

THE LITERATURE TODAY

SMITA DAS JAIN

THE LITERATURE TODAY
EXCLUSIVE

In Conversation with
Author Ravindran

EMERGING VOICES
Poems By Aspiring
Writers

COVER FEATURE-
SMITA DAS JAIN
Leading with Words –
Exclusive Interview &
Review

INSIDE THE MINDS OF
AUTHORS
Smita Das Jain • Akshay
Shroff • Michelle Judy

STORIES REVIEWED &
REIMAGINED
Ratish Ravindran • Rheaa
Noor • Ranjit More • Uma
Ranganathan

SPOTLIGHT ON DISTINCT
VOICES
V.S. Amitesh • Keerthi
Sudhakar • Dr. Harriey
Anshika Gupta

EXCLUSIVE WOMENS DAY
FEATURE
Vahini Suriyanarayanan



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From The Editor-In-Chief

March arrives with a quiet sense of movement the season shifting, ideas unfolding, and voices finding new expression. It is a time that encourages both reflection and forward momentum, making space for stories that inspire and connect.

In this edition of **The Literature Today**, we are proud to feature **Smita Das Jain** as our cover voice in *Leading with Words* an exclusive interview and review that offers a thoughtful glimpse into her literary journey and creative vision.

Inside the **Minds of Authors** brings together **Smita Das Jain, Akshay Shroff,** and **Michelle Judy**, sharing insights into their writing processes and the ideas that shape their work. Alongside, *Stories Reviewed & Reimagined* explores engaging perspectives on the works of **Ratish Ravindran, Rhea Noor, Ranjit More,** and **Uma Ranganathan.**

Our Spotlight on Distinct Voices highlights **V.S. Amitesh, Keerthi Sudhakar,** and **Dr. Harriey**, while a special Women's Day Feature on Vahini Suryanarayanan celebrates voice, strength, and narrative identity.

This issue also features The Literature Today Exclusive—a conversation with **Author Ravindhra**n and other Bestsellers. And we consistently continues to champion Emerging Voices through poems by aspiring writers.

As always, we hope this edition brings thoughtful reading and meaningful connection. We welcome your reflections at theliteraturetoday@gmail.com. Here's to stories that stay with us.



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Editor,
The Literature Today, India
Best Regards,

M. M. Solanki

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Cover Story – Smita Das Jain

Author Spotlights

- Smita Das Jain
- Ravinder Singh
- Vahini Suriyanarayanan
- Akshay Shroff
- Michelle Judy

Author Story Articles

- Dr. Harriey

Book Spotlights

- “Soul Stitched”
- “The Crying Dreams”
- “Virgin Thoughts — The Inner Architect Protocol”
- “When Poetry Found Me”

Exclusive Coverages

- A Meaningful Summer: 5 Simple Ways To Enrich Your Child’s Vacation
- Indian Women Literary Voices: A Defining Force In Contemporary Literature
- A Way To Overcome LPG Shortage: Can Biogas Be a Practical Alternative?

Book Features

- Leading With Words
- Lanterns For The Dark
- Life, Death & Lung Fung Soup
- The Game Changer Monk
- The Red Fiend
- Wisdom Through Words

