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Gurminder

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Words have the power to transform and transcend. And this Saturday evening, at the Government Museum and Art Gallery auditorium, Sec-10, myths resurrected as India-born and US-educated illustrious writer Kamla K. Kapur's power of pen resonated.

The event organised by Chandigarh Sangeet Natak Academy was marked by the dramatic rendering, signing and release of her book *Ganesha Goes To Lunch*. Here, as she read out a couple of her stories to the audience, her singular ability to breathe out new, yet profound life into the mystical

and mythical tales, which she calls teaching stories, was revealed. First, when she read out the story *The Bird Who Fought War*, a leaf from the *Mahabharata*, and then *The Frog Who Didn't Croak*, based on *Ramayana*.

Stories with animals and birds, she shared, hold great significance for her, "for often we don't care about these creatures", she points. If the final essence of her stories like *The Bird...* encapsulated Krishna's compassion for a bird, packed in-between her stories were pearls of wisdom like—ways of men are the ways of the world; things do not happen things simply are. And her story—*The Frog Who Didn't Croak*—brimmed with spiritual fervour.

Between spirituality and pleasure, she sees no difference. "What's the use of spirituality if it can't offer you pure bliss—*ananda*," she avers.

The chief guest of the evening, eminent theatre personality and former director NSD, Padmashri Ram Gopal Bajaj, rendered Hindi translations of her poem *Green*, as well as short story

Meenakshi Aur Chamakna Ek Chamakte Chaand Ka, she had written way back in 1975. With his fine dramatic rendering of both the poem and the short story, he proved that translation isn't merely a bridge between two languages, but an equally creative fruitful endeavour.

So between the moving translation—*Hathi, hathi, ziddi hariyaali, mrityu ki khurad chaahiye use, hari hari fasal ke liye...* and the sublime original—*Stubborn, stubborn, green earth, feeding on death for her harvest*—take your pick.

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Deciphering the hidden

"We all live by myths. Myths are our subconscious, the collective dreams of a society," observes Kamla K Kapur, whose fascination for myths dates back in time. Why, her first collection of poems too was Radha's address to Krishna. Between 1998 and 2000, she wrote five mythical stories for *Parabola*, a New York-based journal on myth and culture. Now, she has written *Ganesha Goes To Lunch*, a collection of 24 insightful tales breathing modern relevance unto myths. As she penned these down in Kullu, the valley of Gods, we wonder whether the spiritual ambience helped? She replies, "Yes, outer space is vital, but inner space is more significant". And soon her inner sojourn will traverse the Sikh *janam saakhis*, and great Sufi poet Rumi — who are the subject matter of her next two books.



Myth and bliss

Writer Kamla K. Kapur's latest book *Ganesha Goes To Lunch* brings out philosophical tales and myths from the Hindu tradition