

Women's Lives, Women's Words



A
Women
Writers'
Meet
2023

SPARROW
Supplement

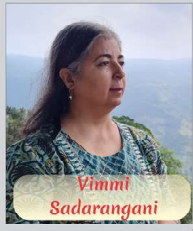


SOUND & PICTURE ARCHIVES FOR RESEARCH ON WOMEN



A cultural event to celebrate women's writing through dialogue and discussion on the theme

**Life Stories
Stories of Life**



Yinmi Sadarangani



Joetumoni Basumatary



Anju Basumatary



Sheela Kolambkar



Malsawmi Jacob



T Vanlalhlani



Deep Inder



Sarah Aineh



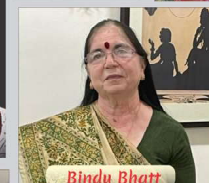
Vibha Rani



Anjali Daimari



Ambai



Bindu Bhatt



Margaret L Pachuan



Anita VL Nunmawii



Aruna Dhere



Kalairani



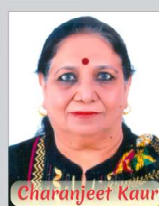
Anita Agnihotri



Chitra Desai



G P Kusuma



Charanjeet Kaur



Kalyanee Rajan



Sudha Rai



Bijoya Sawian



K Vasamalli



Sakoon Singh



Saweini Laloo



IN COLLABORATION WITH
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND CULTURE STUDIES
MIZORAM UNIVERSITY

WOMEN'S LIVES, WOMEN'S WORDS

A Women Writers' Meet

TO DIALOGUE AND DISCUSS

LIFE STORIES, STORIES OF LIFE

ORGANISED BY



SPARROW

SOUND & PICTURE ARCHIVES FOR
RESEARCH ON WOMEN

IN COLLABORATION WITH

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND CULTURE STUDIES

MIZORAM UNIVERSITY

PROGRAMME DATE: 24TH TO 28TH FEBRUARY 2023
VENUE: CHALTLANG TOURIST LODGE, AIZAWL, MIZORAM



Sudha Rai



Malsawmi
Jacob



Saweini
Laloo



Bindu Bhatt



Sarah Aineh



Bijoya Sawian



Anita VL
Nummawii



Jeetumoni
Basumatary



T Vanlaltlani



Vimmi
Sadarangani



Anju
Basumatary



Margaret L
Pachuau



Anjali Daimari

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Sakoon
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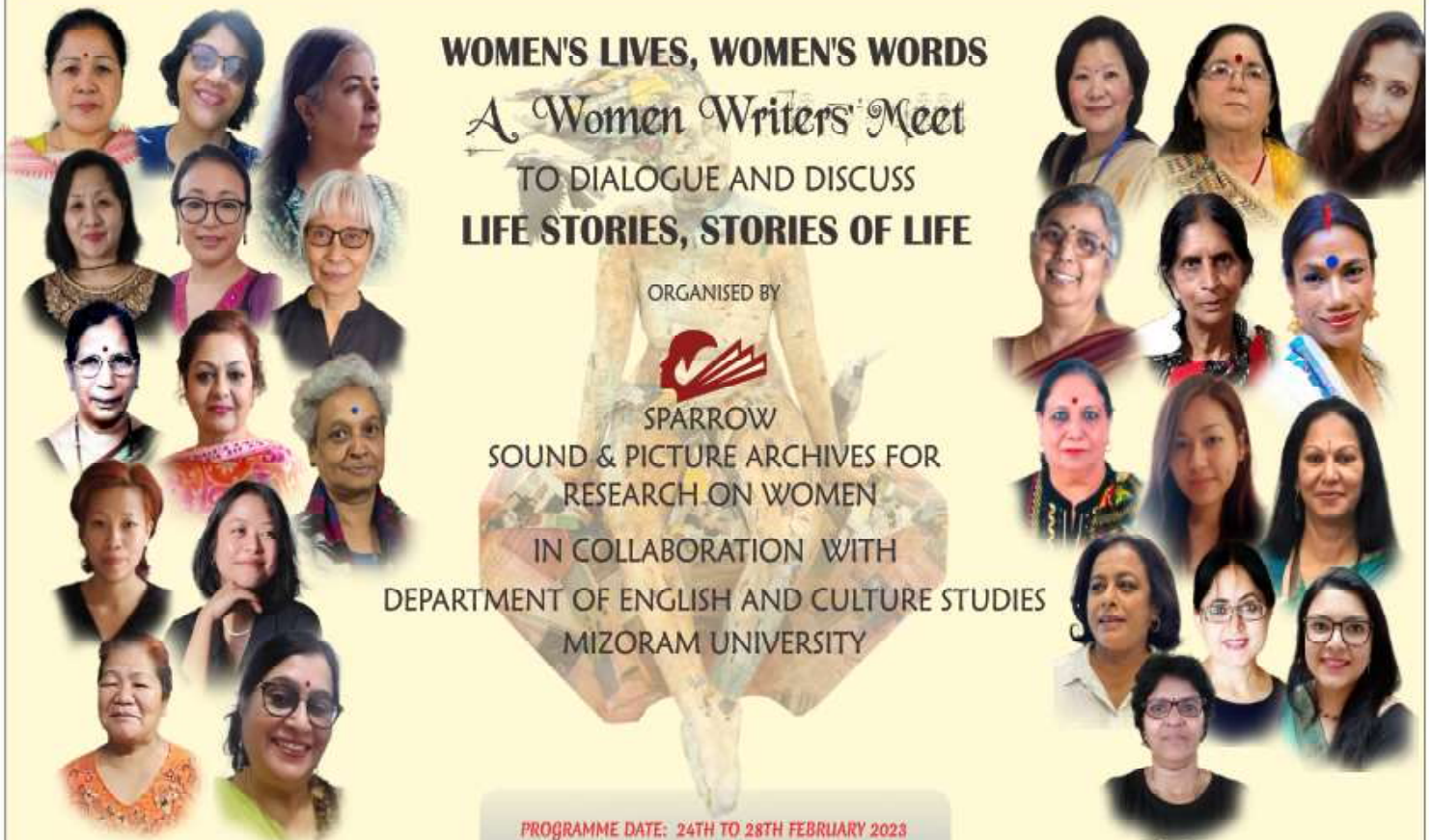
Singers at the Inauguration

STUDENTS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND CULTURE STUDIES
MIZORAM UNIVERSITY



1st Row (L-R) Lallawmzuali, Deborah VL Muankimi, Lalrinliani, Gloria Vanlalruati, Rachel Lalremtuangi, Lalchhuanawmi, Judithi Lalhmingsangi, Esther Remruati, R. Lalnunhlui, Nancy Lalnunmawii.

2nd Row (L-R) C. Lalrochanhlui, Vanlalhruaii, J Vanlalmalsawmzuali, Rosy Laltlankimi, Ruth C Lalremsangi, Celina Vanlalhruaizeli, MK Bertilla, Malsawmdawngkimi, H. Lalremruati.



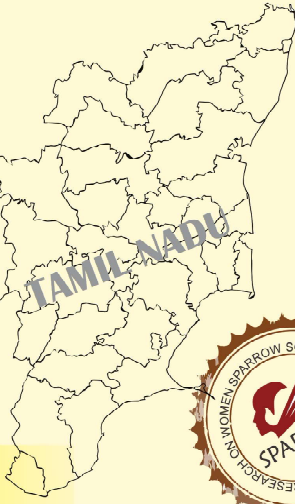
PROGRAMME DATE: 24TH TO 28TH FEBRUARY 2023
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Are you not the Absolute, the All-merciful –
-the Absolute and all-merciful
Shall this pariah speak words of salutation to you –
you, the Absolute and all-merciful
Shall this pariah indeed speak words of salutation to you
Only to witness your dance of eternal joy
May I come –to you– there...

From Varugalama Ayya, a performance piece of S S Kaliraani.

“...பரமக்ருபாநிதி அல்லவோ - இந்த
பறையன் உபசாரம் சொல்லவோ - உந்தன்
பரமானந்த தாண்டவம்
பார்க்கவே (நான் அங்கே வருகலாமோ)...”



IN COLLABORATION WITH
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MIZORAM UNIVERSITY

Kaliraani
(Tamil Theatre)



S S Kaliraani in conversation with C S Lakshmi

S S Kaliraani, who is affectionately referred to as Kalai everywhere, is an acclaimed theatre performer who was with the Koothu-P-Pattarai theatre group of the renowned Na. Muthusamy. She studied acting at the Adyar Film Institute, Chennai and later just in case her acting career did not take off, she also completed a course in cosmetology. It was her friend, actor Naseer, who convinced her to try theatre instead of films. That is how she joined Koothu-p- Pattarai. Kalai made her debut with “Kattiyakaran” (The Announcer), written by Na Muthusamy, a play which went for the South Zone festival. She featured in many Koothu-p-Pattarai productions like “Vellai Vattam” (The White Circle) and “Guruvamma” and in 1988, joined them full-time once they started their Repertory group. But it is with solo performances that Kalai really came into her own. And the person who urged her to try solo performances was the acclaimed dancer Veenpani Chawla. Her first solo act was “Penn” (Woman, 1993) about a woman struggling with self-doubts and emerging as Shakti. She also worked with G Hartman De Souza in “Song of Lowino” (1994) which has remained one of her best-known works which is an adaptation of the poem by the Ugandan poet, Okot P. Bitek. After a break of five years came “Ezhindiri” (Wake Up) which is about the mind being willing but the body not cooperating. After the experience of being drenched in the rain for three days, Kalai produced the play “Mazhai” (Rain) in 1995. Mazhai explores the rain that is needed to nourish the dry lands within. In 1995 Kalai produced another solo play “Varugalamo...” (May I come?). Kali has also acted in more than fifty Tamil films from 1987 onwards. For her role in the film *Kodambakkam* (2005) she received the Tamil Nadu State Film Award for the Best female Character artiste.



Fine lady and me

From your marble mansion, you
mock and block out from view
my bamboo hut in the hills

Shuttered in high class house
with gold and diamond
you cannot see what I own –
a sky full of stars
music and laughter

Now fate has brought me beside you
how you squirm!
You dare not curse aloud
for your reputation's sake
so your lips smile
while your eyes
tell a different story

Poor deluded lady!
You and I
both were made out of dust
to dust will return
so who is high, who is low?

