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cover story

by

CAROLINE

HELENASDOTTER

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FROM THE
Editor-in-chief
★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

When we began with **The Literature Today**, we were not sure about where the journey with our brainchild would take us. With every edition, we learned, grew, expanded the corners of our magazine, and educated ourselves simultaneously. The Quarterly E-Magazine has helped us redefine the meaning and significance of media and bridge the gap between the world of words and quickly evolving technology. **Volume 4 of the third Issue Edition** of The Literature Today Magazine has helped us expand our dimensions a little more with a bunch of topics that we have explored.

The latest edition features much more than just books and attempts to reach out to more readers this time. The magazine includes book reviews and author interviews, featuring articles on a wide variety of topics like technology, lifestyle, fashion, and all that is revolutionary and influential in people's lives. It also includes content that is relevant to the present scenario under the heading of current topics. In addition, some surprise entries can be read once the readers lay their hands on this edition. With every edition, we strive to achieve new heights and improve the next edition, as we believe there is always more to add and to learn. Hence, we would heartily welcome valuable suggestions from our readers at theliteraturetoday@gmail.com. We look forward to hearing from you. Happy Reading!



Dr. Mayurkumar Mukundbhai Solanki

Editor, *The Literature Today, India*

mmsmodasa@yahoo.com

Best Regards,

M. M. Solanki

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INTRODUCING AUTHOR CAROLINE HELENASDÓTTIR



Helenasdotter, born in Sweden on November 6, 1986, harbored an early passion for writing that blossomed during her formative years. Her fascination with fairy tales and books as a young child, particularly the Moomin series by Tove Jansson, sowed the seeds of her profound love for storytelling.

It was the advent of Harry Potter in 1997 that ignited Helenasdotter's fervor for the fantasy genre. "I think that I have always been a little bit odd. I have always felt like my soul belongs somewhere else, and the fantasy genre deeply resonates with my core." Subsequently, she delved into the works of J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, finding solace in the words of C.S. Lewis that resonated with her: "If we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world."

Her literary journey commenced in 2000 with her first attempt at a young adult fantasy novel, which faced rejection from multiple publishers. Undeterred, she persisted and completed subsequent manuscripts in 2001 and 2002, yet these also met with rejection from traditional publishing avenues.

After completing high school in 2005, Helenasdotter ventured into various countries, embracing diverse cultures and languages. Her experiences across Norway, Russia, Portugal, Germany, and Switzerland enriched her perspectives. Fluent in Swedish, English, and Portuguese, she found Paulo Coelho's "The Alchemist" profoundly impactful upon reading it in Portuguese. "The first book I ever read in Portuguese was 'The Alchemist' by Paulo Coelho; that book will always hold a special meaning for me."

In 2012, Helenasdotter earned a bachelor's degree in political science from Lund University, Sweden. Despite facing rejections for her subsequent five manuscripts, she remained resilient, viewing rejection as an opportunity for growth rather than a setback.

Writing fluently in both Swedish and English, she acknowledged the challenges of crafting literature in a second language. However, recognizing the broader scope offered by English language publishing, she persevered, believing the effort was worthwhile for broader opportunities. "Even though it is more difficult to write in your second language, writing in English gives you so many more opportunities. Sweden is a small country, and if you only write in Swedish, then your possibilities are limited. But yes, the amount of work you must put in when writing in your second language far exceeds the work you must do when writing in your first language. However, for me, it is worth it in the long run."

In 2023, Helenasdotter celebrated her breakthrough with the publication of "Saga of the Swedish Water Spirit." Her message to aspiring writers echoes her journey: perseverance is key, urging others to persist despite setbacks. "When you only experience rejection, it is easy to lose your fighting spirit. However, I do not look at rejection as a failure. I see it as an opportunity to try again, stronger next time. Just do not give up. No matter how many times you get knocked down, get up again. Keep trying, keep on fighting, be persistent, do not give in. Hard times will come, life will be difficult, life is often unfair and cruel, and you will feel defeated; do not let that break your spirit." Or in the words of Frida Kahlo, Helenasdotter's favorite painter; "At the end of the day, we can endure much more than we think we can."

