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Pick of the Month

CARE OF SMALL PETS
Geeta
978-81-237-7335-3; Rs 180

Book Release at NBT

National Book Trust, India organized a book release function of its recently published title Care of Small Pets, authored by Dr Geeta at its headquarters, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi.

Speaking on the occasion, Shri Baldeo Bhai Sharma, Chairman, NBT said, “People ask me ‘Do NBT also publishes books on pets?’ as NBT is known for publishing books on different aspects like science & technology, culture etc. India has long tradition of keeping domesticated animals. Pets are now becoming part of families. Now food etc. is easily available for them in the market. They bring a sense of companionship and belongingness. Though they are speechless, they too have emotions. Such books would help people take care of their pets in an easy manner.” Later, Dr Sunita Balyan, well-known veterinary doctor, released the book.

“Pets are stress busters. Whenever I get stressed they give me joy and happiness,” said Dr Geeta, author of the book. She added, “Pets often fall ill due to certain factors like time constraint and space. It is very difficult to cure them as they cannot express their pain and suffering.” She also thanked the Trust for publishing the book.

Earlier, Dr M A Sikandar, Director, NBT India, welcomed the guests. He said, “Our life style is changing and pets help us fill the vacuum. I hope that this book would help people to take care of their pets in a better way.”
Itanagar Book Fair

“Even in this digital age, the fondness for reading books will remain alive and its charm will not vanish easily. Books can indeed become your best friends,” said Shri Mige Kamki, Deputy Commissioner while inaugurating the Itanagar Book Fair, held at Indira Gandhi Park, Itanagar from 28 March to 5 April 2015. Shri Kamki, also urged youngsters to keep healthy reading habit.

The Fair was organized by the National Book Trust, India in collaboration with the District Administration, Itanagar. Shri Batem Pertin, Director Research also spoke on the occasion. He highlighted the importance of book fairs in promoting reading habit and their contribution in facilitating easy accessibility of books. On this occasion, a cultural programme was also presented by the students of Don Bosco College.

During the fair, several book related programmes were organized. A drawing competition for children in association with Gyan Mission Orphanage was held on 30 March 2015 in which a number of children from different schools participated. Winners of the competition were given prizes in the form of books. A seminar on ‘Water Conservation’ was organized on 31 March which witnessed a sizeable audience of booklovers. A multi-lingual poets’ meet in association with Arunachal Pradesh Literary Society was organized on 2 April 2015. Well-known poets from different parts of the country participated and rendered their poems in Hindi and other Indian languages. The session was presided over by Shri Y D Thongchi, eminent author and Sahitya Akademi award winner.

A large number of enthusiastic book lovers visited the fair and were seen busy purchasing their favourite books.

Shri Rajeev Chaudhary and Shri Rajesh Kumar from Exhibition Section of the Trust coordinated the Fair.

Promoting Reading Habit among School Children

In its effort to promote pleasure reading in schools, National Book Trust, India joined hands with the Directorate of Education, Govt. of NCT of Delhi. In a meeting organized at Directorate Conference Room at Old Secretariat on 12 May 2015, Smt Padmini Singhla, Director of Education and Dr M A Sikandar, Director, National Book Trust, India gifted books to ten government schools from various districts in Delhi.

The purpose of this effort is to build up their libraries and cater to the reading needs of the under-privileged children. They stressed on more utilization of school libraries and availability of interactive reading materials for children. Dr S. Kaushik, Additional Director, Education and Shri Manas Ranjan Mahapatra, Editor, National Centre for Children’s Literature, NBT also spoke on the occasion.

The participants in the meeting included senior officials from both the organizations and Principals of the selected schools. The Principals felt that regular reading promotional events need be organized in the govt. schools in Delhi.
The World Book and Copyright Day is marked annually on 23 April, a symbolic date for World Literature. It was celebrated for the first time on 23 April 1995, at Paris, when UNESCO decided to mark 23 April as World Book and Copyright Day and for paying worldwide tribute to authors and books, as well as to encourage everyone (particularly the young) to discover the pleasure of reading to gain a renewed respect for the irreplaceable contributions of those who have furthered the social and cultural progress of humanity.

On this day in 1611, Miguel de Cervantes, William Shakespeare and Inca Garcilaso de la Vega died. It is also the date of birth or death of other prominent authors such as Maurice Druon, Haldor K. Laxness, Vladimir Nabokov, Josep Pla and Manuel Mejía Vallejo. The connection between 23 April and books was first made in 1923 by booksellers in Spain as a way to honour the author Miguel de Cervantes, who died on that day.