*Translated from the Mizo poem
"Miliannu leh kei"*





Malsawmi Jacob
(Mizo and English)



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Malsawmi Jacob writes fiction, poetry and other materials in Mizo language and English. She has published 10 books in different genres and contributed to several anthologies, magazines and journals, and has co-edited two anthologies, the latter published by Sahitya Akademi in 2021. She now lives in Bangalore and Kumbanad.



Malsawmi Jacob is an independent writer now living in Bangalore and Kerala. Her first novel and seventh book, *Zorami A Redemption Song* was published in 2015. Her other published books are a collection of poems in Mizo and English, a collection of short stories, two books of children's stories and two narrative non-fiction. She has worked in different cities of India: taught English to undergraduates at St. Claret College, Bangalore, and Aizawl College, Aizawl; was senior co-ordinator at SPARROW, Mumbai; and freelanced as a journalist for about two years while living in Guwahati. She has also contributed poems, stories and articles on different subjects to a few anthologies and journals.




She

wilting
imperceptibly
waiting
interminably
speaking
mutely
hearing
quietly
living
by default

woman
by design
neither
her own
nor
divine.

Charanjeet Kaur
(English)



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Dr Charanjeet Kaur has been the former Consulting Editor of *Muse India* and Chief Editor from April 2015 to November 2016. She retired as the I/C Principal and Head of the UG, PG and Research Department of English in 2014 after an academic and administrative career spanning 36 years at Smt Chandibai Himathmal Mansukhani College, Ulhasnagar. She has been an IUC Associate at Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla. Currently, she is associated with SPARROW (Sound & Picture ARchives for Research On Women), Mumbai. She has published two volumes of poetry – *The Songs From the Hills* (2015) and *Mirror Image and Other Poems* (2009), with Writers' Workshop, Kolkata. Her poems and short stories have appeared in journals and online journals like *Manushi*, *Kavya Bharti*, *Chandrabhaga*, *kitaab.org* and *Out of Print* ejournal. She has co-edited the volume "Seeking Nanak" for the the NGO EduSikh.



FLUTE

After getting pierced, the bamboo becomes the flute.
From each perforation, life sings raag malhar.
Why do you become sad, o friend!
When someone is left behind, something breaks apart,
penetrates deep within,
that is when it becomes the cosmic sound
echoing across the universe.

After getting pierced, the bamboo becomes the flute.
Translated from the Hindi Poem "Bansuri."

बाँसुरी
बिंध गया बाँस
तो बन गई बाँसुरी
छेद छेद जिन्दगी
गादी है मल्हार
उदास क्यों होते हो दोस्त!
जब कोई छूटता है
कुछ टूटता है
भीतर तक बीधता है
तभी तो वह
नाद बन
पूरे ब्रह्मांड में गूँजता है।

बिंध गया बाँस
तो बन गई बाँसुरी...




Chitra Desai
(Hindi)



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Chitra Desai in conversation with C S Lakshmi

Chitra Desai is a lawyer who has practised law from 1980-1987 in the Supreme Court of India. With a post-graduate certificate in Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) from Mumbai University, she has undertaken various projects through her career. She has assisted many prominent lawyers after enrolling with the Bar Council since 1980. She has regularly contributed to the legal column of the women's magazine *Vama*. She has been visiting the law faculty at SNDT Women's University from 2006-2009. She has worked with Maharashtra Legal Literacy programs and 'Lok Adalat' & Times Foundation's Youth Literacy programs. She also has been an external member of sexual harassment committees for various colleges and corporates.

Apart from her career as a lawyer she is also an eminent writer and poet. Her first poetry collection *Shuru Mein Yatra* (The Journey in the Beginning) was published in 1980. It was followed by two more collections *Sarso se Amaltaas* (From Mustard to Golden Shower, 2015) and *Dararo Mein Ugi Doob* (Grass Sprouting from the Crevices, 2020)

She has received many awards for her poetry such as Maharashtra Rajya 'Hindi Sahitya Academy' award for *Sarso se Amaltaas*, Ubhdra Kumari Chouhan Samman, from *Guftugu*, Prayagraj, Swaym Siddha Srujan Samman by Being Women Foundation of Kavi Kumbh Patrika and Nepali Geet Samman by 'Kavivar Gopal Singh 'Nepali' Foundation', Patna, in 2018, to name a few.



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SMOKE OF BURNING LEAVES

On winter mornings you relished setting the leaves on fire:
dear husband mine,
my sooty kitchen would fill up with smoke,
the scream of the burning leaves would rend my mornings...

You know very well how days come to an end for a leaf -
once as bright as sunshine,
yellow the next day, and then one day
falling off and drifting with the wind

Yet you never spared a single leaf.
You hunted them all from their hiding, one by one
and set them on fire.
Dear gardener mine, did this serve you right!

And this is why our bond broke off.
I failed to reconcile
the warmth of the nocturn blanket
with the morning smoke of the burning leaves.
So, here I leave

A leaf once fallen, never goes back to the tree.
I know, nevertheless...

Translated from the Bangali poem "Pata Pada Dhoora"

শীতের সকাল সূর্যি অস্তে আর পাতা পোড়ানোর কাকস, পরিষ্কার,
মোহন্যে হুত্রে অগ্নি আঁধার কানিমাঝে ঝুলিবে
কুপ পাতার ঠিকার তলাচালা হলে কেত অঙ্গের হকস।
নাকালি কোঃ কানস, নাকালি হপু, নাকালি কাকসে পাতা বোত মাকস।
সূর্যি বো জালা কিতাবে পাতার পিন খুঁজে
কাল, একটা পাতাকে পুঁজি শাকত পিতল, রেং রেং হুত্রে অগ্নি খেল পিত অগ্নে।
নাকালি, এই হি কালসে ঠিকার কাল।
এক ঠিক কাল অগ্নিবো জালা সূর্যি বো।
কাল সেরে এক আর নাকালি পাতা পোড়া মৌসে, কোলসে পাকসে না পো, চাকস।
এক বার আর বোত পাতা আর গমকে কোলস, জালি, হপু।





Anita Agnihotri
(Banga)

IN COLLABORATION WITH
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND CULTURE STUDIES
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Anita Agnihotri started writing very early in life, as a twelve-year-old girl. Satyajit Ray, the legendary film director published her poems and short prose pieces in the Children’s magazine, *Sandesh*. Anita has authored over forty books by now and has been translated into Swedish, German and other Indian languages including Tamil, Malayalam, Hindi, Odia and English. Her writing oeuvre covers multiple genres like Poetry, Short stories, Novels, Writing for the young adolescents, Essays and Critiques of development. Her Epic novel *Mahanadi* (Dey’s Publishing, 2019) has been translated into English and Odia. She has been felicitated twice by the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad , the oldest Bengali literary institution, honoured with the Bhuban Mohini Dasi gold medal by the University of Calcutta (2014), Sarat Puraskar awarded by Sarat Shatabarshiki Samiti, Bhagalpur (2004), Bidyasagar Dinamayi award by the Government of West Bengal, the Gajendra Kumar Mitra Smriti Puraskar awarded by Mitra & Ghosh Publishers, (2010), the Crossword Economist Award for her collection of Short stories *Seventeen* (2011) and Khonj Sahitya Puraskar (2022) awarded by Khonj Sahitya Patrika, West Bengal. She joined the Indian Administrative Service in 1980 and retired as Secretary to Government of India in 2016 after 37 Years of meritorious service.

❦❦❦



Anita Agnihotri in conversation with C S Lakshmi

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Courtyard Like An Ocean

The ocean was very far from my home.
When the house was small
The courtyard was very big.
Lying on the rope cot
The entire sky could be seen.
I used to be scared thinking that
The sky dangling by the wind
May fall upon us.

Then the house became bigger
And the sky became smaller.
One day the courtyard vanished
In a small flat of a skyscraper.
The sky one could see lying on the rope cot
Seen through the kitchen window
Was the size of a hand-span.
Still, it was an ocean for me
As the ocean was very far from my house.
After many years, I saw the real ocean
Spread on land
There was no fear of its falling.
Still, I longed for the ocean in the sky.

*Translated from the Sindhi poem
"Angan varo sumunda."*

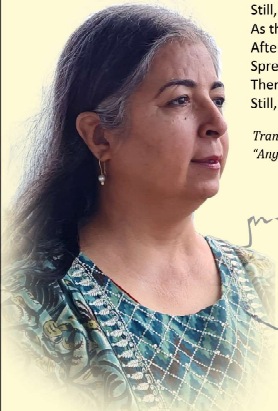
अङ्गण वारो समुंद

समुंदे मुहिनै घर सां बेदद परे हो
घर जुदुदि नंदो हो
न अङ्गणु नमस्तु बूडो हो.
सुटु ले नैठिनो हो न
समुंदे जो सभुओ अगमस्तु नजर ईन्दो हो.
मां न पडो सोचे पहिङ्गइयो बेसी हुअति
त हुवा में सदिभिनव अगमस्तु
असां जे सभां न किरी गावे.

पौह घर बडो धीरो विचो
एँ अगमस्तु नंदो भिन्दो विचो
हिक लेहु अङ्गणु जरी दमाराज जे
नंदे फलेट में सुम भी विचो.

जेको अगमस्तु बर ते लेण मां
समुंदे जो सभो नदो ईन्दो हो
सो रूफो जो ईरुई मां मुडी सुविचार्दज मां
सदि जेतिरो सव नसवी हो.
पर नडुदि वि मुहिनै नाद नदो ई समुंद हो
हो जो याङ्ग मुहिनै घर सां बेदद परे हो.

पयानि सदिभिनो मां पौह
मुँ अडुवी समुंद वि हिनो
अभीन ते फदिभिन अङ्गु
जहिनै विरण जो जो वि सुवरो कोन हो.
वडुदि वि सुवे अगमान वारो समुंद
बेदद यारि आगे.



