

THE LAUNCH OF *THE DANCE OF KALI*, WITH t2, WAS ACCOMPANIED BY AN ENLIGHTENING EXCHANGE OF IDEAS AND THEORIES



Sohini Roychowdhury (left) and Rishi Dasgupta (right), authors of *The Dance of Kali*, and Rajya Sabha MP Jawhar Sircar in a discussion that threw up unknown and interesting facts about the origin of Kali and what she stands for.



The book was launched by the authors and Jawhar Sircar in the presence of Sanjay Arya (right), owner of Shubhi Publications, the publisher.

The Saturday Club played host to an interesting and informative discussion session on Goddess Kali, perhaps the most misunderstood and misrepresented deity in any culture across the world. The occasion was a book launch in association with t2, of *The Dance of Kali* by well-known dancer Sohini Roychowdhury and co-authored by her son Rishi Dasgupta. Held on the evening of January 9, the book was launched by the authors and Jawhar Sircar, Rajya Sabha member and former culture secretary, government of India, in the presence of Sanjay Arya, owner of Shubhi Publishers, which published the book.

Using the research documents she had collected and assimilated while designing a choreographic presentation as the primary source material of her book, Roychowdhury has attempted to dispel the myths surrounding the Goddess and to explain the essence of Kali as the fount of divine power and energy that is also present in every woman.

Through the discussion, moderated by Sircar, the author focused on Kali as a Goddess who is worshipped in different forms in different parts of the world. She mentioned several Western counterparts of the Indian Goddess such as Sara-la-Kali, worshipped in parts of Europe as a dark-skinned, gypsy

"To me, the different forms of Kali like Bhairavi and Tara embody nature's fearsome and infinite aspects. She also embodies multifaceted, unpredictable genius in the limitless cosmos. My purpose in writing this book is to undo the damage done by shallow, ignorant, offensive and even racist half-truths spread in the name of deities by Indian advertisements and Western films and celebrities. Writing the book was a culmination of different thoughts that I wanted to share with the world on what Kali really means and how she embodies the freedom and fearlessness that all women seek. So it was like a catharsis for me," said Sohini Roychowdhury.

Goddess, who, like in our culture, is ritualised for four days and then immersed in water; or the middle-Eastern Goddess Ishtar, who also carries a severed head and a long curved knife (*khavga*) in her hands.

She also focused on Kali as an embodiment of feminine power and one of the earliest feminist icons. Kali slays demons on the battlefield and enjoys limitless existential freedom, attributes that the modern woman wants to be defined by. The discussion also touched upon the origin of Kali, her various benign and terrifying forms, the reasons for the distortion of the myth of Kali and why she continues to be worshipped as a protector of god and destroyer of evil. Snapshots.

"We were delighted to have the book launch of *The Dance of Kali* authored by club member Sohini Roychowdhury and co-authored by Rishi Dasgupta at the club, in the presence of publisher Sanjay Arya of Shubhi Publications. We were honoured to have Jawhar Sircar moderating the session. It was an extremely enriching session for all of us to hear the depth of study, exchange of information and the time that went into writing the book, and a wealth of information shared by the authors on Maa Kali and her different forms. Sircar knew the subject thoroughly and it was a pleasure to hear him as he deliberated on the topic and put questions to the authors that made for a very seamless session. On behalf of the art and culture subcommittee and everyone in Saturday Club, we wish the very best to Sohini-d! for her future endeavours," said Shayak Gupta, president, The Saturday Club.

"Sohini is a very talented, outstanding member who has won great accolades. She has not only made the club proud but also the country. We are very happy to launch her book here today and we wish her success in future," said Vibhas Kichlu, convenor, art and culture, The Saturday Club.