This year, the city of Incheon, Republic of Korea, had been designated as the ‘World Book Capital’ in recognition of its programme to promote reading among people and underprivileged sections of the population. This designation was celebrated with participants from the previous title-holder, Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

Celebrating World Book and Copyright Day, the United Nations seeks to increase awareness on literacy programs worldwide. And in addition, the UN intends to promote careers in book shops, schools, libraries and publishing so that men, women, and children all have access to the written word.

Irina Bokova, the Director General of the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) in her message on World Book and Copyright Day said: “Books are invaluable platforms for freedom of expression and the free flow of information – these are essential for all societies today. The future of the book as a cultural object is inseparable from the role of culture in promoting more inclusive and sustainable pathways to development. UNESCO is seeking to promote reading among young people and marginalised groups. … Let us join together to celebrate books as the embodiment of creativity, the desire to share ideas and knowledge, to inspire understanding, dialogue and tolerance.”

World Book Day in Delhi

National Book Trust, India (NBT) and Delhi Public Library (DPL) jointly organized an interactive session with children featuring Dr Divik Ramesh, prominent children’s author and Shri Atul Vardhan, illustrator on the occasion of World Book and Copyright Day. Held at the Sarojini Nagar Centre of Delhi Public Library on 23 April, 2015, the session was also combined with a book exhibition.

Welcoming the guests and children at the outset, Dr M.A. Sikandar, Director, NBT highlighted on pleasure reading and need to make available such materials which can bring joy in children. Besides interacting with children, Dr Divik Ramesh and Dr M A Sikandar inaugurated the NBT book exhibition and released the recent NBT publication in Hindi for children ‘Gas Gubbare’. The participating children also prepared drawings of the popular character ‘Lulu’ created by the author.

Smt Sudha Mukherjee from DPL offered vote of thanks. Shri Manas Ranjan Mahapatra, Editor (NCCL), NBT coordinated the programme.

World Book Day in Sihor

On the occasion of World Book and Copyright Day, National Book Trust, India in association with Sidhpur Shree Hanuman Shiksha Samiti organized a seminar on the topic ‘Role of Books in Contemporary Times’ (Vartmaan Samay Mein Pustak Ki Bhumika) at Auditorium, Blue Bird School, Sihor, on 23 April 2015.

Shri Santosh Choubey, eminent poet and chancellor, AISECT University, Bhopal was the chief guest on the occasion. The seminar was presided over by Dr Pushpa Dubey. The other speakers on the occasion were Shri Mukesh Dubey, litterateur, Shri Mukesh Verma, author and Shari Vasant Daswani, journalist.

In the seminar, the speakers discussed about the reasons behind dwindling readership and importance of books. In the second session, a poets’ meet was also organized in which poets from across the country including Pankaj Subir, Vinay Upadhyay, Mohan Sagoria among others rendered their poems and enthralled the audience.
Ten Ten Ten is a literary celebration to encourage book reading and writing habits among the youth. It presents fun workshops, panels and competitions for youth to understand its history and traditions and also how literature can be a medium to explore creativity and innovation. Ten Ten Ten is used to denote ellipsis in Japanese language. This being the only literary celebration dedicated to the youth, Ten Ten Ten is a metaphor of a journey to be continued to the other states of North East India.

2nd Ten Ten Ten was organised by National Book Trust, India in collaboration with Cinedarbaar Welfare Society and Cultural Affairs & Heritage Department and Human Resource Development Department of Sikkim. It was held on 29-30 April 2015 at Manan Bhawan, New Secretariat Building, Development Area, Gangtok, Sikkim.

The event was inaugurated by Shri G.S Lama, Founder and General Secretary of the Sikkim Akademi. Mr. Lama, a Nepali author, has written several books which includes short stories collection and poems, and has won Bhanu Puruskar of Sikkim, Sahitya Akademi award for Mrigatrishna, a collection of short stories. He is also a Padma Shri recipient in 2005, he is a founder Secretary of Bharatiya Nepali Rastriya Parishad, and was also the Editorial Advisor (Nepali) for National Book Trust, India and General Secretary of the Sikkim Academy.

Mr. Lama was welcomed by Ms. Supriya Rohit, President of Cinedarbaar with a bouquet of flowers. Thereafter Lighting of the Lamp ceremony was held with the guests that included Mr. G.S Lama and Prajwal Parajuly. After the inaugural function, the two-day event witnessed a number of sessions and workshops on books, writing, publishing, etc.

In a book discussion, Prajwal Parajuly conversed with Nirmal Manger. From a journey from short story writing to a novel, from Gurkha’s Daughter to the Land where I Flee, the author discussed his books and what went behind writing them.

A session on ‘Writer’s Workshop’ saw Ms. Laxmi Rai, Professor in English, discussed how to learn the tricks of writing one’s own stories in a book.

In a discussion on ‘Poets of Sikkim’, the poets talked about the process of writing, the subjects they write about and also recited their poetries. Participants included Prabin Khaling, editor of Purvanchal Bharati, a weekly National Nepali tabloid from Sikkim; Dr. Rajendra Bhandari, winner of many awards including Diyalo Purashkar in Poetry from the Nepali Sahitya Sammelan. Sudha M. Rai, winner of Kamala Aanshu Smriti Sahitya Puraskar, moderated the event.

The session on ‘Publishing World’ witnessed Shri Marc Parent, Sales & Marketing Director of Taschen, a leading publisher, interacting with the audience giving tips for budding authors to get an overview of the publishing industry, Indian publishing abroad and how to get published as an author.

On the second day, a session on ‘Political Writing: Journalism and Long
Essays’ was organised. Kunal Rai, Senior Correspondent, Sikkim Express, gave an insight into journalism writing for magazines and explained how to form narratives for writing facts and how it differs from writing fictional narrative. Nirmal Manger, journalist, The Telegraph moderated the session.

A workshop titled ‘Understanding Expression Through Word And Cartoon’ discussed how one can use cartoon to depict any mood or situation, how reading and writing go together to help understand one’s own thoughts better and find different ways to communicate them. With Pankaj Thapa as the main speaker, the session focused around R.K. Laxman, the great cartoonist, and his views on the art of cartooning. The workshop also gave an exposure to figure of Nehru through Laxman’s cartoons, understanding the man and Indian context of his times; hence inspiring children to explore different ways to express.

In a ‘Poetry Workshop’, Manika Sharma spoke about how to read and write poems. Celebrating 50 Years of Feluda Series by Satyajit Ray, competitions were held on his works.

The festival saw about 1,700 students from schools & colleges and also teachers and general public. Volunteers were selected from the local schools of Sikkim, Gangtok. This was done to have direct involvement of the youth in the festival, who were the major target audience. Also it gave them a hands on experience of event management. All the volunteers were given certificates as an appreciation for their efforts. Authors and speakers were also given certificates to acknowledge their participation.

During the workshop, on both the days, children were encouraged to come on stage and narrate their poetry and stories. The winning participants were given prizes.

The event got extensive coverage in newspapers, local TV channels and Radio. As a part of promotions prior to the event, volunteers were hired to put posters in schools and markets.

Shri Binny Kurian, editor, NBT India coordinated the programme.

A Request to Subscribers

Dear Subscriber,

To begin with we would like to thank you for your support and your long association with NBT as a subscriber of our NBT Newsletter. We have been sending out our newsletter for years. As it happens, during all these years postal addresses of many of our subscribers may have changed. As a result, newsletters sent to them are being returned back to us for lack of proper / correct address. Therefore, we need to review and verify our postal address database.

In order that the exercise is fruitful, we request you to send us a letter mentioning your Name, Address, Contact No. and Email ID to the following address:

National Book Trust, India
Nehru Bhawan
5 Institutional Area, Phase-II,
Vasant Kunj, New Delhi-110070.
OR you can send these detailsthrough email (office.nbt@nic.in) latest by 31st June, 2015.

We appreciate your cooperation. This review of postal address database will ensure continuous dispatch of NBT newsletters to you without delay.

Further, we will also begin our service to send e-newsletters. If you wish to subscribe to the same by email, please send us an email with subject “NBT Newsletter e-Subscription”. In this mail, please mention your contact details like Name, Address, Email, Mobile Number etc.

We are looking forward to receiving your latest contact details. A sample format is given below:
1. Name (Block letters):
2. Address (Block letters) with PIN Code:
3. Age:
4. Educational Qualification:
5. Occupation:
6. Phone No.:
7. Email ID:
8. Would you like to receive the NBT Newsletter in digital form?: Yes/No
9. Are you a member of NBT Book Club / Reader’s Club? : Yes/No
10. If yes, please mention the Registration No.
At the age of 16, having been thrown out of school for the second time, I ran away, and ended up in Muar, my childhood home and the only place I knew outside Singapore. It was a rash thing to do, but as a result I began to learn about life the hard way. I learned also that kindness can come from unexpected directions.