Voices Shaping Modern India

Poem

- Real Racism



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Author Spotlights

► Smita Das Jain

► Ravinder Singh

► Vahini Suriyanarayanan

► Akshay Shroff

► Michelle Judy

INTRODUCING

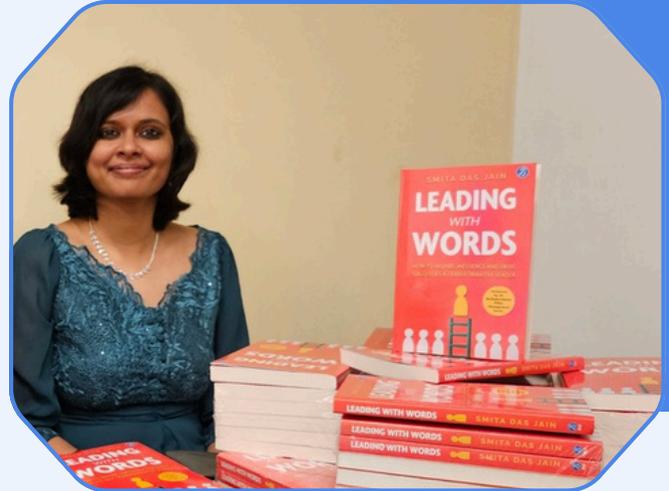
Smita Das Jain*About the author*

An author of 5 books, **Smita Das Jain** is a passionate writer who dedicates herself to writing every day. Evidence of her writing can be found throughout her home, from her office to her sunny terrace garden, her husband's car, and even the kitchen napkins. As an IIM-Indore and SRCC alumna, her talent has been recognised and celebrated in various ways!

Smita Das Jain writes to make sense of the world people inhabit: both the ones we see and the ones we carry within. Her work moves fluidly between fiction and non-fiction, bound by a common thread of exploration of human relationships.

An alumna of the Indian Institute of Management, Indore, Smita started her professional journey with fourteen years in the corporate world before making a conscious shift in 2021 to pursue the written and spoken word, something that had always called her more deeply. Today, as a three-time TEDx speaker, executive coach, and personal empowerment life coach, she continues to work at the intersection of communication, clarity, and self-expression, helping individuals find their voice in both personal and professional spaces. Her award-winning fiction books, including *A Slice of Life*, *Twisted Tales and Turns*, *A Price to Love*, and *Till Fate Do Us Part*, are rooted in emotional realism. Through layered characters and lived-in moments, she captures the complexity of love, family, and identity, often leaving readers with questions that remain long after the final page. Her short stories have been featured in eighteen national and international anthologies, reflecting both the range and depth of her storytelling. She has received several recognitions and awards for her writing, including the prestigious Bharat Award for Literature. Alongside fiction, Smita is also the author of *Leading with Words*, a non-fiction work that draws from her experience as a coach and speaker. In it, she brings together the worlds of communication and leadership with a voice that is both practical and reflective. *Leading with Words* was named as the best non-fiction book by the jury of the Meerut Literature Festival in 2026. She is also a co-author of the New York Times bestseller *Cracking the Rich Code*, extending her reach to a global readership. Yet, for her, the most meaningful validation continues to come from readers who find parts of their own lives reflected in her stories. A consistent writing practice anchors her creative life. She writes every morning, allowing discipline to coexist with intuition. This consistent ritual continues to shape both her craft and her voice. Smita lives in Gurugram, India, with her family.

Smita Das Jain is an award-winning Indian author known for her powerful storytelling across fiction and non-fiction, with five published books to her credit. Her works, including *A Slice of Life*, *A Price to Love*, and *Till Fate Do Us Part*, have earned national and international recognition, including finalist honours at the Page Turner Awards 2025. She is the only Asian writer to be featured among the Top 20 winners of the global Women On Writing (WOW!) contests, reflecting her strong international presence. Beyond writing, Smita is a certified creative writing specialist, TEDx speaker, and executive coach, blending storytelling with impactful personal and professional development.



The problem was that there wasn't one. There are books on leadership. There are books on communication. But there was nothing that married the two in a practical, real-world way. So I decided to write it. *Leading With Words* grew out of that gap. It's a distillation of 2,500+ coaching conversations, real stories, and actionable tools. My fiction has always been about exploring the human side of life. This nonfiction is about equipping people to thrive in it, at work and beyond.

QUESTIONNAIRE:

Q

You've built a powerful career across writing, coaching, and public speaking. What inspired your transition from fiction to a leadership-focused non-fiction book like, 'Leading With Words'?

Smita Das Jain: For me, the shift to non-fiction after writing 4 fiction books was a natural extension of the instinct to understand people, their inner worlds, and how they express themselves. My fiction explores the complexities of human relationships, but this book was born from another part of my world: my career as a senior corporate leader before my pivot and my work as an executive coach. *Leading With Words* is my first nonfiction, and in many ways, it's the book I wish had existed years ago.

