

A date with Urdu litterateurs

LITERATURE Now comes a calendar lauding the achievements of great women writers of Urdu, says R.V. SMITH



IMMORTALISED An image of Begum of Bhopal from the archive of Alkazi Foundation

Women litterateurs of Urdu have been a neglected lot. Arjuman Taraqqi Urdu (Hindi) has tried to make up for this lapse by coming out with a new year calendar extolling their achievements "in what can prove to be a collector's item," says Khaliq Anjum, editor of the calendar. The calendar starts off with a quotation from Justice Anand Narain Milla, "I can change my religion but not my mother tongue Urdu." This shows how much the adherents of the language love it no matter which religion they belong to. The focus then shifts to Nawab Sultan Jahan Begum of Bhopal, who was born in 1858, one year after the outbreak of the Mutiny and died in 1930 when Mahatma Gandhi was negotiating with the British on early steps to usher in self-rule. The British Govt had granted an annual jagir of Rs.75,472 to her, which was a very big amount those days. On June 30, 1901 the begum was made ruler of Bhopal State.

Besides ruling Bhopal she also turned her attention to the literary field and got a number of books translated into Urdu from English and also wrote articles in several magazines, including the one brought out by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.

Rashid Jahan Begum (1905-1952) was the daughter of Sheikh Abdulullah of Aligarh, who had started a school which is now Aligarh University's Girls High School. He also laid the foundation of a college for women. After early education in Aligarh and graduating from Isabella Thoburn College, Lucknow, she did her MBBS from Lady Hardinge College, Delhi. Her first story was written in English and translated by Prof Al Ahmed Saroor into Urdu. Rashid Jahan's literary pursuits were many and she brought out a collection of the writings of progressive writers under the name of 'Angarey' which was a pathbreaking en-

terprise. Ismat Chughtai hardly needs an introduction as she was a literary institution in herself...and the Grand Dame of Urdu...Born in a family which traced its descent from Chingez Khan's son Chughtai Khan, the brother of Halaku Khan, in 1915 at Badaun. She died in 1991. Her initial schooling was done in Agra and Aligarh and her graduation from I.T. College, Lucknow. After that she got married to the famous writer Shahid Latif and settled down in Bombay. Can anyone forget her stories like 'Lihaf' and the humorous pieces she wrote on celebrities. Maimoona Dalvi (1934-2009) was the wife of Abdul Sattar Dalvi, a well-known Urdu litterateur. She studied in Islamia College, Mumbai and along with her father established a public school there. She later taught in her alma mater for 33 years and retired as the head of the Urdu Department. Besides the articles and

three books, she also helped to resettle displaced women after the 1993-1994 riots in Mumbai. October and November are devoted to Sheema Rizvi (1966-2009) and Praveen Shakir (1952-1994), two pretty litterateurs who died young. Rizvi was associated with both the literary world and politics in UP while Parveen, besides being a lecturer in English in Karachi was also an Urdu poetess of note and a high-ranking civil servant. The calendar ends with the portrayal of Safia Janissar Akhtar, sister of poet Majaz and Ansar Harvani who married Janissar Akhtar in 1942 and died in 1953, a progressive writer, thinker and activist. Selected verses from Ghalib, Zauq, Sauda Mazhar Jan Jana, Hali, Mir Dard, Noorul Islam Muntazir, Fateh Ali Shoda, Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi, Kalim Ajizji, Mir Hassan and Mustafa Zaidi enliven the march of the 12 months of the first decade of the 21st Century.

A point to remember



THE LEGEND S.H. Raza

In this overcrowded art scene where every day witnesses the launch of at least two new art shows, we recommend that you don't miss out this one. Ekatra: centre for arts and poetry is showcasing the works of the legendary Syed Haider Raza on February 22. The occasion being his 88th birthday makes it all the more special and add to it his luminous presence. Forget what he sells for or what exorbitant prices his paintings fetch at the auctions the world over, the man known for his 'Bindu' is an institution in himself.

(The exhibition is on for a day at The Lalit, Barakhamba Avenue)






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Resort to relax

FASHION

Raghavendra Rathore tells SHALINI SHAH about his Resort lines, Fall-Winter 2010, and the days ahead

Resort wear, as a full-fledged collection, is yet to pick up in the country. While international designers like Oscar de la Renta, Karl Lagerfeld for Chanel and Diane Von Furstenberg have been bringing out their resort lines for several seasons now, here, specially the showcasing, is mostly a stop-gap to fill in the dull months between Spring/Summer and Autumn/Winter shows and to keep sales going.

So it was a welcome respite when designer Raghavendra Rathore recently showcased a resort line as part of four-city Flair 2010 fashion show held by Axis Bank Wealth and Millionaire Asia.

"We showcased a very traditional resort collection. Versatile, with a lot of prints and knits," says the designer.

"With the change in climate our needs also have to readapt. With extreme temperatures people prefer to travel to places that inspire them. This needs a totally different wardrobe as it might be a summer destination in the peak of winter or vice-versa. At present, it is difficult

to find winter clothing in the peak of summer or, for that matter, summer clothing in the peak of winter - that is the idea of a resort collection," he adds.

The switch

While Jodhpur sparks as many reminiscences of the city as of the eponymous riding breeches known the world over, Raghavendra Rathore singlehandedly put Jodhpur on the national fashion map with his bandhgallas and the crisp new-age royal look that distinguishes his designs.

While his ramp shows in the past, both at the Lakme Fashion Week in Mumbai and the Wills Lifestyle Indian Fashion Week (WIFW) in the Capital, have been lavish affairs, there will be no Autumn/Winter 2010 show this time. The designer, though, will be putting up a stall at the WIFW, which kicks off in the Capital next month.

"We're trying to do a switchover from the runway to evening wear. We're really looking at commercial clothing. The collection is a beautiful array of evening wear offerings for the

women's wear Indian market. Current trends and colours (darker ones, like amber) are carefully introduced in embroideries, giving the collection an overall ethnic feel," Rathore elaborates.

There's another side to Rathore. While clothes, furniture and chocolates are well-known parts of his design folio, last year the designer had also created a software called iCarbon, which can be downloaded from the Apple iTunes store onto the iPhone for 0.99 cents. The software enables one to calculate his or her individual carbon footprint.

Can we expect more such technological concepts in the future?

"Yes, we have about 20 such ideas in the pipeline but are waiting for seed capital investment to make this into a full-fledged creative software design division under our brand," says Rathore.

Other collaborations might be in queue too. "Design as a whole is moving in a new direction. We are looking forward to collaboration with corporate houses in terms of their product offering, to design new and redesigned existing products for modern times and better sales, offering them complete design solutions for their products," he says.

The Rathore label might see a few changes too. "Corporatising the brand and its image is the key for our plans," he says.

"We're trying to do a switchover from the runway to evening wear..."



COMING UP NEXT Raghavendra Rathore will put up a stall at the upcoming WIFW PHOTO: S.SUBRAMANIAM

Touching!



It was a special day and thus celebrated in a special way. The differently-abled students of Tamana Special School gave a call of 'Be My Buddy' to the students of Delhi Public School, R.K.Puram, Springdales and Tagore International School (TIS), Vasant Vihar who enthusiastically reciprocated the gesture. The students from other schools presented dance and song performances. Tamana kids performed a dance performance "Zoobie doobie" from the recent blockbuster "3 Idiots". DPS band performed "Give me some sunshine" from the same movie.

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