

#EVENT @ JKK

CELEBRATING CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Bookaroo Children's Literature Festival, held at JKK, delighted young minds and parents alike, with its array of creative activities and engaging storytelling sessions. From immersive storytelling to hands-on craft workshops, the festival celebrated the 'magic of literature' in nurturing young imaginations.



Tusharika Singh
Freelance writer and city blogger

The Pink City's multi-arts center, Jawahar Kala Kendra (JKK) recently played host to an exuberant gathering of young minds and literary enthusiasts at the two-day *Bookaroo Children's Literature Festival*. The event saw an overwhelming turnout of children and parents alike, all eager to immerse themselves in the world of stories, creativity, and imagination. In fact, a couple even travelled all the way from Delhi so that their children could partake in the event. Despite the soaring mercury, laughter echoed through the Kendra's dome area as children eagerly made their way to the different festival venues, their faces beaming with anticipation.

The first day of the festival kicked off with a flurry of activities, with children eagerly participating in 26 different engagements, tailored to their interests and age groups. From storytelling sessions to craft corners, doodle walls to theatrical performances, there was something for every young mind to explore and indulge in. Over the course of two days, there were 50 sessions with 27 speakers.

The festival grounds were meticulously divided and colour-coded into various zones according to different age groups, each offering a unique experience. The *Kahani Kund* created in the amphitheater, adorned with vibrant hues and puppets, transported children into a realm of storytelling magic.



Simon Rowe loves a good story

PART:1

Simon Rowe loves a good story. In fact, he is so fond of storytelling that he signed up for an English teacher's job in Japan and taught his students to talk about the Japanese culture in English. His students learnt English and he became a storyteller.



Mami Suzuki, the latest detective novel.



Shailaza Singh
Published author, poet and a YouTuber

When I read *Mami Suzuki*, the latest detective novel by Simon Rowe, it was as if I had found a friend in her. Like me, she is a single mother, struggling to make a living and raise her child. She works two jobs, struggling with the loneliness that comes with being a 'single mother' and tries her best to cope with it. Mami Suzuki seemed so real that I had to know from her creator *Simon Rowe* if he had really met her in real life or if it was a channelling of sorts. Some excerpts from the rendezvous at the Jaipur Literature Festival are here.



Simon Rowe, with his wife Masami, daughter Marina and son Aiden.



Simon Rowe with other authors at the Jaipur Lit Fest.



Are you anything like your heroine 'Mami Suzuki'?

(Laughs). Yes, to some extent, I am. I am middle-aged, I live in Japan but that's where the similarity ends. Mami is a composite character, a figment of the imagination but drawn from all the women whom I know in Japan, who are middle-aged, who are working hard (in some cases, two jobs), might be single mothers, a figure of a middle-aged Japanese woman. She is very busy too. *Mami* means 'true beauty'.

So, was this character inspired by your wife?

(Smiles). That is what I will tell her! But it is much more than that. As a foreigner, I guess I can see and observe more details about the 'Japanese' people and a lot 'differently' as compared to the natives. Though, I have been here for the last 27 years, Japan still looks new and fresh to me. In a way, it is death by stimulation. There is just too much for a writer to take in.

#JAIPUR LITERATURE FESTIVAL 2024

■ Did Mami walk into your brain 'preformed' or did you have to 'think' her up?

First of all, we start with the 'motivation'. I wanted to tell a story where the character overcomes a lot of difficulties and succeeds in the end. About that time in 2020, I was creating a collection of short stories, which was to be self-published through crowdfunding. The motivation for the last story came from a leaflet advertising services of a female detective in Japanese language, which is very rare. It showed a middle-aged woman dressed in short suit. I filed away this idea but then, *ideas have a life of their own*. They pop up at unexpected times. I was reading detective series like Agatha Christie, Raymond Chandler, Arthur Conan Doyle, Alexander McCall Smith (author of *The No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency*). So, the idea came to me of a single mother, who lived in Kobe, a place where I live in western Japan. A tale of triumph and adversity! So, that is where I found the story. That's how the character came about and it was built by research, which included interviewing some Tokyo detectives as well. The thing is that there aren't many *female detectives* in Japan, so the thing is you need a 'new spin on the old stereotype' of wine drinking, chain smoking detective, with a woman waiting for him in the bar. So, I flipped it upside down. So, now I have the hard working, beer drinking single mother, who has two jobs and she has her love interest waiting in the bar!



Simon Rowe at the Matsuri Festival in Japan.

■ *Mami, you say, is a work of fiction. However, when one reads the book, it seems as if she is real woman. Did you study single mothers to write Mami?*

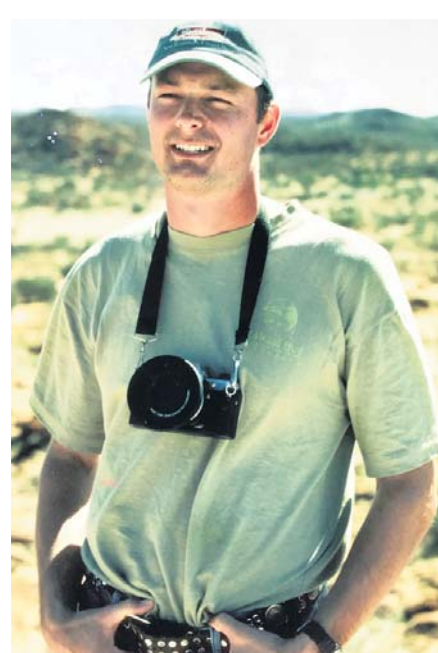
Mami feels like a woman whom I know well, although I've never met anyone exactly like her. I know quite a few single mothers, here, in Japan. They are friends or acquaintances of both my wife and I, and so often, we hear about their trials and tribulations, but not so much about their 'triumphs'. I guess that was the motivation behind writing this

World Cloud Security Day

World Cloud Security Day is like a lighthouse, helping us break through a dense fog of, well, clouds. It's a time when the invisible cloud-based threats, we too often ignore, become visible. The day also reminds about the sometimes forgotten idea of 'ironclad security' in our cloud-based adventures. This day seeks to bridge the gap between data clouds and online safety. By doing so, we all play an active role in enhancing the safety of our digital footprints. Whether you use cloud-based apps for personal use or to run a business, vigilance is needed.



