

FRONTLIST

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PVLFF

Pragati Vichaar
LITERATURE
FESTIVAL 2025

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Featured Interviews



WELCOME MESSAGE

Dear Readers,

Welcome to our June edition of the E-magazine!

Hope the month of June will unfold the best of the literary pages for you!

This edition features a curated and diverse selection of content that celebrates the written word, delves into the world of publishing, and illuminates important social issues.

First, we have **exclusive coverage** of the **Abu Dhabi Book Fair**, a literary haven for book lovers. Get a glimpse into the vibrant atmosphere, meet renowned authors, and discover the latest trends in the publishing world.

Dive into the **inside story** of **Prashant Jain** and his passion project, **Kitabwale**. We explore his journey as a Publisher and the unique experiences that make his publishing house a beloved destination for book enthusiasts.

Looking for a hidden gem? Our **special feature** on **Exceller Books** highlights this independent publisher known for its commitment to quality and diverse voices. Discover their exciting lineup and find your next literary adventure.

We've also included **featured excerpts** from two iconic authors: the legendary **Ruskin Bond** and the captivating **Meeti Shroff Shah**. Prepare to be transported by their powerful storytelling and evocative prose.

This issue is packed with insightful interviews. Dive into the world of **influencers** through our conversation with the influential **Bina Nayak**. Learn about the impact of social media and how to navigate it effectively. Sports fans, get ready to be inspired by **Arjan Singh's** insights on **competitive success**. We also have engaging interviews lined up with **Philip George** on his book **Racket Boys** and the acclaimed author **Harini Srinivasan**.

Recognizing the importance of inclusivity, we proudly present interviews exploring the LGBTQ experience with **Ameya Narvankar**, author of the book **Ritu Weds Chandini**, and **Payal Dhar**, author of "It Has No Name."

On the occasion of **World Environment Day**, we spoke to environmental champions **Sunil Gadhoke** and **Shalini Seth** to understand the critical issues facing our planet.

As Father's Day approaches, we explore the multifaceted role of fathers in interviews with **Debasish Paul**, **Ashiish V Patil**, and **Kapil Gupta**. Get ready to be touched by their stories and the unique bond they share with their children.

This is just a taste of the rich tapestry of content we store for you. We have exciting news brewing about **PVLF 2025** that will be revealed soon. So, grab a comfortable spot, turn the digital page, and embark on a captivating journey!

We value your feedback and engagement. Feel free to share your thoughts on this issue on our social media platforms.

Happy Reading!

Please write to me at navita@frontlist.in.

Navita Berry

Business Head



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EXCLUSIVE COVERAGE

- Abu Dhabi International Book Fair 2024: Celebrating Literary Excellence and Cultural Exchange

Abu Dhabi International Book Fair 2024: Celebrating Literary Excellence and Cultural Exchange

The 33rd edition of the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair (ADIBF), which ran from April 29 to May 5, delivered a wealth of new experiences and initiatives. This year, the fair hosted 1,350 publishers from 90 countries, including 140 publishers participating for the first time. Under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE, and organized by the Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Centre (ALC), part of the Department of Culture and Tourism Abu Dhabi, the fair featured 375 local exhibitors showcasing their latest releases.

New Activities and Features

Among the new activities was the "Book of the World," a pillar spotlighting influential books that have significantly impacted global literary and cultural history. This initiative celebrated the universal power of books in shaping cultures and societies. Furthermore, the fair introduced the Oxford Debates, marking the first time these internationally recognized debates were held in the Arab world. These debates fostered intellectual discourse and brought together thought leaders from diverse backgrounds.

Podcasts had a special presence this year, with the Saudi Arabian "Thmanyah" podcast and the Egyptian "El-Podcasters" making their debut. This inclusion highlighted the growing influence of digital media in contemporary storytelling and knowledge sharing. A mural titled "Thmanyah Writes and the World Reads" was displayed at the entrance, featuring historical figures who have influenced global culture, symbolizing the intersection of tradition and modernity.

Additionally, images of popular Arab folk book markets were featured, beginning with Egypt's famous El Azbakeya Wall. This exhibit celebrated the rich heritage of Arab literary traditions. For the first time, the fair hosted the Forum of Arabic Content for Children and Youth, a professional program targeting writers, illustrators, publishers, and creators in this sector. This forum underscored the importance of nurturing young readers and promoting literature that resonates with the youth.



Special Exhibitions and Programs

The Arts Corner hosted an exhibition titled "Image Is a Language," exploring the history of imagery in the UAE and around the world, from prehistoric cave inscriptions to digital photography and sign language. This exhibition delved into the evolution of visual communication and its profound impact on human interaction and understanding. Complementing this, a musical program featuring the American University of Cairo's Alumni Folklore Group included folklore dances, with choreography by Mahmoud Reda, a pioneer of Egyptian theatre dance. This blend of visual and performing arts offered visitors a holistic cultural experience.



Children’s Programs

Young visitors enjoyed various activities such as the Arabic “Scrabble” game and a specially designed Escape Room. These interactive experiences engaged children in fun, educational activities that stimulated their creativity and critical thinking. Another highlight was “Where the World’s Tales Unfold,” presenting cultures from different continents through various pavilions. This program aimed to foster cultural awareness and appreciation among young readers.

International Participation

China’s participation this year was the largest at any book fair worldwide, with 70 guests from 80 Chinese publishing houses across nine pavilions. The Chinese delegation hosted 15 cultural, professional, and artistic events, showcasing China’s rich literary heritage and contemporary publishing landscape. India also had a strong presence, represented by 23 Indian publishing houses and participating in various cultural events and the World’s Cuisines Corner. This significant international representation underscored the fair’s global appeal and its role as a hub for cross-cultural dialogue.



Focus Personality and Special Programs

The fair paid tribute to Naguib Mahfouz with 13 sessions dedicated to his life and works, including a special pavilion showcasing rare photos and graffiti art inspired by his historical novels. This tribute honored Mahfouz’s enduring legacy in Arabic literature and his contributions to global literary culture. The Miral Reading Experience offered literary workshops in English and Arabic, covering storytelling, writing, art, calligraphy, and more. These workshops engaged participants in creative processes and enhanced their literary skills.

A Lifestyle Corner featured live shows and interactive workshops on health, fitness, nutrition, and related topics, promoting a healthy lifestyle. This initiative reflected the fair’s commitment to holistic well-being, integrating physical health with intellectual and cultural enrichment.

Cultural Exchange and Professional Opportunities

The fair continued to foster cultural exchange, with 145 new exhibitors and publishers from 12 countries, including Greece, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and Pakistan, joining for the first time. Over 2,000 activities, including literary and artistic workshops, live performances, and photo exhibitions, were hosted. These activities provided a platform for cultural exchange and professional networking, enhancing the fair's role as a meeting point for the global literary community.

What's else?

Visitors enjoyed discounts on books and a free one-time visit to Qasr Al Hosn and the Louvre Abu Dhabi. These special offers enhanced the visitor experience, providing additional cultural and historical insights into the region.

The Abu Dhabi International Book Fair 2024 was an unmissable event for book lovers, cultural enthusiasts, and professionals from the publishing industry. With a rich tapestry of programs and activities, it offered something for all ages and interests, reinforcing its status as a premier cultural event in the region. The fair not only celebrated literary achievements but also promoted cultural understanding, intellectual discourse, and creative expression, making it a cornerstone of Abu Dhabi's cultural calendar.



INSIDE STORY

- **An Insightful Conversation with Prashant Jain:
Navigating into Industry Evolution & Nurturing
Academic Excellence**

An Insightful Conversation with Prashant Jain: Navigating into Industry Evolution & Nurturing Academic Excellence

Prashant Jain, a dynamic Managing Director of Indica Publisher & Distributors Pvt Ltd (IPDPL) and CEO of Kitabwale, has been in the books trade for 27 years. Under his leadership, IPDPL/ITSPL is a leading library supplier, serving over 125 institutions. Kitabwale, focuses on nationalist studies and culture by giving the platform to various authors who portray different traditions of Bharat.

He's received numerous awards, including the "Best Library Supplier Award" from FPBAI, and "Excellence in Academic Library Supplies" from India Beyond 75 Platinum Excellence Amrit Awards 2022. Mr. Prashant is active in the Jain community, holding positions in various organizations and serving as President of Navkar Tirth Atishaya Kshetra, a Jain Meditation Temple.

He believes in leading by example, emphasizing work over recognition and the importance of societal contribution in national development.



Frontlist: How did you start your publishing career? What has changed since you initially entered the publishing industry?

Prashant Jain: The world of books has always held a special place in my heart. It all began in 1996, right after I finished school I joined my family business, Jain Book Depot, Hathras, and started my own company in 1997, Indica Publisher & Distributors Pvt Ltd and Kitabwale in 2015. While I pursued my further studies, working alongside seasoned professionals in the industry was an incredible learning experience. Back then, the Indian publishing market was vastly different. Foreign publications dominated the market, and Indian authors had a limited presence. But over the past 27 years, I've witnessed a phenomenal transformation. The quality of Indian publications has soared, rivaling their international counterparts. The rise of a vibrant pool of Indian authors has been a defining moment for our industry, and a source of immense pride for all of us working in it. Our publishing company also does its bit by providing a diverse platform for the budding and backward authors who have immense talent and are waiting to be recognized and shine. Along with this, we also encourage nationalist voices to rise which is essential to understand the culture and traditions of Bharat, especially in this modern world.

Frontlist: You have been in the publishing industry for 27 years, what significant learnings have you grasped throughout your career?

Prashant Jain: The publishing industry is a vast world which is constantly evolving. One of the most valuable lessons I've learned is the importance of nurturing strong relationships with distributors



distributors and other players in the publishing ecosystem. It's a collaborative effort, and having a reliable network is crucial for success. Keeping my finger on the pulse of the latest technologies and market trends has always been vital for me. We became one of the first distributors from the print book industry to offer eBooks from around the globe. Our aim was that even the remote areas of Bharat should get access to these eBooks, encouraging the path of a new and digital country. Moreover, the industry is constantly innovating, and staying informed allows me to make sound decisions for Indica. But knowledge is just one piece of the puzzle. Adaptability is equally important. Learning to read the market's needs and change quickly in response to the requirements has been the basis of our sustained growth.

Frontlist: What are your views on the forthcoming National Education Policy 2024? How does the New Policy align with Indica's core values?

Prashant Jain: The New National Education Policy 2024's emphasis on rich and accessible education resonates deeply with Indica's core values. We've always strived to make high-quality educational resources available to students across the country. The new curriculum presents a tremendous opportunity to contribute further. Our team has always been an active contributor since the beginning, as we started Indica in 1997 when we used to distribute various academic books across different institutions to offer quality education to students. These resources are designed to create engaging learning experiences and ensure students have comprehensive materials that support their academic journeys. However, there's more to be done. While we're creating the resources, ensuring accessibility across all educational institutions in each corner of the country requires a collaborative effort from the government and other stakeholders. Working together, we can bridge the gap and empower educators to deliver the best possible education under the new policy.

Frontlist: Artificial Intelligence has been a revolutionary technology & will continue to evolve further. Throughout the globe it has impacted Industry & Jobs. What are the changes that you have seen & can foresee AI will be making?

Prashant Jain: AI presents a fascinating future for the publishing industry, brimming with innovation potential. From streamlining workflows to creating personalized reading experiences, AI has the power to transform the way we interact with books. However, it's crucial to navigate this new frontier with caution. The heart and soul of publishing lie in the creativity and originality of our authors. We must ensure that AI tools empower writers, not replace them. Striking the right balance between embracing technological advancements and safeguarding the creative efforts of our writers is paramount. The future of AI in publishing hinges on creating frameworks that foster innovation while protecting copyrights and ensuring that unique voices continue to thrive.

Frontlist: How do you envision the future of publishing, and what trends do you think will most significantly influence its evolution?

Prashant Jain: The future of publishing is undeniably bright. Despite the rise of digital media, books remain irreplaceable, especially in the realm of education. The depth of knowledge and the trusted, authentic information they provide are unmatched by online resources. As we move forward, it's our responsibility as publishers to champion the value of reading and ensure the essence of traditional publishing is preserved alongside the inevitable march of technology. Finding innovative ways to engage readers while upholding the integrity of the written word is the key to a thriving future for our industry.

One trend that concerns me is the growing dependence on quick online searches for information, as opposed to in-depth research using books. This is particularly worrisome in academic circles. Equipping students and researchers with the critical thinking skills necessary to navigate the information overload is essential. Encouraging them to rely on well-researched books and credible reference materials is vital to promote a deeper understanding of subjects and foster a culture of thorough research. Collaboration between publishers, educational institutions, and the government can play a pivotal role. By working together, we can create a future where students have the tools and resources they need to excel academically.

Frontlist: How do you address mental health issues, particularly in the academic context, as a publisher?

Prashant Jain: Mental health is a critical issue that shouldn't be confined to a specific context. It's a growing concern for students across all academic levels. As a publisher, I believe we have a responsibility to contribute to a more supportive learning environment. At Indica, we actively advocate for incorporating regular mental health classes and awareness programs into academic curriculums. We're also integrating content that addresses mental well-being into our publications. This could include providing students with resources to manage stress, anxiety, and other mental health challenges. It's about creating a space where mental health is openly discussed and prioritized. Educational materials can play a significant role in fostering this dialogue, but it's a collective effort. We need to work alongside institutions to create support systems that empower students to seek help and build resilience.

Frontlist: What advice would you give to the young generation looking to pursue a career in the publishing industry?

Prashant Jain: Even though this industry is quite big, it also comes with its own set of challenges. Distribution networks, piracy, and maintaining the quality of content in a constantly evolving landscape are just a few hurdles to navigate. However, for those who are passionate about books and ideas, a career in publishing can be incredibly rewarding.

If you're fortunate enough to inherit a business immerse yourself in learning from the experienced professionals around you. Ask questions, understand the complications of the trade, and be prepared to put in the hard work.

For those coming in without a family connection, gaining experience with an established publishing house is invaluable. It will equip you with the knowledge and skills you need to navigate the industry. Remember, success requires dedication, a keen understanding of the market, and the ability to adapt to changing trends. It's a competitive field, but with perseverance and a genuine love for the written word, you can carve your own path in the ever-evolving world of publishing.

About Kitabwale

'किताबवाले' हिन्दी-अंग्रेजी की साहित्य कृतियाँ (उपन्यास-कथा एवं कथा इतर गद्य सहित) तथा विदेशी मूल की हिन्दी में अनुदित पुस्तकों के प्रकाशक है।

यह समूह पुस्तक-व्यवसाय से पिछले पांच दशकों से ज्यादा समय से जुड़ा है। यह प्रकाशन समूह हिन्दी अंग्रेजी के अकादमिक, श्रेष्ठ-ग्रंथों तथा विविध विषयों पर प्रकाशन के लिए विख्यात है।



किताबवाले
KitabWale

SPECIAL FEATURES

- Discover the Mysteries of Konark in Arun Gupta's 'The Treasures of the Sun God'
- Unveiling 'Beyond Imagination' - A Tale of Love, Perseverance, and Destiny



Discover the Mysteries of Konark in Arun Gupta's 'The Treasures of the Sun God'



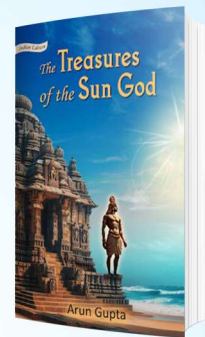
Step into the enchanting realm of the ancient town of Konark in Odisha, India, with Arun Gupta's latest masterpiece, "The Treasures of the Sun God." Published by Exceller Books, this gripping tale beckons readers to delve into the heart of history, mythology, and intrigue.

In 'The Treasures of the Sun God,' readers are transported to the picturesque landscape of Konark, where the ancient Temple of The Sun God stands as a testament to a bygone era. Amidst the sand and sea, this enigmatic temple holds secrets that captivate the imagination and stir the soul.

Follow Arnab, a talented web designer, and his wife Anu as they become entangled in a web of mystery surrounding Konark and its fabled treasures. What starts as a mission to develop a tourism campaign for Odisha soon unravels into a series of perplexing events hinting at a sinister plot lurking beneath the surface.

Arun Gupta's masterful storytelling weaves together elements of suspense, intrigue, and cultural richness, captivating readers from start to finish. "The Treasures of the Sun God" is not just a novel; it is a journey into the depths of history, mythology, and human ambition.

Available on Amazon (India), Google Play, Kobo and Starmark, 'The Treasures of the Sun God' promises to enchant readers with its seamless blend of fact and fiction. Embark on an adventure and uncover the hidden treasures that lie within its pages.

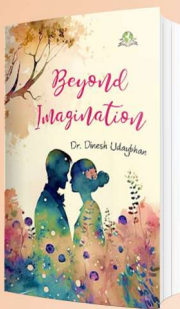


Unveiling 'Beyond Imagination' – A Tale of Love, Perseverance, and Destiny

Dr. Dinesh Udaybhan uncovers his latest literary masterpiece, 'Beyond Imagination,' a captivating narrative that delves deep into the realms of love, resilience, and the enigmatic twists of fate.

Set against the backdrop of the quaint town of Datiya in Madhya Pradesh, 'Beyond Imagination' follows the journey of Deepak Kaneria, a young man whose life takes unexpected turns amidst the vicissitudes of fate.

Fueled by the desire to prove himself, Deepak's encounters with love, friendship, and adversity shape his path in unforeseen ways. His bond with Priyanka Sharma blossoms into a tale of unyielding devotion and unwavering resolve.



As the narrative unfolds, readers are drawn into a gripping tale of survival and self-discovery, culminating in a crescendo of unexpected twists and turns. Dr. Dinesh Udaybhan masterfully crafts a narrative that transcends boundaries, offering readers a glimpse into the intricacies of the human experience.

A publication of Exceller Books, 'Beyond Imagination,' is now available for purchase on leading online platforms including Amazon, Google Play, and Kobo. Join an unforgettable journey through the pages of this enthralling saga to explore the depths of the human spirit and the boundless power of love.

FEATURED EXCERPTS

- An Excerpt from “Hold On to Your Dreams : A Letter to Young Friends” by Ruskin Bond, Published by Penguin
- An Excerpt from “A Matrimonial Murder: a completely unputdownable must-read crime mystery” by Meeti Shroff-Shah, Published by Bloomsbury India



AN EXCERPT FROM “HOLD ON TO YOUR DREAMS : A LETTER TO YOUNG FRIENDS” BY RUSKIN BOND, PUBLISHED BY PENGUIN

In this heartfelt excerpt, Ruskin Bond reminds young readers that creativity is a gift to be nurtured. Writers, like artists and musicians, are driven by an innate urge to express themselves. He encourages them to seize the day and pursue their passions. Bond finds endless beauty in nature, from seashells to the vast ocean, and highlights the power of literature through the works of seafaring authors. The message is clear: embrace your creativity, explore the natural world, and immerse yourself in the written word.

Old soldiers never die; they simply fade away, or so the saying goes. And what about writers? Well, old writers never die—they simply go out of print.

In print or out, we carry on writing. That is, if we are born writers—writers by nature, given to self-expression through the medium of the written word.

The creative instinct is in our genes, and those of us who possess it go on to make beautiful paintings, music or poetry. Indeed, we must put our creative potential to good use if we are not to throw away this gift of life.

Loosely translated, it means art is long and life is short. Michelangelo is still with us; so is Beethoven, and so are the Marx Brothers. Even Father Time must yield to true genius. And because life is short (compared to the millions of years in time past), we must seize it by the coattails and hang on for all we are worth because it can so easily slip away and leave us alone on the beach, looking for seashells. It is better to look for pearls than shells, but even shells are beautiful. As a child, I collected them, marvelling at the intricacies of their designs, some smooth as glass, others encrusted with the patterns of the ocean’s small creatures. Everything that is not man-made is, in its own way, perfect—the mollusc, the starfish, the crab, the oyster, the swordfish, the octopus, the whale and the treasures yet to be discovered. In many ways, the sea is still a mystery, but our attention is being diverted by the earth and the stars.

Although I have spent most of my life in the mountains and often write about them, the literature of the sea has always fascinated me! The stories of Joseph Conrad (who understood the sea better than anyone), Stevenson (who romanticized it), R.H. Dana Jr (who lived with it), Maugham (who roamed over it), W.W. Jacobs (who found humour in it), and of course Melville (who revered it) and gave us an idea of the sea’s true stature in *Moby Dick*.

Oddly enough, I cannot, at the moment, think of any great ‘mountain literature’. Perhaps because the mountains are fixed, and the sea flows, taking us here and there. Well, there was Knut Hamsun in Norway and B. Traven in Mexico’s Sierra Madre—both great writers. No doubt you can tell me of others. Second to the sea, it is probably the desert that has been celebrated the most through the written word, mostly by travellers who used their five senses wherever they went—C.M. Doughty, Freya Stark, T.E. Lawrence (in Arabia), Peter Fleming (in Central Asia), Wilfred Thesiger (among the Marsh Arabs). It takes great observers and great writers to do justice to the desert.

In the time given to you, my friends, read as much as you can. Relish and absorb the thoughts and feelings of these men and women who recorded their experiences of a wonderful world that is still here—but might indeed disappear if we are too careless with it.

HOLD ON TO YOUR DREAMS

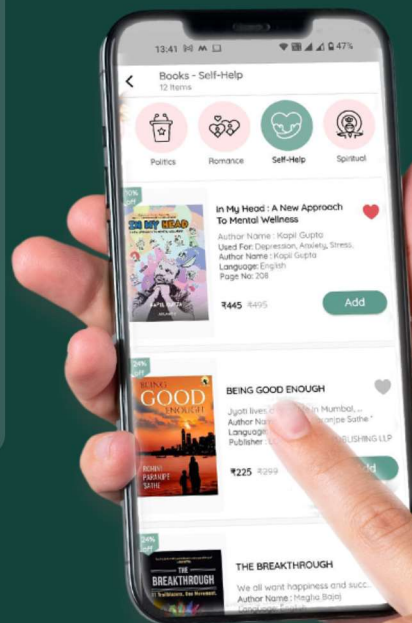


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AN EXCERPT FROM “A MATRIMONIAL MURDER” BY MEETI SHROFF-SHAH, PUBLISHED BY BLOOMSBURY INDIA

Radhi, a writer exploring the world of matchmaking, meeting with Sarla, a seasoned matchmaker in Mumbai. Their chat is interrupted by a blood-red envelope containing a chilling tarot card: Death. A typed message warns, "All good things come to an end." As the discussion progresses, the excerpt takes a sharp turn.

"You know that show, the one about matchmaking?"

Sarla made a sour face. "Yeah, the one with that judgy aunty. Gave all of us matchmakers a bad name."

"Well, it was hugely successful and generated a lot of curiosity in the West about arranged marriages, matchmakers, and Indian matrimonial bureaus. People were keen to know more, and my agent thought I could do a collection of essays on why and how the system works, a sort of behind-the-scenes look into the different facets of matchmaking. I'll be doing an in-depth piece on you – what motivates you, some of the challenges you face, how you got started, that sort of thing. I'll also be speaking to other matrimonial bureaus and people connected to the industry like wedding planners, designers who put together wedding trousseaus, etc."

Sarla nodded thoughtfully. "Hmm... this could be good publicity for us as well. We're hoping to achieve a milestone."

This year – we are at nine hundred and ninety-four right now and by the end of December we hope to make that a thousand matches. If you like, you can talk to a few of our clients, as well!

"That'd be great, actually!" said Radhi.

"Wait, let me jot down a few names. Then Juhi can help you set up a meeting with them," said Sarla shuffling a stack of mail on her desk while looking for a notepad. Suddenly, her hands stopped moving, her face crumpled and a strangled 'oh' escaped her mouth.

"What is it, Aunty?" Radhi quickly scanned the desk to see what had caused such a reaction.

Sarla didn't answer. Her hands shaking, she picked up a red envelope that was lying face down on her desk. She opened it and then dropped it as if she had been burned.

Radhi picked up the fallen envelope, and when Sarla didn't protest, she peered inside and removed a cobalt card from it. It showed a dark figure holding a sickle, sitting atop a pale horse. There were people lying on the ground, around the horse's legs. At the bottom of the card was a single word: 'DEATH'.

"What is this, Aunty?" asked Radhi, alarmed. She turned the envelope over and checked it for a name or address. It had neither. She turned the card over. It had a fine geometrical pattern across the back in gold.

She dropped the card on the table and checked inside the envelope again. A thin strip of white paper was stuck to its side. Radhi removed it and read the typed words out loud: 'All good things come to an end.'

Sarla, who had been sitting with one hand clutching her head, took the note from Radhi and read it before crumpling it and letting it fall to the desk. 'I don't get it,' she said, more to herself than to Radhi. 'Who's doing this?' She picked up the phone. 'Juhi, can you ask Hansa to come see me.'

Then, in response to Juhi's reply, 'I see . . . okay, ask her by when she'll be in office.'

She hung up the phone and turned her attention back to the card. 'This is the fourth one so far,' she told Radhi. 'The other three were equally terrible.'

'They seem like they are part of a deck. Do you have the other three here?'

Sarla nodded. 'They are tarot cards.' She rifled within her drawer and brought out three similar red envelopes.

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"They seem like they are part of a deck. Do you have the other three here?"

Sarla nodded. "They are tarot cards." She rifled within her drawer and brought out three similar red envelopes.

Radhi removed the cards and notes from the envelopes. One card showed a tall tower on fire, struck by lightning, with people jumping out of the windows to save themselves.

The accompanying note read: "The higher you climb, the harder you fall." The second card depicted a blindfolded woman clad in white, seated on a beach with her back to the sea. In her hands, she held two heavy swords crossed against each other. The note read: "There are none so blind as those who will not see." The third card portrayed a swollen red heart pierced with three swords against a stormy background of grey clouds and needle-like rain. Radhi looked in the envelope for the note but couldn't find one. "That was the first one. I didn't think to keep the note then," Sarla looked distressed. "It said something like 'Every action has a reaction'. I can't remember perfectly, but that was the gist."

Radhi studied the cards briefly before handing them back to Sarla. "When did these come?"

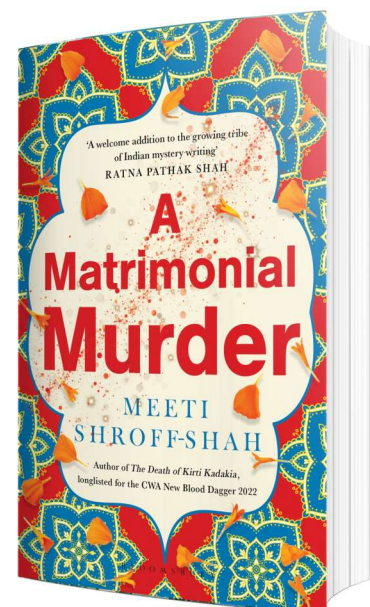
"Well, the first one arrived more than two months ago. Then the second one came two weeks after that. And the third and fourth have followed since."

"What happened two months ago? Can you think of anything significant?"

"No! Nothing. I have racked my head about it!"

"But who in the world do you think it could be?"

MATRIMONIAL MURDER



MEDIA COVERAGES

- BML Munjal University, in association with Oxford University Press, celebrates the legacy of psychoanalyst Sudhir Kakar
- Ruskin Bond shares a heartfelt letter about life's many shades on his 90th birthday
- Book Launch "Raising Stars: The Challenges and Joys of Being a Bollywood Parent" Authored by Rashmi Uchil, Published by Fingerprint! Publishing
- Book Launch 'Gardens of Delhi' by Swapna Liddle & Madhulika Liddle Photographs by Prabhas Roy, Published by Niyogi Books

BML Munjal University, in association with Oxford University Press, celebrates the legacy of psychoanalyst Sudhir Kakar

The School of Liberal Studies (SoLS), BML Munjal University (BMU), in association with Oxford University Press (OUP), organized a day-long event today at India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, to celebrate the work and legacy of Professor Sudhir Kakar, the father of Indian psychoanalysis, who passed away in April this year.

The event, Celebrating Sudhir Kakar: Remembrances and Reflections, was hosted across four insightful sessions. Session one, led by Honey Oberoi Vahali, honored Sudhir Kakar's personal legacy and psychoanalytic practice, exploring his approach to human suffering and healing. Session two, chaired by renowned psychoanalyst Ashis Nandy, delved into Kakar's writings, pondering their psychological, literary, and cultural significance. Session three, led by Rachana Johri, introduced the 4 volumes of selected writings of Sudhir Kakar, elucidating the editorial perspectives. Session four, chaired by Aleeka Kumar, discussed advancing Sudhir Kakar's 'Global Psychoanalysis' legacy through the Kakar Centre for Psychoanalysis and Culture in collaboration with SoLS, BMU.

The book discussion on Professor Kakar's upcoming title, "The Mind in the World: Selected Writings by Sudhir Kakar," published by OUP, was attended by the volume editors: Jhuma Basak, Manasi Kumar, Dinesh Sharma, and Daniel Meckel, from various parts of the world. The session was moderated by Rachana Johri, a distinguished visiting professor at SoLS, BMU. It offered the audience a glimpse into how each volume, studying the work of the celebrated author and thinker, was collated and structured.

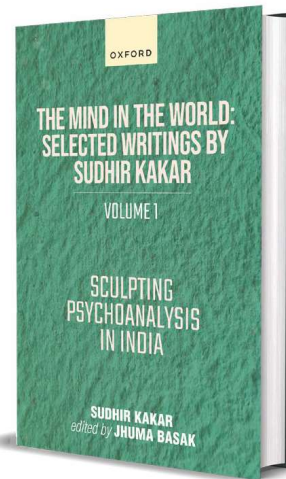
Sumanta Datta, Managing Director, Oxford University Press India, said, "The passing of Prof Sudhir Kakar, India's distinguished cultural psychologist has left a void not only at Oxford University Press, but also in intellectual and literary circles. He was one of India's foremost writers and his nuanced research on post-Independence Indian psyche will inspire generations to come, enriching global perspectives on the intricacies of cultural identity. The remembrance event for professor Kakar, is a befitting celebration of a mastermind who helped interpret Indian society in a way not attempted before."



Vice Chancellor of BML Munjal University, Prof. Shyam Menon, added, "Sudhir Kakar – Remembrance and Reflection is a significant historic event for BMU, particularly for the School of Liberal Studies. BMU is determined that Prof Kakar's commitment and determination of engaged scholarship and a culturalized vision of psychoanalysis will continue to guide SoLS' vision and programmes."

Dr. Katharina Poggendorf-Kakar, wife of Sudhir Kakar, expressed, "This exercise to remember Sudhir not only brings to the forefront who he was as a thinker and scholar, but also who he was as a person. It hopefully will inspire many to build the Center for Psychoanalysis and Culture he dreamed of, to establish India's and other cultures' contributions in the field of psychoanalysis and culture and beyond."

The event was a deep dive into the mind of one of the foremost intellectuals of India who leaves behind authoritative work at the intersection of religion, politics, culture and psychology.





About the Author

A psychoanalyst, scholar, and writer, Sudhir Kakar (1938–2024) was a Lecturer at Harvard University; Research Fellow at Harvard Business School; Professor at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad; Head of Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi; and Adjunct Professor of Leadership at INSEAD in Fontainebleau, France (1994– 2013). He was also a Senior Fellow at the Centre for Study of World Religions at Harvard, Visiting Professor at the Universities of Chicago (1989–1992), Harvard, McGill, Melbourne, Hawaii, and Vienna, and a Fellow at the Institutes for Advanced Study, Princeton and Berlin and the Centre for Advanced Study, University of Cologne.

As 'the psychoanalyst of civilizations', the French weekly *Le Nouvel Observateur*, in 2005, listed Kakar as one of the world's twenty-five major thinkers. Among his many honours were the Kardiner Award of Columbia University, the Boyer Prize for Psychological Anthropology of the American Anthropological Association,

India's Bhabha, Nehru, and ICSSR National Fellowships, the Distinguished Service Award of the Indo-American Psychiatric Association, Germany's Goethe Medal, the Tagore–Merck Award, and the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany, the country's highest civilian honour. Kakar was the author/editor of twenty books of non-fiction and six novels, and his books have been translated into



About Oxford University Press (OUP):

Oxford University Press (OUP) is a department of the University of Oxford. It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship, and education by publishing worldwide. OUP is the world's largest university press with the widest global presence. It currently publishes thousands of new publications a year, has offices in around fifty countries, and employs approximately 5,500 people worldwide.

It has become familiar to millions through a diverse publishing program that includes scholarly works in all academic disciplines, bibles, music, school and college textbooks, children's books, materials for teaching English as a foreign language, business books, dictionaries and reference books, and academic journals.



Ruskin Bond shares a heartfelt letter about life's many shades on his 90th birthday

Penguin Random House is delighted to be celebrating Mr Bond's milestone birthday this year with the publication of a brand new book.

Publisher Sohini Mitra shares that, 'Hold on to Your Dreams is a priceless collection of learnings, poignant life lessons and treasured memories curated from a lifetime of experiences—a book that can be a wonderful companion, bedside reader and at times, also a great teacher.

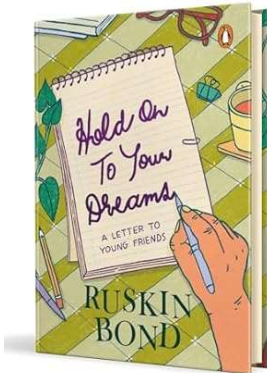
Written in the form of a letter, the pages in this book offer hope, wisdom, courage and strength, making this a perfect gift from one of the greatest writers and inspirational icons from our times. We look forward to releasing it on 19 May in Mussoorie at Cambridge Book Depot, amidst his readers and fans, as he turns ninety.'



About the Book

On the eve of his ninetieth birthday, literary legend Ruskin Bond brings to readers a heartfelt letter capturing his most cherished memories and experiences. Penning his thoughts with sincerity and grace, the writer reflects upon love, loss, friendship, frailties, solitude and companionship—the bittersweet experience of human existence.

Reminiscing tales of his boyhood and youth, the author urges us to learn from mistakes, embrace empathy and hold on to our dreams through life's vicissitudes. Complemented with poignant art, this book is a timeless collection of learnings on the journey called life.



About the Author

Born in Kasauli (Himachal Pradesh) in 1934, Ruskin Bond grew up in Jamnagar (Gujarat), Dehradun, New Delhi and Shimla. His first novel, *The Room on the Roof*, which was written when he was seventeen, received the John Llewellyn Rhys Memorial Prize in 1957. Since then, he has written over 500 short stories, essays, novellas (including *Vagrants in the Valley* and *A Flight of Pigeons*) and more than forty books for children. He received the Sahitya Akademi Award for English writing in India in 1992, the Padma Shri in 1999 and the Delhi government's Lifetime Achievement Award in 2012. He lives in Landour, Mussoorie, with his extended family.



Book Launch "Raising Stars: The Challenges and Joys of Being a Bollywood Parent" Authored by Rashmi Uchil, Published by Fingerprint! Publishing

The celebration of the parenting book, *Raising Stars: The Challenges and Joys of Being a Bollywood Parent*, authored by Rashmi Uchil, and published by Fingerprint Publishing, transformed into a gala evening with a thought-provoking panel discussion on the nuances of parenting, deftly steered by moderator Shalini Vikrant. The panel, graced by the presence of award-winning actress Madhoo Shah, former Miss World Yukta Mookhey, clinical psychologist Dr. Hvovi Bhagwagar, and author Rashmi Uchil, delved into pressing topics such as overparenting, combating bullying, nurturing children within traditional family structures, and the pivotal role of fathers. The conversation was full of insights leaving the attendees with newfound perspectives and valuable takeaways.

Also present were Literary Agent Dipti Patel, Founder WordFamous and Shobha Pillai of Times of India and all the teachers of the author added their experiences of educating the kids and how the GenZ had to be dealt with more compassion, love and freedom.

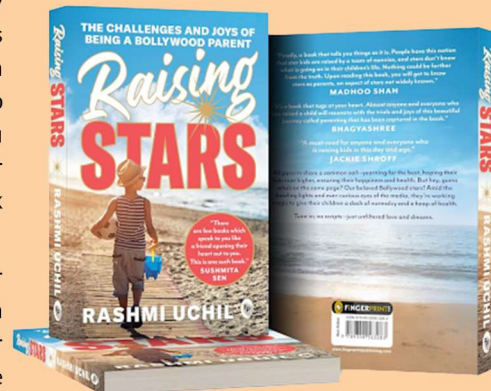
A must read book for all the Bollywood fans to know the parenting style of the stars.



About the Book

Raising Stars: The Challenges and Joys of Being a Bollywood Parent is a captivating journey into the world of parenthood as experienced by some of Bollywood's stars. Through exclusive interviews with famous celebrities such as Mahima Chaudhry, Nandita Das, Archana Puran Singh, Boman Irani, and many more, author Rashmi Uchil delves deep into these stars' personal stories and cherished practices, inviting you to step inside their homes and hearts. From the joys of raising their children to the unique challenges they face in the spotlight, this book unveils it all.

Whether you're a parent seeking inspiration, a fan of Bollywood, or simply curious about the universal bonds of family, *Raising Stars* is an enriching and enlightening read that will leave you with a deeper appreciation for the complexities and triumphs of parenthood in the limelight.



- Exclusive access to Bollywood stars' parenting journeys.
- Heartfelt stories and cherished practices of celebrity parents such as Archana Puran Singh, Bhagyashree Dasani, Chunky Panday, and many more.
- Insights into navigating parenthood in the public eye.
- Written by a seasoned journalist and content development expert.
- Endorsed by renowned Bollywood stars such as Sushmita Sen and Jackie Shroff.

About the Author

Rashmi Uchil began her career as a film journalist at Magna Publications. She has since then been writing for various publications and portals, including TOI, Darmilla publications, and Rediff.com, to name a few. Apart from writing, her first love, she has made an alternate career in corporate training and content development for the last 20 years. Raising Stars: The Challenges and Joys of Being a Bollywood Parent is her labor of love, which she hopes to share with millions of parents across the globe.



Book Launch 'Gardens of Delhi' by Swapna Liddle & Madhulika Liddle Photographs by Prabhas Roy, Published by Niyogi Books

Niyogi Books is proud to announce their latest publication, Gardens of Delhi by Swapna and Madhulika Liddle, a sumptuous bouquet of words and images about Delhi's parks and public gardens. With beautiful images of Delhi's green gardens coming from the lens of Prabhas Roy, the book is a visual delight, which also includes many historical nuggets and anecdotes about the various cities of Delhi.

Swapna Liddle

says, 'Even if you are a regular visitor to Delhi's many gardens, this book can help you see them differently by providing insights on their history, landscape and horticulture. For those who may not have been to these green spaces, Gardens of Delhi is just the thing to tempt them, or to provide entertainment and information to the armchair traveller.'



Madhulika Liddle

says, 'One of the greenest cities in India, Delhi is marked by a number of gardens. Many of these are historic, and all of them offer a chance for city-dwellers and visitors to spend some time with nature. Gardens of Delhi, inspired by the city's gardens and green spaces, is designed to acquaint the reader with some of the major gardens of Delhi. From historic gardens like Shalimar Bagh and Qudsia Bagh to newer ones like Sunder Nursery and the Garden of Five Senses, this book discusses the history, the flora, and the tone of these gardens. Abundant photographs by Prabhas Roy serve to bring the gardens to life.'



COO of Niyogi Books, Trisha Niyogi,

says, 'Delhi is known for its beautiful gardens—some are rich in history while others are modern creations. They provide green spaces all year round, turn Delhi into a floral delight in spring and offer young and old alike a place to reconnect with nature. We are delighted to offer Gardens to Delhi to both residents and visitors to our city.'



During the launch of the book, Pradip Krishen, eminent filmmaker, environmentalist & author, called the book a game-changer, noting that it would go a long way in shaping a critical discourse around Delhi's many gardens and their significance in present times.

Bharati Jagannathan, historian, nature enthusiast & author, exclaimed during the event that this book is an 'absolute joy' as not only the photographs are gorgeous but the meticulously-researched textual content is also enlightening. She added that despite having been a lifelong nature-enthusiast and historian, there were many things that she discovered for the first time while reading this book.

When asked about his experience of working on the book, eminent photographer Prabhas Roy said that like most of us, parks and gardens seemed so commonplace to him initially that he was lost as to what exactly to capture in the spaces, but as he kept working on the project, he slowly came to realise that each park and garden had an unique character of their own.



Swapna Liddle has written several books on the history of Delhi. She has volunteered for many years with the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), to draw attention to the need to preserve the city's historic sites.

Madhulika Liddle is a novelist and award-winning short story writer, best known as a writer of historical fiction. Madhulika is a keen amateur naturalist, especially interested in trees and birds.



About The Photographer

Prabhas Roy works for online media platforms and books related to history. He is on the jury of National Photography Competition, faculty in a photography institute, involved with UNICEF workshops, and IIT and other educational institutes.



About The Book

Delhi is often called a 'garden city', a reference both to its relatively high green cover and to its many public gardens. Some of these gardens have a long and interesting history, going back several centuries. Others are relatively new but still significant, be it for their design and variety of plants, or for the events behind their establishment. All contribute to the character of Delhi, and serve as important public spaces—as a refuge from the strain of urban living for citizens, and must-see attractions for visitors.

This book is about some of Delhi's many gardens, introducing the readers to their histories, flora, and fauna. In the process it also takes a long view of how the city, and particularly its green cover, has developed; and some of the problems and challenges of maintaining that green cover in the face of growing urban density.

Packed with historical tidbits and beautiful photographs, Gardens of Delhi is a memorable read and visual treat for lovers of green spaces, and readers with an interest in the city of Delhi.



AUTHOR INTERVIEWS

- Bina Nayak
- Harini Srinivasan
- Philip George & Geetha K
- Arjan Singh
- Payal Dhar
- Ameya Narvankar
- Sunil Gadhoke
- Shalini Seth
- Debasish Paul
- Ashiish V Patil
- Kapil Gupta

Interview with Bina Nayak, Author “Goagram”

Bina Nayak is an author and graphic designer based out of Goa. She was head of Walt Disney's design team in India. Her first novel, *Starfish Pickle: A Goan Adventure*, has been adapted into a major motion picture. After graduating from Sir JJ School of Art she worked in FCB Speer, DDB Mudra, Leo Burnett and Ogilvy.

Frontlist: After spending nearly two decades with the “Starfish Pickle” manuscript, what does it mean to you to finally see your story in print? How has the journey of writing and publishing this book impacted you personally and professionally?

Bina: Actually, I wrote this book in just three months. However, it took nearly two decades to find a publisher. It was published by Srishti Publishers in September 2021. But it was worth the wait, as it was adapted into a movie called “Starfish” by T-Series. It had a theatrical release in November 2023 and is now streaming on Netflix. It was also shown on Sony TV.

Moreover, “Goagram” is my second novel. It was published by HarperCollins in February 2024 and was written in two months flat.

Frontlist: Throughout “Goagram,” Maddie grapples with the tension between her desire for fame and the consequences of seeking validation through social media. What message or reflection do you hope readers take away from Maddie's story?

Bina: Fame that comes from a social media presence is illusory and fleeting, whereas fame achieved through work, talent, and deeds is real and long-lasting. Seeking validation from anybody is detrimental, and seeking it from a fickle social media audience is the worst. However, wanting validation is a very basic, flawed human need. You should much rather seek it offline from friends and family, people who know you and whom you know as well.

Frontlist: In “Goagram,” Maddie forms a significant bond with the landlady of Casa Coutinho. How does this relationship contribute to Maddie's personal growth and resilience throughout the narrative, and what inspired you to explore the dynamics between these two characters?

Bina: The relationship between Maddie and Mrs. Coutinho is that of a mother and daughter. Mrs. Coutinho is not as close to her own daughter, but she shares some commonalities with Maddie—they both love fashion, clothes, designing, and creating them. Maddie is a trained fashion designer, while Mrs. Coutinho, an older lady in her 70s, comes from a time when there were no fashion schools. Maddie is not close to her own mother, as her mother doesn't understand her work.

Mrs. Coutinho teaches Maddie how to appreciate the finer things in life. For example, she teaches her how to appreciate wine and how to use cutlery and fine china. Mrs. Coutinho represents the solidity of an older generation, values, and resilience that helped them weather the vicissitudes of life. I have shown the difference between old-world values and new-age values through these two characters and how they can meet and enrich each other.

Frontlist: As a graphic designer with extensive experience in advertising and media, how did your professional background influence the depiction of Maddie's digital journey in “Goagram”? Were there any real-life anecdotes or observations that inspired key moments in the story?

Bina: I belong to a generation that saw the birth of the internet and social media, as well as design programs for desktop publishing. As creative professionals in advertising in the early 90s, we were the first people to work on Photoshop, Illustrator, and Freehand, which inspired the filters on mobile apps, Instagram, and other social media platforms.



Having seen how social media has evolved since its earlier avatars, we are aware of its pitfalls and advantages compared to a younger generation that jumps into it in its version 10.0 or higher. Real-life experiences of friends and my own experiences have crept into my story.

Frontlist: In today's digital era, the pursuit of online fame through social media has become increasingly prevalent. Drawing from the lessons learned in "Goagram," what cautionary advice or insights would you offer to individuals who are captivated by the allure of emulating the lifestyle of social media influencers?

Bina: Contrary to what it may appear, social media influencers' lives are not all glitz and glamour. Social media makes them accessible 24/7 and invites strangers into their homes via their mobiles or laptops. Earlier, celebrities had an aura about them in the pre-internet, pre-social media age. They could only be accessed via magazines, newspapers, and TV news. Today, every person who follows a celebrity, an actor, an influencer, or even a neighbor thinks they own that person by merely subscribing to their channel or social media accounts. Followers sometimes behave like they are stakeholders in that celebrity's life and that the celebrities are answerable to them. Comments are passed on everything—from weight gain to dress sense. There is trolling, bullying, shaming, and canceling.

I would advise youngsters to be judicious in their social media use. Use social media; don't get used to it. Don't overshare personal stuff, and don't seek therapy or validation on it. A 'like' really means nothing; it is the easiest thing to execute with the flick of your finger. But will those people who 'like' your stories get their heads out of their mobiles, physically travel in real time, in the real world, to be by your side in your time of distress or joy? That is the question you should ask yourself.

Frontlist: Maddie's rise to fame in "Goagram" is accompanied by a constant struggle to keep her audience engaged and interested. Can you discuss the pressures Maddie faces as she tries to sustain her online presence and how these challenges mirror the realities of navigating social media platforms in real life?

Bina: Without giving away too many spoilers, I will say that her quest for likes makes her throw caution to the wind, and she ends up in many sticky—and sometimes downright dangerous—situations.



Interview with Harini Srinivasan, Author “Shadows and Secrets”

An aficionado of literature, history, music and dance, Harini Srinivasan has found innovative ways of bringing her passions to her work. Among her achievements is her contribution as an editor of several prestigious publications published by the Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, such as Selected Speeches of the President: Pranab Mukherjee; The Republican Ethic: Selected Speeches of Shri Ram Nath Kovind; Indian Dance – Through a Critic’s Eye; Abode Under the Dome; Legends of Indian Silver Screen; and Selected Speeches of the Vice President: M. Venkaiah Naidu.

Frontlist: Historical fiction often requires a delicate balance between factual accuracy and creative license. Can you share any instances where you had to navigate this balance, and how you ultimately decided which liberties to take in service of the story?

Harini: Yes – definitely; the balance between factual accuracy and creative license has been delicately managed. In *Shadows and Secrets*, a former huge but now extinct religion, Manichaeism is a part of a significant arc. The followers of the religion have been known to have lived in India (somewhere in the east) sometime in the 5th century – before heading to China – which is where the religion ended in the 14th century.

I used this as the basis of having some of my characters belong to this religion in *Shadows and Secrets*. However, the circumstances that they find themselves in and the reason behind their being here are totally fictional. Based on my understanding of the history of religion and also my belief that humans make the same mistakes over and over again, and the underlying themes I wished to explore in this book, I have taken some creative liberty. I won't reveal what exactly that is and leave it at that. However, at no given time has the creative liberty tampered with the historical details per se.

Another example is the creative liberty that I have taken in the case of both *The Curse of Anuganga* and *Shadows and Secrets* is in defining the role of Kalidasa.

Frontlist: Could you elaborate on the research process you undertook to accurately depict Kalidasa's multifaceted role in your novel, especially considering his historical reputation as a literary figure? How did you go about exploring potential historical sources or lesser-known aspects of his life to inform his expanded role in the story?

Harini: Kalidasa is a fascinating character – about whom many tales exist in folklore. Not much is known about his life at all. There are many theories based on ancient and medieval texts and a detailed study of his plays as to when he lived. He is known to be the court poet of a King named Vikramaditya – who ruled in Ujjain. The theories have speculated as to who this Vikramaditya could have been. The most popular theory locates King Vikramaditya as King Chandragupta II Vikramaditya of the Gupta Empire. And it is this theory I have used as the basis for Kalidasa's role in *The Curse of Anuganga* and *Shadows and Secrets*. My casting him as the Head of the Intelligence Network (unofficial) is purely fictional. Giving him this expanded role was based on several factors: he was well-known, both in his time and for posterity, as a classical dramatist, which meant that he would have had a pulse on what was going on on the ground level. He had access to the higher echelons of the society as well based on his renown and the trust the King had in him and his abilities – both in appointing him as one of the Navaratnas in his court and as well as the tutor for his grandsons (the Vakataka princes). Considering that espionage was very well established in Ancient India, Kalidasa was an ideal candidate for the position of Head of the Intelligence Network then.



Since nothing much is known about his life at all, it was easy for me to make him thus. In my story as well, only a few people (close to the King or respectable figures in that society) were aware of his dual role.

Frontlist: What strategies or narrative techniques do you employ to breathe life into historical events and figures, transforming potentially dry or obscure subjects into compelling and immersive storytelling experiences for readers?

Harini: History is not the way we have been taught – a series of dates when such a thing happened. History is nothing but a window into how people have lived in the past. And people, past or present, are breathing, living human beings (even if they have now exited the world stage and have passed on.) When I write, I don't see them as historical figures probably featured in some old book – I view them as humans, with all their follies and foibles, and endow them with such qualities and traits. And people's lives – be it in the past or now, are interesting. Ultimately I am looking to tell an interesting story, albeit one set in the past. What, of course, differentiates a story set in the present time and one in the past is to get the background/ setting right. This is a must in historical fiction. I have done a fair amount of research on the Gupta period – the existing social mores, conditions, and how people's lives progressed. Have used this to set the stage and tell an interesting story. The reader should feel like he/ she is in that era and is witnessing something happening there. Also maintaining the balance with how much history (facts and figures) to insert vs keeping the action moving is key. The pitfall with so much research is that writers often do not realize which aspects of their research they must include and which they should leave out.

Frontlist: Religion and religious practices often play a significant role in historical narratives. How did you approach incorporating religious elements into the story to add depth and complexity to the characters and plot?

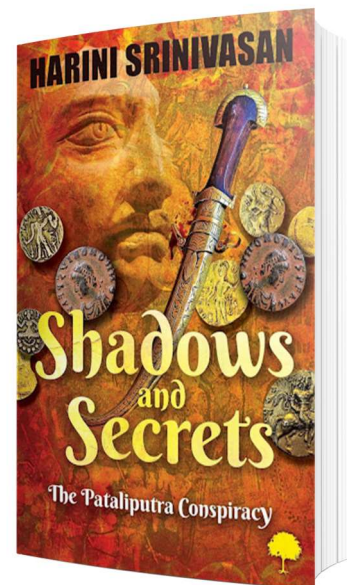
Harini: For one, religion forms the crux of Shadows and Secrets and influences both character and plot, adding a layer of complexity. I won't reveal more about how one needs to read the book. During my research, I came across multiple references to an annual Buddhist procession. I found the references fascinating and hence used them to further the plot in both The Curse of Anuganga and Shadows and Secrets.

Frontlist: Your background in content management and editing likely involves meticulous attention to detail. How did this skill set influence your approach to world-building and character development in the novel?

Harini: It helped in the extensive research involved in the plotting of the books – for that required poring over tomes and tomes of material and also in the numerous rewrites. I was dissatisfied with the initial draft (30K words) of Shadows and Secrets – it just wasn't working. I deleted that entire draft and started afresh – this was possible only because of my editing and content management profile.

Frontlist: Can you discuss specific instances in your storytelling where you challenge readers' assumptions about well-known historical figures like Maharaja Chandragupta II Vikramaditya and Mahakavi Kalidasa?

Harini: As mentioned before, making Mahakavi Kalidasa the Head of the unofficial Intelligence Network is really subverting the main assumption about him as being only the great dramatist. As for Maharaja Chandragupta II Vikramaditya, he isn't exactly featured in the book except for being in the periphery.



Interview with Philip George & Geetha K, “Racket Boy - Where's My Country ?”

Philip George's life is a testament to the RB formula: Hope + Vision + Effort + Hard Work. From his Malaysian roots to four decades in England and eventual retirement in the tranquil San Romano, Tuscany, his journey resonates with resilience. A seasoned traveler, he embraced diverse roles, from factory worker, psychiatric nurse to banker, stevedore, bookie's runner, and waiter/bartender. Sporting feats, legal prowess, and pro bono dedication intertwine in this narrative, reflecting the RB formula's core principles. This book honours triumph over insecurities, a tribute to every underdog's journey marked by hope, vision, effort, and hard work. Philip's core message: "BOOTS on the ground. Walk the talk.

Geetha K is a Malaysian educator turned writer. She spent two decades as a language teacher before transitioning to writing and editing for independent media outlets. Geetha has completed a masterclass in memoir writing in London and has published two books, including her first novel, *The Seat*, and an autobiography co-authored with Philip George, titled *Racket Boy - Where's My Country*. Her third book is set to be published in 2024.

Frontlist: Your book, "Racket Boy: Where's My Country?", offers a fascinating glimpse into your life journey spanning six decades. Can you tell us what inspired you to write this memoir?

Philip: The inspiration to write my memoir stemmed from reaching an age where reflection becomes inevitable, and the unprecedented COVID pandemic offered a unique pause. It was a time to reflect on my life, assess the crises I've faced, and share the valuable lessons I've learned. It seemed the perfect moment to turn crisis into opportunity and capture my journey in writing.

Frontlist: The title of your book, "Racket Boy," hints at your passion for badminton. How has sports shaped your life and influenced your experiences?

Philip: Sports have always been my "chill pill"—a source of oxygen and liberation. Engaging in badminton and other sports has given me a sense of freedom and joy, allowing me to soak up life fully. It's been a vital part of my routine, helping me maintain balance and perspective within the complexities of life.

Frontlist: Your upbringing in Malaysia and subsequent migration to England are central themes in your memoir. Could you share some insights into how these cultural transitions have impacted your identity and worldview?

Philip: Growing up in Malaysia often felt restrictive, like a prison. The societal and cultural norms were confining, and I constantly felt berated and put down. Migrating to England was a liberation for my mind and spirit. It allowed me to think freely, expand my knowledge, and pursue education in a way that was completely different from the rigid academic approach typical in Malaysia and other Asian countries. This transition profoundly shaped my identity, broadening my worldview and fostering a sense of independence and self-worth.

Frontlist: Throughout your life, you've been involved in sports at various levels, including international badminton and county-level squash. How has your involvement in sports contributed to your personal and professional development?



Philip: Involvement in sports has instilled in me essential qualities such as discipline, reliability, and endurance. It has taught me the importance of continuity and staying the course with enthusiasm, passion, and positivity. These attributes have been invaluable in my personal and professional growth, helping me navigate challenges and stay committed to my goals.

Frontlist: Your memoir includes anecdotes of your travels and adventures across the globe, from England to Ecuador and beyond. Can you share some memorable moments or lessons learned from these experiences?

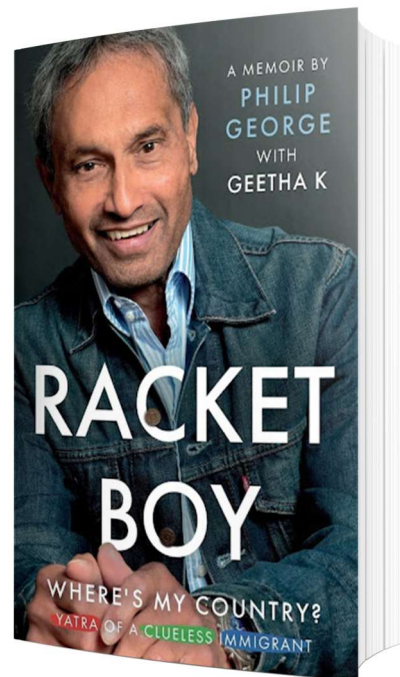
Philip: One of the most memorable and intense experiences was when Hungarian gangsters stole all my cash, passport, credit cards, and personal documents on a train from Sants Station in Barcelona. In a moment of sheer determination, I confronted the three burly men, fighting them in front of a train full of passengers. Despite the imminent threat of being knifed, I managed to retrieve all my stolen possessions. The lesson I learned was clear: sometimes, you must confront danger head-on and be brave. In certain moments, it's the only option.

Frontlist: As a member of CAS (Court of Arbitration for Sports), you continue to offer legal consultancy on a Pro Bono basis. What motivates you to continue your professional pursuits even in retirement?

Philip: I am deeply motivated by the desire to help the less privileged, particularly the underdog. Offering legal consultancy on a pro bono basis allows me to give back to the community and support those who might not have the resources to fight for their rights. It's a way to use my expertise to make a positive impact and keep me engaged and purposeful in my retirement.

Frontlist: Your memoir touches upon themes of identity, resilience, and finding one's place in the world. What do you hope readers will take away from your story?

Philip: I hope readers understand the simplicity and beauty of life that can be achieved through hard work, diligence, and determination. I want them to recognize that each of us is unique—"there is only one of you"—and that embracing one's individuality while staying resilient can lead to a fulfilling and meaningful life.



Interview with Arjan Singh, Author “Competitive Success”

Author ARJAN SINGH has advised 68 of Top 100 companies in the Fortune Global 500 list in building winning strategies and co-authored Best Practices in Managing Competitive Intelligence Research: For Pharmaceutical and Biotechnology Managers. With over twenty-six years of experience, Singh is an expert in helping companies develop data-driven strategies through war games, strategic and competitive analysis, scenario planning and building business early warning systems that deliver significant impact. He is an Adjunct Professor of Marketing and Global Consulting at Southern Methodist University (SMU) COX School of Business and lives in Scottsdale, Arizona with his wife and two children. Learn more about his work at www.CorporateWarGames.com.

Frontlist: Your book, "Competitive Success: Building Winning Strategies with Corporate War Games," offers a unique approach to developing winning strategies through war games. Can you elaborate on the concept of war games and how they can help companies gain a competitive edge in dynamic markets?

Arjan: In "Competitive Success: Building Winning Strategies with Corporate War Games," the concept of war games is presented as a strategic tool to help

War games are structured exercises that simulate competitive environments, allowing companies to anticipate and react to potential market scenarios.

Corporate war games are strategic simulations where teams within a company take on the roles of competitors, customers, and other market stakeholders. These simulations mimic real-world market dynamics and competitive interactions. The primary objective is to test strategies, explore possible outcomes, and identify potential risks and opportunities before they unfold in the actual market.

By simulating various scenarios, companies can identify potential risks and develop plans to mitigate them before they become real issues. Participants gain experience in making high-stakes decisions in a controlled environment, improving their decision-making skills for real-world situations. War games foster collaboration and communication among different departments, enhancing overall organizational cohesion and strategic alignment. The exercise helps companies gain deeper insights into market dynamics and competitor strategies, making them more adaptable to changes and better prepared to seize opportunities.

In dynamic markets, where change is constant and unpredictable, war games provide a proactive approach to strategy development. They are particularly valuable in industries like pharmaceuticals, technology, and finance, where rapid innovation and intense competition are the norms. By simulating competitive interactions and market shifts, companies can stay ahead of the curve, ensuring their strategies are robust and resilient.

Frontlist: With your extensive experience advising Fortune Global 500 companies on strategy development, what are some common challenges you've observed in the competitive landscape?

Arjan: Drawing from my extensive experience advising Fortune Global 500 companies, I've observed several common challenges that these organizations face in the competitive landscape. These challenges are often complex and multifaceted, but understanding and addressing them is crucial for maintaining a competitive edge.



Some of the key challenges are:

1. Technological advancements occur at a breakneck pace, disrupting industries and redefining competitive advantages. Companies struggle to keep up with the latest technologies and integrate them into their operations. This lag can lead to obsolescence or loss of market share to more agile competitors.

2. Operating in a global market means dealing with diverse regulatory environments, cultural differences, and economic conditions. Navigating these complexities can be costly and challenging, especially when trying to standardize products and services across different regions.

3. The competitive landscape is increasingly crowded, with new entrants and innovative disruptors constantly emerging. Traditional competitive advantages can quickly erode, making it difficult for established companies to maintain their market position.

4. As companies become more digital, they face heightened risks of cyber-attacks and data breaches. Cybersecurity incidents can lead to significant financial losses, operational disruptions, and loss of customer trust.

Frontlist: The book emphasizes the importance of incorporating uncertainty into strategic planning through early warning systems and scenario planning. How do these practices help companies anticipate and respond to unexpected events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic?

Arjan: Incorporating uncertainty into strategic planning through early warning systems and scenario planning is crucial for helping companies anticipate and respond to unexpected events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. These practices enable organizations to be more agile, resilient, and better prepared for a wide range of potential disruptions.

Early Warning Systems -

Early warning systems are designed to detect signals or indicators of potential threats and opportunities well before they fully materialize. They provide advance notice of potential disruptions, enabling companies to take preemptive actions rather than reacting after the fact.

By identifying risks early, companies can develop and implement strategies to mitigate their impact, reducing the potential for severe consequences. These systems also help in spotting emerging opportunities, allowing companies to capitalize on new markets or trends ahead of competitors.

Scenario Planning -

Scenario planning involves creating and analyzing multiple plausible future scenarios based on various assumptions about key uncertainties. This process typically includes identifying key drivers, developing scenarios, and assessing impacts. Scenario planning helps companies prepare for a variety of potential futures, making them more adaptable and resilient to unexpected changes. By considering a range of possible outcomes, companies can make more informed strategic decisions that account for uncertainty. This approach promotes the development of flexible strategies that can be adjusted as new information becomes available, ensuring that companies can pivot quickly in response to changing circumstances.

Incorporating uncertainty into strategic planning through early warning systems and scenario planning is essential for building organizational resilience and agility. These practices enable companies to anticipate potential disruptions, respond proactively, and maintain a competitive edge even in the face of unexpected events like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Frontlist: As a competitive intelligence expert, how do you stay updated on industry trends and market dynamics to ensure that your strategic recommendations remain relevant and impactful? Are there any resources or methodologies you rely on for continuous learning and development?

Arjan: As a competitive intelligence expert, staying updated on industry trends and market dynamics is crucial to ensuring that strategic recommendations remain relevant and impactful. Here are some key strategies, resources, and methodologies I rely on for continuous learning and development:

1. Regular Monitoring of Industry Publications and Reports:

- Subscribing to publications such as "Harvard Business Review," "The Economist," "Wall Street Journal" and sector-specific journals.
- Utilizing reports from firms like Gartner, McKinsey, Forrester, and IDC to gain insights into market trends and forecasts.

- White Papers and Case Studies: Reading white papers and case studies from leading companies and research institutions.
- 2. Engagement with Professional Networks and Communities:
 - Participating in organizations such as the Strategic and Competitive Intelligence Professionals (SCIP) and the Market Research Society (MRS).
 - Attending industry conferences, webinars, and seminars to network with peers and learn about the latest developments.
 - Engaging with online forums, LinkedIn groups, and other social media platforms where professionals discuss trends and share insights.

3. Leveraging Technology and Tools:

- Employing analytics tools such as Tableau, Power BI, and Google Analytics to interpret large datasets and uncover actionable insights.
- Integrating AI and machine learning tools to predict trends and automate data collection and analysis processes.

4. Scenario Planning and War Games:

- Regularly conducting scenario planning exercises to anticipate future market conditions and their potential impact on the business.
- Running war games to simulate competitive scenarios and test strategies in a controlled environment, enabling better preparedness for real-world challenges.

5. Customized Research and Consulting:

Commissioning custom research from specialized firms to address specific strategic questions and challenges.

Engaging with industry experts and consultants to gain deeper insights and validate assumptions.

Frontlist: In today's globalized economy, companies often operate in diverse cultural and regulatory environments. How do you advise companies to navigate these complexities and adapt their strategies to different cultural contexts while maintaining a cohesive overall vision?

Arjan: Navigating the complexities of diverse cultural and regulatory environments in a globalized economy requires a nuanced approach that balances local adaptation with a cohesive overall vision. Here are several key strategies I advise companies to implement:

Understand Local Cultures and Markets:

Conducting thorough market research helps to understand local consumer behavior, preferences, and cultural nuances. This can involve surveys, focus groups, and ethnographic studies. Cultural sensitivity training can be provided for employees, especially those in managerial and customer-facing roles, to foster respect and understanding of local customs and practices. Collaborating with local businesses, consultants, and cultural experts who can help offer valuable insights and facilitate smoother market entry and operations.

Adapt Products and Services:

Adapting products and services to meet local tastes and preferences can involve modifying product features, packaging, branding, and marketing messages. Local teams should be encouraged to innovate and develop products designed for their markets. This not only meets local needs but also drives engagement and market relevance.

Cross-Cultural Communication and Collaboration:

Building diverse teams with members from different cultural backgrounds helps to foster cross-cultural understanding and innovation. Clear and effective communication establishes channels that accommodate time zone differences and language barriers.

Feedback and Continuous Improvement:

Establishing feedback loops to gather insights from local customers, employees, and partners helps to refine strategies and improve market responsiveness. A culture of continuous learning and adaptation must be promoted. Teams must be encouraged to stay informed about global trends and local developments and be flexible in their approach.

Successfully navigating the complexities of diverse cultural and regulatory environments requires a strategic balance between global coherence and local adaptation. By understanding local markets, adapting products and services, ensuring regulatory compliance, maintaining a cohesive corporate vision, fostering cross-cultural communication, and continuously learning and improving, companies can thrive in the global marketplace.

Frontlist: Collaboration and partnerships are increasingly important in today's interconnected business landscape. How do you help companies identify strategic partners and build mutually beneficial relationships that contribute to their long-term success?

Arjan: In today's interconnected business landscape, collaboration and partnerships are critical for achieving long-term success. To help companies identify strategic partners and build mutually beneficial relationships, it's essential to follow a systematic approach that includes several key steps and strategies.

First, defining strategic objectives is fundamental. Companies need to clarify their goals and understand what they aim to achieve through partnerships, whether it's market expansion, innovation, cost reduction, or access to new technologies. These objectives should align with the company's overall vision and mission, ensuring that any potential partnership supports the broader strategic direction of the organization.

Identifying potential partners involves thorough market research and leveraging industry networks. Companies should examine industry reports, attend conferences, and participate in trade shows to meet potential partners. Engaging in competitive analysis can also reveal opportunities for unique collaborations by highlighting areas where competitors have formed partnerships and identifying gaps that your company can fill with complementary strengths and capabilities.

Evaluating the fit of a potential partner requires assessing cultural compatibility, strengths and weaknesses, and their track record. Cultural compatibility ensures that both organizations share similar values and work cultures, which is crucial for long-term collaboration. Additionally, reviewing a potential partner's past performance and reliability can provide insights into their suitability for a long-term relationship.

Due diligence is another critical step, encompassing financial health, legal compliance, and reputation checks. Ensuring the financial stability of a partner is necessary to avoid future risks. Legal compliance checks prevent future regulatory issues, and assessing the partner's reputation within the industry provides a sense of their standing and reliability.

Establishing clear objectives and expectations from the outset is vital. Developing a robust governance structure with regular meetings and decision-making processes ensures that both partners are aligned and can manage the partnership effectively. Building trust and fostering open communication are crucial for the partnership's success. Transparent communication, regular updates, and honest feedback help in addressing issues promptly.

Monitoring and evaluating the partnership's performance is an ongoing process. Regular performance reviews and feedback loops help in assessing progress and making necessary adjustments. Celebrating successes and milestones achieved through the partnership builds morale and reinforces commitment to the joint objectives.

Finally, successful partnerships should be scaled and expanded. Identifying successful initiatives that can be applied to other areas of the business or other regions can maximize the partnership's value. Continuously exploring new opportunities for collaboration and developing a long-term vision with a roadmap for future growth ensures that the partnership evolves and remains beneficial for both parties.

By following these strategies, companies can create strong, effective partnerships that contribute significantly to their long-term success and competitive advantage in the global market.





FRONT LIST

Pride Month 2024!

Explore Empowering Authors' Thoughts

**OF LGBTQIA+
COMMUNITY & ALLIES**

To Get Aware & Inspired!



Interview with Payal Dhar, Author “It Has No Name”

Payal Dhar has been writing stories since she was seven years old. Unfortunately, no one will ever know what was in them because her dog ate everything. She writes on a computer these days, and hopes she'll never cross paths with a Pting. In her day job, which she does at night because she hates mornings, she is a freelance journalist on science, technology and society. She also writes books for middle-grade and young-adult readers. *It Has No Name* is her tenth novel.

Frontlist: Can you tell us about your book “It Has No Name?” and what inspired you to write this story?

Payal: *It Has No Name* is a story about identity, fitting in, and how tough it can get for someone encoded as different. The book is from the viewpoint of 16-year-old Sami, who is a butch-presenting girl who is just starting to understand that she is a lesbian. She is forced to move from the city she lives into her mother's hometown in the hills and start at a new school.

Although Sami is very skeptical about how queer-friendly a small town will be, she is pleasantly surprised by how diverse it is. But then, teenage years are full of complex questions about finding out what sort of person you are, what you believe in, etc.—not just for Sami but her friends as well.

Frontlist: As a freelance science journalist, how do you integrate your interest in science, technology, and society into your writing for young adults?

Payal: I'm essentially a science-fiction and fantasy writer, so I get to geek about about science and tech in that side of my fiction writing. Even otherwise, there's usually a strong tech element in all my works. In *It Has No Name*, there's a lot about how the internet brings like-minded people together and about all the available information about the things you can't always ask the people around you about. And, of course, the online “challenge” towards the book's second half changes people's lives.

Frontlist: The book tackles the “chosen family” concept through Sami's friendships. Can you discuss how these relationships provide her with a sense of belonging and acceptance? Furthermore, what is the importance of support networks, particularly for LGBTQ+ youth?

Payal: Chosen family is an evocative term because it packs so much in two words. It tells us that we can't “choose” our families technically; but if that family proves harmful to us, we can choose to form families with people we feel safe with. It reminds of the saying (that is often misinterpreted): ‘The blood of the covenant is thicker than the water of the womb.’

There's a prevalent notion, especially in Indian cultures, that we owe our families our unconditional love and loyalty, but this is a flawed assumption. Yes, families are supposed to be safe and affirming spaces, but they are very often the most unsafe ones. I reported about this for a feature for Al Jazeera on how families emotionally blackmail their queer members and force them to conform. The fallout of this is actual harm, psychological or physical, which makes support networks very important for queer folks to have a safe space. This includes what's called “community,” referring to groups that include other queer people.



But it's not enough. Everyone deserves to feel safe all the time, and sadly, families are often places you don't. I experienced this growing up, always being told that I looked wrong or the way I thought was wrong. As a result, I remained very isolated, feeling like there was something wrong with me. I found the chosen family on the internet before I found them physically. The same happens with Sami—it's her chosen family that actually gives her affirmation first.

A word of caution: whether physical or virtual, there are always dangers. So, this is not a blanket endorsement of internet groups or unknown offline groups.

Frontlist: The book tackles the complex experience of being LGBTQ+ in modern India. How did you research and portray the specific challenges and freedoms Sami faces within this social context?

Payal: Constantly being told that there's something wrong with you for how you look and how you feel can be very damaging, to the extent that you start to hate yourself or force yourself to be a way that is unnatural. That causes lifelong trauma, and this is the first and basic challenge most Indian kids face.

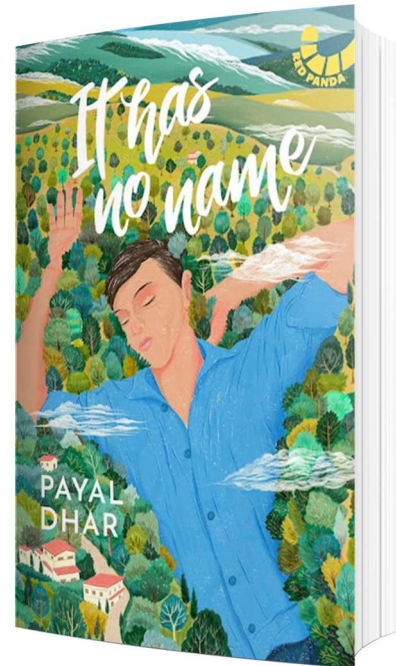
This book draws a lot from personal experience; interviews with queer folk; and research into social, psychological, and physical trauma experienced by LGBTQ+ people. Fiction, and also fan-fiction, also informed a lot of my background infor, because that's where you find the stories that queer folk would like to tell and be told about themselves.

The most important thing was to tell an uplifting story. In the mainstream media, queer stories tend to be disproportionately tragic. This reflects how the mainstream views the lives of LGBTQ+ people—as full of trauma, pain, and tragedy. But queer people have always lived and thrived in every period of history. These days, as more and more queer people are writing their own stories, this is changing.

Frontlist: Lastly, what do you hope readers, especially LGBTQ+ youth, will take away from your book, and do you have any messages for them during Pride Month?

Payal: I hope that readers will be inspired by Sami's determination to be herself, even in the face of bullying. As for Pride month, I want to tell young queers this: Don't be fooled with tokenistic gestures like 'Pride month.' It's just 30 days when big businesses, media houses, educational institutions, etc.,

put a rainbow sticker on everything and pretend they are inclusive. Instead, look at what happens when Pride month is over.



Interview with Ameya Narvankar, Author “Ritu Weds Chandni”

Ameya Narvankar is a multidisciplinary designer, visual artist and bookmaker from India. An alumnus of IIT-Bombay, Ameya believes in the power of design to bring about change, which he hopes to achieve through his foray into children's literature. He loves, in no particular order, cats, bearded men and Beyoncé (who doesn't?). Connect with him at ameyanarvankar.com and [@ameyazing](https://www.instagram.com/ameyazing) on Instagram.

Frontlist: "Ritu Weds Chandni" is an amazing children's book that explores themes of love, acceptance, and standing up against prejudice. What inspired you to write this story, and why did you choose to focus on a same-sex wedding as the central theme?

Ameya: "Ritu Weds Chandni" has academic origins and is the outcome of my Master's in Design thesis project at IDC, IIT Bombay. I explored the subject 'The Visibility & Representation of LGBTQ in Indian Society,'

where I examined various portrayals of the queer community in popular media and art, focusing on those catered towards younger audiences. I found that the mainstream has shied away from accurate representation, and often, the depictions have been cruel and downright homophobic. As a queer man who grew up on a staple of Bollywood in the 90s, these depictions always bothered me. "Ritu Weds Chandni" is an attempt to create better avenues for representation, address homophobia, and sensitize children towards the community.

Frontlist: LGBTQ+ themes are still relatively uncommon in mainstream children's literature. What challenges did you face in creating a story that is both informative and age-appropriate?

Ameya: As part of my initial research on a design problem, I had to speak to my users, in this case, children. Given the topic's sensitive nature, this was not possible, and I had to rely on parents, teachers, and caregivers. This was eye-opening because I realized the extent of direct information I could share while keeping it relatable for the reader. To facilitate this, my story is written from the POV of a child – 6-year-old Ayesha – and is set against the backdrop of a wedding, a concept most of us are familiar with right from childhood. For Ayesha, her didi's wedding is no different from that of her Deepak bhaiya's wedding. She sees it as every other happy family occasion, a union of two individuals coming together to celebrate their love.

Frontlist: As a designer and visual artist, do your artistic sensibilities influence your writing process? How did you envision the characters and their world in "Ritu Weds Chandni"?

Ameya: Indeed, I think in pictures! After I had a rough plot structure outlined, I storyboarded the entire book with sketches and placeholder content, and the story was eventually fleshed out. The thesis draft of the story had rhymes and verbal metaphors; however, it underwent multiple iterations after being picked up for publication to make it palatable to children. The metaphors became more visual, and we dropped the rhymes for a simpler, linear narrative.



The baraat (wedding procession) is pivotal to the story and is a strong visual metaphor that parallels a pride parade, both celebrating the act of being publicly visible and brave. The resistance the baraat faces is again metaphors visualized – high horses, words made of knives, and rain on my parade.

Frontlist: Ayesha, the young protagonist, plays a pivotal role in the story. Why did you choose to tell this story from a child's perspective? How does her viewpoint contribute to the narrative's message of acceptance?

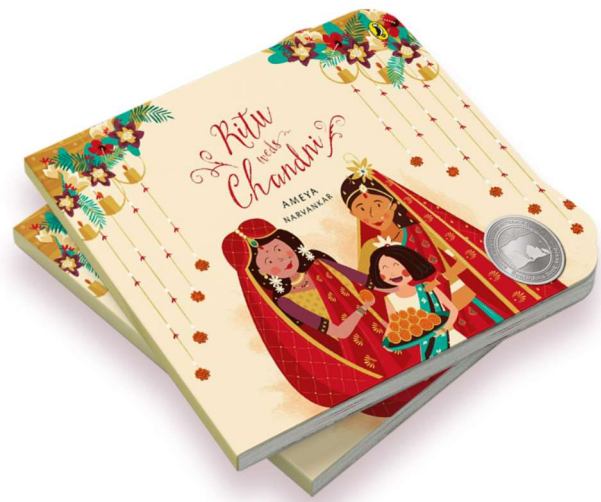
Ameya: Children are good observers and have questioning minds. By choosing Ayesha as the protagonist, young readers can place themselves in her shoes as she tries to make sense of the stigma and resistance faced by her cousin's wedding. She asks 'why?' at every occasion and only wants her cousin to be happy. Her reasoning, while innocent, stumps the adults who have probably been conditioned to view LGBTQ relationships in a negative light. This helps establish the narrative's message that children are not born homophobic but are rather conditioned by society. The idea is to inculcate a sense of critical thinking within the children and help them realize that every person, irrespective of race, caste, gender, or sexuality, has the right to lead their life with dignity and freedom.

Frontlist: Going beyond the love story, the book also delves into the challenges same-sex couples face. How did you portray these challenges while maintaining a hopeful and heartwarming tone?

Ameya: Given my audience was children, I wanted the story to have a happy ending, but at the same time, I did not want to mask the harsh realities the LGBTQ community faces in our country. Many members of the community have come out over the years and become visible in the public eye despite the associated risks of stigma, alienation, and threats of violence. Their visibility validates the community's existence and inspires more individuals to come out. I want children to understand the challenges that a queer person would face, but also to let them know that 'it gets better' eventually. There will be resistance, but you will also find allies and family among friends.

Frontlist: Finally, looking ahead, what are your hopes for the future of LGBTQ+ representation in children's literature, and how do you plan to continue advocating for diversity and inclusion for the LGBTQ+ community through your work?

Ameya: The diverse picture books market is growing every year. New-age parents actively seek such books to facilitate open conversations with their children on sensitive subjects. Several titles have been released in India too. I hope that queer characters become more commonplace in children's literature and their stories are nuanced beyond their sexual orientation. It will be interesting to read stories about queer protagonists from different historical periods or during India's freedom struggle.



FRONT LIST

Heal the Planet. Save the Lives!

Learn from the

**Authors & Enthusiasts
about Surroundings**

To Get Aware & Inspired!



Interview with Sunil Gadhoke, Author “Long Live the Tiger”

Sunil Gadhoke, a dynamic entrepreneur hailing from Delhi, has been actively engaged in both the renewable and thermal energy sectors. Apart from his business ventures, Sunil pursues a diverse range of interests. He has been an avid glider pilot, finding solace and excitement while soaring alongside magnificent birds. He has gained significant recognition for his exceptional proficiency in the art of Bonsai culture and is also an ardent cook.

Sunil enthusiastically pursued wildlife photography in recent years which has manifested in this book. His acute attention for detail and a passion that drives perfection, allows him to capture captivating moments while also playing a role in the broader conservation narrative. Through his work, he strives to raise awareness about the iconic and endangered species, making a meaningful contribution. "Long Live the Tiger" provides a glimpse into Sunil Gadhoke's unwavering commitment for preserving these majestic creatures.

Frontlist: What inspired you to write 'Long Live the Tiger' and what core message do you hope readers will take away from it?

Sunil: The tiger is an icon of the Indian jungle. With one of the last remaining populations in the world, 'Project Tiger' has been a remarkable story. Coinciding with the golden jubilee year, my motivation to write the book was to draw attention of fellow Indians on the remarkable story of a species retrieval program. Tigers were certain to have gone extinct in the wild when Project Tiger started and just how fortunate we are to see this magnificent animal still thriving in its natural habitat.

Notwithstanding our success, I strongly felt that we may have saved the tiger from extinction for now, but the threats facing the tiger have not gone away. As such we don't have the luxury to be complacent to believe we have saved the tiger from extinction forever. Going forward we need to plan for the next several decades by scientifically and objectively applying the learnings towards future of conservation.

Frontlist: Based on your research, what are some of the most effective strategies for tiger conservation, and how can these strategies be implemented on a global scale?

Sunil: I believe the human DNA is coded to enjoy nature. With the youngest and progressively affluent population in the world, the need for nature based tourism is on the rise and will keep growing for next several decades. Whereas the existing forests and resources are limited. As in the past there will continue to be a pressure on them to get diverted due to human development pressure and/or their quality will keep depleting due to poaching of prey base and other forest dependent activities. We are in a unique dynamic of diminishing supply of forests and increasing demand for nature-based tourism. By leveraging the charismatic tiger and dovetailing eco-tourism opportunity, we can achieve multiple goals.

The available forest resources for bio-diversity and tiger conservation are about 380,000 sq. kms, of which about 75,000 sq. kms are currently deployed. About half of that is well protected. As such there is a big scope to step up our conservation efforts which will eventually lead to thriving forests and biodiversity, and tigers will naturally occupy them.



By leveraging the iconic tiger and reclaiming the degraded forests we are able to achieve multiple goals such as:

- Addressing the impact of climate change and global warming
- Helping towards clean air and water security
- Developing large scale tourism opportunity which brings with it economic benefits directed towards the local people while at the same time satisfying the human desires.
- Working towards conservation and a larger and viable tiger population which is continuously under threat from poachers and loss of habitat
- India as a global tiger tourism destination that brings the resources at a large scale.

As we have seen from the experience of other countries, forest conservation to be successful, we need to put the local communities in the centre of the strategy. Conservation starts with the community, and through them we can achieve large scale wildlife conservation success.

Deeper involvement of local communities in tourism related activities or policing and patrolling activities can bring the economic benefits to them. In addition, economic activity will percolate down with many other essential benefits such as access and availability of good health and education facilities. These communities still live in largely primitive environment and farming practices which make them dependant on land. There is huge scope to bring in modern practices such as large-scale co-operative farming, livestock, poultry and fish culture, arts and crafts etc. This can not only create employment, economic prosperity but also serve to hugely reduce conflicts by reducing the interface between humans and animals in the buffer areas surrounded the forests. We can leverage the same people to work for conservation, who are presently conflicted.

Frontlist: How do you envision 'Long Live the Tiger' contributing to the broader discourse on wildlife conservation, particularly in relation to policy-making and public awareness?

Sunil: I have touched upon several issues that may be considered contentious but require fresh scientific analysis.

- 1) Leveraging tourism to achieve multiple objectives

- 2) Review of the 80:20 system which was implemented on an ad-hoc basis

- 3) Science based decision making and eliminating systemic failures

- 4) Managing human and wildlife conflict and working to reduce human induced threats

- 5) Stepping up the fight against poaching and organized syndicates

Frontlist: How has your background in renewable and thermal energy sectors influenced your perspective on environmental sustainability, and how did this perspective shape your approach to writing about tiger conservation?

Sunil: Caveat, I am not a qualified engineer, but, my business interests over last 40 years have always centred around deploying an applied scientific approach to my work. Scientific and analytical thinking is deeply embedded in my grain and as such my interest in wildlife and in particular tiger photography naturally drew me towards the larger issues surrounding tigers, conservation, development and sustainability and to understand and think objectively.

Frontlist: Your book emphasizes the importance of responsible stewardship of our planet's natural treasures. What specific actions can individuals and communities take to support tiger conservation, and how can they be motivated to engage in these efforts?

Sunil: India is at the crossroads of rapid economic development and facing the twin challenge of balancing development needs to support a burgeoning population and environmental stewardship. We are faced with the choice to invest in our future for our future generation or not care and destroy it. Clean air and water are basic necessities which we are already struggling to provide our population.

So, we can press the pedal on this journey to reclaim our forests and biodiversity or on the flip side, if we don't do this our forests will keep getting depleted, clean air and water for our population will continue to get worse as we develop the economy, putting the people in a very difficult situation.

Frontlist: What were the major challenges you encountered while writing and compiling 'Long Live the Tiger' and how did you address them? Were there any unexpected discoveries during this process?

Sunil: As a first-time author and publisher, I had to learn all the specialities.

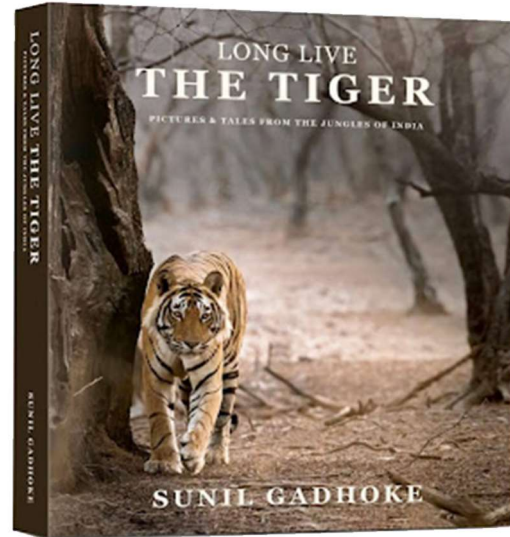
But I sincerely believe that when we set out to our callings in life, nature conspires to come to your assistance. Fortunately, I came across some wonderful people like Dr. Ullas Karanth, Joanna van Gruisen, Dr. Raghu Chundawat, Sunil Kumar who literally adopted me to see this project through. As also Kamal Arora from my printer Navin printers who worked 18 hours shifts to deliver the book on time. All in all it was a great ride with many ups and downs, twists and turns and dangers of failure lurking on every corner just as in the jungle.

Frontlist: For readers passionate about wildlife conservation what additional resources or actions would you recommend for those looking to deepen their understanding and involvement in tiger conservation efforts?

Sunil: There is a lot of information on the internet and youtube. These are definitely great resources. Equally we must read as many books on this subject. On tiger in particular, I find following books fascinating and great reads to deepen our understanding:

Among Tigers - Dr. Ullas karanth

The Rise and Fall of the Emerald Tiger - Dr. Raghu Chundawat



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Interview with Shalini Sheth Amin, Author “Fit In, Stand Out, Walk: Stories from a Pushed Away Hill”

Shailini Sheth Amin is an architect, a community project initiator and a financial consultant. She studied in India and in the UK. Her field of work has been in energy efficiency and sustainable practices, conservation programs and heritage support to buildings, people and places. A spokesperson for sustainability, crafts and Fair Trade, she writes regularly for periodicals and in the social media.

Frontlist: The title, “Fit In, Stand Out, Walk,” is very powerful. Can you explain what each part of the title means and how it relates to Neelima’s journey in the book?

Shalini: Oh, yes, such an interesting question! Neelima, the protagonist in the book, is an orphan. She is found in the garden, and then she is adopted by a very special family who brings her up, nurtures her, and loves her unconditionally. Despite childhood trauma and setbacks, she is blessed with amazing role models.

For her to be an orphan and in her adoption—both very significant moments in her life—she had no active role in them. Like a roll of dice, they just happened. In her later age, she comes out of this childhood trauma, but this sense of being pushed away, being distant, alone, and detached remains. It is like she is on this pushed-away hill from where she sees and experiences her life.

In this situation, trying to fit in with people, places, and circumstances is a conscious endeavor for her; nothing comes easy. With her inspiring mentors and with an in-built mindset of being abandoned, she probably has the need to work to establish her identity. She is moving on—walking. She stands out in the process. Neelima, as a character, stands on her own, and she becomes her own person. Don’t we all work to fit in and stand out sometime or the other in our lives?

Frontlist: How did you keep “Fit In, Stand Out, Walk” engaging and captivating for readers while staying true to Neelima’s character and her authentic journey?

Shalini: I’ve been writing reports articles, and giving talks for a while. Creative writing like this book is a first for me. Readers tell me that the titles of each chapter and the way they begin and end have kept them captivated. The stories, many times, manage to make one connected to real experiences of the moments. The exciting story, told in a fresh voice and a new perspective, finds the readers invested in the characters and events of their lives.

Frontlist: Given that many characters in your book are strong and resilient, how did you ensure that Neelima stands out as a unique and powerful character while also giving each woman in her life a distinct and memorable identity?



Shalini: I am not an experienced writer, so I am not so sure how Neelima came out to be stronger than other characters, but I suppose, simplistically, it is Neelima's story! Her honesty, vulnerability, losses, pains, and little triumphs come out strong. This connects with readers. Her courage, guts, and self-belief in openly talking about them in a clear, objective, and distant manner perhaps make her relatable and stronger.

Frontlist: Writing about personal and often painful experiences can be emotionally challenging. How did you manage the emotional highs and lows while writing this memoir?

Shalini: Neelima's story is very closely related to incidents that have happened in my life. But I was very conscious about one thing. I did not want this book to be therapy or catharsis for me. To write in that frame of mind, I thought, would be selfish. I have worked in many ways to deal with my emotions and my feelings well before writing. Neelima, as a character, stands on her own, and she becomes her own person. I believe this makes her story more relatable and gives it a kind of wider spread of wings.

Having said that, Neelima lost her adoptive mother to cancer when she was nine, and she became an orphan again. That is directly related to my life experience. That is the saddest and most painful experience in my life. I still get a lump in my throat when I read it.

In the book, Neelima mentions that, as a child aged nine, after her mother's death, she instinctively behaved like a normal person, as if nothing had happened: no upheaval and no pain. Probably that was the only way she knew how to deal with the shock, vulnerability, and loss. She wanted to hide everything, subconsciously wishing that it never happened.

Children going through acute difficulty, pain, loss, and complex family issues sometimes deal with this in the same way that she does. They behave as if everything is OK. They do not go for help because they do not have that kind of understanding, or more importantly, the courage to open up to anyone. They are too scared, and there is always a sense of guilt that they are responsible in some way for causing the problems. Believing that everything is fine is a much safer and comforting way. Living in deception is better than naming and acknowledging the monster.

Frontlist: At what point in your life did you begin to believe in the importance of sustainability and environmental conservation, and did you actively try to portray these values in "Fit In, Stand Out, Walk"?

Shalini: My husband was born in East Africa and served as an officer in the Royal Air Force in the United Kingdom. We settled in Pondicherry, South India, and I started my architectural practice there. I was fortunate to meet Shri Chamanlal Gupta ji, a well-known scientist, scholar, and disciple of Sri Aurobindo. He is known as the Father of Solar energy practices in India. With him, I learned about alternative energy sources and their applications.

After a few years, we moved to the UK, and I worked there. Energy efficiency in buildings was a developing movement at the time, and I got involved. My understanding and connection started from there. It has become a lifelong mission and commitment, attempting to live lightly on Mother Earth. That is to adopt a conscious lifestyle, live with low consumption, buy meaningfully, try to be self-sufficient in food, be aware of reducing carbon footprint where possible, and recycle and upcycle resources whenever I can.

Frontlist: Your book highlights the importance of female support systems. Can you share a particularly memorable moment or lesson you learned from the strong women in your life?

Shalini: My family had women in the forefront. A family that broke the stereotypes in an age where society was steeped in set norms about women's domesticity, daily rituals, male supremacy, and all other social constructs. These pioneering women must have faced censure, challenges, and discrimination at all levels. Along with that, there would be all the normal ups and downs of life, within the family and from outside: conflicts; competition—fair and unfair; frustrations; loneliness; jealousy; anger; money problems; failures; and losses. This was not a commune; it was a family of women with a matriarch. Some members were related by blood, and all were related by heart and soul for life—a family with everlasting, indestructible connectedness.

My mother did not cook or clean. She did much more than that. I saw that she was a mother, a father, a teacher, a mentor, and a spiritual Guru. She was very kind and loving not just to me as a child but to people all around her and the community. She was a person with vision and a strong moral code. She was a hard-working woman-soldier, a strict taskmaster, a person with self-belief, and a confident leader. She was equally influential at home and in the outside world, where it mattered. But, at a personal level, none of the mother or parent figures in my life were perfect.

Their childhood traumas, disjointed relationships, family connections and lack of them must have been difficult. They had big losses and deaths of fathers and mothers in their childhoods. They were victims of their own circumstances. Their hopes, fears, dreams, and expectations must have shattered them to the core at times. They were self-centered at times and suffered from self-righteousness too. In spite of all that, they had a sense of meaningfulness, strength, and peace in them. They were survivors. My life DNA is from these women, and I feel I have inherited from them parts of who they were.

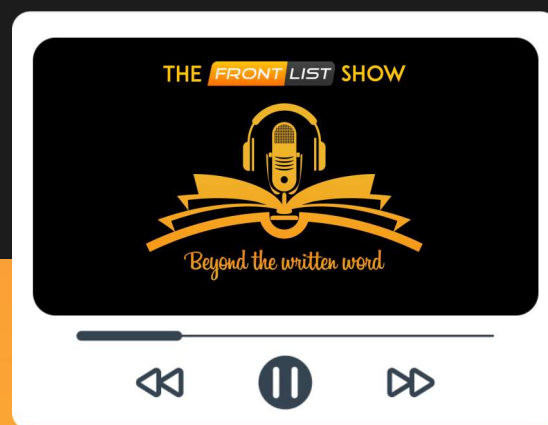
Frontlist: In a world where storytelling is a powerful tool for change, how do you envision your bookmaking an impact or sparking conversations about women's experiences and empowerment?

Shalini: When I wrote this book, I wanted more and more people of our culture to read this book; men and women. My first thought is to get this book translated into many Indian languages. I see this book as a story of finding our passion, finding our vision, to be open to self-search and remain a survivor in whatever circumstances. If this book generates a kind of dialogue, it would be worth its while. Let us see what happens next! I am not sure.



Season-2

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Interview with Debashish Paul, Author “I Have Autism And I Like To Play Bad Tennis”

Debashish Paul is a professional management and marketing strategy consultant with clients across New Delhi, Gurgaon, Bengaluru and Kolkata. The lion's share of his present work is for clients in the education sector. He has previously worked in the advertising field with top-notch global advertising agency networks. He has led several integrated pan-India public service campaigns pertaining to critical issues such as malnutrition, malaria and women's health.

He, along with his agency teams, has won many awards for advertising and market effectiveness awards—national and international (Cannes Lions and New York Festivals).

Outside his profession, one of his interest areas consistently has been child development psychology—much before he became a dad! Today, he counsels parents who have children with learning and social communication difficulties.

I Have Autism and I Like to Play Good Bad Tennis is the first book he has authored.

Frontlist: Your book emphasizes that children with autism may struggle to form emotional and empathetic connections with friends. Can you share your perspective on this aspect, including its implications for these children and their social development? Furthermore, in your view, how can society take steps to offer improved support and understanding for individuals with autism in the context of these social and emotional challenges?

Debashish: In most children and adults with the condition of autism, the social dimension is impaired. The degree of difficulty would vary from case to case. Generally speaking, they would be different from the neurotypically developing children in social communication, learning, and forming relationships and emotional connections. Now, if you reflect on the social facets of our everyday life, you will see that everything has a social component. Going to a school is a social act, learning from a teacher entails certain social exchanges, and any celebration is a social event. So aside from several other deficit areas that need remedial interventions like motor coordination, language learning, speech, levels of anxiety arising from break-in routines, etc., one could conclude that the 'social' becomes the overarching disability.

But the good news is that there are methods/techniques to improve social comprehension, social compatibility, and behavior. But this calls for parents, caregivers, special educators, and therapists to possess the necessary skills, consistency, patience, hard work, and resilience.

For a secure life, a healthy life, productive engagements, and a pervasive sense of well-being, society has a large role. School administrations, employers at large, and public establishments, first and foremost, must become fully aware of this condition. The significant hurdle, even in this age of the internet, is the lack of awareness and the resultant indifference, discrimination, and the absence of empathy on the part of society.

So, the first step would be to acquire basic knowledge of the condition. Then, orient oneself, the immediate community, the neighborhood, and the organization to widen the attitude of acceptance and understanding. Then, move up to create opportunities for the child (or adult) to blossom, uncover the talents, provide support, and find solutions to make it easier for the parents and the person with autism.



This can come about when the belief is framed that neurodivergent people can contribute very productively and creatively in work processes.

The leadership must dissipate the prevalence of the surrounding prejudices in work cultures and organizations.

Parents have a major role, and they need courage in every step to hold up against societal negativities and use their influence and persuasion. They need the strength to crawl out from the caverns of hopelessness. They need help to cut through the bars of the cage of prejudices. They need emotional support and direction. They need hope from the extended family and society all the way.

Frontlist: Your book, "I Have Autism," portrays the strong bond between Noel and his sister, highlighting their love for each other. Can you share insights into how their bond became so deep and special, also were there any challenges in the process?

Debashish: Let me draw a bit from my book (Chapter 1- I Know I Am Different).

Our daughter Ahvana, Noel's "Bonu", 4 years younger than him, grew up to be a wonderful, bossy little sister who was deeply protective of Noel. Even so, they had their usual sibling rivalries right through -squabbling over belongings and space, the harmless jostle for attention, and fighting over the relative share of importance.

Whenever Noel found Ahvana having a long, excited conversation with her mother or with me after an outing or at the end of the day, on return from school, he would interject with mild irritation. 'Bonu, don't say the same thing again and again.' This was an oft-used taunt to tick off his sister. It was possibly rooted in his feeling of being sidelined in a particular situation for too long. He wanted some of the attention of the people around - more so if it was his mum or dad.

When Ahvana started to go to school (Noel was in the Special Ed section of the same school), she began to understand the social challenges that Noel faced. Noel was also bullied at times by boys his age. She used to cry a lot; constant explanations and guidance by me and her mum were needed to safeguard her from a sense of victimhood - "The world is such an unjust place" was her constant refrain when she was 7 -8 years old. We had to be constantly pushing up her resilience. She learned from her parents how to be protective and caring about him, making small everyday sacrifices for

She read about autism, for which I gave her some kid-friendly illustrated material that she promptly pinned on her study table soft board and started to respect him for the person that he was truly.

I used to notice that Noel missed her a lot when she was away for a school trip or later when she traveled on holidays abroad. Noel used to give a running commentary of what she must be doing, the places she must be visiting, what new cuisines she must be enjoying, and so on. A warm bonding encased in innocence and pure love fostered year after year. Ahvana became a young lady and joined the University but always had time for her brother and included him in her outings with her close friends. They were all so warmly accepting of Noel and his quirks, his social goofs.

Frontlist: In your book, you express a unique perspective on preparing Noel for work at an early age, which differs from the typical focus on making children feel safe and worrying about their future. Can you share your thoughts and preparations regarding this approach? How did you handle the potential questions and concerns of the society?

Debashish: It took years to get into the mode of whole-hearted acceptance. My worldview had to change, requiring a lot of work. The recalibration of what constitutes success and happiness was the big one. To step aside from the adrenaline rush of the proverbial 'rat race' was one such important dimension. That would not have happened if I remained in the usual ambition track.

I had to find time to apply myself in the area of seeking workplace opportunities for Noel's learning of elementary work skills side-by-side with the social adjustments that are necessary in a work environment.

Noel was introduced to elementary kitchen skills at home - and he could chop and grate veggies and make sandwiches and brownies independently from the age of 12. After school hours, Noel (then 16) joined a bakery that also had an adjacent retail unit. This was necessary, I thought, to understand the concepts of work life, workplace, and remuneration in exchange for work. Unless these are explained in simple ways and reinforced, I felt he wouldn't be ready when he leaves school (the impending school exit at 18 was looming large). All this was because it was clear that Noel would not be able to take on academics in any form at a higher level.

Dealing with the concerns and insinuations of people around me was easy as I had absolutely no baggage about social class appropriateness of jobs. I respected every job and everyone at the workplace. That was a key part in the shaping of my worldview.

I was genuinely free-spirited here. I had done my recalibrations and priority settings rather early in my parental journey and had let go of the urge to achieve my goals through my kid vicariously.

I only laughed at the comments of the people and their discouragement.

I was rock-solid in my resolve to make this happen for Noel.

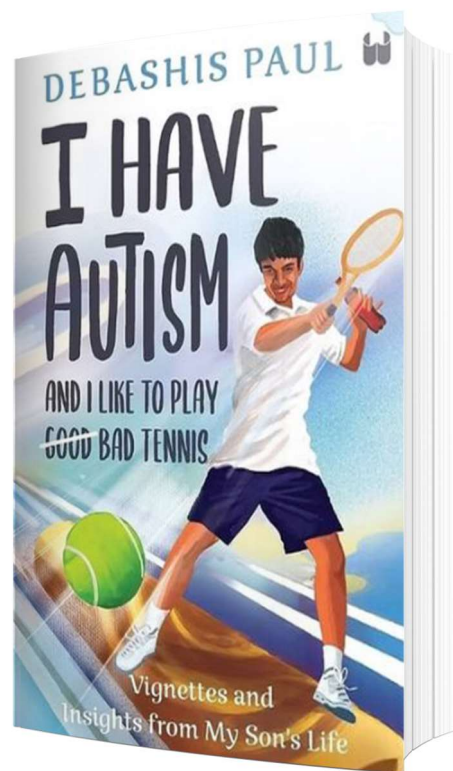
Frontlist: We all fell in love with Noel and his innocence while reading your book. Is there one thing you learned from him during your journey as a parent that truly amazed you and left a lasting impact on you?

Debashish: Well, when you step into the autism landscape, you are faced with a surfeit of lateral ideas and expressions. My book is full of them! It is bound to fill you with surprises and sure to make you chuckle when you read the goofy scenarios drawn from everyday life. The title of my book is a merger of my son Noel's actual statements that he often used. The 'like to play bad' tennis is a noteworthy comment – it represents his pushback to the hard, entrenched norms that we grow up with that we should 'play good, become good' at the sports we choose. So that we can compete and get ahead of others in the sports field. Noel believed that playing tennis should be all about enjoying the beautiful game. 'Bad tennis' became his short code for wholly enjoying the game with no concerns of how good you are at it. The book is full of such pushbacks to our one-track success and happiness definitions that we are all stuck with.

That in my book is lesson one.

Second, the mental strength to overcome adversity in life, the acceptance, and finding the fuel to reinvent oneself for the sake of another is something that one has to work on. Counselling helps but its the individual who has the power to transform himself/herself.

Finally, the discovery that the power of love is the most empowering and enduring force in many a situation. It will help you to overcome very difficult situations. That love can exist in all its intensity, in pain, humiliation, grief, respect, compassion, and companionship.



Interview with Ashiish V. Patil, Author “Goldiboy And The Three Apes”

Ashiish V. Patil is a writer, producer, director and Autism Dad. He's the ex-CEO of MTV India and former Head of Youth Films, Digital Originals and Talent at Yash Raj Films. He is a Cannes Grand Prix Glass Lion winner and was on the Ad Age Global Creativity 50 List of people who mattered.

Frontlist: Can you briefly overview your book "Goldiboy and the Three Apes"? Who is this book for, and what message do you hope the readers should take away from it?

Ashiish: "Goldiboy and the Three Apes" is a fun new picture book, a modern-day take on the classic Goldilocks fairytale. It features a bunch of amusing and colorful characters, including the Ape family and a lovely young boy called Goldiboy. It has many contemporary references, from Billie Eilish and Bollywood to iPads and more. The book also has over 100 gorgeous hand-drawn illustrations and introduces kids and adults alike to the magical world of neurodiversity and autism in the simplest, most fun manner. I hope the readers enjoy a fun story and learn to recognize, accept, appreciate, and celebrate differences in all of us, be it race, religion, gender, ability, or more. In that respect, it's a book for everyone because it's never too early or too late to learn about

Frontlist: How do you think "Goldiboy and the Three Apes" can help people identify and understand neurodiversity individuals?

Ashiish: When things are a little familiar, they become a lot more accessible. And our book is a modern-day take on the classic tale. As is often the case with invisible disabilities, it's very likely you know someone with autism and don't even know it. In the same way, when the original author of Goldilocks wrote her character, they (since there's no single creator identified/attributed to the story) didn't even realize they were writing a character with 'sensory sensitivities,' who find things 'too hot,' 'too cold,' 'too hard,' 'too soft' and is probably neurodivergent. It was a simple, logical extension when we modernized it – but we emphasized these things.

The gender switch from Goldilocks to Goldiboy is because the character is inspired by our son, Rishan, who is on the autism spectrum.

Frontlist: The book introduces readers to a world of anthropomorphic animals. What drew you to this unique setting, and how did you approach crafting a society and environment for these characters?

Ashiish: Besides looking really cool, like those Bored Ape NFTs, the apes are where we've evolved from. They're misunderstood, playful, positive, warm, friendly, fun. The book needed to be bright, happy, and colorful, just like the magical, colorful world of neurodiversity. Hence, the choice of settings and colors mirrors that – neon, up-tempo, positive: a tree house, primary colors, wood, leaves, and lots of sunlight. Small nuances, be it the autism infinity symbol to the logo on the iPad being a peeled banana instead of a half-bitten apple. King Kong posters in the room because it's a beautiful love story of a human and an ape. The detailing has been done with very conscious choices in all aspects, for instance –

- The book that Papa Ape is reading is "Thinking in Pictures" by Temple Grandin – an autism legend.
- The podcast Mama Ape listens to is quite popular in the community – Spectrumly Speaking Podcast.
- The pop star Baby Ape is bopping to a neurodivergent artiste with Tourette's Syndrome – Billie Eilish.



- Other details like the positive/affirmative language used, the phrases from therapy (learning to be flexible/brain left the group), the choice of diet (gluten-free), the weighted blanket, the scooty being an EV
- Of course, the usage of the autism infinity symbol across – be it Goldiboy's T-shirt, Baby Ape's hairclip, the butterflies, the slides in the playground, the gestures/hand symbols.

We spent a year illustrating the book. Unlike most traditional children's picture books, which are 24 to 40 pages, this one is over 130. We wanted each frame to look like rainbow confetti for the eyes – bright, happy, meaningful. Hopefully, readers will feel that vibe as well.

Frontlist: "Goldiboy and the Three Apes" delves into themes of awareness and acceptance of autism. Can you elaborate on how these themes are interwoven into the narrative and the lessons they offer readers?

Ashiish: Storytelling is the most powerful way to introduce new ideas to bring change. No one is interested in a sermon or a speech. Do it through a story or a song: Firewalls Drop. And that's precisely what we've attempted. It's a fun story to begin with, which also happens to feature characters that are neurodivergent. It shows you that autism has many faces. And that you will find differences all around you in life society. It encourages you not to fear those. But to recognize them. Accept them. Appreciate them. Celebrate them.

