

#JLF

Mai Vo Hu Jo Mai Likhta Hu



Tusharika Singh
Freelance Writer and City Blogger

Manav Kaul's world is stitched together with wonder. Born in Baramulla, Kashmir, and raised in Hoshangabad, his earliest memories are of trains rushing past destinations unknown, journeys infinite. This sense of distance and curiosity is captured in the title of one of his books, *Bahut Door Kina Door Hota Hai*. Even now, as an acclaimed writer, actor, and theatre-maker, that boy remains within him. Each time he travels, he carries the same awe, an unshakable small-town curiosity. On flights, he sometimes wonders if he belongs, if someone might tap him on the shoulder and ask him to leave. "Being from a small town, there is a certain freedom and also a certain complex," he says.

Kaul's writing mirrors this duality, of being and becoming, of longing and belonging. His book *Tumhare Baare Mein* carries a life that distills his essence, "Mai too nahi hu jo mai dikhta hu, mai vo hu jo mai likhta hu." (I am not who I appear to be, I am who I write.) At the Jaipur Literature Festival, he confessed, "Mujhe hikma nahi aata. Mai likh raha hu aur mujhe maza aa raha hai, bas kuch nahi chahiye mujhe." (I don't know how to write. I just write, and I enjoy it.

Even after over 30 books, numerous plays, OTT shows, and movies, Manav Kaul remains both the boy watching the train and the traveller stepping aboard, uncertain of the destination, yet enchanted by the ride.

Photo Ops



Photos by Zakir Hussain



Prakash Bhandari
The writer is a senior journalist

Writing about health in a way that people could understand and engage with requires special skills and in-depth research. Scientists come out with numerous research papers which are read during scientific sessions, but rarely such research is made accessible to the general public. Books and articles on sex (pornography) always enjoy a

very high readership. A number of books on health have been published in India, but not many were written in a way that people could easily understand. But Dr. Shiv Sarin, who studied for his MBBS degree from Sawai Man Singh Medical College, rose to become the country's top gastroenterologist, hepatologist and a pioneer in clinical innovations, is a gifted teacher and now an author. Dr. Shiv Kumar Sarin is not only pride of Jaipur or Rajasthan, but of the country. He is the Founder of Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences in Delhi, which is the first of its kind institute in Asia.

Dr. Sarin's book 'Own Your Body: A Doctor's Life-saving Tips' has become the medical Bible and a true bestseller, that attracted a good number of buy-

Easy Health In Easy Words And A Healthy Man

What was fascinating was Shashi Tharoor agreeing to act as moderator for Dr. Shiv Sarin's book and he made the session interesting, though, at times, Dr. Sarin sounded smarter than Tharoor, and that is a shocker. It was a lively session with Dr. Sarin offering health tips in a simple and lighter way. Sadly, Dr. Sarin said that drinking alcohol is a vice and bad for health, particularly liver. The audience nodded knowingly at this declaration, absolutely like children do when preached, that lying is bad.

#JLF2025

ers at the book shop in the Jaipur Literature Festival.

Durbar Hall attracted a full house and a very large number of the audience opted to squat down and hear the session on *Own Your Body*, where illustrious writer, Shashi Tharoor, was in a session with Dr. Sarin. This was, perhaps, the biggest crowd for any session in the current edition of the JLF.

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World Cancer Day



It is hard to find a person in society today who has not been touched by cancer in some way, either directly or indirectly. World Cancer Day hopes to honour those who are fighting and those who have been lost to this dreadful disease. This unique day of remembrance and determination aims to help people understand more about cancer and inspire them to take action so that hopefully one day, there will be many in society who are not touched by cancer.



tal and emotional wellness. The book preaches for a balanced life, urging people to embrace a lifestyle of conscious, informed decisions that foster long-term health, energy and personal empowerment.

Dr. Sarin in the limited session time provided the audience with tools and techniques and knowledge to take charge of their bodies, and he emphasised on self-awareness, understanding one's own body's unique needs, recognising early signs of stress or imbalance, and making one's own decision based on the understanding.

