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The festival of the loquacious

Saturday, November 13, 2010
By Prathmesh Kher

'Literature Live', Mumbai's first-ever literature festival, kick-started on Friday at Tata theatre, NCPA. A wonderful concoction of poets, novelists, journalists and actors took part in this fest. The day was splintered into five [sessions](#), each focusing on one aspect of literary expression.

The first [session](#) took an eye at the resurgence of mythological themes in [contemporary](#) Indian literature. Conducting the session were writers Amish Tripathi, Ashwin Sanghi and Santosh Desai. Tripathi, whose *The Immortals of Meluha* brings an almost Tolkienesque perspective to the story of Shiva, suggested that these themes never go out of fashion.



Following this session was a take on contemporary Indian writing, and included writers Manu Joseph, CP Surendran, Kalpana Swaminathan and Aniruddha Bahal. One of the several points raised during this session was the sudden demand for Indian English literature subsequent to the popularity of Chetan Bhagat's books. Also questioned was [the presence](#) of an audience for this form of expression. Swaminathan suggested that the job of finding an audience was not the responsibility of the author but rather the publishers. One of the [solutions](#) for the dilemma for writers looking to be published was the upsurge in the number of mid-level publishers.

'Life by the throat' was a poetry reading session, with Sunderan, Keki Daruwala and A. Subramanian reciting from their respective works. While Daruwala's recital was mostly political, Sunderan focused more on the intimate emotions. Sunderan [stressed](#) that the decrease in [English](#) poetry was because of the lack of readership. The penultimate session was led by journalism stalwarts B.G. Verghese and Kumar Ketkar. The object of attention was Verghese's [autobiography](#) *First Draft*, which takes an insider's look at over five decades of his career in journalism. Verghese illuminated the audience with a tome of information about his days with Indira Gandhi, the [Emergency](#) during the seventies and other topics that the book covers extensively.

Bollywood thespian, Anupam Kher, featured in the autobiographical one-man play, *Kuchh Bhi Ho Sakta Hai*.

The event also gave an opportunity to youngsters attempting to break onto the literary scene. *Nether*, a collection of poems, short stories and [illustrations](#) compiled by Mumbai University students, was an eye grabber for many who visited the fest.

The [first day](#) of the [first edition](#) of 'Literature Live' seemed to go without a hitch. While the audience wasn't as big as one would expect at a 'festival', one should remember the Claude Raines quote, "Big things have small beginnings."

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