Helenasdotter's recent works have explored romantic and erotic themes, fused with fantasy and folklore. Her upcoming publications center on historical fantasy novels inspired by Scandinavian folklore, a subject deeply rooted in her Nordic heritage. "My latest four works have contained a lot of romanticism/eroticism. Right now, that is the angle I am approaching in my books, but I try to write the erotic scenes romantically and poetically. And I want to mix that with fantasy and folklore."

Fascinated by Scandinavian folklore and enchanted by the mystique of the northern landscapes, Helenasdotter draws inspiration from untamed nature and mythical creatures for her fantastical narratives. "My latest works have been historical fantasy novels with inspiration from Scandinavian folklore. Those are the books that I will be publishing in the following years. But I have also written high fantasy, especially when I was younger. I have always been interested in folklore, especially Scandinavian folklore. There is something truly magical about the deep, dark forests here in the north, the untamed nature, and the mystical mountains. A lot of the magical creatures are both breathtaking and fatally dangerous."

A pendant bearing Edith Södergran's words, "I deem it unfitting to make myself less than I am," serves as a reminder for Helenasdotter to stay true to her dreams and convictions. "Be unapologetic, do not let anyone stop you."

Future plans include publishing earlier rejected manuscripts, which notably delve into fantasy and Scandinavian folklore, showcasing her unwavering commitment to these themes.

Beyond writing, Helenasdotter nurtures an interest in martial arts, holding a black belt in taekwondo and a capoeira graduada. Despite time constraints, she cherishes this lifelong pursuit. "Sadly, I do not have as much time as I would like to train in martial arts for the moment, but it is something that I always carry with me."

Her reading preferences oscillate between fantasy and classical literature, striving to explore the classics and imbibe their wisdom. As a mother of two, she navigates the challenges of balancing a full-time job with parenthood, often finding solace in writing during the tranquil evenings and nights. "As a mother of two small children, it can sometimes be challenging to find time to write while working full-time during the day and tending to your children after work. Therefore, I mostly write during the evening and night when it is dark. Darkness puts me in writing mode; it inspires me."

Reading fairy tales to her children rekindles her childhood magic, fostering a bond through shared stories by Jan Lööf, Astrid Lindgren, and Gunilla Bergström, with Pippi Longstocking being a household favorite. "I enjoy reading fairy tales to my children. It reminds me of all the magic that I felt while reading when I was a child. Reading to your children is an excellent way to connect with them."

Adjacent to her writing desk, a quote by Jack London, "You can't wait for inspiration. You have to go after it with a club," serves as a motivational beacon, compelling her to seize every writing opportunity, even amidst life's bustling moments.



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS WITH PUBLISHERS & INDUSTRY EXPERTS

- **LENA KUMAR**
- **CAROLINE HELENASDÓTTIR**



INTERVIEW WITH LENAA KUMAR

Questionnaires:

TLT: Your book, “The Autobiography of God” is your debut work as an author. What inspired you to venture into writing, particularly on the topic of self-realization, mental health, and personal growth?

Lena Kumar: The inspiration to write came from intuition and a very compelling inner calling. In keeping with the book's 5Ws, I would call it the “Why I am”. That is to say, it is my Life purpose.

TLT: You emphasized that your title, “The Autobiography of God” is for a specific audience – the rational, the logical, the seekers. Well, can you please elaborate on the approach you take to appeal to this demographic?

Lena Kumar: This book presents 5 Practical steps to Self-realization using the 5Ws technique of inquiry, which are namely: What, Who, When, Where, Why am I? This method is specifically aimed at satisfying the logical and rational brain which is the gatekeeper of our sensory and cognitive input. Once these 5 questions are dealt with in the way prescribed in the book, Self-realization is a purely cognitive and intellectual understanding of the answers to the nature of “I” or Self. Now the being is ready to deal with the illogical and mystical experience of Self-actualization, which is the ‘Living of one’s realization’.