He also provided ready tips that would help the audience align their physical habits with their health goals.

active pursuit of physical, mental and emotional balance, mindfulness, stress management, regular physical activity to achieve overall wellness." He prescribed seven hours of sleep and healthy food. The book provides clear advice on how to fuel the body with the right nutrients, offering practical dietary tips and prioritizing whole foods, hydration and motion. He surprised the large gathering at Durbar Hall by spotting D. R. Mehta of the Bhagwan Mahavir Viklang Sahayata Samiti among the audience and describing him as a healthy individual model at 88, who serves people with equipping the disabled with the Jaipur Foot. The House gave a standing ovation to D. R. Mehta.

"True health is not merely the absence of illness but the pursuit of physical, mental and emotional balance, mindfulness, stress management, regular physical activity to achieve overall wellness." He prescribed seven hours of sleep and healthy food. The book provides clear advice on how to fuel the body with the right nutrients, offering practical dietary tips and prioritizing whole foods, hydration and motion. He surprised the large gathering at Durbar Hall by spotting D. R. Mehta of the Bhagwan Mahavir Viklang Sahayata Samiti among the audience and describing him as a healthy individual model at 88, who serves people with equipping the disabled with the Jaipur Foot. The House gave a standing ovation to D. R. Mehta.

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#JLF

"Every person is a story, waiting to be told"



Shruti Kothari

As the sun set on the final day of the Jaipur Literature Festival 2025, the air buzzed with anticipation, for the closing act. A peek into the life of a filmmaker is here.

Reflecting on his childhood, Intiaz shared the early influences that led him to filmmaking. Behind his screenwriting brilliance lies a filmmaker who approaches his craft with the curiosity and openness of a newcomer, each time he writes. "I write as a newcomer," he explained, "It's my way of ensuring that each story is independent of the last one, untouched by preconceived notions or formulas."

Intiaz's path to filmmaking wasn't a conventional one. "I wasn't good at sports, I wasn't great at studies, but I was very good at telling lies," he said with a smile. Looking back, he recognizes that those 'lies' were his first steps into the world of storytelling.

It was during his childhood in Jamshepur that Intiaz lived in a neighbourhood with a local theatre, he found himself drawn to the magic that unfolded on the screen.

In those days, the theatre owners would keep the doors wide open in the evenings to let the cool breeze in, which gave young Intiaz a fragmented view of the movies. He would catch only partial glimpses of the actors, perhaps, the left ear of Rekha or the right side of Amitabh Bachchan's nose. "It was through these glimpses," he recalled, "that I first realized the power of the hero and heroine's positioning in the frame. That's where the emotional core of a scene is built."

He also fondly reminisced about a quirky cultural trend in Jamshepur, the 'Jaipur Hair Cutting House' near the theatre. This was a spot where men, before heading to the cinema, would line up for a haircut that would make them look like their favourite screen idol, usually Mithun Chakrabarty. "It became a sort of ritual," Intiaz laughed.

Failure can set you free

"Failure can set you free." Intiaz said thoughtfully. "When you fail, you have nothing left to hide. It allows you to be vulnerable and learn from mistakes, but it also gives you the freedom to grow in ways success can't always offer." He went on to state that the most important thing in life is to simply do your best. "Try your best to do better. Don't play it safe."

Intiaz also touched upon his 2015 film *Tamasha*, a project that, despite not performing as expected at the box office, has since gained a cult following. When asked about the film's reception, he smiled and acknowledged its uniqueness. "I feel like *Tamasha* has its own 'exclusive club,'" he said, with a twinkle in his eye.

Tamasha, with its poignant exploration of identity and conflict between societal expectations and individual desires, is often hailed as one of his finest works, a modern classic in Bollywood. "We live in a country where complex literature, like the *Mahabharata*, is understood by the vast majority of people. I think my films are far simpler to understand than that."

When asked what truly made him happiest as a filmmaker, Intiaz responded without hesitation. "The happiest moment for me is seeing the smile on people's faces as they leave the theater

after watching my films. That is my ultimate reward." For him, the audience's emotional response to his work is the truest measure of success, and it's the connection between the story and its viewers that holds the greatest value.

A particularly intriguing insight from Intiaz came when he compared the experience of watching films versus making them. "The films you watch are your own," he said, "but the films you make are like houses you rent. You enter them, live in them for a while, and then you leave." This distinction, for Intiaz, captures the essence of his creative process, a journey of living within a story, experiencing it, but knowing that it will ultimately move on, as all art does.