As a corporate leader, I had realised that careers don't get stuck due to a lack of competence, but because of communication gaps. In my coaching practice, I started seeing the same pattern again and again. Brilliant professionals, senior leaders and high performers weren't losing influence because of their ideas. They were losing influence because their words didn't land with clarity or impact. And every time I introduced a concept to help them, they would ask me, "Smita, can you recommend a book on this?"

Q

You emphasise that communication is the engine of leadership. At what point in your professional journey did this belief truly solidify for you?

Smita Das Jain: For me, this belief didn't come from one defining moment. It built itself over time, through a series of very personal experiences.

Interestingly, the first signal came even before my career began. During campus placements at IIM, my eventual employer, a Big 4 firm, told me they were hiring me because I "spoke with so much confidence." At that time, I took it as a compliment, not fully understanding its significance.

The real lesson came soon after. In my first year at work, a manager pointed out that I wasn't speaking up enough in meetings, and as a result, others were often getting credit for the work I had done. That was a turning point. I realised that it wasn't enough to do good work. If your voice isn't present in the room, your contribution isn't either.

Over the years, as I grew into leadership roles, I saw the same pattern play out around me. And when I moved into coaching, it became even more pronounced. I met many highly capable professionals, senior leaders and high performers who weren't struggling with ideas or intent. They were struggling with how those ideas were being received. That's when the belief truly solidified for me. Communication isn't a layer on top of leadership. It is the engine that drives it. In the end, leadership is not what you think. It is what people hear, understand, and choose to act on.

Q **The book offers actionable frameworks for real-world leadership scenarios. How did you ensure these strategies remain practical rather than purely theoretical?**

Smita Das Jain: Practicality was not a design choice for me. It was a non-negotiable. *Leading With Words* comes from over 2,500 coaching conversations with professionals and leaders across roles and industries. These weren't theoretical discussions. They were real situations: high-stakes meetings, difficult conversations, feedback to deliver, and ideas that needed to land. Every concept in the book had to pass a simple test: *Can someone use this in their conversation?* If the answer was no, it didn't belong in the book. That's also why the frameworks are simple and structured. Not to oversimplify leadership, but to make it usable under pressure, when you don't have time to analyse, only to respond. I've drawn extensively from real-world scenarios to share insights on what worked, what didn't, and why. The intention was not to sound comprehensive, but to be relevant. Insights may be useful, but application is what creates impact in leadership. I wanted this book to help people act, not just reflect.



Q **As a 3X TEDx speaker and executive coach, you've interacted with diverse professionals. What is the most common communication mistake you see leaders make today?**

Smita Das Jain: *Not communicating enough, and not communicating at the right moments.* I see this across levels. Highly capable professionals who want to grow, but don't express their intent. Intent for a promotion, for a larger role, for better compensation. They assume their work will speak for itself. And when it doesn't, they feel overlooked or demotivated. But the gap, more often than not, is not capability. Its expression. I see a similar pattern with leaders during difficult situations. When things are uncertain or uncomfortable, they hold back, thinking silence will protect them or the team. In reality, silence creates more confusion than clarity. Over time, I've realised that communication is not just about saying the right thing. It's about choosing not to stay silent when it matters. Careers don't stall only because of what you lack. They stall because of what you don't express. And leadership, in many ways, is about having the courage to voice what needs to be said. Clearly, thoughtfully, and at the right time.

Q **Your book highlights leading effective meetings and managing virtual teams. How has the shift to hybrid work reshaped the way leaders need to communicate?**

Smita Das Jain: The shift to hybrid work hasn't just changed where we work. It has fundamentally changed how communication is experienced. In a physical office, much of the communication was informal and incidental. You could read the room. Clarify things in passing. Sense hesitation or alignment without it being explicitly stated. In a hybrid setup, that layer is gone, which means leaders can no longer rely on presence to carry their message. Clarity holds a greater significance.

I've seen this play out in meetings in particular. Earlier, a vague instruction could still get executed because people would fill in the gaps. Now, the same lack of clarity leads to confusion, delays, and rework.