TLT: Could you share with us how your journey in the film industry, spanning over 25 years and across multiple languages, has influenced your perspectives on life, spirituality, and the human experience, as reflected in “The Autobiography of God?”

About the Author - Lena is an award-winning actress, clinical psychologist, scriptwriter, and entrepreneur renowned for her impact on Indian cinema over a career spanning more than 25 years. She has won numerous awards, including the Filmfare Awards, SIIMA Awards, IIFA Award, Toronto International South Asian Film Awards, Kerala State Film Awards, and Kerala Film Critics Association Awards. An active advocate for mental health, emotional well-being, and self-awareness, she is a transformational speaker on a mission to empower with self-realization through infotainment. Her TED talk has been viewed more than 850,000 times.

Lenaa Kumar: Cinema is an illusion within this illusory world and hence is the best playground for a seeker of the truth. For me, the make-believe world of films became my home, my refuge, and sustenance while also becoming the platform from which my Life purpose could take off too.

TLT: The book is described as a roadmap for a lifelong expedition of self-discovery. How do you envision readers engaging with and applying the principles outlined in your book throughout their lives?

Lenaa Kumar: The feedback I am constantly receiving from readers in the form of emails and phone calls, thrills me to know that the book is doing its job of helping bring clarity and direction to seekers and curious souls alike. I believe that an art form outlives its creator and satisfies its purpose as an independent entity once it has become part of the world. And I am proud to see *The Autobiography of God* do exactly that; Be a Practical guide to Self-realization.

TLT: You mention that the book demystifies self-realization by addressing logical and rational questions. Can you give us a glimpse into how you approach these questions and guide readers toward understanding the nature of introspection?

Lenaa Kumar: The 5Ws; What, Who, When, Where, and Why Am I? If wholeheartedly explored will lead to spontaneous enlightenment. This is the method I personally used to explain my waking up experience to near and dear ones, and it has helped many to realize the nature of Self in a simple and practical way.

TLT: In a world filled with complexities and distractions, “*The Autobiography of God*” serves as a transformative guide. How do you navigate the balance between offering practical tools for personal growth while acknowledging the inherent complexities of human existence?

Lenaa Kumar: Human or otherwise, Existence is the true nature of Self. This book offers practical tools to realize that One is Existence Itself. The complexities and distractions end in the spontaneous realization of One’s true nature. *The Autobiography of God* is a glimpse of stark reality without any filters.

TLT: Given the evolving landscape of mental health awareness, in what capacity does your book contribute to the ongoing conversation surrounding mental well-being, especially in today’s fast-paced world?

Lenaa Kumar: *The Autobiography of God* contains my struggle with the rigidity of the psychiatric system and alternate methods that helped me overcome the limitations of the mind and those imposed by the mental health system. The book teaches one to start with the basic questions and learn to thrive instead of survive.

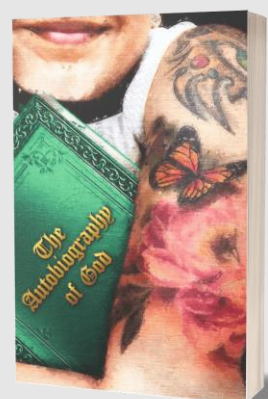
TLT: This is your first published book so, do you have plans for future works that build upon the themes explored in “*The Autobiography of God*?”

Lenaa Kumar: Self-realization happens in the mind, while Self-actualization happens through the body. One is understanding the other is practice. The illogical and mystical experiences on the path from Self-realization to Self-Actualization will be covered in the next and upcoming book, *The Autobiography of Goddess*.

TLT: Finally, what message do you hope the readers will take away from your book and do you have any particular message to share with our audience?

Lenaa Kumar: The message is simple. Self-realization is knowing the meaning of the word “I”. I = LIFE.

The Autobiography of God guides the reader to this realization. Happy reading!



