



December 2020

Dear Friends of Sangam House,

What a year it's been. We hope this finds your loved ones and you coping with the unusual circumstances that have gripped the world.

Like so many non-profit organizations, Sangam House has had a challenging year. In the spring, as we started planning for the upcoming residency season, it was incredibly difficult to envision what the programme should look like given our present circumstances.

There is a certain intimacy to every good residency experience, sharing meals and walks and conversing with our colleagues who know what the fight feels like, who know when to encourage each other and how to thoughtfully challenge assumptions. In some ways, the idea of a residency feels endangered in the context of the pandemic—if not permanently then certainly for the foreseeable future. A residency isn't something that can be moved over to Zoom. Facilitating a shared *physical* space is such a big part of nurturing and protecting a writer's time. In some ways, the experience becomes about the time zone, the kitchen and the dinner table, the weather and the bird songs—everything that the writers experience together while pushing through the solitude of writing.

At Sangam House, we remain committed to supporting writers the way we always have but the pandemic has, indeed, demanded some adjustments. Most notably, this year we were not able to invite writers who were not already living in India, as international travel and visa distributions have largely ground to a halt. And there were several required practical changes made for the eight writers who were able to join us this year. These included masks, social distancing, a heck of a lot of hand sanitizing stations, and various other safety contingencies that, while necessary, chip away at how we share space. While these dynamics might alter what Sangam House is able to provide this year, we have come to realize that the opportunity to be with others who are struggling through their own literary endeavours is particularly valuable to the those who have been cooped up in isolation for much of the pandemic.

Sangam House's capacity to respond to the COVID-19 crisis is, in fact, strengthened by our nomadic lifestyle – flexibility is integral to our design; we are inherently nimble without a home of our own. We are grateful to be working with **Trupti Prasad, Veronica Shanthini** and everyone at our partnering organization, **The Jamun**, to host our thirteenth season. We're happy to announce that Sangam House alumna **Priyanka Sarkar** is filling the role of residency manager this year, with **Pascal Sieger** and **Giles Hazelgrove** continuing to support her work remotely.

Our alumni continue to be showered with honours and awards. Some highlights: **Annie Zaidi, Ram Ganesh Kamathem** and **Taran Khan** won Tata Literature Live! Awards. Zaidi was also short-listed for the JCB Prize for Literature. **Ashutosh Bhardwaj** was short listed for a Tata Literature Live! Award and won the Atta Galatta-Bangalore Literature Festival Book Prize for nonfiction. **Caroline**



**Brothers'** novel *The Memory Stones* was shortlisted for the Eyelands Book Award for fiction, and **Neal Hall** was nominated for the same award in the poetry category. **Rohini Mohan** won the Chameli Devi Jain Award for Outstanding Women Mediapersons and **Namwali Serpell's** novel *The Old Drift* won the Arthur C. Clarke Award. **Perumal Murugan** was again short-listed for the National Book Award in the translated novel category and **Bijal Vachharajani** won the AutHer Award for best children's author, while **Sharanya Manivannan** was shortlisted for the Hindu Prize in the fiction category. And finally, **Rahul Soni**, an alumnus who has been integral to Sangam's administrative operations for the past several years was recently profiled in FirstPost; he reflects on his role as senior editor at HarperCollins, where he has worked on several critically acclaimed and prizewinning books, including a new title out this year from our very own **Arshia Sattar**.

As for publications, the list is too bountiful to enumerate! New books from alumni this year include titles from **Anita Roy**, **Uttaran Das Gupta**, **Sanjay Kumar**, **Saabhik De Sarkar**, **Priyanka Sarkar**, **João Tordo**, **Usha Rajagopalan**, **Claus Ankersen**, **Sudeep Aadil-Aman Almitra**, **Anandh Krishna** and **Maxim Loskutoff**.

We couldn't carry on with our residency or translation work if it weren't for all of our wonderful sponsors—so many of whom have been supporting our work for more than a decade. Our heartfelt thanks to **Kalpna Raina** and **The Aditi Foundation**, **Samir Gandhi**, **Bronwen Bledsoe**, **Rachel Saltz**, **Laurie Patton**, **the InKo Centre in Chennai**, **The Reed Foundation**, **Toto Funds the Arts**, **The Prakriti Foundation**, **Neeraj Nevatia**, **Bhoomija**, **The Nambisan Foundation**, as well as **Jake Short** and **The Kathleen Brooks Family Foundation**.

We are also happy to announce that friends of the late poet **Margaret Mascarenhas** have established the **Fireflies Fellowship** at Sangam House in her memory, while the **Prasad family** has created the **Ammi Fellowship** for writing in Indian languages.

Lastly, we're happy to announce that **Sangam House Reader Vol. VI** will be available early in the new year. This volume will feature work from our alumni in seasons 11 and 12. We will be sending copies to all of those contributors, as well as to all our financial sponsors. If you do not fit into either of those categories and would like to be sent a copy, please let us know.

We thank everyone for continuing to support Sangam House, through your donations, counsel and engagement. We rely on you as part of our broader community to keep the work going.

Here's to making 2021 a year full of good health, cooperation and understanding.

With continued good wishes,

Arshia Sattar, DW Gibson and Rahul Soni