Making some excuse to my mother, I grabbed a bottle of coffee, put a couple of books in my schoolbag and left home. First I went to the Theatre Royal, where they showed Tamil films. After the end of the show, I hid in a dark corner and spent the night there, using my books as a pillow. For about a week I slept rough in the streets, finding secluded spots around Arab Street and North Bridge Road. In those days it was common to see people sleeping in the five-foot ways, many of them workers in coffee-shops and other businesses nearby. After 10.00 pm the streets were very quiet. I had to beg for food. Some days I got lucky, other days I did not.

Gradually moving further and further away from Katong, I ended up at the Tanjong Pagar docks, where there was no security and anyone could go in and out. There was a food shelter for Indian workers. I queued up hopefully, but was turned away – ‘Workers only’!

A bystander saw what was happening, and in an act of kindness shared his lunch with me. I was exhausted and hadn’t washed properly for days – he took me to the house where he lived in a makeshift cubicle, gave me some soap and water, and lent me a sarong while I washed my clothes. I slept solidly for a day and a night. I asked if I could stay there. He tried to persuade me to go home, but finally agreed.

A week or two later Pavadai, as he was called, got me a job as an office boy with an architect’s firm in the Union Building, on Collyer Quay. I worked there for a couple of months, but I was afraid that while running errands I might bump into one of my brothers-in-law. They also worked in the area. Although I was desperate to see my mother and my siblings, I did not want to hurt them anymore. I was determined not to return until I had achieved something in life.

I decided to go back to Muar in Johor, which I remembered from my childhood. There was an overnight Straits Steamship service from Clifford Pier that I had used with my parents. I discovered that for ten cents you could get a sampan to take you out to the ship. On board you could have a word with the most senior Malay or Chinese deck hand, and for a dollar you could use his bunk. This was a strictly unofficial arrangement – there were proper passenger facilities.

With nine dollars in my pocket I arrived at Muar. I remembered our family barber, Mr Alagoo, and went to find him. He and his wife took me in for a while. To make ends meet I offered tuition for a dollar or so a month, but did not make much. For a time I worked delivering documents for a Chinese petition-writer, who wrote letters and other important documents in English for people who could not speak or write the language.

Then I met an Indian Muslim called Kader. He was a hawker selling food in the Malay school. I became his assistant, and went to live in his kampong, where I stayed for a couple of years. I called him ‘Nana’, Tamil for ‘uncle’.

In search of a job I went to the lawyer’s office where my father had worked, and above which we had lived. The chief clerk and his colleagues remembered me, and they were friendly enough, but they could not help. I got an appointment with the owner’s son, who could hardly be bothered to take his eyes off the document he was reading while telling me there was no job.

My morale was low. Nana did his best to encourage me with stories about a Sufi saint from Nagore, India, and his miracles. I had a friend in the kampong, Noordin, who used to talk about Islam – I think he was slowly trying to get me to embrace his religion.

For a long time I had no contact with my family in Singapore. One day I asked Nana to visit my mother and bring back some of my clothes. My mother would not give them to him, saying that I should come home and forget what had happened. A brother-in-law sent me a few dollars, and he too urged me to return, reminding me of the biblical story of the ‘prodigal son’. I thanked him, but said I would come back only after I had made a success of my life.

That is how things stood for this 17-year-old at the end of 1941. I could not afford newspapers, and had little interest in world affairs. I was too bound up with my own problems. But over the horizon events were taking shape that would affect the future direction of my life. War was about to engulf Malaya and Singapore.

S.R. Nathan: 50 Stories from My Life
The one thing remarkable about the small town in the northern valley, nestling on hillocks five thousand feet above sea-level, was that its people lived mostly on bread and rumours.

Viewed from far the town looked like a nest. And there were clouds to behave like giant birds about to settle down in it.

Clouds and mists, some of them familiar in their contours and some strangers, brushed the town time and again. Gusts of cool wind that often accompanied them blew away jumbles of dry leaves and bougainvilleas and sometimes a kerchief or even a petticoat, in which the town abounded, into anonymous destinations. They also blew away the daily rumours into the wilderness where most probably they ended up in the chattering of a covey of partridges.

But nobody need regret such a fate of the rumours. The townsfolk apart, those gossipes were not likely to be of any interest to anybody. Besides, they were meant to be short-lived, to be enjoyed and forgotten like balloons or bubbles going up and bursting into nothingness.

