

Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival 2017

Conversations: Identity: Inclusive urban cities, Post Truth, Voice of Girls, women writers and writing on women ,

News : Announcing of short film winner at Little India Stories by iLead-o-Scope 2.0

Discussions : History, why mythology is subjective truth

Events: Day 3 - 17th January

@ ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL GROUNDS: Us and Them: Of Identity and Belonging: with authors Marcos G Torrente, Jael Silliman, Kiran Nagarkar and Sadaf Saaz; **Modernity and Beyond: Culture and the Urban Space in the 21st Century:** With architect Jon Lang, photographer Ram Rahman, and author Amit Chaudhuri; **A Space for Us: The Last Girl in Literature:** With Anita Nair, Baby Halder, Ruchira Gupta. Moderated by Urvashi Butalia; **Lest We Forget: Rescuing Lost Histories:** Challenges and rewards of revisiting silenced histories. With Ritu Menon, Kama Maclean, Shrabani Basu; **Post-Truth – a threat to liberal democracy?** Are we living in a time where fact is being ignored for emotional rhetoric? With Ananya Vajpeyi and Ram Rahman; **Of Stardust and Tinseltown: Writing Bollywood:** With Shobhaa De, Rachel Dwyer, Jerry Pinto; **Little India Stories: the Other attractions: Poetry Café and Plug** in hold their sessions for 2017 with Open Pic, Adil & Paloma and Sambit; **Little India Stories: the iLead-o-Scope 2.0 Awards** with actor Parambrata, filmmaker Q, cinematographer Ranjan Palit, film studies professor Rachel Dwyer. Introduced and moderated by Modhurima Sinha.

@ TOLLYGUNGE CLUB: From Olympus to Kailash with Devdutt Pattanaik on Greek myths with an Indian twist. In conversation with Arshia Sattar

@OXFORD BOOKSTORE, PARK STREET: Foot in the Door or Candle in the Wind? The niche publisher in today's world: a discussion with Michael Dwyer, Deborah Smith, Ritu Menon, Stephanie Siriwardene, Ruby Hembrom, Anita Nai; **Narichetna: Writing by and on Women:** Across the country, how are women writing and being written of? With Malashri Lal, Esther Syiem, Supriya Chaudhuri, Sunaina Singh, Jerry Pinto; **Silent Archives, Submerged Histories** Post Independence defunct newspapers of Bengal: An exploratory discussion.

@iLEAD CAMPUS:

Screening of films by students of Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute (SRFTI); **Screening of iLEAD-o-Scope 2.0 Entries** - followed by Q & A with filmmakers. Films: **Alankar, Evolution of Zari, Batik Naturally, Eternal, Reflections of India, The Unknown Indian in every Indian, In the Shoes of the Shoemaker;** **Screening of iLEAD-o-Scope 2.0 Entries** followed by Q & A with filmmakers. Films: **Bolpur Blues, Aami Kolkata, Masked the Unseen Kolkata, Lorai, The Pledge.**

Kolkata 17th January 2017: Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival hosted conversations considered by it critical to take place towards creating a social environment that respects 50% of its population – the women – where removing gender bias and protecting the girl child is the need of the hour. This and conversations on how Post-Truth could become the biggest threat to liberal democracy as we live in a time where fact is being ignored for emotional rhetoric, a reality globally, took place at St.Paul's Cathedral grounds.

Inclusive Cities that conserved their tangible and intangible heritage as they modernize, why mythology is a subjective truth drew attention from 100s of Kolkatans who attended the third day of AKLF. The day started with an edifying discussion at St Paul's Cathedral grounds - **Us and Them: Of Identity and Belonging** with authors **Marcos G Torrente, Jael Silliman, Kiran Nagarkar and Sadaf Saaz**, moderated by Kaartikeya Bajpai while Oxford Bookstore hosted **Foot in the Door or Candle in the Wind? The niche publisher in today's world**, a panel discussion with UK publisher Michael Dwyer, Deborah Smith, Ritu Menon, Stephanie Siriwardene, Ruby Hembrom, Anita Nair, moderated by Wendy Were.

The historic and well maintained Cathedral grounds were perhaps the apt venue to start a debate about what do the cities of the future portend for culture and the arts. That's exactly how it turned out for the delegates who were part of **Modernity and Beyond: Culture and the Urban Space in the 21st Century**, a panel discussion. Moderated by Prateek Raja with architect **Jon Lang**, photographer **Ram Rahman**, and author **Amit Chaudhuri** who has been leading the charge in Kolkata for conservation of its old residential architectures, it really brought out how heritage and modernity could indeed make cities more inclusive and give citizens a sense of place and time.

The highlight of the day was **Post-Truth – a threat to liberal democracy** conversation that brought out the scary fact that we are living in a time where fact is being ignored for emotional rhetoric. The conversation between Ananya Vajpeyi and Ram Rahman moderated by Ruchira Gupta was the standout of the day and corner stoned the 2017 agenda of AKLF that Post Truth the new word added to the Oxford dictionary in 2016 required to be understood in its entire social context.

How are women writing and being written of and whether the girls have their own voice and who speaks for them when theirs is stifled, were the critical conversations that AKLF 2017 had pledged to start and indeed brought the audience to its feet. **Narichetna: Writing by and on Women** A conversation between Malashri Lal, Esther Syiem, Supriya Chaudhuri, Sunaina Singh, Jerry Pinto moderated by Bharati Ray in association with Sahitya Akademi. **A Space for Us: The Last Girl in Literature** Can the Last Girl speak? Who speaks for her? with Anita Nair, Baby Halder, Ruchira Gupta moderated by Urvashi Butalia; **Lest We Forget: Rescuing Lost Histories-** Challenges and rewards of revisiting silenced histories with Ritu Menon, Kama Maclean, Shrabani Basu moderated by Jael Silliman; **Silent Archives, Submerged Histories**, Post-Independence defunct newspapers of Bengal: An exploratory discussion. Presented by Aishee were some of the discussions held on day 3.

Films was a big focus of Day 3 of AKLF. While film screenings of the iLead o - Scope was carrying on at their campus around the movies that were shortlisted for the Award later held at AKLF, the platform of AKLF discussed fan fiction to film studies and everything in between at **Of Stardust and Tinseltown: Writing Bollywood** with Shobhaa De, Rachel Dwyer & Jerry Pinto moderated by Modhurima Sinha.

Jerry Pinto shared, *"I am delighted to be in the city that hosted the city's first literary festival created by a heritage bookstore. Kolkata is known to be a city of avid readers and as a first-timer at the Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival, I have been looking forward to stimulating interactions with the audiences here."*

While Poetry Café regaled poetry lovers in the early evening and Plug in delighted youngsters till late at night and both called curtains for 2017, AKLF moved to Tolly Club with the very erudite Devdutt Pattanaik holding fort on Greek myths with an Indian twist. Sharing his thoughts during his session on his latest book Devdutt Pattanaik said *“Mythology is subjective truth. My truth and your truth. Greek myths are based on one life. Hindu myths on rebirth. Greek myths reveal Oedipus complex. Hindu myths reveal Yayati complex.”* Arshia Sattar was in conversation with Pattanaik who seemed to have a huge fan following in the city.

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NOTES TO EDITOR

About AKLF

Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival is India’s first major literary initiative of the year, India’s only literary festival created by a bookstore and Kolkata’s first literary festival. AKLF’s eighth edition from Jan 15– 18 is woven around conversations to make the world a more inclusive place. Spotighting Kolkata’s unique cultural heritage of inclusiveness, the programme of AKLF 2017 was announced aboard a cruise on the banks of the Ganges. Created by the nearly 100 year old Oxford Bookstore , the Festival programming spans the entire spectrum of inclusion, from women and children to the underprivileged, including a tribute to the late Mahasweta Devi who brought the most marginalized into the fold of literature. The era of Post Truth, where facts are fast losing out to rhetoric, the reality globally, will be discussed by experts; as will be the impact of different media on our reality today. Every evening for three days, AKLF will pay tribute to Nobel Laureate Bob Dylan through poetry and contemporary music at Poetry Café and Plug in, hosted at the festival’s main venue – St. Paul’s Cathedral grounds – chosen for its welcoming, accessible and inclusive nature. For the first time, Oxford Bookstores will host Oxford Junior Literary Festival (OJLF), a two-day festival to be held on 15th and 16th Jan for young readers. Renowned children’s authors, publishers of children’s books, storytelling and creativity will form part of OJLF. This year, AKLF has tied up with UNICEF@70 to conduct its global short stories campaign titled “Tiny Stories” at OJLF. AKLF 2017 will be held at St Paul’s Cathedral, established in 1847, and Oxford Bookstore, established in 1919. The festival’s closing event will be hosted at St John’s Church, built in 1787. The Festival conversations will also be hosted at Royal Calcutta Turf Club, Tollygunge Club, the campus of iLead & Presidency University, Daga Nikunj and the Harrington Street Arts Centre.

AKLF 2017 Partners and Associations:

The AKLF 2017 edition has forged several new, prestigious associations, to add to its impressive repertoire of collaborations since the first edition in 2010. We are proud to have as our partners major national and international institutions and corporates such as the Australian Council for the Arts, Alliance Française, Australian High Commission, Instituto Cervantes, Consulate General of Italy, MAKAIAS, Presidency University, Future Hope, UNICEF, The Teacher’s Centre, Jaipur Literary Festival, Sahitya Akademi, Prabha Khaitan Foundation, Development Corporation Limited (DCL), Vivada Cruises, FACES, Open Doors, The Creative Arts, Zoomcar, Art Rickshaw, Times Fibrefill, Aishee, Sienna and several others. A wide cross section of publishers like Niyogi Books, Future, Oxford University Press, Tulika, Duckbill, NBDS The Book Council are also partnering with us. Venue partners include Tollygunge Club, iLead, Harrington Street Art Centre, Alka Jalan Foundation and Royal Calcutta Turf Club. We welcome 93.5 Red FM as our radio partner, Vistara as aviation partner, Typhoo as beverage partner, Kenilworth as hospitality

partner, Apollo Gleneagles Hospitals as wellness partner. AKLF is very proud of these associations and hopes to keep growing year on year.

About Oxford Bookstores:

Established in 1919, Oxford Bookstore is the best equipped 'base-camp' for journeys of the mind offering its customers the widest range of outstanding titles and consistently courteous and informed service for close to a century. Today, with stores in major metros, India's first dedicated Children's bookstore, Oxford Junior, India's first of its kind tea boutique, Cha Bar, India's only literary festival created by a bookstore, Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival, Oxford Bookstore offers booklovers access to the very best in publishing enhanced by a variety of events which salute books, visual & performing arts and celebrate the word. Oxford Bookstore measures its success by the smiles on millions of happy customers that the brand has served over the last nearly 100 years. There are a few treats as sumptuous as a visit to Oxford Bookstore in India. Each time you walk into our iconic store in Kolkata where the brand started in 1919, its charm leaves you wanting for more. Our fleet of happy to help expert booksellers and informed hosts work day and night to bring to customers world class reading experience be it through our books or our fine teas and live by the brand's motto - Much more than a bookstore – at every Bookstore. For more information, please also log on to: www.oxfordbookstore.com

Bios:

Marcos Giralt Torrente: Spanish writer and literary critic, graduated in philosophy from the Universidad Autónoma in Madrid. His first work was the collection of short stories titled *Entiéndame* (1995). He has published three novels and three short story collections. He won the National Prize for Fiction for his novel titled *Lifetime*, which is his most recent novel. His work has been translated into English, German, French, Italian and Portuguese.

Jael Silliman: An associate Professor of Women's Studies at the University of Iowa and the author of *Jewish Portraits, Indian Frames: Women's Narratives from a Diaspora of Hope* which chronicles Calcutta's little-known Jewish community through the lives of four generations of Jewish women in Silliman's family. She has also started a digital archive called Recalling Jewish Calcutta, which documents the lives of Calcutta's Baghdadi Jews. She has collaborated with the School of Cultural Texts and Records, Jadavpur University; Trinity College, Dublin and National University of Ireland, Maynooth for the creation of this website. Her most recent publication is her debut novel titled *The Man With Many Hats* (2013).

