

Sanskriti Awardees 2007-08

LITERATURE

Jyotshna Kalita : 1980

*Admit today that you don't know
How does verse snatch poet's voice
Words inert in pain
If you honestly wish to listen to a poem
Then come out of the complex circuit
For once be simple and straight
(Name of the poem, 1996)*

Such rang the fresh voice of Jyotshna Kalita in her teens, a voice that synthesized a rich poetic tradition and a quest for originality. At 26, she is a leading poet among the younger generation of modern Assamese poets who are distinct in their tone, temper and theme.

An MA in English Literature from the University of Delhi, Jyotshna has published two collections of poetry : Saralrekhar Dare (Like a straight line, 1997) and Kathan (Words spoken, 2005) which are very well received. She began her professional career in the editorial desk of various print media outlets, but later specialized in producing and directing cultural documentaries, script-writing and concept designing. Her documentary on the Monpa tribe of Arunachal Pradesh called *Jewel in the Lotus*, made for the Ministry of Culture, brought her a lot of accolades.

Her enthusiasm to reach out to masses can be seen in the conversational technique she employs in her poems. She "thanks time for completing fifteen summers bit by bit "because she is full with the treasures endowed by time" (Time My Dear, 1994). While talking to her readers she assures that she is not looking at his person, expecting at the same time that she too "is not looked at too much" which is an urgent pre-condition for conversation.

Jyotshna Kalita

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JOURNALISM

K.A. Shaji : Born : 1973

Based at Thiruvananthapuram, Shaji writes on environment, politics, human rights, rural distress and flawed development perspectives. He is concerned with bringing to the fore issues relating to the poor and marginalized, in mainstream media. Shaji has pursued farmers' suicides in Kerala's Wayanad district and raised public consciousness against communal forces that fanned the flames of violence in sensitive places like Marad in Kozhikode district.

His writings on farmers, plantation workers, adivasis, dalits, fishermen and other deprived segments of society are not just catalogues of faceless statistics but portray the grim realities that haunt the poorest of the poor. His genre of writing, reflecting a strong commitment to the suffering masses, has earned him recognition in the field of journalism for the last seven years. He is also concerned with the larger questions of state policy and administrative callousness.

An MA in PM and IR, PG Diploma in Journalism and Mass Comm., Shaji started his career in The New Indian Express in 2000. He worked as staff correspondent in Kalpetta, Kannur, Kozhikode and Bangalore. Shaji has also contributed articles to 'Smakalika Malayalam,' a vernacular magazine from the Express group and to Mathrubhumi and Madhyamam.

In 2005, he joined Tehelka magazine as a senior correspondent based at New Delhi, focusing on in-depth and pro-people public interest journalism. Since 2007, Shaji is Tehelka's Kerala correspondent.

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ART

K.P. Reji : Born : 1972

Reji's paintings exude a matter of fact quality. Despite - or perhaps because of - their apparent simplicity, his paintings are enigmatic and the motifs he engenders are difficult to decipher.

His work is multifaceted and complex in its analysis of the individual's relationship to his external environment. Often political in inflection, his canvases explore the connection between psychological states of mind and socio-political behavior.

Reji completed both B.F.A. and M.F.A. in Painting from the Faculty of Fine Arts, M.S. University, Baroda. In 1999 he held his first solo exhibition at Zen Studio Gallery, Eramallur, Kerala and has exhibited at 'Words and Images', Guild Art Gallery, Mumbai, 2002 and recently in 'Just above my Head', 2006, The Guild Art Gallery. Since then, he has participated in many artist camps, exhibitions and workshops, both in India and abroad. K.P. Reji currently resides in Baroda.

Reji's works disclose a 'migrants' recollection transfigured in his present situation. The 'eclecticism' so prominent in Baroda did not affect the artists' work; instead it served as a subtle backdrop to create playful allegories in his work. The 'natural' colors accustomed to his earlier days perform as a recurring feature in the paintings.

K.P. Reji

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DANCE

Bijayini Satpathy : Born : 1973

Bijayini's life has been focused on Odissi dance. From a tender age of seven, she trained for thirteen years under the tutelage of Guru Gandhar Pradhan, Guru Pagal Swain, Guru Kanduri Charan Behara and Smt. Aruna Mohanty.

An insatiable thirst for knowledge brought her to Nrityagram in 1993. Bijayini flourished under the guidance of Protima Gauri and through her collaboration with Nrityagram's Chief choreographer Surupa Sen who provokes her talents to the maximum with her exquisite choreography and works her ideas on Bijayini. The intense concentration on dance and the involvement with other practitioners of performance arts in Nrityagram gave her the perfect environment in which to foster.

Her skill in Abhinaya was polished by Kalanidhi Narayanan. Bijayini is acclaimed as a dancer with an inner fire and angasuddha. She has a perfect rhythm (Laya) and aesthetics. Bijayini sums up her philosophy in life as "All I want to do in life is to dance. I dance to satisfy my soul. In the process if it pleases the audience, that is my reward."

Bijayini has performed alone and with the ensemble to rave reviews across the globe. She has received national and international recognition including the Mahari Award in 2003 and the Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar conferred by Sangeet Natak Akademi in 2007.

As Director of the Odissi Gurukul at Nrityagram, Bijayini is involved in creating new training techniques and extending the vocabulary of traditional Odissi dance style.

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OUTSTANDING SOCIAL ACHIEVEMENT

Vipin Vijay : Born : 1976

Vipin, hails from Kannur, Kerala. After completing his graduation in English from Calicut, Vipin studied filmmaking at the Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute, Calcutta. In 2003, he received the Charles Wallace Arts Award for research at the British Film Institute (BFI), London, and India Office Records, London. He received support from IDFA, Amsterdam, IFA, Bangalore, and Majlis, Mumbai, PSBT, New Delhi to pursue his interest in film-making.

Vipin has made several documentary, short and promotional films. His films have won national and international awards and have widely been shown in major film festivals abroad as well as the Indian Panorama. Two of his films, "Kshurasyadhara" and "Hawamahal", have been acquired for the permanent archives at the U.S. Library of Congress.

The metaphorical documentary, "Video Game" is the first Indian film to win the Tiger Award (2007) at Rotterdam. The Jury for the Tiger Awards noted its 'relentless, complex post-modern intelligence'.

Vipin presently working on a feature film with a support from Hubert Bals Film Fund, Rotterdam. This project was invited to 3 Continents Film Festival 2007, Nantes, Paris, at Produire au Sud to represent India. "Tatwamasi", "The Egotic World", "A Flowering Tree" are his other prominent works.

Vipin's preoccupation is with the epic dimension and sensibilities, exploring intricate and enigmatic narratives of thought almost like a self-imposed ritual.

Vipin Vijay

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LITERATURE

Inderjit Nandan : Born : 1974

Inderjit is a promising young voice in contemporary Punjabi literature. Her poetry has delicate rhythm, which enhances its communicability. It delves deep into the psyche and consciousness of women and brings forth their experience and turbulence. At the same time, her poetry also addresses wider issues and subjects of her society. The most remarkable fact is that her poetry and other writings embody immense love for human life.

Her first two collections 'Dishadiyon Ton Par' and 'Chup De Rang' came out in 2002 and 2005 respectively. She also wrote a biographical account of noted Punjabi theatre artist Joginder Baharla in the year 2006 which was a huge success and attracted widespread attention of critics. In 2008, her epic 'Bhagat Singh: Anathak Jivangatha' was published, where she has portrayed the life and struggles of Bhagat Singh from a distinct creative lens, not only from the ideological standpoint. The credit for being the first poetess in Punjabi language creating an epic also goes to Inderjit Nandan.

Inderjit has deep social commitments. She says: 'Literature refines individual. The work of a writer is to provide direction to society, but for that, a writer is required to correctly determine his or her own direction. She or he should never forget her or his responsibility towards the society'. This strong commitment moves Inderjit ahead and engages her in numerous social developmental works.

Her passion for poetry is evident in her own words "I cannot live without poetry. The part of my life, which I have not shared with anyone, has been shared with poetry."

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JOURNALISM

Chitragada Choudhury : Born : 1981

Chitragada Choudhury is passionate about the good journalism can do, the power of the news media to enhance the public sphere and challenge clichés. She finds it most fulfilling to work on long-form explanatory narratives and meticulous investigations for her newspaper, the Hindustan Times. She began her journalistic career in 2004 at another of India's leading national dailies, the Indian Express.

Based in Mumbai, Chitragada has primarily reported stories from that city and Maharashtra, while also covering issues from other states including Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Her reportage has primarily probed public policies and how they play out in individual lives, as well as power and marginality in a country in flux.

Her investigative reportage revealing the bleeding of the state's rural employment guarantee scheme, corruption in Mumbai's slum rehousing projects, the abuse of children in welfare institutions, and the official neglect of historic cave monuments have resulted in public interest litigations, legislative questions and police probes. In 2007, a media fellowship awarded by the National Foundation of India and the American India Foundation helped her to provide readers an insight into the harsh lives of distress seasonal migrants in the villages of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Western Orissa.

Chitragada studied History at St. Stephen's College, Delhi University, and Media Studies at the Centre for Mass Communication Research, University of Leicester, UK.

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ART

Ranjani Shettar : Born : 1977

Employing organic materials invested with tradition and history, Ranjani creates multidimensional works that bring forth the metaphysical attributes of residing within a changing physical environment. Shettar's work embodies the relationships between the future and past, exposing the permeability of the often-distinct thresholds between craft and art, tradition and modernity, and the physical and the spiritual.

Transforming simple and mundane materials into the magical, Shettar uses materials such as muslin, tamarind powder, old car parts, lacquered wood and wax beads in her installations, appearing effortlessly natural but at the same time intricately crafted, to evoke the multiple, intersecting histories of the material. It also alludes to cycles of consumption and commodification, prompting analysis of what a technology-driven modernity's relationship is to nature.

Inspired by nature and drawn from experience, Shettar's work combines movement in form and content in which exacting lines sculpted in space are invested with the attributes of the employed materials, as in *Just a bit* more, a monumental installation of thread and tiny beads of wax or in *Me, No, Not Me, Buy Me, Eat Me, Wear Me, Have Me, Me, No, Not Me*, in which old car parts are woven into elegant and organic flowing forms.

Philippe Verne, Director of Dia Art Foundation, described : "*The driving force behind Ranjani's work is a poetics of Space. Whether destined for public, private, or even intimate settings, her art takes account of the physical-almost molecular, organic-and emotional nature of the space in question*".

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MUSIC

Ranjani and Gayatri : Born : 1973 and 1976

Ranjani & Gayatri were accomplished violinists earlier, having been trained, by Sangeetha Bhushanam TS Krishnaswamy, Professor of Violin at the Shanmukhananda Sangeetha Vidyalaya, Mumbai. They made their debut as violin duo in 1986 and made significant impact as duet performers.

The shift to the vocal discipline, in 1997, has been smooth and successful, belying the general belief, that those who lack the 'kural', (voice for singing), take to the 'viral', (fingers), for playing on the instruments. This speaks for the versatility of their talents.

In vocal, initiated by their mother, Minakshi Balasubramaniam, they have been under the guidance of PS Narayanaswamy, steeped in the Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer 'bani', noted for the weighty classicism, intensity, vibrancy in rendition, among many other typical features. These aspects are amply reflected in the performance of the duo.

Gifted with a melodious voice, cultured for octave range and modulation skills, and possessing a wide repertoire (an essential criterion, in the 'kriti' oriented system of Carnatic music), the sisters make deep impression with perceptive imagination, clean 'raga' lines, fidelity to lyrics, felicitous expression and sprays of 'brigha' (quick succession of discreet notes, in ascending and descending orders, sometimes, in a staccato fashion).

With their appeal to the young and the mature audiences alike, Ranjani & Gayatri have carved out a niche for themselves. Ranjani & Gayatri are recipients of many awards, notable among them being Kalki Krishnamurthy Memorial Award, Isai Peroli, National Eminence Award of the Shanmukhananda Sabha, Mumbai.

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OUTSTANDING SOCIAL ACHIEVEMENT

Ability Unlimited India : Estd.: 1996

Ability Unlimited India (AUI) is nation's first professional dance theatre which aims at educating and employing differently-abled people through innovative choreographic works and public performances that integrate arts with career opportunities and training. The arts are used as a vehicle to broaden the perspective and resolve issues of inclusion facing such people. It gives messages of equality, dignity, equal opportunities and participation of such under-privileged people so that they can be on the same platform as the normal people.

Ability Unlimited has a three-fold agenda. First, it advocates the use of arts and dance as therapeutic tool for healing. Second, it trains such special people in all spheres including theatrical technical aspects, and third it helps them become professional artists.

AUI is the only organization to produce historic Indian therapeutic theatre productions like Ramayana on Wheels, Durga on Wheels, Women of India, Freedom on Wheels to mention a few. Artists perform on innovative and custom made wheelchairs and crutches and move across the floor space with breathtaking mobility.

The man who spearheads this silent revolution is Guru Syed Sallauddin Pasha, a dancer of both Bharatanatyam and Kathak; who combines in himself the qualities of a Dancer, Director, Dance – Movement therapist and Social Activist. Pasha is recipient of the National Award from the President of India for outstanding performance in the field of empowerment of persons with disabilities.

www.abilityunlimited.com

Sanskriti Awardees 2009-10

LITERATURE

Ashok Pawar : Born : 1974

Ashok Pawar is one of the powerful emerging voices in the Dalit literature coming out from Maharashtra. His first autobiographical work *Birad* proved to be a trail-blazer with its brutal candidness and immediacy of the appeal. Marked by a rare balance of intensity of expression and seemingly detached presentation of all that he as an individual hailing from disadvantaged moorings went through, his story raised some questions about the superficiality of the socio-economic development scorching enough to make thinking minds think afresh about the issues. His is not a yet another Dalit story, punctuated alternately with wails of helplessness, and fists raised in protest, it is much more.

His second work *Elanmal*, is an extension of his debutant work *Birad*. The form of novel offered him a new freedom to blend the facts with fiction. His writing acquires a sharper edge here reflecting sufferings of the people who are brazenly exploited by the rich, 'better educated' and the upper caste. His works offer a window to the caste pyramid and the way it takes toll on the lowest wrung for generations on end and the past has its feet buried deep in the quagmire of irrational and unfair repression, and the present is only a shade different. The foreseeable future offers no magic carpet for something rooted so deep.

Ashok Pawar has come on the literary scene without any precursor and has no isms to lean on. His is a tale told in stark simplicity, his expression untamed by the rules of sophistication giving new expressions to Marathi stemming from the nomadic dialect he has grown up with. His novels, *'Thangpata'* and *'Gardal'* are ready for publications. He has been honored with 13 awards so far.

JOURNALISM

Teresa Rehman : Born : 1975

A media person based in Northeast India, Rehman has consistently been trying to highlight the myriad hues of this hitherto unexplored and conflict-torn region that includes seven states of the country. Her story with vivid photographs on an alleged fake encounter in Manipur in June 09, won global acclaim and was picked up by newspapers and magazines worldwide. The story led to a civil uprising in Manipur.

She had represented India in a 10-day capacity building programme titled "Advancing Women's Leadership in Global AIDS Policymaking" in the US Congress, and in the UN Headquarters.

She had received the Centre for Science and Environment's National Media Fellowship on Implementation of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. She is the co-ordinator of the Assam chapter of the Network for Women in Media, India. She is also a member of the International Women Media Foundation. She also moderates : Red Ribbon Media, India and The Sanitation Scribes.

An alumna of the Indian Institute of Mass Communication, New Delhi, Rehman has been honoured with many awards. Teresa is presently working as Principal Correspondent, Tehelka newsmagazine.

She feels the northeast region is a challenge for a journalist willing to delve deep into the lives of the people, their struggle for existence, the unexplored and untold stories of women, men and children.

ART

Tejal Shah : Born : 1979

Tejal is a visual artist working with video, photography, performance, sound and installation. Her work, like herself, is feminist, queer and political. Her works have been exhibited widely in museums, galleries and film festivals including, *Lost and Found - Querying the Archive*, Nikolaj Contemporary Art Center, Copenhagen, 2009; *Asian Triennial Manchester*, Cornerhouse, Manchester, 2008; *City of Women International Festival of Contemporary Arts*, Ljubljana, 2007; *Global Feminisms - the inaugural show at the Elizabeth Sackler Center for Feminist Art*, Brooklyn Museum, NY, 2007; *Saturday Live*, Tate Modern, London, 2006; *Sub-Contingent* at The Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, 2006; *Indian Summer* at The Ecole Nationale des Beaux Arts, Paris, 2005. Solo exhibitions include "What are You?", Thomas Erben Gallery, New York and Galerie Mirchandani + Steinruecke, Mumbai, 2006; *The Tomb of Democracy*, Alexander Ochs Gallery, Berlin, 2003. Her work is in the collection of Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Lekha and Anupam Poddar collection, New Delhi and several private collections in India and abroad.

In 2003-4, she co-founded, organised and curated *Larzish* – India's premier International Film Festival of Sexuality and Gender Plurality. She grew up in central India, Chhattisgarh, eventually moving to Mumbai in 1995. She holds a BA in photography from RMIT, Melbourne and has been an Exchange Scholar at the Art Institute of Chicago. Currently finishing her MFA part-time from Bard College, New York, Tejal works out of her laptop and Mumbai city.

THEATRE

Jyothish M.G. : Born : 1975

Theatre activist M.G. Jyothish's world is the stage. The call of the stage made Jyothish an adventurer for he began to write plays and dared to direct and enact those during his years in school. The turning point for the theatre enthusiast came after he joined Abhinaya, where he was groomed by veteran actor and director Reghoothaman. The mutual creative enrichment was strong enough for Jyothish to discontinue his graduation in science and join School of Drama, Thrissur and later do a post graduation in Theatre Arts, University of Pondichery, while continuing his close association with Abhinaya.

"Plays that I have directed are a result of the quest within myself and my evolution as a person. If 'Bhagavadajjukam' reflected my confusions and inner dialogues, 'Siddharatha' was a more philosophical approach to life and its problems. 'Macbeth,' my latest play, is a continuation of that search. It delves into the basic instincts of man," explains Jyothish. Whether it be adaptations of ancient Sanskrit dramas, Shakespearean tragedies or German novels, plays directed by Jyothish are anchored on powerful subtexts and a rich visual stage craft. Jyothish has collaborated with many eminent theatre practitioners for various productions. He was invited as a guest by the British Council to attend the prestigious Edinburgh Festival. Apart from being the artistic director of Abhinaya Theatre Research Centre, he also works as an instructor for numerous courses on theatre jointly conducted by Abhinaya and various governmental and non-governmental organizations. Along almost these twenty five years, Abhinaya could identify and bring forth many talents who went on to become the fiber of life of theatre arena of the nation.

SOCIAL ACHIEVEMENT

Bahar Dutt : Born : 1975

Bahar Dutt a trained wildlife conservationist has worked for the last ten years on key wildlife issues in India and abroad. She has a profound belief that wildlife is not only an attraction on the earth but it's our need also.

Bahar has worked in rural areas across Northern India on a community-based conservation project. She has been members as well as an expert in many renowned institutions and committees working in the field of wild life conservation. She has spent seven years working with and rehabilitating the Bahelias, a community of snake charmers in Rajasthan and Haryana. Through her work with the Joginath Saperas, she has tried to integrate conservation demands with their need to retain their identities. Toward this, she has been working with other conservationists and NGOs to organise them into a snake rescue service and to develop their musical heritage with stage programmes such as 'A hundred charmers' that has performed in Italy, UK and many parts of India. Her interventions have helped the snake charmers find a new way to earn a livelihood, which is not in conflict with conservation laws.

Bahar has transformed environmental journalism from an obtuse segment on the daily news to an independent and vital component of mainstream reportage. She strongly believes that environment and wildlife journalism must move beyond the pretty pictures and focus on the imminent crisis before us. She is an effective defender of wild life. Bahar Dutt, currently Environment Editor, CNN-IBN uses the camera the way a forest guard or officer might use a gun.