INTERVIEW WITH CAROLINE HELENASDÓTTIR



Author
Caroline Helenasdotter

Questionnaires:

TLT: What inspired you to write this title, "Saga of The Swedish Water Spirit," and how did Scandinavian mythology and folklore influence the story's development?

Caroline Helenasdotter: I wanted a unique name that stood out and would enthrall the readers. Most people know about Vikings and the Norse Gods, but fewer know about other creatures in Scandinavian mythology. I have always had a great interest in folklore and mythology, and I want to spread awareness through my fictional writing. The creatures of Scandinavian mythology make up a significant part of the story. In the world where "Saga of the Swedish Water Spirit" takes place, these creatures share the world with humans. The book is set in our world but incorporates elements from mythology.

TLT: Your protagonist, Liv, experiences a deep longing and desire for adventure and passion. How did you develop her character, and what aspects of her journey do you think will resonate most with readers?

Caroline Helenasdotter: I think that a lot of people today long for true connection and that many have hidden desires they do not dare to admit to themselves. Female sexuality has been a taboo subject for a very long time and still is today. In many cultures, female pleasure and sexuality remain controversial. I want to make this subject less taboo and remove the stigma around female pleasure. Many people see this as something bad today, and I think that is unhealthy. Historically, female pleasure has been suppressed, controlled, and denied by many cultures and societies. I want Liv to inspire women to acknowledge their desires and not be afraid to meet them.

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As for the adventures, the book takes place in the 17th century, a time when women were seen as property to their husbands and had no say in their lives. In some places on this earth, this belief still exists. I want to inspire women to pursue their desires and find their passion in life without feeling suppressed, owned, or controlled by society.

TLT: Näcken, the water spirit, is a central figure in the story. Can you share more about this character's mythological background and how you interpreted and adapted this folklore for your book?

Caroline Helenasdotter: Näcken is a water spirit that dwells in lakes. He is known for his magical abilities and how divinely he plays the violin. He is a very dangerous creature with his morals. He has his agenda and follows his desires. It was said that if you sought him out, he could grant you your greatest wish, or if he did not like you, he could drown you in the lake. Depending on his mood, he could help you or become your greatest nightmare. In some tales, he was an ugly green monster, and in others, he was an enchantingly beautiful man. He played his violin to lure women into the lake, seduce them, and take their souls. Many musicians sought him out to learn from his incredible musical talent, but this came at a cost and a great risk. Many feared to go near the lakes, afraid of being drowned by Näcken. In my book, he is a guardian of the forest and lake, and he can choose to take on whatever appearance you prefer to meet your wildest desires.

TLT: How did your own experiences living in different countries, such as Switzerland, Norway, Portugal, and Russia, shape your writing and the themes explored in "Saga of The Swedish Water Spirit"?

Caroline Helenasdotter: Having lived in different countries has widened my perspective of the world. I think that traveling, meeting other cultures, and experiencing things that are out of your comfort zone is healthy for everyone. That is how you grow as a person. Having different experiences helps me broaden my writing and think from different angles and perspectives. The theme that nothing is truly good or truly bad is recurrent in my books. It is all a matter of different kinds of perspectives, and we all have a bit of both within us. Having lived in different countries helps me to have an open mind and to stay curious.

TLT: The setting of 17th-century Sweden plays a significant role in your novel. What kind of research did you conduct to accurately portray the historical and cultural backdrop of this period?

Caroline Helenasdotter: I grew up in Sweden, and history was one of my favorite subjects in school. I learned quite a lot about Swedish history in school, and that interest has remained with me up until today. I also read a lot of books about Swedish history. One of my favorite authors on the subject is Herman Lindqvist. He has written many books about Swedish history and Swedish Kings. Historical information is very easy to find today, and there are a lot of fantastic books on the subject. In my upcoming book 'Carolean Snow', the Swedish King Carolus will play an essential role.

TLT: As a mother of two young children and a practitioner of yoga and martial arts, how do you find time for writing, and how do these activities influence your creative process?

