



NSoJ student
journalists interviewed
Padmashree Dr. Malathi
Krishnamurthy Holla
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SECOND EDITION

EDITOR'S NOTE

I am delighted to bring you the second edition of NSoJ post 2018-19 with more intellectual, innovative and insightful stories. I developed the habit of reading newspapers from my grandfather. I believe writing is an escape, which can be used as a powerful weapon to make the world a better place to live. This edition gives you an insight about "Bengaluru Literature Festival", an interview with Padmashree Dr.Malathi Holla, and other interesting reports.

My team of NSoJ student journalists has put in sincere efforts in making this edition a successful one. I hope you will have an intelligent yet vibrant experience in reading our content.

You can write to us on our Facebook and Instagram page and follow it for more updates.

SHREYA TINKHEDE

#MeToo

>P2



Bangalore Literature

Festival conducted an insightful discussion with eminent panelists on #MeToo movement. The panelists shared their personal experiences and expressed their contempt toward hierarchy of such inhuman activities.

DATING IN DARK >P3



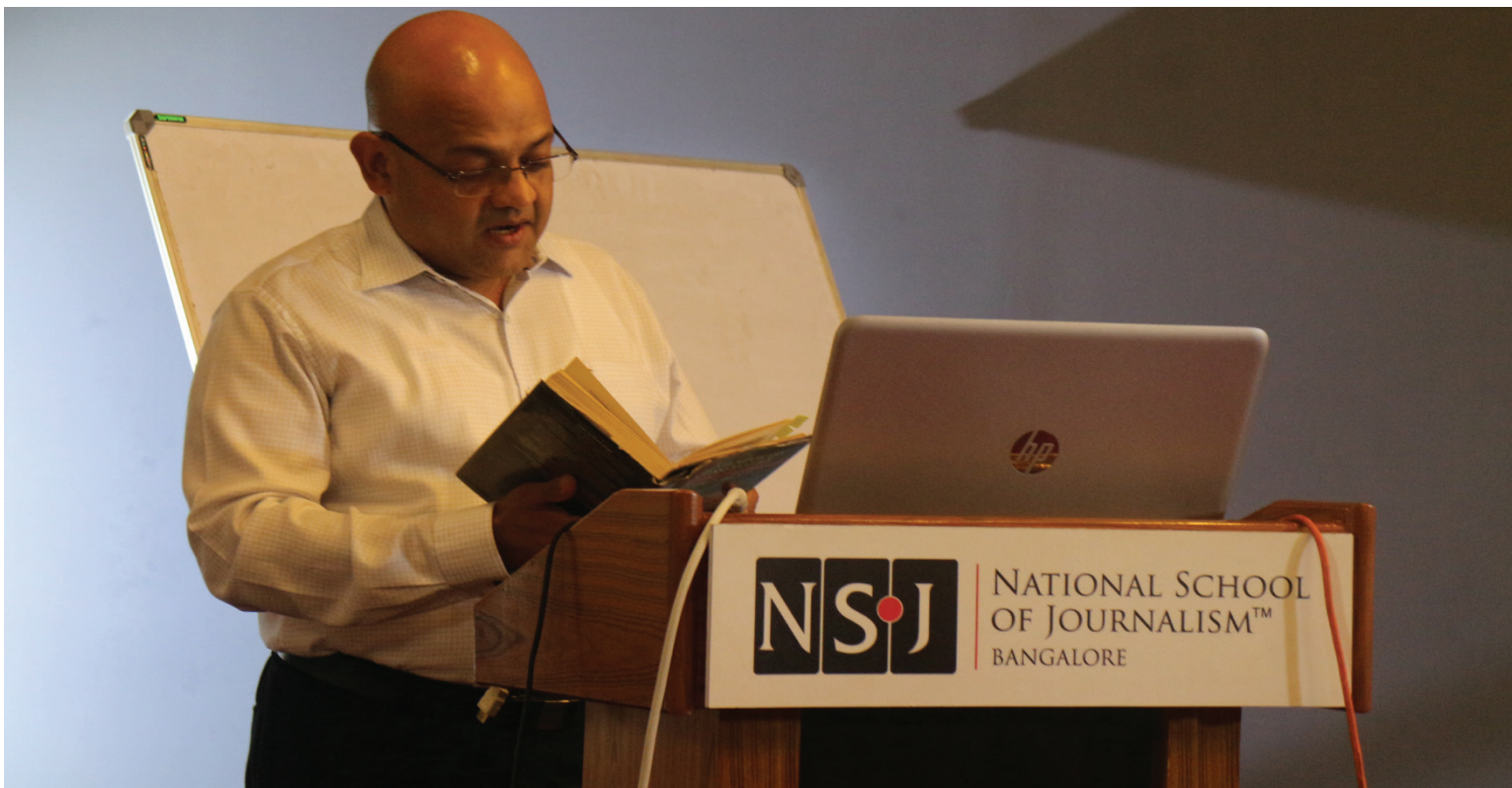
Madhavi Menon talks about the current sex-phobic political environment in India and Yogi Adityanath's 'Anti-Romeo Squad'. She also spoke about the decriminalisation of SEC 377

