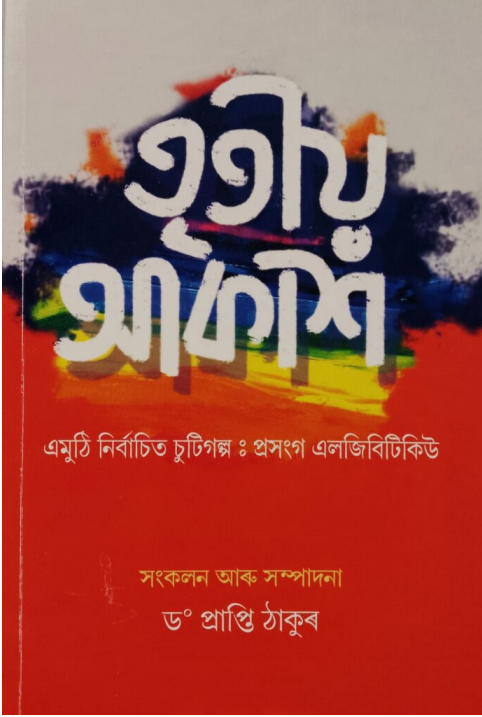


A Fresh Perspective on Queer Studies in Assamese: 'Tritiya Akash'



"Tritiya Akash," translating to "the third sky," is more than just a title; it represents a bold venture into uncharted territories. Dr. Prapti Thakur compiled and edited this anthology of short stories in Assamese, delving deep into the lives, struggles, psychology, and obstacles faced by the queer community. While Queer studies are gaining traction in various writer and researcher communities, this anthology stands out for several reasons. In Assam, Queer studies in the academic field and other creative pursuits are in the infant stage. Unlike most academic institutions that confine their publications to the prescribed syllabus, our educational institution has dared to publish such a book as part of our academic endeavour. Additionally, this anthology challenged the prevailing norms by openly discussing a taboo topic for many.

It's noteworthy that Sarupathar College isn't nestled in the bustling city but rather situated in upper Assam, distanced from the state's intellectual hub. Dr. Prapti Thakur, the college's principal, deserves commendation for advocating such a radical academic approach.

This anthology comprises thirty-one short stories penned by writers from across the state, spanning various age groups. However, it's noticeable that only two senior writers contributed: Sneha Devi (1916-1990) and Dr. Gobinda Prasad Sarma. Sneha Devi, primarily a homemaker, wasn't extensively involved in literary social circles. Hence, witnessing her empathy toward such a significant topic is surprising and heartbreaking, especially amidst limited discussions. On the other hand, Dr. Gobinda Prasad Sarma, a former Professor of Guwahati University, known for his scholarly creative works and openness, bravely tackled the social taboo by addressing the theme of lesbians in his story. While the other writers explore diverse themes and social issues, delving into such a topic is not unusual for them. Not all stories have high literary standards, yet they should be applauded for their theme and creative openness.

Dr. Pori Hiloidari contributed a comprehensive critical preface, dissecting the short stories' thematic and structural nuances. This preface serves as a guiding light for writers, enabling them to grasp the theme's essence and craft more impactful narratives from varied social perspectives.



This collection has sparked numerous questions, prompting us

to seek insights from the Editor and the college's principal, Dr. Prapti Thakur.

What inspired you to edit and publish this anthology?

The inspiration behind curating this anthology stemmed from the recognition that queer subjects, despite being incorporated into the English literature curriculum of Delhi University, remain largely unaddressed within the Assamese literary syllabus. Consequently, this project aims to bring these narratives to the forefront, fostering a broader discourse on queer representation within the academic landscape.

Considering that the Queer subject may not be part of your college syllabus, how do you anticipate this collection contributing to academic discourse?

Although the queer subject matter may not currently be a part of the prescribed college syllabus, this collection holds the potential to enlighten our students about the diverse content of Assamese short stories. The content of this anthology is socially significant, and I think our students will become aware of a social issue that is still regarded as taboo. From an academic point of view, it can be said that presenting a diverse array of narratives that explore queer experiences prompts critical engagement and encourages intellectual inquiry into the multifaceted dimensions of gender and sexuality in the Assamese context. This anthology provokes scholarly discussions, challenging existing paradigms and enriching the philosophical landscape.

How have your colleagues and students responded to this anthology?

The reception of this anthology among colleagues and students has been overwhelmingly positive. They were very enthusiastic from its inception as they felt that our college would do something radical. Without the support of my colleagues, it

would not have been possible to publish a book on such a topic from an educational institute.

Could you share the reactions of both readers and writers to the collection?

The reactions from both readers and writers have been equally commendable. During the anthology's release on January 7th, 2023, in the presence of several esteemed writers, noted gender activists, and readers, the project garnered widespread acclaim and appreciation for its significance in amplifying marginalised voices and promoting inclusivity within the literary norm from an academic institution.

Were there any obstacles encountered during the production process?

Remarkably, the production process was devoid of any substantial obstacles. All the writers participated in the project with excellent support for the cause. Dr. Pori Hiloidari, a leading literary critic of the state, wrote the anthology's preface at my request. I am sure this preface will stand as a significant work in Queer studies in the Assamese language.

What are your plans regarding publishing books on this topic and others?

Our Sarupathar College is very excited to publish more books on this queer topic and other important, socially significant, and literary themes. We are committed and determined to work on projects that benefit our students' community and society.

“The 1st Issue: Innovative Storytelling Journey”



Biswajit Das, a filmmaker who has not only revolutionised storytelling in the film industry, mostly documentary films, but also continues to make a profound impact on the creative community. His film ‘March’ a testament to his innovative style, captivated audiences and earned him the prestigious Best Director award at the Chalachitram National Film Festival. This recognition is not just a testament to the power of his unique approach, but also a source of inspiration for all of us in the creative community.



Biswajit Das’s latest venture, ‘The First Issue, March 24,’ is not just a monthly publication, but a groundbreaking platform that breaks new ground in storytelling. This innovative magazine is a treasure trove of one-page graphic stories, with the first issue boasting twenty-seven tales that span a diverse spectrum of themes and tones. From heartwarming to thought-provoking, there’s something unique and intriguing to pique the interest of every reader.

Within graphic fiction, visual designs play a pivotal role in shaping the narrative experience. The illustrations’ content, design elements, placement, and skilful use of various tones

all contribute to developing and enhancing the central theme and narrative pattern. Biswajit Das curated a selection of one-page stories for the magazine, allowing readers to immerse themselves in a dynamic interplay of words and visuals. This unique approach to storytelling promises to take the reader on a journey like no other.



While most of the stories seamlessly blend graphics and narratives, creating a harmonious synergy, some stories in the magazine embrace a more poetic form, transcending traditional storytelling conventions. Additionally, the publication features an Assamese tale, adding a touch of linguistic diversity to its pages.

However, there are a few areas that could benefit from further

refinement. The typography could be more prominent and visually appealing in specific stories, enhancing the reading experience. Moreover, the author's names could be displayed more prominently, ensuring due recognition for their contributions.

'The First Issue, March 24' is not just a milestone for Biswajit Das but also a testament to the collaborative spirit and unity of the creative community. This groundbreaking project has brought together the talents of Hrishitnoy Dutta, Bulbul Das, Raghu Sinha, and Biswadeep, each contributing their unique artistic and creative expertise to the magazine's diverse content. Their collective efforts have truly made this magazine a masterpiece, reflecting the strength and unity of our creative community.

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राष्ट्रीय नाट्य विद्यालय
NATIONAL SCHOOL OF DRAMA
(An Autonomous Institution of the Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India)

Final Year Diploma Production



Ministry of Culture
Government of India

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Written By Alice Birch
Hindi Translation - Mitesh Gupta
Scenography & Direction - HrituRekha Nath

On Stage

Priyadarshini Puja, Anjali Negi, Mrinali Pandey, Shivani Verma,
Arpana Kapoor, Manoj Yadav, Puneet Nanda, Amogh Shakya, Deepak Yadav,
Prarthana Chettri, Mallika Lokhande

19th March 2024, 4 P.M. & 7 P.M.
ABHIMANCH AUDITORIUM
NSD CAMPUS, BAHAWALPUR HOUSE, NEW DELHI - 110001

सीमित सीटें। निःशुल्क प्रवेश, प्रवेश पत्र प्रदर्शन के दिन रा०ना०वि० के स्वागत कक्ष से प्रदर्शन से दो घंटे पूर्व प्राप्त किये जा सकते हैं। प्रवेश पहले आओ पहले पाओ के आधार पर होगा।
पूछताछ : 011-23389402 / 23031120 / 21 / 25

(संस्कृत नाट्य विद्यालय, राष्ट्रीय नाट्य विद्यालय, नई दिल्ली)

World's largest literature festival concludes



Einstein World Records gives certificate of achievement

The last day was dedicated to the differently abled writers

More than 850 children of Delhi NCR More took part in the programme 'Aao Kahani Bune'

New Delhi, 16 March 2024: The Festival of Letters 2024, which is being organized by Sahitya Akademi as the world's largest literature festival, concluded today. The last day of this six-day festival was dedicated to differently abled writers. To provide national platform to differently abled writers All India Differently Abled Writers' Meet was organized. To awaken interest in literature among children many competitions were

organized for more than 850 children at the programme 'Aao Kahani Bune'. Today's other important programmes included "Symposium on the Life and Works of Gopi Chand Narang", "Translation in a Multilingual, Multicultural Society", "Preservation of Indian Languages", "Translation as Rewriting/re-creation in the Indian Context", "Indian English Writing and Translation". Apart from this, the ongoing national seminars on "Indian Oral Epics" and "Post-Independence Indian Literature" also concluded.

Considering this six-day festival as the world's biggest literary festival, today the team of Einstein World Records, Dubai, presented the certificate of a world record in ceremoniously to Sri Madhav Kaushik, Prof. Kumud Sharma and Dr. K. Sreenivasarao, respectively President, Vice President and Secretary, Sahitya Akademi. The certificate mentions the participation of more than 1100 writers in 190 sessions in this world's largest literature festival that lasted six days and over 175 languages were represented. Delivering the inaugural address at the inaugural session of the All India Differently Abled Writers' Meet, renowned English scholar Prof. G.J.V. Prasad said that we have to work with awareness and affection in connection with the differently abled. Disability is not congenital but many times we acquire it due to our own ignorance and carelessness. He requested all the differently abled writers to identify their special abilities and work on them, they must achieve their destination. In her presidential address, Vice President of Sahitya Akademi, Prof. Kumud Sharma, while discussing the achievements of the differently abled people in various fields, said that the differently abled people will have to move forward with the energy and courage, only then they will be able to achieve their desired destination.

At the beginning of the inaugural session, Sahitya Akademi Secretary Dr. K. Sreenivasarao while giving the welcome address said that Sahitya Akademi is feeling proud to have differently abled writers from 24 Indian languages present here today. Remembering the great writer and critic Gopichand

Narang, a symposium was organized on his literary contribution. The chief guests of which were Sri Gulzar and Narang ji's wife Manorama Narang. Sri Gulzar in his inaugural address said that the personality and work of Gopi Chand Narang is a beautiful combination of his talent and greatness. The key-note was given by the eminent Urdu scholar Nizam Siddiqui. Sadiqur Rahman Kidwai delivered his speech as the special guest. Sahitya Akademi President Madhav Kaushik presided over. Introductory remarks were made by Sri Chandra Bhan Khayal, Convener of the Urdu Advisory Board. Important writers and scholars who participated in these programmes were – Harish Narang, Damodar Khadse, Anvita Abbi, Rita Kothari, K. Enoch, Debashish Chatterjee, Udaya Narayana Singh, Mamang Dai, Sukrita Paul Kumar, Shafe Kidwai, Shamim Tariq.

(K. Sreenivasarao)

Voicing Gender Fluidity

Maharashtra Sanskritik Sandhya at IIC

A review by **Manohar Khushalani** First Published in IIC Diary



Maharashtra Sanskritik Sandhya, is an annual feature at IIC. This year, they presented dramatized readings, *Beyond Gender*, on LGBTQ communities, from two plays: **Satish Alekar's 'Begum Barve'** & **Mahesh Dattani's 'Seven Steps Around the Fire'**. It was brilliantly and imaginatively directed by **Sohaila Kapur**, who has a knack for choosing very powerful and relevant themes. Six actors read the two plays. The event began with a mesmerising dance by Kaustav Ghosh, doing the role of Begum Barve, the female impersonator. The performance was also interspersed with carefully curated soulful marathi music played in the background.

Begum Barve, the Marathi musical, features a quartet of characters: Begum Barve, an exploitative employer, Shyamrao, and two clerks, Jawdekar and Bawdekar, who, trapped in a life of penury and prejudice, use their caprices as an escape from it. In the selected excerpt for performance, Begum Barve and Jawdekar celebrate a fictitious pregnancy during a baby shower, helping Barve to fantasize that (s)he could conceive. The scene ends in his humiliation, **Shyamrao** strips **Barve** off his fantasy and robes and scorning his manhood. The script explores the intertwining of fantasies and reality through the creation of a female fantasy character, Nalawadebai, bridging the impersonator's male identity and the clerk's desire for a traditional family life. This complex narrative challenge's conventional storytelling, weaving a tapestry of gendered social meanings and re-evaluating contemporary perceptions of womanhood.



Seven Steps Around the Fire, depicts the miserable plight of eunuchs who make a living performing at marriages and child births. A eunuch is murdered at her wedding. Her friend, Anarkali, is arrested without proof by the SP, Suresh Rao. His wife Uma, a journalist, who is also the daughter of the DCP, decides to catch the culprit through investigative reporting. The performance was just an excerpt where Uma is interviewing the imprisoned Anarkali.

Although the murderer is known, the police traps Anarkali to protect the actual criminal who is a powerful person. The subaltern hijaras are too scared to speak. Anarkali says, "They will kill me even if I tell the truth. If I don't tell the truth, I will die in jail." The dramatist shows how the murder of Kamla has terrified other hijaras that they cannot reveal the truth and cannot get justice for the dead soul. Anarkali says, "One hijra less in this world does not matter to your husband.". In self-defense, Anarkali reminds Uma, that she treated the deceased Kamla as her sister. Uma realises the bond of love among the hijaras is even greater, because they are isolated from society.

The event was introduced by Suhas Borkar, Trustee IIC. It was concluded rather dramatically by Kaushal Kumar, a fine arts university professor with an intriguing body painting improvisation involving audience participation.

Voicing Gender Fluidity

PERFORMANCE: Maharashtra Sanskritik Sandhya

DRAMATISED READINGS: *Beyond Gender—Extracts (in Hindi and English) from Satish Alekar's Begum Barve and Mahesh Dattani's Seven Steps Around the Fire*

PRESENTED BY: Three Arts Club and Katyayani

SOLO PERFORMANCE: *Human Spirit—by Kaushal Kumar*

COLLABORATION: Maharashtra Sanskritikani Rannaniti Adhyayan Samiti

23 September 2023

‘Maharashtra Sanskritik Sandhya’, an annual feature, comprised dramatised readings, ‘Beyond Gender’, on LGBTQ communities from two plays—Satish Alekar’s *Begum Barve* and Mahesh Dattani’s *Seven Steps Around the Fire*. They were directed and produced by Sohaila Kapur and Anuradha Dar, respectively.

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a fictitious pregnancy during a baby shower, helping Barve to fantasise that (s)he could conceive. The scene ends in his humiliation; Shyamrao strips Barve of his fantasy and robes, scorning his manhood. The creation of a female fantasy character, Nalawadebai, bridges the impersonator’s male identity and the clerk’s desire for a traditional family life. This complex narrative challenges conventional storytelling, weaving a tapestry of gendered social meanings and re-evaluating contemporary perceptions of womanhood.

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The evening concluded dramatically with Kaushal Kumar’s intriguing body painting improvisation involving audience participation.

■ MANOHAR KHUSHALANI



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“你为什么要穿这件衣服？”
“因为它很漂亮，而且很轻。”
“你为什么要戴那顶帽子？”
“因为它可以防晒，而且很可爱。”

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Every Human is an artist

Every human is an artist, a storyteller with a unique point of view.

When we see ourselves as artists, we no longer feel the need to impose our views on others or to defend what we believe.

We know that every artist has the right to create his/her own art, their own story.

–Don Miguel Ruiz

This is a great message from our very own contemporary Toltec Mexican shaman, Don Miguel Ruiz. So often, we get carried away with our own stories. Stories of how miserable, sick, pissed we are, what a rotten world this is, etc. Or, more violently, stories of our own religion, region, nationality, sexuality, that we try to impose on others—or else, I'll shoot you?

–Raj Ayyar

Beastly Tales: Animal and Human Fables



Naseeruddin Shah and Ratna Pathak Shah performing in *Beastly Tales*

Beastly Tales : Animal and Human Fables

A review by Manohar Khushalani

READINGS: Beastly Tales

Poems by Vikram Seth with Stories by James Thurber

Presented by Motley

Recitations by Naseeruddin Shah;

Ratna Pathak Shah; Heeba Shah; and Kenny Desai

Produced by Jairaj Patil

17 November 2022

Beastly Tales was billed as readings by the well-known performers, Naseeruddin Shah, Ratna Pathak Shah, Heeba Shah and Kenny Desai. Produced by Jairaj Patil for Motley, the heavily attended event included poems by Vikram Seth, from his book '*Beastly Tales with stories by James Thurber*', TS Eliot's poems from '*Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*' and Robert

Browning's Legendary poem 'Pied Piper of Hamelin'. The starkly designed presentation had no bells and whistles. Led by Naseeruddin Shah, the four performers stood behind their individual lecterns and read out the poems with a flair and perfect diction. Each one read their own piece individually and sometimes, in perfect synchronisation, in a chorus.

Spiced with humour, the content of the performance was deftly curated to reflect idiosyncrasies of contemporary times with follies and foibles of its people juxtaposed against an animal world which reminds you eerily of 'Fables of Aesop' and 'Panchatantra'. The animals were near human too, but unlike the complexities we fallible folks suffer from, the cat, the lion, the tiger, the elephant, the owl were more focussed with a single idiosyncrasy each. This curious fact, along with the pulsating rhythm of the poetry delivered with a punch and an aplomb by the actors brought out the message of each piece with precision.

Let's pick a few stanzas from here and there and see for ourselves the merriness of the mirth involved.

The Tortoise, in Vikram Seth's poem, initially maintained the original story with who won the race thus:

"And the cheering of the crowd
Died at last, the tortoise bowed,
And he thought: "That silly hare!
So much for her charm and flair.
Now she'll learn that sure and slow
Is the only way to go –
That you can't rise to the top
With a skip, a jump, a hop"

But here comes the twist in Seth's version, it is in fact the hare, who became the hero of the hour:

But it was in fact the hare,
With a calm insouciant air

Like an unrepentant bounder,
 Who allured the pressmen round her.
 “And Will Wolf, the great press lord
 Filled a Gold cup – on a whim –
 And with an inviting grin
 Murmured: “In my eyes you win.”

Each of the selections had interesting, and sometimes mind blowing twists and turns, that be made you realise that, as in real life, in these fairy tales too you cannot take a happy ending for granted
 First Published in IIC Diary Nov-Dec 2022

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Animal and Human Fables

READINGS: *Beastly Tales*

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 Presented by Motley

Recitations by Naseeruddin Shah;
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जनवरी - मार्च 2022

शब्दायतन

शब्द से संवाद



मूल्य - ₹50

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“ඔබට ඔබ ඔබ ඔබට?”

“ඔබ ඔබ්බෙන් ඔබ,” ඔබ ඔබ ඔබ ඔබ්බෙන් ඔබ ඔබ ඔබට ඔබට ඔබ-ඔබට ඔබ ඔබ්බෙන් ඔබ්බෙන් ඔබ ඔබ ඔබ ඔබ ඔබ ඔබ. ඔබ්බෙන් ඔබ ඔබ ඔබ ඔබ ඔබ ඔබ, “ඔබ්බෙන් ඔබ ඔබ ඔබ ඔබ්බෙන් ඔබ ඔබට ඔබට?” ඔබ ඔබට ඔබට ඔබ ඔබ ඔබට ඔබට ඔබට, ඔබට ඔබ්බෙන් ඔබ! ඔබට ඔබ්බෙන් ඔබ්බෙන් ඔබ්බෙන් ඔබට ඔබට ඔබ ඔබ ඔබ.

“ඔබ ඔබ ඔබට ඔබ ඔබට ඔබ. ඔබට ඔබට ඔබ ඔබ ඔබ, ඔබ්බෙන් ඔබ්බෙන් ඔබ ඔබ්බෙන් ඔබ්බෙන් ඔබ ඔබ, ඔබ ඔබ ඔබ්බෙන් ඔබ ඔබ!”

“ඔබට ඔබට ඔබ්බෙන් ඔබ ඔබට-ඔබට ඔබ ඔබ්බෙන් ඔබ ඔබ ඔබ? ඔබ්බෙන් ඔබ ඔබ ඔබ්බෙන් ඔබ ඔබ ඔබ ඔබ්බෙන් ඔබ ඔබ ඔබට!”

“ඔබ ඔබ ඔබ්බෙන් ඔබ ඔබ ඔබ්බෙන් ඔබ ඔබ ඔබට ඔබට ඔබ ඔබ්බෙන්.”

“ඔබට ඔබ්බෙන්! ඔබ්බෙන්-ඔබ්බෙන් ඔබ ඔබ ඔබ ඔබ්බෙන්! ඔබට ඔබට ඔබ්බෙන් ඔබට?” ඔබ්බෙන් ඔබ්බෙන් ඔබට ඔබ්බෙන් ඔබ ඔබ ඔබ ඔබ! ඔබ ඔබ ඔබට ඔබ ඔබ.

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