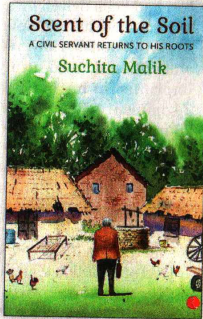


# Malik incredibly encapsulates the life of a bureaucrat in her latest novel

## REVIEW

Scent of the Soil  
A CIVIL SERVANT RETURNS TO HIS ROOTS  
Suchita Malik



**Scent of the Soil**  
**Suchita Malik**  
**Rupa Publications**  
Price: 295  
Pages: Rs 281

Suchita Malik's *Scent of the Soil* is a classic work of fiction, a marked departure from her previous novel. The author, like a sculptor extraordinaire, carves an incredible and intricate chronicle. The riveting tale encapsulates the life and a career of a bureaucrat, an embodiment of unwavering zeal, who finds himself trapped in the mundane trials and tribulations of life.

The story revolves around the protagonist of the novel, Shubhojit, his wife, Yas-



Suchita Malik.

hodhara, his two children, Hemant and Neelakshi and his aged mother, Kamladevi. A two-time Prime Minister awardee, Shubhojit's personal life is in shambles. His wife Yashodhara accuses him of being a failed husband and father. Like a flat cold drink, their marriage is also without the fizz. Just then, Yashodhara decides to call it quits. She's had enough.

The glitz and glamour in the lives of public servants is true only on the surface. What lies underneath is a messy saga that must be laid threadbare. And Suchita Malik does justice. She effortlessly brings the core dilemmas confronting a

civil servant to the fore. The trade-off between professional success and family life and all the myriad decisions that a career bureaucrat has to make along this long journey are often underestimated. However, the writer succeeds in revealing

*The glitz and glamour in the lives of public servants is true only on the surface. What lies underneath is a messy saga that must be laid threadbare. And Suchita Malik does justice. She effortlessly brings the core dilemmas confronting a civil servant to the fore.*

to the naive reader the complexity of decision making in the professional sphere, that too, in a heavily politicised environment where the bureaucrat finds himself under constant media and judicial glare. That's not all. Add to this, the responsibility of be-

ing a devoted husband and a dutiful parent. Sandwiched in between is a hectic social life, lined up with extravagant dinners and musical soirees. One body pulled in three different directions to satisfy and please diverse stakeholders. A nervous breakdown is on the cards. Subhojit Singh suffers a massive heart attack. Will this become a watershed moment in his life? Will Yashodhara return? Will he be able to win the confidence of his children? Will he be able to give back to his roots? Will he return to his homeland? Only time will tell.

Malik's style of writing is unparalleled; her calibrated

selection of words and a self-effacing vocabulary makes the book a worthwhile read with the gravity of a common thread shining through. The author weaves a beautiful veil with distinct and vivid patterns through her characters, thereby creating an impeccable prose. That she has a deep understanding of human emotions would be an understatement. Malik, like an expert artist has an eye for great detail and paints mystic images which leave the reader spellbound.

Shubhojit is the quintessential Indian civil servant, with extraordinary resilience and the will to live in spite of all hardships that life has to offer. Flipping through the pages of this book is like breathing in lungful of fresh air which makes it a promising work of fiction. The book is a must read for all those who wish to peep inside the life — both professional and personal — of a career bureaucrat. The writer apparently prefers multiplicity and variety over drama and intensity, and the result, if not incredible, is definitely warm and charming. Delving into the pages of this novel is like sipping hot chicken soup at the end of an extremely rough day; it just soothes your taste buds rather than exciting them and you are indebted for that. — *Chitransu Singh Dhillon*

# The humane side of bureaucrats

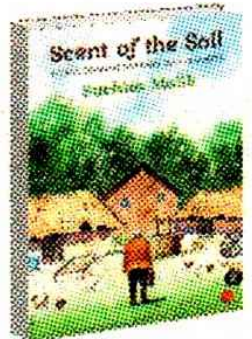
**CHANAKYA GROVER**

**W**HAT happens when a decorated IAS officer starts questioning his career and his life choices? What happens when he realises that no matter how many prestigious awards he get, it won't bring back the time he could have spent with his estranged wife and his disappointed children?

The novel attempts to answer these questions through its protagonist Shubhojit Singh. The story takes off on the eve of Civil Services' Day where he is scheduled to receive the Prime Minister's Award. But he is far from being happy. Suchita Malik, author of *Indian Memsahib*, *Memsahib's Chronicles* and *Women Extraordinaire*, in this book has attempted to break the stereotypes usually associated with the bureaucracy. Through Shubhojit's story, she has tried to bring forth the humane side of bureaucrats.

Shubhojit is struggling with loneliness and to find meaning and purpose in his life once again. He wishes to undo the mistakes he has committed with his family and make them understand his side of the story, but he's unsure if he will ever get a chance to do so. But when he is bedridden and his ex-wife and his children come to visit him. He finds support in this redemptive from his mother who has also come to visit him from their native village. The two talk to his kids about the village life and Shubhojit's bureaucratic life; a life that comes with many expectations but takes a heavy toll on the personal lives of the officers. While going through this process, Shubhojit is forced to ponder over many existential questions.

Even though the characters and their tribulations seem relatable, one cannot empathise with them much. They seem quite prim in their thoughts, speech and actions and that robs them of their emotional vulnerability that comes with any human conflict. They fight with each other over issues they've been harbouring for years but instantly show such amazing understanding and change that seems too idyllic. Malik could have included more anecdotes from bureaucrats' lives to make a better case for the hardships they face.



**Scent of the Soil**

by Suchita Malik.

Rupa.

Pages 287.

₹495

Suchita Malik's latest novel *Scent Of The Soil* traces the life of a civil servant, where the initial enthusiasm leads to the point of no return



Suchita Malik

PHOTO: S CHANDAN

## Essence of life

JASMINE SINGH

Suchita Malik has a message for the young generation, which is applicable to all of us. 'You cannot have a future without having a past,' the soft-spoken writer elaborates and weaves a story around this message, and gives it a form of *Scent Of The Soil*, her fourth book, and the third in the trilogy, the first two being *Indian Mem-*

*sahib* and *Memsahib Chronicle's* published by Rupa Publications India.

Saturday morning saw friends, fans of her work and many dignitaries gather at Haryana Niwas, Chandigarh to talk about her latest book, the one that comes straight from her heart, like the rest of her works.

"I do not write anything for the heck of it, I write about things that I strongly feel about," says the author whose heart found a setting, a space, a scenario, a reality that she was compelled to write about.

