

A PRISONER OF MEMORIES

MOHAMMAD FARHAN interviews HANSDA SOWVENDRA SHEKHAR, award-winning novelist of *Mysterious Ailment of Rupi Baskey*

How old were you when you realized you should start writing and what was your first piece of writing?

I do not really know. I never really thought I would or could write. The first piece I wrote was of course some old Grimm Brothers' fairy tale I wrote in my own words, made illustrations, and

put those reminiscences of childhood in your fiction?

Yes, I think I have the memory of an ichchhadharinaagin (you know, ichchhadharinaagin of Hindi films hardly forget anything) and have a number of memories from my childhood and my life so far. In fact, sometimes I think I am a prisoner of my memories. Though I have not been able to include all my memories in stories that I have written, stories like "Eating With The Enemy" and "Desire, Divination, Death" have several elements from my memories.

is Eating With The Enemy or They Eat Meet. Do you believe you need to expose the unsaid things about these people?

No, I do not feel the need to expose the unsaid things about the marginalized people. The thing is, this is the only thing I know because I too belong to the same marginalized people I write about. So it wasn't the need, it was what I knew.

Which of your stories, say, you're of fond of?

"Semen, Saliva, Sweat, Blood", which was published in the anthology, *Alchemy: The Tranquebar Book Of Erotic Stories II*, and "Merely A Whore", from my book, *The Adivasi Will Not Dance*. "Merely A Whore" was first published as "The Golden Boy" in the online magazine, *The Four Quarters Magazine*.

Do any of your stories reflect the bits of your own life? There is a character Raghu who also becomes a doctor in the story, Sons. Is there any affinity between you and Raghu?

Maybe some stories reflect bits of my own life. But Raghu is not me. I have modeled Raghu on some people I know.

Writers are most often asked why they write, and they have their different interesting answers. What is your answer of this question?

I do not have an answer to this question. And I choose to not find an answer to this question. Because if I come to know why I write, what else would be left for me to know? Let writing remain a search, an unanswered question.

Could we let Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar the non-writer say something and give some sort of assessment of the writer Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar's work whether he likes it or not?

Well, Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar the non-writer thinks Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar the writer is a total jerk and Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar the writer thinks Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar the non-writer is pathetic.



Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar

In addition to writing and reading what do you feel compelled to do?

For the last few days I have been cooking and baking a lot and I think I can make good aalookeparathe, mooliikeparathe and gaajarkahalwa and bake a nice Blondie. I have started loving the fragrance of vanilla essence on my fingers. I have been trying to learn knitting. I hope to learn it soon.

Being a doctor, how do you find time for writing? How does your profession influence your writing?

I do not go looking for time because I know that wouldn't be possible. Like I said in the previous answer, I have been cooking and baking a lot, and when I have time, I would rather bake than write. With so much to do, how can I afford to only write when I have the time? So I also prioritise. I see if there is something that I really want to write about. Ultimately, I write when I feel like writing, not when I have the time. In fact, even when I am at work and I feel like writing, I write on my smartphone. I have a Windows Phone. I write on the Office app on my phone, save my work on my OneDrive, and when I return to my laptop, I go online, download what I wrote on my phone, and continue writing. With me, it is more like what to write than when to write.

My profession gives me plots

sometimes, and insights into people and situations all the time.

What do you find are the biggest challenges of writing fiction?

Imagination. Creating new worlds. I really admire authors like Devaki Nandan Khatri and JRR Tolkien and JK Rowling and George RR Martin who can create absolutely wonderful worlds out of their imagination and write such fabulous books based in those worlds. I cannot do that. Also, I am totally in awe of authors who write suspense stories, thriller stories, spy stories, and murder mysteries. How can they think of such stunning and intricate plots and then connect all the dots in the end? I am reading Jamie Mason's debut novel, "Three Graves Full", right now and I am really intrigued by the plot. I cannot imagine or build up plots like these authors. My mind stops working whenever I have to imagine. All my stories have been taken from real life with a little bit of things imagined. So imagination remains a challenge.

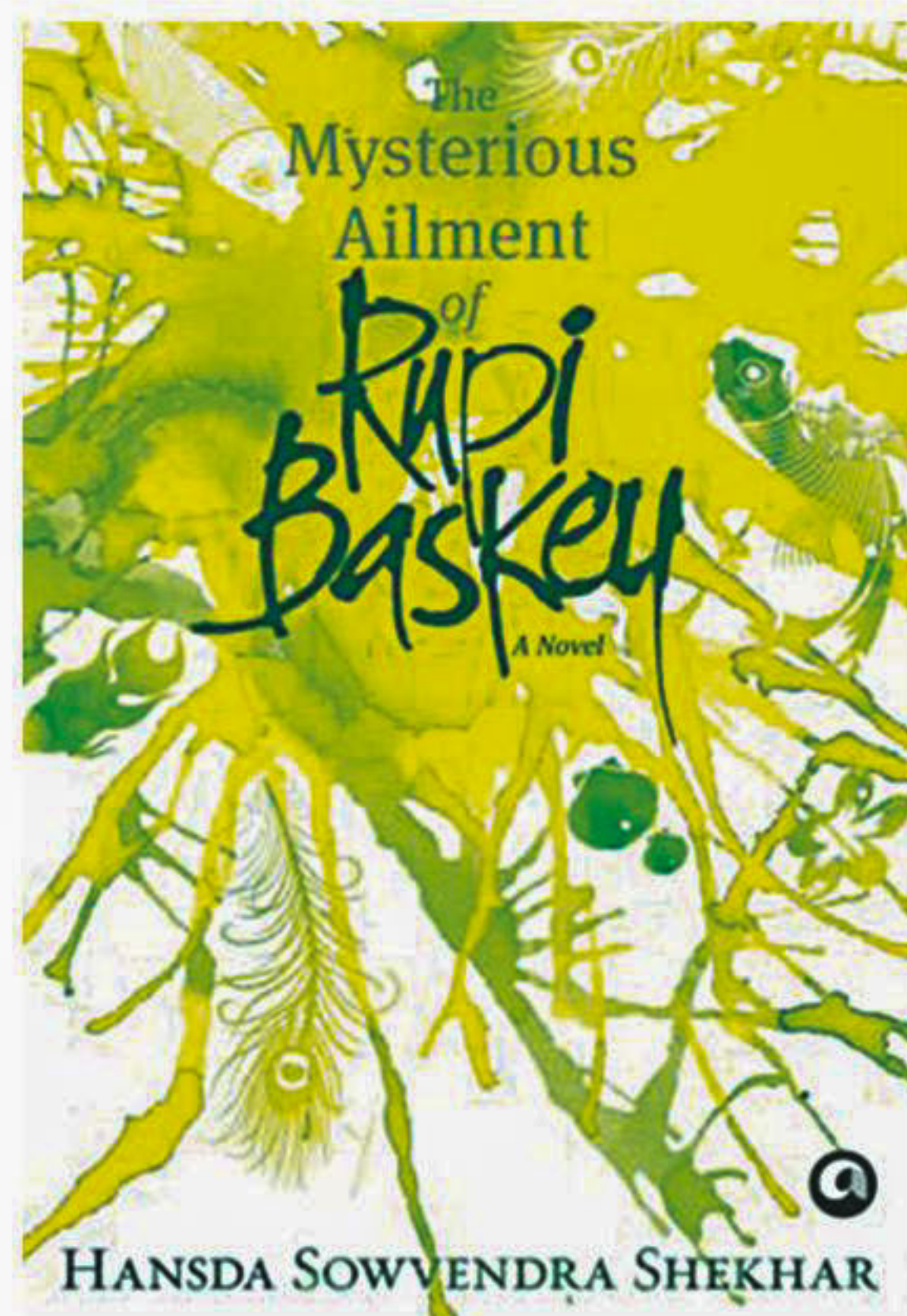
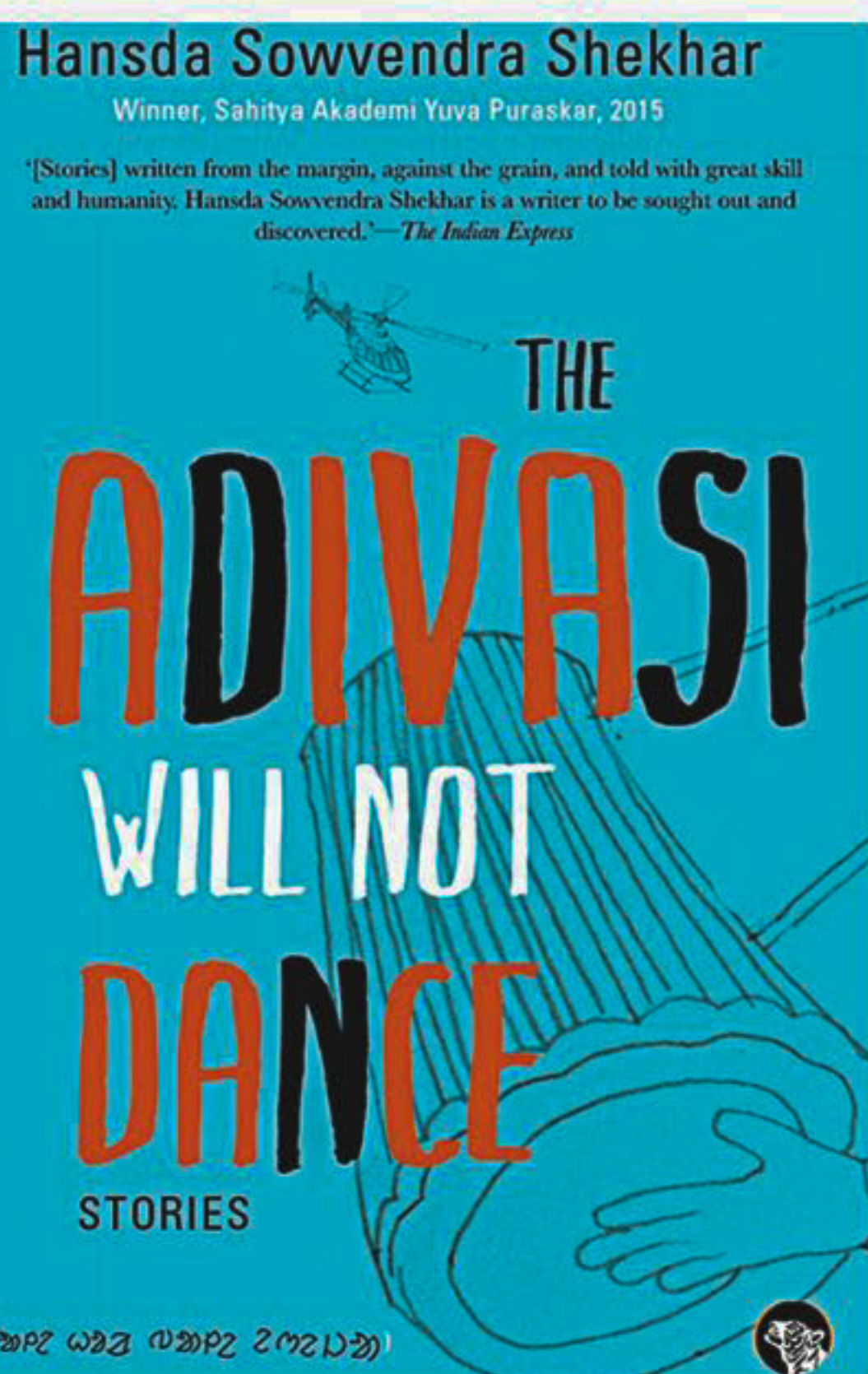
Which are the writers who have been influences upon you?

This is a difficult question because there are so many. In fact, I am influenced more by books because just one author cannot keep on influencing you consistently. When I was writing *The Mysterious Ailment Of Rupi Baskey*, I had Alice Walker's novel, *The Color Purple*, in my mind. Also, it is my dream to do a long family novel like ManjuKapur's *Difficult Daughters*.

What would you love to advise the budding writers?

I do not really have an advice for budding writers. I really have not reached that stage where I may be able to advise others. I am still learning. I just have a message for budding writers: "Read a lot and write a lot, and even if you are not able to write or not able to write much, do not stop reading. Reading, and reading more and more and reading all types of works, is vital."

Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar's is the winner of The Yuva Sahitya Akademy Award for his novel MYSTERIOUS AILMENT OF RUPI BASKEY.



stapled the pages in the form of a book. I was maybe 8 or 9 years old at that time. When I was 15 years old, a short story of mine was published in *The Asian Age*. At that time, I had this feeling that maybe I would write a book. But that was just a feeling.

That's really an interesting story how formed your first stapled book. Do you remember much from your childhood and

When one starts writing, one hardly knows where to find the essential things. Did it also occur to you?

Not exactly. All my published works, my short stories and novel, they all deal with things that I know. I am yet to write anything entirely out of my imagination. Imagination is a huge challenge to me.

Your stories often talk about the marginalized people of the society; either

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IN HER BLUE

MD MEHEDI HASAN

A copper coloured dog bit her
So she dresses blue.
Deep inside her blue
She hates the mountain.
The music of silence let clouds
Pass through the moon, cold
She feels but I haven't got a blanket.
In her blue, she speaks:
"Mother says, nothing can hurt a princess.
Do you think she's a liar?"
I never met a princess
So in reply- I praise Bay of Bengal.

MEMORIES ARE

LATA OSMANI

Dazzling diamond, Shadows on pond, Waves billowy, A day snowy, Shimmering sand, A warm hand, Twinkling stars, Beyond the bars, Fading colour, Coats of velour, A hug so tight! Enchanting sight, Music melody, Smell of coffee, Tranquil meadows, Flashing shadows, Moonlit night,	Sunshine bright, Spring breeze mild, Blizzard wild, Flights of bird, A valentine card, Blossomed tree, Intense spree, Morning dew pearled, It's our own world. Sorrows darkened, Desiring the end, Divergent plight, Will-o'-the-wisp light.
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