The other shift is around visibility. In virtual environments, if something is not said, it is often not seen. So, leaders today need to be far more intentional about how they structure their communication, how often they check for alignment, and how they create space for others to contribute. In many ways, hybrid work has made one thing very clear: *Communication is no longer a supporting skill. It is the operating system of how teams function.*

Q **Many professionals struggle with giving feedback and handling conflict. What mindset shift is necessary to approach these conversations with confidence and clarity?**

Smita Das Jain: The biggest mindset shift is to stop seeing feedback and conflict as something to avoid, and start seeing them as part of responsible leadership. Most professionals hesitate because they associate these conversations with discomfort or the fear of damaging relationships. So, they delay them, soften them too much, or avoid them altogether. But in doing so, they often create a bigger problem.

What I've seen in my work is that the absence of honest, timely communication erodes trust more than conflict does. The shift, therefore, is from avoidance to ownership. To recognise that clarity is not harsh, and that well-intended, well-expressed feedback is a form of respect, not criticism. The tone changes when you approach these conversations with the intent to improve the situation rather than to prove a point. You become more thoughtful, more structured, and more confident. At the end of the day, leadership is not about staying comfortable. It's about saying what needs to be said in a way that moves things forward.

Q **Your writing journey from award-winning fiction to impactful non-fiction is impressive. How does your storytelling background enhance your ability to teach leadership communication?**

Smita Das Jain: In many ways, my storytelling background is at the heart of how I approach leadership communication.

Fiction taught me to pay attention to the nuances of what people say, what they don't say, and how meaning is often carried between the lines. It taught me that words do much more than convey information; they carry emotion, intent, and perception. That understanding translates directly into leadership. In real-world conversations, people don't respond only to content. They respond to how something is said, how it makes them feel, and what it signals about you as a leader. Storytelling also helped me simplify without diluting. In fiction, if something doesn't land, the reader disconnects. The same is true in leadership. If your message isn't clear or engaging, it doesn't create impact. So, when I write or teach communication, I don't think in terms of theory first. I think in terms of how it will be experienced by the other person. In that sense, I'm still doing what I've always done: helping people understand human behaviour, only now through the lens of leadership and work.

Q **The book positions communication as a lifelong skill. How can professionals continuously evolve their communication style as they grow in their careers?**

Smita Das Jain: One of the biggest shifts professionals need to make is to stop treating communication as something they "learn once" and start seeing it as something that evolves with them. The way you communicate as an individual contributor cannot be the same as how you communicate as a manager or a leader. As your role changes, your communication needs to expand: from doing the work to aligning people, influencing decisions, and shaping direction. What helps is building a habit of reflection. After important conversations or meetings, pause and ask: *Did my message land the way I intended? What did people take away from it? What could I have done differently?*

That awareness is what drives improvement. The second is to actively seek feedback. Not just on what you say, but how you come across.

Because communication is experienced by others, not defined by us. And finally, to stay intentional. Small shifts in how you structure a message, how you open a conversation, and how you listen compound over time. In my experience, the professionals who grow the most are not the ones who speak the most. They are the ones who keep refining how they show up in conversations.

Q As someone recognised across global platforms and awards, how do you balance credibility with relatability when addressing a wide audience?

Smita Das Jain: I don't try to balance credibility and relatability as two separate goals. I focus on being real, and let both emerge from that. Credibility comes from experience, from the work I've done, the clients I've worked with, and the frameworks I've built over time. But relatability comes from being willing to say, I've struggled with this too. I don't speak about communication as an expert standing outside the problem. I speak as someone who has lived through it, who has hesitated in rooms, held back at times, and learned what it takes to find her voice. That balance happens when you don't try to impress your audience, but aim to connect with them. I share real situations, real conversations, and real mistakes, and not just polished outcomes. That's where people see themselves. At the same time, I'm mindful that people are looking for direction, not just resonance. So, every story, every insight, needs to lead somewhere actionable. I think audiences today are very perceptive. They can sense when something is authentic and when it's performative. For me, credibility and relatability are not opposites. They come from the same place: authenticity.

Q What role does emotional intelligence play in becoming a transformative leader, and how can one actively develop it through daily communication?

Smita Das Jain: Emotional intelligence sits at the core of transformative leadership because leadership, at its heart, is about people.

