

UPF UK: Londoners Share Cultural Views at Literary Voices of Change

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London, United Kingdom – A dynamic group of writers, readers and peacebuilders gathered for a stimulating evening program, "Literary Voices of Change," on June 18, 2026, at UPF headquarters in London. Through book launches, poetry readings, personal testimony, panel discussions, and reflections on the media, the evening examined how creative expression can deepen understanding and encourage positive social change.



The event, organized by **Dr. Sangita Swechcha**, chair of the International Association of Arts and Culture for Peace (IAACP-UK), featured the launch of two distinctive poetry collections: "Pokhtak" by Dr. Rupak Shrestha and "Going to Darjeeling with My Father" by Mr. Nabin K. Chettri. Through readings and reflections, the authors explored love, family, memory, identity and the experience of living

between cultures.

Mr. Robin Marsh, secretary general of UPF-United Kingdom, introduced UPF's vision and international work, which brings together people from different nations, faiths and professional fields in pursuit of peace through dialogue, cooperation and shared values. Within this wider mission, IAACP creates a distinctive space for artists and cultural practitioners to contribute to peacebuilding.



Mr. Lindsay Barnett then introduced the first book, "Pokhtak," by **Dr. Rupak Shrestha**, a collection of 152 short poems rooted in the Nepali poetic Mukhtuk tradition, presented in English translation. The poems draw upon love, family, nature, memory and Dr. Shrestha's connection to Pokhara, his birthplace in Nepal.

Dr. Shrestha described the discipline and freedom of the compact four-line form; readings from the collection demonstrated how brevity can sharpen meaning. The poems were concise, accessible and capable of carrying considerable emotional weight. His presentation also highlighted that translation can open a cultural doorway. Through his book, English-language readers are invited to encounter the landscapes, relationships and sensibilities of Nepal while also discovering themes that speak across national boundaries.

The second launch featured "Going to Darjeeling with My Father" by **Mr. Nabin K. Chettri**, a poet and writer based in Scotland. **Dr. Todd Stanley Swift**, editor and director of The Black Spring Press Group (UK), the book's publisher, introduced the collection and praised its ability to hold two cultural perspectives in creative tension.

Through poems including "Going Home," "The Snow" and "Moon," Mr. Chettri explored home, memory, migration and cultural identity. The collection reflects the experience of living between Scotland and Nepal: neither world is reduced to a simple image, and both become part of the poet's evolving understanding of belonging.

These readings showed how literature can give language to experiences that are often difficult to explain in ordinary conversation. Distance from one's place of origin, the persistence of family memory and the search for connection can be deeply personal, yet poetry enables those experiences to resonate with others.

Writer, editor and translator **Mr. Shan Uday Shankar Durjay**, in a speech entitled "Where the Line Breaks: The Freedom of the Prose Poem" offered reflections on prose poetry, a form that combines the appearance and flow of prose with poetic qualities such as imagery, rhythm, compression and symbolism. He illustrated how writers can work beyond conventional boundaries while retaining the intensity and attentiveness associated with poetry.

Ms. Shahd Kareem, a Palestinian poet and novelist, spoke about resilience and the importance of

reclaiming one's voice through storytelling. Drawing upon painful personal experience and her journey towards authorship, she reflected on freedom, peace and the courage required to transform suffering into creative expression. Her testimony demonstrated that writing can support personal recovery and also help others feel seen.



Dr. Sangita Swechcha moderated a wide-ranging panel discussion with the participating authors and poets. The conversation considered where writers find inspiration, how cultural background shapes interpretation and why perseverance remains essential when seeking publication.

The panelists spoke of lived experience, family relationships, nature, pain, and personal memory as sources of creative work. They also considered literature's social role, saying that it can make room for underrepresented voices and communicate across boundaries that political or public language may struggle to cross. A short poem, a remembered image or an honestly told story may remain with a reader and gradually change how another person, community or culture is understood. In this way, literature contributes to peace not by avoiding difficult realities but by enabling their encounter with honesty and empathy.

Mr. Ian Pelham Turner, international television broadcaster and UPF-UK patron, addressed the relationship between media, cultural expression and global understanding. Drawing on his long broadcasting experience, he stressed that words matter. The language chosen by journalists, broadcasters, poets and public figures can intensify division or help people see one another more clearly.

His remarks underlined the shared responsibility of literature and media: both shape narratives, direct attention, and influence which experiences enter the public consciousness. Used responsibly, they can challenge stereotypes, widen cultural awareness and strengthen the conditions for constructive dialogue.

The event concluded with book signings, shared conversations, and opportunities for the audience to engage directly with the authors. Participants were also encouraged to respond to an open call for poetry and stories on the theme of peace.