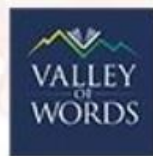




THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES

DOON UNIVERSITY, DEHRADUN

Book Reviews on Selected Works 2022



PFC-VoW Books Awards 2022

LONGLIST

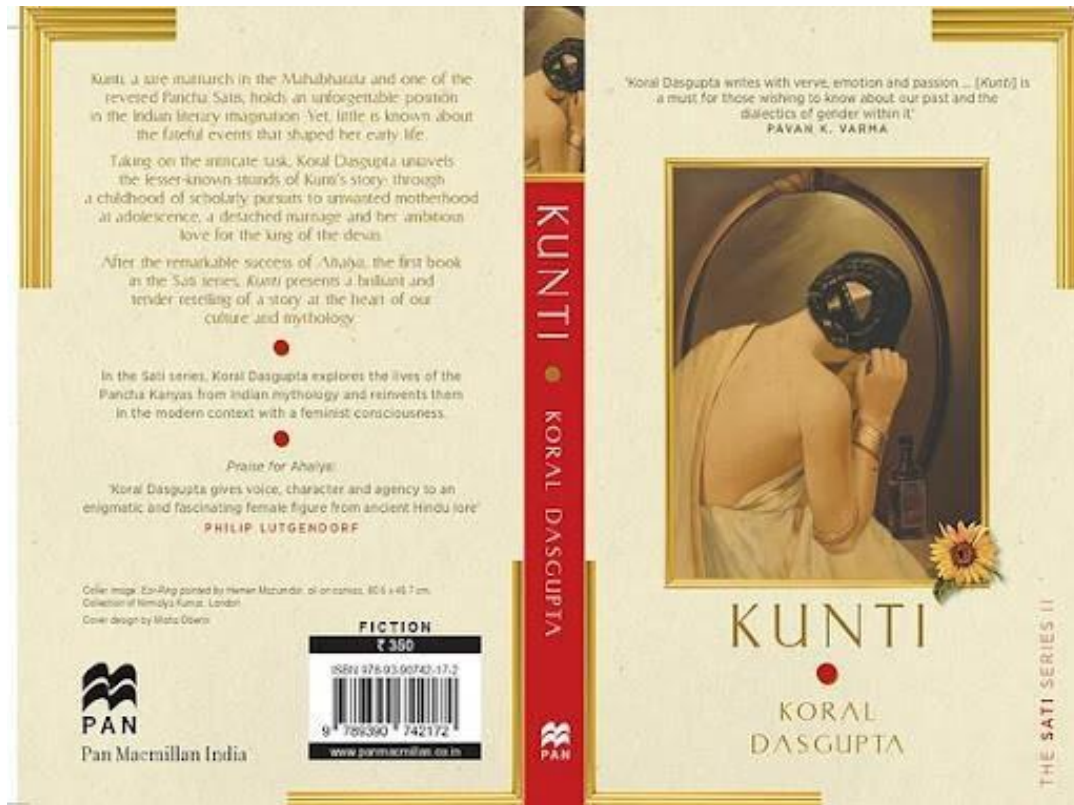
English Fiction



1. Book: *Kunti*

Author: Koral Dasgupta

Reviewer: Dr. Chetana Pokhriyal (Head, Department of English)



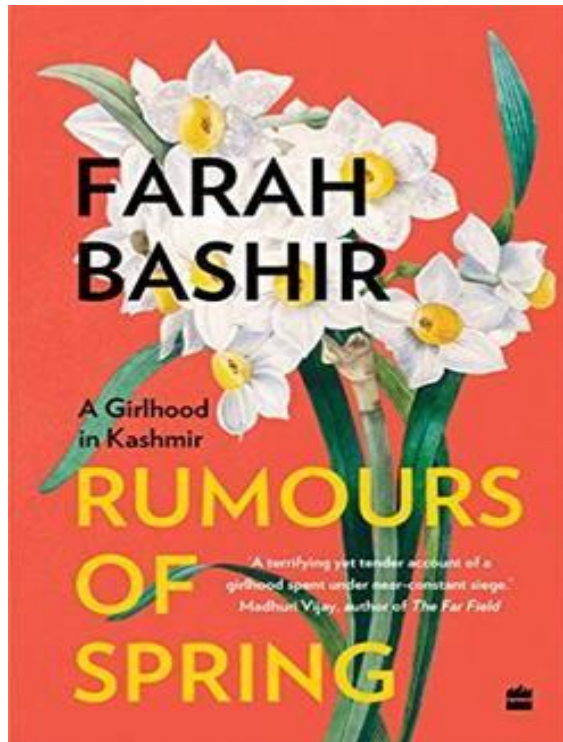
Kunti by Koral Dasgupta is a fascinating exploration of Kunti, a little dwelt upon character of the Mahabharata. Dasgupta deftly reveals the multifaceted personality of Kunti the daughter, the sister, the lover and the wife. Where she is usually merely acknowledged as the mother of Pandavas, Dasgupta's *Kunti* is assertive of her identity, bold in administration, unapologetic about her desires and beliefs, unafraid of raising uncomfortable questions for others. She is not a passive object, but an active individual who questions male hegemony and fearlessly addresses questions which men did not consider fell into the women's domain. Kunti thus comes across as transgressive and progressive scholar as well. All these strands have been artistically and beautifully drawn by Komal Dasgupta in this erudite and powerful, yet riveting and approachable work, recommended for scholars and general public alike.

The book is recommended.

2. Book: *A Girlhood in Kashmir: Rumours of Spring*

Author: Farah Bashir

Reviewer: Raina Singh (Research Scholar, Department of English)



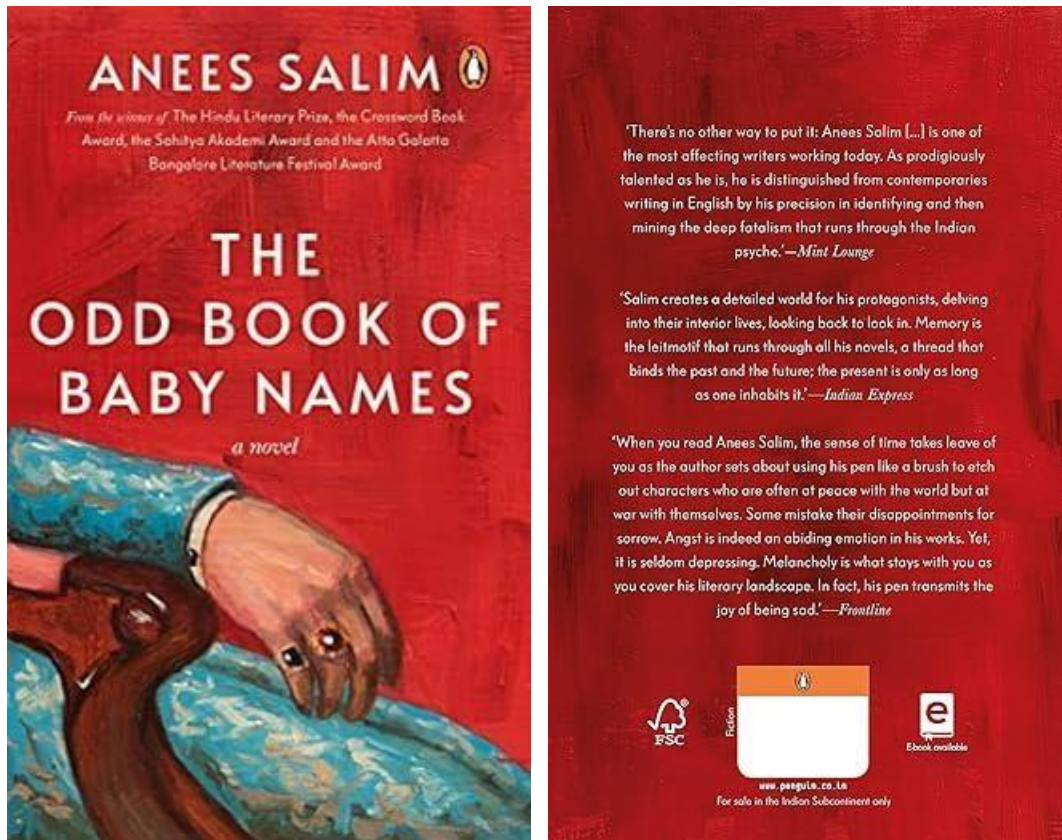
Farah Bashir's book is politically charged. It talks of curfew in Kashmir, and how daughters of Kashmir are at the receiving end of violence. There is a use of first-person narration here. It records a heartbreaking account of a girlhood spent under curfew, which is delivered in a plain descriptive style of writing.