The narrative does that by simply introducing Goldiboy in the most fun manner, where you see how he's so much like any other kid – loving his mom, pizzas, and music. But at the same time, a little different. And how he's different. What bothers him is how he sees, hears, and feels things differently. And then throwing a curveball through a twist that's seeded but you possibly don't see coming up ahead as you find out, hey, Baby Ape's neurodivergent too. It does this without making any judgments, and through that. Hopefully, it helps people in the community/on the spectrum feel seen/heard. It helps them to belong and feel accepted.

And for everyone else, neurotypical folks and more – helps them understand and also shows them how to normalize things.

Frontlist: Goldiboy embarks on a journey of personal growth throughout the story. Could you discuss the development of Rishshan as a protagonist and the challenges he faces that lead to his transformation?

Ashiish: Rishshan, our son, is my hero. He has made me not just a better dad but a better man. I am amazed to see how he lives life in such an authentic manner. He doesn't judge people based on their looks, wealth, color, religion, or possessions. He does that purely based on their behavior with him and the rest of the world. What an incredible way to be. I wish we could all learn to do that.

On his journey, Rishshan has learned to recognize some of his challenges and find a way to work around them – like auditory sensitivity, noise-cancellation headphones, sensitive gut, hence a gluten-free, dairy-free diet, etc. And he's learned to use his strengths to his advantage, like his music, singing, and wicked sense of humor. These are his tools to calm his social anxiety, express himself, and connect with people.

Goldiboy does that with his golden smile and innocence.

Frontlist: Creating a world with anthropomorphic animals requires balancing relatability and fantasy. How did you approach developing characters that readers could connect with while still maintaining the unique qualities of this animal society?

Ashiish: We have yet to see too many neurodivergent characters as anthropomorphic animals. But apes are the origin stories of humans since that's where we began/evolved from – so it was a seamless transition. Give them cool, contemporary clothes and accessories – hats, clips, sunglasses, clothes. All this does have a sense of heightened, hyper-stylized, enhanced reality. But they're still rooted in regular, daily activities. So, it's relatable/believable yet enjoyable.

Frontlist: Mental health plays a significant role in your book. How did you infuse humor into the narrative, and why do you believe it's essential for a story like "Goldiboy and the Three Apes"?

Ashiish: You really can't bore people into understanding and appreciating anything. I mean, look at all our academic textbooks. A children's storybook really couldn't afford to be a snooze fest. And humor is a potent tool to jump firewalls, to drop truth bombs – even if uncomfortable at times – and that comes very naturally to me. I also tend to write just like I speak. So, draft one was anyway inherently fun/funny. Then, as we did follow-up passes, the rhyme came in – it's written like a fun rap. And the color characters only added to the fun.

Frontlist: The story emphasizes the importance of embracing differences and finding common ground.

What message do you hope readers will take away from this aspect of the narrative?

Ashiish: There are special schools, but there is no special world. No separate bubble. Neurodivergents and Neurotypicals. And people and beings of all kinds have to live together in the same world. So, we must learn to recognize, accept, and appreciate differences vs. fear and discriminate against them. Only then will the world become a more inclusive, "isspeshal" place.

Frontlist: "Goldiboy and the Three Apes" appears to hold a mirror to real issues and dynamics faced by autistic people. How can using a fictional setting sometimes allow for a more profound exploration of societal complexities?

Ashiish: We have too much reality in our lives anyway. And at times, a fun story that seems unreal can REALLY show us our true selves and realities. With fiction and animated/illustrated characters, you can push the envelope in your storytelling. Besides making it more exciting and entertaining, it can allow you to see things you may have missed or not noticed otherwise. The wandering mind during meetings, the difficulty in making friends, the making fun of others, the joy of music and dance, some of these things in this avatar become far more palatable, acceptable, and engaging. And then the penny drops with, "Oh gosh, that's probably me!"

Frontlist: As the author & father, what personal challenges did you face while articulating "Goldiboy and the Three Apes"?

Ashiish: There are two types of writing—one is outside, where you observe the world and comment about it. The second is inside out. This book is that. It was inside me, and it probably took a pandemic, a couple of lockdowns, and a week of quarantine after testing COVID-19 positive for it to HAVE to break free from inside of me!

At some level, it was cathartic to put it out as a story. Because our son and his lived experiences so profoundly inspired it. By things, I've seen, experienced, felt as a late-diagnosed autistic myself. Things that are fulfilling and gut-wrenching. Things that are fun, things that are heartbreaking. And things that restore your faith in humanity. And yourself.

To see someone "different" get picked on/bullied, or to see a condition stigmatized, to see the difficulties people on the spectrum have made friends – it's very, very hard.

But then, you'll see their purity and positive outlook. And stumble upon people who are nice, accepting, and without agendas. You'll see the change in people once they understand. You'll see bonds and the needle moving forward just a little – I mean, the journey of educating the world about neurodiversity is not a sprint; it's a long marathon. But worth it.

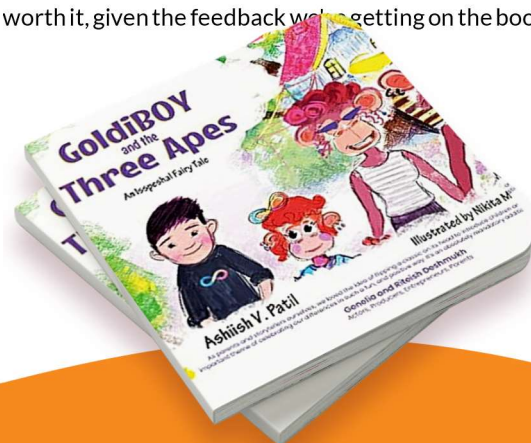
In pop culture, be it movies, series, TV shows, music videos, or books – disability in general and neurodiversity in particular have largely been absent. Not under-represented – just missing. What exists is probably worse, which is misrepresentation, like narratives that are based on pity, inspiration, or just downright insensitive. Playing up disabilities for gags, humor, as the butt of jokes. Globally, there are very few books (less than 30 probably) in this format to introduce children and adults to this concept. What exists is an academic or a bit of a sob story, a personal memoir.

Rather than complaining about that, I thought, why not do something to fix that – hence the book happened. And I wanted to make sure I got the nuances right. So, besides putting out a very personal, vulnerable side of us, I had to ensure that we got the content detailing right. Some of the most respected names in the neurodiversity and autism community have fortunately come in and endorsed our efforts.

I also wanted to make sure that it's entertaining and looks fantastic. So, finding the right illustrator was vital. I lucked out with Nikita [Modi Biswas], an art teacher from NOIDA, UP. She just "got" the material and poured her heart into every page, every sketch. Her style, which is so childlike, raw, and unfinished, is just what I needed for this book. I'd say she was "JUST RIGHT" for it.

And then, of course, making sure the book gets out there to as many people as possible through the right partner. HarperCollins fortunately came in just in time to help give it a global platform.

All the author's earnings from this book are going to a center for autism – so it's been quite a ride. And so worth it, given the feedback we're getting on the book.



Interview with Kapil Gupta, Author “In My Head : A New Approach To Mental Wellness”

Kapil Gupta is the founder of Solh Wellness, a mental wellness platform offering free tools for individual mental health management and comprehensive solutions for organizations. With a mission to enhance mental well-being, Kapil has successfully introduced his innovative mental health approach to over 30 organizations, engaging with thousands of users in the process. In addition to his focus on mental health, Kapil is a versatile entrepreneur, founding OMLogic, PragatiE and Frontlist.

Frontlist: Can you share your journey of delving into the field of mental wellness and what led you to consolidate your learnings into this book?

Kapil: Working in the area of mental health was never something I had planned on pursuing. In fact, since adulthood, people have always perceived me as someone with lesser emotions and someone slightly devoid of understanding the depths of stress, anxiety, and sadness.



While I have found some of this arguable (not that I have argued for them to take me as an emotional person), in reality, even I have always found it difficult to understand the pressures that people seem to reflect. I could never lose my sleep over anything or get so depressed that I couldn't laugh or go about my day normally. Upon extensive soul-searching, I identified that I have created a new system of gamification for myself, where I can play anything in life as a game (even the question of life-death).

In the middle of everything that was going on 'In My Head,' trying to make sense of the world, came COVID. During these unprecedented times of the COVID years (felt like an era), I witnessed the devastating impact it had on people and their well-being - how life was altering for them, situations were getting out of hand, everyone was struggling. While I still had some difficulty seeing myself there, I started to understand what was going on. You could say the frailties of the human head became visible to me. Perhaps, aspects that I had thrown into a bottomless pit came mid-surface. At that point, I knew something had to be done.

Frontlist: How do you envision the integration of digital technology in advancing mental health solutions, as highlighted in your book?

Kapil: The integration of digital technology in advancing mental health solutions holds immense promise for revolutionizing how we approach mental wellness. In "In My Head," I envision digital platforms as catalysts for accessibility, outreach, and personalized interventions. From teletherapy to mindfulness apps, digital technology has the potential to democratize mental health care, making it more accessible and tailored to individual needs. By harnessing the power of digital innovation, we can reach wider audiences and provide scalable solutions that empower individuals to take charge of their mental well-being.

Frontlist: You introduce the concept of 'psychological capital' in your book. How can individuals cultivate this capital, and why is it essential for mental resilience?

Kapil: The concept of 'psychological capital' introduced in my book offers a transformative approach to enhancing mental resilience. It serves as a framework for individuals to cultivate a reservoir of mental well-being through intentional actions and practices.

Much like accumulating wealth, individuals can invest in activities that contribute positively to their mental health, thereby accruing psychological capital. By tracking these activities and rewarding positive outcomes, individuals can gradually increase their PsyCap points, leading to improved mental well-being over time. This approach not only motivates individuals to prioritize their mental health but also provides valuable insights into their mental health journey. Moreover, psychological capital extends beyond personal benefits to encompass broader societal and economic implications. As individuals bolster their psychological capital, they become better equipped to manage stress, cope with challenges, and foster positive relationships. This resource is renewable and can be shared across different contexts, ultimately contributing to a culture of support and empowerment. Through the cultivation of psychological capital, individuals can build resilience, regain a sense of purpose, and exert control over their lives, paving the way for fulfilling and satisfying experiences even in the face of adversity.

Frontlist: Could you elaborate on how your book aligns mental wellness with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and its broader impact on global objectives?

Kapil: "In My Head" intricately weaves mental wellness with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), recognizing the profound interconnection between individual well-being and global progress. By prioritizing mental health, we not only foster personal growth but also contribute to broader societal objectives. Through advocacy, awareness, and policy reform, we can align mental wellness initiatives with SDGs, catalyzing transformative change and creating a more equitable and sustainable world.

Frontlist: Your book also addresses the often-overlooked mental health challenges faced by older individuals. What are some key takeaways for understanding and addressing these issues?

Kapil: We have tried to work on mental health issues faced across demographics. Older individuals often face unique mental health challenges that are frequently overlooked by society. In my book, I shed light on these issues, emphasizing the importance of social connectedness, purposeful engagement, and holistic support systems.

Key takeaways include the recognition of age-related transitions, the promotion of mental resilience through meaningful activities, and the destigmatization of mental health discussions within older populations. By addressing these challenges, we can foster a culture of dignity, empowerment, and well-being for older individuals.

Frontlist: Can you explain the relevance of the '16 Hour Theory' and the 'Power of 5 Adjectives' in simplifying mental health understanding for readers?

Kapil: The '16 Hour Theory' underscores that mental health encompasses more than just specific activities like meditation or therapy. I believe that for more than 16 hours a day every day, all that we do is mental health - from the food we eat, to the people we meet, and the places that we go to and even in what we don't do. We all are working towards our mental health in our daily routine, each day, knowingly or unknowingly. This concept emphasizes the holistic nature of mental wellness, highlighting that our daily actions,

interactions, and environments influence our mental well-being. It is just a matter of knowing the right vocabulary, tools, and framework that we can work towards our mental health with more efficiency. This encourages individuals to recognize the significance of their everyday choices in shaping their mental health, fostering a proactive approach to mental health management.

Similarly, the 'Power of 5 Adjectives' offers a straightforward classification of human emotions into five key descriptors: Sad, Lonely, Stressed, Happy, and at Peace. By categorizing emotions in this manner, readers can easily grasp the fundamental aspects of mental health and understand the balance between negative and positive states. This framework helps individuals identify and address areas of improvement in their mental well-being, striving to transition from negative to positive emotional states.

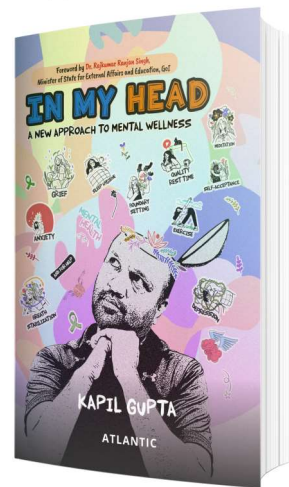
Both the '16 Hour Theory' and the 'Power of 5 Adjectives' provide practical tools for readers to enhance their mental health literacy and navigate their mental well-being more effectively. By simplifying complex concepts into accessible frameworks, these tools empower individuals to take proactive steps towards improving their mental wellness and leading more fulfilling lives. Through relatable stories and straightforward explanations, readers can gain insights into their own mental health journey and develop strategies for self-care and resilience.

Frontlist: How do you see the role of Solh Wellness in contributing to addressing mental health challenges at grassroots levels?

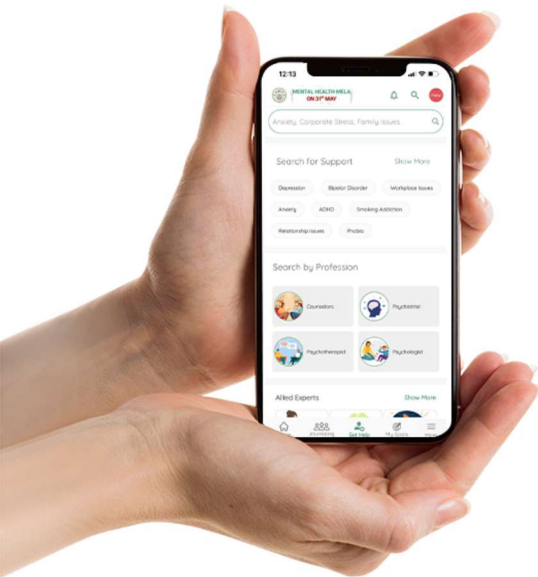
Kapil: Solh Wellness is playing a vital role in addressing mental health challenges at grassroots levels through its multifaceted approach. Firstly, by actively combating the stigma surrounding mental health, Solh Wellness creates awareness and fosters understanding within communities.

Secondly, Solh Wellness focuses on developing sustainable, long-term solutions rather than quick fixes. Recognizing the significance of investing time, effort, and genuine commitment, Solh Wellness adopts a preventive approach to address everyday stressors before they escalate into more serious mental health issues. By fostering resilience and well-being within communities, Solh Wellness aims to create lasting impacts on mental health outcomes. Lastly, Solh Wellness extends its reach beyond individual users to encompass organizations, schools, and communities through subscription-based models.

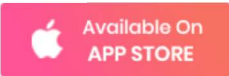
By providing accessible, affordable, and personalized mental health tools and solutions, Solh Wellness empowers these entities to prioritize mental wellness within their environments. This inclusive approach not only supports individuals in need but also cultivates a culture of mental health awareness and support within various community settings. Through these concerted efforts, Solh Wellness strives to break down barriers, shatter stigmas, and foster a world where mental wellness is universally prioritized.



Revolutionizing Mental Health with Tools and Solutions



Download the Solh Wellness App today!



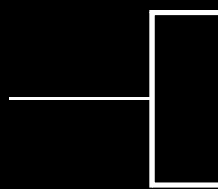
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