



Word. World. Wisdom



The BEST of what they said...

The best quotes from interviews and columns published in Spark during 2010 and 2011.



# A note from the Editors



One of Spark’s core defining factors has been the columns and interviews we have published in all our issues over the last two years. This exercise has been an immensely rewarding and a spectacular learning experience for us in many ways, including but definitely not limited to gaining a deeper understanding of how people approach their areas of expertise, realising that it is their passion, intelligence, persistence and a certain humility that has taken them to where they are today, and of course, receiving our biggest reward—that of Wisdom - that’s something we have received in copious amounts during our interactions.

Our featured personalities—ranging from authors to performing artistes to filmmakers to journalists to publishers to social activists—have all been great sources of some brilliant thinking and insightful experiences. At the most basic level, they have led us to think deeply about life’s most important and relevant truths and reexamine some of our beliefs and ways.

We earnestly hope, month after month, over the last two years, we have been successful in our endeavor to take this very wisdom to our readers by publishing these interviews and columns. On this special occasion of celebrating 25 issues and two years of word, world, wisdom at Spark, we felt nothing would be a more befitting tribute to all the wonderful people who agreed to share their thoughts with us than bringing out a compilation of the best of our conversations. Not to mention, a small gift to all our dear readers who have read and supported us through the last two years.

The Spark editorial team, keeping this momentous occasion in mind, has put together the best of what our featured personalities have said over the last two years through different columns and interviews. Lastly, we *have* to mention that we sure are enjoying the sense of pride that fills us as we get ready to publish these gems of thoughts—it sets out to show the amazing variety that we have been able to present in terms of themes in our issues. We feel glad, absolutely glad.

We sincerely wish this collection will brighten up your day whenever you choose to read it. Ladies and gentlemen, presenting joyfully —the best of what they said.

- *Anupama Krishnakumar*
- *Vani Viswanathan*





“Nothing should be termed as a failure in filmmaking since it involves lot of hard work, money and people’s efforts. I would rather use a friendly term called ‘Learning experience’ and I don’t think there is going to be an end to it. I like the saying, ‘There should be an award for just completing a film’. I believe in that sincerely and in that sense, every film is a success in its own terms!” – **Arun Vaidyanathan, Filmmaker, in response to failures and successes in his career – in his interview in the March 2010 issue.**



“I do not consider myself a travel writer. I’m essentially a traveller who writes, not a writer who travels. Most importantly, in writing of my travels I relive them all over again, every moment coming alive as I seek words and pictures to illustrate them. This is the key reason I write for in as much as I also write so I can share my experiences with anyone who cares to read my blog. We connect not as human beings but around shared experiences that we can relate to as human beings. And since travel is among the most primal of experiences common to humans, travel narratives are easy to connect with for the essential humanity that’s inherent to travel of any kind.” – **Anil Purohit, Travel blogger, in his featured column in the April 2010 issue.**



“For a vagabond like me, my alter ego lies in a spirit that is lost in the hills, running down the plains, getting her feet soaked in waters and reliving the past in a monument. I am often asked why I travel. Am I an escapist, shunning civilisation? Do I want to run away from the ‘real’ life and holiday all my life? Or is it a way to forget myself?... My journeys have been more ‘real’ than an escape. It is more of a self-discovery, where the choices and dilemmas in life become more obvious and yet, I have let life take its own path, like the meandering road. When in doubt, my motto has been, look for the road not taken. ....According to me, travelling is not always about must see places. It is about what you want to see.” - **Lakshmi Sharath, Travel blogger, in her featured column in the April 2010 issue.**





“How can life be made more meaningful? Is there a ‘purpose’? What if you were to die tomorrow? How will you spend the last 24 hours that you have? What are the things that will truly matter then? If one were to ask these questions and if one were to truly live by the answers he or she provides, I think the person will automatically find the meaning of life.” –

**Preeti Shenoy, Author of ‘34 Bubble Gums and Candies’ and ‘Life is What you Make it’, in her featured column in the May 2010 issue.**



“It struck me that I could decide on my own happy ending, I could reach my dream, if I really wanted it, if I really saw myself as the main character in my own life, who fought for her dreams, and who believed in achieving it. That’s when I decided that I didn’t want someone else to write my own life. I wanted to wake up the little girl so that I could dream again and be the author of my own story.” –

**Margareta Astaman, popular Indonesian author and blogger, in her featured column in the June 2010 issue.**



“Before every success there may be a failure. But, you have to have faith in what you are doing and keep doing it. Do not give up easily on your dreams!” –

**Rashmi Bansal, Author of ‘Stay Hungry Stay Foolish’, ‘Connect the Dots’ and ‘I have a Dream’, in response to her advice for aspiring entrepreneurs, in her interview in the June 2010 issue.**



“I don’t believe there’s any other medium, through which you can experience and understand the lives of people across centuries, cultures, and nationalities to the extent and depth as you can do through the characters of a well-written novel. The written word holds magic.

And when a writer comes along and unharnesses that magic, I am left spellbound.” – **Paritosh Uttam, Author of ‘Dreams in Prussian Blue’ and ‘Urban Shots’ in his featured column in the July 2010 issue.**





“To me these books represent wading pools. This is where reading India will first have to conquer their fear of reading before they are ready to swim beyond their depth.” – **Anita Nair, Author of ‘The Better Man’, ‘The Mistress,’ ‘Good Night and God Bless’ and ‘Lessons in Forgetting’,** in response to her thoughts on the growing trend of quick-read novels in India, in her interview in the August 2010 issue.



“I truly believe that the arts are powerful and articulate on their own terms. The arts are for everyone. In today’s world fuelled by speed and greed, it is only in the arts that everyone wins. In every other field of activity, there are winners and losers. The arts humanise society and offer a prophetic vision of harmony and wholeness.” – **Anita Ratnam, Film actor, dancer and choreographer,** in response to her thoughts on using arts as a social awareness tool, in her interview in the September 2010 issue.



“I think I learnt that one does not own what one creates. Be it a magazine, a job, a child. Some of it belongs to others and is given to you to shape; others are yours to create and then need to find their own paths. But being able to create is valuable, I treasure the opportunities. And reaching out with what one creates: that is a gift from God!” – **Sathya Saran, Author of ‘Night Train and other Stories’, ‘10 years with Guru Dutt: Abrar Alvi’s Journey’ and ‘From Me to You’,** in response to some of the important lessons she has learnt in her life – in her interview in the September 2010 issue.



“Stop taking life seriously. If shit has to happen, it will. Might as well have a hoot!” **Sidin Vadukut, Author of ‘Dork : The Incredible Adventures of Robert Einstein Varghese’,** in response to what he would like to tell our readers – In his interview in the October 2010 issue.





“The problem is not with the poor. It is with those who have enough – the middle class, the upwardly mobile – who still adhere to the system of giving and taking dowries, despite the law, who still prefer sons as they do not want property divided, and who can afford to use technology to prevent the birth of girls. So even though there has been some change, I don’t think the basic attitude of preferring sons to daughters has changed.” –

**Kalpna Sharma, Independent journalist and columnist, in response to whether the Indian society’s attitude towards bringing up and educating girl children has improved over the years – in her interview in the November 2010 issue.**



“India is so culturally, socially, economically, politically, linguistically diverse, that there cannot be any one representation of the whole. Doing books in different languages helps us give voice and image to the details of this diversity in a way that publishing in just one language does not. The

experience has made it clear to us that our books can and must work for all children, reading in different cultural contexts, within and outside India. The choices in terms of the kind of books we publish are based on this.” – **Radhika Menon, Managing Editor, Tulika Publishers, in response to why Tulika decided to publish children’s books in both English and regional languages – in her interview in the November 2010 issue.**



“How does a child learn to walk? How does he or she manage to learn and talk a whole new language? It is all about faith; it happens. But once children grow up, we start interfering too much with the learning process.” – **Raksha Bharadia, Author of many titles of the Indian Chicken**

**Soup series, ‘Roots and Wings – A Handbook for Parents’ and ‘All and Nothing’, in response to parenting trends seen today – in her interview in the November 2010 issue.**





“I think I am not alone in spending much of my life recording my impressions of the world and then sifting through them for meaning. This work of thinking is what drives most of us. In that sense, we are all blessed with the writing instinct. The work of the writer is to reduce this instinct to the scope of the page. We gain something significant in the process – an audience and conversations we would not otherwise enjoy;

we lose a lot in the process – a sense of the infinity that is our own minds.” – **Mridula Koshy, Author of ‘If it is Sweet’, in response to her thoughts on writing – in her interview in the February 2011 issue.**



“Feminism is good for the entire society. Children should grow up in an environment where women and men are equally respected and where injustice is not encouraged in the guise of customs or traditions. A huge number of the social problems we face today are directly related to gender discrimination.”

– **Indian Homemaker, Blogger, in response to how relevant is feminism in India today – in her interview in the March 2011 issue.**



“Launching *What Kind of Man are You?* and *Is This Justice?* – our PSA campaigns addressing condom use and the stigma faced by women living with HIV/AIDS – and seeing them reach millions on mainstream networks was extraordinary. They caused quite a stir, and started a national dialogue about safe sex and HIV/AIDS-related stigma.”

– **Mallika Dutt, CEO, Breakthrough, in response to some proud moments in Breakthrough’s success – in her interview in the March 2011 issue.**



“I think today women writers know their work will be looked at, and that the publishing environment will at least be open and hospitable to it. They also have a choice. When we began, we were the only ones. Today, there are many; so women have a choice. Further, the old taboos about which subjects are possible and not possible, permissible and not permissible for

women, have gone or are going. I think it’s a good environment and I hope it gets better and better – women writers deserve it!” – **Urvasi Butalia, Director, Zubaan Books, in response to how the women’s writing scenario has changed over the last 25 years – in her interview in the March 2011 issue.**





“There is no way I can possibly pick one or two or even ten examples because that’s really the reason that I continue to be inspired by what I do every day – there’s the constant change that I see in the kids – changes in their aspiration levels, how they think about what they can do with their lives, changes in their achievement levels, what they are actually able to do with their lives, changes in their value systems, the

things that they are willing to stand up for and fight for. It’s just so many millions of these little changes.” – **Shaheen Mistri, CEO, Teach for India, in response to what keeps her going in her mission – in her interview in the March 2011 issue.**



“Creating characters is like making a dish. You are given certain existing ingredients, but you have to add your own zest, dressing, spice. ... It requires getting into the skin of the person you create, you have to lose yourself. Fiction is wonderful because you can do anything

with it; it’s malleable clay.” – **Abha Iyengar, writer and poet, in response to how she builds her characters – in her interview in the April 2011 issue.**



“Practical Learning – learning what can be applied and applying what one feels has been learnt – one good turn deserves another. There is no use for wisdom that cannot be felt or applied.” – **Karthik Kumar, Film and theatre actor, Director, Evam and Sideways Training, in response to the best way to put lessons from corporate training sessions to use - in his interview in the April 2011 issue.**

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“I know that all talents come from God. They are His gifts. We are only His instruments. I am grateful each day that He has given me such a wonderful and enjoyable job to do. I pray He allows me to do it well.” – **Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Author of ‘The Mistress of Spices’, ‘The Palace of Illusions’ and ‘One Amazing Thing’, in response to**

**how she manages to stay grounded despite all the fame` and success – in her interview in the April 2011 issue.**





“The fact that you speak to lakhs and lakhs of people and entertain them is definitely an exciting aspect and a challenging aspect as well. Challenging because you have different kinds of people with different mentalities and belonging to different age groups listening to you. So, to connect with each one of them and bring a smile on each of their faces is the toughest part! You crack this... that’s it, you know people love

you!” – **RJ Pavitra, Radio Jockey, in response to the challenging and exciting aspects of her job, in her interview in the April 2011 issue.**



“I understood that allotting “stars” or “marks” was by far the least interesting thing you could do as a reviewer. It was far more important to engage carefully with a film, think about it and articulate your thoughts as well as you could.” – **Jai Arjun Singh, freelance**

**writer, journalist, Author, ‘Jaane bhi do Yaaro’, in response to his views on the star-rating reviews for films, in his interview in the June 2011 issue.**



“I look at everything as an architect: in plan, elevation, perspective, etc. I can perceive anything as spaces with forms in it. ....In weddings, the forms are people. Looking at it this way helps me analyse situations rationally than emotionally. For example, if I miss a moment, I don’t panic. That is the worst

enemy to wedding photography, since panic can prevent further such moments from being captured. When you are confident enough of your own ability, you know, there is another moment waiting.” – **Maniyarasan Rajendran, Associate Faculty in the Photography Design Discipline at the National Institute of Design (NID), Ahmedabad, in response to how he approaches wedding photography – in his interview in the July 2011 issue.**





“We’re so attuned to ‘thinking’, being ‘logical’, that we forget to dream. While dreams shape imagination, thoughts are merely the speed-breakers in execution. In a journey called life, if everybody decided to follow a set path laid out by the dream ‘thinkers’, who would ever dare to ‘dream’? Why give something that is expected? Why should we not try to break the mould with utter stupidity? Wasn’t Forrest Gump stu-

pid?” – **Kartik Iyengar, Author of ‘Horn OK Please’, in response to the why his book is not presented with a particular structure – in his interview in the August 2011 issue.**