I recommend this book.

3. Book: *The Odd Book of Baby Names*

Author: Anees Salim

Reviewer: Raina Singh (Research Scholar, Department of English)



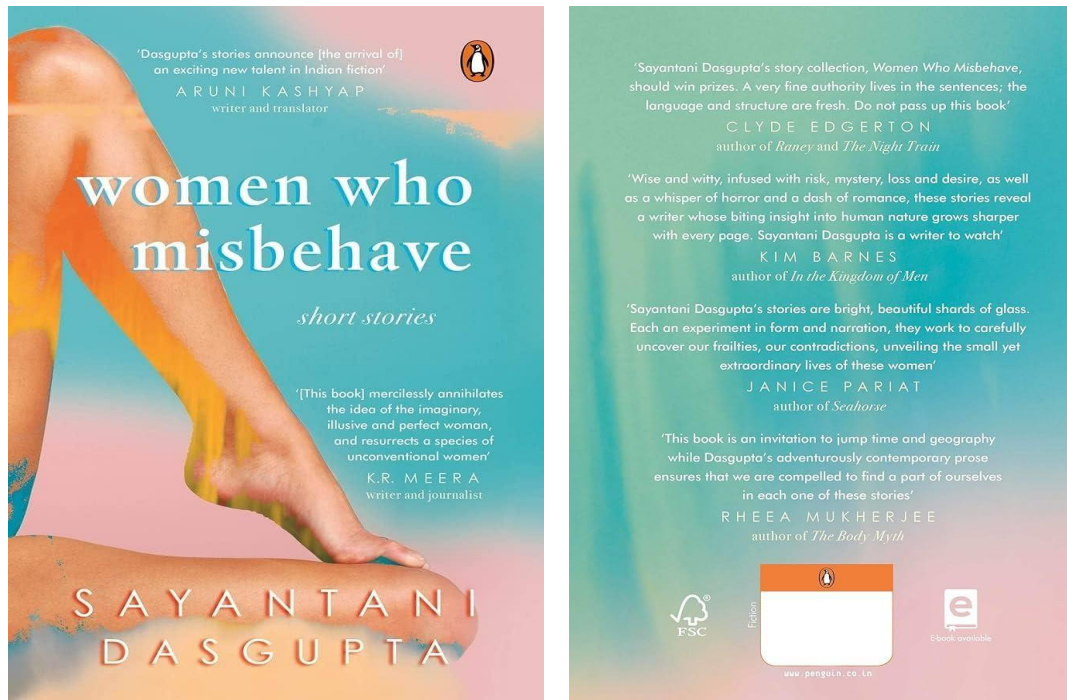
Anees Salim's text beautifully weaves the lives of legitimate and illegitimate children of a Nizam of Hyderabad. It's divided into sections, where each child of the Nizam gets to narrate their viewpoints. The same tale is narrated by different children from different perspectives depending upon their location. Everything about this book is beautiful- from content to overall writing style and structure.

This book should be shortlisted.

4. Book: *Women Who Misbehave*

Author: Sayantani Dasgupta

Reviewer: Aporwa Siwali (Research Scholar, Department of English)



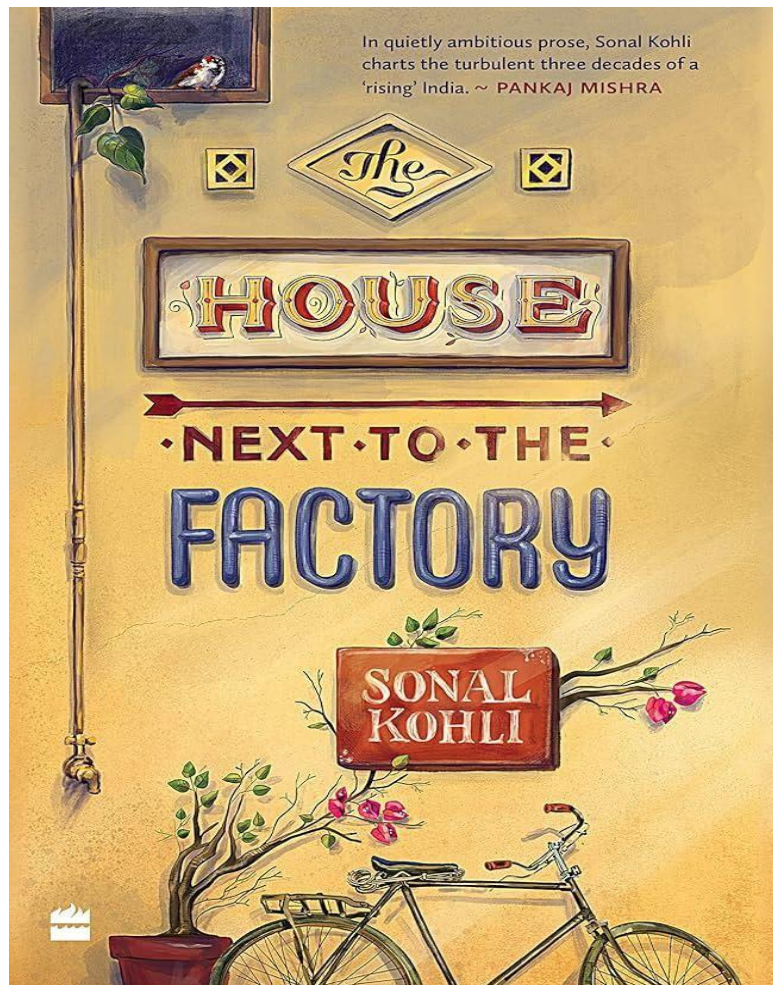
Women Who Misbehave by Sayantani Dasgupta is a collection of short stories which makes the reader always look forward for the end to discover the truth. Each story is very distinct in its approach. They bring out various themes such as homosexuality, femininity, child marriage, education among others. Each story helps in demolishing the idea of 'the perfect woman' by breaking the conventional ways of portrayal. The characters are interesting and self-sufficient, like Misha knowing not to give up on her dream, Bina being considerate about learning, and Shaaji being conscious of her doings. It gives us a reflection of different women asserting themselves in diverse ways in different arenas. Seeing them gives the reader multiple, emphatic ways of looking at the unique personalities around us.