Kiran Nagarkar: Novelist, playwright, film and drama critic and screenwriter both in Marathi and English, and is one of the most significant writers of postcolonial India. His works include, *Saat Sakkam Trechalis* (tr. Seven Sixes Are Forty Three) (1974), *Ravan and Eddie* (1994), and the epic novel, *Cuckold* (1997) for which he was awarded the 2001 Sahitya Akademi Award. Nagarkar was awarded the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany, described as the 'highest tribute Germany can pay to individuals'.

Sadaf Saaz: Poet, writer, entrepreneur and women's rights activist, co-founded the Dhaka literary festival in 2011, and has been a driving force since its inception. She is based in Dhaka, and runs several businesses, including Jatrik, an arts management and travel company, which has managed the festival since 2011, and continues to produce Dhaka Lit Fest. She is author of a collection of poetry, *Sari Reams*, published by UPL.

Michael Dwyer: Publisher at Hurst Publishers. He joined Hurst Publishers, a London-based independent non-fiction publishing house in 1986 and became the head in 2007 after the death of Christopher Hurst. He mostly works with African Studies, Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, South Asian Studies and War and International Relations.

Deborah Smith: A literary translator of Korean fiction. She has translated *The Vegetarian* by Han Kang. She became the first translator to share the Man Booker International Prize with an author, in 2016. Apart from being a translator, she founded the Tilted Axis Press, which focuses on contemporary fiction especially from Asia. Having only started to learn Korean in 2010, she has already translated three books. Her translated works include Han Kang's *Human Acts*, Bae Suah's *A Greater Music*. She has graduated from Cambridge University and is currently a research fellow at SOAS.

Ritu Menon: Publisher and writer who has been active in the South Asian women's movement for over 20 years. She is co-founder of Kali for Women, India's first and oldest feminist press, and founder of Women Unlimited, an associate of Kali for Women. Her recent work (co-authored with Kalpana Kannabiran) is titled *From Mathura to Manorama: Resisting Violence Against Women in India*. She also recently penned a travel memoir, *Loitering with Intent: Diary of a Happy Traveller*.

Stephanie Siriwardene: Publishing Assistant at Scribe Publications, she has worked in editorial capacity for various non-profit organizations. She provides support to areas such as editorial and production. She is making efforts to establish new opportunities for Scribe's frontlist and backlist authors and to expand Scribe's list of commercial titles. She received her bachelor's degree in English Literature/History and Master's degree in Publishing and Editing from Monash University. She has remained an administrative assistant and a publications officer from Judicial College of Victoria, where she coordinated Judgment Writing workshops for the Victorian judiciary and edited the College's inaugural online journal. She has also worked as a project manager for a non-profit arts organization Ondru.

Ruby Hembrom: Founder and Director of Adivaani, which is a publishing outfit of adivasis. It strives to bring out adivasi stories into the public sphere. She has established Adivasi Pickle which is a prize for indigenous thought, ideology and knowledge. She has been nominated for the award of 'NDV Women of Worth' in the category of Literature for her contribution in making an effort in reviving tribal literature.

Anita Nair: An author, best known for her fiction and poetry. Her novels *The Better Man* and *Ladies Coupe* are bestselling works and have been translated in twenty one languages. *Chain of Custody (2016)* dealing with child trafficking is her most recent work.

Jon Lang: An Emeritus professor at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia where he served as the Head of the School of Architecture during the 1990s. Professor Lang was born in Calcutta and educated there, as well as in South Africa and the United States. He has served as a UNESCO consultant in Turkey and a NATO Fellow in Belgium. As a Ford Foundation Fellow he has taught at The Indian Institute of Technology in Kharagpur. He has co-authored with Madhavi Desai and Miki Desai *Architecture and Independence: The Search for Identity (1997)*. He is also the author of *Creating Architectural Theory (1987)* and *Urban Design: the American Experience (1994)*.

