

READING CORNER

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



Falling Down The Rabbit Hole

I had no intention of ever doing this. But the rabbit hole was tempting. And down I went, encountering my own mad tea parties along the way. What am I on about? My journey into the magical land of children's literature.

At the age of 12, my class was asked to talk about our pet animals. When it was my turn to speak, I was overwhelmed by how exciting my classmates' pets were. All I had was a very ancient dog, who was more of a carpet for warming feet than a living creature. As I stood up to share my answer, instead of 'old dog', what popped out of my mouth was 'pet monkey'. I don't think I had ever had this thought before, nor had I planned it. As I stood there, more than 40 sets of eyes staring eagerly at me, I was the smoothest liar that ever lived. Firm facts about the fictitious monkey flowed out of me. My mouth and imagination working overtime, I clearly remember thinking, 'gosh Paro, you're really good at this!' *Pepper, the Capuchin Monkey*, based on that florid lie, went on to become my first book, years later.

The truth is that I had never been much of a reader as a child. Yet I was surrounded by books as I came from a family of readers. My preferred pastime was theatre. And that was the first door that opened into my future. In the theatre group I worked in, we wrote our own plays as well as performed, while experimenting with every aspect of the stage. So I became a drama teacher in school.

That's when I discovered that there were, at the time—and to a large extent, still, no play scripts yet for the contemporary Indian student. There were either very Western ones or those based on Indian mythology and folklore. Often, these didn't connect with the students I worked with.

And thus opened the second door to my future. I started to write ready-to-perform plays for my students—on issues that made them laugh, cry, think and connect with.

Thinking I was on to a good thing, I began to write plays full time, adding director's notes, costume and set designs and suggestions for putting on a good play at low cost, as was required by schools then.

Taking my set of seven plays, one very rainy morning, I marched up and down Asaf Ali Road, where publishing houses resided. I was in for a rude shock. No one wanted them. One after the other, I was told that there was no market for them. In fact, one darbaan, taking pity on my soaked, sorry state, asked me to come in and wait till the rain abated, at the same time, assuring me that my plays would find no market.

But I had been bitten by the writing bug. I loved it. I had a wonderful stint with the legendary editor of Target magazine, Rosalind Wilson, who taught me a lot about being authentic and never talking down to children. I was writing, I was getting published. But I was playing it safe.

And then, as I got the opportunity to work with organizations like the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, Sanskriti Kendra, Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya and later, the National Centre for Children's Literature, I had the unique opportunity to work with children who had incredible stories to tell, astonishing lives lived. I found that these children, often robbed of their very childhood, were bursting with their own stories and begged to share those with the world. I began to piece together such stories bit by bit, weaving a different fabric, challenging young readers to

look simultaneously at worlds beyond themselves as well as within themselves—deeply and with empathy. And most of all, with questions. Even if those questions were at times uncomfortable.

When I published my book, *No Guns at my Son's Funeral*, it was the first of its kind, addressing the Kashmir conflict through the eyes of a child seduced into militancy. There was worry; we ran it by several school principals, several children and I am glad that the publisher (India Ink and later on, Roli Books) was brave enough to publish it. 22 years later, it is still in production and is 'recommended reading' in many schools across the country.

My stories began to address issues of sexual assault, gender bias, alternate sexuality, conflict, violence, religious biases, domestic violence and more. In fact, whenever I have the opportunity to interact with young people, I always ask them to tell me what books they would like to read but haven't found as yet. Their suggestions inform my writing. The most telling being the ones that come from the child who will lead me to a corner and whisper a brave wish of the kind of book she want to read. These interactions and responses tell me that I am finally on the right track.

So, I fell into the magical rabbit hole of children's literature by telling elaborate lies. I ended up being brave enough to tell the truth.



Paro Anand

Author & recipient
of Sahitya Akademi
Bal Sahitya Puruskar, 2017

Editor's Note

Crazy work weeks; long days; short nights; we are constantly cramped for time. But, despite all that, there have been many around me who made it a point to read every day. I believe I subconsciously picked up the habit very early on in my life, which fortunately still continues.

I can now say that I have read for leisure, I have read for knowledge enhancement, I have read in search of vocabulary and ideas, but still, the more I read, the more I seem to know nothing. There is a constant nagging in my head that I have not read enough.

As a result, many a time, I toy with the desire to give up, thinking that it would never be enough, but then other times, I find myself overcome with great energy to continue to persevere. After all, if you aim for the stars, you might hit the moon.

My mentor calls this 'Divine Discontent', which is perhaps one of the reasons I chose to work in publishing; whether you call it collateral damage or serendipity, I have to read books for a living.

This year we decided to go a step further and publish children's books and oh boy! It turned out to be harder than adult books.

It is a humbling experience to be able to observe and empathise, to unlearn and relearn, to develop new skills and hone them; it takes me back to my childhood and makes me look at the world with those big eyes—curious and kind. And isn't that what the world needs today more than anything else?

Trisha De Niyogi

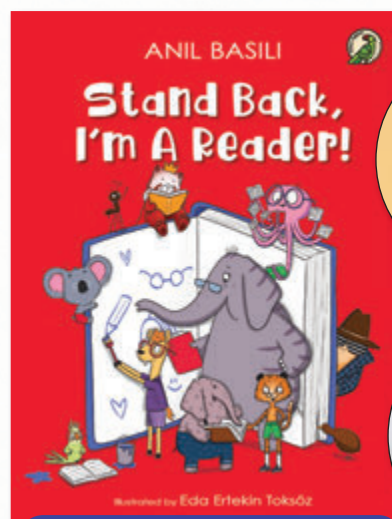
COO, Niyogi Books



Age
Range
7+

Stand Back, I'm a Reader!

Embark on a delightful journey with a charming collection of short stories. Join a lively crew of animal characters as they go on exciting adventures, all the while discovering the enchanting world of books and the joy of reading.



Translated from Turkish

Anil Basili is a writer who loves to collect books and gifts for children living in disadvantaged areas.



Eda Ertekin Toksöz illustrates books and magazines for children.



Chef Dragon and his Truly Disgusting Recipes

Age
Range
6+

Çiğdem Kaplangı studied Psychology at Bard College, USA and writes for young readers.



Can Tuğrul is a Graphic Designer who writes and illustrates children's books.



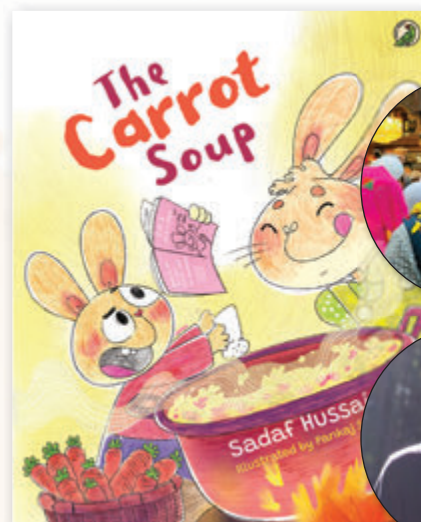
Translated from Turkish

A book with positive messages about friendship and sharing. A group of mountaineers climb a peak and find Chef Dragon, who likes to cook and share his food. They have an enjoyable stay at his castle and feast on food that he prepares for them with warmth and care.

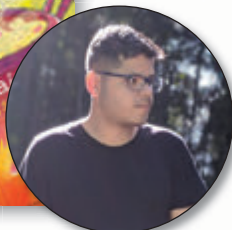
The Carrot Soup

Age
Range
4 to 8

Meet Phudku, Chamki and their parents—a happy bunny family. One day, Momma Rabbit falls sick. With Papa Rabbit away at work, the brother-sister duo must work together to run the house. Will teamwork and carrot soup save the day?



Chef, author and podcaster, **Sadaf Hussain** wears many hats! When he isn't chewing on food history or food stories, Sadaf likes to write and speak about culture and myth busting.



Pankaj Saikia is an author and illustrator who lives and works in Assam.

Urbi Bhaduri is forever sniffing out stories in bookshops and libraries and greedily scanning random bookshelves.

Age
Range
6 to 8



A Creative Director, **Ranjan Verma** effortlessly weaves together his love for exploring new places and creating visual masterpieces.



Kheer-er Putul

Translated from Bengali



Kheer-er Putul narrates the touching tale of a king, his two queens, a doll made of kheer, and a witty, talking monkey. Woven with the tender, luminous imagination of a gifted storyteller and artist, Abanindranath Tagore, this is a children's classic that promises an unforgettable experience of the kingdom of childhood.

A magnificent artist and a master storyteller, **Abanindranath Tagore** is remembered for his remarkable contributions to children's literature.



My Poo is the Coolest

Age Range
4 to 6

Translated from Turkish



Professor McPoo is a dung beetle. That's why his mission in this book is—picking the coolest poo! Llama, deer, elephant, camel, dinosaur, whale, penguin, cow, parrot fish and thrush—all of them are very ambitious in this race. Let's see, what will Professor McPoo decide?

Elif Yonat Toğay has translated bestselling books from English to Turkish and has written for both children and adults.



Gamze Seret, loves to write and draw books for children in the new world they have established together by making friends with pencils and colours.



A Twiggy Harmful Thingy

Age Range
4 to 6

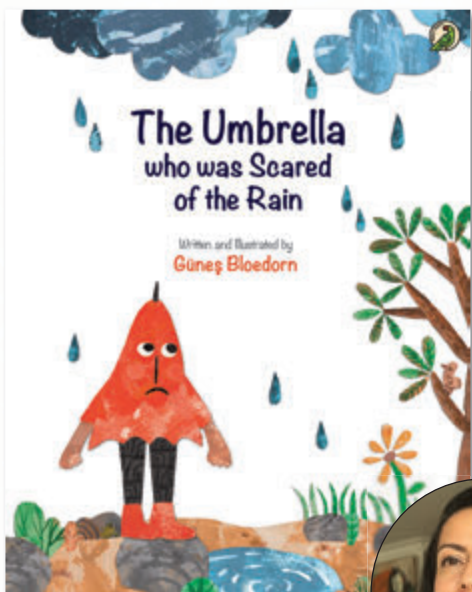


Translated from Turkish

Step into a world where even small choices matter. A story for young hearts, this book gently teaches the importance of saying no to plastic products. It shows how a straw from a birthday party enters the ocean and affects a turtle. With clear, beautiful illustrations, this book is both fun and educational with a simple yet powerful message about caring for our world.

The Umbrella who was Scared of the Rain

Age Range
4+



Translated from Turkish

Did you know there once was an umbrella who was afraid of the rain? His name is Oli, and this is his story...

Oli was able to overcome his fear and become a friend of the rain. Sometimes, when we run away from our fears, by coincidence, we open the door of courage.

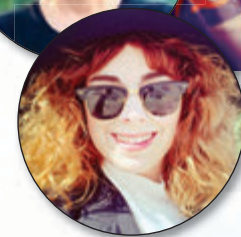
Güneş Bloedorn writes and illustrates children's picture books, while also contributing her art to a children's magazine.



Glass Jars is a children's story with a deeper message. It shows how a group of fish find themselves living in glass jars after they are trapped by their own fears. One day they are able to break free of their jars and make a new life for themselves.

Özge Bahar Sunar is a full-time author, who previously worked as a teacher.

Öznur Sönmez draws both children's books as well as works as a freelance art director.



Translated from Turkish



Help! My Mother Left Her Mind Behind!

Translated from Turkish

Age Range
4+



Help! My Mother Left Her Mind Behind tells the tale of a little boy called Memo, who is feeling unwell one day. He feels his mother has left her mind behind, with him, and asks his friend Spider to help him return her mind to her. Does Spider succeed?

