

POWER Packed WIVES

Bureaucracy is a golden glass for people at the outset. Ask these wives who walk the tight rope right from the word 'go'. They give away their career ambitions, their dreams and oblige with senior wives even if they are not the socio-butterfly types. *Bureaucracy Today* tries to break the ice and bring to surface many untold thoughts about life a bureaucrat's wife.

| By VANDANA VASUDEVAN I



Jaya Chandrashekhar

Being a VIP spouse is like a finished product of the cinematic world where the glamour is reflected on the screen while the grind is relegated to the background," says Suchita Malik an author, an academican and a bureaucrat's wife.

So do our *memsahibs* relate to this? Of course, they do! A bureaucrat's wife! Yes, it is power personified. Whether it is the red beam on their cars or the official dinner meets, where the who's who of the bureaucracy exude their *savoir-faire*, they are at the centre of power 24x7. The poise of being a VIP, attention gathered, the aura of being amongst the most important people and the glitterati, these ladies have it in them which can leave others burn with desire. But is that all to the life a bureaucrat's wife.

There are certain ignored territories to this control. Sacrifice, pressure, vanity, irritation, and frustration you name it and they have faced it. These ladies at the outset put best of themselves, but the in-built pressure to be the best is even more as their husbands move upwards in the echelon.

The plight of an Indian bureaucrat's wife is like a bird wishfully inside the golden cage where the physical freedom is immense, but the mental blocks are many. In the beginning, when you are young you feel very nice. With the glamour and aura, you suddenly realise you are so important. The problem arises when you have to juggle between your social and professional life. You are madams at one moment and commoner standing with other colleagues in an-



Suchita Malik

other. It's like being on a pedestal and on earth at the same time. This minute-to-minute change becomes very irritating.

So, what about the whole hint of glamour between all this? Calling upon official dinners, obliging with the senior bureaucrat wives' tantrums, taking what you would not have in a general scenario with a smile. While *Bureaucracy Today* sensed that the top women refused to accept that there is vanity (probably they have seen it all and grown mature) in bureaucratic circles, Suchita blows the whistle. "There is vanity in ladies who are new to this environment other than the senior ladies but they settle after 5-6 years of grind."

Moreover, it came across as that the junior ladies look up to the senior ones, as they feel seniors guide them on what to do, what not to do, how to conduct themselves, how to go about things. The ladies feel that seniors learn from their experiences and are more grounded and humble.

The general feeling among the bureaucrat wives replicates the same. It is only till 5-6 years that the glam in your eyes stays the same. The bubble bursts once you witness the ups and downs of bureaucracy.

Suchita emancipates, "When you have an upright and an honest officer as husband your troubles increase manifold. There are frequent transfers if your husband annoy his boss, politician if he doesn't bend the rules the way they want. While you are proud of your husband you also start realising the after effects of being this his wife."

Yudhvir Malik, Suchita's husband is a Haryana

cadre 1983 batch IAS officer. He is currently working as the Financial Commissioner and Secretary (Industries and IT). In the span of nine years they saw 11 transfers. In 1989, Yudhvir was the Deputy Commissioner, Hissar and was transferred overnight for not obliging with the ruling party during the elections. The ruling party came into power again and Yudhvir was transferred to Chandigarh. Recalls Suchita, "When I applied for transfer under the couple rule, I was sent to Narnol intentionally. The places were two poles apart. I was staggering in the guest-house leaving my small children in Chandigarh and my colleagues in college, where I joined as a lecturer, considered it to be a royal treatment. Imagine you were living in a 10 acre bungalow and suddenly you find yourself in this box guest house."

For the people at the outset it is the life one can dream to live. Yes it is the same for the top ladies as well but they have relative costs to pay especially if they happen to be of the career oriented lot.

It is difficult to come up to everyone's expectations and at the same time pursue your interests and individualism. You need to adjust to the uncertainties of settling at one place and thus focus on your career and family. It is rather more difficult now than it was earlier as the aspirations in the modern world increase and the bias between working men and women decrease.

Explains Gita Vittal, former CVC Nagarajan Vittal's (GJ: 60) wife and author of *Reflections: Life of a Bureaucrat's Wife*. "Our generation was completely different from today's. What I have noticed is that

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girls today are more ambitious, they are professionally focused and some of them are completely of the 'no-compromise' lot. We were very adjustable in the sense that we used to move with our husbands wherever they were posted and moreover women in those times were less ambitious probably because there were fewer options.



Gita Vittal

We only lived up to our husband's wishes and we never grumbled much. But now sky is the limit for a woman to pursue her career. When the girls want their own professional life then they have to have two establishments. I know girls, one who was a doctor and another graduate from IIM, who gave up their careers because they were finding it difficult to set their careers and there was no consistency.

On the other hand I know a lady income tax commissioner whose husband, a navy officer, gave up his job to take up another in a private firm to be with his wife. In our times, it was more about wives adjusting with their husbands. Now it is both husband and wife adjusting with each other's professions and when they fail they either get divorced or live separately."

This in some cases, stands true as when BT approached one of the bureaucrat's wife (name withheld), who also happens to be a senior IAS officer and holds the most important position in Rajasthan, believes that she does not live under her husband's shadow. She is a self-made woman and hates the concept of IASOWA. This also reflects in her family life as both husband and wife don't like to talk about each other. So does the pressure for surviving with your own individualism become so immense that in due course of time you are left with only two options, either you take care of your family and husband's wishes or you pursue your career and chase your own dreams?

Suchita seems to have answer to the question. "Yes it is very difficult to juggle between the two, your career and family. You need to strike the balance to the extremes and this is the area some bureaucrat wives, who are also professionals lag and hence have broken or distorted family lives."

In order to have a smooth family they give up their careers or take up jobs stepping down on the seniority in their field of interests. Through our understanding and discussions to some other counterparts in bureaucratic circles we realized that many women after some point of time start suffering from identity crisis.

"Suddenly your life revolves completely around your husband, children and family. When your husband is a bureaucrat he is most of the

POWER Packed WIVES

time away from you and your family and children remain to be the only solace. But as they grow and move to places for higher studies, you all of a sudden discover yourself in a completely lone and isolated situation. You leave everything for your loved ones and at one point you are left with nothing. It's too frustrating at least for me it was. Well! Let's accept this. It is a male dominated world. Your own identity comes later. In the beginning it irritates you a lot but when you try to put yourself in the situation of your husband you tend to understand because they are contributing to a much larger cause, i.e., the Nation. It is the woman who is supposed to understand and she is to provide a support system", is how Suchita

When you have an upright and an honest officer as husband your troubles increase manifolds. There are frequent transfers if your husband doesn't bend the rules the way bosses want. While you are proud of your husband you start realising the after effects of being his wife

explains the situation.

However, the harassment doesn't stop here, it continues at your work place as well. The colleagues carping about the privilege of taking long leaves, transfers, study leaves when you actually take them, yes for something constructive, but the hidden reason remains to be with your family.

Your colleagues strike taunts without even batting an eyelid and understanding how difficult it is for you to constantly switch places and have an irregular career graph that reflects badly on the CV. Your colleagues never expect anything substantial from you. The most irritating part is that they don't speak what they have in their minds on your face and would talk about you on your back. You start developing this general feeling of hostility but you cannot vociferously start arguing. You suddenly realise that you put up in a mild world. You have to maintain the grace. You feel frustrated, but that is the reason why we call bureaucracy a steel frame. You are part of bureaucracy and there are certain unsaid rules to it.

"There are so many things you would like to retaliate on but you have to undergo all that with a tight

lipped smile or turn it down in a joke.", adds Suchita.

This holds true with every bureaucrat's wife we spoke to. They cannot retaliate and take everything what may come because of chances of being easily misinterpreted. What pinches them the most? Ask them and they will be all vocal about it. "It pinches you so much when your juniors go ahead of you and achieve what you wanted to in your career," is what Suchita has discovered in her journey of knowing these wives better.

Certainly grass is always greener on the other side of the hedge. People only see the glitterati posed outside but they fail to see the tribulations. These ladies never deny of their luxuries and the better access to things a normal man will find difficult to have, and the special treatment. They say it's not true that they have everything at disposal and have obeisance of servants all the time.

The stereotypes are many. From bureaucrat wives of not being very friendly and too arrogant to using husbands' reach to get promotions.

Explains Gita, "There is a stereotype that a bureaucrat's wife is not friendly this may be because the husband is holding an important position and she has to maintain the dignity. IAS wives do enjoy glamour and luxuries but this happens only in few states where the wives throw tantrums. There are states where IAS officers are not treated specially; and their wives are like any other government officer's wife. In our times most of us did cooking on our own."

But the truth is a bit bitter-sweet to be either swallowed or to be spitted out. While these ladies make an extra effort to be nice, people outside start taking them for granted they feel. People think that they have the power and can do anything while people don't realize that these ladies have to struggle so much to get their own things done. The moment Memsahibs maintain the distance they become arrogant. It is definitely a tough world as they are under constant surveillance.

While the bureaucrat wives fraternity expresses their solidarity for the chores they go through *Bureaucracy Today* brings in its cover the top ladies of various states who have managed all of this and much more with elegance and eloquence. All of them have balanced their professional and family lives to the best that they stand where they are in the Indian bureaucracy today.

Suchita Malik, *Indian Memsahib: The Untold Story of a Bureaucrat's Wife*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 2009. 195 pp. Rs. 195. (Paperback)

The past decade has seen an upswing in books on Indian themes featuring Indian characters and Indian settings. Whether charting the migrations of an Indian family abroad (Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*) or of Americans in India (Paul Theroux's *The Elephant Suite*), a common theme for writers participating in this twenty-first century Indian renaissance has been one of travel or, more precisely, the spiritual journey. In many ways this motif recalls earlier, colonial era visions of the East as a place of self-awakening, a backdrop for mystical inner reflection and revelation. Coming upon the heels of the recent surge of Indian-themed writing, then, is *Indian Memsahib*, Suchita Malik's "untold story of a bureaucrat's wife." This book traces its protagonist Sunaina's journey from ambitious young woman to wife of a rising officer in the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) against the backdrop of this latter character's peripatetic postings in the north Indian state of Haryana during the 1980s, 90s, and up to the present.

The book begins with Sunaina already on a journey: traveling by bus to Rohtak, a small town on the outskirts of Delhi, where she will take up her first teaching post at the local university. En route, Sunaina finds herself "intently watching the mud-houses on both sides of the road, the dirty waterlogged lanes of the villages," even as she "covered her nostrils against the stench and foul smell emanating from the dunghills" (3). Here, then, one is given a *mise-en-scene* that would not be out of place in the writing of an Occidental visiting India for the first time. Indeed, Forster's *Passage to India* also begins by vividly describing "the rubbish" deposited alongside the Ganges riverfront, in which "people are drowned and left rotting." In many ways, *Indian Memsahib* could be said to mirror Forster's novel: both chronicle the journey of a "memsahib" into the foreign landscape of a "backwards India", and both female protagonists envision themselves as inextricably wed to a significant other, namely, their spouses (or, in the case of *Passage to India*, spouse-to-be) who, in both cases, are workaholics. The following passage (from *Passage*) could very well come from *Indian Memsahib*:

"Yes, Ronny is always hard-worked," she replied, contemplating the hills. How lovely they suddenly were! But she couldn't touch them. In front, like a shutter, fell the vision of her married life. She and Ronny would look into the club like this every evening, then drive home to dress; they would see the Lesleys and the Callendars and the

Turtons and the Burtons, and invite them and be invited by them, while the true India slid by unnoticed.

Two changes occur within this passage in *Indian Memsahib*. First, the name of the young female protagonist's husband is "Raghu," not "Ronny"; second, and more significantly, "true India" is discovered not in flight from the quotidian aspects of married life but, indeed, within them. Whereas Adela Quested ultimately decides not to marry her bureaucratic "Ronny," seeking the "true India," perhaps, in the Marabar Caves, Sunaina fervently resolves to play the role of 'Indian Memsahib' to the hilt, to "make her gracious presence felt . . . and compliment her husband's role in society" (126). Yet this "fervent resolve" does not come without its hardships. Indeed, one of the ambiguous aspects of *Indian Memsahib* is Sunaina's sudden transformation from "outsider *bahu*," to loyal, devoted bureaucrat's wife. Book Two ("The Exposure"), for instance, ends with Sunaina "sobbing uncontrollably" on her bed soon after marrying Raghu, and Book Three ("The Soaring") begins with her again on a journey, this time with her husband, to his new posting in Rewari.

Readers familiar with Flaubert may, at this point, expect Sunaina's narrative to take a turn toward the Bovaryesque, yet Sunaina instead makes her best effort to stand by her man. The familiar adage of not judging a book by its cover is proven once again with *Indian Memsahib*. Were one to take this novel *prima facie* and, simultaneously, as following earlier narratives featuring such female protagonists (here Forster's *Passage* and Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* are but two that most immediately come to mind), one would expect "the soaring" of Part Three to be followed by the (inevitable) Icarusesque "fall," whether literal, figurative, or both. Yet *Indian Memsahib* provides a double surprise: not only does Sunaina remain true to her earlier "fervent resolve"—immersing herself in the details of her bureaucratic husband's busy life—but, more surprisingly, she seems to adjust to this shift almost seamlessly. Whereas the first two (shorter) parts of this book chart *Sunaina's* exposure to and initiation into her husband's life, Part Three's soaring in many ways puts its protagonist in the passenger seat, playing Plato more often than not to her husband's Socrates, whose chronicles of his many run-ins with the townsfolk seem to usurp the narrative, leaving those expecting Marabarian caves perhaps somewhat let down.

Yet in this way, *Indian Memsahib* also stands apart from the dominant trend governing such tales. Rather than resigning herself to playing an essentially "outsider" role, Sunaina paradoxically becomes an "insider" in her husband's world by allowing his life to dictate her story. Some (clinging to earlier, romantic narratives) may call this a

regrettable trade-off, wishing instead for tragic denouement. Yet *Indian Memsahib* refuses such facile resolution. If, as Forster noted, "most of the inhabitants of India do not mind how India is governed," then Malik, in her book, provides a fascinating insider's perspective on this most nebulous aspect of India and, indeed, finds its 'elixir' in the inner-workings and minutiae of its bureaucracy (and bureaucrats). To return to the familiar adage, those expecting that "the untold story of a bureaucrat's wife" will primarily focus on this latter figure will instead find the wife's untold story of a bureaucrat and only tangentially (by proxy, as it were) her own.

To some extent, however, Sunaina's repeated resolutions to play the eponymous role belie her stated desire, especially as they quite often precede or come after passages in which she yet again finds herself unsettled, her life rearranged by her husband's career. The shift in language between these passages is difficult to miss. Whereas her "fervent resolves" take on the tone of sober mantras, passages such as the following—when she is yet again preparing to leave one place for another—carry away the reader with their passionate yearning for escape:

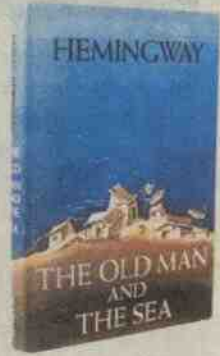
Oh, to leave it all and leave it forever . . . these flights of fancy in the exotic, exquisite realms of the sub-conscious utopia where the weariness, the fever and the fret of the world took a backseat, which extolled the unattainable and mocked at the transitoriness of everything that seemed beautiful and seemingly permanent till the marching orders came . . . (174)

One concludes *Indian Memsahib* wishing for more passages like this. If, following Hemingway's dictum, one has been given the tip of the iceberg, one joins this novel's protagonist, on the last page, in looking forward to "many more such moments still to come."

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CELEBRITY चाँयस

एक लेखक की शैली एक लेखक ही जान सकता है। 'इंडियन मेमसाहिब: अनटोल्ड स्टोरी ऑफ ब्यूरोक्रेट वाइफ' की लेखिका सुचिता मलिक को किताबें पढ़ने का बहुत शौक है और इसी शौक की बदौलत वे काफी लेखकों की शैली से वाकिफ हैं। मार्क ट्वेन और अर्नेस्ट हैमिंग्वे की किताबों से इनकी शोल्फ अटी पड़ी है, दोनों इनके पसंदीदा लेखक जो हैं। आइए, जानते हैं सेक्टर-11 स्थित गवर्नमेंट कॉलेज में इंग्लिश की लेक्चरर सुचिता मलिक से कि आजकल वो कौन-सी किताब पढ़ रही हैं।



किताब पढ़ने का मजा तभी है जब उसमें लिखे शब्द आसानी से समझ आ सकें। अर्नेस्ट हैमिंग्वे की शैली की मैं पैन हू क्योंकि उनकी लेखनी ऐसी है कि आसानी से समझ आ जाती है। उनकी किताब पढ़ते वकत डिक्शनरी की जरूरत नहीं पड़ती। मैंने काफी लेखकों की किताबें पढ़ी हैं लेकिन अर्नेस्ट हैमिंग्वे की लेखनी सबसे अलग है। आजकल मैं हैमिंग्वे की 'द ओल्ड मैन एंड द सी' किताब पढ़ रही हूँ। इसमें उनकी लेखनी का प्रवाह बहते पानी की तरह है। उनकी यह किताब पहले भी पढ़ चुकी हूँ, फिर से पढ़ने का दिल करता है। जब भी इस किताब को पढ़ती हूँ हर बार कुछ नया मिल जाता है। कहानी में एक बजुर्ग है जो नदी में मछली पकड़ने जाता है। उसके जाल में उम्मीद से बड़ी मछली फस जाती है। लेकिन उसकी मदद करने वाला कोई नहीं होता। कई बार नाकामी का सामना उस बजुर्ग को करना पड़ता है। लेकिन हार न मानने वाला वह इन्सान अंत में कामयाब हो जाता है। किसी भी परिस्थिति में हार न मानना और हर चुनौती का सामना डट कर करना यह सिखाती है यह किताब।



Weekend

कामकी बात
No Bakwas

भास्कर



Corridors of power

It feels great to have power, but with power comes immense responsibility, which, at times, is not easy to handle. Being a bureaucrat's wife might appear to be a tempting proposition, but not many know all the adjustments she has to make.

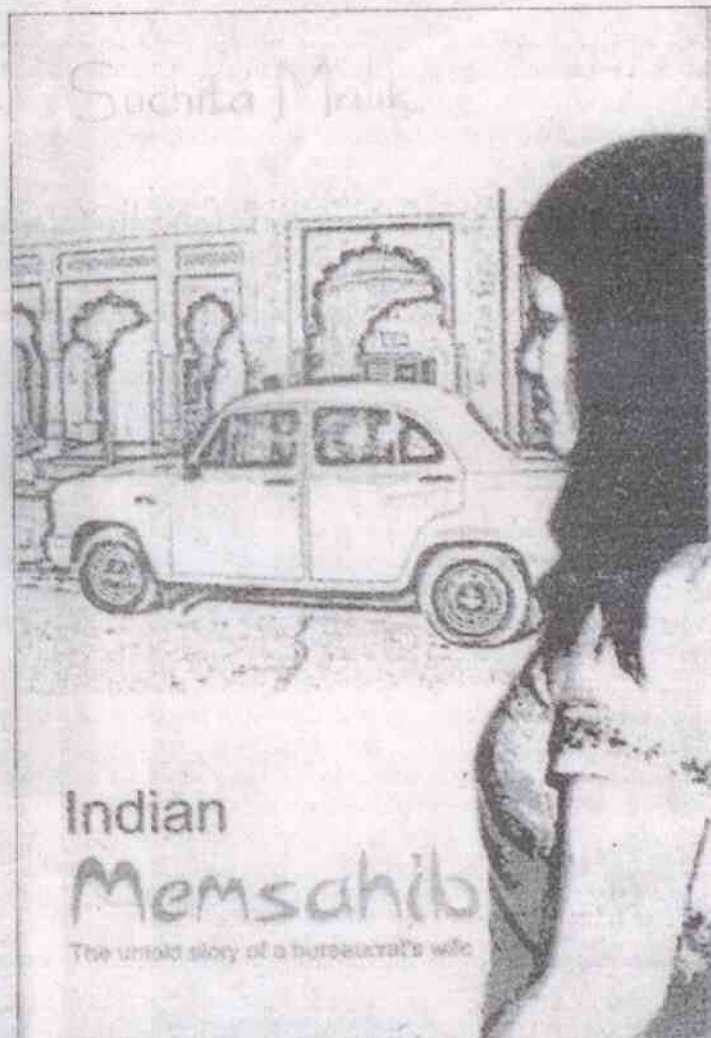
Indian Memsahib deals with the journey of one such wife. The book tracks Sunaina's journey from a spirited and independent Delhi girl to an 'outsider' *bahu* in a Haryanvi Jat household who is supposed to cover her head with her *pallu*, refrain from speaking on family matters, etc. It delves into her roller-coaster life as the wife of an upright IAS officer Raghu.