Ram Rahman: Noted contemporary Indian Photographer and curator based in Delhi. He is one of the founding members of the Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust (SAHMAT) in New Delhi, a leader in the resistance to communal and sectarian forces in India through its public cultural action. Ram Rahman is one of the leading photographers in Project 365, a public photo art project that creates and preserves photographic visuals of the fast changing ancient culture and lifestyle of the tri-sangam territory of ancient Tamilakam.

Amit Chaudhuri: A novelist, his latest work is *Odysseus Abroad (2014)*. He is also a critically acclaimed singer in the north Indian classical tradition. He was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award in 2002 for his novel *A New World*. In 2012, he won the Infosys Prize for Humanities-Literary Studies for his literary criticism. He is currently Professor of Contemporary Literature at the University of East Anglia. He has been recently involved with preservation and restoration of architectural heritage of the city of Kolkata through his new endeavor Calcutta Architectural Legacies (CAL).

Malashri Lal: Professor of Department of English, and the Joint Director of the University of Delhi, she specializes in literary studies. She has written and lectured extensively on women's socio-cultural positioning and women's writing. Her publications include, *The Law of the Threshold: Women Writers in Indian English*, and the co-edited volumes *Women's Studies in India: Contours of Change; Interpreting Homes in South Asian Literature*, and most recently, *The Indian Family in Transition*. Lal has served on the international jury for the Commonwealth Writers Prize and received fellowships from the Fulbright and the Rockefeller Foundation.

Esther Syeim: A professor of English at the North Eastern Hill University, Shillong, she is the author of the book, *Race of the Rivers*, which is her first book with Tulika Books. Her writing aims to revive and reinterpret the traditional Khasi folktales. Her publications also include two collections of poetry, *Oral Scriptings* and *Of Follies and Frailties of Wit and Wisdom* and a play in Khasi, *Ka Nam*. She is also a member of the Advisory Boards at Sahitya Akademi.

Supriya Chaudhuri: Academic scholar who is Professor Emeritus at Kolkata's Jadavpur University. Her scholarship ranges over many fields, notably literary theory, 18th Century British Literature, modernism, and the Renaissance. She specializes in the history of ideas. Her works include *Writing Over: Medieval to Renaissance* (edited along with Sukanta Chaudhuri), *Literature and Gender: Essays for Jasodhara Bagchi* (edited along with Sajni Mukherji), *Literature and Philosophy: Essays in Connexion, Petrarch and the Renaissance* (edited along with Sukanta Chaudhuri). She is a major contributor to the Oxford Tagore Translations and has translated *Relationships* (Jogajog).

Sunaina Singh: Professor of English at the English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU). Before embarking on this prestigious position, she was a Professor of English at Osmania University. She has published seven books and a number of research papers over the years. She is the recipient of the *Commonwealth Academic Staff Scholarship Award (1984)* and a *Postdoctoral Faculty Award (2005)*. Her outstanding contributions to Indian Education have enabled her to become the recipient of *Rashtriya Gaurav Award (2011)*

Jerry Pinto: Mumbai-based poet, prose and children's fiction writer, journalist. Pinto writes in English, and his works include, *Helen: The Life and Times of an H-Bomb* (2006) which won the Best Book on Cinema Award at the 54th National Film Awards, *Surviving Women* (2000) and *Asylum and Other Poems* (2003). His first novel *Em and The Big Hoom* was published in 2012 for which he won the Windham-Campbell prize in 2016. This also won the Sahitya Akademi award in 2016.

Baby Halder: An inspirational woman who went from being a domestic help onto becoming a published author, with her autobiography, *Aalo Andhari* which was translated by Urvashi Butalia to English, renaming it as *A Life Less Ordinary* (2006) which became a bestseller. The book received a lot of media attention due to its thematic story of the harsh lives of a domestic help. It later got translated into twenty one languages. Her second book, *Eshat Roopantar*, was also well received. She is currently working on her third book.