"There comes a stage in one's profession (in the book this comes in the life of a civil servant), when enough is enough. This is the saturation point from where one is left to think about where life is moving or should it be."

And this is how her latest book *Scent Of The Soil* progresses. Suchita gives a peek into the inside world of her protagonist, a male civil servant.

"I was asked when would I ever bring in a male protagonist in my books, since her earlier two books had a woman as the leading lady. So, this time my lead character is a male," Suchita smiles as she takes us along the storyline of her new book.

"My protagonist is a celebrated civil servant who has only focused on his professional commitments, and his family life is in complete mess. His wife has left him and kids have gone astray. It so happens that this civil servant lands up in a hospital, and he finds himself sur-

rounded by his family, his ex-wife, children and his grandmother, the ones he didn't care about when he was working. It is here that the kids strike a bond with their granny, who talks about the village life, and how the protagonist is already toying with the idea of going back to the village," Suchita gives a brief of the story for which, of course, she has done her research.

"I went to a village, spoke to the people there and stayed with them for a few days. So, though this book is a work of fiction, it has the flavour of what I felt and saw in the village," says the author.

And it is time to ask her about reactions from the family. She smiles, "My daughter is also a civil servant. I have asked her to take the message seriously but not everything as she is too young to feel exhausted or run away from something so important," Suchita holds that smile.

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## BOOK LAUNCH

## Does past provide us refuge from present?

Mukesh Rawat

mukesh.rawat@hindustantimes.com

**CHANDIGARH:** "After all the hard work that civil servants do in the line of duty, which often comes at the cost of their personal lives, the fraternity is called as babus. Isn't it demeaning?"

Despite years of service, the public perception lingers on," rues a retired officer in a hall full of civil servants.

But then, is there a silver lining? A ray of hope that this perception will someday change? The audience appears optimistic. They have gathered for the launch of a novel that attempts to portray the human side of a civil servant's life.

Suchita Malik is out with her fourth novel, 'Scent of the Soil'. It was released in Chandigarh on Saturday at the Haryana Niwas.

Like her previous novels, 'Scent of the Soil' also

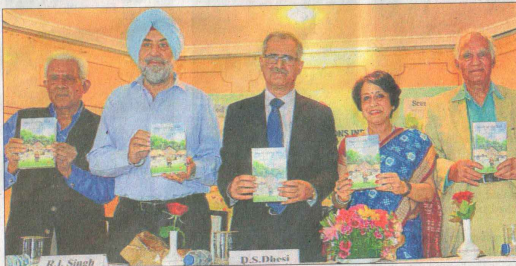
attempts to portray the different shades that colour, and discolour, the life of a civil servant in India. Malik is wife of senior IAS officer YS Malik, who is currently chairman, National Highways Authority of India (NHAI).

Malik says the idea for the novel germinated from her experience of hearing countless tales by civil servants about the towns and villages they served in.

"These were often recounted with an air of joyous nostalgia," she says.

The novel is based in Haryana. Shubhojit Singh, the protagonist, is a promising hard-working civil servant. Though he is a highly decorated officer, but in personal life, he is a loner.

His dedication to work often positions him at the crossroads of professional and personal life. The latter is often compromised at the altars of the former, to an



(From left) Writer Robin Gupta, former Punjab chief secretary RI Singh, Haryana chief secretary DS Dhesi, author Suchita Malik and former Haryana chief secretary RS Verma during the release of Malik's novel 'Scent of the Soil' in Chandigarh on Saturday.

KARUN SHARMA/HT

extent that his family relations break down at various levels. But he continues. A massive heart attack changes the course of his life. Armed with retrospection, he takes a voluntary retirement at a

time when he is at the peak of his career, and decides to take refuge in his village—his roots.

Explaining the plot, Malik says, "Shubhojit is a representative figure of all civil ser-

vants who join with great optimism and many dreams. But over the time, things change. The professional front overshadows the personal. Life starts oscillating between hope and despair."

She adds, "This novel is my attempt to raise questions and dilemmas that confront our past, present and future. While writing the book, I often wondered why we take refuge in nostalgia for happiness? Are we not happy in the present? Has the enthusiasm in us reached saturation? Can going back to the roots and maintaining balance between traditions and modernity be an answer?" she asks.

Apart from the dilemmas that a civil servant faces daily, Malik says she has also tried to weave in natural elements of life in rural Haryana so that the young generation also connects themselves with their traditions.

Grappling with the dichotomies between personal and professional growth and the dynamics of achievement and renouncement, will the book lighten the load of perception that the retired officer raised? It is for time to answer that.

# Haryana Chief Secretary releases Suchita Malik's fourth book

DP CORRESPONDENT

Chandigarh

Dr Suchita Malik has come out with her fourth book the 'Scent of the Soil' - a novel which is based on a civil servant's return to his roots. The book was released by Haryana Chief Secretary D S Dhese in the presence of former Chief Secretary, Haryana R S Verma, former Chief Secretary Punjab Ramesh Inder Singh, former IAS officer Mr Robin Gupta here on Saturday.

Speaking on this occasion, Dhese congratulated Dr Malik for writing another book and said that the author had come out with another masterpiece

highlighting the demanding nature of civil services and its effects. Dr Suchita Malik, an alumnus of Lady Shri Ram College for Women, University of Delhi. Besides contributing middles, feature articles and travelogues to national newspapers, she had authored three novels titled Indian Memsahib, Memsahib's Chronicles and Women Extraordinaire.

While congratulating the author, former Haryana Chief Secretary, R S Verma, former Chief Secretary Punjab Mr Ramesh Inder Singh and former IAS officer Mr Robin Gupta have also shared their views about the book. Votes

of thanks were presented by Chairman National Highway Authority of India, Y S Malik.

## About the book

Shubhojit Singh is at the pinnacle of his career as a civil servant, having won the Prime Minister's award twice; however, his personal life is in a shambles. His wife has left him and he has become a stranger to his own children.

When a sudden health crisis brings the whole family together, Shubhojit is left reminiscing about his younger days in the village-of the times spent with friends, splashing in the village pond and climb-

ing trees and of meaningful relationships. Just four years short of his retirement, he decides to go back to his roots, to live with nature, to a life which is not dictated by structures-a life where he is free and unencumbered. Those prominent present among others included Principal Secretary to Haryana Chief Minister r Rajesh Khullar, Additional Chief Secretary Revenue Mrs Keshni Anand Arora, Additional Chief Secretary Health, Mr Rajan Gupta, Additional Chief Secretary Transport S S Dhillon, Additional Chief Secretary Cooperation S Dheera Khandelwal.

# खुश होने के लिए इंसान यादों को करता है तरोजा

## INTERACTION

शनिवार को ऑथर सुचिता मलिक के नॉवल 'सेंट ऑफ द सॉयल-अ सिविल सर्वेंट रिटर्न्स टू हिज रूट्स' को रिलीज किया गया।

सिटी रिपोर्टर • भूतकाल के बिना कोई भविष्य नहीं होता। आज की पीढ़ी को यह समझने की जरूरत है। और लेखिका सुचिता मलिक के लेटेस्ट नॉवल 'सेंट ऑफ द सॉयल-अ सिविल सर्वेंट रिटर्न्स टू हिज रूट्स' में यंगस्टर्स को यही संदेश दिया गया है। शनिवार को सेक्टर-3 हरियाणा निवास में इस नॉवल का रिलीज किया गया। लेखिका सुचिता ने बताया कि नॉवल की कहानी एक सीनियर आईएएस ऑफिसर शुभोजित सरकार पर आधारित है, जिसकी रिटायरमेंट को चार साल बचे हैं। वह अपनी प्रोफेशनल लाइफ में तो काफी कामयाब



है। दो बार प्रधानमंत्री अर्वाॉड भी पा चुका है। पर प्रोफेशनल और पर्सनल लाइफ में तालमेल नहीं बैठा पा रहा। जिस वजह उसकी बीवी उसे छोड़कर चले जाती है और दिल का दौरा पड़ने से वह अस्पताल में भर्ती हो जाता है। वहीं उसकी मां, बीवी और बच्चे सब

## 1992 में न्यूजपेपर्स में मिडल से लिखना शुरू किया

सुचिता सीनियर आईएएस ऑफिसर वार्डेस मलिक की पत्नी हैं। इस नॉवल को लिखने का आइडिया कहाँ से आया। इसपर वह बोलीं कि चूंकि उनके पति एक ब्यूरोक्रेट हैं। वह गामोण बैकआउंड से हैं। हमेशा अपने गांव, अपनी हदेली के बारे में मुझसे बात करते थे। इसलिए वह परिस्थितियों से आसानी से रिलेट कर सकती हैं। इसे लिखने में कुछ ज्यादा मेहनत नहीं करनी पड़ी। हालांकि यह नॉवल पूरी तरह से फिक्शन है। पर फिक्शन लिखने के लिए भी उन्हें घर, करीब्स, पड़ोस से तथ्य लेने पड़ते हैं। वे बोलीं कि आजकल सिर्फ सिविल सर्वेंट्स ही नहीं, हर जॉब में एक समय में रैजुरेशन पॉइंट आ जाता है। उस वकत इंसान खुश होने के लिए, पुरानी यादों को तरोजा करता है। सुचिता मलिक जीसीएम-1 में अंग्रेजी की प्रोफेसर रही हैं। वे बताती हैं कि साल 1992 में न्यूजपेपर्स में मिडल लिखकर अपनी लेखनी की शुरुआत की। पहले मिडल में उन्होंने यही लिखा था कि ब्यूरोक्रेसी में सब अच्छा है, सुविधाएं ही सुविधाएं हैं। पर ब्यूरोक्रेट के पास अपने परिवार के पास समय नहीं। 2009 में नॉवल 'इंडियन मेमसाब' मार्केट में आई। इसमें एक पत्नी के नजरिए से ब्यूरोक्रेट के जीवन को दर्शाया गया। वहीं 2011 में दूसरी किताब 'मेमसाहब क्रॉनिकल्स-अ स्टेरी ऑफ़ डिट एंड ब्लैमर' रीडर्स के बीच आई। तीसरी किताब 'दिनम एक्टर्ऑर्डिनयर' 2014 में मार्केट में आई। इसमें तीन पीढ़ियों की महिलाओं की कहानी थी।

इकट्ठा हो जाते हैं। तब दादी अपने पोते-पोतियों को गांव के जीवन के बारे में बताती है। वह जो खाते हैं वो फसलें कहां से आती हैं। बच्चों की दिलचस्पी गांव की जिंदगी में बढ़ने लगती है। यह सुन शुभोजित महसूस करता है कि वह अपनी प्रोफेशनल जिंदगी में इतना खो

गया कि अपनी जड़ों को ही भूल गया। इसलिए सरकार से एक साल की छुट्टी लेकर वह अपने गांव के आउटस्कर्ट्स जाकर रहने लगता है। वहां एक झोंपड़ी में रहकर वह देखना चाहता है कि क्या ग्लैमर से दूर रहकर, कम जरूरतों के बीच रह सकता है या नहीं।

## मुख्य सचिव डीएस देसी ने किया 'सेंट ऑफ द सॉयल' का लोकार्पण सुचिता मलिक के चौथे उपन्यास का विमोचन

आज समाज नेटवर्क

चंडीगढ़। डॉ. सुचिता मलिक के चौथे उपन्यास सेंट ऑफ द सॉयल का विमोचन शनिवार को हरियाणा के मुख्य सचिव डीएस देसी ने किया। यह उपन्यास भारतीय प्रशासनिक अधिकारी के जीवन पर आधारित है। इस अवसर पर हरियाणा के पूर्व मुख्य सचिव आरएस वर्मा, पंजाब के पूर्व मुख्य सचिव रमेश इंद्र सिंह तथा पूर्व आईएएस अधिकारी रॉबिन गुप्ता उपस्थित रहे। इस मौके मुख्य सचिव ने डॉ. सुचिता मलिक को बधाई दी और कहा कि लेखक ने नागरिक सेवाओं की प्रकृति की मांग और उसके प्रभावों को उजागर करते हुए एक और बेहतरीन उपन्यास लिखा है।



सेंट ऑफ द सॉयल का विमोचन करते मुख्य सचिव व अन्य। आज समाज

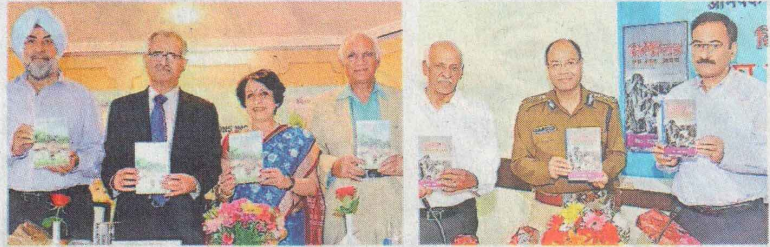
डॉ. सुचिता मलिक दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय की लेडी श्री राम महिला कॉलेज की छात्रा रही हैं। इसके अलावा इन्होंने विभिन्न समाचार पत्रों में मध्यस्थित, फीचर,

आर्टिकल और यात्रा वृत्तांत भी लिखे हैं। डॉ. मलिक ने तीन उपन्यास इंडियन मेम साहिब, मेम साहिब क्रोनिकल्स और वूमन एक्ट्र ऑर्डिनरर है।

उपन्यास का सार

सुभोजित सिंह अपने जीवन में सिविल सेवा में शिखर पर हैं। जिन्होंने दो बार प्रधानमंत्री पुरस्कार भी लिया है, परन्तु उनका निजी जीवन अस्त-व्यस्त चल रहा है और उनकी पत्नी उन्हें छोड़ देती है। वह अपने बच्चों के लिए एक अनजान व्यक्ति बन जाते हैं, जब अचानक स्वास्थ्य का संकट आता है तो सारा परिवार इकट्ठा हो जाता है। सुभोजित गांव में अपने दोस्तों के साथ अपने युवाकाल के दिनों को याद करता है, जो गांव के तालाब में नहाना, पेड़ों पर चढ़ना, जिसका एक अर्थ संबंध है। अपनी सेवानिवृत्ति से चार साल पहले वह निर्णय करता है कि अपनी पुरानी जड़ों से मिलने जाएगा और प्रकृति के साथ रहेगा।

## डॉ. सुचिता मलिक के उपन्यास का विमोचन



चंडीगढ़ में उपन्यास का विमोचन करते मुख्य सचिव डीएस टेसी • जागरण

विमोचन करते राजेश खुल्लर व पुलिस महानिदेशक केपी सिंह ।

राज्य व्यूरो, चंडीगढ़ : दिग्गज साहित्यकार के रूप में अलग ही पहचान बना चुकीं डॉ. सुचिता मलिक का चौथा उपन्यास 'सेंट ऑफ द सॉयल' लोगों के बीच आ गया है। शनिवार को उपन्यास का विमोचन मुख्य सचिव डीएस टेसी ने किया।

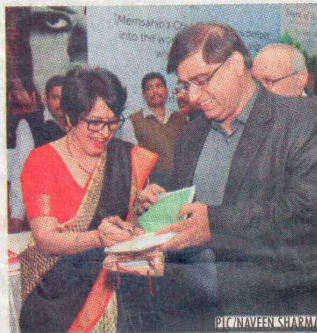
डॉ. सुचिता इससे पहले विभिन्न समाचार पत्रों में मध्यस्थिति, फीचर, आर्टिकल और यात्रा वृत्तंत भी लिख चुकी हैं। इसके अलावा उनके उपन्यास 'इंडियन

मेम साहिब', 'मेम साहिब क्रोनिकल्स' और 'वूमन एक्सट्रा आर्डिनेयर' भी खूब सरहे गए। इस अवसर पर पूर्व मुख्य सचिव आरएस वर्मा, मुख्यमंत्री के प्रधान सचिव राजेश खुल्लर सहित कई वरिष्ठ आइएएस मौजूद थे।

**'विभाजन एक काला अध्याय' का विमोचन**

चंडीगढ़ : भारत और पाकिस्तान के विभाजन

को लेकर लिखी गई पुस्तक 'विभाजन एक काला अध्याय' का विमोचन मुख्यमंत्री के प्रधान सचिव राजेश खुल्लर और पुलिस महानिदेशक केपी सिंह ने किया। विभाजन की त्रासदी के पीछे मार्मिक आधार पर लिखी गई यह पुस्तक डॉ. चंद त्रिखा की अनुपम कृति है। इससे पहले भी वह भारत के विभाजन पर तीन पुस्तक लिख चुके हैं। कार्यक्रम में कई जाने-माने साहित्यकार और विचारक पहुंचे। इस दौरान डॉ. आत्मजीत, डॉ. मेंहदीरता, डॉ. सुखदेव सिंह विशेष रूप से मौजूद रहे।

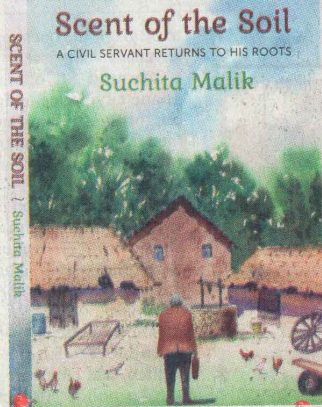


OUR CORRESPONDENT

ARE WE REALLY happy in the present? If so, then why do we take refuge in nostalgia? And if not, what are the reasons? One would find the answers to these queries in Suchita Malik's latest novel 'Scent of the Soil: A civil servant returns to his roots'. Her fourth novel was inaugurated in the august presence of Amitabh Kant (CEO NITI Ayog), Shashi Tharoor (prolific writer, politician), Pavan K Verma (former diplomat, socio-economic thinker, author), and Kapish Mehra (CEO Rupa Publications India) at Indian International Centre in the Capital recently.

'Scent of the Soil' gives an insight to the demanding nature of civil services; throwing light on how their regimented lives sometimes has adverse effects on the families of civil servants. Shubhojit Singh, a highly decorated civil servant is at the pinnacle of his career having won prestigious awards, however his personal life is in shambles as his wife had left him and he had become a stranger to his own children. He is lonely. When

# In search of an unencumbered life



a sudden health crisis brings the whole family together, Subhojit is left reminiscing about his childhood – of times spent with his friends and of meaningful relationships. With just four years left for

his retirement, Shubhojit decides to go back to his roots, to a life which is not defined by structures and where life is free and unencumbered. Will he succeed? Or will it prove to be an impulsive and hasty decision?

The author said that the idea of writing this book came to her on a visit to Bhutan, when along with other bureaucrats and their wives, she accompanied her husband, and realised that the civil servants were missing out on most of the fun time due to their work. She also credited the title of her book to Pavan Verma's chance observation on a casual discussion during the trip, when he used the phrase 'khushbu of the soil'.

The author was immensely praised by the guests of honour and the publisher, for weaving sensitivity in her novel and the magic in her words which had also given birth to her previous three novels – 'Indian Memsahib', 'Memsahib's Chronicles' and 'Women Extraordinaire'.