Indian Memsahib takes the reader to a small town Rohtak, just 60 km from Delhi. A predominantly Jat stronghold, people living here are still rustic, orthodox and rooted to their traditions. Through its simple

narrative, the book takes us through the culture shock that Sunaina has to go through and the adjustments she makes. Here's an example: *As long as the clothes of a woman was a ghagra choli or a yellow shirt with blue salwar and a green dupatta, everything was fine but the moment it became matching, stylish salwar kameez with an ethnic dupatta, it became a shehari fashion that needed to be discarded. If the old women smoked bidi or hookah or took the addictive stuff, it was all in order but all hell would break loose if a young woman from another culture was seen having a puff or a two at a cigarette.*

Not only this, Suchita Malik also highlights the malpractices and red tape involved in the Indian bureaucratic set up. The way honest officers are suddenly transferred or bribes are slowly sent to their household, all form a part of the intriguing book.

The good times and the bad times, the lonely battle fought by Sunaina as a *bahu*, wife and mother make the *Indian Memsahib* an impressive debut.



INDIAN MEMSAHIB - THE UNTOLD STORY OF A BUREAUCRAT'S WIFE

Price: Rs 195

Publisher: Rupa.Co

Author: Suchita Malik

Suchita Malik

Some time ago Suchita Malik

Best book on sex that I
Vyana divides men and
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came to see me to seek my
advice on writing a book. I
recall advising her to try her
hand writing a novel. She was
teaching English in some col-
lege. So language would not
pose a great problem. "What
should the novel be about?"
she asked me. I replied: "No



Kama Sutra has the most explicit paintings of couples

matter what your topic, most
writers' first novels tend to be
autobiographical, camouflaged

as fiction". So it turned out to
be. Her *Indian Memsahib: The
Untold Story of a Bureaucrat's*

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Wife (Rupa) is her life story—her giving up a career in journalism to take up a teaching job in the newly set up Department of Journalism in Maharishi Dayanand University at Rohtak.

There she befriends a fellow lecturer, a couple of years her senior. They fall in love. She is an Arya Samaji Punjabi, he a Haryanvi Jat. Love transcends caste and language barriers. They get married. He qualifies for the Indian Police Service and becomes a *sahib*. She, his devoted *memsahib*. Together they go from one posting to another. He is an able and upright administrator and goes up in the service. She is a dotting wife and mother. The story could well have ended as fairy stories do, "and they lived happy ever after".

But there were a few setbacks. He fell out with his political bosses, ever a venal lot, who punish him for being able to be upright by transferring him from post to post. He ends up in the Central Secretariat in New Delhi, an undistinguished *babu* among hundreds of *babus*. His aim in life is to be a Joint Secretary in some ministry. She rejoins college to earn a doctorate. They have a squabble or two. Which married couple does not? Suchita found a reputable publisher to market her novel. Tejender Khanna, Lt Governor of Delhi, officially released her book and had words of praise for it. I was disappointed. She remains a pedagogue and has

not been able to shed the tone of a teacher of English language. Her descriptions of village life as well as her one and only romance are cliched, all dialogues sound alike. To be a story-teller you have to be a bit of a gossip-monger, a nosy mischief-maker with a lash of malice. It may be hard but not impossible for one as talented as Suchita Malik.

War clouds

*Heavy and hoarse breathing;
The nation seething;
Anger unprecedented, fear,
grief and disgust;
A dreadful legacy, although it
was not the first;
The Mumbai carnage was
easily the worst;
So what must be done?
Attack Pakistan, obviously
walk through Lahore, Peshawar,
Rawalpindi;
And hang every jihadi by the
neighbourhood tree;
As on your way, you destroy
Pakistani military;
It is shameful to talk of
diplomacy, counsel caution;
What consultation? What is the
hesitation?
Go and light up a
conflagration;
But first confiscate their
nuclear arsenal;
And if you cannot, let there be
a holocaust;
What if suicide and vast?
So, go and jump into the fire;
And, thus, express your
noble ire.*
(Contributed by Kuldip
Sali, Delhi)

Photo: Himanshu Mahajan



Sahib, biwi aur kalam

Suchita Malik's debut novel *Indian Memsahib* is an insider's take on bureaucratic life

■ Neha Walia

Behind every successful *sahib*, there is a *memsahib*. No, we haven't forgotten that oft-repeated phrase, only adjusted a little to suit our purpose. The *sahib* and the *memsahib* being the man and wife in the bureaucratic world and telling the story of this elite class is Suchita Malik. In her debut book *Indian Memsahib*, she weaves facts and fiction to bring out the labour, filled with uncertainty that comes with being a bureaucrat's wife. "Writing the book was a cathartic experience. It is not only about my own perspectives but also about the emotional struggle and fight for the identity, an account of a VIP life and its challenges," says this VIP wife for past 25 years.

The book, which has sold over 2000 copies within 15 days after its release, gives an insight into the ups and downs of Indian bureaucracy, through a women's perspective. Ask her how the whole process of writing and reliving her life was, and she replies, "It was like introducing somebody to his own family. Honestly, I don't find anything different in the book as I have

lived that life, but the whole experience of writing it was like a flashback."

It's not the first time that Suchita has explored the literary world. She has been teaching literature and her likings include writings of Mark Twain, Ernest Hemingway, Khushwant Singh. She is also familiar with the contemporary writers like Arvind Adiga, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri...you name it and she has read it. "Khushwant Singh's *Sahibs Who Loved India* is one of the most interesting and inspiring novels I have ever come across. The compilation of essays and writings by foreigners who have made India their home brings the real India to you. The one you never knew," she says.

Now, we know that a life of a *sahib's* wife is not usually perceived as a struggle. But how was penning it down? "I believed when Kiran Desai once said that writing is a lonely business. You have the facts; a writer's imagination to weave them into a story, but then comes the stagnation. The moods of depression when you don't know what to write. It's then that you start from the scratch," she says. But also believes that the sense of contentment and achievement in the end makes it all worthwhile.

Her book has no famous plot or last lines, but an abrupt and open ending. Why? "It always leaves the reader asking for more and then you have a sequel to write," she says with that content smile. And while the *Indian Memsahib* makes its presence felt on the bookshelves, we wait for this *memsahib's* second innings.

Suchita Malik true 'Indian Memsahib'

SUMEDHA SHARMA
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Dressed in a crisp silk saree, Suchita Malik truly epitomises the title of her maiden book 'Indian Memsahib'.

"We will have to speed up things as I have to pack my stuff for the forthcoming holidays and go to the market to shop for some important stuff." She requests surely blowing off the much-conceived image of a bureaucrat's wife enjoying the pleasure of bossing around the fleet of servants.

"Well that's what the book aims at. People till date are fascinated by bureaucracy in India and being wife of one of them comes across as the best fortune. But hardly anybody tries to understand the struggle involved in adjusting one's career, routine and even social circle according to the husband's status." She gives an insight to the novel that traces the life of protagonist revealing her bewilderment and confusion and her struggle to maintain her individuality while carefully treading the scintillating corridors of powers without stifling her voice of conscience.

"Well you can call it autobiographical to an extent because I have lived this life for 25 long years and struggled too. Every time my husband was transferred I would look in for a job to keep me busy rather than nourishing a career. The husband's busy schedule made me feel like a single parent most of the times but what kept me going



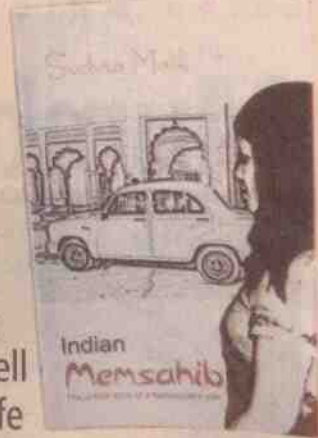
Suchita Malik with her book.
Tribune photo: Manoj Mahajan

was a desire of not to live like a trophy wife." Adds Suchita. On being questioned about the response she considers it unexpectedly overwhelming and shares the credit with her hubby dearest.

"He never knew I was writing till I was half way through but helped me lot as he has been the pivot of my life my experiences and my everything and trust me sweet or sour the time spent has left me with no complaints but a lot to share in form of this book." Concludes Suchita.

An 'official' insight

Suchita Malik's debut novel, *Indian Memsahib*, weaves fact & fiction to tell the untold story of a bureaucrat's wife



PARUL

THE agony, ecstasy, labour, loneliness, uncertainty...of being a writer is something Suchita Malik has lived. And as her debut novel *Indian Memsahib*, the untold story of a bureaucrat's wife makes waves, Suchita sums up the entire experience aptly, "it's like bringing into being a baby, as tough and as satisfying." A student of literature and now teaching American Literature at the Government College for Boys, writing and reading, smiles the lovely author, has come naturally to her and she'd been toying with the idea for a long time, ever since she read *English August*. "That was from a bureaucrat's point of view, but there is another side to it all, the wives' perspective, for behind the glamour is the grind and my journey of more than 25 years as a civil servant's better-half is what *Indian Memsahib* is all about," for Malik, who began her teaching career from MD University, Rohtak and has been regularly writing newspaper columns, penning the book was a walk down memory lane. Recalling the various stints of her husband, his transfers, associated problems, situations, the good and bad times and jotting it all down was how Suchita began it all. What people see, rues Malik, is only a hunky-dory situation, though many times there are situations which call for many adjustments, "as a wife, you have to play second fiddle, submerge your identity, be reticent, always have a smile and fight a lone battle at different stages of life, flagging her own banter of individualism. She also tries her level best to come up to the expectations of everyone at every stage of life relegating her own self, career and individualism."

The ground reality is different from

what is seen by outsiders and Malik did a lot of introspection as she went through the process of writing and looked back closely at her own life, taking care of home, family, career and at times, also feeling personal gaps and emptiness. It's been a long journey, nods Malik. As to whether the book is autobiographical, Suchita recalls how in one of her meetings with Khushwant Singh, he said that the first work of fiction is usually autobiographical and encouraged her to write a novel with that element in mind. "As a writer you have to be objective and even the imagination has to be factual, and so this novel is not only about my experiences, but also of the other wives, their emotions, identities," Suchita recalls how apart from her daughter no one else had a clue about *Indian Memsahib*. And she's absolutely ecstatic about the reviews and sales of the book and is all set for another novel and some non-fictional work too. "Teaching is like catharsis, challenging, satisfying and education is a subject that will occupy my writing now," Suchita's words come easy.

PHOTO: JAIPAL SINGH



In memsahib's WORLD

Suchita Malik's novel *Indian Memsahib* explores the life of an IAS officer's wife

Sourabh Gupta

Sunaina, an urban girl, comes to a small town to teach at the university there, falls in love with a fellow lecturer from that area and they get married. But then comes the culture shock for her as orthodox in-laws and customs. Soon, Sunaina's husband clears the UPSC exam, becomes an IAS officer and their lives change again. She moves with him from one field posting to another, and along the way sacrifices her identity, makes compromises, raises a family and also teaches. The husband immerses himself in his job and is unable to give time to family. One day, she asks herself: 'Which world do I belong to — my career or my husband's'. Her identity crisis has finally come full circle.

This, briefly, is the sad, real world of the bureaucrat's wife, the destiny shared by all Indian memsahibs, now put into a novel by Suchita Malik. The 51-year-old writer is also a bureaucrat's wife and an English lecturer at Government College for Men-II. Her husband, Y.S. Malik, is Secretary, Industries and IT, Haryana. And life hasn't been easy, she says. This novel, *Indian*

GURMINDER

Memsahib, is also her story, her 'faction,' where facts merge with fiction. "The memsahib is a legacy of the British Raj. People think we live a dream life. But it's a mirage," says the writer. "A civil servant's wife has to surrender her personality even though she is her husband's strength. I too had fulfilled my role as a wife and mother and now that my two children have grown up, I thought: Look at me! What have I achieved?"

But the idea to pen down her life's journey, from Delhi to Rohtak to Scotland to Chandigarh as an Indian memsahib, came to Suchita 20 years ago. And the



spark came from Khuswant Singh whom she met some years ago. "He asked me to write a novel, and said his first book too was autobiographical."

