

Press Note: Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival 2016 – Day 4

Event: Love for Sale

Launch of 'River of Flesh and Other Stories: The Prostituted Women in Indian Fiction'

Kolkata, 17th January, 2016: Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival 2016 hosted the launch of '**River of Flesh and Other Stories: The Prostituted Women in Indian Fiction**'. The book was released by Sonagachi leader Keya. The launch was followed by a discussion between the Book's editor - eminent feminist **Ruchira Gupta**, founder of Apne Aap Women Worldwide, **Nayanika Mookherjee**, Reader of Socio-Cultural Anthropology in Durham University, **Modhurima Sinha**, media professional and author as well as journalist **Ratnottama Sengupta**. The discussion brought out a perspective on 'this form of human slavery' and the commoditization of a woman's body. The highlight of the session was readings from the book by **Aparna Sen**.

River of Flesh and Other Stories brings together twenty-one stories about trafficked and prostituted women by some of India's most celebrated writers—Amrita Pritam, Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, Indira Goswami, Ismat Chughtai, J. P. Das, Kamala Das, Kamleshwar, Krishan Chander, Munshi Premchand, Nabendu Ghosh, Qurratulain Hyder, Saadat Hasan Manto and Siddique Alam, among others. An unprecedented anthology — for its subject, as well as for the range of authors and translators who are part of it — *River of Flesh and Other Stories* offers a harsh indictment of this practice of human slavery, too often justified—and occasionally glorified—as the 'world's oldest profession'. Across regions, religions, and fourteen languages, these stories uniformly reveal the entrenched inequalities that force women into prostitution, their desire to liberate themselves, the demoralizing conditions that they are forced to endure and the remarkable strength with which they transcend their exploitation—sometimes through death and murder and sometimes through hope and fortitude.

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:

Ruchira Gupta is the 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. She has striven over her 25 year career to highlight the link between trafficking and prostitution laws, and to lobby policy-makers to shift blame from victims to perpetrators. 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. Her work has been featured in 11 books including *Half the Sky* by Sheryl WuDunn and Nicholas Kristof. Prior to founding Apne Aap, Gupta worked in the United Nations in various capacities in 12 countries for over ten years. In 2012 and 2013, she designed and taught courses on human trafficking for New York University's School of Global Affairs.

Nayanika Mookherjee is a Reader of Socio-Cultural Anthropology in Durham University, UK. She has published extensively on her research interests: anthropology of violence, gendered violence during wars, ethics and aesthetics. Recent publications include *The Spectral Wound. Sexual Violence, Public Memories and the Bangladesh War of 1971* (Foreword by Veena Das, Duke University Press, 2015). Currently she is finishing her manuscript 'Arts of Reconciliation' (contracted with Stanford UP). As a British Academy fellow, her new research is on transnational adoption and conflict.

Modhurima Sinha is the Director of Public Relations and Marketing at Taj Hotels, and Head - Marketing Communications for Khazana worldwide. She authored *Call of the Real*, a coffee table book outlining the biographies of the eleven Bengali Masters of contemporary art. She assisted Aparna Sen on her film *Goynar Baksho* and dabbled in advertising and film-making with award-winning Indo-Canadian film-maker Mitra Sen.

Ratnottama Sengupta is a journalist, who has contributed to newspapers like *The Telegraph*, *The Indian Express* and *The Times of India*, as the Arts Editor. She won the National Award for Writings on Cinema in 2001, has contributed on Hindi cinema to the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and been on the Central Board of Film Certification. She is involved with programming film festivals, curates art and photo exhibitions and has authored several books on contemporary Indian art and artists. She is currently writing *In The World of Bimal Roy*, and *Behind The Veil*, on the legendary Bengali actress Suchitra Sen.

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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