# दिल्ली वैभव

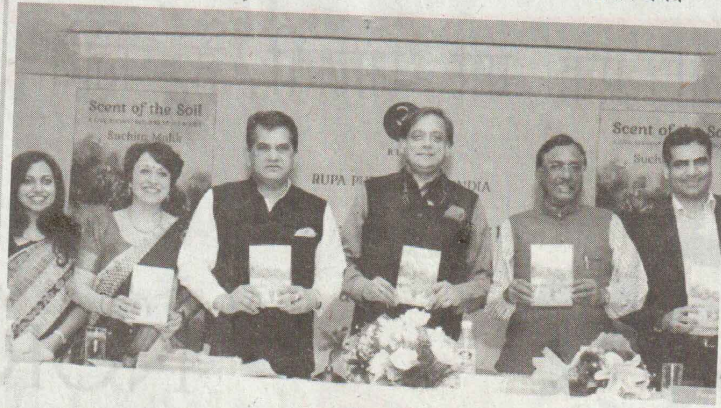
## विराट वैभव

नई दिल्ली, मंगलवार, 28 फरवरी 2017

### विमोचन

सोमवार को नई दिल्ली में 'मिट्टी की खुशबू' नामक उपन्यास के चतुर्थ संस्करण का विमोचन करते कांग्रेस नेता शशि थरूर, मोके पर नीति आयोग के सीईओ अमिताभ कांत भी मौजूद थे।

छाया : वैभव



THE HINDU NOIDA/DELHI

THURSDAY, MARCH 2, 2017

### **Civil servant's journey**

Suchita Malik's latest and fourth novel "Scent of the Soil: A civil servant returns to his roots" was released at India International Centre recently.

The book, which gives an insight into the demanding nature of civil services, was released in the august presence of senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor and Pavan K Verma, former diplomat.

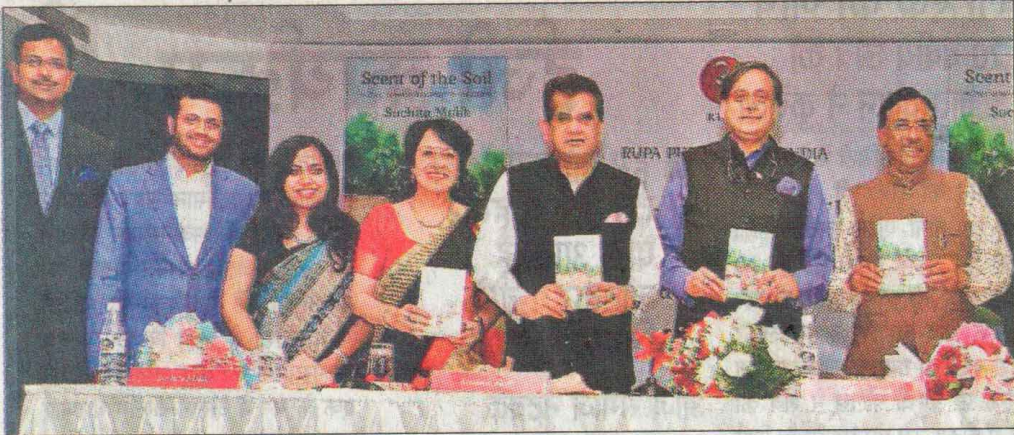
The book also throws light on how their regimented lives may somehow have adverse effects on their families.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, NEW DELHI  
FRIDAY, MARCH 03, 2017



- Dr. Suchita Malik's novel 'Scent of the Soil: A civil servant returns to his roots' was released in the august presence of politician Dr. Shashi Tharoor, former diplomat Pavan K Verma, CEO NITI Ayog Amitabh Kant and CEO Rupa Publications India Kapish Mehra at Indian International Centre, New Delhi.

## सेंट ऑफ द सोइल का लोकार्पण



इंडिया इंटर नेशनल सेंटर में पुस्तक के विमोचन अवसर पर उपस्थित अतिथि।

आज समाज

### आज समाज नेटवर्क

नई दिल्ली । डॉ. सुचिता मलिक की ताजी पुस्तक सेंट आफ द सोइल पुस्तक का यहां शुक्रवार को इंडिया इंटर नेशनल सेंटर में विमोचन हुआ। यह पुस्तक एक सिविल सर्वेंट की अपनी जड़ों की ओर वापसी की कथा पर आधारित है। इस अवसर पर बहुचर्चित लेखक डॉ. शशि थरूर, पूर्वी राजनयिक पवन कुमार वर्मा, नीति आयोग के मु य कार्याधिकारी और रूपा प्रकाशन के सीईओ मौजूद थे। अंग्रेजी में लिखी यह पुस्तक सेंट ऑफ

द सोइल (जमीन की खुशबू) में लोक प्रशासनिक सेवाओं से अपेक्षाओं की प्रकृति पर प्राकश डालती है। पुस्तक में बताया गया है कि कभी कभी नौकरशाहों के नेक नीयत से लिए गए फैसले परत दर परत परेशानियां पैदा कर देते हैं।

पुस्तक नौकरशाहों अनुशासित जीवन का उनके परिवार पर पड़ने वाले दुष्प्रभाव का ठंड उल्लेख करती है। पुस्तक यह भी बताती है कि जब वे इस सेवा से निवृत्त होकर दुनिया का रहस्य जानने के लिए अपनी जमीन से जुड़ने जाते हैं, वह जीवन छोड़कर जहां

वैभव, तड़कभड़ और सम्मान कदम-कदम पर मौजूद रहता है। इसमें सुभोजित सिंह की कहानी भी है जो दो बार प्रधानमंत्री पुरस्कार पा चुके हैं। उनकी निजी जिन्दगी क्षतविक्षत है उनकी पत्नी उनको छोड़कर चली गईं और वे अपने बच्चों के लिए अजनबी बन गए। सेवा निवृत्ति से चार वर्ष पहले वे अपनी जड़ों से जुड़ने के लिए अपने घर वापस चले गए। लेखिका लेडी श्रीराम कॉलेज दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय से पढ़ी हैं उन्होंने पंजाब विश्वविद्यालय से पीएचडी की है। गत 30 वर्षों से अंग्रेजी पढ़ा रही हैं।

WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM  
THE INDIAN EXPRESS, SATURDAY, MARCH 4, 2017



### BOOK RELEASE

Dr. Suchita Malik's latest and fourth novel 'Scent of the Soil: A civil servant returns to his roots' was released in presence of Shashi Tharoor (prolific writer, politician), Pavan K Verma (former diplomat, author) & other dignitaries.