The novel as a form was familiar to Suchita through her teaching. "All I needed were facts...and time." As she started writing, things began falling into place. "I began reliving each moment of the last 25 years. The book came straight from the heart. My experiences, experiences of my friends. Today, they think it's their story."

She had liked *English, August*, Upamanyu Chatterjee's novel on an IAS officer. "But that was the man's perspective. I thought of presenting the reality from the other side, from the side of an IAS officer's wife." Suchita told her husband about the book after she was halfway through. "Initially, his response was lukewarm. My daughter and son are

Indian Memsahib: A 'VIP spouse' lifts veil on grind behind the glitz & glamour

ANUSHREE MAJUMDAR
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 16

THE auditorium at the India Islamic Cultural Centre was packed to the full with bureaucrats and their wives. As a bureaucrat's wife herself, Suchita Malik couldn't have been happier. After all, the audience comprised a world she knew best. "My marriage began with a peace accord. It would set the foundation not only for our marriage but also for our lives," said Malik at the launch of her debut novel *Indian Memsahib: The untold story of a bureaucrat's wife* (Rupa, Rs 195). The book was released by Lieutenant Governor Tejendra Khanna.

Indian Memsahib... spans the roller-coaster journey of Sunaina, a bureaucrat's wife. Malik admits that her characters are drawn from her own life, including the protagonist Sunaina, who fights a lonely battle at different stages of life while flagging her own brand of individualism. "Being a VIP spouse is like a finished product of the cinematic world—the glam-



Lieutenant Governor of Delhi Tejendra Khanna releasing Suchita Malik's (left) book at the Islamic Cultural Centre on Tuesday. Photo by Prem Nath Pandey

our is reflected on the screen, while the grind is relegated to the background. My book lifts the veil of our little-known reality, a life that is full of struggle, challenges, apprehensions, and above all, compromise," said Malik, who also teaches English Literature at the Government College for Men, Chandigarh. Malik recently completed her post-graduate doctorate thesis on 'faction' — a literary mix of fiction

based on facts.

"I clearly knew that I did not want to write an autobiography. I teach fiction and it is based on certain facts of life and of the times. The story is mine and yet it belongs to many other women," said Malik who was inspired to write her book after reading Upamanyu Chatterjee's *English, August*.

Suchita is wife of bureaucrat Yudhvir Malik.

लोकार्पण...



HK

Tejendra Khanna
Hon'ble LS-Delhi

Mrs. Uma Khanna

नई दिल्ली। उपराज्यपाल तेजेन्द्र खन्ना ने एक समारोह में मंगलवार को डॉ. सुचित्रा मलिक की पुस्तक इंडियन मेमसाहिब का लोकार्पण किया।

छाया : हरिभूमि

इंडियन मेमसाहिब उपन्यास का लोकार्पण

हरिभूमि न्यूज

नई दिल्ली। किसी वीआईपी की पत्नी या पति होना दरअसल बॉलीवुड की कहानियों की तरह बहुत ही ग्लैमरस होता है लेकिन असली सच्चाई इस ग्लैमर की परत के नीचे कहीं छुपी होती है। सुचित्रा मलिक के उपन्यास इंडियन मेमसाहिब की कहानी जीवन के अनछुए पहलुओं को उजागर करती है। सुचित्रा के इस उपन्यास का लोकार्पण मंगलवार को इंडिया इस्तामिक

सेंटर में उपराज्यपाल तेजेन्द्र खन्ना ने किया। इस उपन्यास को फिक्शन श्रेणी के तहत रखा गया है। इसमें एक नौकरशाह की पत्नी के जीवन में आए उतार-चढ़ाव को बहुत ही संदर ढंग से व्यक्त किया गया है। जिंदगी के अलग-अलग मोड़ पर उसके एकाकी संघर्ष व वैयक्तिकता

की पुकार इस उपन्यास की मुख्य कथावस्तु है। उपन्यास की नायिका जिंदगी में हरेक की अपेक्षाओं और उम्मीदों पर खरा उतरने की कोशिश करती है और इस कोशिश में उसका अपना बज्रूद, कैरियर तथा निजता की बली चढ़ जाता है। इस उपन्यास की कहानी के बारे में सुचेता ने बताया कि इस उपन्यास के बहाने भारतीय नौकरशाही का अनदेखा, अनजाना पक्ष सामने लाने का प्रयास

किया है। रूपा एंड कंपनी द्वारा प्रकाशित इस पुस्तक की कीमत 195

उपराज्यपाल तेजेन्द्र खन्ना ने किया लोकार्पण

रूप है। इस उपन्यास की नायिका अपनी भावनाओं से जूझती हैं। लेकिन अंत में एक मजबूत इरादों वाली महिला के रूप में सामने आती है। वह शक्तिशाली अफसरशाह की कोहलियों पर झुलती सजावटी गुड़िया बने रहने की बजाए अपनी ही परछाई से लगातार संघर्षरत हैं।

'इंडियन मेमसाहब' में संजोया जीवन के अनुभवों को

हरिभूमि ब्यूरो

नई दिल्ली। दिल्ली के उपराज्यपाल तेजेन्द्र खन्ना ने आज यहां आयोजित एक समारोह में सुचिता मलिक द्वारा लिखित अंग्रेजी उपन्यास 'इंडियन मेमसाहब' का लोकार्पण किया। इस अवसर पर श्री खन्ना ने कहा कि इस उपन्यास में जीवन के अनुभवों को बहुत ही ईमानदारी और संवेदनशीलता के साथ संजोया गया है। उन्होंने कहा कि लेखन कार्य बहुत ही कठिन विधा है। लेखक जिस कलात्मक ढंग से अपने अनुभवों को संजो कर प्रस्तुत करता है उसके प्रयास ही पाठकों द्वारा प्रशंसा या आलोचना के हकदार बनते हैं। उन्होंने कहा कि जीवन अनुभवों को एक नदी के समान है, जिसमें से हम सब को गुजरना होता है और अनुभवों के अन्तिम मुकाम पर हम बुद्धिमान हो जाते हैं। सुचिता मलिक ने भी अपने अनुभवों को बहुत ही पारदर्शिता से इस उपन्यास में संजोया है। उन्होंने कहा कि लेखिका भारतीय प्रशासनिक सेवा के अधिकारी की पत्नी होने के नाते इस लेखन के लिए विशेष तौर बधाई की पात्र हैं।