Caroline Helenasdotter: I have a really busy life. I only have time to write at night when my kids are asleep. I do not sleep a lot. I know that many female authors who are mothers have said the same. Sleep is the first thing we cut out to have time for everything else. Today, there is a lot of pressure on women to do it all, and that can have a negative impact on many people's lives.

I also have a very disciplined schedule to make time for everything in my life. For example, my son loves to ride his bicycle, and he joins me when I am out running. It takes a lot of planning to make time for writing when you have a full-time job, children, and other interests. But I would say that I appreciate writing more and write very effectively when I sit down to write since I know my time to write every day is limited. I would say that it helps a lot to know martial arts when writing fighting scenes. Yoga keeps me focused and calm, and focus is a great discipline when it comes to writing.

TLT: Liv's relationship with Näcken challenges the norms of her time. What message do you hope readers will take away from their love story, particularly in terms of following one's heart and defying societal expectations?

Caroline Helenasdotter: This is your life, and no one can decide what is best for you but yourself. If you want something, then go after it. Do not listen to everyone who tries to convince you that it is a bad idea, or that you are bad for doing so. You cannot train yourself into not wanting what you want in life; that will only lead to misery and despair. Do not let anyone hold you back or tell you that you are unworthy of your dreams. One must stay true to oneself and find their path. No one ever regrets following their heart on their deathbed. With that said, it is equally important to connect with other people. Life is a difficult balance between staying true to yourself and respecting and helping others. Liv is a mild and gentle character, but she is also passionate and knows what she wants. Hopefully, she will inspire people to look within themselves for the balance when it comes to giving and taking.

TLT: Your book delves into themes of longing, passion, and destiny. How do these themes reflect your personal experiences or beliefs, and why are they important to you as a writer?

Caroline Helenasdotter: I think that passion is essential for humans, and I do not just mean sexual passion but passion in general. Following your passion makes your life fuller. I would say that passion is what fuels all artistic professions. It is that burning calling from within those who refuse to be silenced. We are here in this lifetime to expand our consciousness and to learn. If we deny ourselves that, then there will always be a part of us that feels like something is missing. We must always embrace ourselves and our passion. When we embrace our passion and stay true to ourselves, we inspire others to do the same.

TLT: Fluency in Portuguese and your international experiences suggest a diverse cultural perspective. How do you incorporate these diverse influences into your writing, particularly in "Saga of The Swedish Water Spirit"?

Caroline Helenasdotter: The different kinds of cultures in this book are more between humans and väsen (which is the collective name of all the magical creatures that reside in forests, lakes, and other dimensions that can opt into our realm). Humans tend to think in terms of us and them, and they want to annihilate all väsen. In "Saga of the Swedish Water Spirit," it is implied that we all come from the same source and that all our souls are essentially connected. Liv sees the value in all living beings and respects them. She sees them as part of herself and has no desire to harm anyone, but she feels trapped within society's norms and beliefs.

TLT: What can readers expect next from you? Are there any upcoming projects or sequels to "Saga Of The Swedish Water Spirit" that you can share with us?

Caroline Helenasdotter: I released one book called "Whispers of the Nordic Draugr" just recently. Right now, I am working on a book called "Carolean Snow," which will be released later this fall. It follows a Carolean soldier who encounters the gruvå. These books are closer to the genre of romantic fantasy than erotica.

This summer, I will release the first short story in my series "Lustful Legends," which is poetic historical erotica where women encounter different kinds of magical beings in Scandinavia. The series will consist entirely of short stories, and if you enjoy poetic erotica, you will appreciate this series. I felt that there is a lack of representation of women over 30 in fantasy and erotica, which is why all my main female characters are over 30 years old. Women who are mothers and middle-aged, such as myself, also have vivid imaginations and sometimes like to escape into the fictional world. Having characters that you can relate to in age and motherhood is very inspirational, and I hope that we will see more female main characters in the fantasy genre who are over a certain age and still go on adventures, follow their passions, and create their own lives.



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