In a spontaneous moment of camaraderie, Intiaz invited veteran filmmaker, Vidhu Vinod Chopra, to the stage, lightening the mood with a joke about making the session 'more star-studded.'

The Half Empress: Raskapoor

Shruti Kothari

Sitting in a cozy tent at Bagaan, an intimate yet compelling story unfolded, as Tripti Pandey spoke about her book, *The Half Empress*. Though the space was small, the curiosity of the audience was boundless. Enthusiasts of history and literature gathered closely, eager to uncover the hidden love story of Jaipur that Pandey so eloquently brings to life.

The session was brief yet impactful. With a storyteller's charm, Pandey delved into the essence of her book, offering glimpses into the forgotten legacy of a remarkable woman erased from history. Her words resonated with the audience, sparking a quiet sense of awe. Despite limited time, the discussion left a lasting impression, weaving together history, intrigue, and a rediscovered romance, that had long been veiled in obscurity.

TRIPTI PANDEY is a well-known name in Jaipur. Often termed as Rajasthan's cultural ambassador, she has been a pioneer in researching and presenting living heritage. With her innovative approach, she has set

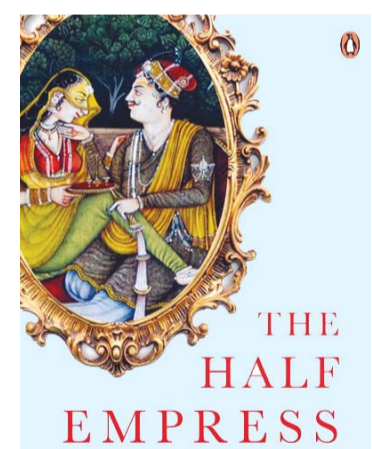


many a milestone creating international events like the Desert Festival, Jaisalmer. Her books on heritage include *Where Silence Sings*, *Rajasthan's Silver Jewellery*, *Pushkar: Colours of the Indian Mystique* and *India's Elephants: A Cultural Legacy*.

In her historical novel *The Half Empress*, Tripti Pandey transports readers to the regal corridors of 19th-century Jaipur, bringing to life the remarkable story of a formidable woman, whose legacy has been deliberately erased from history. The book unravels the life of a queen who, despite wielding immense power and influence, was sidelined in

historical records. At the heart of the novel is the story of a woman who entered the royal court as a mere consort, but rose to prominence through her intelligence, resilience, and political acumen. She navigated the intricacies of palace politics, defied societal norms, and played a crucial role in shaping Jaipur's history.

Pandey masterfully weaves fact with fiction, painting a vivid portrait of a bygone era, its grandeur, betrayals, and unspoken romances. Through *The Half Empress*, she seeks to restore the queen's lost identity, inviting readers to rediscover a past that had been deliberately obscured.



Through meticulous research and evocative storytelling, Pandey revives Raskapoor's lost tale, weaving together historical fact and fiction. The *Half Empress* is not just a novel, it is an attempt to restore a forgotten queen to her rightful place in history, allowing her story to shine once more before time erases it again.

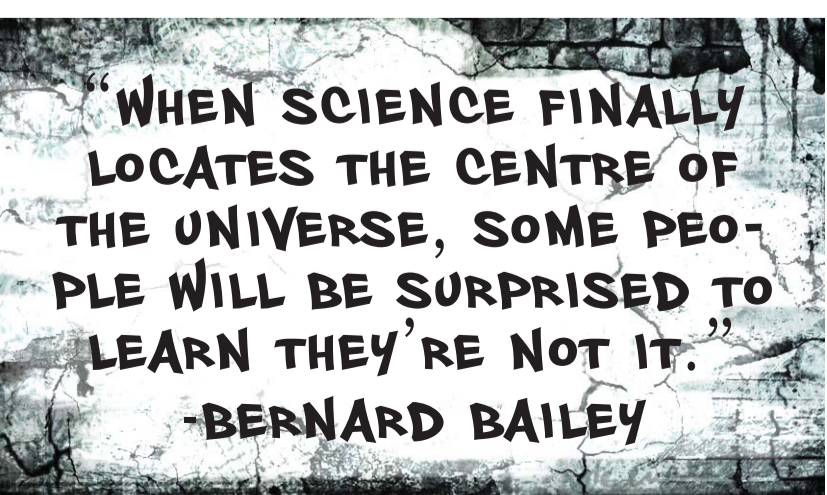
About the book
Among the rulers of Jaipur, Maharaja Sawai Jagat Singh's name is often spoken with contempt, largely due to his controversial affair with Raskapoor, a courtesan of extraordinary beauty and intelligence. Born to

a Muslim mother and a Brahmin father, Raskapoor was an outsider in the rigid social order of the time. Yet, defying all norms, the Maharaja elevated her status, bestowing upon her the title of Half Empress, a recognition both unprecedented and scandalous in the royal court.

With little experience but unwavering resilience, Raskapoor navigated the treacherous corridors of power, mastering the complexities of palace intrigue. However, surrounded by scheming nobles and an atmosphere thick with betrayal, she ultimately fell victim to a conspiracy. Trapped by her enemies, she was imprisoned, marking the beginning of her tragic downfall.

Her fate remains shrouded in mystery. Some say that a compassionate prison chief secretly aided her escape, allowing her to vanish into obscurity. Others claim that she chose a fiery end, flinging herself onto the pyre of her beloved Jagat Singh. Regardless of how her story ended, one thing remains certain, Raskapoor has not been entirely forgotten. Today, her name lingers in the whispers of history, echoed by the guides at Nahargarh Fort, where she is remembered as one of its most famous prisoners.

THE WALL

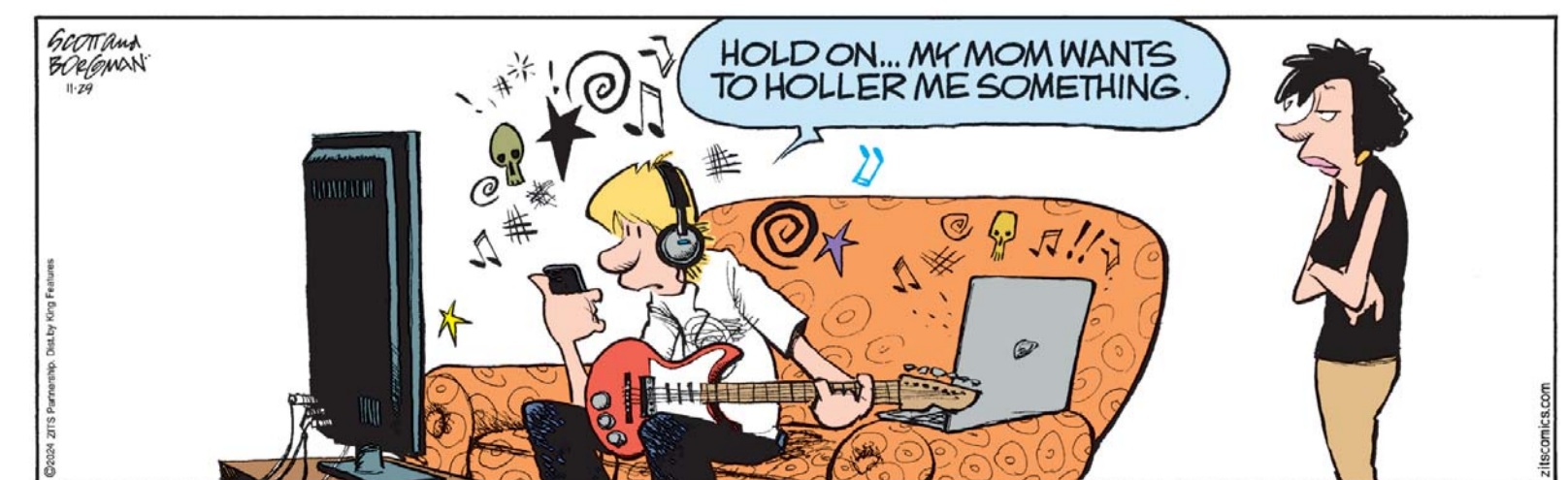


BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman