



## Press Note:

### Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival 2016 – Day 3

**Event:** *'The Last King of Sikkim'*

Book Release of *'Sikkim: Requiem for a Himalayan Kingdom'* by Andrew Duff

**Kolkata, 15<sup>th</sup> January, 2016:** Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival 2016 hosted the launch of ***Sikkim: Requiem for a Himalayan Kingdom*** by **Andrew Duff**. The book was released by Chief Guest **Sanjeev Chopra**. Based on interviews, archive research as well as a retracing of a journey the author's grandfather made in 1922, this is a thrilling, romantic and informative glimpse of life in Shangri La. The launch was followed by an intriguing discussion between the author and **Julia Booth** and **Sunanda K. Datta-Ray**. The conversation was moderated by **Sajeda Momin**.

*Sikkim: Requiem for a Himalayan Kingdom*, is the true story of Sikkim, a tiny Buddhist kingdom in the Himalayas that survived the end of the British Empire only to be annexed by India in 1975. It tells the remarkable story of Thondup, the last King of Sikkim, and his American wife Hope Cooke, thrust unwittingly into the spotlight as they sought support for Sikkim's independence after their 'fairytale' wedding in 1963. But as tensions between India and China spilled over into war in the Himalayas, Sikkim became a pawn in the Cold War ideological battle that played out in Asia during the 1960s and 1970s. Rumours circulated that Hope was a CIA spy. Meanwhile a shadowy Scottish adventuress, the Kazini of Chakung, married to Sikkim's leading political figure, coordinated opposition to the Palace. As the geopolitical tectonic plates of the Himalayas ground together forming the political landscape that exists today, Sikkim never stood a chance. On the eve of declaring an Emergency in India, Indira Gandhi brazenly annexed the country. Thondup died a broken man in 1982; Hope returned to New York; Sikkim began a new phase as India's 22nd state.

#### **About Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival (AKLF): 2016**

Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival (AKLF) is Kolkata's pioneering literary festival. Instituted in 2010 by the Apeejay Surrendra Group and its heritage Oxford Bookstore on Park Street, AKLF grew out of the bookstore's year round involvement with books, writers & publishers. In the seven years since Kolkata saw her first literary festival in AKLF, literary festivals have mushroomed across the country, but AKLF stands apart with its unique identity as the only one nearly 100 year-old bookstore as its nucleus. AKLF offers an atmosphere of warm, welcoming intimacy, favours depth over size, and includes a variety of subjects, from history to the environment. AKLF also celebrates Kolkata's magnificent public monuments and heritage sites as settings for Festival events, and eminent literati and cultural stalwarts from across India and overseas join the festival scheduled every year in the second week of January. In 2016 AKLF celebrates diverse themes encompassing books, theatre, the arts and cinema. AKLF's focus is on younger writers, newer voices and fresh

audiences in its ongoing attempt to build an audience for books and reading. The 7th edition of AKLF is poised to scale new heights, with an outstanding and meticulously curated programme, bringing the world and the nation to Kolkata. Continuing to celebrate the city's magnificent public monuments and heritage sites the festival rediscovers the quaint and hidden charms of the city through heritage walks. AKLF highlights several unique concepts with a fresh approach that reflects current concerns such as diversity, gender equality, continuities across borders and youth engagements, which are also broad themes running through the festival. AKLF signature heritage sites include Nandan, Town Hall steps, The Indian Museum, Presidency University, Tollygunge Club and Victoria Memorial. AKLF 2016 has participation from Australia, Israel, Scotland, Italy, Nigeria, Portugal as well as England, France, Germany, Pakistan, Bhutan and others. Some of the prominent personalities who will be part of the literary extravaganza are Ben Okri, Meera Syal, Christine Manfield, Ashis Nandy, Vir Sanghvi, Bharathi S Pradhan, Shatrughan Sinha, Shobhaa De and more. The four day long, multi-faceted event has several stimulating components designed to give visitors and the audience an enriching experience, with a great blend of literature, culture, art and heritage. And all of this is absolutely free for Kolkata and her culture-loving audience.

### **Notes to the editor**

**Andrew Duff** is a writer and freelance journalist based in London and Scotland, writing on India and related subjects. His first book, *Sikkim: Requiem for a Himalayan Kingdom* (2015) has received widespread praise. Andrew is a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and travels to Asia frequently, particularly the Himalayan region. His blog about travelling through India, China and the USA in 2008-9 was featured in *The Times Sitegeist* column. Andrew has also written for *The Times*, *Financial Times*, *Sunday Telegraph*, *Times of India* and *India Quarterly*.

**Sunanda K. Datta-Ray** One of India's leading journalists, spent many years in Singapore, as consultant with the *Straits Times* newspaper group, teaching at Nanyang Technological University. He has been editor of *The Statesman* (Calcutta and New Delhi) and has also written for the *International Herald Tribune* and *Time* magazine. He was editor-in-Residence at the East-West Center in Honolulu. Datta-Ray returned to Singapore in 2007 to work on a book with Lee Kuan Yew at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies based on a series of one-on-one conversations and a host of classified documents. His book, *Looking East to Look West: Lee Kuan Yew's Mission India*, was published in 2009. His other books include *Bihar Shows the Way*; *Smash and Grab: Annexation of Sikkim*; and *Waiting for America: India and the US in the New Millennium*. He is also a regular contributor to *Business Standard*, *OPEN* magazine, *The Pioneer* and others.

**Sajeda Momin** is a journalist, writer and editor. She has worked as a resident editor at *The Asian Age*, Assistant Editor at *The Statesman*, was a foreign correspondent for *DNA* and features editor of *The Bengal Post*.

### **AKLF 2016 Partners and Associations:**

The AKLF 2016 edition has forged several new, prestigious associations, following its impressive collaborations in first year in 2010. We are proud to welcome on board both our new and regular partners including the Victoria Memorial Hall, Indian Museum, Australian High Commission, Embassy of Italy in India, Bloody Scotland, British Council, Calcutta Debating Circle, Crime Writers Festival, Embassy of Israel in India, Alliance Française, Portugal Embassy, Presidency University,

Jaipur Literary Festival, Yes Foundation, FACES, Open Doors, FREED, The Creative Arts, Poetry Paradigm, MAKAIAS, Tollygunge Club, Max Muller Bhavan - Goethe Institute, The Park, Modern High School for Girls, Rakshak Foundation, Aishee, Streets of Calcutta, Calcutta Instagrammers, Wikipedia, Caravan, BEE books, Gibl.in, Bulk Email SMS India, Presto, She and Griffith Review. We also have 91.9 friends FM as radio partner, The Times of India as Print Media Partner, Anderson as Printing Partner, Selvel as Outdoor Partner, Typhoo as Refreshment Partner, Mera Tiffin as Food Partner, Indismart and Anon Production as special partners. A wide cross section of publishers, which include Niyogi Publishers, Future Publishers, OM Books and others will showcase their authors at AKLF 2016. AKLF is proud of these associations and hope they keep growing year on year.

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