeded out. In case, we lack books on a particular genre or theme, we add titles to our requisition list after checking the content, illustrations and age appropriateness. We also have a suggestion register in the library, where staff and students enter their suggestions. The principal and the library team visit bookstores across the city to choose books that would add value to the collection. Parents and other stakeholders are also invited to donate books. However, these books are reviewed before they become a part of the collection. We avoid books that reiterate stereotypes.



Social media has been a boon in this regard as we also pick up recommended titles from other librarians.

2. Can you elaborate a bit about your roles and responsibilities as a librarian?

To begin with, we are much more than mere bookkeepers! Our job involves acquiring, processing and maintaining a collection of carefully curated reading material. Apart from that, we provide numerous services to our users/readers. We are storytellers. We are guides to readers who need help to find *that* perfect book. We facilitate activities that develop empathy, literacy, critical thinking and creative skills, while building confidence. We connect teachers with supporting learning materials and create opportunities for them to read beyond the textbook. We use books and articles to explore socially relevant topics. We also plan and execute events related to reading and writing. We network with other librarians and professionals to exchange best practices.

We like to think of ourselves as search engines with hearts.

3. Reading alone is not enough. A book needs to be discussed. It must also feature in our daily conversations and activities. That is how we can utilize the knowledge we have gained from books. What other activities do you do to make this seamless connection between books and daily life?

While transacting a book in the library, we use different reading strategies like 'making connections', where students are encouraged to connect the story with their own lives (text to self), other texts they may have read (text to text) and things they have seen in the world (text to the world). They also share their own experiences while listening to a story—empathizing with the characters and situations. They are asked to write/share their responses to open-ended questions. For example, after reading *Fauja Singh Keeps Going*, students were asked to share a time in their lives when they faced a challenge and how they overcame the same. Then they gave each other tips and suggestions. A list was created with the students' suggestions and shared.

Other strategies like making inferences, summarizing, predicting, visualizing and questioning enables students to engage with the text deeply, and the activities give them an opportunity to apply what they have learnt.

We use several reflective questions in all library activities to elicit responses from the students and help them navigate through the real world.

Librarians are the tour-guides to the hidden hives of knowledge.

4. One Niyogi Book title you would definitely like to include in your library—

The book that we would choose for our collection is *Breaking Paths: Stories of Women Who Dared* by Meera Khanna as we are a library that promotes gender equality and encourage our students, parents and staff to read books that are inclusive and diverse.

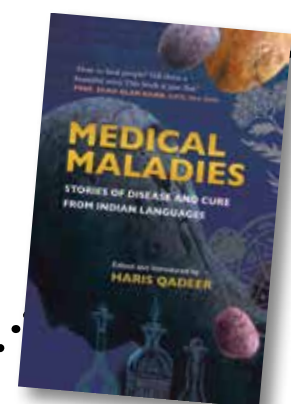
Scan for full interview



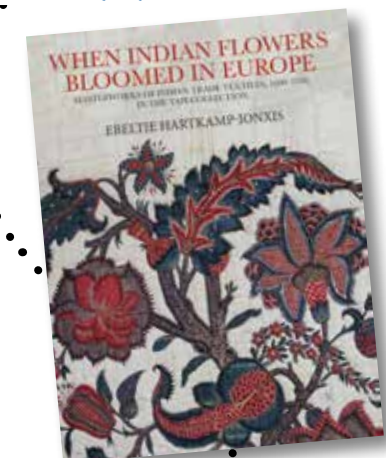
Forthcoming Books



Tales of pride and power in the history of football!



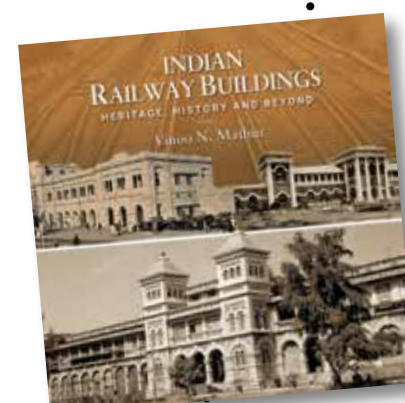
Stories of hope and healing from Indian languages



See how Indian textiles enchanted Europe



A pilgrimage undertaken -to perceive God? Or humankind?



Rediscover the romance of the Indian Railways

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