



# The big book party

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T MISS ASIA'S BIGGEST CULTURAL EVENT, THE JAIPUR LITERATURE FESTIVAL, AS IT UNITES WRITERS AND READERS FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY AND THE WORLD

**F**ESTIVAL founder and driving force, British author William Dalrymple calls it "one big party," while 'tiger mom', Amy Chua, is "super excited" about it. The Jaipur Literature Festival (JLF) is back for its seventh edition, and it's no wonder a slew of literary enthusiasts are making their way to the Pink City. Described as 'the greatest literary show on earth' by *The Daily Beast*, JLF-2012 (January 20-24) is geared to host some of the biggest names in the industry, from Tom Stoppard to Michael Ondaatje. Even the glamorous Oprah Winfrey is going to be there. Expect talks, music performances, debates, workshops and more in the crush of Jaipur.

## Directors speak

Festival directors, authors Namita Gokhale and William Dalrymple, say this is the place to be, for anyone who loves literature.



Namita Gokhale

### Understanding the festival

**NAMITA GOKHALE (NG):** The Jaipur Literature Festival hit a deep chord that resonated with book lovers and literary audiences from across India and the world. I think this had to do with its democratic spirit and the intense and spontaneous energy it generates.

**WILLIAM DALRYMPLE (WD):** I think it's because it's a fabulous festival. It has serious literature and talks, but then there's also music and dancing, and it becomes one big party. It's absolutely lovely. It also combines *bhasha* (vernacular) authors with international stars, and brings them all on one platform, catering to a broad audience.



William Dalrymple

### The focus on Bhakti and Sufi traditions this year

**NG:** Bhakti poetry incited a unique literary movement that remains at many levels the very core of Indian culture. I expect the sessions to impact audiences both intellectually and emotively.

### Oprah Winfrey, how did that happen?

**WD:** She actually asked us if she could come! She was coming anyway, to meet Deepak Chopra, and we were only too happy. She's done so much to get people to read, so she has a legitimate place in the literary world.

## The line-up

### DAY ONE

Meet the author Michael Ondaatje and rub shoulders with Editor-in-Chief of *The New Yorker*, David Remnick.

### DAY TWO

Author of *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* Amy Chua opens up about 'tiger moms', while Nigerian poet and novelist Ben Okri discusses his book, *The Famished Road*. Our favourite poet, Gulzar, also takes the stage.



### DAY THREE

Pakistani writer Fatima Bhutto talks about her country, while English playwrights Tom Stoppard and David Hare elaborate on their profession. Look out for Oprah Winfrey as well.

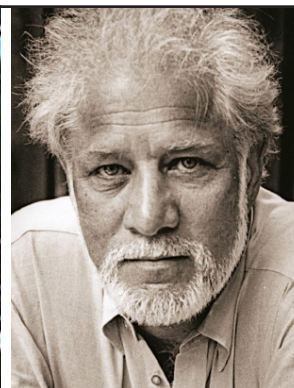
### DAY FOUR

Caribbean novelist Jamaica Kincaid speaks on the art of the short story, and author Kiran Nagarkar reads excerpts from his new book, *The Extras*.

### DAY FIVE

Two American author-cum-journalists are featured — Lionel Shriver and author of *Brokeback Mountain*, Annie Proulx.

There will be a young adults' democracy workshop on all five days. Music performances every evening include Rajasthan musicians, Papon and the East India Company, Pandit Vishwa Mohan Bhatt and Parvathy Baul.



Michael Ondaatje

## Venue perfect

The festival will take place at Diggi Palace (over 200 years old), and as always, is free. This year, however, registration is mandatory for visitors to ensure better crowd management, so make sure you have a photo ID. You could also register online to avoid queues. Details: 141 2373091



## Mom in the picture

US-based author Amy Chua, the controversial author of *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* (2011), a book that caused a debate on eastern versus western parenting practices, tells us why her book shouldn't be taken too seriously.

### Are you expecting your talk 'Tiger Mothers' to stir up any sort of controversy?

No, because I'm going to make it clear, that my book is a memoir, intended to be funny, satirical and hyperbolic, and not a how-to guide. Second, I did not choose, never saw, and do not agree with the headline, 'Why Chinese Mothers are Superior' (A headline that a *Wall Street Journal* review of her book used).

### Are there similarities between Chinese and Indian parenting practices?

I certainly know many Indian parents in the US who are wonderful, loving, self-proclaimed 'tiger moms', but I'm curious and excited to find out more about moms in India! Sometimes, if the entire education system is already very strict, authoritarian, and high-pressured — as in China — tiger parenting may not be the best thing. It's all about balance, and trying to combine the best of all cultures.

### What are you looking forward to at the fest?

Just super excited for my family to see Jaipur and to meet everyone!

## AT A GLANCE

### 2006

Had about 100 attendees. Big names included William Dalrymple and Shobhaa De.

### 2007

Featured Salman Rushdie and Shashi Deshpande, among others.

### 2008

About 2,500 visitors. Nayantara Sahgal and Miranda Seymour were two of the big names.

### 2009

Grew to about 12,000 visitors. Vikram Seth, Rana Dasgupta and others were present.

### 2010

Saw about 30,000 attendees. Vikram Chandra and Jamaica Kincaid made an appearance.

### 2011

Doubled to about 60,000 visitors. Orhan Pamuk was the highlight.

### 2012

Expecting over 80,000 attendees, say the directors.

— Shefali Rao

## preview

# Chords of life

Ready to perform in the city today, Anoushka Shankar talks about the sitar, yoga and her love for tea



**F**OLLOWING in her father's footsteps, Anoushka Shankar is becoming a force to be reckoned with. Her latest album, *Traveller*, merges Indian classical music and Spanish flamenco beats, and the sitar player and composer says she is ready for something new. The daughter of the legendary sitar player, Pandit Ravi Shankar, collaborated with the New York-based multi-instrumentalist Karsh Kale in her previous work in 2007, *Breathing Underwater*. For *Traveller*, Shankar learned flamenco. "They have completely different rhythmic beats, so it was interesting collaborating the two. It was a small idea but I planned to expand on it," she says.

## On the stage

According to Shankar, who lives in East London with her husband, filmmaker Joe Wright, "The sitar is one of the most difficult instruments to play. Technically very demanding, one needs to have good foundation and know the intricacies involved." Though Shankar has been playing alongside her father, she admits to still being nervous before a performance. "What I need to do is not freak out. I need to be focussed and at the same time be relaxed. I generally do a lot of yoga. I also speak to my co-performers and lighten the mood a bit."

## Tea and yoga

Shankar, 30, who became a mother last year, tells us that most of her compositions are inspired by life. Admitting that yoga and tea help her perform better, she says, "The way we sit and perform might cause a lot of back problems; it can damage the backbone too. Yoga helps me a lot. It helps me cleanse my body, stay focussed and avoid physical discomfort. Being of Indian origin, I can't not have tea. I love strong tea more than coffee, and it helps keep me going."

Anoushka Shankar will perform at Kamaraj Arangam today. At 7.30 pm. Passes (₹500-₹10,000) are available. Details: indianstage.in

— Mrinalini Sundar