वस्तुतः उन्होंने उपन्यास के पात्र रघु के तौर पर अपने पति युद्धवीर सिंह मलिक तथा महिला पात्र सुनयना के रूप में अपने आप को प्रस्तुत किया है। उन्होंने कहा कि मेमसाहब की कल्पना अंग्रेजी राज के ब्रिटिश नौकरशाहों की पत्नी के रूप में दिलों में बसने वाली छवि है, जो आम लोगों से दूर रहने में ही गौरवान्वित अनुभव करती हैं। मौजूदा घरातल पर आज इन नौकरशाहों की पत्नियों को किस प्रकार का एकाकीपन सहन करना पड़ता है उसकी पीड़ा और उसके अस्तित्व की अभिव्यक्ति ही इस उपन्यास का मूल निचोड़ है। सुचिता मलिक ने कहा कि उपन्यास में एक नौकरशाह की पत्नी के जीवन में उतार चढ़ावों की अंतरंग दास्तान को समेटा गया है। जिंदगी के अलग-अलग मोड़ पर उसका एकाकी संघर्ष, वैयक्तिकता की उसकी पुकार इस उपन्यास की मुख्य कथावस्तु है। वह जिंदगी में हरेक की अपेक्षाओं और उम्मीदों पर खरा उतरने की कोशिश करती है और इस कोशिश में उसका अपना वजूद, कैरियर तथा निजता भेंट चढ़ जाते हैं।

'इंडियन मेमसाहब' उपन्यास का विमोचन

लेखिका सुचिता चंडीगढ़ के शासकीय महाविद्यालय में अंग्रेजी भाषा और साहित्य की प्राध्यापक हैं। उप-राज्यपाल तेजेंद्र खन्ना ने किया विमोचन।

एजेंसी, नई दिल्ली

लेखिका सुचिता मलिक के पहले कथाप्रधान उपन्यास इंडियन मेमसाहब का मंगलवार को दिल्ली के उपराज्यपाल तेजेंद्र खन्ना ने विमोचन किया। चंडीगढ़ के शासकीय महाविद्यालय में अंग्रेजी भाषा और साहित्य की प्राध्यापक सुचिता के इस उपन्यास का प्रकाशन रूपा एंड कंपनी ने किया है।

इंडियन मेमसाहब के विमोचन पर सुचिता ने कहा कि यह मेरा पहला प्रयास है और मुझे उम्मीद है कि पाठकों को यह पसंद आएगा। उपन्यास एक नौकरशाह की अनकही दास्तान पर आधारित है। इसमें नौकरशाह की पत्नी के जीवन की झलक दिखाई गई है, जो रोमांच संघर्ष, चुनौतियों, आशंकाओं और उतार-चढ़ाव से भरी है। नौकरशाही की जिंदगी के तमाम पंच इसमें समेटे गए हैं।

प्रकाशक समूह रूपा एंड कंपनी ने भाजपा नेता लालकृष्ण आडवाणी, जसवंत सिंह और अरुण शौरी के अलावा साहित्यकार गुलजार और इंदिरा गोस्वामी की पुस्तकों का प्रकाशन भी किया है।

उपराज्यपाल द्वारा 'इंडियन मेमसाहब' का लोकार्पण

एनबीएस/नई दिल्ली

दिल्ली के उपराज्यपाल श्री तेजेन्द्र खन्ना ने आज यहां आयोजित एक गरिमामय समारोह में श्रीमती सुचिता मलिक द्वारा लिखित अंग्रेजी उपन्यास 'इंडियन मेमसाहब' का लोकार्पण किया। इस अवसर पर श्री खन्ना ने कहा कि इस उपन्यास में जीवन के अनुभवों को बहुत ही ईमानदारी और संवेदनशीलता के साथ संजोया गया है। उन्होंने कहा कि लेखन कार्य बहुत ही कठिन विधा है। लेखक जिस कलात्मक ढंग से अपने अनुभवों को संजो कर प्रस्तुत करता है उसके प्रयास ही पाठकों द्वारा प्रशंसा या आलोचना के हकदार बनते हैं। उन्होंने कहा कि जीवन अनुभवों की एक नदी के समान है, जिसमें से हम सब को गुजरना होता है और अनुभवों के



अन्तिम मुकाम पर हम बुद्धिमान हो जाते हैं। श्रीमती सुचिता मलिक ने भी अपने अनुभवों को बहुत ही पारदर्शिता से इस उपन्यास में संजोया है। उन्होंने कहा कि लेखिका भारतीय प्रशासनिक सेवा के अधिकारी की धर्मपत्नी होने के नाते उनके इस लेखन के लिए विशेष तौर भी बधाई की पात्र हैं। वस्तुतः उन्हें उपन्यास के पात्र रचु के तौर पर अपने पति श्री युद्धवीर सिंह मलिक तथा महिला पात्र सुनयना के

रूप में अपने आप को प्रस्तुत किया है। उन्होंने कहा कि भारतीय प्रशासनिक सेवा से अधिक महत्वपूर्ण लोक कल्याण को और कोई वैकल्पिक सिस्टम नहीं है। मेमसाहब की कल्पना अंग्रेजी राज के ब्रिटिश नौकरशाहों की पत्नी के रूप में दिलों में बसने वाली छवि है, जो आम लोगों से दूर रहने में ही गौरवान्वित अनुभव करती हैं। मौजूद धरातल पर आज इन नौकरशाहों की पत्नियों को किस

प्रकार का एकाकीपन सहन करना पड़ता है उसकी पीड़ा और उसके अस्तित्व की अभिव्यक्ति ही इस उपन्यास का मूल निचोड़ है। श्रीमती सुचिता मलिक ने इस अवसर पर कहा कि एक नौकरशाह की पत्नी के जीवन में उतार चढ़ावों की अंतरंग दास्तान को समेटा गया है। जिंदगी के अलग-अलग मोड़ पर उसका एकाकी संघर्ष, वैयक्तिकता की उसकी पुकार इस उपन्यास की मुख्य कथावस्तु है। वह जिंदगी में हरेक की अपेक्षाओं और उम्मीदों पर खरा उतरने की कोशिश करती है और इस कोशिश में उसका अपना वजूद, कैरियर तथा निजता भेंट चढ़ जाते हैं। उन्होंने कहा कि यह पुस्तक लेखन उनका पहला प्रयास है, जिसमें उन्होंने भारतीय नौकरशाही का अनजाना अनदेखा पक्ष सामने लाने का प्रयास किया है।

न्यू स्टार

'इंडियन मेमसाहब' का लोकार्पण

चंडीगढ़, 16 दिसंबर (निस)। दिल्ली के उपराज्यपाल तेजेन्द्र खन्ना ने आज नई दिल्ली में आयोजित एक गरिमामय समारोह में सुचिता मलिक द्वारा लिखित अंग्रेजी उपन्यास 'इंडियन मेमसाहब' का लोकार्पण किया।