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Vimmi Sadarangani
(Sindhi)

Sindhi poet **Vimmi Sadarangani** is an Associate Professor of Sindhi at Tolani College of Arts and Science, Adipur (Kutch) since 1995. She has taught Sindhi Language Course at Singapore Sindhi Association (1995) and University of Illinois, US (2000). She has completed a UGC Major Research Project on 'Identity Journey of Sindhi Women' in 2017. Presently, she is doing oral history project related to Sindhi community of Adipur-Gandhidham (Kutch).

Vimmi Sadarangani has written five collections of poems, four books of children literature and five books of Sindhi language learning. Her main research interests are Sindhi language, literature, culture, translation, women's studies etc. Translated into English, Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi, Konkani, Vimmi's works have been published in various national and international literary journals. She has been the local organiser of '100 Thousand Poets for Change' since 2011.

Vimmi has participated in various literary events and literary conferences all over India and abroad. She has received literary awards from Gujarat Sindhi Academy, NCERT, Delhi Sindhi Academy, Akhil Bharat Sindhi Boli Ain Sahit Sabha, SPARROW etc.



Vimmi Sadarangani in conversation with C S Lakshmi





The Time Being

Long have I walked in searing heat,
The ceaseless asphalt burns my feet,
I've been on this road one time too many,
To grasp reasons and to find out why,
Before this being runs out of time.
I've run the race and shed tears aplenty
For whom I sated with heartfelt song,
For those I loved and later mourned,
Lived in a world that is ever-changing
To find myself back on this street.
There's nothing written on the trees;
And now the quandary I've been facing,
Unless I take this final leap,
How will I find what's in the deep?

*In here, in the deep red garden,
Walk on through the petal shower,
Be it honey or the cherriest wine,
Drink your fill and stay behind.*



Sarah Aineh
(English)



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Scratch

Neither have I come to topple an era
nor your words,
I will do nothing that will
make you restive...

I am just a faint scratch
on your thoughts
Though for a while
I'll certainly bother you...

Translated from the Punjabi poem "Jhareet"

ਝਰੀਟ

ਨਾ ਯੁੱਗ ਪਲਟਣ ਆਈ ਹਾਂ
ਨਾ ਤੇਰੇ ਕਹੇ ਨੂੰ
ਕੁਝ ਵੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਰਾਂਗੀ ਅਜਿਹਾ
ਕਿ ਤੈਨੂੰ
ਤਿਲਮਲਾਉਣਾ ਪੇ ਜਾਵੇ ...

ਤੇਰੀ ਸੋਚ ਤੇ ਪਈ
ਨਿੱਕੀ ਜਿਹੀ ਝਰੀਟ ਹਾਂ
ਥੋੜ੍ਹੇ ਦਿਨ ਤਾਂ
ਤੰਗ ਕਰਾਂਗੀ ਹੀ ...



Deep Inder
(Punjabi)



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Sarah Aineh grew up in Pune, Maharashtra and is presently based at Khawzawl district in Mizoram as an MPS (Mizoram Police Service) officer. She describes herself as an amateur singer, poet, and air guitarist, as well as a lover of the road and the sea. She is also one of only a handful of Mizo creative writers who have published works in English.

In 2014, her first novel *Jo's Journal* was published by Notion Press, which was recently followed up, in February 2017, with her second, *Zeb and the Girl*. A third book *Zuma Puk* was published in 2018. Her second and third book are self-published. Her short stories and poems can be seen on her blog sarahaineh.wordpress.com.

In the Punjab literary world, **Deep Inder** is a renowned and well-known poet and fiction writer. She made her writing debut with a few short stories and prose pieces that were published in various magazines and newspapers, which quickly gained her a devoted following among the Punjabi readers and critics. She has published a book of poetry, *Khataas* (Sourness, 2017) and is currently working on her next project.

She is also the editor of the the Punjabi literary magazine *Sankh*.





Aruna Dhere
(Marathi)

Where have you been staying?

Where have you been staying
after leaving my words?
As fresh water in the jar,
full to the brim,
carried by a suvasini?
Trailing down the plough,
are you dangling
beneath the earth
as a new sprout?
Perhaps, you are blowing
like the wind
into the dreams of saints
or perhaps flowing
as agony
in the blood
of some prophet?
Why did you walk
out of my words so freely
this I won't ask.
But, if you are lying
with clenched fists,
in an empty
yearning womb,
then, as 'Oti', I would offer
to that woman,
all these hollow words,
and my own life too
love-lorn, crazy.
Really,
where are you?

Translated from the Marathi poem "Kuthe Utlarla Aahes?"

कुठे उतरला आहेस ?

कुठे उतरला आहेस तू
माझ्या शब्दमधून निघून गेल्यानंतर ?

यांबला आहेस का एखाद्या सवाण धटाल
काठोकड मधील गाणी म्हणून
की एखाद्या नांगराच्या फाळवळून उतरून
मातोघाली इतलो आहेस रूजवा होऊन ?

कदाचित तू वादली श्रवणील
वाऱ्यासारखा सज्जनीच्या स्वर्गदरवून
किंवा कदाचित
देवनेसारखा कुणा प्रेक्षिताच्या रक्तामधून

माझ्या शब्दमधून तू निघून गेलस सज्जनी
नो का कणून,
हे गी विकल्पान नाही तुला
पण एखाद्या रिकाम्या अर्त गर्भारिणात
तू उतरलील जर सुटी मिट्टी पडुडोला
रर मात्र
हे सगळे पोकळ शब्द
नालीन मी त्या गर्भरिणीच्या ओटीत
आणि मालीन माझी नील केवळकूल

खरंच
कुठे रे आहेस तू उतरलेला ?



IN COLLABORATION WITH
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND CULTURE STUDIES
MIZORAM UNIVERSITY

Aruna Ramachandra Dhere has worked in several capacities in different institutions. She was a lecturer and producer in the Educational Media Research Center at Pune University during 1983-1988 and was also associated for a while with the Indian Institute of Education, Pune. She was Director of the Women's Creativity Development Centre "Shashwati" in Pune from 2010-2015. Currently she is a Chairperson of Dr. R.C. Dhere Centre for Cultural studies, Pune

She has been a full-time writer from 1990. onwards. Dr. Aruna Dhere is a highly acclaimed writer in the field of Marathi literature. She is among the few authors, who has done extensive writing on Folk Literature, Indian Mythology and Indian Feminism. She focusses on Indigenous thought

processes, re-writing of the stories of women from great epics with a newer perspective and philosophy and lives of women saints in India etc. Her extensive work in field of Marathi literature includes nearly 50 books including poems, short stories, travelogues, personal essays, translation works, television screen plays, children's stories etc. She has successfully done an editing for over a dozen of publications and magazines. *Krishnakinara* (Being with Krishna, 1992), a collection of long stories has been translated into Hindi and Gujarati. *Bandh Adharonse* (Through Closed Lips, 2010) is a collection of her selected poems translated into Hindi and published by Sahitya Akademi. She has translated into Marathi selected stories of Indian women writers. She has also written TV scripts and scripts for several stage programmes. She has been President of Maharashtra State Book Selection committee and also President of Marathi Vishwakosh Mandal. She chaired the 92nd All India Marathi Literary Meet held at Yavatmal in January 2019.

She has received more than forty coveted awards both from the State government and other organisations. The following are some of the prestigious awards received by her: Maharashtra State Government Award for a collection of essays entitled *Lavanyayatra* (Journey of Beauty, 1988-89), Kavi Kusumagraj Award for her poetry collection entitled *Niranjan* (Pure), 1994, N C Kelkar Award and D V Potdar award (1998) for a book of essays on prominent women in history entitled *Vismrutichitre* (Forgotten Images), Pu. La. Deshpande Award for a collection of articles entitled *Vegali Maati Vegala Vaas* (Different Earth, Different Smell), Sahityadeep Puraskar from Pune for contribution to literature, 2016, Mritunjay Puraskar 2017, Maharashtra Shasanacha Utkrushtha Sampadit Granth Puraskar (Maharashtra State Excellence Award for Edited book) received by her for her book of selected stories of women writers entitled *Streelikhit Nivadak Marathi Katha*, 2013 and SPARROW Literary Award, 2019.





"...In your days, girls didn't have the good fortune to go to school. You went to school as you had to look after your younger brother—the sole heir of three generations. On the open raised platform, he would sit and write letters of the alphabet on a slate while you, sitting on the steps of the platform wrote the letters in the dust with your finger...."

Quote from "A Letter to Ali Doso (Ali, the old man) Alias Ba"

"...તારા જમાનામાં છોકરીના ભાગ્યમાં નિશાળ ક્યાંથી? તું મામાને લઈને નિશાળે જતી, તણ પેઢીના એક માત્ર વારસની રખવાળી કરવા ખુલ્લા ઓટલા પર બેઠેલા મામા પાટીમાં પેનથી કક્કો લખે અને તું પગથિયે બેસીને આંગળીથી ધૂળમાં કક્કો લખે!..."



Bindu Bhatt
(Gujarati)



IN COLLABORATION WITH
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND CULTURE STUDIES
MIZORAM UNIVERSITY

Bindu Bhatt is a Retired Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Hindi from Uma Arts & Nathiba Commerce Mahila College, Gandhinagar. She is a well-known novelist, short story writer, critic and translator from Gujarati language. *Mira Yajnik-ni-Diary* (Mira Yajnik's Diary, 1992), *Akhepatar* (The Inexhaustible, 1999), *Bandhani* (Binding, 2009) are her novels and short story collections which have been published in many editions and have also got translated into other languages. There are also many critical essays, translation and edited works to her credit. Her literary works have been well-appreciated.

She has been conferred with many awards – Govardhanram Tripathi Award in 1992-1993 for *Mira Yajnik ni Dayari*

Gujarati Sahitya Parishad Award in 1999 for *Akhepatar*.

Sahitya Akademi Award in 2003 for *Akhepatar* Justice Sharda Charan Mitra 'Bhashasetu Sammaan, Kolkata, 2009 for translations works in Indian Languages.

Dhumaketu Navalika Puraskaar by Gurjar Grnharatan Kaaryaalay in 2009 for *Bandhani* (A collection of short stories).

Laadali Award in 2017 for Gender Sensitivity 2015-16 (Western Region) by the 'Laadali Media and Advertising Awards'.



Bindu Bhatt in conversation with C S Lakshmi

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Korusyal My Korusya Buffalo!

"Korusya! My korusya buffalo,
Oh Nilgiri Mountain Rail you look beautiful like a dark and young buffalo,
and
as a wonderful and rare creature they have created you.

Your coaches are spacious and lit brightly like a house with
seven porch and seven faced lamps,
your floor is as smooth as a surface polished with butter.

You make sound like a baby crying without opening her eyes, and
you come hopping as a calf coming to us.

You transport all the seven Nilgiri community members safely, and
thousands and thousands of money has been spent to craft you?...

Toda Train song

train neuw

"Ikorasa eLhxorasa

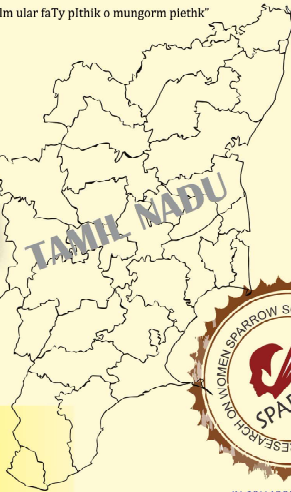
kockorm koy kisithing kumorm keok kisithing

kalulioth kisithing keokiothy kisithing

othin has kisthing onof folk kothyothing

pen gwiTer kisithing neTwirxof kisithing

oxwir olm ular faTy pithik o mungorm plethk"



K Vasamalli
(Toda)

IN COLLABORATION WITH
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND CULTURE STUDIES
MIZORAM UNIVERSITY



Bed Room Fairy

I like to sleep in the dark,
Darkness bring peace,
It rests the restless soul.

But I keep bottles of fairy light in my room,
I would occasionally switch them on
When the dark feels too dark and suffocating.
When darkness weigh you down,
Your eyes will see strange things,
Something dark in the dark,
And they will get on your nerve,
And your heart...
Oh your heart!
It will leap out of your mouth,
Just to realize that it's nothing
It's nothing but just a wall.

So I keep the fairy alive,
And pretend that it is dawn
Until dawn arrives.



Anita VL Nunmawii
(Mizo and English)

IN COLLABORATION WITH
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND CULTURE STUDIES
MIZORAM UNIVERSITY

K Vasamalli is a Toda Community Coordinator, State Tribal Welfare Board Member (2008) and now District Tribal Welfare Committee Member, collector of Toda songs and stories. She has also contributed to creating a Toda language dictionary. She is a contemporary scholar from the Toda community who continues to do research to disseminate information on the Toda culture.



With an MA in Psychology, **Anita** is a poet who writes in Mizo and English. She had great love for reading from when she was very young. It is this love that brought her to the path of poetry very early in life. She started writing poems when she was studying in high school.

There are three Mizo poetry collections to her credit – *Aikaih* (Fatally Captured, 2017), *RIP* (2019) and *Ni Hawi* (Sun Flower, 2021). All these collections are self-published. Her poems have been also included in the anthologies – *Restless Echoes* by Anodynes (Notion Press, 2018) and *Zaikung Thar Vol-1* (New Tree Songs, 2017), a 21st century Mizo Poetry Series brought out by the Mizo Poetry Society. After quitting a government job Anita is looking forward to starting her own publishing house and hopes to publish at least one novel within this year.

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"...At the moment I was plagued by yet another anxiety. If she becomes physically mature how will I get to know? How do I explain to her about it? It was a different case during our childhood. Our mother would isolate herself for two or three days from all the work saying the crow had touched her. We were not allowed to go in their vicinity. She would become an 'untouchable' then! I would get angry at that crow during childhood...."

Translated from the Konkani Story "Dolly."

हालीं डॉलीलो म्हाका आनीक एक हुस्को दिसतालो. देवा, हें जागटें जालें जाल्यार म्हाका कशें कळटलें? हाका कशें समजावन सांगपाचें? आमी ल्हान असताना गजाल वेगळी आशिल्ली. आई कावळो आफुडलो म्हूण सांगून दोन-तीन दीस कुशीक बसताली. आमकां आफडूंक बी दिनाशिल्ली. ल्हान असताना ह्या कावळ्याचो राग येतालो.



Sheela Kolambkar
(Konkani)




IN COLLABORATION WITH
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND CULTURE STUDIES
MIZORAM UNIVERSITY



Sheela Kolambkar in conversation with C S Lakshmi

Shantalakshmi Naik/Kolambkar whose pen name is Sheela Naik/Sheela Kolambkar belongs to Panaji. She worked as an assistant school teacher but she felt that her innermost feelings needed to be expressed. So, she chose to write. She was inspired by her college professor S Nadkarni and the Gyanapeeth awardee Konkani writer and scholar, Ravindra Kelekar. Although she initially chose to write in Marathi, she strongly felt that her mother tongue Konkani should be her vehicle in literature. Her first Konkani story "Guerra" (War) which won the first prize in the short story competition in 1967 of the now defunct *Rashtramat* daily was a trendsetter in Konkani literature. It gave Sheela an identity as an important writer of Konkani. The story got translated into many languages. Her first collection of short stories *Oli Saanj* (Wet Evening) was published in 1973 and was well appreciated. She has done translation works. She has won Sahitya Akademi Translation Prize for translating Dogri short stories into Konkani entitled *Bhangrachim Suknnem* (Golden Sparrow, 2004). She has also written children's stories and a collection of character-sketches, called "Bhuim-Chamfim (Champa Blooms on the Earth, 1994) which received Sahitya Akademi Award in 1997. Her other published works include, *Guerra* (War, 2007) and *Kathashilp* (Sculptor of Stories, 2007), translation works from English to Konkani, *Parjaliti Gholl* (The Crystal Cave, 1999), translation of Arup Kumar Dutta's novel of the same name for National Book Trust and *Dongravelo Uzo* (Fire in the Mountain, 2010), a translation of Anita Desai's novel of the same name for Sahitya Akademi and 4 books for children which are very popular. Apart from awards mentioned above she has also been honoured with many other prestigious awards including Kala Academy Goa State award for *Oli Saanj* (1975), Sahitya Akademi Samsung Tagore Literature for literary excellence at Kochi (2012) and Vimla V Pai Vishwa Konkani Sahitya Puraskar in Mangalore (2014).




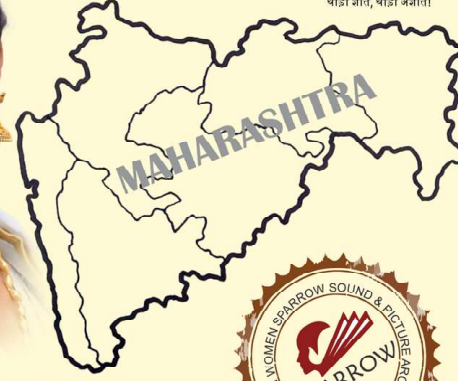

The Rare Gift of Stars!

On the night of the chemo
Sleep is a marriage procession
For others,
In my hands
The rare gift of stars!
I hobnob with them!
Tomorrow I'll hear hymns of the sun
Bathed in warm sunshine
Without being ambushed
With no counter moves
For now
The night of the chemo
Papers of the examination
The food for the hungry
The night and the day!
The battle has begun
Let us see, who checkmates whom!
The body's or nature's wind,
The days are seven, and seven are the chakras!
The night of the chemo
A little known, a bit unknown!

Translated from the Hindi poem "Sitaron ki Saugat"

सितारों की सागात

केमो की रात
नींद की बरात
किमी और के साथ
अपने हाथ
सितारों की सागात!
उमरो हो रही बात- पुलाकान!
कल सुनेंगे सूरज का नात
धूप का गर्म शान
बिना धात, बिन प्रतिधात
फिलचत,
केमो की रात
परिधा के पात
भूषे का भात
रात और श्रात!
शिरी हे ज्य
देखें, बौन देना किसको मात!
तन की सा तिमर की बात
दिन हे सात, चक हे सात!
केमो की रात
भोगी सात, भोगी असात!

Vibha Rani
(Maithili and Hindi)

IN COLLABORATION WITH
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND CULTURE STUDIES
MIZORAM UNIVERSITY



Vibha Rani in conversation with C S Lakshmi


Mumbai-based **Vibha Rani** is a bilingual writer, poet, translator, playwright, film and theatre actor, folk presenter of 'Dahkan' and 'Khissa Kahe Khisni' of two Indian languages – Hindi and Maithili. She is the initiator of 'AVITOKO Room Theatre'. Along with her latest Hindi novel *Kandur Kadahi* (Tandoor Kadhai, 2022), based on the migration of two women from Kashmir and Mithila and an award-winning Maithili novel *Kaniya ek Ghunghruavali* (Dulhan with one Ghungroo, 2022), based on the deep desire of learning dance by a girl from Mithila, she has written thirty-seven books, which includes short story collections, plays, books on folk tales, cancer, satires, translations. Many of her works are compiled in various books and many have been translated into Marathi, Gujarati, Odia, Telugu, Bangla and so on.

She is a veteran Solo Theatre practitioner and doing solo theatre in and around the world. She is a motivational speaker and conducts workshops, lectures and solo theatre classes both on and off line. POSH Enabler, Vibha conducts POSH awareness classes in and around the country. Being a cancer survivor, Vibha recites poems, stages the play on cancer and speaks on it to motivate the people.

Vibha's new entry is into films and so far, she has acted in films *Lal Kaptaan* (Red Captqain, 2019) *Unwanted* (2019), *Monsoon Football* (2019), *Shamshera* (2022), web series *Maharani 1* (2021), *Taaza Khabar* (2023) and TV serial *Eklavya*. Five more of her films and web series are lined up for release in 2023.

She has bagged more than thirty awards for her contribution to literature, theatre and social work.





Unity

These days
When I write
Each poem
Asks me for
Breath
Life
Love
Happiness and
Death




Thus
Emptied
I feel

Evermore close to you.
*Translated from the Nepali poem
"Ekakaar"*

एकाकार

हिजोआज
लेख्दै गर्दा
मलाई
हर कविताले
प्राण माग्छ
जीवन माग्छ
प्रेम माग्छ
खुशी माग्छ अनि
मृत्यु माग्छ

यसरी रित्तिएर
खालीपनमा
म झनै
तिम्रो नजिक हुन्छु।

Sudha Rai
(Nepali)

IN COLLABORATION WITH
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Sudha Rai in conversation with C S Lakshmi

Sudha Rai is a well-known Nepali Poet with national reputation and has been widely translated into many Indian and international languages including English and German. She has participated in national and international poet meets. She has eight books to her credit – four poetry collections, one short story collection and three translations. Her poetry collections include, *Phulko Yowan Phulaisita Jora* (Relate the Freshness of the Flower to the Flower Alone, 1995, published by Kamala Rai), *Wirodhavas* (Dissimilar Reflections, Tika Rahul Gurung, South Sikkim, 2000), *Padhachihna* (Footprints, Aksharam Prakashan, Gangtok, 2007), *Bhumigeet* (Songs of the Earth, Janapaksha Prakashan, Gangtok, 2013). *Samadhanhin Pailaharu* (Faltering Footsteps, Kinar Prakashan, 1999) is her short story collection. Her translation works are: *Timeelai...* (For You, Aksharam Prakashan, Gangtok, 2005), a translation of Khalil Gibran's love letters, *Jarma* (Aksharam Prakashan, Gangtok 2011), a translation of Federico Gabriel Garcia Lorca's immortal play *Yerma* and Bharatiya *Kavitaharu* (Poems of Bharat, Janapaksha Prakashan 2021) a translation of poems from 22 languages. Many awards have come her way. She received the Shrastha Puraskaar in 1999, Bhaichand Pradhan Smriti Puraskaar in 2008, Kamala Aansu Smriti Puraskaar in 2013 and Dr. Shovakanti Thegim (Lepcha) Smriti Puraskaar in 2016. She was also a member of the Language Committee (Nepali) of Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi. She works in the Education Department, Government of Sikkim and lives in Gangtok.



Once a SPARROW decides to fly high, the sky is the limit! The larger and bluer the sky, the better!



"...Tears started rolling down from Swgwmdao's eyes. He hugged the case file and felt as if he found something that he had lost. He became speechless in his excitement. He stammered, "Joys and sorrows are after all, part and parcel of one's life and we should equally share in others' joys and sorrows. We cannot leave the one for the other."

Looking straight at Swgwmdao's eyes, she said to herself, "Yes, it's true, God helps us to find a way out. Self-belief is the key. Then one need not succumb to failure...."

From the Story "The Moon on the Western Horizon", translated from Rita Boro's Bodo story "Swnab fwisalini gwrlwi akhaphwr"



Anjali Daimari
(English)



Anjali Daimari in conversation with C S Lakshmi

Anjali Daimari is a Professor in the Department of English, Gauhati University. She has also been a Visiting Faculty at National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad offering a module on Introduction to Narratives from 2014-2022. She is currently the editor of *English Forum: Journal of the Department of English, Gauhati University* a UGC-CARE listed journal. Her areas of interest are Fiction, African Writing in English, Contemporary South Asian Literature, Life writing, Translation Studies, Writings from India's Northeast and Bodo Life and Literature.

One of her early publications was a book of Bodo short stories that she selected and translated along with Pranab Jyoti Narzary, entitled *Sagan: A Collection of Bodo Short Stories*, (DVS Publishers, Guwahati, 2011, 2013). She has contributed to books and Indian and International journals translations of folk tales and Bodo short stories and essays on a wide range of subjects including post-colonial writings in India's North-East and readings of important writers like Senegalese writer Mariama Ba, Assamese writer Indira Goswami, Nagaland writer Easterine Kire and Arunachal Pradesh writer Mamang Dai.

Her recent journal publications include "Identity and Community in Indian World War 2 Novels" in *Margins, Vol. IX*, 2019-20 with Jaydweep Rabha, "A Parable for Today?: Anthropocentric Reasoning and Pandemic in Sukanya Datta's Short-Story "Modern Neelkanths" in *Dialog: A Bi-Annual Peer-Reviewed Journal*, No.37, Spring, 2021, published by the Department of English and Cultural Studies, Panjab University, Chandigarh (India) with Himashree Swargiary and "Internal Instabilities: Nationalism in the Context of Nagaland with Reference to Select Novels", *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities: Special Issue on Northeast Literature and Culture*, Volume 14, Issue 2, pp. 1-11, April-June 2022.



The Chair

In a room
All Chairs are not empty
All Chairs-
Except for one
In the corner
A silent observer
Waiting to be occupied
No warmth from bodies
That sat not long ago
Waiting Watching
A dizzying haze of extravaganza
Before it.
A Chair-
In the corner
By the fireside
A picture above it
An empty Chair.



Saweini Laloo
(English)



IN COLLABORATION WITH
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"...The desire to be understood is primeval too. It might be forgotten for a while in the euphoria of new love. But it resurfaces like a lost child come home. You can't shut the door. You got to take it in. The tussle then begins.

"And even though body has entwined with body, vows have been whispered into the lover's ears in the throes of unimaginable passion, there's a pang still. One has not felt understood by the lover. And that is a different quality of loneliness. A constant dull hammering. Like a static hum. Dissonance. Ultimately it translates into a plain inability to see the other's view. We shout betrayal. We shift blame. We feel inadequate. When it is just plain inability. So the intimacy has a narrow gap running across, like a rift between two continents, and it's only when you examine it from above that you really see it. You realize that the gap might have the breadth of a hairline, but it is deep. Its darkness stretches all the way down into a free-falling abyss." ...

From the book In the Land of the Lovers-A Punjab Qissa.



Sakoon Singh
(English)



IN COLLABORATION WITH
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Saweini S Laloo is a research scholar and also a poet and a writer. Saweini Laloo was born in Shillong, Meghalaya where she also completed her schooling from Loreto Convent. She graduated with English Honours from St. Xavier's College, Kolkata, and has a Master's degree in the same from the University of Delhi.

Saweini Laloo's poems have been published in Induswomanwriting.com, an online platform, and the Caesurae magazine. She was a guest writer at ED Times in 2017. Currently, she is pursuing research at North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong. She is a member of the North East Writers' Forum and Pyrta Collective. Besides poetry and an occasional short story, Saweini is also passionate about art and music. When the weather is right, she loves spending her time in the great outdoors.

Sakoon Singh teaches Indian literature and cultural studies in Chandigarh. She has published her academic writings extensively, including contribution to *Cultural Studies in India* (Routledge 2015), *Literature and Theory* (Routledge 2021) and *Reading India in a Transnational Era* (Routledge 2021). She has served on the editorial team of *Dialog* and edited a special South Asia section for *E3W Review of Books* (University of Texas, Austin). She was a member of the selection process of *Bal Puraskar, Sahitya Akademi*, New Delhi. 2021.

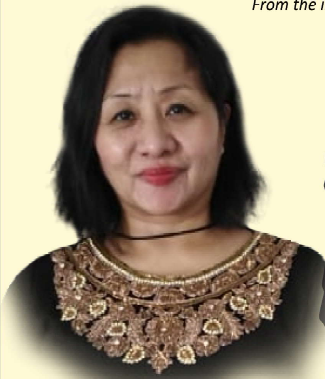
She is currently doing a stint at Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla.

In the Land of the Lovers: A Punjab Qissa (Rupa; April, 2020)- Short listed for PFC-VoW Book awards 2021, is her debut novel.



"...The Mizo society is one where the notion of orality has been inherently noteworthy. Verse and prose as well as other significant forms were intrinsic in a society where there was an absence of the written script and thus the richness of the oral paradigm has been central. While the concept of colonization has been significant, there must be a fundamental comprehension of the fact that the narratives that existed within the precolonial domains were integral towards shaping and formulating arenas that were pertinent to Mizo identity." ...

From the introduction to Folklore from Mizoram



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Margaret L Pachuau
(English)

Margaret Pachuau is a professor and currently the Head of The Department of the Department of English and Culture Studies, Mizoram University. She has several published works to her credit, including Mizo fiction in translation in *The Heart of the Matter* (Katha, 2004), *Handpicked Tales from Mizoram* (2008) and *Folklore from Mizoram* (2013), both of which were published by Writers Workshop, Kolkata. She has also written *The Experience of Expatriation* (2006) and *Construction of Good and Evil in Iris Murdoch's Discourse* (2007), and several articles in literary journals. A keen researcher and translator, she undertook two major research projects on identity and Mizo folk narratives that was sponsored by the University Grants Commission from 2008-2011 and from 2013-2016. She has compiled her findings in two major research projects namely, 'Rewriting Identity: A Discourse on Select Mizo Narratives' and 'Situating Religion and Power in Select Mizo Narratives'. She won the first prize for fiction in translation, in a competition organised by *Muse India* in 2008, for *Lamkhuang* (The Jackfruit Tree), a story in *Handpicked Tales from Mizoram*. Her recent work is *Lockdown Literature from Mizoram* (Writers Workshop, 2020). Her latest book is *Negotiating Culture: Writings from Mizoram* (Bloomsbury, 2023)




Margaret L Pachuau in conversation with C S Lakshmi



VOICES FROM SILENCE
DALIT WOMEN WRITERS' MEET
TO EXPLORE SELF AND
EXPRESSION
WITH INSPIRATION FROM
GURUDEV RABINDRANATH
TAGORE
ADISHAKTI, PONDICHERRY
19TH-23RD APRIL 2012




<https://www.sparrowonline.org/downloads/sn12526.pdf>



Rwjabgri: Sitting upright on horseback, swinging her sword,
Jumping into the battlefield,
I bring the story of that lady.
Listen, listen, O folks
The story of that virago.
Neither Razia Sultana, nor Jhansi ki Rani,
This brave lady is our own
Our own beloved Boro daughter, Thengphakhri.
When the women of this country were made to suffer
By the oppressive laws of *sati*,
Our Thengphakhri became
A tax-collector, a *tehsildar*.

From the play *Thengphakhri Tehsildar*

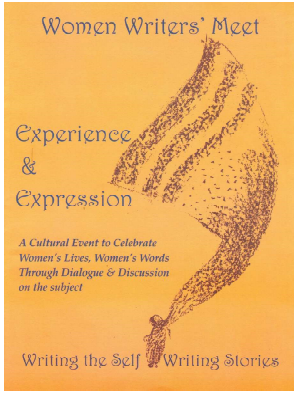
(सारो रोजाबग्लिआ रोरजा दामै-दामै रोजाबदो,
रोजाबग्लि: गरायाव गाखोना, धुंग्रि शिबदावना,
दावहायिलियाव बारसोमईनाय
बै आइजोनि खीरां लाबोदो आं।
खोनासं: खोनासं रायजो-राजाफोर
बै बिर जोहोलावजोनि बाथा।
राजिया सुलताना नज, झानसिनि रानि नज,
बे जोहोलावजोआ जादो जॉनिनो
अंगेनि वर फिस्ता रेंगखि।
सठिनि उदखारि खान्छिआ खालामदोमोन जेव्वा
हादोरनि आइजोफोरखौ लाय लथर,
अव्वा जादोमोन जॉनि थैफखिआ
खजोना खांग्रा तहसिलदार।

Jeetumoni Basumatary
(Bodo)

IN COLLABORATION WITH
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND CULTURE STUDIES
MIZORAM UNIVERSITY

Jeetumoni Basumatary is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English, Cotton University. Before joining Cotton University in 2015, she had taught at the English Department of Ramjas College, Delhi University from 2009 to 2015. She is interested in drama and translation. She has translated two Bodo works into English and has also scripted two plays in Bodo, one of which is a Bodo adaptation of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the other is based on a Bodo legendary woman called Thengphakhri. Translations from Bodo into English are *True Reminiscences of Life and Some Prayers* (2011), English translation of Mongolsingh Hazowary's poetry collection *Jiuni Mwgthang Bisombi Arw Aroj*, and *The Hunt* (2008), an English translation of Dharanidhar Wary's Bodo novella *Mwihoor*. She also has contributed essays, research articles and chapters to various magazines, journals and anthologies, her latest articles being "Colonial Ethnography and the Rhetoric of Bodo Identity" in *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, Vol. 24, Issue - 8, 2022, and "Witnessing the Bodo Identity Movement: A Reading of Mangalsingh Hazowary's Poetry" in *Dialog: A Bi-Annual Peer-Reviewed Journal*, No. 39 Spring, 2022.





Women Writers' Meet

Experience & Expression

A Cultural Event to Celebrate Women's Lives, Women's Words Through Dialogue & Discussion on the subject

Writing the Self | Writing Stories



Jeetumoni Basumatary in conversation with C S Lakshmi



Locomoting Selves (Or, Locomotor Love)

Once in every few days,
We meet.
Share precious breaths,
to last the next few days.
Exchange information and updates,
some vital, others mundane.
And relish the wholesome spread,
savouring (for) each other.
Then head together
for the Metro train;
ticking off stations,
towards transitory detachment,
stirring Us somewhere deep within.
Changing trains to become You and I,
set-apart
until the next meeting,
to become Us, once again.



Kalyanee Rajan
(English)



IN COLLABORATION WITH
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND CULTURE STUDIES
MIZORAM UNIVERSITY

She has translated six short stories of Premchand from Hindi to English, “Dara Shikoh’s Durbar” (translated from Hindustani for the first time ever into English), “The Balance Sheet”, “Atonement”, ‘The Funeral Feast’, ‘A Mother’s Heart’ and ‘Two Sisters’, which were published in *Premchand: The Complete Short Stories* in 4 Volumes, General Editor M. Asaduddin, by Penguin Books, in 2017.

She is a translations reviewer (Tamil to English) with The Sahitya Akademi, Indian National Academy of Letters; and has also recited poetry (in Hindi and English) at their platform. Her poems have been published in *Indian Literature* (Sahitya Akademi’s Bimonthly Journal), *The Journal of The Poetry Society of India*, *KRITYA* (a web journal of poetry), the SPARROW Newsletter, *Muse India-The Literary E-Journal*, *The Wagon Magazine: The International Literary Monthly 2016*, *The Hindu Newspaper*, *Poetry Space - Bristol UK*, and *The Hans of India* (an English daily). She was one of the poets included in *Cuckoo in Crisis: An Anthology of Poems*, Poems by 25 Women Poets edited by Charu Sheel Singh and Binod Mishra (Akhand Publishing House, 2021).

Kalyanee has published several research articles in ISSN journals apart from co-authoring a beginner’s handbook on Translation. Her book-reviews have been published in national and international dailies, journals and periodicals like: *The Asian Age*, *The Pioneer*, *The Wire.in*, *Muse India*, *SETU* Pittsburgh USA, *Confluence UK*, *Indian Literature Journal* of the Sahitya Akademi and *The Book Review Journal*. She serves on the editorial board of literary journals including *Lapis Lazuli- An International Literary Journal* (ISSN: 2249-4529).



Positive change is possible only when we understand women’s lives, history and struggles for self-respect and human dignity.

Kalyanee Rajan teaches English language and Literature at Shaheed Bhagat Singh Evening College, University of Delhi. An educator by passion with more than 13 years of experience, her areas of interest include reading and researching, reviewing books of different genres, writing-reciting poetry in both Hindi and English and, following natural sciences and global politics. She has previously taught at Lady Shri Ram College, Daulat Ram College, Shivaji College and Shri Ram College of Commerce to name a few. Kalyanee is a polyglot, and her areas of research range from Indian Writing in English and in translation, English Language Teaching, Climate Studies and Migration Studies, Women’s writing, and Shakespeare Studies.



"...She saw some dust-laden books that had been kept leaning against a wall and smelt of anti-termite spray, which had been overcome by some brave termites that had started on them. It seemed that it wasn't a godown but a buried historical treasure. She wondered how many histories published by the government at a certain point of time and attempted to be suppressed by the same government or another at a different point of time were contained in the godown...."

"The godown seemed to be a long python that had swallowed everything."

Translated from the Tamil Story "Payanam 21."

...ஊர் ஊர் ஊரில் தூசி படிந்து, கவற்றின் மேல் சாய்ந்து வைத்திருந்த, கறையான அரிக்காமல் இருக்கத் தெளிந்திருந்த மருந்தின் நெடியையும் மீறும் சில கைரியமான கறையான அரிக்கத் தொடங்கியிருந்த புத்தகங்களைப் பார்த்தாள். அது கிடங்கு அல்ல, ஒரு சிந்திரப் புறையல் என்று தோன்றியது. ஒரு காலகட்டத்தில் அரசாங்கம் வெளியிட்டபின் இன்னொரு காலகட்டத்தில் அதே அரசாங்கமே இன்னொரு அரசாங்கமே மறைக்க நினைத்த எத்தனைச் சிந்திரங்கள் அங்கிருக்கும் என்று நினைத்தாள்....

"அந்தணையும் விழுங்கிய மலைப் பாம்பாய் நீண்டு கிடந்தது கிடங்கு"....



Ambai
(Tamil)

IN COLLABORATION WITH
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND CULTURE STUDIES
MIZORAM UNIVERSITY



Ambai in conversation with Kalyanee Rajan

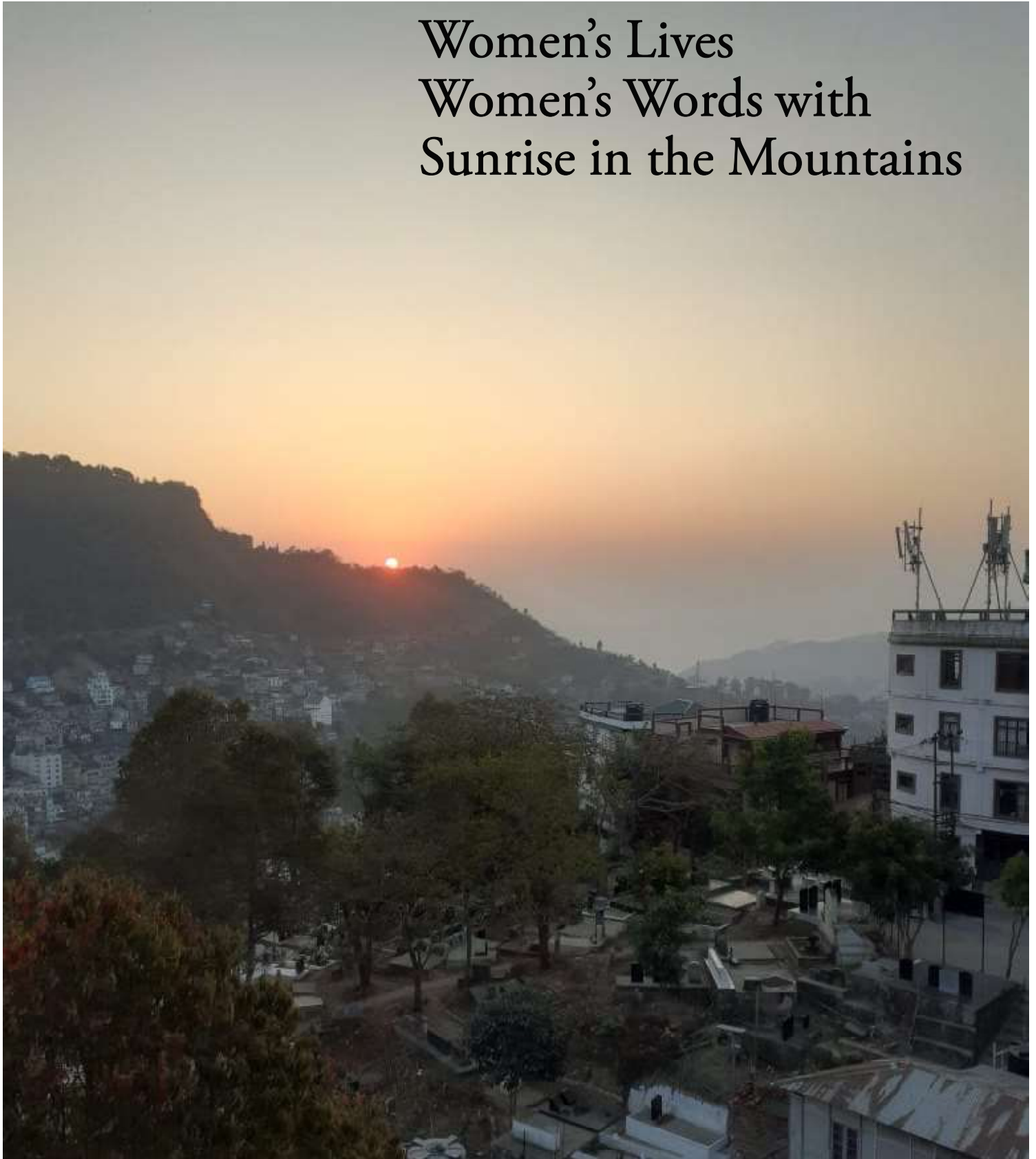
C S Lakshmi has been an independent researcher in Women's Studies for the last forty years. She has a Ph.D from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, and has several books and articles to her credit. She is also a creative writer who writes about love, relationships, quests and journeys in the Tamil region and elsewhere in the pseudonym Ambai.

She has been writing from the age of 16 and is a well-known writer in Tamil. Her stories have been translated in five volumes entitled *A Purple Sea*, *In a Forest*, *a Deer and Fish in a Dwindling Lake*, *A Night with a Black Spider* and *A Meeting on the Andheri Overbridge* The second book *In a Forest*, *a Deer* shared the Hutch-Crossword award 2006, for translated fiction. She received the Pudumaipiththan memorial lifetime achievement award for her contribution to literature from the U S Tamil cultural organisation Vilakku in 2005. She was awarded the Lifetime Literary Achievement Award of Tamil Literary Garden, University of Toronto, Canada, for the year 2008. She was awarded the Kalaigyar Mu. Karunanidhi Porkizi award for fiction awarded by the Booksellers and Publishers' Association of South India in the Chennai book fair, January 2011. The University of Madras awarded her for excellence in literature in the centenary celebrations of the International Women's Day in March 2011. She was given the Sahitya Akademi Award in 2021 for her book *Sivappuk Kazhuththudan Oru Pachaip Paravai*.

She is currently the Director of SPARROW (Sound & Picture Archives for Research on Women). She lives in Mumbai with her filmmaker friend Vishnu Mathur, who also happens to be her husband, in a small third-floor flat with a view of the sea, along with her twenty-six-year old foster daughter Khintu and her two brothers Krishna and Sonu who brighten up her life.



Women's Lives Women's Words with Sunrise in the Mountains



The Women Writers' Meet called Women's Lives, Women's Words was organised by SPARROW in collaboration with the Department of English and Culture Studies, Mizoram University. It was, in the usual style of SPARROW, organised as a cultural event to celebrate women's writing through dialogue and discussion on the theme Life Stories, Stories of life.

The Meet was planned to take place in Aizawl from February 24th to 27th, 2023. The idea of organising the Meet in Aizawl came after an earlier short trip to Mizoram, Meghalaya and Assam in October-November 2022 to conduct a series of interviews with women from all walks of life, for another project. Those interviews could be done only because of the enthusiasm of Professor Grace Sailo, colleague of Professor Kanagaraj Easwaran, Department of Social Work at Mizoram University (whom I had earlier contacted but who could not be there at the time I reached Aizawl), and Chuani, his student, and Dr Margaret Pachuau who had inadvertently got drawn into it but was gracious enough to offer a lot of help. It was while walking on the slippery steep roads of Aizawl in the drizzle and rain, arduously climbing (sometimes on all fours!) many steps to houses and restaurants, and while watching the cloud covered mountains through the window of the hotel R H Inn that the idea of a women writers' meet there had taken root.

Dr Margaret Pachuau, now the HOD of the Department of English and Culture Studies, was enthusiastic about holding it in Aizawl. There was a lot of back and forth on WhatsApp and we arrived at Chaltlang Tourist Lodge as the venue. With Dr Margaret Pachuau at the helm of affairs at the Aizawl end, the various practical aspects of the Meet began to take shape. They were not easy to plan. In the first place Aizawl was not a familiar territory to many including the SPARROW team. We only had photographs of the Chaltlang Tourist Lodge to go by to plan and design the posters and organise the sessions. But the SPARROW team was willing to take the plunge.

The SPARROW team jumped into the fray and invitations were sent to writers, poets, researchers

and performers to participate in the Meet. All of them were writers who had not participated in the previous Meets (which we like to call camps) of SPARROW. Furious reading, marking and translations began and what we thought would be a quiet stream became the Tlawng river of Aizawl in full spate. We were reading the already translated works of some thirty writers, translating some and choosing texts to be read at the Meet. While we thoroughly enjoyed it, it meant many sleepless nights. 24 writers attended the Meet.

While designing the posters and banners alongside all the other work, we had the mountains in our minds and we thought of making them as big as possible. Everything had to be planned in big sizes but easy to transport in a flight to Aizawl. We approached Vasamalli, the Toda researcher and writer in Ooty asking her if her women's group could make bags with Toda embroidery to be given as gifts to the participants at an affordable price. She agreed and soon a huge cardboard carton full of bags arrived. We thought our banners were huge until we reached Chaltlang Tourist Lodge. (How we carried all the banners, standees, brochures, bags for writers and books, and how we planned the various groups to take the flight from different places and how we managed to get an exemption for the Inner Line Permit is a different story altogether.) The Chaltlang Tourist Lodge had a vast space and our banners looked quite small when hung from all kinds of strategic locations we chose. In any case, anything would have looked small in front of those huge mountains that surrounded us. Standing before those mountains is a humbling experience.

The image we chose for the Meet was an installation by Rohini Mani which she had done for the recent Book Fair in Chennai, which she kindly allowed us to use. It was a papier mâché portrait of a woman seated on a lotus. Normally it is goddess Lakshmi or goddess Saraswathi that we see seated on a lotus. But the figure on the lotus was a woman. Ambai (C S Lakshmi) the Tamil writer, called this installation Against the Wind. Her explanation of the installation was: "When women are placed in the public sphere as sculptural installations or paintings, from the dress, jewellery, the captured moment of their activity (going to temple, basket weaving, cooking, stringing beads, reading

WRITERS' MEET



SPARROW Banners and Standees at Chaltlang Tourist Lodge



SPARROW Banners at Chaltlang Tourist Lodge

books, being with a pen and paper or computer and similar activities) one can identify who the woman is. But the installation of Rohini Mani defies all such efforts at defining; it shatters identities. This nude papier mâché portrait in a way symbolises fragility but her wind-blown short hair and her manner of sitting counters it saying she is not going to give up easily! She is not any one individual. All of us come together and become her!"

We thought nothing could define the Meet better than this image of the woman facing the wind. So, this became our image for the banners and brochure.

When writers began to arrive in buses travelling through the rocky mountain paths with waterfalls, banana trees and deep gorges with small shops on the way with women selling bamboo shoots and other vegetables, they looked tired but the standees and the banners revived them and soon instead of going to their assigned rooms they were busy taking photographs standing before the banners. Suddenly the otherwise quiet Chaltlang Tourist Lodge was filled with chatter and loud laughter.

With Dr Margaret Pachau quietly organising the vehicles for pick-ups and her enthusiastic student volunteers, we got all set for the Meet. During the four days that followed, there were conversations with writers, readings, performances by S S Kalairani from Chennai and Vibha Rani from Mumbai and Hot Chocolate Sessions (where we really served Hot Chocolate with chocolate powder brought from Mumbai as Aizawl did not seem to have a stock of Hot Chocolate powder tins) where we discussed various topics. R V Ramani with his assistant Sarbuddin Mohamed were covering the entire event on video. Sarbuddin who came as a quiet, shy person came out of his shell and was soon posing for photographs with different writers. Samuel Zohminthanga, who brought the projector and took care of the mikes and speakers, revealed he was a singer and belted out a song for us on the last day. Some of the other writers too did some impromptu singing and dancing for us. The surprise item on the last day was the SPARROW team giving a dance performance that they had secretly rehearsed and there were loud cries when they showed up in costumes. We screened R V Ramani's national award-

winning documentary *Oh, That is Bhanu* on one of the evenings and it was hugely appreciated.

With exuberance and joy, we discussed and argued during tea, soup, lunch and dinner breaks and the four days literally flew past us. A few of us did fall sick but recovered soon to participate and perform. When it was time to go all of us had lumps in our throats and promised ourselves, we would keep in touch and meet every year. The return bus trip of the last group of 21 people to the airport turned out to be the longest one we have ever known—it took four hours! There was a road block of sorts as construction work was going on to repair roads, because of the G-20 Meet from 1st to 3rd March, 2023. (Why they chose to have G-20 in Aizawl like we had, is something we need to find out!) The bus driver chose a circuitous mountain road and we were panicking thinking we were going to miss the flight. And right in the middle of all that a writer said she just had to "go" and to stop the bus for five minutes near some bush! The driver chose a secluded spot in the jungle and lit a cigarette knowing this will take more than five minutes as others too got down. Finally, we made it to the airport and Bindu Bhatt who had an earlier flight ran inside and the others followed her. Finally, all of us were in the flight carrying with us memories of the Meet and the view of the mountains during different times of the day. The mountains at night had looked dark and huge but beautiful and protective with lights of some heavy weight trucks on the mountain roads glittering here and there and the same mountains during the day when the clouds covered them and moved away revealing them had looked as if they were in a hide and seek game. We had seen hard working women keeping the Chaltlang Tourist Lodge clean, managing the administration and helping us in the best way possible in a place where things were not easy to order and get. In the final group photo, all of them joined us and later hugged us and wished us well telling us to come back again. Sitting in the flight we thought maybe we should come back for another Meet!





ARRIVAL STORIES

Kolkata Airport became the meeting hub for all the writers from different states with SPARROW Team!

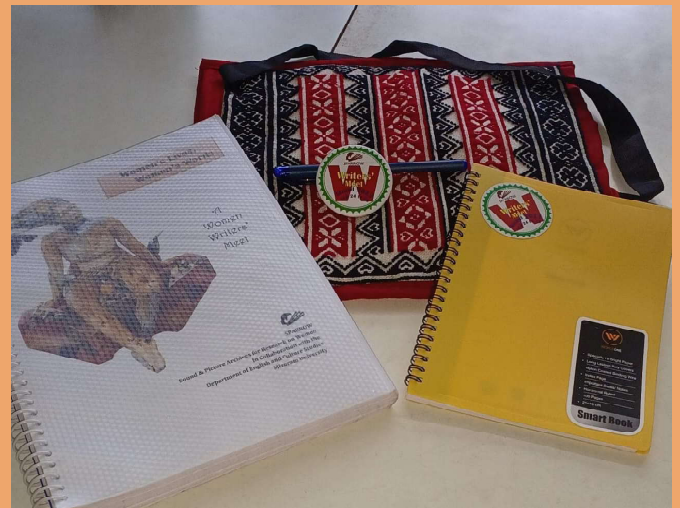


Bus travelling through the rocky mountain paths with waterfalls, banana trees and deep gorges with small shops on the way with women selling bamboo shoots and other vegetables,





Welcome address by C S Lakshmi



Toda embroidery bags from the Toda Women's Group of Vasamalli in Ooty, and reading material for the participants.



Inauguration of the Meet with music. Group songs by students of the Department of English and Culture Studies, Mizoram University



Informal launch by C S Lakshmi of Margaret Pachuau's recent book *Negotiating Culture: Writings from Mizoram* (Bloomsbury, 2023). First copy to SPARROW.





G P Kusuma in conversation with C S Lakshmi



Aruna Dhere in conversation with C S Lakshmi



Sakoon Singh in conversation with Charanjeet Kaur



Charanjeet Kaur in conversation with C S Lakshmi



Saweini Laloo in conversation with Charanjeet Kaur



K Vasamalli in conversation with C S Lakshmi



Malsawmi Jacob in conversation with C S Lakshmi



Anita V L Nunmawii in conversation with Margaret L Pachuau



Kalyanee Rajan in conversation with Charanjeet Kaur



Deepinder in conversation with Charanjeet Kaur



Sarah Aineh in conversation with Malsawmi Jacob

CONVERSATIONS
THEME: LIVED LIVES AND WORDS

WRITERS' MEET



Chitra Desai



Anita Agnihotri



Vimmi Sadarangani



Anju Basumatary



Sarah Aineh



K Vasamalli



Sudha Rai



Anita V I Nunmawii



Sheela Kolambkar



Vibha Rani



Anjali Daimari



G P Kusuma

**THEME: LIFE, EXPERIENCE, THOUGHTS AND EXPRESSION READING
POEMS, SONGS AND EXCERPTS FROM STORIES**



Deepinder



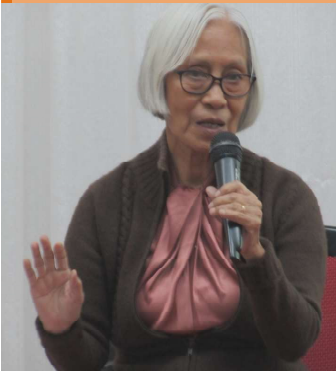
Saweini Laloo



Bindu Bhatt



Jeetumoni Basumatary



Malsawmi Jacob



Margaret L Pachuau



Aruna Dhere



Sakoon Singh



Kalyanee Rajan



Kalairaani

**THEME: LIFE, EXPERIENCE, THOUGHTS AND EXPRESSION
READING POEMS, SONGS AND EXCERPTS FROM STORIES**

**THEME: LIFE, EXPERIENCE, THOUGHTS AND EXPRESSION
SOLO PERFORMANCE BY KALAIRAANI**



VARUGALAMO..? (MAY I COME..?)

Based on an early 19th century literary and poetic work by Gopalakrishnan Bharathi, the solo act draws inspiration from the core of the self-struggle of Nandanar, a male ascetic enslaved by the oppressive conditioning he suffered by virtue of his birth in a lowered caste group that stood in the way of him reaching God.

The collective experience of generations of women under siege of cultural and social oppression parallels the suffering of lowered caste groups when it comes to reaching God—made inaccessible to all by superstition and religious doctrines.

Nandanar's struggle as expressed from a woman's perspective gives a completely new dimension when combined with song, contemporary body language and theatre—creating a transcending and visceral experience.

Solo performance of *Varugalamo*, a Tamil play on Nandanar, a Nayanar saint, by S S Kaliaraani.

**THEME: LIFE, EXPERIENCE, THOUGHTS AND EXPRESSION
SOLO PERFORMANCE BY VIBHA RANI****Solo performance of play on cancer called Popcorn Breasts! by Vibha Rani**

The play 'Popcorn Breasts!' is a tool to create awareness towards Breast cancer. Based on the cancer experiences of the author, poet, theatre and film actor Vibha Rani, the play deals with this subject through unfolding its essential aspects, precautions, treatment process, chemo, radiation etc with loud humour and satire rather than wasteful preaching. 'Popcorn Breasts!' play had been written as a full-length play (80 minutes) and had several shows in India. At the request of SPARROW, the play has not been shortened, but written in a new form with less duration. Being a cancer survivor, Vibha Rani hopes that our audience will not only enjoy the play, but will get to know how to handle the situation with courage, patience and smile, if it ever arises.

HOT CHOCOLATE SESSION THEME FOR DISCUSSION: FOLK STORIES, FOLK LEGENDS AND IDENTITIES



L to R.: Deepinder, Sheela Kolambkar, Anita Agnihotri and Vimmi Sadarangani with the participants



C S Lakshmi with the participants



Vimmi Sadarangani with the participants

HOT CHOCOLATE SESSION ARE LIFE STORIES OF WOMEN A VALID SOURCE OF SOCIAL HISTORY?



Sheela Kolambkar with the participants



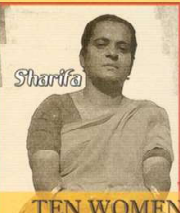
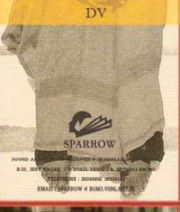
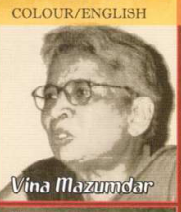
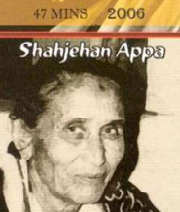
Anjali Daimari with the participants



Chitra Desai & Sakoon Singh with the participants

SCREENINGS & DISCUSSIONS

A film covering the themes of the ten films made on women's scholarship and action for the Global Feminisms project in collaboration with the University of Michigan.

 Neera Desai	 Sharifa	 Flavia Agnes	 Mahasweta Devi
TEN WOMEN, TEN LIVES, TEN CONCERNS			
DV		COLOUR/ENGLISH	
47 MINS		2006	
 Lata P M	 Vina Mazumdar	 Mangai	 Shahjehan Appa
 Jarjum Ete	 Thokchom Romani Devi		
CREDITS CAMERA: Avijit Mukul Kishore SOUND: Subhashis Roy		EDITING: Swarnima Sinha PRODUCED BY: C's Lakshmi, SPARROW DIRECTED BY: Vishnu Mathur	

Screening of SPARROW film
Ten Women, Ten Lives, Ten Concerns



Screening

SCREENINGS & DISCUSSIONS



Screening Of The
Film *Oh, That's Bhanu*
Producer, Director, Cinematographer,
Editor: R V Ramani



R V Ramani in
discussion with the
participants

DISTRIBUTION OF SOUVENIRS TO THE WRITERS



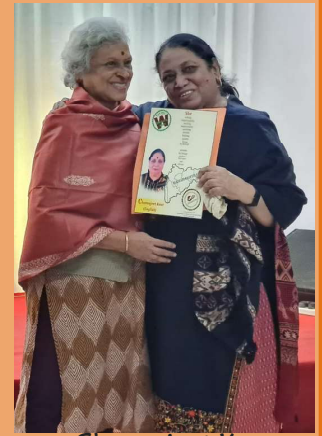
Anita Agnihotri



Anjali Daimari



Maisawmi Jacob



Charanjeet Kaur



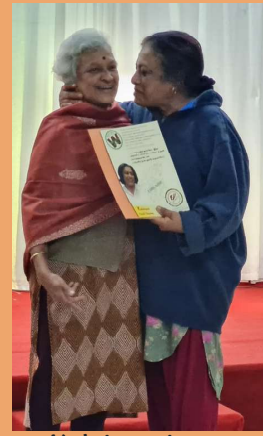
Jeetumoni
Basumatary



Anju Basumatry



Kalyanee Rajan



Kalairani



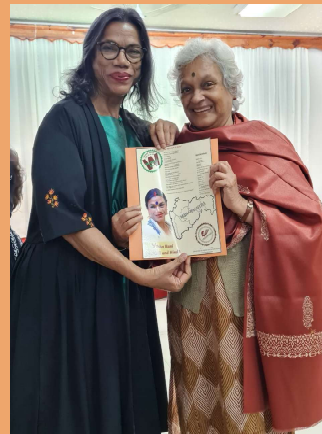
Margaret L Pachua



K Vasamalli



Aruna Dhere



Vibha Rani



Sakoon Singh

SONG AND DANCE AND FUN



Bodo Dance by Anjali Daimari, Anju Basumatary, Jeetumoni Basumatary and Vibha Raani.



Garba dance by Bindu Bhatt



Group Dance by SPARROW Team



Writers enjoying garba dance



Group Dance by SPARROW Team

TRIP TO SOLOMON'S TEMPLE



Bus Ride



Selfie!



Ready to pose 😊



Group Photo

GROUP PHOTO TOH BANTA HAI!



Last day - Group Photo



Farewell Group Photo

SPARROW WILL BE
RELEASING THE
FILM BASED ON THE
WRITERS' MEET
HELD IN AIZAWL IN
FEBRUARY 2023
CALLED

'LIFE STORIES,
STORIES OF LIFE,
WITH SUNRISE IN
THE MOUNTAINS'

ON 24TH FEBRUARY
2024.

FURTHER DETAILS
WILL BE SHARED
SOON

*HAPPY
TO
SHARE*

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BRANCH: New Delhi Main Branch

FCRA Account number:

FCRA Current A/C NO: 40267768469

IFSC: SBIN0000691

SWIFT: SBININBB104

Bank code: 00691

MICR Code: 110002087

Address: FCRA Cell, 4th Floor, State Bank of India.
11, Sansad Marg, New Delhi 110001

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Phone: 022 2828 0895, 2896 5019

E-mail: sparrow1988@gmail.com
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