Simon Rowe in a Japanese traditional Hakama dress.



■ Tell us about your growing up days.

I grew up in New Zealand. We immigrated to Melbourne for the final days of the schooling. I have younger siblings too. I finished the university and I became a travel writer. I was always fond of writing and I realized travel and writing *together* were really a good way to see the world. So, for the next 10-12 years, I travelled around the world. I used to write a story, take photos and make a package and send it to multiple publications and be paid multiple times. We can't do that now. I had a self-perpetuating existence, where I was stimulating and gave me and had cameras, and I had pretty wildlife. Things I won't do now! Like take small boats way, way up to the jungle or ride a bus to Morocco. A lot of *hard travel*. It was stimulating and gave me something to write about because I believe if you write a travel story, it should be authentic. Like for example, I met this guy, who is a chef and he makes the best *chicken bryani* in Delhi. So, it is not just about the food but the man also. With time, the competition became great to the point, where I would go to a small island in the Pacific and discover that someone from my rival publication was already there. Though, I was working freelance, yet the competition was great.

...To be continued
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#TRAVEL

Offbeat Tracks

From Himalayan slopes to coastal vistas, embark on a summer escape through India's diverse tapestry, on these iconic train routes.

Train travel paints vibrant pictures in our minds, often featuring the exciting journeys that we share with loved ones. When the rhythm of the rails sets the pace of travel, jour-

neys are filled with simple pleasures, books, steaming *chai*, laughter echoing through card games, and landscapes painting themselves onto our memories. India's diverse tapestry unfolds beautifully, from the window of a train, offering

unique experiences and breath-taking sights at every turn. If you yearn to capture the magic of rail travel, or simply embrace a more relaxing pace, we have curated a list of incredible train journeys that you can take during the summer.

Kalka to Shimla

5.5 hours, Himalayan Queen
Escape the Delhi furnace aboard the iconic '*Himalayan Queen*'. This toy train winds through pine-clad slopes and verdant valleys, culminating in Shimla, a charming town where Victorian-era architecture meets crisp mountain air. Picture horse-drawn carriage rides, colonial-era buildings, whispering stories of the past, and breath-taking views, that will leave you breathless.



Siliguri to Darjeeling

7 hours

Darjeeling Himalayan Railway
Step back in time with this UNESCO gem. Meander through emerald tea plantations and soak in the breathtaking Himalayan vistas. Darjeeling, your destination, awaits its iconic architecture, fragrant Darjeeling tea, and the promise of misty mornings and cosy evenings by the fireplace.

Mettupalayam to Ooty

4.5 hours

Nilgiri Mountain Railway
Embark on a journey through time and mist aboard the '*Toy Train of the South*'. Snake through emerald hills and verdant valleys, arriving in Ooty, the '*Queen of the Hills*'. Rolling hills, colonial charm, refreshing lakes, and, of course, the promise of delicious strawberries await in this summer haven.



Kanyakumari to Trivandrum

2 hours

Various train options are available
Witness the confluence of three oceans, the Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal, and the Indian Ocean, on this coastal journey. Watch the sun rise and set over the endless horizon, reaching Trivandrum, with its historical backwaters, lush greenery, and delicious South Indian cuisine. This is a summer escape for those who love the serenity of the sea and the charm of Kerala's backwaters.

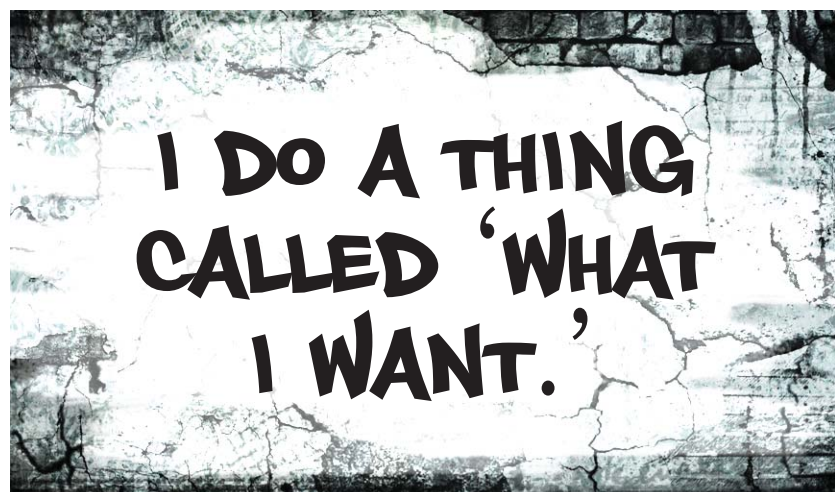
Hassan to Mangalore

5.5 hours

Various train options are available
Embrace a sensory overload on this Western Ghats adventure. Lush rainforests, cascading waterfalls, and verdant coffee plantations greet you as the train chugs through the landscape. In Mangalore, pristine beaches, delicious seafood, and the unique Tulu culture await, offering a perfect summer escape from the ordinary.



THE WALL



BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman