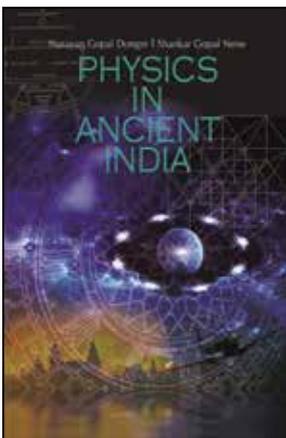


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### PICK OF THE MONTH



**Physics in Ancient India**  
Narayan Gopal Dongre & Shankar Gopal Nene  
978-81-237-7973-7; Rs 150

## Brahmaputra Literary Festival



“The literary festival is one of the best platforms to celebrate unity in diversity,” said Shri Prakash Javadekar, Hon’ble Union Minister for Human Resource Development, while inaugurating the Brahmaputra Literary Festival held at Srimanta Sankaradeva Kalakshetra, Guwahati, Assam from 28 to 30 January 2017.

Shri Javadekar added, “Nearly 200 authors writing in 22 languages are participating in the literary festival, which shows India’s unique diversity in culture, literature and language. Despite such diversity, unity is the essence and ethos of India.”

He remarked that the literary festival is a cultural investment and must be organised in all states to celebrate India’s diversity and plurality.

Talking about the importance of the freedom of expression in democracy, Shri Javadekar said, “Freedom of expression, thought and writing is the very essence of democracy and we are committed to uphold it.”

Referring to the role of libraries in promoting books and reading habit,

Shri Javadekar said that libraries are pride of a nation and they must be made a part of our lives and set-up in every part of the country.

“India has, since ancient times, had a rich tradition of libraries in Nalanda, Taxila and Vikramshila and history has been witness to the fact that invaders have always attacked and vandalised libraries first,” he added.

Shri Javadekar also said that all kinds of reading - in print, through audio or e-books - must be encouraged at all costs as it has been seen that the development of these platforms has not adversely affected the publishing industry. He also called upon writers “to create a bridge” with the readers and promote reading habits.





“Readers’ participation is very important and the culture of reading is the essence of development of human beings,” Shri Javadekar said.

Shri Sarbananda Sonowal, Hon’ble Chief Minister of Assam also spoke on the occasion. He said that literature is the mirror of the society which reflects

create stronger ties,”

The other speakers on the occasion were: Shri Vinod Kumar Pipersenia, Chief Secretary, Government of Assam; Shri Baldeo Bhai Sharma, Chairman, NBT; Dr. Rita Chowdhury, Director, NBT; Shri Ajay Tewari, IAS Commissioner & Secretary to the

contemporary times like media, democracy, children’s writings, literature from Northeast, Bangla literature, Hindi literature, oral literature and writings on wildlife among others. Well-known authors from India and abroad like Rajiva Wijesinha, Sanjoy Hazarika, Narendra Kohli, Subhash Kashyap, Kula Saikia, Yuvan Chandrasekhar, Subramani, Baldeo Bhai Sharma, Prem Janmejaya, Francois Gautier, Rita Chowdhury, Giampaolo Simi, Jahnvi Barua, Jeyanthi Manokaran, Kaizad Gustad, Linda Christanty, Marika Johansson, Neal Hall, participated in these programmes.

Celebrity authors from Bollywood including Asha Parekh, Shatrughan Sinha, Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra and Shafi Ahmad also participated in the festival. They interacted with



its strengths and weaknesses. It has the ability to transform the society, enable readers to ask questions, start conversations and look for answers in uncertain times. Shri Sonowal hoped that the festival would be a great platform for interaction and exchange of ideas between readers and litterateurs across the country and abroad.

Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma Hon’ble Education Minister, Assam, said “Since time immemorial, the human civilization has thrived mostly on the bank of a river whether it is Indus, Nile, Mesopotamia, Huwang He or the Thames....Brahmaputra has also been at the core of Assam’s folklore, inspiring literature, art and music even though often left behind a wave of destruction during the monsoon. Thus, Brahmaputra Literary Festival seeks out to recreate the magic of convergence of literature from all over the world to

Govt. of Assam, Higher Education; Ms Mamang Dai, eminent poet; Shri Damodar Mauzo, eminent Konkani writer; and Ms Randy Taguchi, eminent author from Japan.