# हरिभूमि

नई दिल्ली, शनिवार, 4 मार्च 2017

haribhoomi.com

## खबर संक्षेप



डॉ. सुचिता मलिक का नवीनतम एवं चौथा उपन्यास 'सेंट आफ दि सायल: सिविल सर्वेन्ट रिटर्न्स टू हिज रूट्स' का विमोचन डा. शशि थरुर, पवन के वर्मा, अमिताभ कान्त और कपिश मेहरा की उपस्थिति में नई दिल्ली में किया गया।

books | 3

New Delhi, March 5, 2017

sunday  
magazine

the pioneer

agenda

## A civil servant's life

With this book, the author debunks the glory and glitter attached to the field of Civil Services, writes AKSHITA RAWAT

The fourth novel of Dr Suchita Malik, a distinguished professor of English Literature, was released on February 25, 2017 at the Indian International Centre, New Delhi. The book is titled, *Scent of the Soil*. The event was graced by the presence of Dr Shashi Tharoor (Congress MP), Amitabh Kant (member of the IAS and CEO NITI Ayog), Pavan K Verma (former diplomat and author) and Kapish Mehra (CEO, Rupa Publications).

The honourable guests praised the author in their comments on the book for inculcating sensitivity and magic in her words. At the event, Suchita Malik gave the credit for the idea for the novel to her visit to Bhutan along with her husband and other bureaucrat families. She said that she had realised on the trip how the civil servants were missing out on all the fun because of their work commitments.

Malik has been acclaimed widely for writing *Memsahib's Chronicles* in the past. Her other books include *Indian Memsahib* and *Women Extraordinaire*.

### Scent of the Soil

A CIVIL SERVANT RETURNS TO HIS ROOTS

Suchita Malik



**SUCHITA MALIK BEAUTIFULLY COMBINES ELEMENTS OF NATURE AND CITY TO PRESENT A MODERN-DAY PICTURE OF THE LIFE OF A BUREAUCRAT**

This time the author has presented a deep insight into a civil servant's life. Protagonist Shubhojit Sarkar feels a massive turmoil in his personal life even after touching great heights in the professional front. His recently won

Prime Minister's award testifies for that. The relationships with his estranged wife and children however cause him great pain and sense of loneliness. Things change for Shubhojit when a sudden health crisis strikes him causing the whole family to reunite.

He goes down the memory lane into his childhood days where everything was much simpler. He realises that he had more meaningful friendships at a young age than now. This makes him decide to go back to his village to live a more serene and unencumbered life, where he could be free of the structures and rigidity of society. A decision like this needed guts and his family's approval because he was nearing his retirement.

The novel revolves around this decision of his to go back to his roots and follows the ups and downs in his life henceforth.

Malik has beautifully combined the elements of nature and city to present a modern-day picture of the life of a successful bureaucrat. She debunks the glory and glitter attached to the field of Civil Services.

## **Release of Dr. Suchita Malik's latest novel**



Dr. Suchita Malik's latest and fourth novel 'Scent of the Soil: A civil servant returns to his roots' was released in the august presence of Dr. Shashi Tharoor (prolific writer, politician), Pavan K Verma (former diplomat, socio-economic thinker, author), Amitabh Kant (CEO NITI Ayog), and Kapish Mehra (CEO Rupa Publications India) at Indian International Centre, New Delhi recently.

**THE TELEGRAPH CALCUTTA**  
**MONDAY 6 MARCH 2017**

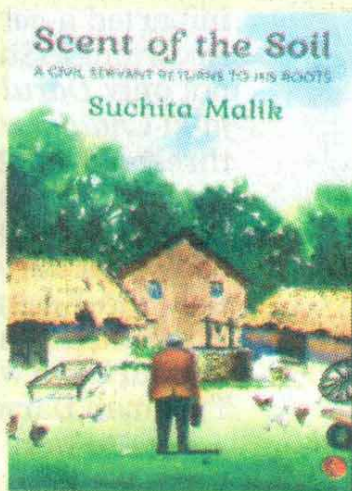
**Release of Dr. Suchita Malik's latest novel**



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## Back to roots

**T**aking cognizance of the challenging trait of civil services, the latest novel by Suchita Malik, *Scent of the Soil: A civil servant returns to his roots*, gives insight into the demanding nature of civil services and the plight civil servants go through. Many a time, one wonders about the complexities of life and the never-ending competition to be on top always. Somewhere down the line, we are all part of this mad race to excel at whatever we do, all the time. How insane is that?



This is Malik's fourth novel, which was recently released in the presence of writer-politician Shashi Tharoor, former diplomat and author Pavan K Verma, Amitabh Kant (CEO NITI Ayog) and Kapish Mehra (CEO Rupa Publications India) at the Indian International Centre.

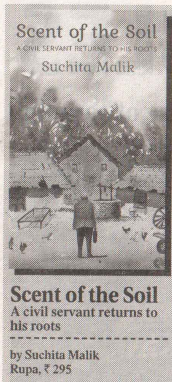
Sometimes the decisions by the civil servants, though taken in goodwill, may ruffle many feathers. The book also throws light on how their regimented lives may somehow have adverse effects on their families. There comes a point in their lives when they want to seek refuge in going back to their roots and explore the mystery of the universe, away from the glare, grit and glamour.

Shubhojit Singh is at the pinnacle of his career as a civil servant, having won the Prime Minister's Award twice; however, his personal life is in shambles. His wife has left him and he has become a stranger to his own children. When a sudden health crisis brings the whole family together, Shubhojit is left reminiscing about his younger days in the village ~ of the times spent with friends, splashing in the village pond and climbing trees and of meaningful relationships. Just four years short of his retirement, Shubhojit decides to go back to his roots, to live with nature, to a life which is not dictated by structures ~ a life where he is free and unencumbered. Will he succeed? Will his family approve? Or, will it prove to be an impulsive and hasty decision?

# BOOK REVIEW

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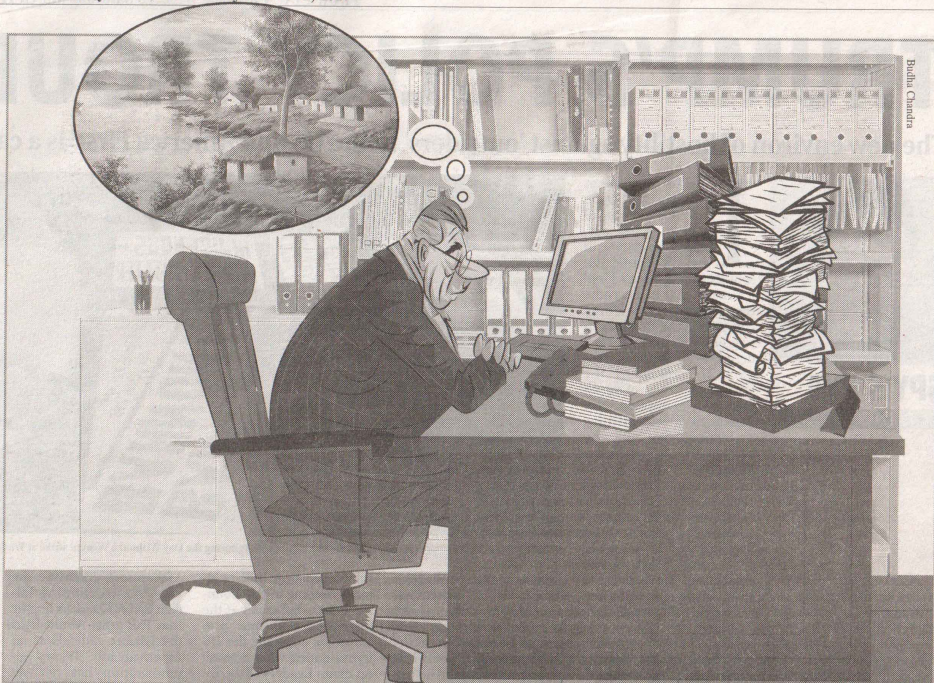
FINANCIAL Chronicle Weekend Saturday March 11 - Sunday March 12, 2017



ANANDA MAJUMDAR

**T**HE personal lives of greying, balding, presumably soulless individuals who comprise the steel frame of the Indian government system, can sometimes run into pretty choppy waters. Choppy enough to lend themselves to a novel, like Suchita Malik's 'Scent of the Soil'.

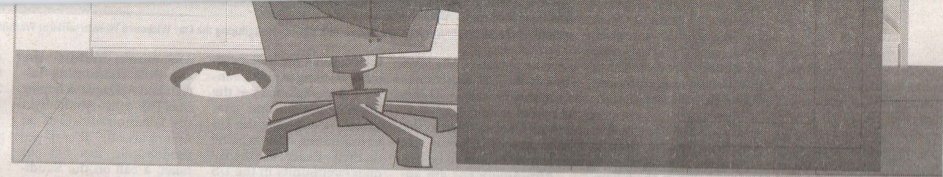
Midlife crisis is a pretty secular phenomenon that



**I** soulless individuals who comprise the steel frame of the Indian government system, can sometimes run into pretty choppy waters. Choppy enough to lend themselves to a novel, like Suchita Malik's 'Scent of the Soil'.

Midlife crisis is a pretty secular phenomenon that hits just about everybody. Even senior bureaucrats, with two 'Prime Minister's Awards', handed out at Vignyan Bhavan, just like Malik's protagonist. The crisis manifests itself in several ways. Leading questions usually are: What am I doing? Is it really worth it? And then, it quickly moves to nostalgia: childhood, growing up years, old friends. Facebook has been generally therapeutic in bringing friends together, even middle aged people, once they are comfortable with the rat race and no longer as competitive as they once were.

In the case of Malik's protagonist, Shubhojit, there was little time for Facebook because the midlife crisis was triggered by a heart attack. In his case, the health crisis gave his volatile personal life and dysfunctional family – which included his former wife, who had walked out on him to marry someone 'less deserved' in Shubhojit's opinion – a second chance at getting things right. The second chance was essentially about coming together



# A bureaucrat RETURNS TO HIS ROOTS

and emotional bonding.

Seen through the eyes of his former wife, Shubhojit appears to be a typical bureaucrat – his long tenure had hardened certain traits in his character, and these included "his self-complacency, his sense of righteousness, his conviction of always being in the right" apart from "stereotyped and cliched responses and a stubborn disregard for changing norms and life". When she married another man on the rebound, it was because he had come into her life like a "breath of fresh air and rescued her from her

stagnant marriage".

Invariably when a midlife crisis hits, it is always about nostalgia: the good old days. In this case, it means a return to the roots, Shubhojit's village with memories of the village pond and spending time with friends, and, of course, food. It is an idea he has gone over. It was when his wife was still with him. And he had known then that he would go alone. When they were married she would abhor going to a place like that. After his heart attack, it seemed things had changed. When he called

her to tell her he had taken a sabbatical and would be away from work and Delhi for a year, she seemed more attracted to the idea of going to the village.

**T**he book title says, "A civil servant returns to his roots." The 'roots' here is not work-related but entirely about his village home. Some of the more interesting passages in the book relate to details of village life, its organisation and daily life, in stories related by

Shubhojit's mother in the manner of a sociological study when she came visiting after he had had his heart attack.

It is perhaps inevitable that any novel on the Indian bureaucracy will be measured against Upamanyu Chatterjee's 1988 best-seller, 'English, August', which gave an insight into the life of an Indian Administrative Service officer at the district level. It told the story of how a person from his background, westernised and over-educated, went from one shock to another as he stumbled through life in the district.

In comparison, Shubhojit is himself from a village. The return to the roots is his own way of finding equilibrium. It is not about getting a shock treatment in an unfamiliar world.

The best parts of 'Scent of the Soil' are the ones that are melodramatic. Visualised, these sections are tear jerkers: the time his

son, with whom he has a difficult relationship, hugs him and promises to be good; or his former wife, fighting between reaching out to him and keeping her emotions in check because she is no longer with him.

Little is, however, told about Shubhojit himself, his working and living environment. Or how he looks. The same goes for other members of his family. A few more personal details would have helped the reader to imagine the setting.

Under the circumstances, his identity as a bureaucrat is just a background, even incidental. It is basically a personal drama. There is one element that should hold the suspense of the reader throughout the novel. His former wife comes ever closer to him after his heart attack. But, does she come back to him? The reader has to read the whole novel to find out.

When a midlife crisis hits, it is always about nostalgia: the good old days. In this case, it means a return to the roots, Shubhojit's village with memories of the village

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पढ़ें किताबें...

# आधुनिक जीवन का मार्मिक चित्रण

प्रशासन तंत्र की ओर से लिया गया एक छोटा-सा निर्णय समाज के एक बड़े वर्ग पर कितना महत्वपूर्ण और बड़ा प्रभाव डालता है, इसका मार्मिक चित्रण इस उपन्यास में बखूबी हुआ है। कैसे एक छोटा-सा फैसला किसी की जीवन धारा को नई दिशा दे देता है, इस उपन्यास में लेखिका ने बड़ी बारीकी और संवेदनशीलता से उभारा है।

डॉ.

सुचिता मलिक का यह चौथा उपन्यास है। राजनीति और प्रशासनिक ताने-बाने में रुचि रखने वाले पाठकों के लिए यह उपन्यास रोचक होगा। उपन्यास में सिविल सेवा अधिकारियों की ओर से लिए गए फैसले के व्यापक असर का बेहतरीन चित्रण किया गया है। कैसे सिविल सर्वेंट का अनुशासित जीवन उनके खुद के परिवार को प्रभावित करता है, का मार्मिक चित्रण भी इसमें देखा जा सकता है। उपन्यास का मुख्य पात्र शुभोजित सिंह है जो दो बार प्रधानमंत्री अवार्ड जीत चुके सिविल सर्वेंट हैं। लेकिन कैरियर के शिखर पर होने के बावजूद उनका पारिवारिक जीवन खंडहर के समान है। कहानी के अनुसार शुभोजित की पत्नी छोड़कर जा चुकी है और वह अपने बच्चों के

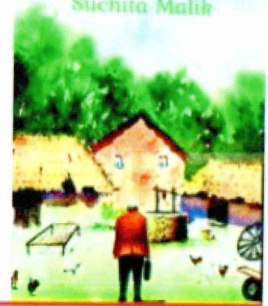
उपन्यास की कहानी एक ऐसे शख्स के जीवन के इर्द-गिर्द घूमती है, जिसकी रिटायरमेंट में केवल चार साल बाकी हैं। ऐसे समय में उसे अपने बचपन के दिन याद आने लगते हैं। वह अपने बचपन के दोस्तों और उनके साथ की गई मस्तियों के बारे में सोचने लगते हैं। इनी यादों से अभिभूत वह अपने पैतृक घर लौटने का फैसला लेते हैं, जहां कोई बंधन नहीं है। क्या वे ऐसा कर पाते हैं?

लिए अपरचित बन चुके हैं। अचानक स्वास्थ्य बिगड़ने पर पूरा परिवार मिल जाता है। तब शुभोजित अपने बचपन के दिन याद करते हैं कि कैसे वह गांव में दोस्तों के साथ मस्ती करते थे। वह सिर्फ चार साल रिटायरमेंट के बचे होने पर अपने घर लौटने का

Scent of the Soil

A CIVIL SERVANT RETURNS TO HIS ROOTS

Suchita Malik



फैसला करते हैं। वह उस जीवन में लौटना चाहते हैं जहां कोई बाध्यता और बंधन नहीं है। क्या शुभोजित सिंह अपने इसमें सफल हो पाते हैं? क्या उनका परिवार इसकी अनुमति देता है? और क्या उनका यह निर्णय जल्दबाजी में लिया गया फैसला साबित होगा?



## REVIEWS 3

### BOOK PICKS

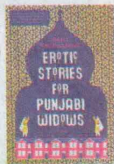


**Dear Ijeawele, or a Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions**

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie  
HarperCollins  
₹250

Replying to a friend's request for help on how to bring up her newborn baby girl as a feminist, Nigerian

writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie writes 15 pieces of practical advice that goes right to the heart of sexual politics in the 21st century.



**Erotic Stories for Punjabi Widows**

Balli Kaur Jaiswal  
HarperCollins  
₹399

When Nikki takes a creative writing job at her local temple, she meets a group of barely literate women who appear to have no interest in women's freedom. They finally open up and share their experiences, making it an interesting cross-cultural novel.



**Scent of the Soil**

Suchita Malik  
Rupa  
₹295

When Subhojit Singh, a civil servant who has won the Prime Minister's award for good service twice in his career, decides to give everything up and return to his village, he doesn't know whether his family will approve of this uprooting. Will this prove costly?



**Temporary People**

Deepak Unnikrishnan  
Simon and Schuster India  
₹998

A debut novel delves into the histories, myths, struggles and triumphs of the labour force in Abu Dhabi and Dubai, who are mostly foreign nationals or 'guest workers' without citizenship rights. The anonymous workers get a voice in 28 linked short stories.



**Bijnis Woman**

Tanuja Chandra  
Penguin  
₹299

These strange, funny, intriguing tales have been passed down orally from one generation to the next in Uttar Pradesh as told by *māusis*, *bus* and *chachas*.

# दैनिक ट्रिब्यून

आपकी आवाज़

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हेसी के उपन्यास 'सेंट ऑफ द सॉयल' का विमोचन

## अपनी मिट्टी की ओर लौटा 'एक आईएस'



हरियाणा के चीफ सेक्रेटरी डीएस हेसी ने शनिवार को डॉ. सुचिता मलिक के लिखे उपन्यास 'सेंट ऑफ द सॉयल' का विमोचन किया। इस अवसर पर हरियाणा के पूर्व चीफ सेक्रेटरी आरएस वर्मा, पंजाब के पूर्व सेक्रेटरी रमेश इंदर सिंह मौजूद रहे।

चंडीगढ़, 25 मार्च (ट्रिब्यून)

डॉ. सुचिता मलिक के चौथे उपन्यास 'सेंट ऑफ द सॉयल' का विमोचन शनिवार को यहां प्रदेश के मुख्य सचिव डीएस हेसी ने किया।

यह उपन्यास भारतीय प्रशासनिक अधिकारी के जीवन पर आधारित है। उपन्यास में सुभोजित सिंह सिविल

सेवा में शिखर पर हैं। उन्होंने दो बार प्रधानमंत्री पुरस्कार भी लिया है, परंतु उनका निजी जीवन अस्त-व्यस्त चल रहा है और उनकी पत्नी उन्हें छोड़ देती है। वह अपने बच्चों के लिए एक अनजान व्यक्ति बन जाते हैं, जब अचानक स्वास्थ्य का संकट आता है तो पूरा परिवार इकट्ठा हो जाता है। सुभोजित गांव में अपने

दोस्तों के साथ अपने युवाकाल के दिनों को याद करता है, जो गांव के तालाब में नहाना, पेड़ों पर चढ़ना, जिसका एक अर्थ संबंध है। अपनी सेवानिवृत्ति से चार साल पहले वह निर्णय करता है कि अपनी पुरानी जड़ों से मिलने जाएगा और प्रकृति के साथ रहेगा, जहां उसे खुलकर जीवन जीने का मौका मिलेगा।