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NSoJ TALK SHOW ON ROLE OF JOURNALISTS

TO TELL THE TRUTH WITHOUT ANY FEAR



EMINENT ADVOCATE SIDDHARTH RAJA ADDRESSING NSoJ STUDENTS

Prathiksha Devagiri
NSoJ Bureau

BENGALURU:We are bound to tell the truth as we find it without fear of consequences to lend no convenient shelter to acts of injustice. Siddharth Raja, a seasoned corporate lawyer with almost two decades of experience, focuses on private equity and venture capital transaction as well as on cross-border and domestic mergers and acquisitions, speaking on "The roles & responsibilities of journalists & the law" at the talk show organized by National School of Journalism, Bangalore, recently.

He started the session by reading two editorials of Dhiren Bhagat published in 1988. "The editorials are the classic statement of our profession,"said Siddharth Raja. He said the duty of the press is to obtain the earliest and most correct intelligence of events.

If there is a duty to speak there is also a time when there is a duty

not speak. If you present data in a fashion which presents both sides of the picture, then you are focusing on the rights of people, he added.

Speaking about newspaper he mentioned what Dhiren Bhagat wrote in one of his editorial which said, "To be a newspaper it is not enough to look like one. Apart from physical qualities, there are some moral qualities. The real test I propose for a newspaper is independence." To quote the roles and responsibilities of journalists with legal provisions, Siddharth Raja read a few articles from the Indian constitution:

Article 19: All citizens shall have the rights to freedom of speech & expression but it does not presume the imposition of reasonable restrictions on this right in the interest of the sovereignty & integrity of India.

Article 25: Freedom of conscience & freedom of profession, practice & propagation

of religion, subject to public order & morality & health.

Section 499 – Defamation: Whoever, by words either spoken or intended to be read or by signs or by visible representations, makes or publishes any imputations concerning any person intending to harm or having reason to believe that imputation will harm is Defamation.

So, if you ought to know that harm caused to the reputation of such a person is said to defame that person except in some cases here & after that should be accepted. However, there are some exceptions like the imputation of truth which public good requires to be made or published.

Section 500 - Punishment of Defamation: Two years of imprisonment or fine or both. Section 124A – Sedition: A provision which was introduced to our Penal Code following Jallianwala Bhag incident.

It states whoever by words ei-

ther spoken or written no intention here, or by signs or by visible representation or otherwise brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt or excites or attempt to excite disaffection towards government established law in India. It provides imprisonment for life. The expression of disaffection includes disloyalty and all feelings of enmity.

Siddharth Raja spoke about the 4 Hs – Humility, which is the ability to be graceful and courteous and civil; History - understand your history; Hunger to work hard to dig deep; and hearsay which needs to be avoided as it is the foundation for fake news. He also spoke about 2 Es – Exactitude: to be very precise in what to say & what not to say; and Expression: to avoid too many words.

The session ended with a quote: "The foundation for all inquiry, whether it be legal or in the hands of journalists, is to be aware." Always be aware of yourself, your position and the position of others.

MeToo: A standing ovation and an insightful discussion

Shreya Tinkhede
NSoJ Bureau

Bangalore Literature Festival turned into a platform for survivors of sexual harassment to participate in the panel discussion on the burning issue that is picking up momentum and raising questions about women safety and sexual misconduct. The movement has expanded into a global rallying cry. The campaign has many facets, but its core message is clear: Women who are victims of sexual harassment and assaults still face too many obstacles in their quest for justice. The fire of raising voice against molestation has ignited and it is spreading across the country with flame of pride, courage and bravery.

Mard ko dard hoga: #MeToo, which had Sandhya Menon, writer and journalist; Sister Jesme, former nun; Vinta Nanda, former actress; Tushita Patel, author moderated by Barkha Dutt, Indian television journalist, received much-deserved standing ovation. The panelists were recalling their personal stories of harassment and times when women have had to compromise on their careers,



INTENSE DISCUSSION ON ME TOO MOVEMENT

dreams, family, and respect and maintain an image of sophisticated lady in society as if nothing has happened to them. “#MeToo movement was the most important topic discussed in the literature festival and deserved sensitivity and not sympathy”, said Barkha Dutt.

