

BOOKS

One with the cosmos



The Cosmic Detective

Dr Mani Bhaumik
Penguin
92 pages,
Rs 199

Dr Mani Bhaumik, the co-inventor of the laser technology that made LASIK eye surgery possible, has penned another exciting new book – *The Cosmic Detective*, after his international bestseller, *Code Name God*. He takes the readers on a whirlwind tour into space, millions of light years away, through his graphic scientific account of the cosmos, supported by the rarest of rare pictures of planets, stars and galaxies. There can be no better book giving larger views and insights about the magnificence of our universe than this one. He has addressed all the fundamental cosmic riddles which ignite the curiosity of young as well as mature minds, with scientific precision.

Born on a mud floor in Bengal in the midst of the struggle for Indian independence, Bhaumik highlights the primary message that *we have all come from one single source*. Today, we may belong to different nations and follow numerous faiths and religions but our origin is from the same seed. We are all *cosmic* kin tied from our birth to the sun, the stars, the planets, the moons and the whole universe itself. He endorses the statement of Albert Einstein that each one of us is at the centre of the Universe. The very reason for the creation of the universe 13.7 billion years ago is connected to our eventual emergence. He talks about the metaphysical aspect of this wonderful discovery by stating that there are two miracles: *one is the existence of the unfailing Laws of Nature, and the other is the ability of the human mind to divine them*. He urges us to listen to the song of oneness among the innumerable stars and hope their song will unite with our own to finally banish the ignorance that causes prejudice and war in our fractious world today.

A must read for all seekers of spiritual wisdom who wish to have scientific proof of the spiritual laws of life.

Rajeev Chaudhry

Courage in the bleakest of landscapes



Unnamed Heroes

Compiled and edited by Peace Direct,
Jaico
272 pages,
Rs 295

In this path-breaking and timely book on peace initiatives, one can feel the heart and soul of each of the protagonists being poured out onto the page. Through a simple and straightforward format, we are offered a set of personal testimonies and essays on the peaceful resolution of conflict in various parts of the world. Ranging from a peace activist in Manipur, a former IRA bomber, Palestinian and Afghan peace activists, and those who died in the World Trade Center, the stories make a powerful statement. They are not professionally written, but are personal accounts written with so much depth that they motivate us to gather our thoughts and take action. For, essentially, it is really not about extraordinary people but about ordinary people who have transcended their personal grief and situation to see the larger picture. So one begins to think if they can do it, so can I.

The book also contains essays and suggestions for peace-building exercises that can be carried out regularly to include the other. The book also includes instances of everyday conflict and ways of dealing with it so that all of us can understand that a non-negotiating stance can lead to problems in life.

“Think of conflict like an epidemic. When enough people are inoculated against a disease, it stops spreading. Similarly, when enough people in an area are using non-violent ways of dealing with conflict, violence can be halted,” is the founding principle of Peace Direct, the organisation that has published this book. The book quotes extensively from many philosophers and visionaries all through the ages on the power of love alone to transcend the web of hatred. There is also a list of organisations working in this area at the end of the book.

Here’s hoping that the next edition will have many more heroes from the Indian subcontinent, and that this book will become a milestone in the creation of a strong, articulate and powerful peace constituency, energising many ‘unnamed heroes’ of the world.

Jamuna Rangachari

Seek not and ye shall find



The Open Secret

Tony Parsons
Yogi
Impressions
103 pages,
Rs 175

Enlightenment is no secret. It is not a treasure hunt set up for us by the forces that be, to keep us meaningfully engaged through the span of our lives. There is nothing elusive or esoteric about it. Nor is it an exalted goal that all of humanity must strive for. It is simply our natural state of being and therefore something we can never lose. It is that which we are when we are not trying to become that which we are not. This, quite simply, is the thesis of *The Open Secret*. Its profundity lies in the simplicity of its message and of the language. But the mind, used as it is to complicating, looks for deeper and hidden meanings. It has been conditioned into believing that anything worthwhile cannot be simple – and definitely not easily available.

Tony Parsons' *Secret* is an elaboration of the classic by Nisargadutta Maharaj, *I am that*. To seek enlightenment is to miss the point. To toil and strive for it, to practice this or that discipline, to feel the need to deserve it are conditioned responses. As impactful as *The Power of Now* by Eckhart Tolle, it goes a step further by declaring that you don't even have to practice being here and now to be that which you already are. "In reality we are surrounded by unconditional love, whether we respond to it or not. Our experience in time sets up a perfectly appropriate manifestation, exactly suited in its grand happenings and tiny nuances, to the particular and unique needs of our re-awakening. The source of the hidden principle is ourselves, and it is fired by our longing to come home." (pg.67)

In fact, enlightenment, liberation, fulfilment, freedom, oneness – whatever name you want to call it

by, is effortless, immediate, instantaneous and constantly with us. It is available through a mere shift in perspective. The very strife that we hope to attain it by is in its way. The only purpose effortfulness ever

serves is that it will tire you out such that you give up out of sheer frustration; and in that moment of giving up, what you seek becomes manifest.

Neelam Mehta

F I L M

The ambience of nazakaat



Delhi-6

Cast: Abhishek Bachchan, Sonam Kapoor, Waheeda Rehman, Rishi Kapoor, Om Puri, Pawan Malhotra, Supriya Pathak, Sheeba Chaddha, Vijay Raaz, Divya Dutta, Aditi Rao

Music: A.R Rahman

Lyrics: Prasoon Joshi

Director: Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra

Yes, *Dilli 6* is a love story; not so much of the lead couple but of the director with his mileau: Old Delhi. The never-empty narrow 'galis', the 'havelis' within, the connected rooftops, the 'patang-baazi', the cows and the cars, the rickshaws and the handcarts, the 'jalebis' and the 'golgappas', the mandir and the masjid, the skull caps and the saffron 'gamchas'.

We have seen all of this often but the sheer affection with which Rakeysh depicts this makes Chandni Chowk come alive.

The story opens with America-based Roshan (Abhishek), flying in with his dying grandmom (Waheeda), straight into the hustle and bustle of Chandni Chowk and the affection of the large, extended family and neighbours.

The estranged brothers (Om and Pawan), the 'bhabhis' (Supriya and Sheeba), spinster 'bua' (Aditi), and the free-spirited Bittu (Sonam) who wants to be the next Indian Idol - all are woven into the plot quite deftly. Sonam is, however, grossly under utilised as her character gets much less footage than it deserves.

There are stellar performances from the main supporting cast – Om Puri and Pawan Malhotra, and the 'jamadarin', played by the excellent Divya. Rishi Kapoor superbly creates the still-alive 'nazaakat' and decay of the 'nawabi' traditions of Delhi Chhe (Dilli 6). The music is really good; particularly the classical touch of combining the track of Bade Ghulam Ali Khan with Shreya Ghoshal.

It is in getting real action going that the film falters. The 'kala bandar' (a mysterious monkey that terrorized Delhi some years ago), is built up slowly and is essentially shown as a metaphor for the growing communal unrest simmering under the surface in a hitherto peaceful area. The Ram-lila, which runs on a parallel track, is also authentic but fails to integrate totally with the storyline.

The core messages of the film: of showcasing the old world amity of Old Delhi as well as the need to look within for the root of all evil (depicted by the kala bandar) and the metaphor of using the mirror to see the Divine in oneself and all others are still worth recounting and repeating many times.

"India works," says Roshan in one of his soul-searching moments. So, yes, go for it, to look within and to look at a piece of India that works.

Jamuna Rangachari