

SPEAKERS

The momentous issues of this hour are producing their inevitable upheaval, change and effort at creation in the whole national life, politics, society, economical conditions, industry, commerce, as well as and more noisily than in literature. But it is perhaps in art, literature and science that the future will see what was most definitive in the creations of the present hour...

Sri Aurobindo, Essays Human & Divine



Anne Weber is a German-French author, translator into both French and German and self-translator. She studied in Paris and worked for several publishers. Anne Weber started writing and publishing in French, but immediately translated her book into German. Since then she has written each of her books in French and German. In 2005 she received the 3Sat award at the Festival of German-Language Literature. For her translation of Pierre Michon she received a European translation award. She was awarded the 2020 German Book Prize for Epic Annette.



Anu Majumdar has lived in Auroville for over forty years. She worked on the Matrimandir construction site and was a dancer choreographer with the Auroville Dance Lab. Her books include: *Parallel Journeys*, *Refugees from Paradise & God Enchanter* (Fiction); *Island of Infinity & Infinity Papers* (YA); and *Auroville: A City for the Future*. She was a poetry columnist with *Arts Illustrated* & contributed 108 poems to the *Light Matter* art installation. Her poetry has appeared in various magazines and anthologized, as in *Converse*.



'Kalaimaamani' **Dr. Arimalam Padmanabhan**, Former Fellow of Central Institute of Classical Tamil, Govt. of India, is a veteran Musician & Musicologist with more than five decades of professional experience. A visiting faculty of fine arts in various Universities and colleges, he has authored 11 Research Books on Music and Theatre Arts, and compiled the First Dictionary of Music Literary Terms in Tamil. A recipient of several prestigious Awards including the Best Musicologist Award 2023 of Madras Music Academy.



Dena Merriam began work in the inter-faith movement in 1990s as Vice Chair of the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious Leaders held at the UN in 2000. She is the founder of the Global Peace Initiative of Women (GPIW). For over 40 years, she has been a student of Paramahansa Yogananda and a meditation practitioner. She received her MA from Columbia Univ. In 2014 she received the Niwano Peace Prize for her interfaith peace efforts. Her books include *My Journey Through Time*, *When the Bright Moon* among others.



Devdip Ganguli is a faculty member at the Sri Aurobindo Centre of Education at Pondicherry, where he offers courses on the social and political philosophy of Sri Aurobindo, as well as on ancient Indian history, art and culture, to undergraduate students. He is frequently invited to speak in universities in India and abroad on topics related to Sri Aurobindo's writings. His area of interest is at the intersection of Integral Yoga, Indian art and Asian philosophy.



Gautam Chikermane is a Vice President at Observer Research Foundation, he has worked in leadership positions at India's top newspapers and magazines, including *Hindustan Times*, *The Indian Express* and *Outlook*. His areas of interest are economic policy and international relations. His other recent books include *India 2030* (Penguin, 2021) and *Reform Nation* (HarperCollins, 2022). He has been studying the works of Sri Aurobindo since 2000.



Gayatri Majumdar is founder/editor/publisher of the critically acclaimed literary journal, *The Brown Critique*. Her books include *A Song for Bela* (a novel); poetry collections *Shout*, *I Know You Are Here*, *The Dream Pod* and *A Place With No Memory*; *The Lotus of the Heart* (non-fiction) and 'Home' anthology, which she co-edited. Gayatri was on the review committee of *Yearbook of Indian Poetry 2022* and is a co-founder of 'Pondicherry Poets'. She curates the prestigious Pondicherry/ Auroville Poetry Festival.



George Szirtes is a British poet and translator born in Budapest, Hungary in 1948. He has published several poetry collections, including *New and Collected Poems* published in 2008. Szirtes has won numerous awards, including the T.S. Eliot Prize, has been shortlisted for the Forward Prize and the Griffin Poetry Prize. In addition to his poetry, Szirtes is also a translator of Hungarian literature into English, for which he was awarded the International Booker for translation in 2015.



Dr. Jayanti Ravi is a multifaceted individual: a scientist, civil servant, writer, speaker, educator, performing vocalist, and thinker. With a diverse academic background and extensive professional experience, she has authored books, published in international journals, guided doctoral students, and served as visiting faculty at Harvard University. Notably, as principal secretary and commissioner, rural development in Gujarat, she spearheaded the Swachh Bharat Mission and recognized for her leadership during the Covid-19 outbreak. She is currently Secretary, Auroville Foundation.



