



National Seminar on Translation as Retelling

As part of its annual festival of letters, Sahitya Akademi organized a daylong seminar on 'Translation as Retelling' at Rabindra Bhavan Lawns in New Delhi on 26 February, 2017. Many eminent translators and scholars from across the country participated in the seminar. The focus of the Seminar was on the Indian tradition of retelling epics and classics in different tongues as opposed to the western practice of 'translation'.

In the inaugural session of the seminar, Dr K. Sreenivasarao, Secretary, Sahitya Akademi, welcomed the participants and audience and spoke about how translation lies at the core of Akademi's activities and why Sahitya Akademi publishes a large number of translations, organizes translation workshops and seminars, symposia and literary forums on translation across the country. He also talked about the tradition of *anuvad*



as retelling in regional languages and how it is different from the conventional western notion of translation. In his Presidential address, Dr Vishwanath Prasad Tiwari, President, Sahitya Akademi, stated that India's translation tradition predates that of Europe with Ramkatha and Mahabharata being told and retold in almost all the languages of the country. With varied interpretations and ways of retelling with different connotations such as Tika, Bhashya, Vritti etc., the Indian understanding of translation is far superior to that of others and translation is an original work and a re-creation in another language. In his inaugural address, eminent Gujarati scholar Prof Sitanshu Yashaschandra elaborated on the Indian practice of *anuvad* as *punar kathan* and stated that good translations as retelling withstand the test of time and leave lasting impression on the minds. In his keynote address, Prof Sumanyu Satpathy, eminent English scholar, talked about how retelling as a practice with liberty has made the epics and classics relevant through times and in diverse cultures and languages. He said that translators were re-creators and cited the example of Sarala Dasa and others and stated that this practice has become invisible today. Dr Chandrashekhar Kambar, Vice President, Sahitya Akademi, provided the concluding remarks.

In the first session chaired by Ms. Mini Krishnan, two eminent translators, Sri Chandrakant Patil and Dr J.L. Reddy, presented their papers. Initiating the session, Ms. Mini Krishnan said we are forgetting to translate the writers of 40's, 50's and 60's and Indian languages are vanishing from schools. Sri Chandrakant Patil presented a paper 'Translation as Retelling in Bhakti Movement: Marathi Perspective' and spoke about *anuvad* having different connotations in the medieval period. He observed that whenever the mainstream literature suffers from staleness and become lifeless, it turns toward the vast treasure of medieval literature and folk-literature searching its roots and



cultural identity for revitalization. Concluding his paper he said, “The Hindi translation of selected hundred *abhangas* of Tukaram by Chandrakanat Devtale is a remarkable attempt to retelling. It is significant that the retelling of medieval Bhakti literature has played such an important role even in modern times.” Dr J.L. Reddy presented a paper ‘Anuvad Punarkathan Ke Rup Mein’ and delivered an analytical representation of different translations and retellings of Ramayana in the context of Telugu language and stated that it is our tradition to produce new definitions of Indian Folklore and Indian myths. He observed that nowadays a translator not only translates a story or ideas but also he translates it keeping in mind each “word”. As a result, his translation is quite close to the original. But in the ancient times a translator/writer instead of translating or retelling any story or idea word by word, used to take liberty according to the taste of his country/region and principle. Concluding his paper he said “Without referring to Tulsidasa’s Ramcharitmanas this debate on translation in the form of retellings cannot be complete. There are a number of sources available in connection with Ramcharitmanas by Tulsidasa. So the question arises which are the sources which have important role in the collection of Ramcharitmanas by Tulsidasa. The fact is that Tulsidasa does not detain himself with a particular source.

In the second session chaired by Dr. Blanka Knotkova, eminent Indologist and expert in Bengali culture and literature, three eminent translators, Sri Ramshankar Dwivedi, Dr Rana Nayar and Dr Rakshanda Jalil, presented their papers. Initiating the session, Dr Blanka Knotkova spoke about translation tradition of Czech Republic, her acquaintance with Bengali language and Indian translation tradition. Sri Ramshankar Dwivedi presented a paper ‘Anuvad: Etihay, Parampara aur Samasya’ and dwelt on the problems that arise at the time of translation, retranslation or telling or retelling of a particular text into other languages, because of the lack of good dictionaries in those languages. He also gave an example of Sri Sushil Kumar De who has a collection of more than 10 thousand proverbs in Bengali, but their translations into Hindi are not available. Concluding his paper, he suggested two ideas: 1) At the time of writing history of Hindi literature we should also simultaneously write the history of Hindi translation; 2) Every editor, publisher wants translation, every writer wishes that his writings should be translated into other languages particularly in Hindi, but we do not have any Who’s who of Hindi translators. Dr Rana Nayar presented a paper ‘Translation as Kayakalpa: An Indian Perspective’ and said that in the process of translation, a new kind of language is created, which may largely be seen as a mutated form of the ‘target language; but has strong, ineffaceable traces of the ‘source language’ stamped on it... The most important aspect of Kayakalpa that has a definite bearing on the notion of translation is that through this process, a ‘translated text’ suddenly begins to exist in two separate time-zones, one within which it was originally created in the ‘source culture’, and the other in which it is sought to be translated in the ‘target culture’... Concluding his paper he appealed to the present audience “If I have managed to pose a few relevant questions and provide some tentative solutions to the practicing translators, I’d say, this exercise has not been a total waste.” Dr. Rakshanda Jalil presented a paper ‘From Text to Context: A Personal Journey’ and narrated her journey as a translator and said “One is often asked: what is the parameter of a good translation? My answer is: first and foremost, it should be readable; the translation should read as a stand alone text that draws the reader with the power of its writing. One should bear in mind that translations are seldom done for fellow translators; they are meant for the general reading public who may know nothing about the text that ‘speaks’ to you and is so compelling for you.” Concluding her paper, she appealed, “There has to be a clear vision document for a National Translation Policy which is not merely just and fair to all languages but is seen to be so. For this to happen, culture should not be interpreted in a narrow way according to the diktats of whichever government is in power.”