I recommend this book.

5. Book: *The House Next to the Factory*

Author: Sonal Kohli

Reviewer: Ayush V. Kurian (Research Scholar, Department of English)



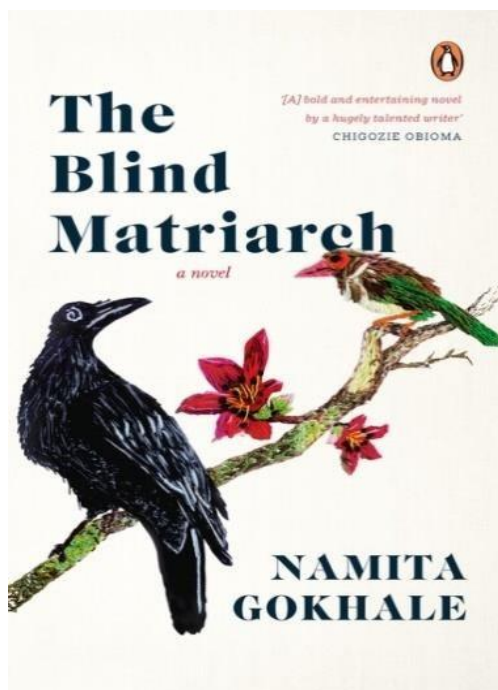
It is a collection of interlinked short stories that spans over three decades' post-independence from the turbulent times of Emergency to 2010. However, unlike the volatile period of the setting, the narratives are mostly heartfelt and mundane events of life that we often skip without noticing. The theme of Melancholy and normalcy runs deeply throughout all these stories. The work subtly includes the class divide that has become a part of contemporary lives. Sonal Kohli uses lucid language in her work to present a world that transports its reader into Suburban Delhi.

I highly recommend this book.

6. Book: *The Blind Matriarch*

Author: Namita Gokhale

Reviewer: Akanksha Barthwal (Research Scholar, Department of English)



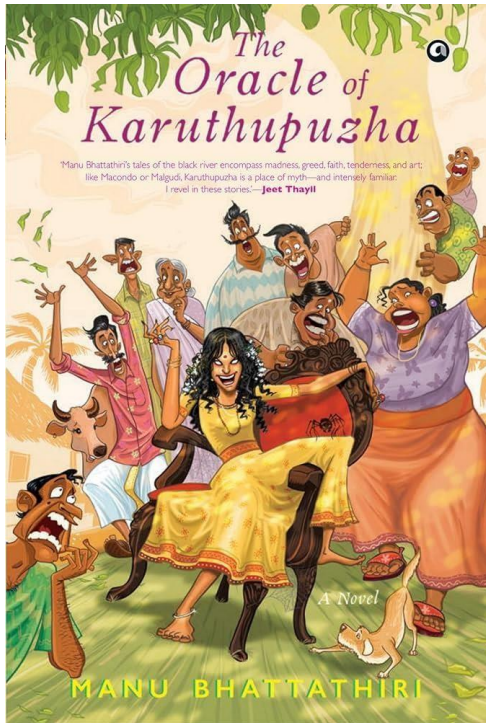
The 2021 novel by Namita Gokhale truly accords to one of the first literary responses in India to the pandemic, *The Blind Matriarch* precisely record the tempestuous events that unfolded in the country from early 2020. Gokhale explores into the complexities of an Indian family which is deeply rooted with the affection of the blind matriarch the Matangi-Ma. The blind matriarch, Matangi-Ma, lives on the topmost floor of an old house with many stories. From her eyrie, she lingers unseeingly over the lives of her family. Her long-time companion Lali is her envoi to the world. Her three children are by turn overprotective and dismissive of her. Her grandchildren are coming to terms with old secrets and growing pains. Life goes on this way until one day the world comes to a standstill-and they all begin to look inward. “*The Blind Matriarch*, which I began just before the pandemic set in, followed through on thoughts and themes from many of my previous novels. It is a quiet book, paced in a real-time narrative of lock-down days, which examines the dynamics of the Indian joint family. The central character, the blind matriarch Matangi Ma, has remained in my heart and mind long after I finished the book,” Gokhale said. This story of love and loss, of the resilience and triumph of the human spirit, will resonate with every single person who has survived the pandemic. Gokhale’s twentieth novel is an unputdownable read with a beautiful cover, which has its own back story. The reader is sad when the novel ends, wishing it went beyond page 207, wishing for the unceasing company, love, wisdom, and healing touch of magical Matangi-Ma.

I highly recommend this work of Namita Gokhale.

7. Book: *The Oracle of Karuthupuzha*

Author: Manu Bhattahiri

Reviewer: Akanksha Barthwal (Research Scholar, Department of English)




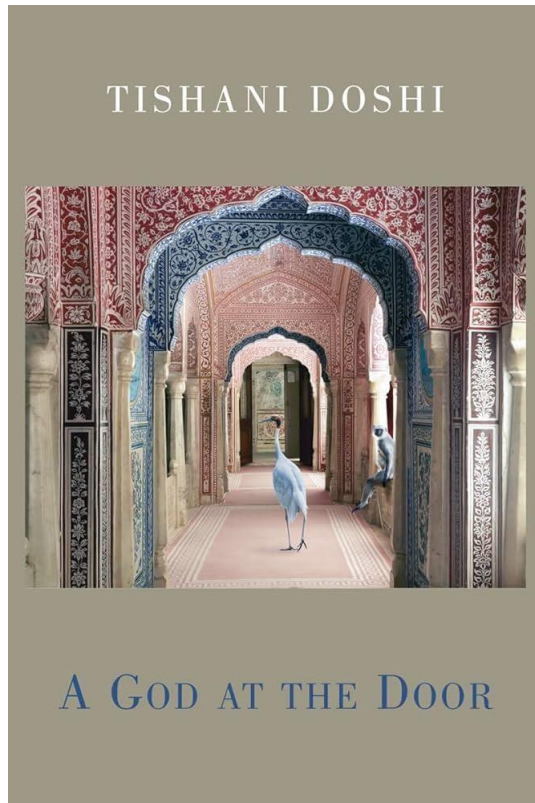
Manu Bhattathiri weaves his tale with simple language with emotionally intense characters who are beautiful imperfect people to write stories. This novel is about people which the author builds up in eccentric South Indian town called Karuthupuzha which is removed from the modern world. Nareshan is a milkman with two bony cows and father to three children; he worries about the never rising price of milk and his poverty struck life. When his daughter Sarasu comes to be possessed by a demon-god, the village visit Nareshan's home for the blessings. This becomes a so called way that might pull the family out of poverty. Bhattathiri's satirical take on a small town oracle possibly will bring out or demonstrate the human obsessions with understanding everything and might be a mirror of our reality.

I recommend this book for all group readers.

8. Book: *A God at the Door*

Author: Tishani Doshi

Reviewer: Mehul Rawat (Research Scholar, Department of English)



An exquisite collection from a poet at the peak of her powers, *A God at the Door* spans time and space, drawing on the extraordinary minutiae of nature and humanity to elevate the marginalised. These poems, taken together, traverse history, from the cosmic to the everyday. There is a playful spikiness to be found in poems like 'Why the Brazilian Butt Lift Won't Save Us', while others are fed by rage. As the collection unfolds, there are gem-like poems such as 'I Carry My Uterus in a Small Suitcase' which sparkles on the page with impeccable precision. Later there are sharp shocks delivered by two mirrored poems set side by side, 'Microeconomics' and 'Macroeconomics'.

Tishani Doshi's poetry deploys beauty to heal trauma, enabling the voices of the oppressed to be heard with piercing clarity. From flightless birds and witches, to black holes and Marilyn Monroe, *A God at the Door* illuminates with lines and images that surprise, inflame and dazzle.

'A generous mix of cosmic myth and earthy wit, Tishani Doshi's fourth collection, *A God at the Door*, is wise and profound, with the lightest of touches.' – RISHI DASTIDAR, *The Guardian* (Best poetry books of 2021)

'A rich and fearless extravaganza of a book, outward-looking, engaging with global crises and news stories with passion and panache. These poems go far beyond reportage – each vignette is transformed into an expansive but compressed bomb. Dealing with subjects as wide-ranging as the shooting at a maternity clinic in Kabul, or the iconic photo of a tigress hugging a tree in Manchuria, the results are packed with fury, outrage, and humour. Sometimes the poem resembles the shape of its subject, so that the form on the page is like an exquisitely fired urn containing an explosion.' – PASCALE PETIT, *Ars Notoria* (Poetry Books of the Year 2021).

BLOODAXE BOOKS

FRONT COVER
Avatars of Devi, Zenana, Samode Palace, Samode
by Karen Knorr
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ISBN 978-1-78037-577-9 \$18.95

SHORTLISTED FOR THE FORWARD PRIZE FOR BEST COLLECTION

£12.99 US \$18.95 9 781780 375779 AUTHOR PHOTOGRAPH CARLO PIZZATI

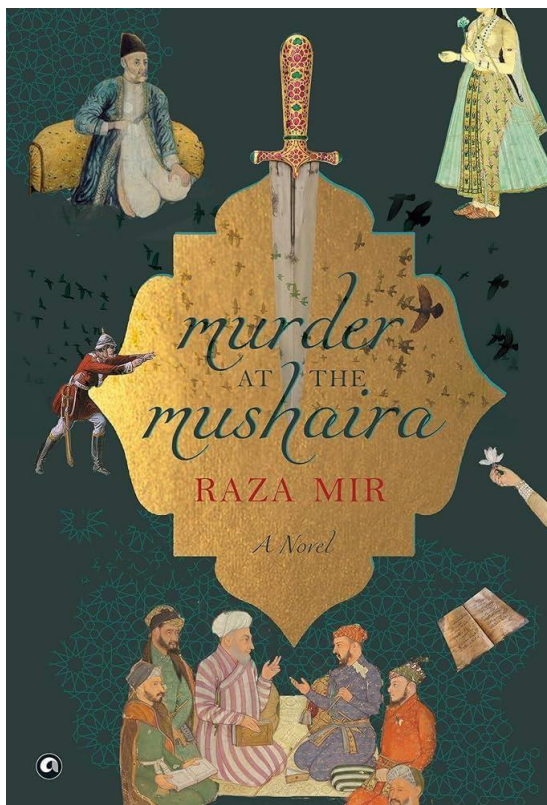
A God at the Door by Tishani Doshi is an anthology of her verse that comments upon with great poetic precision on diverse sociopolitical issues. Doshi's subjects are contemporary, her style is sharp and her metaphors are riveting. In each of her poem she grips the reader's attention by stretching the limitations of form and structure. Despite the subtleness and nuance of her art, she calls a spade a spade, coming across as a vigilant poet. A lot of her poems are astute comments on the sociopolitical goings on. Her vocabulary is apt and focussed and the lines are well chiseled. She uses irony, sarcasm and humour to good use in dismantling the modern forces that undermine human dignity. She comes across as a true professional.

Her work is recommended not only for her ideas, but also for the aesthetic presentation.

9. Book: *Murder at the Mushaira*

Author: Raza Mir

Reviewer: Dr Gazala Khan (Guest Faculty, Department of English)

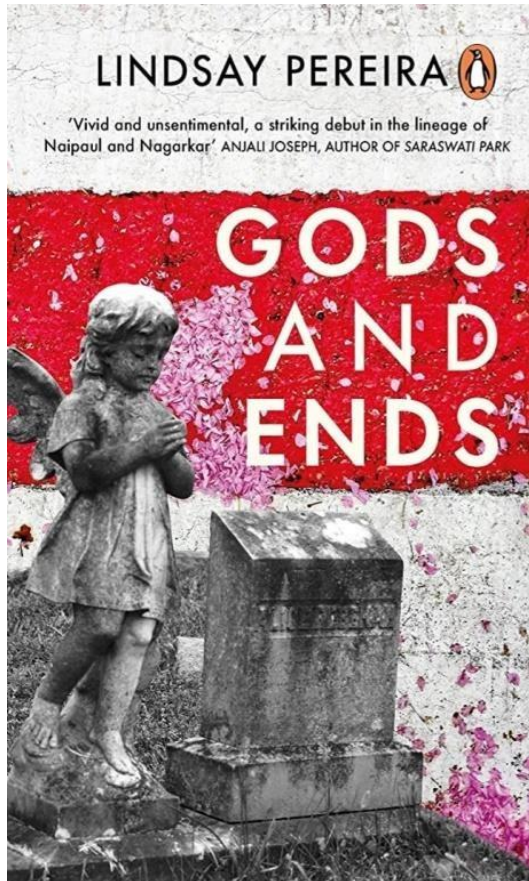


It is a detective fiction drawn on the locale of old Delhi of mid-nineteenth century when British were ruling India and the fire of rebellion had lit among the Indians. Interestingly, the detective is famous Urdu poet Mirza Ghalib who is hired to solve a murder case that has left the Crown, East India Company, Mughals and the Indians startled. It's a well-knit plot and the writer explicitly holds the attention of the reader throughout the text. Mirza Ghalib uses poetic couplets to understand and solve the case of murder held at the musharia. He deciphers the behaviour of the attendees through the kind of poems that the write. The novel also projects Indian youth association with the war of Independence against the British. A historical fiction coloured with imagination throws light on the political and poetical affairs of the time. **His work is recommended for the lovers of literature who love history, thriller, suspense and whodunit plots.**

10. Book: *Gods and Ends*

Author: Lindsay Pereira

Reviewer: Dr Gazala Khan (Guest Faculty, Department of English)



