

The Telegraph

calcutta, india

Paperback Pickings

Everyone is fighting a battle

IMMODERATE MEN: STORIES

(Speaking Tiger, Rs 299) by **Shikhandin** is written in a matter-of-fact manner; nevertheless, it has the power to make readers introspect. The protagonists in this collection, as the title suggests, are men; however, they are not always 'immoderate'. The author has tried to show that men are victims of patriarchy just as women are. However, unlike women, they often do not realize that. Even if they do, it is only towards the end of their lives.



The story titled "The Vanishing Man" is an example of this. It is about a person who dreams of spending quality time with his family after retirement. But soon after retiring from his job, he realizes that he was important for his family only as long as he was earning. "Black Prince" narrates the story of Biren Dutta, who had to abide by his father's instructions for much of his life. Biren studied metallurgy because his father wanted him to. Then he had to marry a girl of his father's choice. Consequently, he suffered a loveless marriage, as he never grew fond of his wife. The simple narrative style of the stories, in spite of the complex issues discussed, will appeal to the readers.

GANDHARVI: LIFE OF A MUSICIAN

(Orient BlackSwan, Rs 525) by **Bani Basu** captures the struggle that middle-class working women in India have to endure. The protagonist of *Gandharvi*, Apala, is a gifted singer. She tries her best to balance her personal and professional lives. Yet, her family members think that she is neglecting her domestic duties. The truth is that Apala could have attained more fame as a classical singer had she not been married off at a young age.



Orient BlackSwan

Gandharvi

Bani Basu

Translated from the original Bengali
by Jayita Sengupta

Originally published in Bengali, *Gandharvi* is also a celebration of the indomitable spirit of music. In addition to that, Basu has provided a vivid description of the lives of middle-class Calcuttans in the 1960s. Translating the work must have been a challenging task. Basu's prose is peppered with musical terms and metaphors. But the translator, Jayita Sengupta, has done a satisfactory job.

HEALING ROOM: THE NEED FOR PSYCHOTHERAPY

(*Harper Element*, Rs 399) **edited by Reena Nath** is a collection of essays penned by renowned counsellors. Emotional turbulence can strike any human being, preventing them from enjoying life fully. It also impedes one's ability to work and take rational decisions. In such a situation, it makes sense to seek professional help. However, in India there is a bias against consulting psychotherapists. This is a result of Indian society's utter disregard for treating mental illness in the correct way. *Healing Room*, it is hoped, will help dispel some of the myths surrounding the field of psychotherapy.