National Seminar on Folklore: Tellings and Retellings (contd.)



The National Seminar on Folklore: Tellings and Retellings continued for the third day. In the seventh session devoted to 'Folklore: Multilingual Perspectives' and chaired by Prof Bhalachandra Nemade, three eminent scholars, Dr. Anil Boro, Dr. Kashinath V. Barhate and Prof. Pradip Jyoti Mahanta, presented their papers. Dr. Anil Boro said that "folklore plays a most significant role in the multilingual society of Northeast India. In the tradition-oriented society that we are living today, we are surrounded by folklore- be it oral song or oral tale or the rites and rituals. Even our lives in the urban setting may not be completely divorced from these. As time changes, contexts of folklore may change, but the appeal remains the same as folklore is the pulse of the people." Dr. Kashinath V. Barhate began his paper saying that the special feature of Indian culture lies in multilingualism and different cultures. He focused his paper on 'Korku; sub-tribe

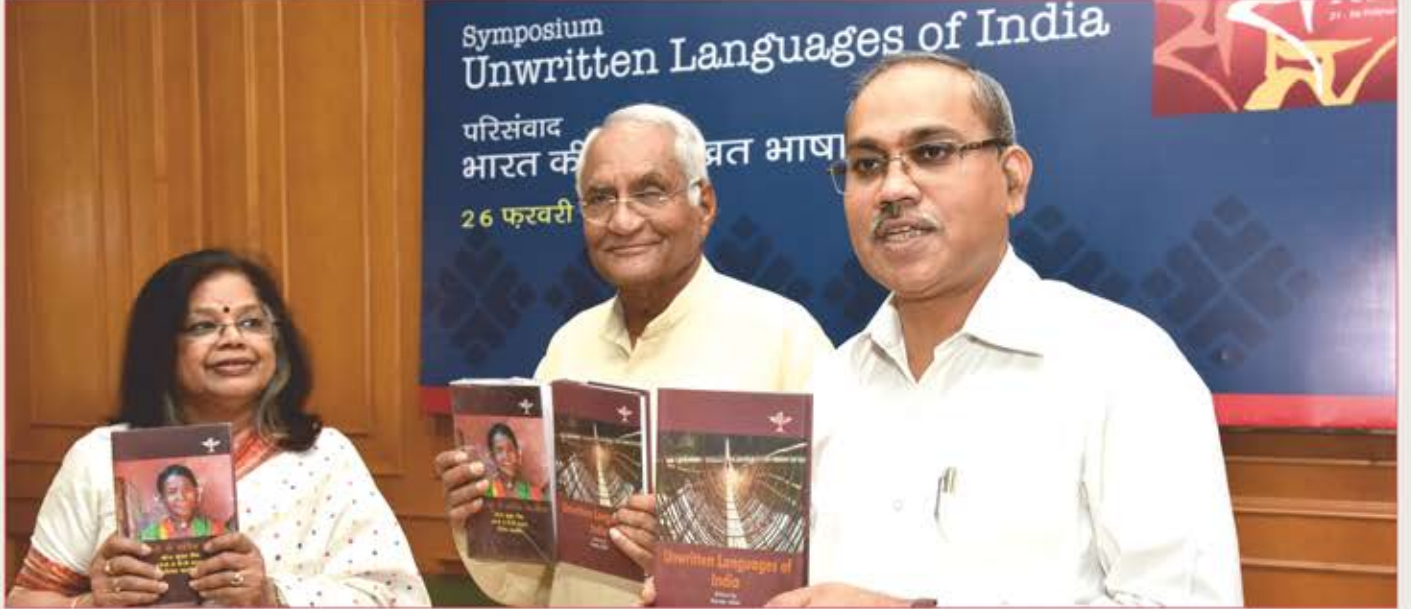
and Korku language and discussed in detail its history, the areas where these people live in different parts of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar. Dr. Pradip Jyoti Mahanta's paper dwelt upon a distinctive tradition, a sacred and ritual performance in nature, spirit and content, ritually held in large congregations in Sattras, the Vaisnava monasteries of Assam. He talked about the Guru-lore or sacred life stories of religious saints, often viewed as religious texts oral or written, meant to propagate and popularize teachings and ideals of religious saints passed through oral transmission or recorded in writing, are more or less a common practice in all religious denominations.