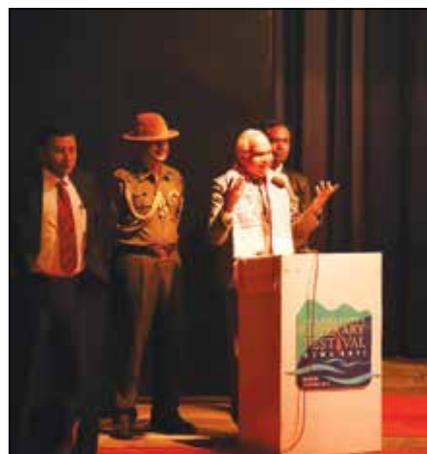
The three day gala event saw a number of discussions, conversations and reading sessions being organized on various important issues of

the booklovers and talked about their books and various facets of their life in Bollywood.

On the concluding day, the ‘Readings on the Cruise’ was organized in which the poets occupied the readers with their poetry. The programme was moderated by Desmond L. Kharamawphlang.

The closing ceremony of the Festival was attended by Dr Narendra Kohli, eminent author, Mr Carlo Pizatti, Italian author, Shri Mridul Hazarika, and Vice Chancellor, Gauhati University among other.

A valedictory function was organized on 30 January 2017. Addressing the gathering, Shri Banwarilal Purohit, Hon’ble Governor of Assam said, “I am a serious reader. I read Munsii Premchand’s *Namak Ka Daroga* in school and it changed my life. I read Harivansh Rai Bachchan who



did not drink but wrote *Madhubhala*. There is great power in literature. I thank all for the successful conduct of the festival.”

On this occasion, Shri V S Oberoi, Secretary, Department of Higher Education in the Ministry of Human Resource Development said “It was the first Brahmaputra Literary Festival, but I am sure it will grow into a landmark event in India and abroad, given the response from authors, readers and visitors. Guwahati is a greatly responsive city. To see so many young men and women visit the fest, partly out of curiosity, was a life- changing



experience for many. We will do it even bigger and better again next year. The Centre and the state governments are firmly behind it.”

Shri Baldeo Bhai Sharma, Chairman and Dr Rita Chowdhury,

Director, NBT also spoke on the occasion.

Brahmaputra Literary Festival, an initiative by National Book Trust, India was organized in association with the Government of Assam. It brought together authors of different languages from different regions of India and abroad.

Different from other literary festivals organized across the country, Brahmaputra Literary Festival was an attempt to give a platform to young and established authors where they together shared their thoughts on literature, language and society.

## Shodh Yatri Winners Felicitated

A felicitation ceremony for the winners of the online Shodh Yatri contest was held at the Theme Pavilion on the sidelines of the New Delhi World Book Fair 2017.

Shri Baldeo Bhai Sharma, Chairman, NBT in his address said that youth must not read books only for career enhancement but should read books to become a good human being and contribute in nation building.

Congratulating the winners, he said that they have proved themselves to be an example for other students in pursuing extracurricular activities to widen their vision of the world.

In her address, Ms Nupur Singh, Director, ICHR congratulated the winners and felt happy to see that the youth are taking interest in history and culture.

The winners were felicitated with a certificate, wooden replica of Ashoka Stambh, and mementos.

The winners of the Shodh Yatri online contest include: Miss Aparajitha Nair (Delhi), Master S. Gururagav (Vellore, Tamil Nadu), Miss Tapsi Arora (Noida, Uttar Pradesh), Master Harish Rashid (Jammu & Kashmir), Miss Mitali Sahu (Maharashtra), Master Uma Shankar Rathor (Madhya Pradesh), Miss Hardika Lalwani (Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh), Master Ankit Jha (Uttar Pradesh), Miss Darsana J Varier (Cochi, Kerala), and



Master Akshar Tekchandani (Delhi).

The Shodh Yatri is a unique programme initiated by Ms Smriti Zubin Irani, former Minister for Human Resource Development, to encourage students to do research on India's contributions and influences as well as areas of contacts between India and other countries in the neighbourhood. In the process, the research findings will also trace the Indian roots in the evolution of their control and heritage.