इस अवसर पर श्री खन्ना ने कहा कि इस उपन्यास में जीवन के अनुभवों को बहुत ही ईमानदारी और संवेदनशीलता के साथ संजोया गया है। उन्होंने कहा कि लेखन कार्य बहुत ही कठिन विधा है। लेखक जिस कलात्मक ढंग से अपने अनुभवों को संजोकर प्रस्तुत करता है उसके प्रयास ही पाठकों द्वारा प्रशंसा या आलोचना के हकदार बनते हैं। उन्होंने कहा कि जीवन अनुभवों की एक नदी के समान है, जिसमें से हम सब को गुजरना होता है और अनुभवों के अन्तिम मुकाम पर हम बुद्धिमान ही जाते हैं। सुचिता मलिक ने भी अपने अनुभवों को बहुत ही पारदर्शिता से इस उपन्यास में संजोया है।



सुचेता मलिक की किताब को लोकार्पित करते राज्यपाल तेंजेंद्र खन्ना।

लाट साहब ने किया 'इंडियन मेमसाहब' का लोकार्पण

■ संवाददाता।

नई दिल्ली। दिल्ली के उपराज्यपाल तेजेंद्र खन्ना ने मंगलवार को सुचिता मलिक के अंग्रेजी उपन्यास 'इंडियन मेमसाहब' का लोकार्पण किया। इस अवसर पर श्री खन्ना ने कहा कि इस उपन्यास में जीवन के अनुभवों को बहुत ही ईमानदारी और संवेदनशीलता के साथ संजोया गया है। उन्होंने कहा कि लेखन कार्य बहुत ही कठिन विधा है। लेखक जिस कलात्मक ढंग से अपने अनुभवों को संजो कर प्रस्तुत करता है, उसके प्रयास ही पाठकों द्वारा प्रशंसा या आलोचना के हकदार बनते हैं। उन्होंने कहा कि जीवन अनुभवों की एक नदी के समान है, जिसमें से हम सब को गुजरना होता है और अनुभवों के अन्तिम मुकाम पर हम बुद्धिमान हो जाते हैं।

श्रीमती मलिक ने भी अपने अनुभवों को बहुत ही पारदर्शिता से इस उपन्यास में संजोया है। उन्होंने कहा कि लेखिका भारतीय प्रशासनिक सेवा के अधिकारी की धर्मपत्नी होने के नाते उनके इस लेखन के लिए विशेष तौर भी बधाई की पात्र हैं। वस्तुतः उन्हें उपन्यास के पात्र रघु के तौर पर अपने पति श्री युद्धवीर सिंह मलिक तथा महिला पात्र सुनयना के रूप में अपने आप को प्रस्तुत किया है। उन्होंने कहा कि भारतीय प्रशासनिक सेवा से अधिक महत्वपूर्ण लोक कल्याण को और कोई वैकल्पिक सिस्टम नहीं है। मेमसाहब की कल्पना अंग्रेजी राज के

लोगों से दूर रहने में ही गौरवान्वित अनुभव करती हैं। मौजूदा धरातल पर आज इन नौकरशाहों की पत्नियों को किस प्रकार का एकाकीपन सहन करना पड़ता है उसकी पीड़ा और उसके अस्तित्व की अभिव्यक्ति ही इस उपन्यास का मूल निचोड़ है। श्रीमती सुचिता मलिक ने इस अवसर पर कहा कि एक नौकरशाह की पत्नी के जीवन में उतार चढ़ावों की अंतरंग दास्तान को समेटा गया है। जिंदगी के अलग-अलग मोड़ पर उसका एकाकी संघर्ष, वैयक्तिकता की उसकी पुकार इस उपन्यास की मुख्य कथावस्तु है। वह जिंदगी में हरेक की अपेक्षाओं और उम्मीदों पर खरा उतरने की कोशिश करती है और इस कोशिश में उसका अपना वजूद, करियर तथा निजता भेंट चढ़ जाते हैं।

उन्होंने कहा कि यह पुस्तक लेखन उनका पहला प्रयास है, जिसमें उन्होंने भारतीय नौकरशाही का अनजाना-अनदेखा पक्ष सामने लाने का प्रयास किया है। उन्होंने कहा कि इस उपन्यास में नौकरशाह की पत्नी के जीवन की झलक दिखाने का प्रयास किया गया है, जिसमें रौमांच, संघर्ष, चुनौतियां, आशंकाएं और उतार-चढ़ाव जैसे अनेक पेशों को समेटा गया है। इंडियन मेमसाहब का प्रकाशन रूपा एंड कंपनी, दिल्ली द्वारा किया गया है। इस अवसर पर उप-राज्यपाल की पत्नी उषा खन्ना सहित भारतीय प्रशासनिक सेवा के वरिष्ठ अधिकारी उपस्थित थे। अतिथियों का



नई दिल्ली : दिल्ली के उप राज्यपाल तेजेन्द्र खन्ना 'इंडियन मेमसाहब' उपन्यास का विमोचन करते हुए। साथ में उनकी पत्नी उमा खन्ना व दाएं उपन्यास की लेखिका सुचिता मलिक। महामेधा

एलजी ने किया 'इंडियन मेमसाहब' का विमोचन

संवाददाता/नई दिल्ली
रूपा एंड कंपनी से प्रकाशित, सुचिता मलिक का पहला उपन्यास 'इंडियन मेमसाहब' मंगलवार को साहित्य प्रेमियों के लिए बाजार के लिए उपलब्ध हो गया है। इस उपन्यास का लोकार्पण दिल्ली उप राज्यपाल तेजेन्द्र खन्ना ने मंगलवार को यहां स्थित इंडिया इस्लामिक कल्चरल सेंटर में आयोजित समारोह में किया। 'इंडियन मेमसाहब' सुचिता का पहला उपन्यास है और फिक्शन श्रेणी के तहत इसे रखा गया है।

इसमें एक नौकरशाह की पत्नी के जीवन में उतार-चढ़ावों की अंतरंग दास्तान को समेटा गया है। जिंदगी के अलग-अलग मोड़ पर उसका एकाकी

संघर्ष, वैयक्तिकता की उसकी पुकार इस उपन्यास की मुख्य कथावस्तु है। वह जिंदगी में हरेक की अपेक्षाओं और उम्मीदों पर खरा उतरने की कोशिश करती है।

इस कोशिश में उसका अपना वजूद, करियर तथा निजता भेंट चढ़ जाते हैं। इस उपन्यास की कहानी के बारे में सुचिता ने कहा कि यह पुस्तक लेखन का मेरा पहला प्रयास है और मुझे आशा है कि पाठकों को यह पसंद आएगा।

यह एक नौकरशाह कही जिंदगी की अनकही दास्तां है और सच पूछा जाए तो इसके बहाने भारतीय नौकरशाही का अनदेखा, अनजाना पक्ष सामने लाने का प्रयास किया गया है।

**सुचिता मलिक
ने लिखा है
पहला उपन्यास**