

UPF UK: Literary Voices of Change: Poetry, Prose and Narrative Perspectives

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Literary Voices of Change: Poetry, Prose and Narrative Perspectives Thursday, 18 June 2026 - Universal Peace Federation - UK, London

An evening of literary reflection, cultural dialogue and creative expression.

Key Takeaways

Literature builds cultural bridges

Poetry and storytelling enable people to encounter experiences beyond their own and recognise their shared humanity.

Personal stories can inspire change

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Literature as a Meeting Place



[Universal Peace Federation](#) - UK (UPF) and the [International Association of Art and Culture for Peace](#) - UK (IAACP - UK) welcomed writers, readers and peacebuilders to Literary Voices of Change on Thursday, 18 June 2026. Through book launches, poetry readings, personal testimony, panel discussion and reflections on the media, the evening examined how creative expression can deepen understanding and encourage positive social change.

Opening the programme, Robin Marsh, Secretary General of UPF - UK, introduced the vision and international work of the Universal Peace Federation. He explained that UPF brings together people from different nations, faiths and professional fields in pursuit of peace through dialogue, cooperation and shared values. Within this wider mission, IAACP creates a distinctive space for artists and cultural

practitioners to contribute to peacebuilding.

Reflecting on earlier cultural initiatives, including Voices and Music for Peace and Leading Through Stories, Robin emphasised that creativity can help transform difference from a source of division into an opportunity for encounter. Stories, poems and songs enable people to enter experiences beyond their own and recognise the humanity held within them.

Launching Pokhtak: A Nepali Poetic Voice in English



The first book launch introduced 'Pokhtak' by Dr Rupak Shrestha, a collection of 152 short poems rooted in the Nepali poetic Mukhtuk tradition and presented in English translation. The poems draw upon love, family, nature, memory and Dr Shrestha's connection to Pokhara, his birthplace in Nepal.

Dr Shrestha described the discipline and freedom of the compact four-line form, including its use of an AABA pattern. Like the Persian rubaiyat, it allows a poet to create a complete emotional or imaginative world within only a few lines. Readings from the collection demonstrated how brevity can sharpen meaning: the poems were concise, accessible and capable of carrying considerable emotional weight.

The presentation also highlighted the importance of translation. Bringing a literary form from one language into another is more than a technical exercise; it opens a cultural doorway. English-language readers are invited to encounter the landscapes, relationships and sensibilities of Nepal while also discovering themes that speak across national boundaries.

Between Scotland and Nepal



The second launch featured *Going Without a Link with My Father* by Nabin K. Chettri, a poet and writer based in Scotland. Dr Todd Swift, the book's publisher, introduced the collection and praised its ability to hold two cultural perspectives in creative tension.

Through poems including "Going Home," "The Snow" and "Moon," Nabin explored home, memory, migration and cultural identity. The collection reflects the experience of living between Scotland and Nepal: neither world is reduced to a simple image, and both become part of the poet's evolving understanding of belonging.

These readings showed how literature can give language to experiences that are often difficult to explain in ordinary conversation. Distance from one's place of origin, the persistence of family memory and the search for connection can be deeply personal, yet poetry enables those experiences to resonate with others.

Form, Resilience and Reclaiming Voice

Writer, editor and translator Shan Uday Shankar Durjay offered reflections on prose poetry, a form that combines the appearance and flow of prose with poetic qualities such as imagery, rhythm, compression and symbolism. His contribution illustrated how writers can work beyond conventional boundaries while retaining the intensity and attentiveness associated with poetry.

Shahd Kareen, a Palestinian poet and novelist, spoke about resilience and the importance of reclaiming one's voice through storytelling. Drawing upon painful personal experience and her journey towards authorship, she reflected on freedom, peace and the courage required to transform suffering into creative expression. Her testimony demonstrated that writing can be both a personal act of recovery and a way of helping others feel seen.

How Can Literary Voices Change Society?



Dr Sangita Swechcha, Chair of IAACP - UK, moderated a wide-ranging panel discussion with the participating authors and poets. The conversation considered where writers find inspiration, how cultural background shapes interpretation and why perseverance remains essential when seeking publication.

The panellists spoke of lived experience, family relationships, nature, pain and personal memory as sources of creative work. Their discussion also moved beyond the individual writer to consider literature's social role. Poetry can name what has been overlooked, make room for underrepresented voices and communicate across boundaries that political or public language may struggle to cross.

An important theme was that words do not need to be loud to be influential. A short poem, a remembered image or an honestly told story may remain with a reader and gradually change how another person, community or culture is understood. In this way, literature contributes to peace not by avoiding difficult realities, but by enabling them to be encountered with honesty and empathy.

Words Matter: Media and Cultural Understanding

Ian Pelham Turner, international television broadcaster and UPF - UK Patron, addressed the relationship between media, cultural expression and global understanding. Drawing on his long broadcasting experience, he stressed that words matter. The language chosen by journalists, broadcasters, poets and public figures can intensify division or help people see one another more clearly.

His remarks underlined the shared responsibility of literature and media. Both shape narratives, direct attention and influence whose experiences enter public consciousness. Used responsibly, they can challenge stereotypes, widen cultural awareness and strengthen the conditions for constructive dialogue.

A Growing Platform for Diverse Voices

The event concluded with book signing, conversation and opportunities for the audience to engage directly with the authors. Participants were also encouraged to respond to an open call for poetry and stories on the theme of peace.

Looking ahead, IAACP - UK intends to continue developing literary and cultural programmes that welcome new and diverse authors, particularly voices that have often been underrepresented. Further media interviews, audience conversations and digital promotion will help extend the reach of the writers and the ideas shared during the evening.

Literary Voices of Change affirmed that art is not separate from the work of peace. By preserving memory, expressing pain, celebrating identity and inviting people into unfamiliar experiences, literature can build bridges that formal dialogue alone may not create. The evening offered a thoughtful reminder that every authentic voice has the potential to enlarge understanding - and that words, when used with courage and care, can become instruments of peace.

Video Links: Part I youtu.be/m70f0cs34Rg

Part II youtu.be/y8TKr-xWZmo

Part III Panel youtu.be/IJMBE-s28VY

Dr Rupak Shrestha Book Launch: youtu.be/b6xlzdNYFdw

Facebook Photos

www.facebook.com/universalpeacefederation,uk/posts/pfbid0KmC9vK6oCKAs6wGF6KtUetEWZaqCrY46Kdi5NDRkbVpBdrS4S84Fqk6W6rk2qUdkl

Event Contributors

Dr Rupak Shrestha: Poet and author of Bokta

Nabin K. Chettri: Poet and author of Going Without a Link with My Father

Shan Uday Shankar Durjay: Poet, author, writer, editor and translator

Shahd Kareen: Poet and novelist

Dr Sangita Swechcha: Chair, IAACP - UK and panel moderator

Ian Pelham Turner: International television broadcaster and UPF - UK Patron

Dr Todd Swift: Publisher

Robin Marsh: Secretary General, Universal Peace Federation - UK