

# Penning her thoughts

Laxmi Tendulkar Dhaul has varied interests and that is why she has written books on different subjects



Empowering children through participation holds the key to a better tomorrow, says Dhaul. **REKHA WADKAR**

**Rajwari Tankha**  
resides@rediffmail.com

In her latest book, *In the Shadow of Freedom*, Chankyapuri resident Laxmi Tendulkar Dhaul focuses on the lives of her parents, AG Tendulkar and Indumati Gunaji, and their relationship with German filmmaker Thea von Harbou.

Dhaul's father travelled to Germany in the early 1930s where he met and fell in love with a German woman, Thea von Harbou, who took him and many other students from India under her wings. Later, as Hitler ascended to power, Tendulkar had to return to India.

Back in India he got involved in the freedom struggle responding to Mahatma Gandhi's calls for non-cooperation, and married a Gandhian activist, Indumati Gunaji.

Incidentally Dhaul began writing this book after her mother passed away in 2008. It was as if some unknown forces were compelling her to write this story.

"Actually, it was my mother who wanted to write this story. She couldn't but the several handwritten notes, which she left, came in quite handy while

I wrote this book," says Dhaul. The book was launched at the Jigar Lekany Fest in Jaipur this year and got rave reviews.

This is not the only book Dhaul has authored. She has some more to her credit. Two of her books are on sufisaints, *The Sufi Saint of Ajmer* and *The Dargah of Nizamuddin Auliya*.

"I had gone to Ajmer with my children. The premises of the dargah and the rituals that are followed here so fascinated me that I decided to bring out a book on it," she says.

The other two are *Chimi's Dreamworld*, a children's book on environment, and a cookbook, *Guide to Gentleman Chef* that she co-authored with her friend, Gostanaji Khanna.

An alumna of Seth GS Medical College, Mumbai, Dhaul got married soon after completing her M.Sc., and shifted to Belgium.

There she got involved with her husband's business.

Her writing career started as her children grew up. She wrote her first article on flash cards in 1987 for *Eve's Weekly*, a popular magazine those days. She went on to write a series of articles thereafter for several magazines. "Most of my articles have

## FACT FILE

- Dhaul keeps shuttling between Mumbai, Delhi and Belgium, though it is Belgium that is closest to her heart.
- She loves reading, writing and travelling, though not necessarily in that order. "Reading memoirs is something that I like the best," she says.
- She wants the young to read books on religious stories so that they know the history, religion, mythology and everything about it.

been human interest stories," she says. Though relieved that she has finally completed her mother's book (it took her over six years), she is not resting.

These days she is working on a book on the 12 Jyotirlingas. "I am fascinated by temples and religious rituals," she says, quickly adding that she herself is not ritualistic but spiritual.

Dhaul has varied interests, which explains her books on varied subjects. But teaching children about the importance of maintaining ecological balance tops her list. Perhaps that's why she set up her own animation studio three years back, through which she works on her favourite subject, education for sustainable development.

Her latest initiative, *Chimi's World*, an animation film, is the story of a young adolescent boy Chimi's protest against man's treatment of environment.

"Empowering children through participation holds the key to a better tomorrow. Educating young impressionable minds who eventually shall inherit the world will go a long way towards increasing awareness about environment. Children must be made to believe that each of them can make a difference and that every child's actions count or add up," she says.

"Our education system is like a factory churning out graduates year after year. It is not making them thinking individuals," she adds, a little sad.

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PAJ KRAJ/HT PHOTO

Rajkumari Tankha

[nankha@hindustantimes.com](mailto:nankha@hindustantimes.com)

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Back in India he got involved in the freedom movement.

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## FACT FILE

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