



# The Times of India

## Women: Mightier than the pen

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# celebrating exemplary women

CONSUMER CONNECT INITIATIVE



Vinita Dawra Nangia, executive director and writer AS Mehta, president & director, JK Paper Limited



Papa CJ, stand-up comic, hosting the awards

## Women: Mightier than the pen

JK Paper joined hands with The Times of India to present 'AutHer Awards' to honour women authors and their literary works



Sonali Bendre, Bollywood actress and author

Urvashi.Mishra@timesgroup.com

Every word that a woman writes has the power to change the world's vision and alter its trajectory. Even in times of suppression, there was no stopping women. No matter the means, whether using pseudonyms or just initials, women authors not only got their word out but also accrued the praise they deserved. On the occasion of International Women's Day - March 8, 2020 - JK Paper presented the 'AutHer Awards' in association with The Times of India to honour exemplary women authors for their brilliant contribution to the literary world.

Vinita Dawra Nangia, executive director and curator of the awards, in her opening speech took the audience on a journey of the past and reflected on the works of historic women authors and their struggles. "Inferior, obedient, a mistake, frail - no. All these are adjectives women threw out the window years ago. Every step taken by every woman back then, every time she raised her voice in support, each time she raised her hand to be heard, and each time she



More than 30 eminent personalities were associated in the AutHer Awards' journey (including Jury, Selection committee, TV episode authors and book reading authors)

Amongst six award categories, more than 800 entries were registered across the country. Total website sessions recorded were close to 40,000 and the social media page reached about 2.5 million people.

took a step in the right direction - all that is what has brought us here today. We owe it to them." Every time an initiative is taken to uplift and applaud women, many people feel the need to ask 'why only women?' To them, keeping in mind the AutHer Awards, Vinita retorts, "To encourage and recognise women in the field of writing and literature. Men are still seen to have disproportionate advantage in the sphere of publishing; despite the fact that publishing houses employ mostly women."

Women authors have a way of storytelling that brings forth stimulating perspectives.

"Our love for 'paper' and a feeling that contributions of women authors, at times, have been inadequately appreciated became the genesis of AutHer Awards, celebrating the 'Her' in author."

—Harsh Pati Singhania, VC & MD, JK Paper

tives and involves a flawless amalgamation of sensations and sensibility. Each word is a reflection of wisdom, passion and has in it the depth to make the reader feel unprecedented emotions. Member of Parliament and a revered author himself, Shashi Tharoor, chief guest for the day, echoed similar thoughts. "A galaxy of Indian women writers, through their works, have led a revolution within writing in our country. But the fact fundamentally remains, too much of our history, too many of our stories have been principally written by men. Therefore, the way readers look at the world has been shaped and conditioned by the perspectives of these men. Somehow, the world

"What could be a better way to empower women than by recognising their expressions on paper. AutHer awards is thus envisioned by JK Paper to encourage & inspire women authors to put pen to paper."

—Debasish Ganguly, Marketing & Communication head, JK Paper

has remained, despite all our progressiveness, a male preserve. The experience of what it means to be a 'woman' is channelled through a male perspective. Today, we are celebrating authentic female voices who inhabit the experiences of women they seek to portray, something no man can possibly replicate second-hand." Tharoor noted that Women's Day and an award function like this acts as a reminder of the evident shortcomings of the existing status quo and the evident problems faced when people are restricted to a perspective that is short of the really important voices of women.

Ensuing these invigorating speeches was the introduction and felicitation of the jury members. The category of Best Fiction was headed by prominent fiction writer Ash-

win Sanghi, Best Non-Fiction category was judged by Bollywood actress and author Sonali Bendre, Bulbul Sharma, painter and writer, headed the Best Children's Author category and Shobhaa De, columnist and novelist, judged the Best Debutant category.

The other jury members were author, Jaishree

"We live in a changed world today which is much richer, because of the writings of strong, independent women who have deservedly earned their space in all spheres of life."

—Raj Jain, CEO, BCCL

Misra (Fiction); author and former deputy secretary, Sahitya Akademi, Gitanjali Chatterjee (Fiction); author, Yasser Usman (Non-Fiction); author and journalist, Maninugdha Sharma (Non-Fiction); author and comic writer, Arjun Gaiind (Debut); Co-founder of ScoopWhoop, Kishi Pratim Mukherjee (Debut); actor, compere and director of The Study School, Shivani Wazir Pasrich (Children's books), and author, Ramendra Kumar (Children's books). Grant Thornton was the Process Validator for the AutHer Awards.

Not only did all the jury members shower the participants with encouraging words but they made no efforts to conceal their amazement with the quality entries that they received and read. The night was a wonderland with energies and tales of inspiration, praise and fervour not leaving the room for even a second.

Vice chairman and managing director, JK Paper, Harsh Pati Singhania, aptly commented,



L to R: Bulbul Sharma, Ashwin Sanghi and Shobha De

"This is a grand celebration of women authors who have penned down their stories and experiences on paper and made an unparalleled contribution to literature in a world that has been, at times, inadequately appreciative of what they have achieved." However, the world that these women authors have curated for themselves only seemed to be swarming with love, warmth and

"What these AutHer Awards have done is thrown open the opportunity for women to express their intimate experiences and concerns and to reward the best of such writing."

—Nayantara Sahgal, novelist

exhilaration for each other.

Nayantara Sahgal, Indian journalist and novelist, received the accolade of Lifetime Achievement for her incredible and valuable work in the field of literature, and for her allegiance to truth and her own belief system, always. She sent a message saying, "As far as literature is concerned, this new AutHer Awards is giving Indian women a weapon to enable them to kick away barriers that force women into rigid conventional modes, and to write, if they wish to, of what intimately concerns their bodies, their minds, their lives, their pleasures and their pains. God-speed to all such future Indian writing."

### BOOK READING SESSIONS

In a riveting segment of the campaign, 10 book reading sessions were organised across five cities - Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Pune and Kolkata. Inspiring women authors - Sujata Parashar, Deepa Agarwal, Kishor Desai, Amrita Mahale, Richa S. Mukherjee, Kiran Manral, Milan Vohra, Nirmala Govindarajan, Manjiri Prabhu and Jhimli Mukherjee Pandey - were a part of this inventive initiative which rejoiced the literary contributions of women. In its objective to give more recognition and appreciation to the unsung 'shores' of the literary world, the book reading sessions were a triumph. The audience was left irrevocably entranced by the excerpts read out by the authors, with only one question in their mind - what comes next? Not only were the sessions interactive, with audience indulging in back to back questions with the authors, but they also brought out a never-before-seen side of the authors. The evenings were extremely satiating for the connoisseurs of literature who delved deep into anecdotes and narrations that was nothing short of awesome.

RUDRAKSHI BHATTACHARJEE



MADHURI VIJAY



REHANA MUNIR



SABA DEWAN



NAYANTARA SEHGAL



BIJAL VACHHARAJANI



SUTAPA BASU

### WINNERS

Best Author - Fiction

■ Madhuri Vijay, The Far Field (HarperCollins Publishers India) (Literary Fiction)

■ Sutapa Basu, The Curse of Nader Shah (Readomania) (Historical Fiction)

Best Author - Non-Fiction

■ Saba Dewan, Tawaifnama (Westland)

Best Author - Debut

■ Rudrakshi Bhattacharjee, This is how it took place (HarperCollins Publishers India) (Posthumous Award)

■ Rehana Munir, Paper Moon (HarperCollins Publishers India)

Best Author - Children

■ Bijal Vachharajani, A Cloud called Bhura (Speaking Tiger)

Best Author - Popular Choice

■ Sutapa Basu, The Curse of Nader Shah (Readomania)

Lifetime Achievement Award

■ Nayantara Sehgal - for contribution in the field of Literature