Ruchira Gupta: Founder and President of Apne Aap Women Worldwide, a grassroots organization in India working to end sex trafficking by increasing choices for at-risk girls and women. In 2009 Gupta won the Clinton Global Citizen Award and in 2007, she won the Abolitionist Award at the UK House of Lords. In 2008 and 2009, Gupta addressed the UN General Assembly on human trafficking. She won an Emmy in 1997 for her work on the documentary "The Selling of Innocents," which inspired the creation of Apne Aap. Prior to founding Apne Aap, Gupta worked in the United Nations for over ten years. She also taught courses on human trafficking for New York University's School of Global Affairs.

Shrabani Basu: Journalist and historian, she is the author of *For King and Another Country: Indian Soldiers on the Western Front 1914-18*, *Victoria & Abdul: The Story of the Queen's Closest Confidant*, *Spy Princess:*

The Life of Noor Inayat Khan and Curry: The Story of Britain's Favourite Dish. She is also the founder and chair of the Noor Inayat Khan Memorial Trust. She has been the London correspondent of Ananda Bazar Patrika group since 1988--writing for Sunday, Ananda Bazar Patrika, and The Telegraph.

Ananya Vajpeyi: An academic and award-winning author. She is Assistant Professor at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies. Her book *Righteous Republic* won the Crossword Award for Non-Fiction (2013), Thomas J Wilson Memorial Prize from Harvard University Press and the Tata First Book Award for Non-Fiction (2013).

Ram Rahman: Noted contemporary Indian Photographer and curator based in Delhi. He is one of the founding members of the Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust (SAHMAT) in New Delhi, a leader in the resistance to communal and sectarian forces in India through its public cultural action. Ram Rahman is one of the leading photographers in Project 365, a public photo art project that creates and preserves photographic visuals of the fast changing ancient culture and lifestyle of the tri-sangam territory of ancient Tamilakam.

Shobhaa De: Columnist and novelist. She runs four weekly columns in mainstream newspapers, including The Times of India and The Asian Age. Her Times of India Blog titled 'Politically Incorrect' where she takes on contemporary politics and current events in her typical sarcastic humour has garnered a huge readership. All her novels have been immensely popular and have been on various bestsellers lists. Four of her novels have been included in the postgraduate popular culture curriculum in the University of London. Her most recent work *Sethji* has received popular and critical acclaim.

Rachel Dwyer: Professor of Indian Cultures and Cinema at SOAS, University of London. She took her BA in Sanskrit at SOAS, followed by an MPhil in General Linguistics and Comparative Philology at the University of Oxford. Her PhD research was on the Gujarati lyrics of Dayaram (1777-1852). Professor Dwyer has published ten books, several of which are on Indian cinema. She has recently completed '*Bollywood's India: Indian cinema as a guide to modern India*'. She is currently researching the Asian elephant in India.

Devdutt Pattanaik: A mythologist, writer, illustrator and communicator. He has also been the Chief Belief Officer at Future Group. Although trained as a doctor, he became a leadership consultant. Following his passion for mythology, he has written over thirty books, amongst which the most popular are *Myth=Mithya: A Handbook of Hindu Mythology*, *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of the Mahabharata*, *Sita: An Illustrated Retelling of the Ramayana*, *Business Sutra: An Indian Approach to Management*, *Shikhandi And Other Tales They Don't Tell You*, *My Gita*. His most recent work, *Olympus: An Indian Retelling of the Greek Myths* sheds light on Greek mythology and compares it with Indian mythology. He has published over 600 articles. He has also been part of the popular television series, Devlok with Devdutt Pattanaik, as the mythology expert.

Arshia Sattar: A translator, writer and teacher, her note-worthy translations include *Tales from the Kathasaritsagara* (1993) in Sanskrit and *Valmiki's Ramayana* (1996). She also published her essays on the Valmiki Ramayana, *Lost Loves: Exploring Rama's Anguish* (2011) which was short-listed for the Crossword Vodafone Non-Fiction Award. Her recent work is *Valmiki's Uttara*. Along with DW Gibson, Sattar founded the Sangam House International Residency Program which has hosted nearly one hundred writers from across India and all over the world.

For more information, please contact: