

Image, Identity, Literature & the Asian Woman

Kolkata, 12th January, 2013: The National Library and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies (MAKAIAS) presented a thought provoking discussion on *Image, Identity, Literature and the Asian Woman* on the occasion of Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival 2013.

Focusing on the issues and challenges faced by Asian women in literature, international names in literature, Kenize Mourad, celebrated French -Turkish author with Indian roots, who attended courtesy the French Embassy & Institut Francais en Inde, Farah Ghuznavi, columnist and short story writer from Bangladesh; Mira Hashmi, film critic and professor of film studies in Lahore School of Economics in Pakistan and Jael Silliman, Jewish author, independent consultant, and an activist both in the US and international women's health and reproductive justice movements, presented a stimulating discussion on the subject.

Moderated by Tilottama Tharoor, Humanities Professor at New York University, and a prominent face on the intellectual circuit of both Kolkata and New York, the event was a part of one of AKLF 2013's key themes of the "The Asian Neighbourhood." The panel discussion highlighted how Asian women are finding expression of their emotions, their rights, their activism, and their creativity in varied forms of literature and how the same is reflecting in their writing and in their image and identity.

About Kenize Mourad:

The French writer Kanize Mourad grew up in Paris as an orphan in Catholic care. It was not until almost reaching adulthood that she discovered her sad and romantic family history - she was the product of an exiled Turkish Princess's unhappy marriage to an Indian Rajah. This new knowledge inspired her with an interest in those parts of the world that were in her blood, if not in her upbringing, and at 20, she converted to Islam after studying the Sufi poets. Later she became a correspondent for the French magazine *Nouvel Observateur*. Her works include the best-selling *De La Part de la Princesse Morte* (Regards from a Dead Princess), published *La Jardin de Badalpur*, a novel, *Le Parfum de Notre Terre* (Our Sacred land). Her most recent book, published in France in 2010 and just coming out in English this year, is *Dans la Ville d'Or et d'Argent* (In the City of Gold and Silver). This is a historical novel set in 19th Century Awadh, and the city of Lucknow, and tells the true story of Begum Hazrat Mahal and her stand against the British colonizer's attempt to seize the territory that her husband had ruled.

About Farah Ghuznavi

Farah Ghuznavi is a writer and newspaper columnist, with a background in development work. She has worked for NGOs in Bangladesh, Britain, Africa, as well as in the United Nations, and the Grameen Bank, famous for its collateral-free loans to poor women. She is one of the winners of the 2010 Commonwealth Short Story Competition. Farah is also a columnist for the Star Weekend Magazine, the largest-circulation English publication in Bangladesh. Her topics include global politics, humour, human rights, gender equality, social commentary and child behaviour.

About Mira Hashmi

Film critic, teacher, buff, some-time filmmaker/writer, lives in Lahore where she is Assistant Professor in Film Studies at the Lahore School of Economics. She has a BFA (with distinction), and a Major in film production from the Concordia University, Canada. She has worked on a number of television projects, and does theatre and freelance work. Prior to joining the Lahore School she taught Film Studies at BNU.

Jael Silliman

Jael Silliman is a writer who has been an activist both in the US and international women's health and reproductive justice movements. She was an associate professor of women's studies at the University of Iowa, where she wrote about social movements, women's health, and reproductive rights. Currently an independent consultant, for six years she was the program officer for reproductive rights in the Human Rights Unit at the Ford Foundation. Her book Jewish Portraits, Indian Frames, explores three generations of Baghdadi Jewish women in her family, as they negotiated life in Kolkata and the east.

Tilottama Tharoor

Tilottama Tharoor is a humanities professor at New York University. She studied at Loreto House and Loreto College, Kolkata, where she was known for her debating prowess. Her special focus is on Indian writing in English.

About Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival (AKLF) 2013:

A Community initiative by the Apeejay Surrendra Group, the annual literary festival hosted since 2010 in Kolkata is the first international literary festival in Kolkata, a city celebrated for its intellectual depth and cultural heritage. An array of special curated discussions, performances and some of the finest literary events are scheduled for the fourth edition from 9th- 13th January, 2013. A noteworthy literary and cultural representation from across India and overseas will be seen at the Festival, amongst the finest minds from India and overseas. Prominent personalities attending will be Ramachandra Guha, William Dalrymple, Shyam Benegal, Pavan Varma, Yasmin Ali Bhai

Brown, Amit Chaudhuri, Leila Seth, Manil Suri, Ruchir Joshi, Onir, Urvashi Butalia, Shobhaa De and Tishani Doshi and several others. Events are scheduled at significant cultural and heritage venues across Kolkata like National Library, St John's Church, banks of Hooghly, Lascar Monument, and at India's finest and most loved 92 year old iconic bookstore- Oxford Bookstore, Kolkata. Amongst the many highlights is Festival's collaboration with the Tibor-Jones South Asia Prize to recognize and encourage new and emerging writers in the South Asian region.

For event videos & pictures Log On to <http://www.aklf.in/>

For media related information, please contact: Perfect Relations
Priyanka 9830615322 | Ranita 9007392076 | Aditi 9831548970