Except in winter and monsoon, half of the town-dwellers were outsiders looking for their missing health or in hoping for a romance with cosy solitude. But there lay the magic of the town: it did not let them feel outsiders. But in winter and monsoon, the town was hardly more than a memory even for the villagers down the valley, let alone the people of the wide world.

The day, as usual, had begun with the townsfolk getting agog over a pretty little rumour. It was a cloudy morning. Davra, the young professor, sat on the wrecked parapet of an ancient monument in ruins and gazed at the hilltop. An old banyan tree leaned towards him and he was tickled by showers of swirling dead leaves. The other thing to tickle him was the fluttering shawl of Ms Jolly. The shawl too was of the colour of the cloud and as soft as well, and nobody had any business to feel surprised should Davra claim that he thought it was only a wayward virgin cloud that caressed him.

The two seated like that were spied upon by Ms Jamila who had lately been seen in the intimate company of the young professor. Earlier too she had seen Davra and Jolly submerged in the silence of the ruins and the dead leaves. But all she had done was give a shrug and return home and resume her Bharatnatyam. This time, however, she was observed to shiver.

Back home she raised a howl and under some weird inspiration told her father, the headman of the town, that Davra and Jolly turned into lovely little monkeys as she looked on and the two kept sitting on the historic parapet with their distinctly identifiable tails dangling down it.

The story of the metamorphosis spread at the usual speed of rumours which was at par with the west wind. Soon a hundred people collected below the historic ruins and kept marvelling at Davra and Jolly who sat with their backs at the crowd, Jolly’s shawl still tickling the professor. It was only when the two got down and walked through the crowd – Davra asking someone about time and adjusting his watch – that the crowd began to disperse. There was no change in their mood at their realising that the two went as tail-less as ever.

The townsfolk’s attitude towards rumours had a sort of holiness about it. To look upon a rumour as rumour and yet to be able to enjoy it was a kind of culture that had to be cultivated with patience over a few generations.

By noon the townsfolk had forgotten all about Davra and Jolly for, they were rapidly falling into the grip of a thrilling new rumour that had brewed up late in the afternoon.

The two major shops in the town, the Rainbow and the Evening Star, were situated almost facing each other midway the road leading to the picturesque hilltop, and were arch rivals.

On the eve of the annual carnival celebrating the advent of spring Robin, the owner of the Rainbow, imported a life-size synthetic statue showing a fairy in the nude and installed it at the entrance to his showroom. A number of people graced the informal installation with their impromptu presence and many were willing to lend their hands to setting the statue in the proper position.

One of them asked Gulliver, the proprietor of the Evening Star who happened to pass by, “Won’t you too put up a gorgeous thing like this?”

“Pooh! Why should I?” asked Gulliver. “Must I deceive you by putting up fake figures? Why? Won’t Ms Pinquee herself appear in the nude as mannequin on the terrace of my shop, if I make a request to her?”

Ms Pinquee, the avant-garde danseuse who occupied a suite atop the Evening Star, had been observed having food, drink, and indulging in chitchat with Gulliver on more than one occasion during her fortnight’s stay.

By sundown it had become the sole talk of the town: Ms Pinquee would shed her clothes and emerge atop the Evening Star. The town had never known a sweeter twilight. The dutiful hundred gossipers who had collected below the historic monument in the morning were duly present before the Evening Star, barring only the few female members of the lot.

“What’s the matter over here?” enquired the retired judge as he came dragging his feet.

Excerpts

The Trust has recently published a short story collection The Bridge in the Moonlit Night and Other Stories by Manoj Das. Herein we reproduce an excerpt from a story titled ‘A Tale of the Northern Valley’.
Mobile Exhibition Vans

Two new mobile exhibition vans have been added in NBT’s fleet of mobile vans. Shri Baldeo Bhai Sharma, Chairman, NBT inaugurated two newly acquired mobile exhibition vans at its premises in Vasant Kunj, New Delhi on 29 April 2015.

One of the objectives of NBT is to promote reading habit and books in all Indian languages at affordable price across the country. NBT deputes mobile exhibition vans across the country throughout the year to reach out to the readers, especially in remote areas and villages across the country.

On India Government Service

Sahitya Akademi is bringing out an updated National Register of Translators comprising the details of translators who translate from/to any Indian language. This Register will be distributed to governments, embassies, newspapers, magazines and journals, academic and research institutions and translation service centre among others.

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