“Why do Indians keep modernising and localising our myths? That’s because we are making our myths relevant to our present day lives. And that attitude keeps our myths relevant & alive. I think myths have something to teach us and that’s perhaps something I am trying to do in some sense in

my book – try to make statements about today.” – **Amish Tripathi, Author of ‘The Immortals of Meluha’ and ‘The Secret of the Nagas’ in response to the need for youngsters to read and understand mythology – in his interview in the August 2011 issue.**



“Awards make it possible to continue writing full time, and most of all, it is very heartening that people I didn’t know at all read the book and warmed to it.” – **Anjali Joseph, Author of ‘The Saraswati**

**Park’, in response to how she felt on winning The Betty Trask Award and The Desmond Elliot Prize for her debut book – in her interview in the August 2011 issue.**



“In today’s world, money management is not just an important life skill; it is a lifesaving skill. With corporates paying huge amounts as salaries and the younger generation making more money than ever, isn’t it the responsibility of the adult world to teach the little ones how to handle money?

Every year we are churning out a huge number of adults who don’t know what to do with the money they earn. They don’t know how to invest it or they just do not understand economics. Think about it –are we creating a generation of capable adults?”

– **Priya Gopal, Educator, in her column in the September 2011 issue.**





“Our intention with Ravanayan is to show that the world is a complicated place and everyone has reasons for doing the things they do. If, by the time a reader has finished reading our story, he can see a bit of himself in one of Hindu mythology’s most dreaded bad guy ever, then perhaps he will also think twice before labeling the people in his life as evil; then we will consider our work as storytellers done.” – **Vijayendra Mohanty, Author, ‘Ravanayan’, in response to why he decided to tell the story of Ravana – in his interview in the October 2011 issue.**



“It is a sad situation and it pains me to note that we elders have failed to inculcate the pride about our languages in the minds of our younger generation. ....Parents prefer talking with their children in English, instead of their mother tongue. And, people believe that it increases social status only if you are educated in English and not in any vernacular language. Before we blame the youth for what they are today, I personally believe that the elders, who are the role models for the youth, should change their attitude and give up this stigma against their mother tongue.” – **Sivasankari Chandrasekharan, prolific Tamil Writer, in response to the growing trend of Indian youth being more proficient in English literature than regional literature – in her interview in the October 2011 issue.**



“Ramayana and Mahabharata are the key stories that have sustained Indian society. These two epics tell the story of the same God over two lifetimes. In one, God follows rules. In another, God breaks rules. So, as Indians, we are never sure when to follow rules and when to break rules. This doubt manifests in the famous Indian headshake from side to side. We think contextually and subjectively, unlike objective compliance driven cultures of the West and the East.” – **Dr. Devdutt Pattanaik, Mythologist and Author, in response to which mythological stories have defined the foundation of Indian culture – in his interview in the October 2011 issue.**





“Our fashion weeks focus on weddings and wedding glamour mostly, limiting talent and fashion to a large extent. Fashion Weeks abroad are huge events and a melting pot for a lot of creative minds and people who are passionate about fashion. Here, it is still about being ‘seen’ at the fashion week or spotting celebs. I think New York, London are so much more crazy, out there, experimental in terms of makeup, themes, presentation and clothes. You can spot clear trends. So in terms of Fashion Weeks, we have a lot of growing up to do.” – **Jasleen Kaur Gupta, Journalist and Fashion blogger, in response to her thoughts on fashion weeks in India – in her interview in the November 2011 issue.**



“A good story, with energy and engagement. Lightness and depth. Integrity of voice. Craft is critical – an understanding of how to pace a story, the balance of dialogue and exposition. And then, there is that indefinable aesthetic filter that we all develop, the thing that allows a story from outside to in, permits it past acceptance barriers.” – **Indira Chandrasekhar, Editor, Out of Print, in response to her expectations from a short story submitted for consideration – in her interview in the November 2011 issue.**



“History inevitably repeats itself, one simply needs to observe the patterns. This pattern is what interests me, not the history in itself and this is what is central to my fiction. ....History, mythology, conspiracy, mystery and suspense are the nucleotides of my writer’s DNA. I cannot imagine myself writing outside this comfort zone.” – **Ashwin Sanghi, Author of ‘The Rozabal Line’ and ‘Chanakya’s Chant’, in response to what it means to write historical fiction – in his interview in the December 2011 issue.**



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