

Jashn-e-Rekhta 2017: Celebrating Urdu

‘Jashn-e-Rekhta’ - a unique festival celebrating the timeless eloquence of Urdu recently celebrated its 3rd edition that enriched and entertained the audience in ways never experienced before.

February 17-19, 2017 at Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi

- *Over 100 most distinguished writers, poets, artists, litterateurs, singers and acclaimed personalities from across the world attended the festival.*
- *Gulzar, Irfan Habib, Manager Pandey, Annu Kapoor, Pushpesh Pant, Hans Raj Hans, Shamim Hanfi, Javed Siddiqi, Prasoon Joshi, Saurabh Shukla, Sharmila Tagore, Prem Chopra, Abdul Bismillah, Uday Prakash, RJ Sayema, Kumar Vishwas, among many others came together to bring alive Urdu’s radiant charm and rich heritage.*
- *The festival drenched the audience in the exquisite colours of Urdu with Mushaira, Qawwali, Dastangoi, Ghazals, Book Exhibition, Film Screening, Panel Discussions, Calligraphy Workshops, Plays, Urdu Bazaar and an innovative game of Baitbaazi.*
- *The **Grand Mushaira** at the Jashn painted the evening sky with stars of contemporary Urdu poetry like **Gulzar Dehlvi**, **Wasim Barelvi**, **Shakeel Azmi** among others. Audience enjoyed the unique experience of different flavours of mushaira, such as Mazahiya Mushaira, Tamseeli Mushaira and Khwateen ka Mushaira.*
- *Audience not only interacted with the stars of Urdu literary cosmos, but were also given an opportunity to share their poetry and stories in several open forum sessions.*
- *Rekhta Food Festival hosted a grand feast of cuisines like Kashmiri, Peshawari, Sindhi, Parsi, Awadhi, Hyderabad, Punjabi and Nomadic along with the finest selection of popular street food from Purani Dilli.*

New Delhi, February 20, 2017: The long-awaited third edition of Jashn-e-Rekhta concluded successfully on Sunday with an overwhelming response by roughly over a lakh visitors as well as distinguished poets, authors and artists from across the globe.

World’s largest Urdu festival, Jashn-e-Rekhta 2017 began its grand celebrations on the evening of February 17th with Gulzar and Ustad Amjad Ali Khan gracing the inauguration. Dr. Sanjiv Saraf, founder, Rekhta Foundation welcomed the lovers of Urdu to the 3-day long festivities and recalled the first edition of Jashn-e-Rekhta which pulled the beauty of Urdu language and culture out from the pages of history and gifted it back to the spirit and sentiment of Urdu lovers. He highlighted the success of the efforts of the organization in spreading the elegance of Urdu among young literature enthusiasts. Dr. Saraf mentioned that to separate a language from its script is like separating a body from its soul, and correspondingly launched Aamozish.com- an Urdu learning website, which was inaugurated by Gulzar. The online Urdu learning portal boasts of a methodically formulated course, a visually rich information structure and interactive quizzes

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that promise to be an enriching learning experience for those interested in the language. To add to the spirit of the celebrations was a musical evening with Sarod maestros, Amaan Ali Bangash and Ayaan Ali Bangash who curated a mix of poetry, traditional music, folk tunes and raagas to present a new creation.

Organized by the Rekhta foundation, that curates the largest online repository of Urdu poetry in the world www.rekhta.org that has brought authentic Urdu poetry at a click to its lovers; the Jashn has been honoured with the presence of eminent personalities like Zia Mohyeddin, Javed Akhtar, Gulzar, M.K.Raina, Muzaffar Ali, Nandita Das, legends of Urdu literature Shamsur Rahman Farooqui, Gopi Chand Narang , Intizaar Hussain among many others, who came together to celebrate Urdu through various performances and sessions. It has been heartening to witness the swelling crowd of Urdu lovers, especially the youngsters nurture an undying passion and appreciation for the language.

The festival endeavours to engage, enlighten and entertain audiences from diverse backgrounds; therefore it is a free public event, accessible to one and all. In a three-day long celebration at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, the Jashn opened up the sensory experience of living and loving a language.

Jashn-e-Rekhta 2017 witnessed the poetic genius of Gulzar as he cast a spell on the audience with his poetry and conversations with the noted scriptwriter, Javed Siddiqi. The two illuminated the audience on the power of literary creation to challenge reality and to allow the writer as well as the reader to live their dreams. The session on Premchand, which included critics like Alok Rai and Manoj Pandey, re-visited the legacy of the writer and helped the listeners come to a fresh understanding of his contributions to the Hindi-Urdu literary traditions. Prof. Gopi Chand Narang greeted a packed hall as he began talking about the creative miracles of Amir Khusro. The session was particularly a hit among the young academics and poetry enthusiasts as Narang not only critically contextualized Khusro's poetry but also shared several untold aspects of his art. 'Theatre ke Bhoole Hue Rang' and 'Jab Filmein Urdu Bolti Thi' witnessed the star-studded presence of the likes of MS Sathyu, Sharmila Tagore, Bhawana Somaaya, Prem Chopra and Saurabh Shukla. The lovers of Urdu and Delhi were in for a treat as the renowned historian, Irfan Habib chronicled the ancient and medieval history of Delhi while another session explored in great detail popular literature in Urdu and its significance for the mass literary sensibility.

11-year old singing sensation from Bengaluru, Khanak Joshi left the audience awe-inspired while a group of young professionals from Pune won several hearts with their poetry and music. Salman Akhtar hosted a gripping session which elaborated upon the use of English vocabulary in Urdu poetry. Gulzar released 'Ghazal Usne Chhedi- Vol.2' by Farhat Ehsas and the book received an encouraging response from a crowd eager to soak in the variety of experiences the festival had to offer. The second evening of the Jashn was greeted with a warm, melodious welcome as Vidya Shah mesmerized thousands with her rendition of Progressive Poetry. Added to it was the silvery voice of Danish Husain who narrated poignant instances from the lives of the poets like Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Majrooh Sultanpuri, Sahir Ludhianvi and others. The crowd had

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just soaked in the poetry when they were greeted with the enchanting qawwali performed by Dhruv Sangari, followed by the Grand Mushaira where the best among contemporary Urdu poets recited their shayari and floored the audience with their craft. The night refused to grow dark as the mushaira went on till late, with the people sitting transfixed to their chairs, while others jostled for space in a packed lawn.

Last day of the Jashn felt like the celebrations had only begun. The beauty of Urdu was evident on the faces of every visitor as they enthusiastically attended the sessions, visited the Urdu Bazaar, thronged the Book Exhibition, and delighted themselves to delicacies at the Food Festival.

Prasoon Joshi discussed Bollywood lyrics and the contribution of Urdu in adding lyrical beauty to them, while critically commenting on the contemporary practices within the film and advertisement industry. Faridoon Shahryar shared his journalistic perspective on popular literary creation and Joshi concluded by reciting a new nazm that stressed on the arbitrary rules language binds us in and the need to break free. Shamim Hanfi presented the blazing legacy of Firaq Gorakhpuri while eminent jurists like Salman Khurshid and Justice TS Thakur charmed the audience as they delineated the role played by Urdu in shaping the judicial discourse in India. It was a moment of thrill and excitement as Dr. Kumar Vishwas and RJ Sayema stepped on to the stage to discuss the poetry and struggle of Jaun Eliya. Many youngsters felt inspired by the session while others felt exhilarated upon catching a glimpse of the personalities they admire. Ashok Chakradhar and Sheen Kaaf Nizam exchanged views on the converging themes, metaphors and form in poetry in Hindi and Urdu, while Uday Prakash and Alok Rai highlighted the relationship Indian languages share with the global market. Darain Shahidi and Poonam Girdhani left the audience spell-bound as they narrated 'Dastan Raja Vikram ke Ishq ki'. The thrilling game of Baitbaazi was given prominence this year and the participation from the audience made the game all the more fun and interactive. Celebrating a tradition, the game managed to pique the common curiosity and many among the audience expressed interest in continuing to play the game. Sessions like 'Ghalib, Hali and Urdu Renaissance' and 'Urdu Tahzeeb ka Husn-e-Zaiqa' received a resounding applause from the people who found them enriching. Stand-up comedian, Zakir Khan hosted a magnetic session where he brought out his lesser known side- the passion for Urdu poetry which he presented with his signature comic twist.

Annu Kapoor set the stage blazing with his versatile performance that packed theatre, poetry, music and history in one. The spell was an intoxicating one and 'Urdu Suroñ ka Mausam-e-Bahaar' is a season the night refused to let go of. Hans Raj Hans added to the celebrations with his breeze-like Sufiyana kalaam and the audience hummed to the tunes that continued to ring long after the spectacular performance was over.

The highlight of this edition of the Jashn were several open forum spaces and interactive sessions planned in order to encourage people to write and recite their poetry to a wide audience, and correspondingly the festival was enriched with the presence of numerous new talents from the

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Urdu literary and cultural cosmos. In one of the sessions, RJ Sayema read the poems and stories penned by common people and gave voice to their heart-felt sentiments.

Urdu Bazaar charmed the visitors with the fragrance of it, the antiquities of old Delhi, handicrafts, the delicate beauty of chikankari along with an elaborate book exhibition spanning across Urdu, Hindi and English. Aimed at developing an inclination for Urdu language and culture among children, a Children's Corner was hosted where storytelling, dastangoi, audio installations, drawing contests and fun conversations made for an unforgettable experience. Jashn-e-Rekhta endeavoured to bring the language and culture to Urdu connoisseurs and non-Urdu speaking audience alike. A grand feast of delectable Kashmiri, Awadhi, Hyderabad, Mughlai and Sindhi cuisines presented a gastronomic adventure along with the finest selection of popular street food.

One of the heartening responses sums up Jashn-e-Rekhta 2017- "it felt like we all were one race- that of Urdu, of Jashn, of Rekhta and no boundary could separate us."

Dr. Sanjiv Saraf, founder of Rekhta Foundation and the force behind Jashn-e-Rekhta says, *"Jashn-e-Rekhta is a manifestation of our belief in the versatility, richness and the timeless beauty of Urdu. The success of its debut last year is a testimony to this belief. We were overwhelmed to see lovers of Urdu coming together to feel and experience its beauty through the savants of the language. Jashn-e-Rekhta, in its second edition will continue its efforts to keep Urdu alive in the public consciousness and I invite all to come and be a part of this Jashn with us"*

About Rekhta Foundation:

Rekhta Foundation is a non-profit venture and operates a free online resource for Urdu poetry- www.rekhta.org. The objective of Rekhta is to promote Urdu literature, especially Urdu poetry, to a global audience having roots in our sub-continent, particularly those not conversant with the Urdu script. The content is available in Devanagari and Roman scripts in addition to the Urdu script.

The website has a global readership from over 160 countries across the globe. In few years since its launch, it has attracted wide acclaim and has been highly appreciated not only by laypersons and enthusiasts but also by Urdu literatures from India, Pakistan and other parts of the globe. This resource provides the works of the highest number of poets compared to any other site in this genre. The site is the world's largest online repository of Urdu poetry, with over 15,000 Ghazals and Nazms of over 1500 Urdu poets of over the last three centuries.

For festival updates, visit:

www.jashnerekhta.org

For further details, contact:

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