

FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

An increasing number of tweens and teens are turning authors thanks to growing interest from publishers

Kaushani Banerjee

Teenagers in the country are writing way more than just projects and essays these days. If the shelves at major bookstores are any indication, a growing crop of youngsters are writing their own novels, alongside school, exams and life. A prime example is Anusha Subramaniam, now 16 and a student, who wrote her first novel, *Heirs of Catriona*, when she was just 12, and recently launched her second book, *Never Gone*. Similarly, indicative of a growing trend is the long showing of books at bookstores by authors under 18, such as Zuni Chopra's (15) *The House That Never Spoke*, Insiya Patanwala's (16) *Esoterica*, and Melitta Tessy's (16) *Battle of the Spheres: Crust, Mantle and Core*.

This isn't just a new fad made possible by self-publishing. Publishers are taking an active interest in bringing young voices to the fore. "We have always believed in nurturing young talent. We are focusing on identifying powerful, new voices. That is the larger strategy for us," says Sohini Mitra, executive editor for children's and young adult books, Penguin Random House India.

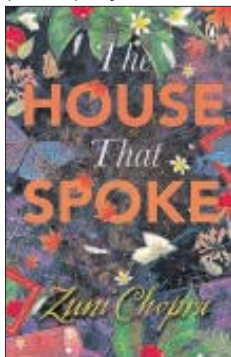
Speaking about her debut novel, Zuni, the daughter of film-maker Vidhu Vinod Chopra, says, "I've wanted to write a novel since I was seven. I used to make up my own stories using toys, but I only started writing them later. Now with my book finally published, I have realised that I loved writing the novel more than I thought I would."

AGE NO BAR

But can one be too young to write good fiction? Literary agent Kanishka Gupta says there are several factors to consider. "There is the question of quality, and if these writers have lived and



(From left) Insiya Patanwala, Zuni Chopra and Anusha Subramaniam

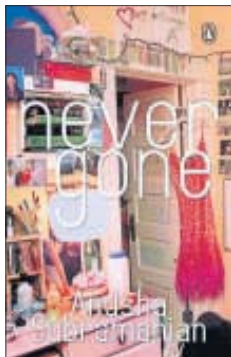


experienced enough to write convincing stories and characters. Publishers such as HarperCollins India have launched some tween writers, but none have been able to break through," he says.

On the other hand, Zuni feels that readers are finally taking teen authors seriously. "People think teenagers are silly and immature, but with



so many of us writing and getting published, we are now being taken seriously," says the 15-year-old. Anusha, the daughter of Indian thriller writer Ravi Subramanian, says, "The writing industry is not as complicated as it looks. When I started writing in 2012, teens were not taken seriously, because we wrote in the young adult genre. Now with more



exposure to the genre, many authors are slowly emerging."

A GROWING MARKET

Publishers certainly have no prejudice against young authors, especially in the growing young adult market. When asked if there is a low benchmark for teen authors as compared to adults, Mitra says, "The only parameter

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ZUNI CHOPRA, AUTHOR

'I am forever grateful to Brando'

ME, MYSELF AND I

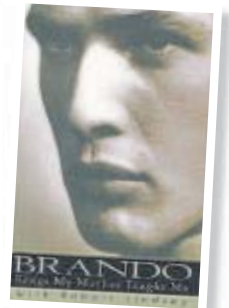
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AMIT SADH, ACTOR



A poster of the play Golden Boy



Marlon Brando's *Songs My Mother Taught Me*

about a boy who becomes a boxer, as he is trying to win the 'fight of life'. He does it, but at his expense. It's something a lot of people would be able to relate to. It would make a great movie, I think.

Which is your favourite fairy tale or folklore?
The wolf and the kid. I love the message — it's easy to be brave from a safe distance.

What kind of reader were you as a child? Which childhood books and authors have stayed with you?
My childhood was spent away from books, and more in sports and fights. I have been making up for that. But now I'd say, read, read and read.

If you had to name one book that made you who you are today, which would it be?
Any of Odets' plays. If I had to choose one, it would probably be *Golden Boy*.

Which author would you choose to write your life story?
I am not sure that I'd have one written at this point. Let me live a life that's worth being on a book shelf.

Kaushani Banerjee

Which books are currently on your reading list?

I have a huge list of books. Whenever someone recommends a book, it goes straight into my list. But the next few I would like to read are (the autobiography) *Kiss Me Like A Stranger*; *My Search For Love And Art* by Gene Wilder; *Fences* by August Wilson, and *Gaslight* by Patrick Hamilton.

What's the best book you've read so far?

Songs My Mother Taught Me by Marlon Brando and Robert Lindsey. I read it at a point in my life when I was a little lost. This book really spoke to me and guided me. It was exactly what I needed at that point in my life, and I am forever grateful to Brando.

Which writers, novelists, critics, playwrights or poets do you admire the most?

A few of my favourite playwrights are Clifford Odets, Tennessee Williams, Michael Weller and Robert

Anderson. I don't really read what critics write. I believe people shouldn't have to be told what's 'good' or what's 'bad'. JRR Tolkien, JK Rowling and Roald Dahl are also fantastic.

What genres do you enjoy reading? Which do you avoid?
I love real-life stories; stories about real people, relationships and ideas. Stories that teach you a lesson or help you understand yourself or life better. I'm not a huge fan of fantasy, although I love horror and ghost stories.

What do you like to read when you travel?

I love reading about places I'm going to; about their culture, history, landmarks and the people. It helps me enjoy the place more, and you end up taking much more away from your trip.

Which was the last book that made you laugh or cry?

Golden Boy by Clifford Odets made me cry. It's

All for a noble cause



An art installation created as part of the More To Give Organ Donation logo design contest at HTKGAF



PHOTOS: HTCS

The prize winning logo designed by Eshita Jadhav

At the Hindustan Times Kala Ghoda Arts Festival 2017 (HTKGAF) this year, one of the social causes that was promoted was organ donation. While people think of it as a noble act, there is a large gap between the number of registered donors compared to those awaiting organ donations on a global level. To bridge this gap, Fortis has been urging people to come forward and take a pledge through several activities. Besides events such as street plays, music performances and talks held by Fortis, a contest was also organised to create a symbol for organ donation.

There is no universal symbol that represents the cause. So, using HTKGAF as a platform, Fortis invited entries from students, professors, design schools and academies to design a symbol that can give an identity to this cause. The entries were judged by a team from Fortis Healthcare. A total of 50 plus symbols and logos were received as a part of the More To Give Organ Donation logo design contest. The team selected a winner from the entries received. However, the team also felt that, despite the

great attempt by all the participants, finding a symbol that could globally stand for the cause of organ donation would need more time.

The youngest participant of the contest was 13-year-old, Kalpit P Prabhu, while the oldest one was Colleen Traynor, 72, from Chembur. Eshita Jadhav, who created a unique design in the shape of an eye, won the contest. The design uses the eye in the shape of the alphabets O and D, which stand for organ donation. There are eight shades of green (green is also brand Fortis's colour) in the design that depict the lives that can be saved. Experts believe that the organs from a donor can help as many as eight lives.

Talking about the need and importance of donating your organs, Dr Avnish Seth, director, Fortis says, "With only 411 cadaveric donations taking place last year, India has a current organ donation rate of 0.34 per million. It has taken us eight years to reach from 0.05 per million to 0.34 per million. At this rate, it will take roughly 28 years for India to reach the organ donation rate of one per million."

— HTC



5 LAKH INDIANS ARE WAITING FOR ORGANS.
WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?
PLEDGE TO DONATE YOUR ORGANS.

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log on to www.fortishealthcare.com/moretogive



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