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# Three Women Caught in a Web of Global Events

**In her book *It Happened Like This*, Suraksha Giri interweaves the personal lives of three individuals with incidents of national importance that occurred between 1940 and 1980**

by Naveena Vijayan

**D**ecades after she passed out of school in Ooty, Suraksha Giri goes back to the serenity of the place through her book *It Happened Like this*. She uses the dewy backdrop for narrating a story about three women, from different familial and geographical backgrounds, who end up meeting each other in Ooty.

One of the protagonists in the story is a widow, who, mauled by fate and time, is unable to get herself to remarry. Another is a mother of two, who is tired of her whimsical husband and decides to go on a vacation along with her children to find some peace. Yet another is Sister Margaret, an Irish woman who is deputed in Ooty to do social service. Margaret, according to Suraksha, is an amalgamation of all the good that she has seen in the nuns at the school she studied in.

Talking about the characters, Suraksha says that Martha has a very forthright and clear way of moving ahead in life, while the others are entrenched in the cultural, social and family background of their respective religions. "Martha advises them to live joyfully, gives them energy and determination. Whether one is a widow or is struggling in life, one shouldn't be bogged down by the circumstances, she advises them," says Suraksha. The book, thus, is a catalyst for those who need a moral boost.

That apart, *It Happened Like This* goes beyond the contours of the personal lives of the three women and interlinks them with the global events that occurred between 1940 and 1980. "It was the time when countries were shutting off colonial rule all across the globe. Indo-Pakistan war, Bay of Pigs invasion, signing of the



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Panchsheel agreement and Chinese war — all happened around the same period. These had an impact on the lives of people, even those miles away," she says. For example, with war after war, the State announced Food Control, and one couldn't invite more than 200 people for marriages, she explains. "For refreshments, there was just one glass of juice and one samosa," she adds.

Having studied in Ooty for years, she says there might be parts in the narration that are reflections of her own experiences. As far as autobiographical elements are concerned, she

says, "In 1965, during the Anti-Hindi agitation, we had to spend a night at the Thiruvottiyur beach because our bus was set on fire. This incident finds a mention in the book."

While Suraksha finished writing the book in just six months, to type the whole thing out, the not-so-tech-savvy sexagenarian took two years. She says, though many might think that bringing out a debut novel at this age is highly ambitious, for her it was an outpour of ideas without bothering about what others might think.

The book will be launched at Amdavadi, T Nagar, at 6 pm.