

Press Note:

Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival 2016 – Day 2

Event: A Fierce Beauty

Launch of '*Goddesses of Kathmandu Valley: Grace, Rage, Knowledge*' by Arun Gupto

Kolkata, 15th January, 2016: Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival 2016 hosted the launch of '*Goddesses of Kathmandu Valley: Grace, Rage, Knowledge*' penned by **Arun Gupto**. The book was released by **Aparna Sen**, Award winning filmmaker, screenwriter and actor, who graced the occasion as the Chief Guest.

This book maps the diverse identities of goddesses through metaphors of grace, rage and knowledge, and offers an in-depth insight into femininity, sexual politics, ritual worships, religion, ecology and gender. Grace manifests as motherly sublimity, warring protectors, and varying personifications of sexuality. Rage encapsulates the fearful aspects of goddesses and independent identities of women. Knowledge evokes associations with order, reason and intellect in conflating gendered binaries of body/mind and nature/culture. The volume explores how these deity attributes are expressed and embedded through anthropomorphic as well as inorganic forms of nature, beautiful women, multi-legged and many-armed animals, epistemic selves, demonic beings, glamorous personifications as also grotesque sub-humans.

The launch was followed by a captivating discussion with **Aparna Sen** and **Kalyan Ray**, writer and Professor of Literature bringing about insights into methodological combination of critical theory, mythological and philosophical concepts, along with religious studies, cultural studies, folklore, art, literature, sociology and gender studies, especially those interested in Nepal and Hinduism.

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 with a 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 Editors

Arun Gupto, is the principal at the Institute of Advanced Communication, Education and Research, Kathmandu, Nepal. He has been part of the faculty at the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University. His areas of study are literary theory, postcolonial studies and South Asian studies, and his current research is on South Asian art and religion, culminating in a documentary project entitled 'The Art of the Lake'.

Kalyan Ray grew up in Calcutta and was educated in India and the US, and has taught in Greece, Ecuador, Jamaica and the Philippines where he was a Visiting Professor of Comparative Theology. His poems and translations have appeared at the US and India; some have been anthologized. He has published several books of translations of contemporary Indian poetry into English, including *City of Memories*, which has a Preface by Allen Ginsberg, and *Emperor Babur's Prayers and Other Poems* by Sankha Ghosh. He is the author of the novel *Eastwards* (was adopted by several universities and colleges in Asia and the US as a text in courses on Post-Colonial literature) and his most recent work, *No Country*, is based on his own experiences. He is currently completing his third novel *A Rain of Stones*. He lives now in India.

Aparna Sen is an Indian filmmaker, screenwriter and actress who is known for her work in Bengali cinema. A leading actress of late 1960s, 1970s, 1980s. She has received eight "BFJA Award", five for best actress, two for best supporting actress and one for lifetime achievement award. She is the winner of three National Film Awards and nine international film festival awards for her direction in films. She was awarded the "Padma Shri", the fourth highest civilian award, by the government of India in 1987. Her directorial debut *36 Chowringhee Lane* won her the National Award for best Director. Her other notable films include *Paromitar Ek Din*, *Mr & Mrs Iyer*, *The Japanese Wife* and *Goynar Baksho* among many others .

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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