“We don’t want to mistrust men, we like them, but we also end up second guessing ourselves when faced with lack of belief”, said Sandhya Menon. She questioned why the ambition of a woman is always ignored, why do women end up adjusting, compromising and sacrificing themselves and

their self respect for the fault of men. Recalling her incident of sexual misconduct with one of her bosses, she somehow started questioning herself and finding guilty that she had done something wrong. Speaking of the hypocrisy of the movie industry Vinta Nanda first made the complaint of her rape, Vinta said “That at this stage if hypocrisy leads to something good, why not?”. She was filled with horrors while recalling the incident of her rape, and admitted that she had lost jobs and reputation in the television industry, because of which she had to face an ultimate disgrace of working with

her abuser again for the sake of money on the same sets.

Sr Jesme, who faced an immense ridicule on leaving the religion congregation to protest sexual assault, said, “If you don’t deserve the tarnish society paints you with, hold your head high and walk forward.” She inspired the audience with her words of wisdom, of being bold, brave and honest towards speaking against any such harassment or assault. She narrated her personal story of how the bishop of her own church asked her to strip down for him. “I faced name calling and shaming by the church and members

of my religion, but I fought back positively and remained stubborn on my allegations on the bishop”. Reacting to the criticism of the #MeToo movement, Ms Patel, who was among the women who made allegations of sexual harassment against the former Union Minister M J Akbar, said, “If more and more women came out, there would be pressure to create an institutional mechanism so that such cases could be addressed to from now on, let’s hope that we don’t need majority of women to prove themselves right, the voice of an individual women should be treated equally just, fair, and true.”

Barkha Dutt expressed her contempt for the hierarchy of such inhumane activities that are always connected to each other, and make the women in society vulnerable and weak to speak out about their experiences. In the coming days of #MeToo movement, many more will come out, some voices will be suppressed, some will be denied, yet the struggle is real and the struggle for justice will prevail as the time is really up, and now there is no looking back.

The 3Cs in politics: Crime, Corruption & Crony Capitalism

Aishwarya Rajpurohit
NSoJ Bureau

If you are keen on the business of politics these books might enrich you with interesting anecdotes, the world of politics not being far away from business and eventually leading to the world of cronyism.

Notwithstanding the scorching winter sun, the visitors to the recent Bengaluru Literature Festival were provided an occasion to listen to one of the most interesting and controversial sessions on the first day of the festival.

James Crabree’s book, ‘The Billionaire Raj,’ and Milan Vaishnav’s book, ‘When Crime Pays: Money and Muscle in Indian Politics’, go hand-in-hand widely illustrating the political scenario in India. Ashutosh Varshney, the moderator, was in conversation with the writers. The Indian politics cannot be



JAMES CRABREE IN CONVERSATION WITH THE PANELISTS AT BANGLORE LIT FEST

thought of without the menace of corruption and crime even as crony capitalism is flourishing in the state. The political parties across the ideological differences seek candidates from criminal background to speed up the ever slow moving political momentum. And Milan rightly quoted in his book: “Those who have one se-

rious case of crime against them have probably three times more chances of winning the election than a candidate with a clean record.” The role of business men in politics is also considerably increasing. James in his ‘The Billionaire Raj’ has a huge chunk of content for Bengalurians. The billionaire hero, Vijay Mallya, has a role

to play too in this book. It can also be relatable to the people of Karnataka as it also narrates the story of the now well-known Iron ore scandal involving the Reddy brothers of Bellary. Being the Financial Bureau Chief in Mumbai for Times, James must have had enough ideas for his book. The book is all about the swift rise of India’s super wealthy

elite society. From the year 2000 to last summer the wealth concentration in the hands of a few is evident. He ironically relates the increasing number of billionaires in the country with that of Narendra Modi coming to power. The book also features the link between politics and business. It clearly elaborates the rise of crony capitalism and explains its influence on the politics especially in southern India.

Milan, in his book, tries to explain that the art of politics is no different of that of the market. The supply and demand chain in political arena is not much different from that of real-market scene. Voters knowingly and unknowingly increase the demand of the candidates by voting them, and political parties push these candidates into main stream business. Money speaks louder in politics than in business. Everything is an expensive affair be it the elections or the election campaign.

Current political climate is sex-phobic: Madhavi Menon

Manisha Shewaramani
NSoJ Bureau

Sitting in her crisp multicolored saree, wearing a dull red lipstick for the book signing, Madhavi Menon had just got off the stage after an intense panel discussion on Sec 377 at the Bengaluru Lit Fest gheld recently. She was now waiting to sign books for her fans. The writer of Infinite Variety: A History of Desire in India, gave a big smile as NSoJ approached her for a few questions.



MADHAVI MENON

Q:The youth of India is still dating in the dark, for a young couple to spend some quality time is a difficult task, even the hotels will not accept them unless it is a 'couple friendly' hotel. So till what extent homosexuality ever get normal in the minds of the people?

A:If a girl wants to go on a holiday with another girl, their parents won't mind at all. That's because they don't even imagine that the two might have sex, that's the problem. But the fact remains that two men together or two women together can fly under the radar with much more

freedom in India today. And why do we want everybody to understand us? I mean, it is a pipe dream, it is an impossibility. We should be able to do whatever we want, without legal restrictions. The judgment of the apex court is great, but then to say 'Oh Hurray!', now we can call ourselves gay or a lesbian or straight, isn't something to be excited about.

Q:How happy are you with the decriminalization of Sec 377 on the scale of 1 to 10?

A:Oh, 10! Absolutely 10!

Q:But at the same time we have Yogi Adityanath's 'Anti-Romeo Squad'. So where are we going? It is like putting legs on two different roads.

A:Exactly! Hetrosexuality is much more policed in India because that's where people presume sex happens. But also, since you brought up Yogi Adityanath, the current political climate in the center and in much of India is extremely victorian, extremely sex-phobic. All this, ironically in the name of Indian culture, is nonsense. It's all in

the name of Victorian culture that they are putting their foot down. What was hilarious about the Victorian morality, of course, is that in Victorian England they would even cover the feet of the piano because they thought the feet should not be shown. That's where we are now! Despite being a post-colonial country.

Q:Is there a better understanding of sex and homosexuality among the well-offs that the rural or poor people?

A:I actually think rural people are much more accepting and engaging because they have so little to lose. The question that plagues urban India is 'What will people say?' The rural or poor people don't have that burden. So I don't think that's where the dividing line falls.

I think there certainly is a sense of, and we are in that moment now, trumped-up macho patriarchal nationalism, and people who are dear to that tend to be very conservative on desire. And people who question that tend to be more liberal, I think that's actually the fault line along with which the country is moving.

IF YOU DARE TO DREAM IT, YOU WILL HAVE IT: POORNA

Trisha Sanyal
NSoJ Bureau



MALAVATH POORNA

"I wanted to prove to the world,that women can achieve anything", said the young , enthusiastic Malavath Poorna. She is the youngest girl to climb Mountain Everest at the age of thirteen. Her sheer dedication and passion has inspired many women across the world with a social message that women are bold ,strong,and can face any challenges in their life.

She narrated her story to a young audience at the Bangalore Literature festival,held at Lalit hotel recently.

The young crowd aged between 11 and 15 were patiently listening to her enriching talk. The moderator of the event asked her several questions regarding the challenges she faced, while climbing Mountain Everest. She said with a smile, "I enjoyed the whole process of training .Yes,it was an extremely difficult journey.

When I heard stories of people losing their life while the Everest, it didn't discourage me.I feel extremely happy that I can set an example for all women.

Women are discriminated in many sectors especially when it comes to the kind of career a woman should choose.Right from the childhood boys and girls are taught what kind of activities they should involve themselves in.If a girl child plays sport,she is looked down by the society.

Malavath Poorna, now 18, has several goals and ambitions in her life.One of them is to became an IPS officer like her coach and other is to climb the next two top mountains by 2020.

CHILD STAR TO HER OWN WOMAN

Shreya Tinkhede
NSoJ Bureau



Sarika

Sarika Thakur, better know as Sarika is an Indian film actress and a National award winner. Apart from showing extraordinary performances in her acting career, she showed immense intrest as costume designer, sound designer and associate director for Kuruthipunal under Raaj Kamal Films International.

She stepped into the world of glamour and fame as a child actor at the age of five, she was mostly given 'westernised girls' roles because of her non-Indian looks. One of her most celebrated per-

formance as a child was in 1967 in the musical superhit "Hamraaz". Unlike the other actresses of her time, Sarika likes to keep things simple.

She strolls into the coffee house of a five-star hotel wearing no make-up, hair pulled up in a ponytail and a simple cotton kurta. She participated gracefully in an interview with Sadhna Rao, in Bangalore Literature Festival, celebrating her 50 years in Indian cinema and her journey in Bollywood as a child artist to a diva.

Q: A child artist; a Bollywood diva; a working mother, which role defines you more accurately?

A:What defines me is very hard to define,I had always been working, the only time I took break was when I had my babies that needed hundred percent concentration. If not acting I was busy in designing costumes, or trying my hands on sound designing.

Q: If you were to play memory replay what your first memory would be as a child artist?

A: I would say " Hamraaz", I was very young, I was only four and I don't remember every-

thing as a memory as I only enjoyed doing what was asked by my directors to do. I was young and flexible to opportunities.

Q:We can see a natural actress in you, since childhood you have given great performances one after the other.

A: I think the whole credit goes to the team, the whole set-up and the directors they made everything so comfortable on sets that made very easy for me to act in my comfort shoes.

Q: Is there any person you have a lovely memory of ?

A: I must say that biggest blessing of my life would be that I got an opportunity to work with great directors such as Rishikesh Mukharjee and Chopra saab. As a kid I did not realise but now when I look back I feel so blessed and obliged.

Q:" Geet gaata chal" and a star is born, everywhere in India brides would sing "mein wahi darpaan wahi sabkuch laage naya naya". How did you handle this stardom.

A: I don't know what to say, "Geet gaata chal"was an im-

mense success and I owe it to my directors and team.

Q: Any one role which is close to your heart that you will cherish forever?

A: It is very hard to say, all of roles are my favorite and it is very difficult to pick one. I enjoyed playing them all.

Q: What kind of an evolution do you see in old Bollywood and current Bollywood?

A: oh! I think a lot has changed since the old times. I find it absolutely wonderful it is a great change in terms of diversity in cinema, freedom of expression and, realism in cinema

Q: Tell us about your favorite actress from the younger generation.

A: They are all so good, there is one good actress in every kind of cinema. It is very difficult to choose one.

Q: How are you feeling in Bangalore?

A: Oh very nice, I love Bangalore.

'Courage doesn't mean absence of fear ; you learn to manage fear '

Prathiksha Devagiri
NSoJ Bureau

Barkha Dutt, one of the best-known television journalists in India, spoke on women in conflict zones and #Me Too movement at the Bangalore Literature Festival 2018 held recently. Here are excerpts from an exclusive interview that she gave to NSoJ.



Q: The #Me Too movement has become a trend nowadays. Why is this happening now, all of a sudden?

A: Sometimes it takes one person to speak and anchors emerge from that. It started with an actor in the film industry, a few journalists joined, and then women in every profession started joining, because they found some space where they could get support which they

didn't get earlier.

Q: You spoke about women in conflict zones, what are the difficulties women face there?

A: The biggest difficulty women face is that they have to convince their employers to send them to work, as there is an assumption that women want special treatment, they have to be treated softly.

BARKHA DUTT

Women don't want that. They just need the same opportunities their male colleagues get.

Q: What was your experience in reporting at war zones?

A: I was much younger, around 27 years, and it was a transformative experience of my life which made me a conflict reporter. I learnt that courage does not mean absence

of fear, it just means you learn to manage fear.

Q: What's your advice to budding journalists like us?

A: Join journalism only if you love it and have passion for it. Don't join to get your face on TV. Don't join thinking that it is safe because it is an all-consuming profession.

'Even if it's gossip, no problem; but do discuss LGBT'

Aishwarya A Rajpurohit
NSoJ Bureau

Vasudhendra, a well-known Kannada writer, born in Bellary district of Karnataka, is known for his short stories. In his newly released book, "Monhanswamy", is a collection of stories about the gay character. He, in his book reveals to his readers of him being a gay.



VASUDHENDRA

reject them, and there lies the bigger challenge to be faced.

'But decriminalizing it may open up a bigger and brighter area for us in future.'

"The legal approval has encouraged people to come out of the closet and accept their sexuality". Legalizing homosexuality will help remove the social stigma and phobias from minds of people, which otherwise will be difficult without the help of the legal system.

Vasudhendra said "The Indians are far ahead of the legal system and have accepted us even before decriminalizing of section 377."

To live in society with diverse features is in itself a unique task.. To understand the dynamics of society we need to comprehend the basic need of every citizen.

Openly speaking about his sexual identity, he addressed the gathering at the recent Bangalore Lit Fest. A lively person to encounter with clear thoughts, Vasudhendra speaks intensively about very few or no books with information for both LGBT and non-LGBT community, especially in regional languages.

