



### **AMBIKA SONI (India)**

Ambika Soni was born in 1942 in Lahore. Post-Graduate in Spanish Art and Literature from Delhi University, and from Alliance Francaise, Bangkok, and University of Havana, Cuba. She has been President of Indian Youth Congress, 1976, Elected to Rajya Sabha

1998, General Secretary, All India Congress Committee, 2000-2004.

Currently Minister of Information and Broadcasting.

Ambika Soni has been on many Consultative Committees of several Ministries. Was Minister of Tourism and Culture, when she brought India to the Central focus of culture and tourism map of the world.

Actively involved in Social and Literary and Cultural Activities. Led delegations to South Africa, China, Australia, Morocco, U.S.A., Europe, Mexico, Cuba, Russia and erstwhile Czechoslovakia.

### **KARAN SINGH (India)**

Was born heir-apparent to the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir. In 1949, he was appointed Regent, and was later elected Sadar-i-Riyasat and as Governor. He has held important Cabinet portfolios of Tourism & Civil Aviation, Health & Family Planning, Education & Culture. He was also India's Ambassador to the United States.



He was awarded a Ph.D. by the University of Delhi for his thesis on the *Political Thought of Sri Aurobindo*. He has been Chancellor of Jammu & Kashmir University and Jawaharlal Nehru University, President of the Authors' Guild of India, the Commonwealth Society of India, People's Commission on Environment & Development; Chairman of the Temple of Understanding, Global Interfaith Organisation; and member of the Club of Rome, the Club of Budapest, and the Green Cross International. He was a four-time Member of the Lok Sabha, and since 1996 is a Member of the Rajya Sabha. He is the Chancellor of the prestigious Benaras Hindu University, and President of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, having rank equal to Central Cabinet Minister.

Karan Singh has written many books and has lectured on political science, philosophy, education, religion

and culture, in India and abroad. He is recognised as one of India's outstanding thinkers and leaders.

Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh while releasing his latest book, said “I can think of no other Indian who has come to represent the ethos of our great civilisation,” he said.

### **MAHASVETA DEVI**

Mahasveta Devi holds an exclusively unique and preeminent position in Indian literature. She is the doyen of Bangla fiction. Through her profoundly committed writings, generally based on the miserable life of the tribals, the oppressed and the marginalised, she has been portraying and mindscaping their struggles and sufferings.



Mahasveta Devi has been honoured with various top-ranking awards, including Padma Shri, Magsaysay Award, Sahitya Akademi Award, Jnanpith Award, and SAARC LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT LITERARY AWARD.

### **KIRAN MEHRA-KERPELMAN**

UNIC Director Mrs. Kiran Mehra-Kerpelman assumed duties on 1 February 2011.



She says, “The commitment of the UN agencies and partners – NGOs, media, academia, think-tanks – that I have come into contact with, the positive work being done in diverse spheres to improve the quality of people’s lives and ensure human rights, has been absolutely inspiring. I am so pleased

to be able to participate in these inspirational moments”.

Mrs. Mehra-Kerpelman has been a Senior Communication Manager at the ILO, as Chief of Web, Information Production and Dissemination Section for the Department of Communication of the ILO, prior to which she was the Managing Editor and Production Manager of the ILO’s Flagship Magazine ‘World of Work’.

A national of the United States, Ms. Mehra-Kerpelman has returned to her country of origin after more than 30 years. “I feel privileged to be here and to be able to contribute to the UN’s work in this dynamic country. And I look forward to renewing old ties and forging new ones”, she says.

## ABID HUSSAIN (India)



Author, Scholar and Diplomat, Dr. Abid Hussain is the Additional Chairman of FOSWAL, Delhi. He is also the Chancellor of the Rai University of Raipur, and Professor Emeritus at the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade. Member of the Academy of the Kingdom of Morocco, and B.P. Koirala Foundation. Special Rapporteur to UN

on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, and on UNESCO Panel on Democracy and Development, and has been India's Ambassador to U.S.A. Currently, he is a Member of Asiatic Society, New York.