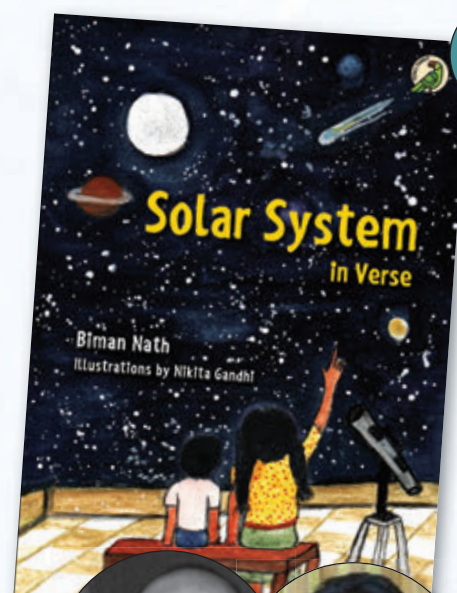
Mert Tugen is presently working as an illustrator for publishing houses and magazines.



Özge Bahar Sunar is a full-time author, who previously worked as a teacher.

Solar System in Verse

Age Range
8+



Biman Nath is an astrophysicist at the Raman Research Institute, Bangalore.

Nikita Gandhi is an educator, artist and illustrator.



A book for young readers with an environmental message about avoiding using plastic straws and plastic products, because of their harmful impact on other creatures. The story shows how a straw from a birthday party enters the ocean and affects a turtle. It is a well-illustrated educational read.



The Fugitive Storm

Translated from Bengali



Age Range 8+

The Fugitive Storm is one of the first science fiction stories in India, originally in Bengali, about a storm that threatens the city of Kolkata, only to mysteriously disappear. The author claims that he is the only one to know the secret; a bottle of hair oil diffused the storm!

Jagadish Chandra Bose was a pioneering scientist who is also considered the father of science fiction and popular science writing in Bengali.



Ranjan Verma, a creative conductor & doodle dazzler, thrives on crafting visual symphonies and sketching stories.



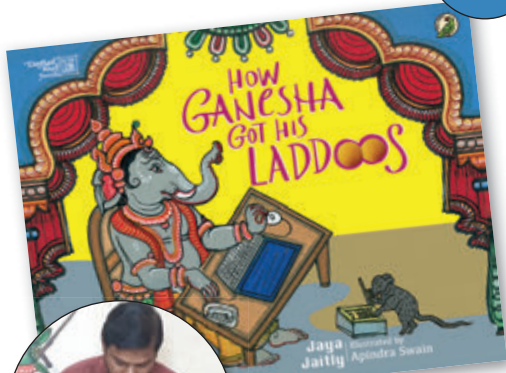
Nirmal Kanti

Bhattacharjee is a teacher, scholar, critic and cultural administrator.



How Ganesha Got His Laddoos

Age Range 4 to 8



Apindra Swain is an innovative artist from Raghurajpur, Odisha, who practices the Pattachitra style of traditional art.

When people forget to give Ganesha laddoos, what does he do? Illustrated in the Patachitra style, this is a charming tale of how to overcome hurdles and come out on top of every difficult situation. Featuring life hacks from Ganesha's assistant mouse!



Why is New Year's Day on 1st January?

Age Range 8+



Nirmal Kanti Bhattacharjee is a teacher, scholar, critic and cultural administrator.



Shreya is an artist from NIFT, New Delhi, who loves nothing more than bringing stories to life with her vibrant art.



The Tilted City

Age Range 5+



Susan Batori is a Hungarian illustrator, graphic designer, and a character design addict.

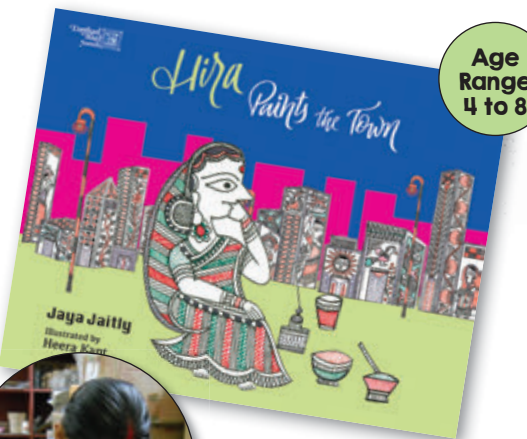


Zebright has always dreamt of going to Zebrutopia, the dreamland of zebras. But, when he finally reaches there, he finds that everything is *TILTED*. Zebright is confused. What is he going to do?

Masoud Malekyari followed his heart for story writing and studied cinema screenwriting and dramatic literature.

Hira Paints the Town

Age Range 4 to 8



Heera Kant is an experienced artist from the Madhubani district of Bihar.

Hira loves painting, and her world is full of colours. What happens when she gets married and moves to a dull and blank city? Illustrated in the Madhubani style, the story follows Hira's fight to hold on to her dreams and passions, even in a new and unfamiliar environment.



Jaya Jaitly is the Founder-President of the Dastkari Haat Samiti. She regularly speaks and writes on crafts and has published several books on handicrafts.

Bhajju's Flock and the Tick-Tock Clock

Age Range 4 to 8

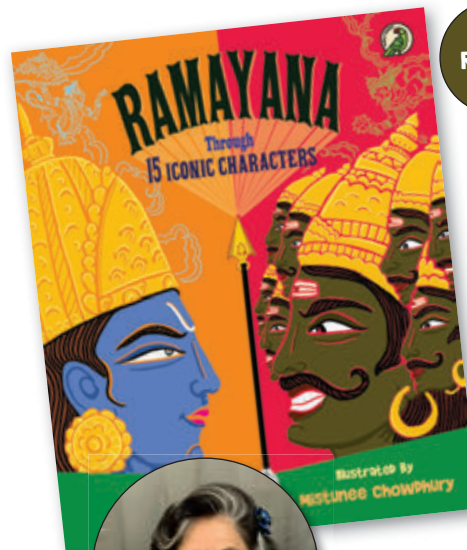


Kaushal Prasad Tekam comes from a family of tribal artists and practices the Gond style of painting.

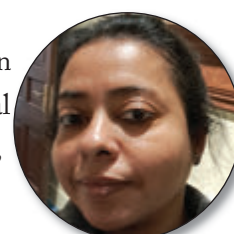
Bhajju is a young forest-dweller. He spends his days with his animal friends, and has no need to keep track of time. One day, he has to go work, where he encounters the tick-tock clock. Can Bhajju fall in line with the clock?

Ramayana Through 15 Iconic Characters

Age Range 10+



Alka Pande is an art critic, cultural theorist, teacher, curator and author.

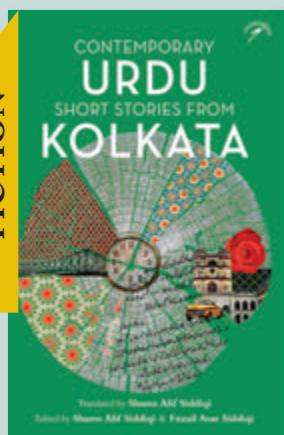


Mistunee Chowdhury is a Delhi-based illustrator, animator, painter and sculptor.

Find answers to the mysteries of calendars and dates hidden within the pages of this book. Take a trip around the world to figure out how similar or how different ideas of time can be. Along the way, take a dip into the fascinating world of astronomy to understand why we celebrate New Year's Day on 1st January.

NEW RELEASES

FICTION



Contemporary Urdu Short Stories from Kolkata

Edited by Shams Afif Siddiqi
& Fuzail Asar Siddiqi
Translated from the Urdu by
Shams Afif Siddiqi

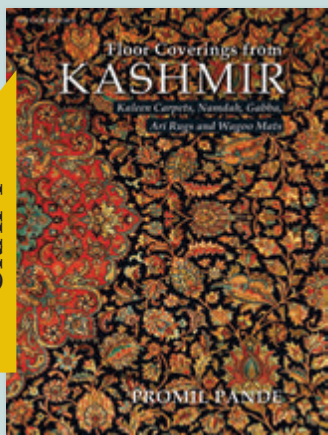
FICTION



Spellcasters: A Novel

Rajat Chaudhuri

CRAFT



Floor Coverings from Kashmir:
Kaleen Carpets, Namdah, Gabba,
Ari Rugs and Wagoo Mats

Promil Pande

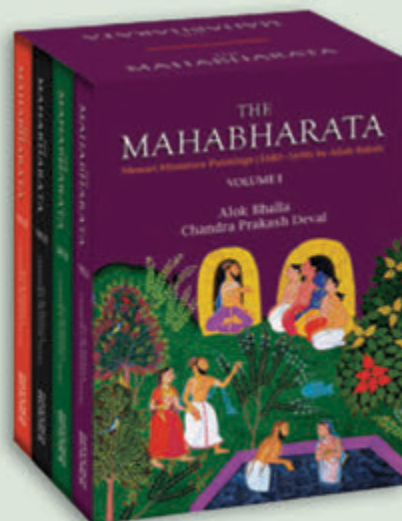
FICTION



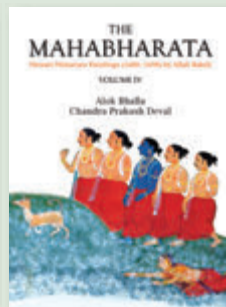
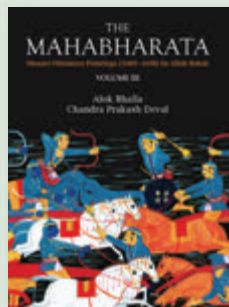
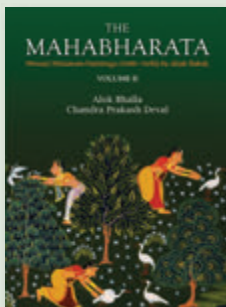
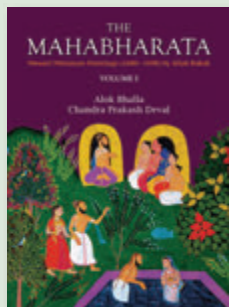
Trailokyanath Mukhopadhyay:
Tales of Early Magic Realism
in Bengali

Trailokyanath Mukhopadhyay
Translated by Sucheta Dasgupta

A Grand Visual
Retelling of the
Great
Indian
Epic

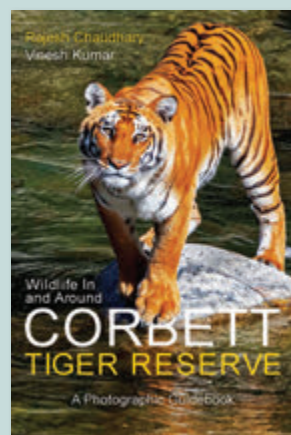
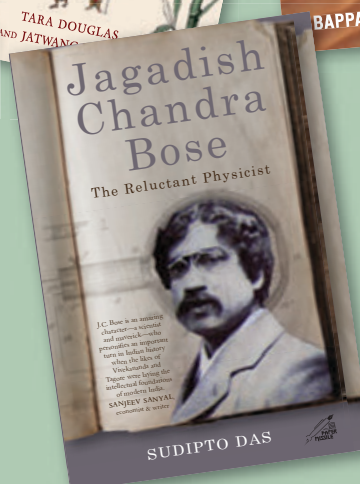
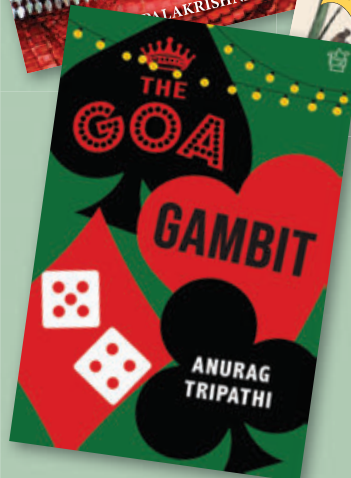
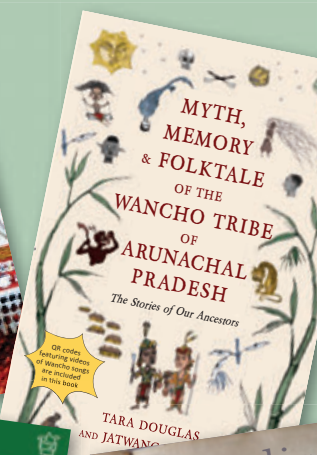
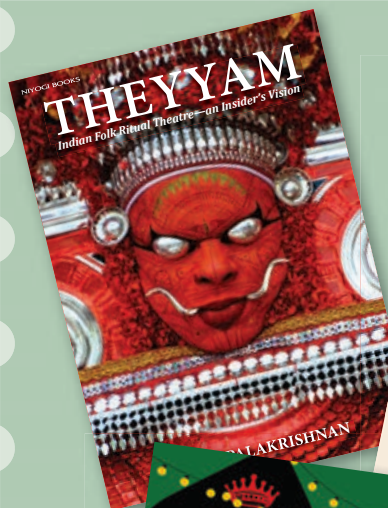


THE
MAHABHARATA



Mewari Miniature Paintings (1680–1698) by Allah Baksh
VOLUMES I - IV

FORTHCOMING

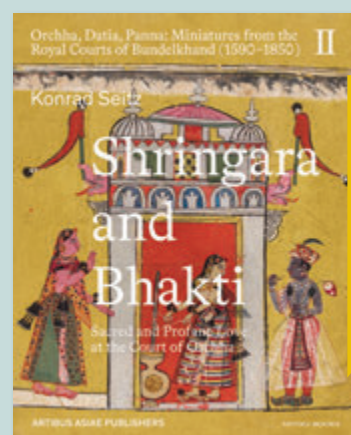


NATURE
& WILD LIFE

Wildlife In and Around Corbett
Tiger Reserve:
A Photographic Guidebook

Rajesh Chaudhary & Vinesh Kumar

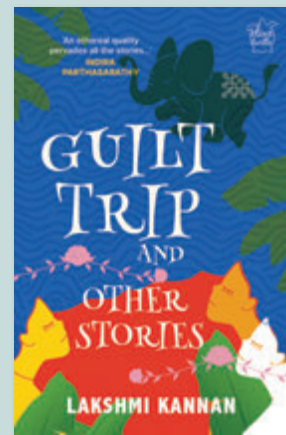
ART



Shringara and Bhakti:
Sacred and Profane Love at the
Court of Orchha, Vol. II

Konrad Seitz

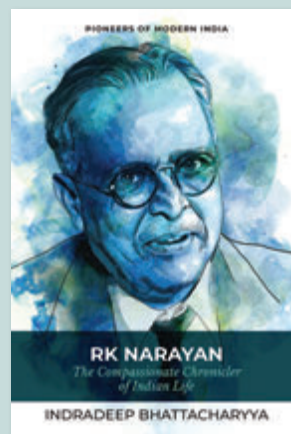
FICTION



Guilt Trip and Other Stories

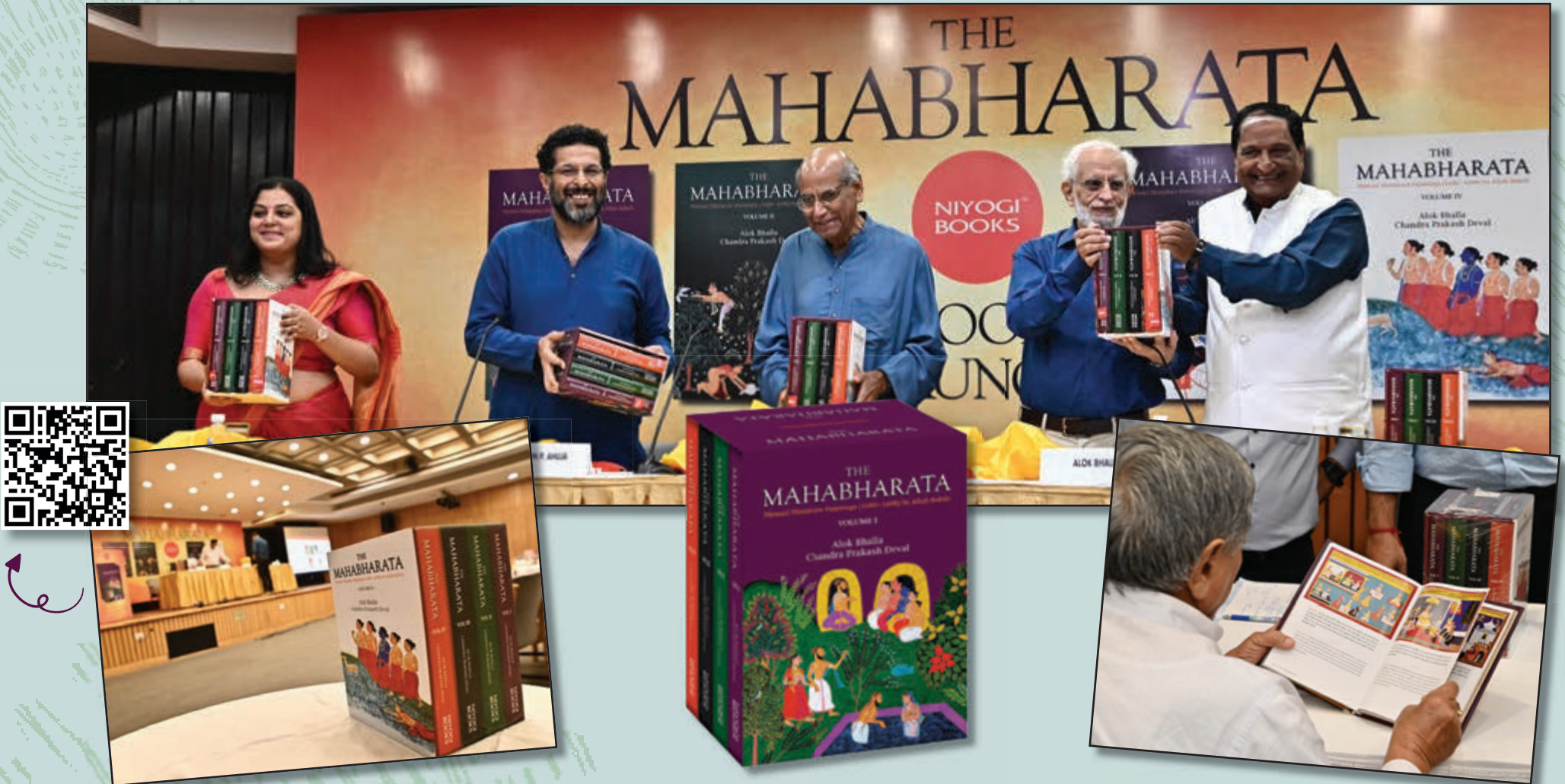
Lakshmi Kannan

BIOGRAPHY



RK Narayan:
The Compassionate Chronicler
of Indian Life

Indradeep Bhattacharyya



(L-R) Trisha De Niyogi, COO, Niyogi Books; Prof Naman P. Ahuja, art historian and General Editor, *Marg*; Shri Shyam Saran, President, India International Centre; and Prof Alok Bhalla & Mr Chandra Prakash Deval, co-authors of the book.



(L-R) Trisha De Niyogi, COO, Niyogi Books; Ramesh N. Mehrotra, former Head of Forest Force & Chief Wildlife Warden, Rajasthan; Sunayan Sharma, author of the book and former Field Director of Keoladeo National Park & Sariska Tiger Reserve.

(L-R): Author of the book, Mr Rajan Kashyap, former IAS Officer and Chief Secretary, Punjab; Mr Narinder Nath Vohra, former Governor & former Defence Secretary of India; Mr Tejendra Khanna, former Lieutenant Governor, Delhi; Mr Wajahat Habibullah, former Chief Information Commissioner of India.



(L-R) Indradeep Bhattacharya, journalist & author of the book along with Prof Satyaki Pal, Associate Prof. (Retd.), RKMRC, Narendrapur, Kolkata, at the launch of *RK Narayan: The Compassionate Chronicler of Indian Life*.

(L-R) Ms Joyeeta Basu, journalist & editor, Sunday Guardian; Amb. TCA Raghavan, former High Commissioner to Pakistan & Singapore and former DG, ICWA; Shri K N Shrivastava, Director, IIC; Ms Achala Moulik, former Education Secretary, GoI, former DG, ASI & Author of the book; Dr Nirmal Bhattacharjee, Editorial Director, Niyogi Books.

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