

## **Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival 2017**

***Conversations:** Why Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry and narrow mindedness; Can Writers be cause activists or Literature a peacekeeping force Bring North East to Centre stage ; Upgrading popular narratives of the woman of substance*

***News:** Dans le Moment - Contemporary French Photography*

***Candle Light Vigil:** To protest against divisive voices and forces and to stand in solidarity with the ideal of an inclusive society*

### **Events: Day 4 - 18<sup>th</sup> January**

#### **@OXFORD BOOKSTORE, PARK STREET:**

**Peace Words: Literature as a peace keeping force?** with Kaartikeya Bajpai, Pritha Kejriwal, Sadaf Saaz, Yassmin Abdel-Magied; **Staying Alive: Ethics and Public Health** with sociologist Sujatha Rao, medical academic Samiran Nundy, bureaucrat Sanjeev Chopra, doctor Rupali Basu; **Taking Off: Travel Tales** with Ritu Menon, Prajwal Parajuly, Sandip Hor, Sundeep Bhutoria; **Whither Northeast? Points of View** with Prajwal Parajuly, Esther Syiem, Reep Pandi Lepcha, Sreeradha Dutta; **On Literary Activism, a discussion on the occasion of the release of Literary Activism: Perspectives** with Amit Chaudhuri, Raj Kamal Jha, Rosinka Chaudhuri, Saikat Mazumdar; **The Superwoman Syndrome with** Shobhaa De, Naina Lal Kidwai, Rupali Basu, Sudha Menon.

#### **Closing event**

#### **@ST. JOHN'S CHURCH:**

**Love in a Time of Vitriol – Narratives of Inclusiveness with** Nayantara Sahgal delivers the closing address, followed by Haji Syed Salman Chisty of Ajmer Sharif. Statements by Ram Rahman, Kiran Nagarkar, Urvashi Butalia, Ananya Vajpeyi, Jerry Pinto and Sandip Roy

#### **Also**

#### **@HARRINGTON STREET ARTS CENTRE:**

**Inauguration:** Dans le Moment - **Contemporary French Photography** exhibition followed by a discussion on 'In The Moment' with Kunal Basu, Ram Rahman, Alka Pande, Anila Gill and Benoit de Vilmorin. Moderated by Raju Raman.

**Kolkata 18<sup>th</sup> January 2017:** Apeejay Kolkata Literary festival held at the nearly 100 year old Oxford Bookstore on its fourth and closing day brought voices that urged packed audiences and the conscientious everywhere to speak up in solidarity with the ideal of an inclusive society. The various sessions brought forth views that echoed the hope that there will arise a new generation of inspired artists, musicians, writers, filmmakers and visual artists - those who value the idea of inclusion, those who will spotlight the racism, patriarchy, warmongering, social inequality, hypocrisy, and corruption, hurting people, especially children, across the world and who will become the world's peace keeping force.

Nayantara Sahgal revered for her take on political ideas said in the festival's closing address delivered at the St. John's Church supported that this call for inclusiveness had emerged from Kolkata and AKLF. She said, "I have found Kolkata to be a very intellectually stimulating city where

*the audience are alert about what's going on in the country which is important specially now when the country is going through a politically difficult period. Inclusiveness is our nature and very much a part of India. Festivals like AKLF help keep the freedom of expression alive."*

The day's sessions ranged from urging people to travel as it was 'fatal to prejudice, bigotry and narrow mindedness', to shout outs for attention to our North East and the need to up the 'substance' of the popular narratives of the woman of substance.

The day started with a call to writers to hold 'power to account' with a discussion on whether a pen could even stand up to the sword. The session **Peace Words: Literature as a peace keeping force** was moderated by Saikat Majumdar featuring writers like Kaartikeya Bajpai, Pritha Kejriwal, Sadaf Saaz, Yassmin Abdel-Magied who have indeed tried. Edifying conversations - **On Literary Activism** opening the 'literary' to multiple interventions with Amit Chaudhuri, Raj Kamal Jha, Rosinka Chaudhuri, Saikat Mazumdar was moderated by Samantak Das and **Taking Off: Travel Tales**, encountering the new – travel that broadens the mind with Ritu Menon, Prajwal Parajuly, Sandip Hor, Sundeep Bhutoria, moderated by Anita Nair brought to focus AKLF's 2017 agenda.

The day also witnessed two special conversations conceptualized on controversial issues of imagery of women created in popular narratives and the issues that ail India's north eastern states - **The Superwoman Syndrome**, investigating how do popular narratives represent Women of Substance, with writers Shobhaa De & Sudha Menon, financial wizard, Naina Lal Kidwai and medicine specialist Dr. Rupali Basu moderated by Oindrilla Dutt and **Whither Northeast? Points of View**, Questions of identity and progress with Prajwal Parajuly, Esther Syiem, Reep Pandi Lepcha, Sreeradha Dutta moderated by Sanjeev Chopra, held in association with MAKAIAS .

**Dans le Moment - Contemporary French Photography exhibition** was inaugurated which features works of French followed by a discussion on 'In The Moment' with Kunal Basu, Ram Rahman, Oxford Bookstore Cover prize Jury member Alka Pande, Anila Gill and Benoit de Vilmorin. Moderated by Raju Raman.

**Staying Alive: Ethics and Public Health** where experts share their perspectives and experiences with sociologist Sujatha Rao, medical academic Samiran Nundy, bureaucrat Sanjeev Chopra and doctor Rupali Basu, moderated by C. S. Mukherjee.

The Day's last and closing session was **Love in a Time of Vitriol – Narratives of Inclusiveness**, Nayantara Sahgal delivered the closing address, followed by Haji Syed Salman Chisty of Ajmer Sharif. Statements by Ram Rahman, Kiran Nagarkar, Urvashi Butalia, Ananya Vajpeyi, Jerry Pinto and Sandip Roy. The Festival was closed with a mass candle light vigil, poetry and music in solidarity with the ideal of an inclusive society.

**STAY CONNECTED: #AKLF2017 at AKLF.IN & @THEAKLF**

### **Notes to Editors**

**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. Spotlighting 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 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> 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](http://www.oxfordbookstore.com)

#### **Author Bios:**

**Karthikeya Bajpayi:** A JN Tata Scholar and journalism graduate, whose first published work *Chandamama* was at the age of nine. His works have since appeared in *Tehelka*, *Helter Skelter*, *Muse India*, *Reading Hour*, *Sahitya Academy's Indian Literature Journal*, *Spark Magazine*, *Roots* and *Meanderings Anthology*, *Significant Anthology*, *Everyman's Science* among others. He has given two TEDx

talks and been a panelist/speaker in numerous literary events. He lives in New York, and is pursuing his masters in Creative Writing and works part time at the India China Institute.

**Pritha Kejriwal:** Founder and editor of Kindle Magazine. Under her leadership the magazine has established itself as one of the leading torch-bearers of alternative journalism in the country, having won several awards, including the United Nations supported Laadli Award for gender sensitivity and the Aasra Award for excellence in media. She is also a poet, whose works have been published in various national and international journals.

**Sadaf Saaz Siddiqi:** 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.

**Yassmin Abdel-Magied:** Mechanical engineer, social advocate, writer and petrol head, she is the 2015 Queensland Young Australian of the Year. She advocates for the empowerment of youth, women and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and founded Youth Without Borders at age 16. Her new book *Yassmin's Story: Who do you think I am* has received both critical and popular acclaim.

**Sanjeev Chopra:** IAS Officer with over thirty years in the government at the apex level, with degrees in law, history and literature, and a PhD in Management Studies. He holds prestigious fellowships (Hubert H. Humphrey at Cornell and Robert S. McNamara at World Bank). He has also taught at the LBS National Academy of Administration was the coordinator of the faculty of Management and the Vice Chair of the Centre for Co-operatives and Rural Development. He has been the Guest scholar/Visiting Faculty at Brookings Institution, IIM-A, IRMA, LBSNAA and State ATIs.

**Dr. Rupali Basu:** President and CEO of Apollo Hospitals Group. She has been a speaker at Hospital management Asia and other healthcare industry forums. She currently holds the position of the President of Association of Hospitals in Eastern India.

**Dr. Samiran Nundy:** A gastrointestinal surgeon, medical academic, writer. Formerly, the head of the department of 'Gastrointestinal surgery at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi', is also a former faculty member of Harvard University, Cambridge University and London University. He is also a recipient of the Padma Shri Award for his contribution in the field of medicine. His most recent book '*Complications after Gastrointestinal Surgery*' will be releasing in 2017.

**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*.

**Prajwal Parajuly:** Author. His works focus on Nepali-speaking people and their culture. Parajuly's works include the short-story collection *The Gurkha's Daughter* and novel *Land Where I Flee*. His debut work was shortlisted for the Dylan Thomas Prize.

**Sandip Hor:** Australia based freelance travel writer and photographer who has been living in Australia for the last 30 years. He has travelled to over 65 countries in 5 continents and has a portfolio of travel articles

published in mainstream media in Australia, India and other countries. Currently he is the Chairperson of Australia India Travel & Tourism Council.

**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.

**Reep Pandi Lepcha:** Research scholar at Jadavpur University, currently working on folk and oral literature originating from her native place in the North-East region of India.

**Sreeradha Dutta:** Director of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, Kolkata, Evolving Nature of India-Bangladesh Relations. She works for India's Northeast Complexities and India-Myanmar's bilateral relations. Prior to ISDA, she was a co-ordinator with the South Asian Centre for Strategic Studies, New Delhi. She is a regular participant in Indo-Bangladesh Track II dialogues and also has been working on climate change and water security issues in South Asia.

**K. Sujatha Rao:** Former Union Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for the Government of India until 2010. She has authored *Do We Care* which gives an overview on India's health system. It highlights the need to prioritize good health as a national goal. She was the Director General of the National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) from 2006-2009. She has represented India on global forums like WHO, Global Fund and UNAIDS.

**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).

**Raj Kamal Jha:** Chief Editor of The Indian Express and an internationally acclaimed novelist. A student of IIT Kharagpur he got his Bachelor of Technology with Honors in Mechanical Engineering. Jha's first novel, *The Blue Bedspread* won the 2000 Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best First Book (Eurasia region) and was a New York Times Notable Book of the Year. His fourth and latest novel *She Will Build Him A City* is published by Bloomsbury in India, Australia, UK and US which has been shortlisted for the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature in 2016.

**Rosinka Chaudhuri:** Professor of Cultural Studies at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Kolkata. She had completed her D. Phil from University of Oxford. She has been a visiting fellow at eminent institutions like South Asian Institute, Columbia University and also the Charles Wallace Fellow at Cambridge University. *Gentlemen Poets in Colonial Bengal: Emergent Nationalism and the Orientalist Project* and *Freedom and Beef Steaks: Colonial Calcutta Culture, The Literary Thing: History, Poetry and the Making of a Modern Cultural Sphere* are some of her published works.

**Saikat Majumdar:** novelist and critic. He is the author of three books, most recently, the novel *The Firebird*, one of *The Telegraph's* Best Books and a finalist for the Atta Galatta-Bangalore Literature Festival Fiction Prize for 2015, and shortlisted for the Mumbai Film Festival Word-to-Screen Market in 2016. The

novel is forthcoming in the US in April 2017 as *Play House*. He is also the author of *Prose of the World* (2013), which received Honorable Mention in the Modernist Studies Association's Annual Book Prize, 2014. His work appears in *The Hindu*, *Caravan*, *The Times Higher Education*, *The Times Literary Supplement*, the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, *The Times of India*, *Public Books*, and in various collections and anthologies. He is currently at work at a new novel, a book of criticism titled *The Amateur*, and a nonfiction book on higher education in India, forthcoming in 2017. He is Professor of English and Creative Writing at Ashoka University.

**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.

**Naina Lal Kidwai:** Indian banker, Chartered Accountant and business executive, she has been the Group General Manager and Country Head of HSBC India. She is also a former President of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI).

**Sudha Menon:** Author, a columnist and a writing coach. She is the author of three non-fiction books, *Leading Ladies: Women Who Inspire India*, *Legacy: Letters to their daughters from eminent Indian men and women* and *Gifted: inspirational stories of people with disabilities*. Her books have been translated into Marathi and Hindi. Last year she started *Telling Our Stories*, a voluntary initiative where she works with senior citizens in Pune to help them write their stories and thus capture the legacy that they will leave for posterity.

**Nayantara Sahgal:** Indian writer in English whose fiction deals with India's elite responding to the crises engendered by political change. She is a member of the Nehru–Gandhi family and is the second of the three daughters born to Jawaharlal Nehru's sister, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit. She was awarded the 1986 Sahitya Akademi Award for English, for her novel, *Rich Like Us* (1985). She is revered for her take on political ideas.

**Haji Syed Salman Chishty:** A founding member of the Chishty Foundation, he is also the Gaddi Nashin (Hereditary Custodians/Key Holders) of Sultan ul Hind Hazret Khawaja Moinuddin Hasan Chishty. He has been invited to speak in some of the world's top University Conferences such as Harvard University, John Hopkin's University. He works with the ideas of Islamic Spirituality, Sufism, Spiritual Understandings, and spiritual Ethics of the Chishty Sufi Order. His special artistic line of Sufi Musafir Photography has been exhibited at various Galleries, Studios, and Exhibitions and others.

**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.

**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'.

**Urvashi Butalia:** Author. She co-founded Kali for Women in 1984 and Zubaan in 2013. She also has a long involvement in the women's movement in India. She has several works to her credit, key among which is her path-breaking study of Partition, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* which won the Oral History Book Association Award and the Nikkei Asia Award for Culture. She has also taught publishing for over 20 years and is on the advisory boards of a number of national and international organisations. She has received many awards, among which are the Pandora award for women's publishing, the French Chevalier des Artes et des Lettres, the Nikkei Asia Award for Culture and the Padma Shree, the highest civilian honour awarded by the Indian government.

**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).

**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.

**Sandip Roy:** Former Senior Editor at the popular news portal Firstpost.com and blogs for the Huffington Post. He is also an editor with New America Media. Roy has won several awards for journalism and contributed to various anthologies including *Storywallah!*, *Contours of the Heart*, *Because I Have a Voice: Queer Politics in India*, *Out! Stories from the New Queer India*, *New California Writing 2011* and *The Phobic and the Erotic: The Politics of Sexualities in Contemporary India*. His debut novel *Don't Let Him Know* brings together the two forms of the short story and the novel, narrating the story of secrets and sagas of a middle class Indian family, traversing between India and US. The novel was included in the long-list for the DSC Literature Prize 2016.

**Sundeep Bhutoria:** Rajasthan-born-Kolkata-based social and cultural activist whose name is synonymous with social welfare activities and promotion of Indian folk art, literature and culture. He is an outspoken community conscience and a youth icon representing India in United Nations Associations and various other fora and non-governmental organisations. He has been featured as one of the 50 youth figures that India can look up to by the Asia Magazine in 2005. In September 2010 he was felicitated with the "The Pride of India" Award in London for his chosen area of work at The House of Lords.

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**For more information, please contact:**