## SHAHRYAR (India)

Shahryar is undoubtedly the greatest Urdu poet of our times. Khushwant Singh wrote in his weekly column 'Most Urdu lovers will agree that Shahryar is our top poet today'.

Ten collections of Shahryar's poetry have been published in Urdu, in India and Pakistan, and in Devnagri script too. Ashok Vajpeyi said, "Shahryar is our favourite poet".



Kunwar Akhlaq

Mohammad Khan 'Shahryar' was born in Anwla, District Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh, in 1936. Since 1948, Aligarh is his home. He got his Masters and Doctorate in Urdu Literature from Aligarh Muslim University, and joined its Urdu Department in 1966, and retired from there in 1996 as Professor and Head of the Department.

He has also been editing literary magazines, has compiled books, participated in radio and TV programs.

Of the numerous awards bestowed on him include : Uttar Pradesh Urdu Academy Award for *Satwan Dar*, 1971; Sahitya Akademi Award for *Khaab ka Dar Band Hey*, 1987; Uttar Pradesh Urdu Academy Award, 1994; Sahitya Manch Award, 1996; Adabi Sangam Award, New York, 2000; Uttar Pradesh Film Critic Award, 2001; Delhi Urdu Academy Bahadur Shah Zafar Award, 2003; Firaq Samman, 2004; Sharfuddin Yahya Award, Bihar, 2004; Ghalib Institute Award, 2005; Gyanpeeth Award, 2008.

Shahryar has played a major role in shaping today's

modern Urdu poetry.

### **KAPILA VATSYAYAN (India)**

Kapila Vatsyayan is a leading scholar of the global cultural scenario,



classical Indian dance and Indian art and architecture, and an extraordinary visionary. Author of many books including *The Square and the Circle of Indian Arts*, *Bharata: The Natya Sastra*, and *Matralaksanam*, she was the Founder-Director of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (Indira

Kalakendra) in Delhi. She has also served as Secretary to the Government of India and the Ministry of Education, Department of Arts and Culture, where she was responsible for the establishment of many institutions of higher education in India. She served as a Rajya Sabha M.P. in March 2006, and was reappointed to the Rajya Sabha in April 2007 for a term expiring in February 2012.

### **NIHAL RODRIGO (Sri Lanka)**

Retired officer of Sri Lanka Foreign Service, Nihal has served as Honorary Advisor (Foreign Relations) to the Sri Lanka President; Sri Lanka Foreign Secretary; Secretary General SAARC; Ambassador to China; Ambassador/Permanent Representative to the United Nations, in New York, and Geneva with concurrent accreditation to Vienna;



Member, UNSG's Advisory Board on Disarmament; and Coordinator, Non-Aligned Group activities at the UN during Sri Lanka's Chairmanship of the Movement. His earlier assignments have been at Sri Lanka Missions in New Delhi, Australia and Germany. Currently visiting lecturer in international relations and working on a study on interplay between domestic affairs and foreign policy in Sri Lanka in the context of the global rise of Asia.

### **NIRUPAMA RAO (India)**

Born on December 6, 1950, Smt. Rao joined the Indian Foreign Service in 1973. She has served in various world capitals, including Washington and Moscow. She has had extensive experience in relations between India and China, having served in



the East Asia Division of the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, from 1984 to 1992, including as Joint Secretary (East Asia). Smt. Rao was a Fellow of the Centre for International Affairs (now the Weatherhead Centre) of Harvard University during 1992-93. She was Minister in the Indian Embassy in Washington from 1993-

1995, in charge of Press Affairs.

She was Ambassador of India to Peru with concurrent accreditation to Bolivia from 1995-98. From 1998-1999, she was Deputy Chief of Mission at the Indian Embassy in Moscow. In 1999-2000, she was Distinguished International Executive in Residence at the University of Maryland at College Park. From 2001 to 2002, she served as the first woman spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs. She headed the Administration and Personnel Division of the Ministry of External Affairs as Additional Secretary from 2002-04.

Smt. Rao assumed the office of Foreign Secretary on 1 August 2009.