Jennifer Down is a writer and editor. Her debut novel, *Our Magic Hour*, was shortlisted for the 2014 Victorian Premier's Literary Award for an Unpublished Manuscript. The story collection *Pulse Points* won the 2018 Readings Prize and the 2018 Steele Rudd Award in the Queensland Literary Awards. She was named a *Sydney Morning Herald* Novelist of the Year in 2017 and 2018. *Bodies of Light*, her second novel, won the 2022 Miles Franklin Literary Award. She lives in Naarm/Melbourne.



Jhilam Chattaraj is an academic and poet based in Hyderabad. She has authored *Noise Cancellation*, *Corporate Fiction*, *Popular Culture and the New Writers*, & *When Lovers Leave and Poetry Stays*. Her works have been published at *Ariel*, *Colorado Review*, *World Literature Today*, *Room*, *Porrige*, *Not Very Quiet*, *Queen Mob's Tea House*, *The Wire*, and *Asian Cha*. She received the CTI Excellence Award in "Literature and Soft Skills Development" from the Council for Transforming India and Govt of Telangana.



Dr Joy Sen is an Indian architect, urban planner with over 20 years of experience and a Professor at IIT Kharagpur. Author of "Sustainable Urban Planning: A Systematic Approach" and 'The Aryan Invasion that Never Was'. A visiting faculty member, Sen has conducted research on urban sustainability, housing, urban governance, and Indian Knowledge Systems. He has received several awards including Distinguished Speakers Award, Stanford University USA and the prestigious G. S. Sanyal Best Faculty Excellence award from IIT Alumni Foundation USA.



Kanishka Gupta is a literary agent and writer best known for his acclaimed series for Scroll.in called 'Publishing and the Pandemic'. He is the founder of Writer's Side, the largest literary agency and consultancy in South Asia. He represents a range of highly accomplished debut and award-winning authors, including the 2022 International Booker Prize winner, Daisy Rockwell and has worked closely with the 2022 Man Booker Prize-winning author Shehan Karunatilaka. His first novel was longlisted for the Asian Booker Prize in 2009.



Karen Jennings is a South African author. She has published a poetry collection, short story collection, a memoir, and several novels, including *An Island*, which was longlisted for the Booker Prize in 2021 and won the K. Sello Duiker South African Literature Award the same year. Karen holds Masters degrees in English and in Creative Writing, and a PhD in English. She is currently a writer in residence at the Laboratory for the Economics of Africa's Past (LEAP) at Stellenbosch University.



Dr. Manju Kak's short stories won the Katha, Charles Wallace, Hawthornden awards & Senior Fellowship in Culture (GOI), published in *First Light in Colonepura*, *Requiem for an Unsung Revolutionary*, *Just one Life*. Her non fiction books *In the Shadow of the Devi—Kumaon*, & *Nicholas Roerich—Quest & Legacy* with a focus on art history around mountains, art, culture and the films: *They who walked Mountains* & *The Roerich Peace Pact*. She is Convenor- Peace Commission of the IAW(Geneva) & Secretary General of All India Women's Conference.



Namita Gokhale author of 21 books including 11 works of fiction, and editor of numerous anthologies. *Paro: Dreams of Passion*, *The Blind Matriarch* and the play-script *Betrayed By Hope* are some her well known works. *Mystics and Sceptics - Searching Himalayan Masters* was published in 2023. Gokhale, the co-founder and co-director of the Jaipur Literature Festival is recognised both for her writing and her commitment to multilingual Indian literature and cross-cultural literary dialogue and is a recipient of several national awards including the 2021 Sahitya Akademi award.



Nandini Sengupta is an Indian writer and journalist based in Pondicherry. She became fascinated with India's glorious past after a visit to Ajanta Ellora caves in 2007 which soon inspired her to write in the historical fiction genre. Her bestselling titles include *The Blue Horse And Other Amazing Animals from Indian History*, and the *Gupta Empire Trilogy: The King Within, The Poisoned Heart and The Ocean's Own*. *Rani Durgawati* is her first narrative non-fiction biography.



R. Meenakshi, is the author of 20 books of which 12 are anthologies of Tamil poems. A professional social worker, researcher and youth counselor, she initiated Ilaingarkal Education Centre in Auroville 45 years ago, for men and women, youth and children. She is also the Editor of *Auroville Seythimadal*, a Tamil monthly for the last 25 years. She was honoured twice by Government of Tamilnadu and has served as a member of Sahitya Akademi Tamil Advisory Board, 2008-2012.



