

festival of letters

CELEBRATING

60
YEARS

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Face to Face

Festival of Letters 2015 continued for the third day at Rabindra Bhawan complex on March 11, 2015. Day three started with the second edition of the Face to Face programme in which five Award winning writers were in conversation with eminent scholars of their language.

Pradeep Acharya in his opening conversation with Arupa Kalita viewed the Face-to-Face sessions as an endeavor to celebrate the award winning authors. Kalita, as an academic and a creative writer, started by speaking about the balance and sustenance between the two. As she asked about her novels, especially her award winning novel, she spoke of the forces that drive her to write. The political questions that have plagued Assam for over a century and the unsung heroes of these struggles, especially the women form some of the central questions of her works. She further talked about the need to use oral literature in her works. She worked for several years just to find a way to narrate the story of an illiterate Bodo woman and

place her in her own milieu. The session concluded by Kalita's expounding of the role of women in her works as central characters.

The second Face-to-Face session saw eminent Hindi writer Ramesh Chandra Shah in conversation with Prayag Shukla. The two have been close associates at professional as well as private fronts, and that repartee was carried to the fore in this dialogue. They started the dialogue with Shah's foray into such varied genres and the art of story-telling through them. He talked about his childhood, the formative years which had a lasting impression on him – the uncondusive environment for proper formal education, the classical music, the house right in the middle of the market place. All his understanding of human characters stemming from those years. Shah talked of his profession as a teacher, as an enabling force which allowed him time to write. He also expounded on his meeting with writers from Allahabad in his young days, when they treated him on equal





footing. He ended this dialogue by talking about his experiments and success in children's writings and his tussle with the self over his autobiography.

The third Face-to-Face saw famous astrophysicist and eminent writer Jayant Narlikar in conversation with Vilas Kolhe. Since Narlikar had won the award for his autobiography, the dialogue in the session too addressed some of those personal concerns. Narlikar started by stating his surprise at receiving the award. The entire session focused on the tussle between the scientific thought and the religious spirit. And as he was asked if he believed in God, Narlikar stated that as a scientist one realizes that the more you find, the lesser you know. He tried to make the scientific the part of his lived reality and the message he sent out to the audience sitting in rapt attention. At being asked what the inspiration for his writing the autobiography was, he stated that he just wanted to write to satisfy himself as a person.

Punjabi writer Jaswinder in his Face-to-Face with Dr Vanita spoke of his childhood, difficult circumstances and the impression they left on him. He was born in a backward village of Bathinda, and he somehow managed to get a degree in engineering. And it was while he was studying in college, there was a movement of 'navikavita' in Punjabi which influenced an entire generation. Ghazal became his preferred mode of poetry as it was highly appreciated by his audiences. Even

though the form has Arabic and Persian roots, his poetry is deeply rooted in his context. Jaswinder further spoke of the extremely kind reception he had received from his audiences, but receiving the Sahitya Akademi award was a true inspiration and a stepping stone for writing more and more. The poets in conversation concluded the session by discussing the state of various interactions between the 24 recognized Indian languages and the cultural assimilation all around us.

Telugu critic Rachaplem Chandrasekhara Reddy was engaged in a dialogue with scholar J L Reddy. Rachaplem Reddy described his journey from a small agricultural village in Andhra Pradesh to being the winner of Sahitya Akademi Award. His father was a farmer and had had no education. Reddy worked in the fields every day and yet managed to travel 30-40 km for his education. He expounded on his role as a critic and the role of the critic in society. He states that being a good critic is more difficult than being a good poet. He further stated that a good critic is essential for production of good literature. For him, subscribing to a certain ideology is the main tenet of a good critic and integrity of character. As part of his critical exposition, he states that exposing the problem is only half the job done, the critic also needs to provide a solution for the problem raised. To conclude, he said that the critics need to reevaluate the literature to be studied every 20-30 years.





Yuva Sahiti : Young writers' meet

In the inaugural session of the meet, Dr K. Sreenivasarao, Secretary, SahityaAkademi, welcomed Dr Vishwanath Prasad Tiwari, President, Sahitya Akademi, Prof Giriraj Kishore, eminent Hindi writer and scholar, Smt. ChitraMudgal, distinguished Hindi writer, Dr Chandrasekhar Kambar, Vice President, SahityaAkademi, chairs of various session, writers and poets and audience. He talked about the value of youth and youth writings and listed the various schemes and projects and publications of the Akademi catering to the youth of India.

In his inaugural address Prof Giriraj Kishore, who has more than 40 titles to his credit and has been decorated with many prestigious awards in his long and illustrious career, talked about the value of youth writings for a country. He appealed to young writers not to be merely selfish but work hard for higher ideals and the nation, for the benefit of many is the real benefit. He recalled the role of and ideals with which the founding fathers established the Akademi 60 years ago and felt that not only the institution but writers also should play a bigger role in keeping alive the spirit. He appealed to the President of Sahitya Akademi to create and operate a TV channel given that almost all the electronic media in all the languages of India have neglected literature and it is the duty of Sahitya Akademi, being India's premiere institution of Letters. He lamented the decline in the standards of literature across the country and observed that Sahitya

Akademi should put in more effort to improve the situation.

In his Presidential address, Dr Vishwanath Prasad Tiwari talked about the value of writers' meets and it is the wonderful opportunity for young writers that Akademi has given a platform for them to interact with and learn from each other. He echoed Dr Sreenivasarao's statement that youth is the best time for developing and expressing creative skills and also that more often than not and all over the world young writers produce best writings though exceptions are there.

Smt. Chitra Mudgal, who has around 40 titles to her credit besides having edited 7 titles and the first woman writer to receive Vyas Samman, in her speech talked about the role and relevance of literature in today's world and observed that decoding this is the biggest challenge in front of all young writers of the country today. She highlighted that literature belongs to people and should always reflect the thoughts and lives of the people. Smt. Mudgal felt that India has always been the land of literature and the linguistic diversity has also helped in this regard. She said India is the land of *Godan*, the land of *Deshatinte Katha*, the land of *Silapathikaram* and all such epics in different languages. Young and aspiring writers should have this perspective.

Dr Chandrasekhar Kambar, in his concluding remarks said that choosing wrong priorities has





resulted in humanity being nothing more than a bundle of contradictions and chaos. He appealed to the youth not to ape the western methods since India has much better methods emanating from multi-ethnic, multilingual and multi-cultural societies embedded in one country. Young writers should imbibe the spirit of the great souls of the past and continue to blossom.

In the first session that was devoted to poetry reading and chaired by Dr Manager Pandey, seven young poets, Ranjit Gogoi (Assamese), Anil Chavda (Gujarati), V. R. Carpentar (Kannada), Praveen Kashyap (Maithili), Wangthoi Khuman (Manipuri), Tika Bhai (Nepali) and Narendra Kumar Bhoi (Odia) recited their poems. All the poems focused on the modern themes but the poets drew heavily from the ancient lore and mythology and presented the poems in new styles. All the poems were first recited in the original language and then in English / Hindi translation.

In the second session that was devoted to short story reading and chaired by Abdul Bismillah, two young

fiction writers, Indu Menon (Malayalam) and Vishal Kandeparkar (Konkani), read out their stories, focusing on the angst of an eunuch and travails of everyday existence, respectively. Sri Abdul Bismillah summed up the stories and presented a critical appreciation. He also read out one of his stories.

In the final session of the day devoted to poetry reading and was chaired by Vishnu Nagar, eleven young poets, Pranjal Dhar (Hindi), Sagar Nazeer (Kashmiri), Ravi Korde (Marathi), Gagandeep Sharma (Punjabi), Kumar Ajay (Rajasthani), Anpa Marandi (Santali), Rajkumar Mishra (Sanskrit), Anita Dayal Tejwani (Sindhi), Uma Devi (Tamil), Manthri Krishna Mohan (Telugu) and Wasif Yaar (Urdu), recited their poems.

This programme was coordinated by Sri Brajendra Tripathi, Deputy Secretary, SahityaAkademi.

The day ended with Bharatanatyam classical dance performance by eminent dancer, Ms. Geeta Chandran.



Programmes for March 13, 2015

Purvottari : North East and Northern Writers' Meet, Rabindra Bhavan Lawns : 10.30 a.m.

National Seminar on 'The Region and the Nation in Indian Fiction', Akademi Auditorium, 1st Floor : 11 a.m.

Cultural Programme : Rajasthani Folk Singing, Meghdoot Open Theatre : 6.30 p.m.



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