Only her close friends know that she is a sensitive poet and musician too.

### **ABHI N. SUBEDI (Nepal)**

Professor, Poet, Folklore Scholar, Columnist, Playwright, and Theatre Director. He is an honoured Member of the Think Tank of FOSWAL. He has written several articles on FOSWAL in national dailies of Nepal.

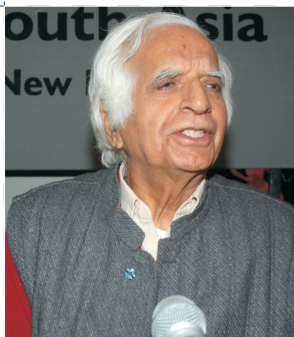
An eminent scholar and expert in Folklore Documentation, he has been closely associated with FOSWAL for more than a decade. He is the recipient of many honours and literary awards including SAARC LITERARY AWARD. He has published many research works, in Nepali and English. Currently, he is working on a research project for FOSWAL on 'Kabir and his Contemporary Bhakti Poets in Nepal'.



### **JOGINDER PAUL (India)**

Joginder Paul was born in 1925 in Sialkot (now in Pakistan). His first story was published in the well-known Urdu journal 'Saqi' in 1945. The Partition of the country led to his migration to Ambala where as a refugee he struggled to provide for his family. His





marriage led to another migration to Kenya where he served as a teacher of English for several years, expressing his angst of being in exile in his stories. Back in India in 1965, he was Principal of a post-graduate college in Aurangabad, Maharashtra, for another fourteen years before coming to settle in

Delhi for full-time writing.

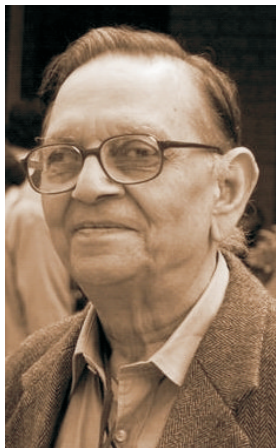
Joginder Paul has published over 13 collections of short stories, including *Khula, Khodu Baba Ka Maqbara and Bastian*. Amongst his novels are *Ek Boond Lahoo Ki, Nadeed, Paar Pare* and *Khwabro*. He has three collections of short stories with which he is known to have significantly enriched Urdu fiction.

Paul is the recipient of many important national as well as international literary honours including the Iqbal Samman, Urdu Academy Award, All India Bahadur Shah Zafar Award, and the Ghalib Award. His fiction has received a lot of critical acclaim and many Urdu journals in India and Pakistan have published special numbers on him and his writings and his fiction has been translated into many Indian and foreign languages.

In the SAARC Festival of Literature, 2011, he is being awarded SAARC LIFETIME LITERARY ACHIEVEMENT AWARD.

### **KUNWAR NARAIN (India)**

Hindi's leading living poet. Born in 1927, he has read widely, written over the last six decades, and is among the few intellectuals to combine an international modern sensibility with a thorough grounding in their country's cultural and imaginative history. His work covers diverse genres – poetry, epic poems, stories, literary criticism, translations, jottings, essays on world cinema, Indian classical music and the arts, and writings of versatile cultural and human interest.



Translated nationally and internationally, his honours include the *Sāhitya Akademi Award, Kabīr Sammān, Vyāsa Sammān, Lohiā Sammān, Shalākā Sammān*, Warsaw University's honorary medal, Italy's *Premio Feronia*, the civilian honour *Padma Bhūshan*, The *Sāhitya Akademi's* Senior Fellowship, and the *Jnānpīth Award* India's highest literary honour across languages and

genres.

He lives in Delhi with his wife and son. A major poet of the *Nayī Kavītā (New Poetry)* in the sixties, he has continued to expand and inspire its frontiers since.

His oeuvre began with *Chakravyūh*, his first poetry collection in 1956. He was published in *Tīsrā Saptak* edited by Agyeya and, in 1961, his second collection *Parivēsh: Ham-Tum* came. *Ātmajayī* (1965), a short epic based on the Upanishadic character Nachiketā, short story collection *Ākāron Ke Ās-Pās*, 1971, *Apné Sāmné* (1979), *Koī Dūsrā Nahīn* 1993. *Āj Aur Āj Sé Pahlé*, literary criticism, *Méré Sākshātkār*, a collection of interviews, and *Sāhitya Ké Kuchh Antar-Vishayak Sandarbh*, an essay. He co-edited journals like *Yug Chétna*, *Nayā Pratīk* and *Chhāyānat*. In 2002, the poetry collection *In Dino*, in 2008, his acclaimed epic poem *Vājashravā Ké Bahāné*. A selection of his poems in English translation. In 2009, his latest poetry collection yet : *Hāshiyé Kā Gavāh* came, and in 2010, a book of his conversations titled *Tat Par Hūn Par Tatastha Nahīn* has been published.

### **HAMID MIR (Pakistan)**

Hamid Mir, a writer and journalist, Executive Editor of Pakistan's Geo News TV channel, and columnist for *Daily Jang* and *The News*.



With two decades of unique experience of covering wars in Palestine, Iraq, Lebanon, Chechnya, Bosnia, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, and in Pakistani tribal areas.

Hamid Mir was arrested by Taliban in Afghanistan in 2001, arrested by Russian

Army in Chechnya in 2004, arrested by Hezbollah in Lebanon in 2006, and was banned on TV by General Pervez Musharraf for more than 4 months in 2007.

Hamid Mir interviewed Osama bin Ladin thrice in Afghanistan between 1997 and 2001. He also interviewed famous world leaders like Nelson Mandela, Tony Blair, Hilary Clinton, Condoleezza Rice, Colin Powel, Hamid Karzai, Benazir Bhutto, L. K. Advani, and many others. Became the youngest editor of a Pakistani national newspaper in 1996 at the age of 30. 'All Pakistan Newspaper Society Award' in 1998 for 'Best Columnist of Urdu Language.' Hamid Mir is known for his bold stance against dictatorships, extremism and violence against women. He is the symbol of struggle for media freedom in Pakistan. He came out openly against suicide bombings in 2007 and was attacked by extremist groups many times. He delivered lectures on extremism and inter-faith dialogue in Harvard University, Yale University, University of California Berkeley, London School of

Economics, University of Western Australia, Perth, in FOSWAL Conferences in Delhi, and in many other international institutions in recent years. He received SAARC LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD FOR FEARLESS JOURNALISM, 2010, from FOSWAL in Delhi.

### **GULZAR (India)**

Gulzar is a poet, short story writer and film director of immaculate repute. A multi-dimensional, luminous intellectual with a lyrical heart of pure lucidity, he is loved and admired all over the sub-continent, especially for his sensitive lyrics many of which have been used in Hindi films. He has made unique, sensitive films too, and written several milestone scripts for films.



Gulzar is the recipient of several prestigious awards and honours, including the Sahitya Akademi Award for his short story collection, *Dhuan*. Recently he has won the internationally acclaimed Oscar Award for his lyric 'Jai Ho' in the film *Slumdog Millionaire*.

### **MANI SHANKAR AIYAR (India)**

Born 10 April 1941, educated at The Doon School, St. Stephen's College, Delhi, and Trinity Hall Cambridge.

Served as Minister of Panchayat Raj (2004-09), Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas (2004-06), Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports (2006-08), and Minister for Development of North-Eastern Region (2006-09). Was conferred "Outstanding Parliamentarian Award, 2006" by the President of India.



At present, Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha). Chairman of the South Asia Foundation (India Chapter) and of the Gandhi Ashram Reconstruction Trust.

Began career as a diplomat, serving twice in Brussels (1964-68; 1973-76); Hanoi (1967-69); Baghdad (1976-78); and finally, as first Consul General of India, Karachi (1978-82). He also served on deputation as Joint Secretary to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi (1985-89).

He has been a popular columnist with several newspapers and magazines in India and abroad and has authored several books. He is married to Suneet Vir Singh, and they have three married daughters.