The countries thus identified for the Shodh Yatri Programme include Bangladesh, Burma, Cambodia, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

In pursuing this programme the Ministry of HRD in association with Indian Council for Historical Research, Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and National Book Trust, India organised an all India Online Contest to select students who could be part of the Programme.

The contest was open to students of classes X and XI, across all Boards of School Education and schools in the country. The contest included writing an essay on the theme at the MyGov. in website.

40 students (20 boys and 20 girls) were shortlisted for the interview which was conducted through Skype, in which ten students were selected as winners.

# Brahmaputra Literary



# Festival: Pictures Speak



## Nation is an Emotional Entity

The idea of nationalism in women's writings made for an engaging debate at the Theme Pavilion at the New Delhi World Book Fair held in January 2017. The Theme of the Book Fair was 'Manushi: Writings on and by Women'.

Panelled by Prof. Simi Malhotra, Dr. Meenakshi Bharat, Dr. Shormishtha Panja and Dr. Avdhesh, the debate began with a set of pertinent questions — What kind of writings are we talking about when we talk about women writings? What kind of languages are we talking about when we talk about writings?

According to Dr. Avdhesh, as far as nationalism is concerned, nation is an emotional entity, an idea. One should not subscribe to 'ism'. The moment we use the suffix 'ism', 'ism' becomes smaller and suffix becomes bigger. "We have to think of women's writing and nationalism as a metaphor of liberation," so according to him, not only writing, even phonocentric writing is also equally important.

Prof. Panja on the other hand stressed that when we talk about women and nationalism, the only picture that comes to one's mind is the portrait of Mother India in the form of a woman, silence of marginalized voices and onslaught of homogenization. Relying on homogenization will not work in India, she says. Notion of women is no

longer a single notion. How do we talk about third gender? Notion of nationhood itself is a contested issue.

Dr. Bharat had a problem with the concept of one territorial space, which according to her, came with the Western concept that had completely erased the earlier notion of nationalism. It also brought in its wake notions of how to look at a woman. Although looking at women's writing in the context of nationalism lead to myriad problems some say that women should stay at home, for some, women should be educated and for someones, women should know the outside world and so on. But there was an unwritten conspiracy at hand that kept woman at home because it was thought that woman was good in keeping the spirituality of India intact. Even today, women are not considered competent to talk about nationalism. If women are writing about nationalism, it was considered as talking about issues related only to women. One cannot get out of these issues by simply picking up a pen and write. Women in themselves are a little hesitant to pick up such issues.

Why should women take the burden of writing about nation? Writing itself had moved away from writing about questions of nationalism with



the emergence of some recent genres like science fiction, etc. What kind of idea of India as a nation are we talking about? Is it confined to geopolitical? Are we talking about India in Australia, US, UK etc.? In Prof. Avdhesh's words "Any kind of discourse is a writing whether it is Dalit writing, Diaspora writing etc. The continuous phase in women's writing will be a diverse, inclusive and driving force without losing its entity."

Prof Panja on the other hand said that we can only move forward if we remember the past. The responsibility of mothering the culture is given to women. Why should women take the responsibility of carrying the burden of Indian cultures, she asks. Women's voices are a reality check, they bring us back to earth, they talk about nitty, gritty things of day to day life. Women should have an open field to choose the topic just as the male writers have the space to choose topics on their own.

Ideas change so even the present discourse will change in the days to come.

## Who is an Indian Woman?

Dr. Swati Guha (Bangla), Dr. Anamika (Hindi) and Ms. V.M. Girija (Malayalam) joined together in the discussion based on the theme "Meet the Authors from Various Languages" which was held at the Theme Pavilion. They read out portions from their works.

Swati Guha, a novelist and short story writer, read out few pages from one of her latest novels in Bengali and later translated into English. Through her stories, she brings out the painful woes of the marginalized and the poor.

Girija read out the English version of her poem titled 'Sleeping Poem'. Through her poetry she tries to represent the adivasi women, women from rural areas, women from the cities, so in her words her poems are "ambiguous" because they carry so many women from different walks of life. She questions, "Who is an Indian Woman?" Are they women of slums, women of city, women of Adivasi? Is there an India that portrays a proper India? She cannot touch, see, feel and yet she writes in Indian Languages.



On the other hand, Dr. Anamika read out several of her poems in Hindi and one in English titled "Women were read as torn pages of a children's notebook".

Later, the writers had a lively discussion with the audience.

## Jodhpur Literature Festival



“Literature is powerful. It can achieve those goals which are difficult for the governance to achieve,” said Shri Rajpal Shekhawat; Hon’ble Minister of Urban Development and Housing Department, Govt. of Rajasthan at the inauguration of Jodhpur Literature Festival held at Zanana Garden, Jodhpur from 23 to 24 December 2016.

Speaking on the occasion, Baldeo Bhai Sharma, Chairman, NBT said, “Literature had originated for the well being of mankind.” He added that literature has a significant role in developing human values.

The festival was inaugurated in the presence of Shri R K Sinha, Hon’ble Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha); Shri Ghanshyam Ojha, Mayor of Jodhpur, Shri Gopal Krishna Vyas, Hon’ble Justice, Rajasthan High Court; Shri Gyanesh Upadhyay, Editor, Rajasthan Patrika; Ramanandacharya Swami of Kashi Peeth; Shri Sheen Kaaf Nizam, noted author; and SHRI Mahendra Singh Rathore, Chairman, Jodhpur Development Authority.

National Book Trust, India had also put up its stall at the festival in which NBT books in Hindi, English and other languages were displayed.



During the festival more than twenty sessions of discussions, presentations and interactions, etc. were organized in which authors, scholars and professionals from varied fields like Om Thanvi, noted journalist; Hassan Kamaal, noted lyricist; Anup Jalota, noted singer, among others participated.

## Women in Panchayati Raj

“If we wish to develop our country, the way our forefathers proposed, we need to develop our villages first and the gram panchayats,” said Shri Upendra Kushwaha, Hon’ble Minister of State for Human Resource Development while releasing the book *Panchayat Mein Mahilayen: Chunauiyan aur Sambhavnayen*, published by National Book Trust, India. The book release was held at the Theme Pavilion at the New Delhi World Book Fair.

He added that while panchayati raj is a direct form of democracy, the Parliament form of democracy is an indirect one. In villages it is the people who participate in gram sabhas. In the Parliamentary form, the elected candidates are the voice of the people in the house. He also said in most of the cases, even if the women are elected in panchayats, it is the male who actually take the decisions, and so we should encourage the participation of more and more women in panchayats. He also underlined the importance of empowering women through education.



In his address, Dr Mahipal, the author of the book said in our society women gram panchayat members have dual responsibilities of taking care of household duties as well as their duties as a member of the gram panchayat. The 73rd Amendment to the Constitution made provisions for the women to be part of panchayats.

Following the release of the book, Ms Nazma Khan, a panchayat member; Prof. Pamela Singla, Department of Sociology, University of Delhi and Dr Mahipal discussed about women’s participation in panchayats. Ms Khan

said that she had the strong support of her family because of which she could discharge duties as a panchayat member. Some of the initiatives that she has undertaken include setting up a tailoring center for women and creating awareness about the importance of education among the village women.

In her observations, Prof. Singla said that it is encouraging to note that there are over 10 lakh women panchayat members in India. This is despite the fact that most of the members face several challenges including political, financial and social.

## Hingori Sutras

**H**ingori Sutras are a set of books that have harnessed and compiled the wisdom of the ancient Indian spiritual gurus and presented it in a modern and contemporary format.

The books were released by the Union Minister of the Indian Railways, Mr. Suresh Prabhu, at an event organised at the New Delhi World Book Fair. The book is about finding the purpose of our existence and the knowledge of finding the balance of our deeds through the doctrine of Karma. While finding the path to spiritual transformation and the meaning of life, there may be many distractions and the book is a guide to overcome these and keep working towards cracking the karmic code of deeds.

Mrs Uma Prabhu shared the stage with her husband Suresh Prabhu and released a Spiritual IQ Test, an IQ Test that offers prescription for spiritual advancement by assessing the spiritual quotient of a person.



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## Farewell



**S**hri Surender Kumar Arya, Assistant, retired from the Trust after serving for 37 years. He joined the Trust on 20 September 1979 as LDC. He has worked in Sales Coordination, Grant-in-Aid, Sales NRO, PR Cell, Chairman Office, Establishment, Accounts and Exhibition section of the Trust.

We wish him a very happy retired life.

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