

[Newspaper article titled, An evening of bright words: South Asian reading]

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## An Evening of Bright Words: South Asian Reading

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On November 16th, UCFV hosted the last of its reading series for this semester. We found out the results: Richard Van Camp, poet Ron Baynes, and novelist Siba Robinson read some of their work and had two nights looking at specific groups of writers in Bharatpur, an afternoon reading of Mountain System from the valley and an evening reading of work by five writers of South Asian descent.

It was a cold night, and a freeze, but there was still a good turnout and we all settled in to listen to a marvelous read by Don Andrew.

First was Kobby Gill who read with a very soft voice, but lively, passionate poetry. It was easy to be carried away with her words, each poem showing a part of her life as part of an immigrant family growing up in Rimouski. Kobby says that she "found it hard to find a way to write without talking about people in my mind and the chance of hurting people. Poetry was a force that allowed me to distance little bits through metaphors without relying too much on explicit narrative. I struggle with how to say certain things, and poetry lets me say them. It's very forgiving." The Hour Publishing, a group which focuses on small communities such as Rimouski, published her collection "Dharma Raja" in 1998. She is a professional anthropologist with a Master of Fine Arts from USC and has been published in other magazines such as the "Library Review of Canada" and "Red Silk: An Anthology of South Asian Canadian Women Poets." Also published in "Red Silk" and reading her work was Soozie Lalbée.

Lalbé has two poetry anthologies of her own published, "A Strange Rite" (2001) and "Killzone" (2007). She writes about a variety of subjects, such as growing up with a mixed background family, and accounts how we perceive our linguistic world with playful pieces exploring the semantics of words and sounds. Her vocabulary was absolutely dazzling when read aloud and the lines rolled along to the clever rhythms and cadence in her verse. Lalbé has translated internationally and drawn from a number of cultures in her work where she explores what words mean to cultures, and how and why some words seem to mean the same thing across the world. She has studied abroad the world, taught at universities in Korea and Toronto, and now is working on her PhD in English at UBC.

Somerset Perveen was next, and she is a teacher, now in UCFV's English department. Her focus is on contemporary literature and film of South Asia. She has only started writing poetry on a regular basis lately and still insisted that she was not a writer - but after hearing her work, I would disagree, if the previous two ladies were passionate, Perveen was an fire! She is enjoying reading at UCFV, especially since we have a well-established South Asian population in the community and a centre for Indo-Canadian studies in the school. "Teaching South Asian students was a major attraction for me," she says, "and being part of a Punjabi community was another." When Perveen it wasn't a tough position for her because she has lived in so many different places and been influenced by many different cultures, however, she says "I like to view my displacement as advantageous, for it allows me to be a multiplicity in terms of my identity." I would say she's carrying herself awfully well already.

Last was the only prose author, and the only male, Tomy Malik. He was born and raised in Pakistan and became an industrial quality manager there before he emigrated. He has a book published now called "Bansuraj of Kothi" which was short listed for the North Shore Book Festival in 2006. "Bansuraj of Kothi" looks at the ups and downs of the lives of the central characters, loosely based off of his own family and friends' experiences, in five short stories. The common theme that seems to tie them all together is water. In all his most are realizations, as one can never truly know what is in Vancouver where he can wander into the bush and spend time next to a stream, contemplating it.

This was a shining way to end the "writers' series" at UCFV on a cold autumn winter night. Many of the finest were featured, though a few were new, and Richard Van Camp acted as a master of ceremonies, introducing the writers and getting the crowd excited about it through his enthusiastic and sincere admiration of their wonderful work. These readings were sponsored by the Canada Council and were hosted in the UCFV Centre for Indo-Canadian studies.



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