In the eighth session devoted to 'Folklore Narrative' and chaired by Dr Pradip Jyoti Mahanta, three noted scholars, Sri Ramendra Kumar, Dr. Barun Chakraborty and Dr. Surjeet Singh, presented their papers. Sri Ramendra Kumar discussed in his paper the interaction between folk tales and mythology and the paradigm where the influencer and the influenced get so inextricably entwined that it is difficult to separate one from the other. He took the folktales of Odisha and Panchatantra along with the mythology associated with Jagannath Consciousness and Ramayana to reiterate his thesis that the dynamic blending of these two forms of storytelling is essential to create a literature which is endearing, enduring and eternal. Dr. Barun Chakraborty said that the folktales are the most attractive specimen of folk literature. It easily arrests the attention of the listeners both young and elderly persons. The main reasons lie in its story element. Folktales can never be regarded as an important medium of entertainment only. Rather it plays a very vital role in educating the commoners especially morality. Dr. Surjeet Singh said through his paper that disciplinary boundaries to blur, tradition, a key to historical knowledge is to be understood as a process of cultural construction.

In the ninth session devoted to 'Folklore and Culture' and chaired by Prof H.S. Shivaprakash, two noted scholars, Dr Seema Sharma and Prof Aparajita Shukla, presented their papers. Dr. Seema Sharma presented her paper on 'Folklore Through Popular Media – The Representation of the 'Subaltern''. Her paper examined what aspects of folkloric cultures and stories get highlighted, and conversely, what aspects get marginalized in retelling through popular media. Ms. Aparajita Shukla in her paper on 'Jagar of the Hills: A Musical Rendition of Culture and Society' said that the folk religion of Uttarakhand that envelops the religious dimensions of its folk culture also includes social causes, concerns and a rich culture and also foregrounds a shared ideology between its two geographically demarcated regions of Garhwal and Kumaon.



Symposium on Unwritten Languages of India



Sahitya Akademi organized a day-long symposium on 'Unwritten Languages of India' at the Akademi Conference Hall in New Delhi on 26 February, 2017. Dr. Devendra Kumar Devesh, Officer on Special Duty, Sahitya Akademi, welcomed the participants and audience and spoke briefly about the various initiatives of Sahitya Akademi to preserve and promote unwritten languages of the country. In the inaugural session, Dr. Avdhesh Kumar Mishra discussed the North-East languages of India. He expressed his concerns that North-Eastern languages are being written or scripted in the different languages of India. The dialects of different regions subscribe to the major language usage of the region. But most of the languages of North-Eastern regions have been adopted by the different ways of Roman script. Dr. Avadhesh Kumar Singh of Indira Gandhi International Open University, in his paper said that oral literature is more important than written literature. Prof. Purushottam Bilmale and Dr. Shalendra Mohan presented their papers with reference to Tulu and Nihali languages and discussed the specialty of these languages with the audience. Prof. Anvita Abbi concluding the session said that India is a language-rich country and it is for us to preserve our oral literature as well our traditions.

On this occasion Dr. Vishwanath Prasad Tiwari, President, Sahitya Akademi, released *Unwritten Languages of India* edited by Anvita Abbi and *Kalahandi Ke Vachik Mahakavya* by Mahendra Kuamr Mishra and translated from English to Hindi by Dinesh Malviya, published by Sahitya Akademi. He further said that there was a time when only oral literature was important, but in today's context written literature is more important.

In the second session devoted to 'Issues and Perspectives in Unwritten Languages' and chaired by Prof. Sukrita Paul Kumar, three noted scholars, Prof. Anand Mahanand, Prof. Bhaktavatsala Bharathi and Prof. C. Maheswaran presented their papers. Prof. Mahand in his power-point presentation introduced the audience with the rich tribal

traditions and their annual festivals. Papers presented by Prof. Bharati and Prof. Maheswaran were devoted to Toda and Alu Kunuwa schedule tribes situated in the heart of Nilgiri hills. The third session was a panel discussion on Survival of Unwritten Languages chaired by Awdesh Kumar Singh. The discussants were Ayesha Kidwai, Kirti Jain, Joseph Bara, Vasamalli and Karthick Narayanan.



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