It's not just about what you say, but how aware you are of what others are feeling, what they are not saying, and how your words are being received in that moment. Two leaders can deliver the same message, but create a completely different impact. The difference is emotional intelligence. A leader with high emotional intelligence knows when to push, when to pause, when to listen, and when to step back. That's what makes communication land with trust, not resistance. The good part is, this is not an abstract skill. It can be built in very practical ways through daily communication. It starts with awareness. Notice your own triggers in conversations: when you feel defensive, impatient, or the urge to interrupt. Then comes listening, not to respond, but to understand. Most people listen for their turn to speak. Leaders need to listen for what's really being said beneath the words. Another simple practice is to pause before responding, especially in difficult situations. That small pause often creates the space between reaction and thoughtful leadership. Transformative leadership doesn't come from having all the answers. It comes from being deeply aware of people and responding in ways that bring out their best.





Q

If there's one conversation skill that can immediately elevate a professional's leadership presence, what would it be and why?

Smita Das Jain: The ability to pause before you speak. Most professionals don't struggle because they lack ideas. They struggle because they rush to fill the silence, dilute their message, or speak without clarity. A pause changes that. It gives you a moment to gather your thoughts, to choose your words, and to anchor your presence. And interestingly, it also changes how others perceive you. When you pause, you don't come across as unsure. You come across as thoughtful. From there, intention takes over. Instead of speaking to say everything, you start speaking to say what matters. That shift to fewer words, a clearer message, and a calmer delivery immediately elevates how you are heard in any room. Leadership presence is not built by speaking more. It is built by speaking with clarity, conviction, and control. And it often begins with a simple pause.

Q

Tell us briefly about the others you have written. And what are you writing next?

Smita Das Jain: *Leading With Words* is my first non-fiction. My earlier four books have been fiction. I have written two novels and two short story collections. My debut was *A Slice of Life*, a collection of stories about everyday moments with unexpected turns. Then came *A Price to Love*, a novel inspired by my corporate life that explores ambition and emotional cost. *Twisted Tales and Turns* followed; my readers often tell me they love how I sneak in a twist just when they think they know what's coming! And *Till Fate Do Us Part*, my second novel was about the weight of choices and the unpredictability of life. As for what I'm writing next, it's something I've never attempted before. All I'll say is... it's written with deep devotion. And if you listen closely, there's a clue in that line.



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AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH

Ravinder Singh

QUESTIONNAIRE:

Q

Your debut novel *I Too Had a Love Story* is based on a deeply personal experience and has touched millions of readers. What motivated you to share such an emotional story with the world through writing?

Ravinder Singh: It was never a calculated decision—I just felt the need to give my emotions a voice. Writing became a way to process grief, and sharing it made others feel less alone.

Q

After the huge success of *I Too Had a Love Story*, you wrote *Can Love Happen Twice?*, which continues the emotional journey. What challenges did you face while revisiting such personal memories?

Ravinder Singh: The only real challenge was the expectations from readers. What helped me cope was the excitement that they wanted to read more from me. I've always believed your second work is the true litmus test of your craft, and I'm glad *Can Love Happen Twice?* lived up to that and was well received.

Q

Many of your novels, including *Your Dreams Are Mine Now*, deal with themes of love, loss, and hope. What inspires the stories and characters you create?

Ravinder Singh: I'm inspired by real emotions—love, loss, hope—things everyone goes through. Stories often come from observing people and the complexity of their relationships.



About the author

Ravinder Singh is a bestselling Indian author known for his deeply emotional and relatable love stories. He rose to fame with his debut novel *I Too Had a Love Story*, which touched millions of readers with its heartfelt narrative. With popular works like *Can Love Happen Twice?* and *Your Dreams Are Mine Now*, he has established himself as a voice of modern romance in Indian literature. Apart from writing, he is also an entrepreneur and the founder of **Let's Socialize**, a platform that helps individuals and brands build their digital presence. His stories, inspired by real emotions and life experiences, continue to resonate strongly with readers across generations.



Q

Your writing style is known for being simple, emotional, and relatable. How do you ensure that your stories connect with such a wide audience, especially young readers?

