



SA/37/PR/2018

30.7.2018

PRESS RELEASE

Southern Tribal Writers' Meet
27 July 2018, Chennai

Sahitya Akademi, in collaboration with the School of Tamil and Cultural Studies, Tamil Nadu Open University, organized a two day Southern Tribal Writers' Meet at the University premises in Chennai on 27-28 July 2018.

In the inaugural session on 27 July 2018, Dr K. Sreenivasrao, Secretary, Sahitya Akademi, welcomed the participants and audience and spoke briefly about the necessity to preserve and propagate tribal culture and literature since they are pioneers of all literature that followed later. He also highlighted the initiatives of the Akademi to promote tribal literature in India. In his keynote address, Dr M.D. Muthukumaraswamy talked about the culture of and the reasons behind decline of indigenous communities of the country and highlighted the role of dominant castes working relentlessly to eradicate indigenous inhabitants of the country. He cited a number of examples for this from this history of the country spanning two millennia. Dr Muthukumaraswamy spoke about the importance, relevance and diverse nature of tribal societies and provided detailed analysis of several communities. In his Presidential address, Dr Sirpi Balasubramaniam lauded Akademi's initiatives in preservation and promotion of tribal literature across the country. He also said preservation is important for loss of a tribal literature would not merely mean a loss of literature but a loss of culture and important and vital information about the past. He also highlighted how the tribal literature of the country echo the celebrated literary masterpieces of the country and that explains tribal literature contains within it hidden gems and hoped Sahitya Akademi will intensify its efforts in preserving and promoting tribal literature of the country. Dr S. Balasubramanian, Director, Research, TNOU, proposed a vote of thanks.

In the first session, Dr Carlos provided a panoramic view of South Indian tribal literature in 21st century. He also delved into what constitutes tribal and oral literature and also threw a question whether only those literatures written or composed by tribal people would constitute tribal literature. He also talked about different types of tribal literature such as tribal creative literature which is essentially written and traditional tribal literature which is orally transmitted etc. Sri Mallipuram Jagadeesh presented a paper capturing the changing reality as reflected in the 21st century Telugu tribal literature, especially Telugu tribal creative literature. He observed that changing reality is always reflected in literature and Telugu tribal literature including creative literature cannot be an exception. Dr Gona Naik focused on the contemporary tribal songs in his paper and highlighted the diversity and plurality of tribal songs of Andhra and Odisha.

In the second session chaired by Prof Madegowda, who observed that in the name of development not only the forests are destroyed and tribal societies are displaced, the tribal culture is also being threatened and many practices are on the verge of extinction. Sri Dhananjayan focused on the Tamil and North Eastern tribal societies and highlighted the fast vanishing folk art forms such as folktales and folksongs. Prof Prasanna Shree, in her paper entitled, Tears that Tell Tales, talked about the aspects which do not meet the eyes often especially when it comes to the impact of globalization. Her paper also focused on the plight and deep marginalization of tribal women writers due to the impact of globalization. Sri Syamjit, in his paper focused on the displacement, vanishing indigenous practices and disappearing art forms in the face of rampant globalization and also highlighted grave threat faced by tribal languages. Prof Chellaperumal, in his paper 'From Orature to Tribal Literature: Impact of Globalization on South Indian Tribal Literature' talked about the distinction between oral tradition and written traditions within Tribal literature and how both the traditions are impacted drastically due to globalization. Sri Maheswaran talked about specific tribal groups and highlighted how they changed due to the impact of globalization. The first day of the meet ended with a vote of thanks by Dr S. Rajmohan, Deputy Secretary, Sahitya Akademi, who coordinated all the sessions.

Sd/-
(K.Sreenivasarao)



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The Southern Tribal Writers' Meet organized jointly by the Sahitya Akademi and the School of Tamil and Cultural Studies, Tamil Nadu Open University, continued for the second day at the university premises in Chennai on July 28, 2018. In the third session devoted to Southern Tribal Poetry Reading and chaired by Ms. Indu Menon, five well-known tribal poets, K. Vasamalli, T. Vijayalakshmi, Kudiya Muthappa, R. Govindaraj and Surya Dhananjay, recited their compositions. Ms. Vasamalli recited Toda songs about buffalo and the art of creation. Dr T. Vijayalakshmi recited Iruvalar songs ranging from the welcoming the new year to celebrating the birth of young one to wailing on the passing away of dear one to time pass songs. Sri Kudiya Muthappa recited Kudiya songs on birth of girl child, the protection given by elephants for tribal communities and on Nature. Prof Surya Dhananjay recited a Bhanjara song on the history of Bhanjara. Sri Govindarajan recited Malayali tribal community songs on the new year on Javvadu hills, sowing of seeds and other activities of Malayali tribal communities residing on western hill range. In the fourth session devoted to the Art of Storytelling and Tribal Tales and chaired by Sri Sa Kandasamy, four well-known tribal scholars, S. Balamurugan, Sindhu Krishnadas, Appala Naidu and Vaigai Selvi, presented their papers. Sri Sa Kandasamy stated that people all over the world have lots of things to learn from tribal communities. It is time right status and recognition accorded to tribal languages and literature all over the country since it is tribal people are the ones who keep alive the cultural, linguistic and literary traditions of the country. In his paper, Sri S. Balamurugan stated that tribal stories are of non-linear narrative by nature and this has to be understood by all otherwise only misunderstanding regarding tribal storytelling. Sri Appala Naidu, in his paper stated that tribal tale telling is the ancient way of telling stories and this method of tribal storytelling is still intact though many tribal people have adopted modern way of living. He also observed that stories are carriers of culture. Smt. Sindhu Krishnadas stated that tribal storytelling is personalized in tribal societies and often they get rooted in the present times rather than the past. Prof Vaigai Selvi traced the tribal storytelling to remote past and stated that the commonalities between tribal stories and stories in mainstream languages betray the commonality of human aspiration. In the final session devoted to Panel Discussion on Translating Tribal Literature and moderated by Sri Maalan, three well-known scholars, Sri Sa Kandasamy, Sri Sakti Sivaramakrishna and Sri Ashok Marayoor, participated in the discussion. In his introductory remarks, Sri Maalan talked about the very nature of tribal literature composed in tribal languages and the necessity for translating tribal literature. Sri Sakti Sivaramakrishna observed that for efficient translation of tribal literature into other languages, the translators and writers should equip with overall knowledge tribal systems. Sri Ashok Marayoor talked about his translation efforts in this direction. Sri Sa Kandasamy talked about the challenges and possible solutions would emanate only from secure knowledge of tribal culture. A brief interactive session followed the discussion. Dr S. Rajmohan, Deputy Secretary, Sahitya Akademi, who coordinated all the sessions, proposed a vote of thanks.

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(K. Sreenivasarao)