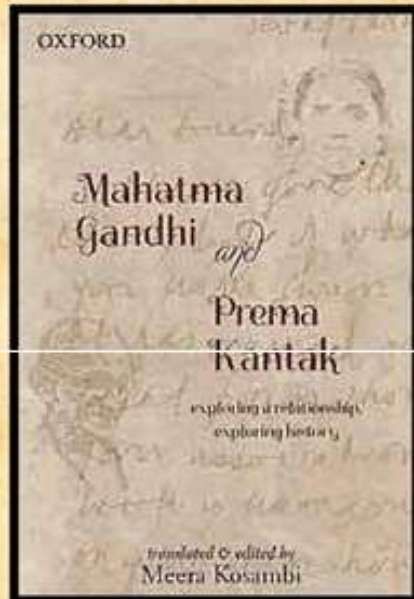


NEW RELEASE

The Mahatma through a woman's eyes



Oxford University Press has released a new book *Mahatma Gandhi and Prema Kantak* exploring a relationship, exploring history, to commemorate the 144th birthday of Gandhiji. The book is translated and edited by prominent sociologist Meera Kosambi. Bringing together personal correspondence between Gandhi and writer-activist Kantak as well as original translations of her fiction and nonfiction writings, this book explores a unique Gandhi-Kantak relationship and reflects the complexities of Gandhi's political and social ideas — especially his understanding of the role of women in the nationalist movement.

BOOK BABBLE

A new 'Emma'



Alexander McCall Smith has been confirmed as the third author to be taking part in The Austen Project. The creator of the bestselling *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* novel series will now write the contemporary version of Jane Austen's 1815 novel, *Emma*. The project features a series of contemporary re-workings of the English writer's six published novels. Joanna Trollope and Val McDermid will do the modern reworking of *Sense and Sensibility* and *Northanger Abbey* respectively.

Write, instead of tweeting

According to American author Jonathan Franzen, social media may be proving detrimental to writers. Instead of working on their craft, young authors are now-a-days seen wasting time on Twitter and building up followers. The author, whose latest work *The Kraus Project* includes thoughts on modern technology from a century-old observer, said of Twitter: "This kind of crowd-sourcing model — everything shared, communal — doesn't really work. Most important the whole definition of literature is that people go off by themselves, develop a distinctive voice. It's not a communal enterprise. It can't be collective."

QUICK CHAT

Decoding ancient scriptures

Shalaka Nalawade chats up debutant author **Sudipto Das** on his novel *The Ekkos Clan*

The *Ekkos Clan* does to Indian culture what Dan Brown's novels have done for Christianity... The author — Sudipto Das, an engineer from IIT Kharagpur, talks about his inspiration for the plot, the obvious comparison and what he plans to do next....

The Ekkos Clan is said to be an Indian equivalent of Dan Brown's novels. Was that the idea behind it?

I believe that Indian culture had to be represented in our literature. Of course, when people compare it to Dan Brown's novels, I'd like to say that in fact, after reading his stories, along with those of Indiana Jones, I realised that there was no good fiction that dealt with Indian culture. *Kisi ko to batana tha ye sab* (Someone had to tell all this), I'm glad it's me!

So Dan Brown's novels inspired you to write *The Ekkos Clan*?

Not just him. I have been an avid reader since childhood. If I have to list the authors whose work inspired me, I would definitely like to mention the works of Jhumpa Lahiri, Khalid Hossain, Jeffery Archer, Amitav Ghosh among others. Being a Bengali, I feel I am privileged to have read Tagore's writings in the original language. It has had a big impact on me. I read all kinds of books, even the non-fiction works of people like Amartya Sen and Richard Feynmann!

You've spent six long years in researching for this novel. Wasn't that a huge challenge?

It was indeed a challenge, but I read so extensively because I didn't wish to do a shoddy job. I have read



After reading Dan Brown's stories, along with those of Indiana Jones, I realised that there was no good fiction that dealt with Indian culture

— Sudipto Das



such trash, half-baked stuff about Indian culture, that I decided to tell the story as close to the truth as possible. I hate it to have wrong facts or half truths in a book. I feel that the author is deceiving his readers when he does that.

You actually read the Rigveda, that forms the base for *The Ekkos Clan*?

Yes, I read the Rigveda, that too in Sanskrit itself as I feel the soul of writing is lost in translation. I hate to read translated writings. If someone like Rabindranath Tagore could not do justice to his own writings while translating the *Geetanjali*, how will the other translators fare

comparatively? I will consider the book to a big success if I get people interested in reading about Rigveda and linguistic paleontology.

Now that you mention it, *The Ekkos Clan* combines several branches like linguistic paleontology, mathematics, Indian culture, astrology and poetry...

Yeah, these are the things that are quite close to my heart. The story is essentially about the evolution of Sanskrit as a language, among other aspects. Then there is my love for Gulzar's works. It's an indirect tribute to Gulzar saheb. He inculcated the love for Urdu and Farsi in me.

There was a hint of a sequel...

(Smiles) It won't be a sequel per se. It's somewhat like the stories of Indiana Jones, the characters and theme will be the same but it will be a different plot. This one will be about the mathematician Aryabhata. So little is known about him...