To understand the culture, and customs we should begin talking about the issue. "Even if it's gossip it is no problem", but people should start talking about it. Everyone in society should be aware of these people. He also said that as long as the LGBT issue is spoken as someone else's problem, we are ready to accept them but when it comes to someone of their own family, they

AN EQUAL WORLD BEYOND SECTION 377



PANELISTS DISCUSS SEC 377 AT BANGALORE LIT FEST

Aishwarya A Rajpurohit
NSoJ Bureau

Decriminalisation of homosexuality by the Supreme Court is just the beginning. But the battle continues. What is badly needed is an equal world beyond decriminalisation.

A panel of eminent writers, Aatish Taseer, Madhvi Menon, Robert Dessaix and Vasudhendra, discussed Sec 377 that dealt with this sensitive issue threadbare at the Bangalore Literature Festival held recently. The session was moderated by Anjali Gopalan.

Vasudhendra said that the society at large was friendly with the LGBT community, but the legal system wasn't. There was lack of

knowledge base that explained the culture and lifestyle of the community in a positive and healthy way.

There was a need to educate people on this subject, particularly in regional languages.

Once his friend asked him whether the gay virus had bit him and that was the reason for his behaviour.

He also said "There are misconceptions that gay virus comes from the west and not from our native"

People thought it was a disease. There was stigma attached to it. LGBT community sought empathy, not sympathy, he said.

Madhvi Menon pointed out that the courts cited only western examples. Much of Indian tradition was hidden. She said that before celebrating the court verdict, people must realise that the LGBT community got this freedom after a huge struggle.

Robert Dessaix, Australian novelist, essayist, and journalist compared the situation in India with that of Australia. Homosexuality became legal in Australia 18 years ago.

Australians "couldn't give a fine duck" whether or not someone was gay. Only the uneducated Australians cared about sexual

identity.

He said India must change the narrative style of its own culture and tradition to understand this sensitive issue.

Aatish Taseer said his grandmother would be shocked to find out from his book on LGBT community, in which he had openly admitted that he was gay. It would be difficult for anyone to suddenly accept the truth, but it would bring strong waves of positivity in the long run.

Vasudhendra ended the discussion saying, "Because there is Shikandi in Mahabharata, I don't demand my rights. I want to live the way I want".

Twice Born : A book Review

Aishwarya Rajpurohit
NSoJ Bureau

The Bangalore Literature Fest began with an exuberant session with Aatish Taseer, a author with considerable relations with the Indian sub-continent. Son of Indian journalist Tavleen Singh and late Pakistani politician and businessman Salmaan Taseer. He vividly spoke on his newly released book "The Twice-Born: Life and Death on the Ganges" Taseer, keeps the interest of the reader with its plot being set in the most convenient traditional backdrop. Aatish first came to Benaras when he was eighteen, and now after two decades, he is back to find the traces of the past.

He is here in search of Brahmins, the caste that is devoted itself in sacred learning. He finds new texture in the emerging changes in society. The book moves from the narrow streets of the temple town of Benares to Modi rally in Delhi. The story revolves around the culture and politics that have emerged over the years.

CREDIBILITY IS DD's GREAT VIRTUE : AYESHA

Aishwarya A Rajpurohit
NSoJ Bureau

Fearless and bold reporting from the war zones and having great political versatility, Ayesha Khanum is with Doordarshan as News Correspondent. Her experience as field reporter for two decades has earned her the chance to travel with two Indian Prime Ministers on their international visits.

Having the experience of working with both private and government media houses, she gave us a vivid picture of the functioning of both the media houses. Technology had not taken a leap in the television industry, she recalls the days when her working pattern where even to



AYESHA KHANUM

send a report to for broadcast was a great deal. Ayesha Khanum addressing the young journalists at NSoJ briefed about certain norms to be fol-

lowed in the working procedure of DD. In one such incident when Prime Minister was an arm distance from her, she couldn't click a

picture though she wanted to. **The 90's**

During the late 90's the report had to be actually sent by cargo, not forgetting the time constraints of even reaching the airport. The later years saw an incredible change in the technique and aura of news to be dealt with. Technology became the key factor.

The style of reporting and content gained much importance than earlier. The new revolution also included change in programme patterns and also demanding reporters to be loud. Entry of foreign investment in India's news industry saw the rise of many news channels and huge demand. Briefing us about the ground realities,

Khanum said.

Current Time

Today, television news is at crossroads, media independence being questioned with technology playing a key role with huge number of players in the market, skilled and unskilled reporters and their credibility is the question of the day."

Giving details of public broadcaster, Doordarshan, Khanum said Doordarshan has the biggest reach across the country and it had stood up against the test of times and stuck to facts by winning the credibility levels. Doordarshan may not have the kind of presentation people expect but for facts and news people switch to DD."