Peggy Mohan is a Trinidad born author, also a linguist who earned a PhD from the University of Michigan, USA, migrated to India and worked as a professor of Language Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University and Jamia Milia University, New Delhi. Her books include *A Walk in C Minor* and *Jahajin*. She recently won the Matrubhumi Book of The Year Award of 2023 for her book *'Wanderers, Kings and Merchants*



Ranjit Hoskote is a poet, translator, cultural theorist and curator. His collections of poetry include *Vanishing Acts*, *Central Time*, *Jonahwhale*, *Hunchprose*, and *Icelight*. Hoskote's translation of a 14th-century Kashmiri woman mystic's work has appeared as *I, Lalla: The Poems of Lal Ded*. Hoskote curated the 7th Gwangju Biennale and India's first-ever national pavilion at the Venice Biennale. He has received the Sahitya Akademi Golden Jubilee Award, the Sahitya Akademi Prize for Translation, the S H Raza Award for Literature, and the 7th JLF-Mahakavi Kanhaiyalal Sethia Award for Poetry.



S. Hareesh is a renowned Indian writer and journalist best known for his works in the Malayalam language. He has published several novels, short story collections, and essays that have been widely praised for their literary merit and social commentary. Hareesh has won several awards for his contributions to literature, including the Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award, Vayalar Award, the Muttathu Varkey Award and the JCB Prize for Literature. His works often explore themes of identity, politics, and human relationships.



Dr. Sanjeev Chopra is a recipient of the Robert S McNamara Fellowship of the World Bank and the Hubert H Humphrey Fellowship at the University of Cornell, was a Guest Scholar at The Brookings Institution, Washington DC and part of the Twenty First Century Trust Fellows Program at Merton College, Oxford. He has written extensively on policy issues in governance and development & his latest book is We the People of Bharat. Sanjeev is the Festival Director of Valley of Words, Literature and Art International Festival.



Sanjeev Sanyal is currently a Member of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM). Earlier he was the Principal Economic Adviser to the Finance Minister and the Co-Chair of the G20's Framework Working Group and Global Strategist and Managing Director at Deutsche Bank. He was awarded the Eisenhower Fellowship in 2007 and named as a Young Global Leader by the World Economic Forum in 2010. Sanyal is the author of best-selling books like Land of the Seven Rivers, The Ocean of Churn, India in the Age of Ideas & The Indian Renaissance.



Shreya Sen-Handley is the author of 'Handle with Care', short story collection 'Strange' & 'Memoirs of My Body': Best Nonfiction Book at the NWS Writing Awards 2018 and UNESCO Cities of Literature Best Reads 2017. She is the first South Asian woman to write international opera, co-written for the Welsh National Opera's film series 'Creating Change' (2020) and 'Migrations' (2022). Her play 'Quiet' premiered at London's Tara Theatre. Former television journalist for CNBC, MTV, and East India Head for Channel [V], Shreya continues to write columns for the international media.



Sudeep Sen's prize-winning books include *Postmarked India: New & Selected Poems*, *Rain, Ladakh, Aria* (A. K. Ramanujan Translation Award), *The Harper Collins Book of English Poetry*, *Fractals: New & Selected Poems | Translations 1980-2015*, *EroText*, *Kaifi Azmi: Poems|Nazms*, *Anthropocene*, and *Red*. He is the editorial director of AARK ARTS, editor of *Atlas*. The Government of India awarded him the Senior Fellowship for "outstanding persons in the field of culture/literature." Sen is the first Asian honoured to deliver the Derek Walcott Lecture at the Nobel Laureate Festival.



Uday taught history and critical thinking at the Ashram school in Pondicherry for 5 years, and remains a mentor to several teenagers and young adults. He returned to India in 2017 after 14 years in New York and Paris, having worked in various capacities in finance and banking. He is the founding partner at *BlueLotus.vc* which has funded more than 80 startups in India and abroad and is tracking various new experiments in education



Violaine Huisman is a French writer. Her debut novel, *The Book of Mother*, won *Prix Françoise Sagan* and was longlisted for *International Booker Prize*. She has lived in New York for over two decades and worked in publishing and translated novels. Huisman has coordinated the literary series at the *Brooklyn Academy of Music*, as well as managed multidisciplinary arts festivals. She works as an essayist and cultural journalist and has written for such publications as *The New York Times*, *Vogue* and *The Paris Review*.