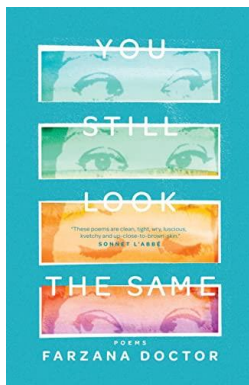




Report on the Indian Book Launch of Farzana Doctor's *You Still Look the Same* **2 June 2022**

The Mumbai Münster Institute of Advanced Studies (MMIAS) had organized an online book launch of Canadian author Farzana Doctor's *You Still Look the Same* in collaboration with the Indo-Canadian Studies Centre (ICSC) on 2nd June 2022.

The event was chaired by Professor Sridhar Rajeswaran, Director, Centre for Advanced Studies in India (CASII).



Farzana Doctor, Author

Professor Nilufer E. Bharucha, Director, MMIAS, welcomed all the participants to the joint launch. She spoke of the old connections the MMIAS (formerly, CoHaB IDC) had with Farzana and the long standing association that Ms. Doctor has had with the University of Mumbai. She then introduced Professor Sridhar Rajeswaran and thanked him for chairing the event and then handed over the session to him.



Professor Nilufer E. Bharucha, Director, MMIAS

Taking over the virtual platform, Professor Sridhar Rajeswaran spoke about how book launches have now shifted from the physical to the virtual in post-pandemic times. He set the tone for the book launch with his remarks and introduced Farzana Doctor formally. He then officially launched the book – *You Still Look the Same* and invited Farzana to comment on the book and give her response to the book launch. She began by thanking the organisers for conducting the event. She spoke about what inspired her to write this book. She referred to her life experiences when she was in her 40s and how the poems were a testimony to the challenging times she had then experienced.



Professor Sridhar Rajeswaran, Director, CASII

Farzana mentioned how the book has been divided into four sections – losses, self searching, working through trauma and healing – each depicting the different stages of her life and experience. With her training as a psychotherapist, she begins each section with a tongue-in-cheek therapy question in the form of haiku, thus engaging the reader's attention. All the other poems in the book are written in a narrative or lyrical style.

Following Farzana's introduction and remarks, the Chairperson called upon the poet's publisher Kelsey Attard of the Freehand Books to give her remarks on the book. Attard mentioned how Farzana's poems are powerful in their content and narration at the same time revealing the author's vulnerability. The poems talk about embracing life and love with all its complications. Attard mentioned how the poetry resonated with its readers and they were happy to publish the book.

After the Publisher's address, Professor Sridhar thanked her and introduced Dr. Sachin Labade, Honorary Coordinator, ICSC, who interviewed Farzana Doctor about the book.



Dr. Sachin Labade, Honorary Coordinator, ICSC

Dr. Labade in his opening remarks said how he finds poetry interesting and spoke about his own attempts at writing it. He then asked Farzana how she felt when the book became a reality. Farzana mentioned how she was nervous at first since this is her first poetry collection and spoke about the technical and emotional process of writing and publishing a book especially the one that has been inspired by her own experiences and life. Dr. Labade spoke about how the book's reviews have been encouraging and how the book had relatability with the readers. He referred specifically to the title and mentioned how it offers relief to its readers as one is constantly being othered on the basis of caste, class, religion, gender and race. Farzana agreed and said how the title resonated with her and how she perceives things. She gave an example of a long lost friend from childhood and how they had connected as adults to make her point. The poem titled the same as the book was drawn from this experience. Referring to their association in the past, Dr. Labade said he knew Farzana not just as an author but also as a psychotherapist and a social activist. Taking the cue from there, he asked her whether Farzana the psychotherapist and social activist in any way conflicted with Farzana the poet. She answered by saying that although people are layered and can have several identities, knowing her vocation and career, she structures her day such that she is able to devote time to

doing a particular task – as a poet or a therapist with along with activism as and when she is able to. However, she said it is all these things that make her what she is.

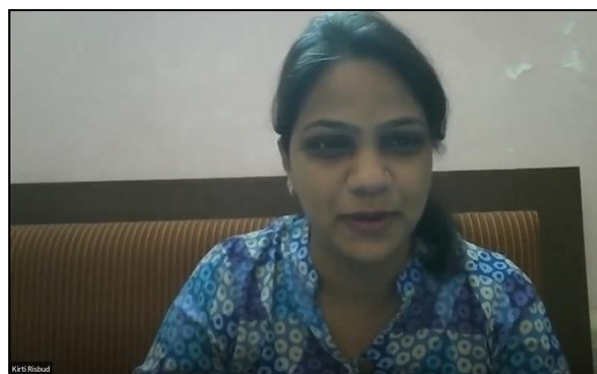
Dr. Labade said he was intrigued by how although Farzana deals with serious issues in her poetry, her tone is light hearted. He asked her how she managed to effortlessly combine these two. Farzana responded by saying that this is something that she had always tried to do from the first book that she wrote as she likes humour to present serious issues. She mentioned how she was influenced by the authors she read and who followed this style. Dr. Labade remarked how difficult it is to in fact deal with serious issues in a light hearted tone without losing its essence.

Moving to the form employed by Farzana, Dr. Labade wanted to know from the poet whether she had difficulty choosing the form when she wrote the poems as they do not follow a particular form. She said she faced constraints when she had to write haikus and also during the editing of the poems as they are written in a free form. Since the poems draw from her life experiences, she wanted to be sure that she had not infringed on anyone's privacy.

Dr. Labade remarked on the variety of subjects that Farzana had tackled in her debut poetry collection. He then requested Farzana to read any poem/s of her choice and she read 'Fall Back' which she mentioned was also one of her favourites. Dr. Labade thanked her for reading the poem and mentioned how due to lack of time he had to wrap up the discussion. He then handed over the session to the Chairperson Professor Sridhar Rajeswaran. Professor Sridhar mentioned how it was riveting to hear a poet talk about her work and mentioned how Farzana's work is interesting in multiple ways. He then opened the question and answer session.

Following the Q & A session, Professor Sridhar gave his concluding remarks about the book. He alluded to W B Yeats and other authors and quoted from their works to describe Farzana's book. He commented on how the language used in her poetry is contemporary while the content reflects the shared concerns of our times. He said he had arrived at his conclusions after merely reading Farzana's poetry, while a deeper study would reveal different facets of the personal and the political in her poetry. He concluded by saying how the poems are sensitive and simple and how the book is a must read for all.

The launch ended with the vote of thanks offered by Ms. Kirti Risbud, Research Associate, MMIAS.



Ms. Kirti Risbud, Research Associate, MMIAS

To view the complete event, visit the link given below:
[Book Launch of Farzana Doctor's *You Still Look the Same*](#)
