

Kavya Rang and NAAC @ Nottingham Festival of Words

Jai Verma

Nottingham has an extremely rich literary background and a vibrant writing scene, being the birth place of Lord Byron and D H Lawrence. This was the first time an extraordinary event like this had been organised to bring together local talent and to celebrate the achievements of Nottingham's diverse range of artists and writers. It was a fabulous platform for bringing together the growing number of Asian writers who have had their work published in their mother tongue as well as in English.

Nottingham Festival of Words was held between 9th February and the 24th February 2013 at various venues across Nottinghamshire. There were a wide range of activities arranged and a huge variety of artists working in different forms were allowed to showcase their skills, including readings, competitions and creative writing workshops. The event was open to people from all walks of life, age was not a barrier. The work on show appealed to children, adults and all readers of poetry, fiction and nonfiction. Book stalls were set up to both buy and sell books throughout the event.

A key strand of the festival was to introduce local writers and the Indian subcontinent writers to the event's audience. The Kavya Rang's Chairperson, Mrs Jai Verma, and Nottingham Asian Arts Council's Mr Bhavesh Jani, along with their respective teams, worked together with Nottingham Writers' Studio, Writing East Midlands, The University of Nottingham, Nottingham City Council and Nottingham Trent University to create a showcase for the Asian writers and poets of Nottingham. This was the first opportunity for a range of Asian writers to present their work and be and involved with such a large, mainstream literary festival.

On Sunday 17th February at Nottingham Trent University's Newton Building, the event started 10am with a book launch. The guests were welcomed by Nottingham Asian Arts Council's Chairperson Mr Rajesh Sharma. The Programme was anchored by Mrs Jai Verma, who reflected the festival theme of diversity and positivity and the writers were introduced by Mrs Baldish Bilkhu. The books were launched by the Consul General from Birmingham, Mr V S Ramalingam. The special guest was the Hindi & Cultural attaché from High Commission London, Mr Binod Kumar. Mr Nat Puri (an Honorary Freeman of Nottingham) and the renowned writer from London Mr Tejender Sharma were also present to grace the occasion. This included the book launch on behalf of 13 writers working in different languages such as Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Gujarati and English, and covering a varied range of subjects. The books on show included anthologies, novels and collections of short stories. The audience was addressed by Consul General Mr V S Ramalingam from Birmingham, who appreciated the work of the writers, volunteers and organisers and expressed his full support. The General Secretary of Katha UK London, Mr Tejender Sharma, then inspired and encouraged writers in his speech.

The Books were launched at NOTTINGHAM FESTIVAL OF WORDS:

Names	Title of Books	Description of Books	Languages
Santokh Dhaliwal	Te Kanu Mar Gaya	Stories	Punjabi
Chanchal S Babak	Zindagi Diya Pairan.	Autobiography	Punjabi
Sadia Sethi	Kabhi Naraaz Mat Hona	Poetry	Urdu
Farzana Akhtar	Dard Ki Neeli Rangain	Poetry	Urdu
Asi Kashmiri	Urdu Poems	Poetry	Urdu
Ahmed Masud	Roshni Hay Kahan	Poetry	Urdu
Jai Verma	Sahyatri Hain Hum	Poetry	Hindi
Neena Paul	Talaash	Novel	Hindi
Pushpa Rao	Zindagi Ki Shaam	Stories	Hindi
Shivendra Sinha	Basics of Hinduism	Reference Book	English
Roopam Carroll	Sammy the SNAIL	Children's Story	English
Harminder Nagi	Wish I Had a Magic Carpet.	Poetry	English
Chandrika Seth	Amazing Countries of World.	Travel Book	Gujarati

The Indian sub-continent has a very rich culture of poetry and this was reflected in the talented local poets on display. There were two sessions of poetry recital with 25 poets reading their poetry in a variety of languages and on diverse subjects. It was an enriching and intellectual experience which captivated the audience. The first session of poetry was presented by Secretary of Kavya Rang Dr Jugnu Mahajan and, following a lunch break, the second session of poetry was conducted by Dr Jas Bilkhu. The poetry was of very high standard and touched many hearts with its creativity and diversity. It was a unique experience with English translations projected on screen to help the audience. The poems were translated into English by Mr Tejender Sharma. The Hindi & Culture Attaché Mr Binod Kumar said he had heard a wonderful array of poetry here today ranging across reflective, sensitive, optimistic and philosophical themes. Dr Karar Khan closed the session of poetry on a very positive note.

Name of Poets	Title of Poems	Languages
Sandeep Dhir	Obama	Hindi
Somdutt Sharma	Sanskar	Hindi
Meena Sinha	Khoyaa Ya Paaya	Hindi
Ravi Mahajan	Godhood of any sort .	Hindi
Rekha Vashishtha	Another India	Hindi
Arun Fakey	Shairi Kehte Hain	Hindi
Ratna Patel	Zindagi	Hindi
Ashish Sinha	Ganpati Bappa	Hindi
Shriharsh Sharma	Janm Din	Hindi
Jai Verma	Existence of a Tree	Hindi
Neena Paul	Jaanbaaj	Hindi
Manorma Jain	Toota Dil	Hindi
Somesh Chaturvedi	Immigration	Hindi

Chakradhar Rao	Kya Main Le Aati	Hindi
Sudha Vashishtha	Promise	Hindi
Jugnu Mahajan	Jab Desh Jao	Hindi
Pushpa Rao	Zindgi Ki Shyam	Hindi
Anushka Shah	Needle Lace	English
Harminder Nagi	Nottingham	English
Baldish Bilkhu	Mendicant	English
Santhokh Dhaliwal	The Lost Word	Punjabi
Chanchal Singh	In Memorium	Punjabi
Jas Bilkhu	William Wilberforce	Punjabi
Karar Khan	My matter is the same	Urdu
Asi Kashmiri	Lonely Path	Urdu
Ahmed Masud	Tears to Help	Urdu
Shamim Ahmed	Aftermath of Earthquake	Urdu
Farzana Khan	Belongings	Urdu

Bali Rai, a famous Midlands writer, was the key-note speaker for the event. It was fascinating to listen to his life experience which he has conveyed in his books. The way in which he integrates the mixed cultures and city lifestyles he grew up in, bringing together the different aspects of education, social and cultural issues, make it easy to relate to his experiences. He is a great role model for young people looking for encouragement and inspiration.

The creative abundance was continued in the afternoon with the professional Ghazal singer Tofail Ahmed. The Ghazal programme including historic facts of Ghazal was introduced by Prof Ravi Mahajan. It was a very melodious afternoon, with a mixture of pieces including old and new forms of Ghazals from the Indian sub-continent. The audience really seemed to enjoy Tofail Ahmed's choice of melodies, classical and innovative styles. The audience were bewitched and the enjoyment was such that the organisers had to watch the clock carefully in order to vacate the venue on time!

Finally, Nottingham Asian Arts Council's Mr Bhavesh Jani thanked everyone for supporting the event.

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