SABITA GOSWAMI: ASSAM'S INCREDIBLE WOMAN

Trisha Sanyal
NSoJ Bureau

The documentary screening of Geeta Sush's work on veteran journalist Sabita Goswami's four decade coverage on the violence of Assam and north-east was organized by the Network of Women Club in collaboration with Press Club of Bangalore.

Geeta Sush interviewed the daughter of Sabita Goswami, Trideni Goswami Mathur.

The documentary particularly focuses on Sabita Goswami's professional life. She worked for British Broadcasting Corporation and did in-depth cover stories of Assam agitation for news organizations.

The movie starts with Sabita Goswami's sharing some painful and horrifying experiences of Assam agitation. Today the State is facing two major problems - one is of Bangladeshi's illegal immigration in the State and the other is of formulating the National Register of Citizen draft.

Implementation of Nation Register of Citizen and proposing the bill of citizen amendment



SABITA GOSWAMI

has created turmoil between Assamese and Bengali speaking population in Assam.

Trideni Goswami said that during the 1980's "nobody could imagine a women journalist during field stories. The male journalists were given much preference in the field." Her mother is extremely courageous lady and she was able to build several

contacts to work deeply on the stories of Assam agitation.

Most of them thought that she was social worker rather than journalist". "Assam witnessed one of the bloodiest elections during 1980s. Several massacres took place during that time. It was considered worst after the genocide during 1947 partition

of India.

Assam Liberation front was created in the backdrop of the agitation in the State. The main motto was to drive away all the non-Assamese people from the State. The movement was a matter of pride to preserve their cultural identity. They feared that if the outsiders in their State weren't identified and deported;

they will be reduced to a minority, as was the case in Tripura.

After six years of turmoil, the government under Rajiv Gandhi signed an agreement with the members of AASU and AASGP. The negotiations ended up with the signing of the Assam Accord on August 15, 1985.

After the accord, AASU and AASGP merged and formed a regional political party called Asom Gana Parishad. Prafulla Kunmar Mahanta became the chief minister of the State in 1985 with a promise of resolving the foreigner's issue and building Golden Assam.

Reporting such events during that time was extremely tough, exhausting and heartbreaking for her mother "says Mathur. Her mother shared an anecdote with her, where Sabita Goswami decided to visit her nephew who was behind bars owing to the ongoing protest in which he had taken part. She remembers the prisoners who were excited to share their stories with her. They called her big sister. Madhur concluded with a quote saying that "The battle is real and it is very similar to Greek war"

Malathi: Always a fighter, a winning horse

Ashutosh Patki
Raksha Arun
NSoJ Bureau

Life is a battleground. To survive on this battleground, one should be a warrior. It does not matter how many scars one has on their body because those are the proud marks of one's bravery. Some people in this world are born fighters.

They face immense pain but still reach the goal of life and their life becomes an inspirational story. Padma Shri Dr. Malathi Krishnamurthy Holla is one of the best examples.

A girl who dreamed to run with her friends but was not able to because of her disability. And today, she is "India's fastest women athlete on the wheel". Having won 428 medals, Malathi was conferred the prestigious Arjuna and Padmashree award. She is the founder of Mathru Foundation.

Q1. What is the difference between Malathi Holla before 428 medals and after?

A: Before 428 medals Malathi Holla was a big zero. Keeping aside society's recognition, I myself was unable to recognize who I was. My potential and focus remained untold and hidden within myself because I did not know or introspect as to who I was. All that I remember are the struggles that I had to face physically and mentally in order to live a happy life. What I am now is wholly because of sports. My passion for sports helped me to create a born-to-win Malathi Holla in me.

Q2. How can sports change a person's life? Tell us about your struggles and how did you prepare yourself?

A: Sports can shape one's life perfectly. The more and more you torture yourself physically by means of physical exercises and fitness, the stronger will one become mentally.

Now I have all the strength and courage to face any kind of pain. I think sport is the best medicine for a human being. I started this career in 1975. This ground is my second house. Every day I came here. In those days facilities were not avail-



MALLATHI HOLLA

able. Coaches were not there; even now we do not have a coach.

Travelling was a big challenge as the financial condition then was bad. However, I did not miss even a day for my practice.

I used to spend six rupees on autorikshaw which was not affordable for me. For the pocket money, I ironed papa's clothes and he used to give me 50 paise per piece. That money I had to use for travelling. The next problem was, whenever I practised on my wheel chair in sand, its tyres and tubes used to get worn out after a week and changing them every time was not affordable for me. Papa used to give me three rupees. After putting the shotput, it was hard for me to go and bring it back. I got hold on the boy who was the son of a worker. I gave him one rupee a day for candy and he helped me in practice. When my financial condition became good, I took his entire educational responsibility. I do not call that a struggle; it was a life experience.