Ravinder Singh: I keep my writing simple and honest. When you write from a place of truth, people across age groups naturally connect with it.

Q

Before becoming a bestselling author, you worked in the IT industry. How did your professional background influence your journey into becoming a writer?

Ravinder Singh: My IT background gave me structure and discipline. But more importantly, it made me realise that I wanted to create something more personal and meaningful.

Q

In addition to writing, you are also the founder of Let's Socialize. How do you balance your roles as an entrepreneur and a novelist?

Ravinder Singh: It's about prioritising and switching contexts. Writing needs solitude, while Let's Socialise is about people—I've learned to respect both spaces.

Q

With the growth of digital platforms like Instagram and Facebook, how important do you think social media is for authors to connect with their readers today?

Ravinder Singh: Social media is extremely important today. It allows authors to build a direct, real-time connection with readers beyond the book.

Q

Through your company Let's Socialize, you help individuals and brands grow their online presence. How has this experience shaped your understanding of storytelling in the digital age?

Ravinder Singh: It has made me realise that attention is earned in seconds. Storytelling today needs to be sharper, more relatable, and instantly engaging.

Q

Your books often reflect real-life emotions and situations. Do you draw inspiration from your personal experiences or from stories shared by your readers?

Ravinder Singh: Both. My personal experiences shape the core, but stories shared by readers add depth and perspective.

Q

Looking back at your journey from writing *I Too Had a Love Story* to becoming a well-known author and entrepreneur, what has been the most rewarding part of this journey?

Ravinder Singh: The most rewarding part is knowing that my stories have helped people feel seen, understood, and a little less alone.

Q

Are there any new writing projects or upcoming books that your readers can look forward to in the near future?

Ravinder Singh: Yes, there are new stories in the works. I'm excited to share something fresh with my readers soon.

Q

Finally, what advice would you give to young aspiring writers who want to turn their life experiences into meaningful stories?

Ravinder Singh: Be honest with your story. Don't try to impress—try to connect. If it's real, it will find its audience.

AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH

Vahini Suriyanarayanan



About the author

Vahini Suriyanarayanan is a dedicated voice in the field of children and parenting. As a lactation and infant feeding counselor and a birth educator, she has guided countless families through the early stages of parenthood with care and expertise. A mother of two, she brings both professional knowledge and personal experience to her work. Her approach reflects empathy, awareness, and a deep commitment to nurturing both mothers and children. Through her journey, she continues to inspire and support modern parenting with confidence and compassion.

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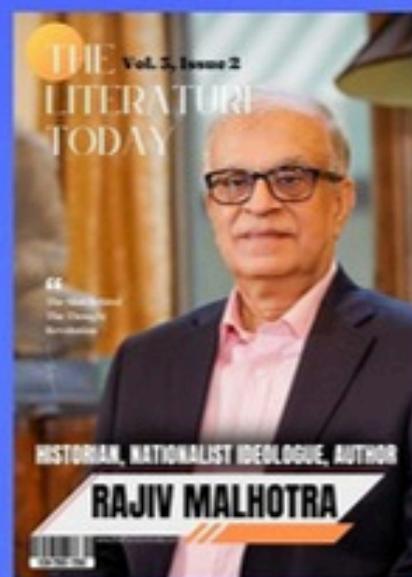
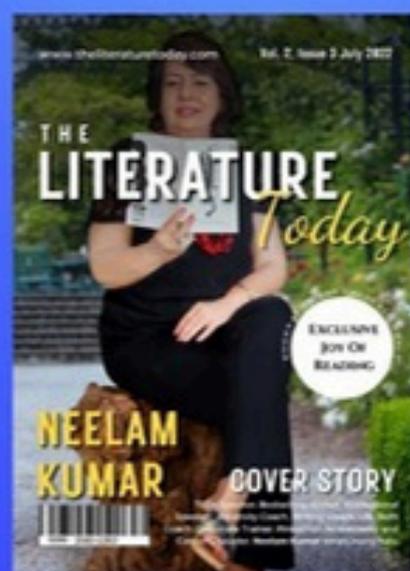
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