

## Press Note: Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival 2016 – Day 2

**Event:** Love Equals Chemistry: Or Does It?

*Panel discussion with Shobhaa De, Anuja Chauhan, Vera Splepoj, Kathryn Harkup and Hia Sen*

**Kolkata, 15<sup>th</sup> January, 2016:** Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival 2016 hosted a one-of-its-kind discussion on whether love is purely a chemical reaction - a fundamental question that every individual wishes to know the answer to, with well-known writer and columnist **Shobhaa De**, popular young adult author **Anuja Chauhan**, psychologist **Vera Splepoj**, chemist, science communicator and author **Kathryn Harkup**, and sociologist and author **Hia Sen**. The conversation was moderated by **Sumit Chakraborti**.

Owing to their diverse backgrounds, the panelists engaged in an intriguing conversation that broke barriers and prejudices, giving Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival guests, food for thought. The concept of love as a chemical reaction is a view of life that people, over the last two-hundred years have speculated on, mused over and debated to no end.

### **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 the Editors**

**Shobhaa De** is an Indian columnist and novelist. After making her name as a model, she started her career in journalism in 1970 during the course of which she founded and edited three magazines — *Stardust*, *Society*, and *Celebrity*. Shobhaa is an immensely popular columnist and 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. She has been the writer of several popular soaps on television, including India's second daily serial, *Swabhimaan*. De has participated in several literary festivals, including the Writers' Festival in Melbourne. 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.

**Anuja Chauhan** is an Indian author and advertiser, often described as 'the best writer of the Indian commercial fiction genre. She worked in the advertising agency, JWT India, for over 17 years eventually becoming vice-president and executive creative director, before resigning in 2010 to pursue a full-time literary career. As a writer, she is best known for her best-selling, contemporary "rom-com" novels, *The Zoya Factor* (2008), *Battle For Bittora* (October 2010) and *Those Pricey Thakur Girls* (January 2013). Her new novel, a jump sequel to *Those Pricey Thakur Girls* released in May 2015 is titled *The House That BJ Built*.

**Vera Splepoj**, armed with a degree in psychology and specializing in individual and group psychotherapy, the psychologist Vera Splepoj lives and works in Padua, Milan and London. Many activities that have seen the psychologist engaged in years past as a professional psychotherapist are teaching at the University of Siena, the president of the Italian Federation of Psychologists and International Health Observatory, the direction of important schools of psychology training. Vera was also a member of the Authority for Volunteering and the TV and Minors Committee of the Ministry of Communications. He held the position of Head of Culture and Social Policy of the province of Padua. Author of many scientific papers and books on psychoanalysis, psychologist Vera Splepoj participates as an expert in many television programmes and collaborates with various newspapers including Diva and Donna.

**Kathryn Harkup** is a chemist, science communicator and author of *A is for Arsenic: The Poisons of Agatha Christie*, released on 10th September 2015. She is passionate about communicating how amazing science can be, and her talks and workshops have been delivered for science festivals and schools across the South East as well as organisations such as The Hungarian Museum, The Training Partnership, RHS Wisley and The Royal Institution of Great Britain. Kathryn is appearing at the following event: A is for Arsenic: The Poisons of Agatha Christie.

**Hia Sen** studied sociology in Kolkata and New Delhi and completed her doctoral thesis at the University of Freiburg, Germany. She is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Presidency University, Kolkata, India. She is the author of 'Time-Out' in the Land of Apu'.

## **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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