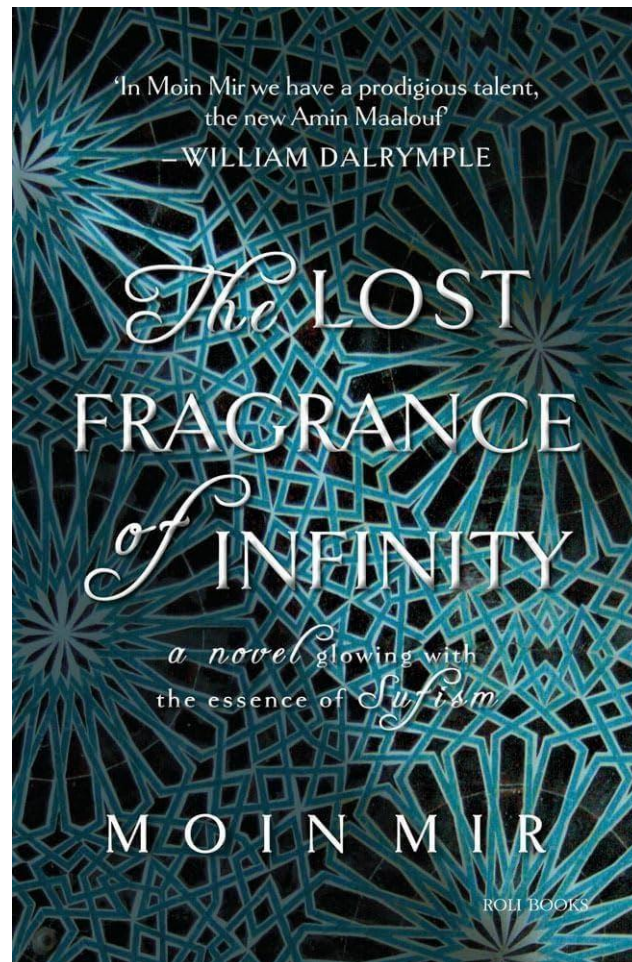
It's a story of a marginalized community of the Roman Catholic based out of Bombay. The tragic story reveals the characters that are real and reveals the stark reality of brutal lives that they have to live off. It's tainted with sarcasm and biting humour.

I highly recommend this book.

11. Book: *The Lost Fragrance of Infinity*

Author: Moin Mir

Reviewer: Shabeer Ahmad (Research Scholar, Department of English)



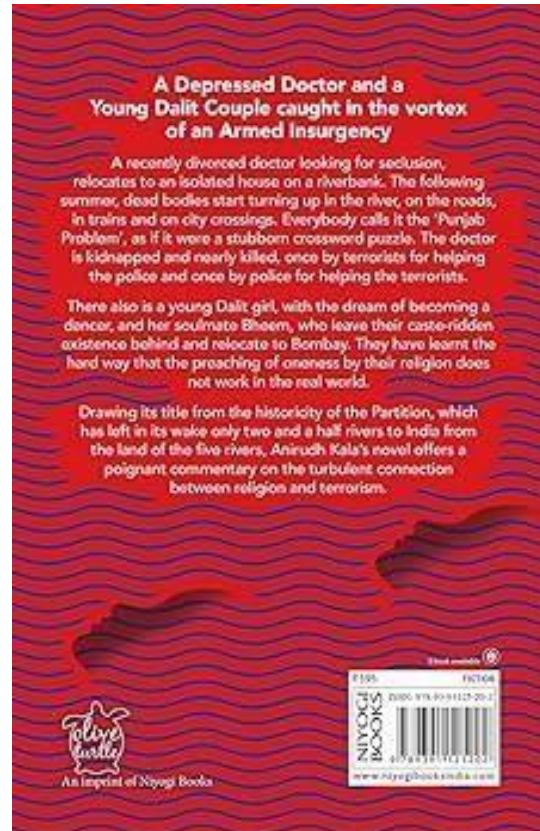
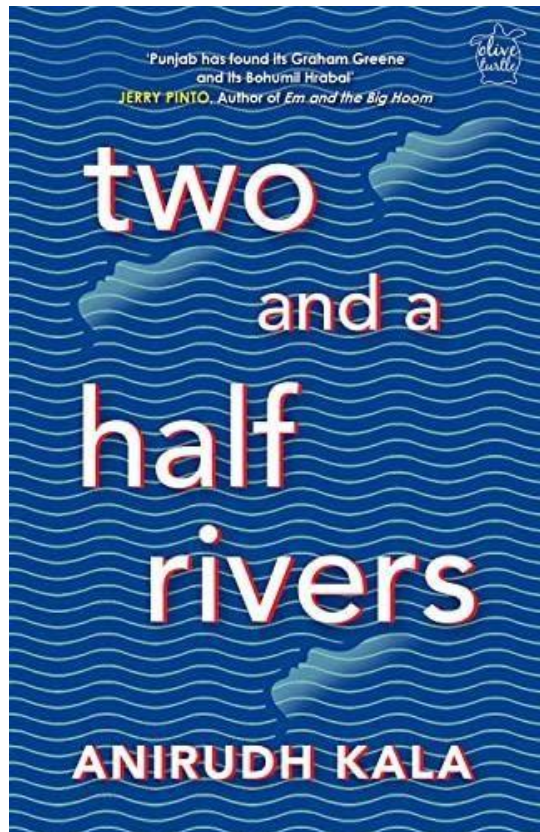
It gives a much deserved voice to Sufism and its contribution to humanity, art, mathematics, mysticism and science. The book gives account of dislocations caused by decline of Mughal and Ottoman Empire and the impact of Sufism. Their influence on ruler and its positive consequences direct their resources towards science, arts and social improvements and gives the message that power divides while Sufism unites.

The book can be recommended.

12. Book: *Two and a Half Rivers*

Author: Anirudh Kala

Reviewer: Ayush V. Kurian (Research Scholar, Department of English)



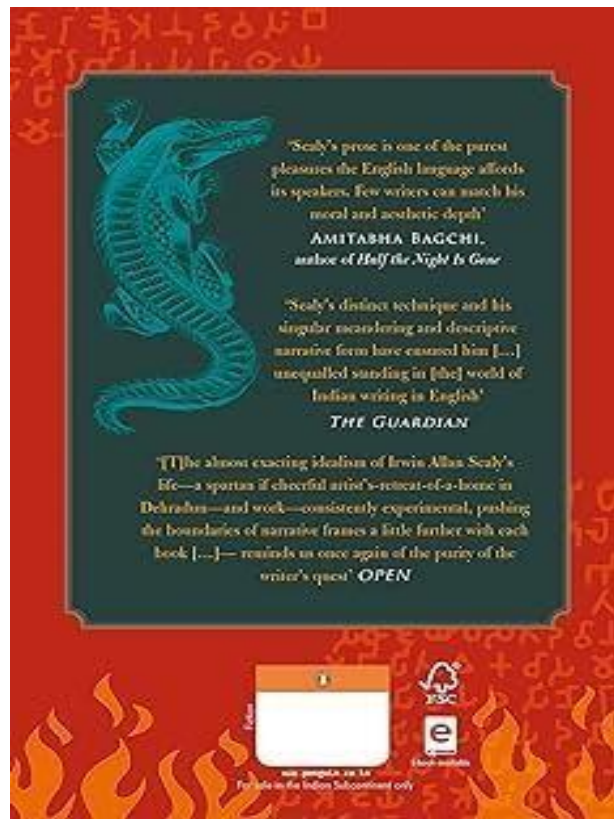
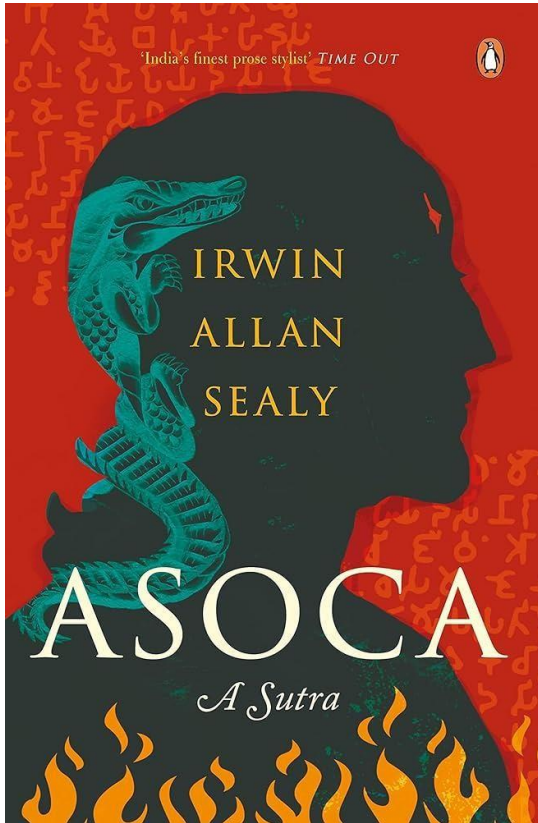
Is a tale that involves the theme of caste discrimination, loneliness and personal loss. It acts as a tool to give voice to those who were pushed to the margins during the time of insurgency. Anirudh Kala through his narrative takes the readers into the turbulent times and helps us revisit the atrocities of the war and ponder over its effect and after effect. The commentary on religion and extremism makes it a good read.

The book is recommended.

13. Book: *Asoca: A Sutra*

Author: Irwin Allan Sealy

Reviewer: Ms. Shubra Kukreti (Assistant Professor, Department of Francophone Studies)



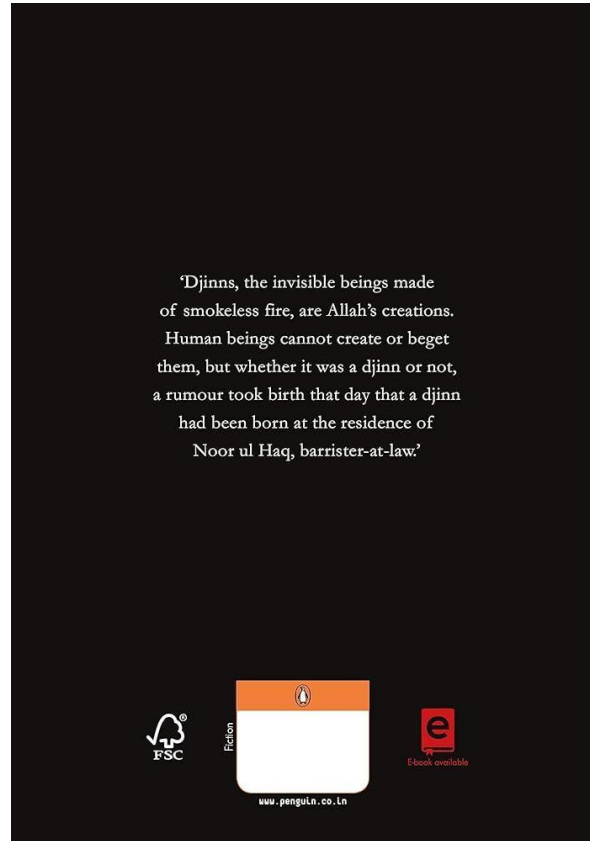
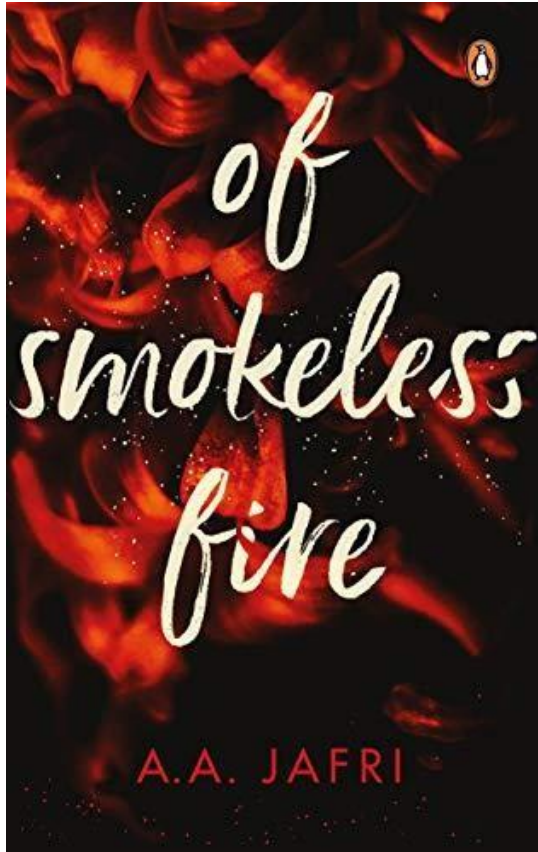
Asoca by Irwin Allan Sealy is a historical fiction on King Ashoka. The narrative is highly whimsical and is modern in looking at the historical ruler.

It is highly recommended.

14. Book: *Of Smokeless Fire*

Author: A. A. Jafri

Reviewer: Dr. Chetana Pokhriyal (Head, Department of English)



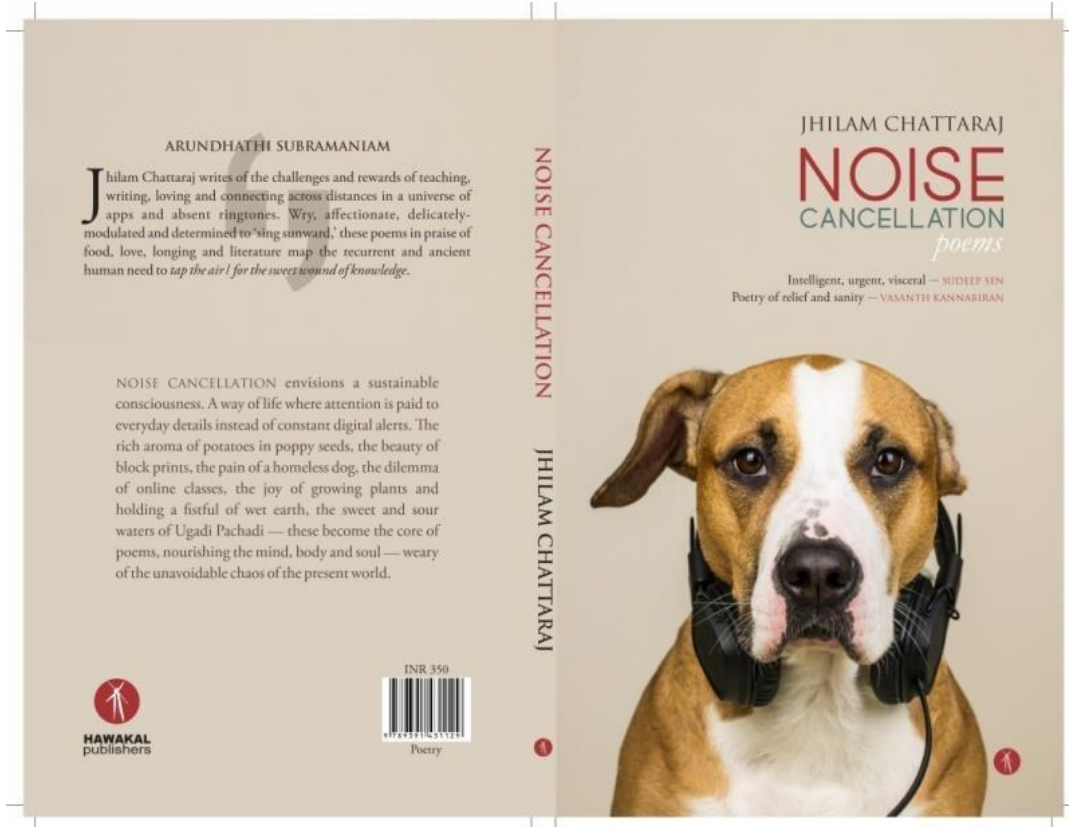
Nothing new that has not been written before about culture, the stifling struggle between new and old, poor and riches, and how religion plays a part in this journey to find one's true self. But it is told in such a captivating way that it made itself distinct from other similar stories that I have read.

This book is not recommended

15. Book: *Noise Cancellation*

Author: Jhilmam Chattaraj

Reviewer: Raina Singh (Research Scholar, Department of English)



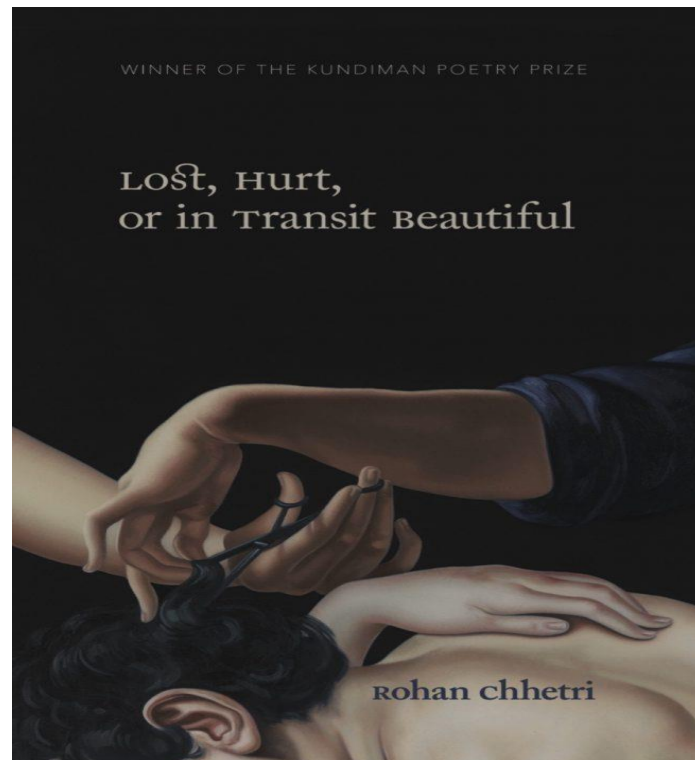
Noise Cancellation is a good one time read. It's a collection of poetry on mundane things in life such as everyday food items, saree, and lockdown. In one of her poems, Chattaraj creatively arranges all alphabets of English in ascending order to write 26 lines defining Indian woman. There is an emphasis on mundane things in these poems, but there is nothing new or substantial that is talked of in the book.

This book is not recommended.

16. Book: *Lost, Hurt or in Transit Beautiful*

Author: Rohan Chhetri

Reviewer: Ms. Kritika Joshi (Student, Dept. of English)



It is a collection of poems by Rohan Chhetri. The poems are beautiful accounts of the poet's homeland and the conflicts that his community faces.

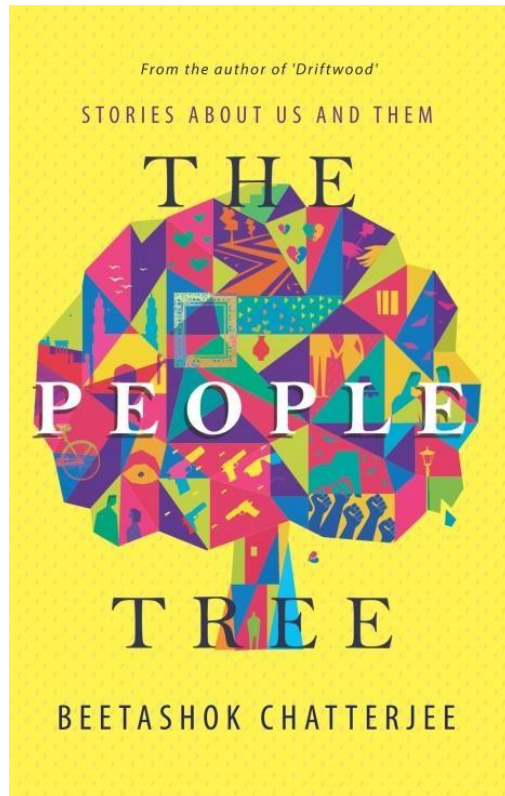
The poems employ the themes of —revolution, death, soldiers and longing all set against the foothills of Himalayas. The poems are not lyrical and devoid of rhythm, rather they are prosaic. The imagery is vivid and enchanting that almost arrests the reader's attention.

This book is not recommended.

17. Book: *The People Tree*

Author: Beetashok Chatterjee

Reviewer: Dr. Aditi Bist (Guest Faculty, Department of English)

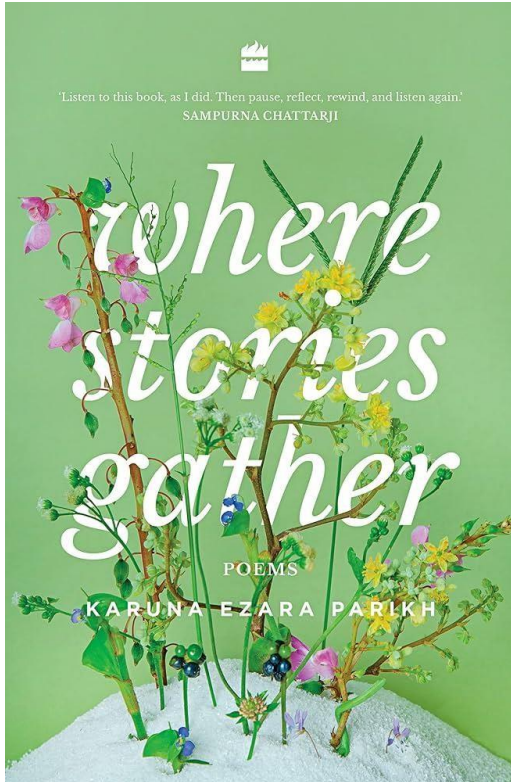


One time read, not recommended.

18. Book: *Where Stories Gather*

Author: Karuna Ezara Parikh

Reviewer: Mehul Rawat (Research Scholar, Department of English)



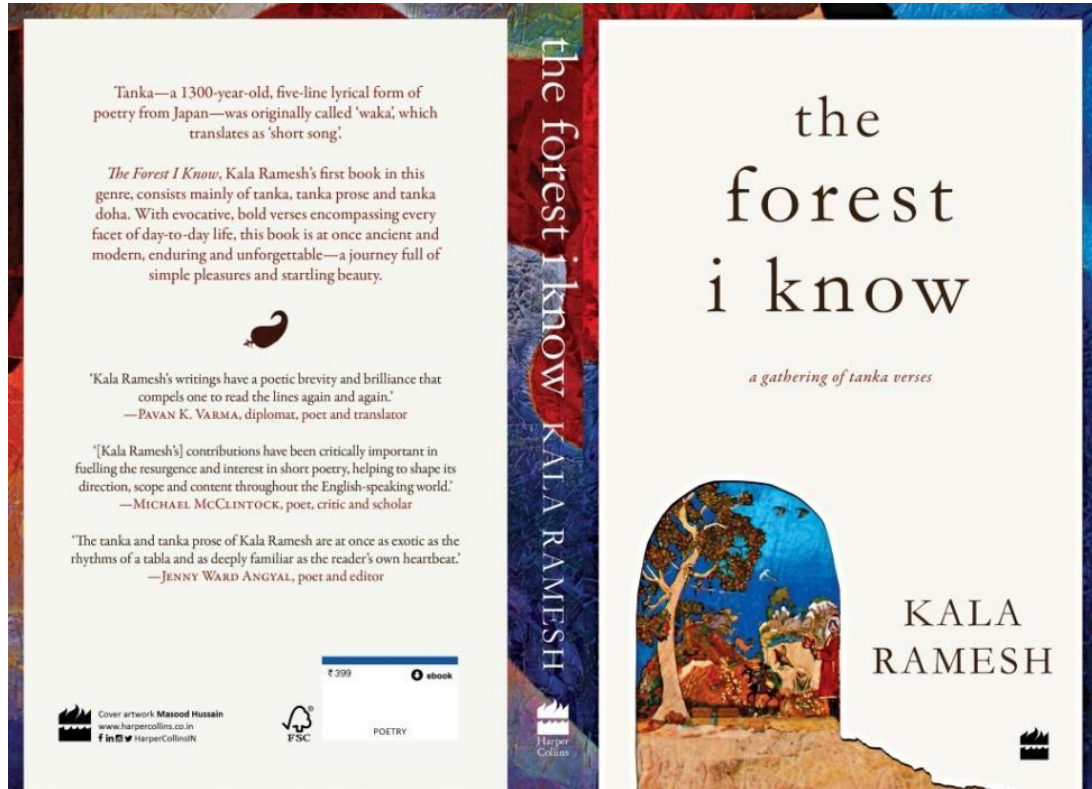
Where Stories Gather, Karuna Ezara Parikh's first volume of poetry, presents a curation of her most popular work alongside new material where she delves into a deeply personal realm, asking and answering questions of identity, memory, womanhood, and the heart. Her poem Pray for the World, published on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram in 2015, echoed around a bruised, grieving world, speaking directly to those bewildered and outraged by the moral contradictions of international politics.

This book is not recommended.

19. Book: *The Forest I Know*

Author: Kala Ramesh

Reviewer: Mehul Rawat (Research Scholar, Department of English)



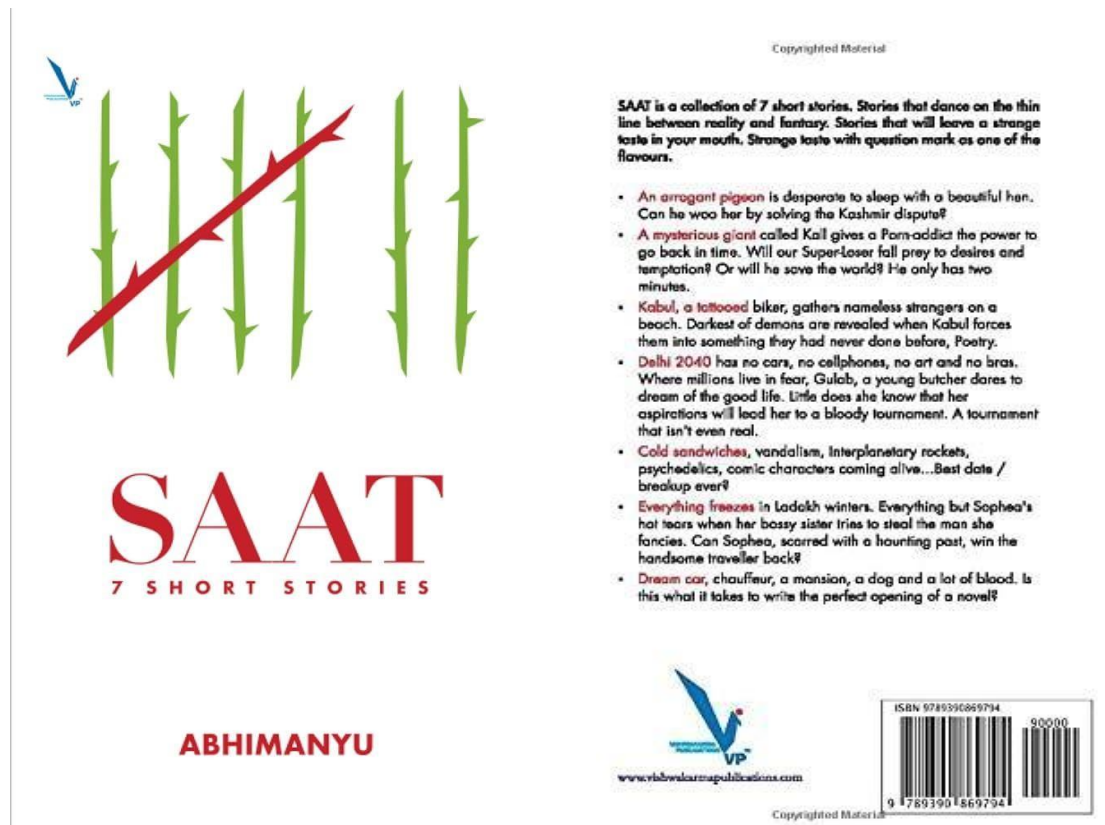
Tanka, a 1300-year-old, five-line lyrical form of poetry from Japan, was originally called 'waka', which translates as 'short song'. *The Forest I Know*, Kala Ramesh's first book in this genre, consists mainly of tanka, tanka prose, and tanka doha.

This book is not recommended.

20. Book: *Saat 7 Short Stories*

Author: Abhimanyu

Reviewer: Aporwa Siwali (Research Scholar)



SAAT is a collection of 7 short stories. Stories that dance on the thin line between reality and fantasy. Stories that will leave a strange taste in your mouth. Strange taste with question mark as one of the flavours. 1. What if you could go back in time, but you only had 2 minutes? What would you do? 2. What if a pigeon could resolve the Kashmir issue? 3. What if you needed blood on your hands to write a best seller? 4. What if your sibling took everything you liked; your toys, your food, your lover? 5. What if in 2040 dreams come true and the truth, is nothing but a dream? 6. What if your life was a poem? Will it be a happy one? 7. What if there was such a thing as the perfect breakup?

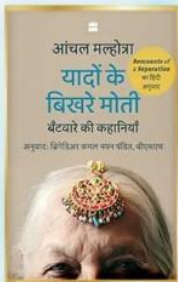
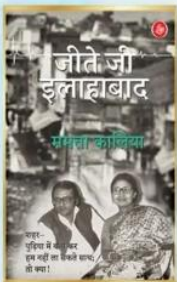
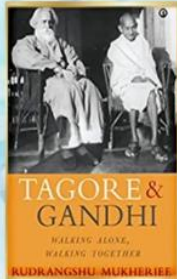
This book is not recommended.



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