

Press Note: Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival 2016 – Day 3

Event: Of Magic and Mysteries

Release of Ben Okri's new novel 'The Age of Magic'

Kolkata, 16th January, 2016: Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival 2016 hosted the book launch of *'The Age of Magic'* authored by **Ben Okri**. The book was released by chief guest **Jayanta Sengupta**, Jayanta Secretary and Curator (Director) of Victoria Memorial Hall, and Director-in-Charge of Indian Museum, Kolkata. *The Age of Magic* is an unusual blend of poetry, prose and philosophy—the unique literary form that Okri has coined as fictive philosophy. Throughout the book, the literal and the metaphorical or emotional goes hand in hand. The physical journey corresponds to the characters' emotional journey. The world of magical spirit parallels emotional needs and perceptions. These things are intrinsically linked and although shown as separate, it is clear that the spirit and material world interact and create one another.

This novel takes us on a journey, a magical, and a literal one. It depicts a story of a tightly knit group of filmmakers travel from Paris together to make a documentary. Unknown to themselves they carry a lot of unwanted baggage - fear, anger, jealousy, love. When they arrive in an idyllic Swiss village ringed by mountains and reflected in a lake, they discover a haunted world that will compel them to confront the demons they have been trying to escape. A story full of unexpected, poetic and metaphysical revelations.

Speaking on the occasion **Mr Jayanta Sengupta** said, *"It is a privilege and honour for the Victoria Memorial Hall to be a co-host of the AKLF 2016, like in the last years, and I am really glad to see that its role in the festival has grown from hosting the inaugural event to hosting several sessions over multiple days. We have always believed that heritage spaces like the VMH lend an additional charm, even grandeur, to high-profile literary and cultural events like this, and that is why we are proud to continue this partnership. I am deeply moved to be given the honour of releasing the latest novel of Ben Okri, one of the foremost authors of our times."*

The launch was followed by an intriguing discussion on the theme of the book and the mysteries of storytelling with **Sujata Sen**, Director (East India), British Council who was in conversation with author **Ben Okri**.

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 Editor:

Ben Okri is a Nigerian poet and novelist, born in Nigeria and lives in London. Okri is considered one of the foremost African authors in the post-modern and post-colonial traditions and has been compared favourably to authors such as Salman Rushdie and Gabriel García Márquez. Ben Okri has published 8 novels including *The Famished Road* which was awarded the 1991 Booker Prize and *Starbook*, as well as collections of poetry, short stories and essays. His work has been translated into more than 20 languages. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and has been awarded the OBE as well as numerous international prizes, including the Commonwealth Writers Prize for Africa, the Aga Khan Prize for Fiction and the Chianti Rufino-Antico Fattore. He is a Vice-President of the English Centre of International PEN and was presented with a Crystal Award by the World Economic Forum.

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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