Q3. You always claim that you may be physically paralyzed but your self confidence is not paralyzed. Can you tell us the secret behind this?

A: One should not become mentally paralyzed. Your self-determination, confidence, self-respect, ambitions and dreams should not be paralyzed. I always felt proud in setting myself as the best example for many. When I go back in time, at the age of fourteen months I was detected with polio.

Only my neck was functioning and the entire body was paralyzed.

My eyeballs were not at the proper place and neither was I able to speak properly nor hear properly.

I was unable to respond to people, though I was able to comprehend because my tongue didn't function properly. I had three siblings and my family was very poor and we were unable to afford a single meal in a day.

My mother used to carry me in two or three buses in order to get me to the hospital for an electric shock treatment. Two or three years this process continued and afterwards I was shifted to a hospital in Chennai. There I spent 15 long years and underwent 33 surgeries. Those fifteen years were physically painful. All this made me mentally strong and confident.

Q4. I read your interaction with the Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. We would like to hear about it.

A: In 1994, I wanted to buy a car. I wanted to get some concession because such cars (which are specially made for disabled people) are expensive. Someone told me that it could get exempted as a sports person. I had to show my certificates. So I travelled for 42 hours and reached Delhi.

I guess that time the winter session of Parliament was going on and Mr. Manmohan Singh had a bad day. I showed him 158 certificates. He saw them and then with a sensitive voice he asked me: "Madam, do they belong to you?" I said, "Yes sir!"

Then he said, "Are you Malathi Holla?". Patiently again I gave

the same reply. Then he asked me, "How can I believe that these certificates belong to you?" I felt bad. Then I replied, "If that is the case, then how can I believe that you are Mr. Manmohan Singh?" When I came back to my place an authorization letter was on my table. The facilities of exemption were not open for me but also for all sportspersons. That gave me the satisfaction that I had contributed to society.

Q5. As the founder of 'Mathru Foundation', tell us about polio in India. Because in 2014 India received "Polio-free Nation" certificate but still polio cases are getting reported. What do you think we are lacking?

A: Awareness programs are there. Good services are available. Certain things you cannot make people understand because of their blind belief. They think giving polio drops to their children will lead to their death. The child has to suffer because it is god's will. People's thinking should change and then we will become a totally polio-free nation.

Q6. You have received many State-level and international awards. What was your feeling while receiving them?

A: It was the outcome of my struggle. Particularly 1995 was my peak year, as I received state awards and Arjuna award too. For this I struggled a lot. Because, till 1979 Arjuna award was given to one handicapped sportsperson. Then in that year amendment was brought in saying that no physically challenged sportsperson would be eligible for Arjuna award. Then again I had to go to Delhi and then an amendment was made so that one or two handicapped sportsperson would be eligible for the award. These awards gave me confidence. In 2001, I received Padma Shri which was the best moments of my life.

Q7. Tell us about "Mathru Foundation".

A: My childhood was physically and mentally very painful. When I came out of the hospital I was eighteen years old. Those fifteen long years, staying away from my parents was disappointing. My mother never came there as she

was very sensitive. But my father would visit me every week. I was very attached to my father. He used to say that at least something I should give back to society. When I questioned myself that what I was giving back to society, I got no answer.

Then I decided to do something for the disabled children. In urban areas, parents are literates and can afford to take care of their children but in the rural areas the conditions differ. The disabled children are neglected by their own parents. They are considered as a curse and made to live within the four walls. We started with two children in 2004 and today

I am a proud mother of thirty three children. So I am enjoying my motherhood. Whatever I missed in my childhood I am giving them now.

Q8. #MeeToo movement is gaining popularity. What is your opinion about this?

A: Everyone should support this movement. But my only suggestion is victims should come out with proper records. Waiting for decades, does not make any sense. I am not saying they are wrong, but right time can give right justice. But what about common people? Nowadays even a one-year old child is getting raped. Mentally retarded child is getting raped.

There is no voice for such people. We cannot imagine the mental condition of the child victim's parents. Being a common person, I want this movement to become the voice for the common people. Society forgets the offender. He must suffer such torture for life.

Q9. We would like to know your views on drugs in the field of sports.

A: I am 55 plus. I am still a fighting horse and a winning horse too. Till today I don't know anything about drugs. Obstacles will come in your path but once you learn to face them, you will become stronger. Drugs will not help anybody. Whatever I am today it is because I was able to cross the obstacles in my life and there was never a shortcut.

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THE WRITE WAY

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