

festival of letters

9-14 March 2015

Sahitya Akademi NEWS BULLETIN

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Symposium on Unwritten Languages



Festival of Letters 2015 continued for the fourth day at Rabindra Bhawan complex on March 12, 2015. Day four started with the symposium on unwritten languages.

In the inaugural session, Dr K. Sreenivasarao, Secretary, Sahitya Akademi, welcomed Prof Udaya Narayana Singh, distinguished linguist and writer, Prof Anvita Abbi, eminent linguist and academician, Dr Vishwanath Prasad Tiwari, President, Sahitya Akademi, the scholars and linguists who had assembled for the symposium. Dr Sreenivasarao informed everyone that March 12, 2015 marks the 61st birthday of Sahitya Akademi and thanked the entire community for being part of the Akademi's success story. He talked about the challenges of collection and scripting the unwritten languages and detailed Sahitya Akademi's efforts and programmes in this regard.

Dr Vishwanath Prasad Tiwari, in his Presidential address, talked about the evolution of written languages of India and highlighted the importance of unwritten languages. He said Sahitya Akademi will do everything within its limit to preserve and promote oral traditions. He observed that while

writing has taken over the place of word, it also entails the loss of philosophical truth of the spoken word.

Prof Anvita Abbi, who chaired the session, talked about languages families of India. She enumerated the details of language structures and sound forms which contribute in major way to multilingual India. India is not only multilingual but also multi-scriptural. Prof Anvita detailed the reasons for the need to script and catalogue the unwritten languages, preservation being foremost of them and also listed numerous challenges on that front with complications arising from the conflict with the existing scripts. She also talked about various methods of preservation of spoken and unwritten languages.

Prof Udaya Narayana Singh, in his keynote address, said he always enjoyed working with Sahitya Akademi over the past three decades or so. He observed that the first reason for scripting unwritten language is the purpose of recording and the second is to secure the validity which the unwritten / oral languages do not enjoy at present. Prof Udaya Narayana Singh then presented a comparative analysis of writing and painting, highlighting that though writing and the written script evolved from painting, the painting involves





more of spatial awareness while writing requires, spatial awareness and understanding numerous things apart from the context. Prof Singh stressed that evolution of written script from the oral sounds is technical for the writing is a form of technology and writing itself evolved from the extension of picture signs. Prof Singh then proceeded to list reasons / need to evolve script for oral traditions and listed recording, the feeling of groundedness which writing gives and ability of writing to take and import knowledge and information beyond the community using a particular language as some of the reasons to evolve scripts. Prof Singh also highlighted the flipside of the process of evolving scripts and observed that a) unlike a spoken word, writing often hides the emotions and at the same time also has the potential to express unintended b) unlike in the spoken language where narrative of the epic can be modified differently depending on the narrator and context, in the written language it is not possible c) writing world has lead the people of more self-centred in the sense that often knowledge acquisition gets limited to the known written language only. Prof Singh ended his address with a question for the scholars: Will the promotion of unwritten languages with or without scripts lead to new genres and new narrative structures?

In the first session devoted to “Challenges of

scripting the unwritten languages” and chaired by Prof Ayesha Kidwai, four eminent scholars, Prof Umarani Pappuswamy, Prof Kavita Rastogi, Prof Yashwanta Ch Singh and Prof Awadhesh Kumar Mishra, presented their papers, “Issues and Challenges in search of effective orthography for Unwritten Languages of North-East India,” “Challenges of Scripting Raji, an endangered language,” “Least Written Languages of Manipur” and “An overview of Unwritten Languages” respectively. At the commencement of the session, Prof Ayesha Kidwai observed that script lends identity to a language, empowers the speakers to communicate, interact and gain from others outside the community and highlighted that technology has transformed oral into visual and scripting the unwritten languages is a must in the modern world.

In the second session that was devoted to “A World of Myths and Tales” and chaired by Prof. Awadhesh Kumar Mishra, five eminent scholars, Prof B.N. Patnaik, Prof B.R.K. Reddy, Prof Mahendra Mishra, Prof Imtiaz Hasnain, Prof Farooq Ahmad Mir and Prof PradipPrabhu, presented their papers, “Bhabana Bhuta,” “Dravidian Tribal Lore,” “Oral Epics and Literary Traditions in Odisha,” “Vanishing Folk, Receding Myths: A Comparative Study” and “The Logic of Orality and the Substratum of Conviviality” respectively.

This event was coordinated by Dr Devendra Kumar Devesh, OSD, Sahitya Akademi.





National seminar on 'the region and the nation in Indian fiction'



An integral part of Festival of Letters, a three day National Seminar started on March 12, 2015 at the SahityaAkademi auditorium. The theme and concept for this year's seminar was 'The Region and the Nation in Indian Fiction.'

In the inaugural session, Dr K. Sreenivasarao, Secretary, Sahitya Akademi, welcomed Sri Kiran Nagarkar, distinguished bilingual writer and playwright, Prof Neera Chandoke, eminent writer and academician, Dr Vishwanath Prasad Tiwari, President, Sahitya Akademi, Dr Chandrasekhar Kambar, Vice President, Sahitya Akademi, scholars and writers who had assembled to participate in the seminar and spoke about seminars that are being arranged by Sahitya Akademi across the year and throughout India. He also enumerated the concept and theme of the current seminar.

Dr. Vishwanath Prasad Tiwari in his Presidential Address of the seminar said that this seminar is particularly related to the rise of the regional novel in the Bhashas. The 50s saw a rapid rise in such novels in all Indian languages, and in Hindi they came to be known as "Anchalik." These works though concentrated on a particular region often appealed to the national ethos. He added that to take the work from the particular to the universal, from

the regional to the national depended on the writer's uninhabited vision. He elucidated the same by stating how Premchand's *Godan*, though located in Benaras, became the exemplary example of farmer's struggle throughout India. He ended his talk by stressing the need for writer's vision in bridging the gaps.

The inaugural address by Kiran Nagarkar focussed on a different yet central tangent of the seminar. Nagarkar focussed on the conflicts of language within the country. A bilingual writer himself, he stated that he is often asked why did he switch from writing in Marathi to English, and he further understood this question as underlying the question why did he stop writing in Marathi. He talked about the turning point in his life when he moved to Fergusson College, Pune from St. Xavier's Bombay. While in school Marathi and other regional languages were looked at as lesser languages, and seen by students as only a tool to move to the next standard. But his meeting DilipChitre and his contact with the journal 'Abhiruchi' inspired him to write his first short story, and subsequently his first novel. Hence while talking about his precarious position where he only knows two Indian languages, and his love for the English language, he stressed the need to preserve the languages. He located in the loss of a language, the loss of an entire way of life, feeling and thinking.

Neera Chandhoke in her Keynote address spoke of the various paradoxes of being a nation-state in the South Asian context. She located the emergence of nations in response to serious provocations such as colonialism, institutionalised injustice and rampant discrimination, or the need to define the identity of a certain group against another. At the same time there is the construction of the ideology of nationalism. India bears witness to the construction of national boundaries fomenting politics of distrust and nurturing the sentiment of segregation and elimination, often causing immense harm to human beings. Even with the births of nation states



through trails of blood-stained histories, the South Asia is yet to learn its lessons. While distinguishing between the civic and organic nationalism Chandhoke elaborated on the western theorists notions of good and bad nations. She ended her address by asserting the need to see the similarities between differing regions and the need to come together, rather than the deep insistence on ruptures.

Dr Chandrasekhar Kambar proposed a vote of thanks.

In the first session that was devoted to “Region and Fiction in North Indian Fiction” and chaired by Prof Gopi Chand Narang, distinguished Urdu writer and scholar, three noted scholars, Sri Farooq Fayaz, Sri

Nand Bhardwaj and Dr RadhavallabhTripathi presented their papers “Nation and Region in Kashmiri Fiction,” “Katha-Srijan Mein Kshetraaur Rashtraka Pratibimb” and “National and Regional Identities in Modern Sanskrit Fiction” respectively.

In the second session that was devoted to “Region and Nation in Indian English Fiction” and chaired by Prof Alok Bhalla, three eminent scholars, Dr Kavita Sharma, Dr Ipshita Chanda and Dr Sachin Ketkar presented their papers “The Politics of Mahabharata,” “Hum Apke Hain Kaun?: On neither region nor nation in Indian English Fiction” and “Translating Darkness into Light: A Cultural Semiotic Reading of the Nation and the Region in the White Tiger” respectively.

Foundation day lecture

March 12th is the day on which Sahitya Akademi was founded in 1954. As a mark of remembrance and thanksgiving Akademi started inviting eminent scholars and writers to deliver a lecture on that day from 2013. Prof S.L. Bhyrappa delivered the 3rd Foundation Day Lecture on March 12, 2015 after Dr Kapila Vatsayan in 2013 and Justice M.N. Venkatachalaiah in 2014.



Dr K. Sreenivasarao welcomed Prof Bhyrappa and briefly talked about Foundation Day Lecture series and thanked all the staff of the Akademi who has been contributing tirelessly to its development and success.

Delivering his lecture, Prof Bhyrappa gave an overview of the climate that prevailed in India in the past sixty years, especially what creative writers in native languages of India underwent. He presented a neat and detailed analysis of the status of country's intelligentsia from pre-independence to post-independence to economic liberalization perios and how the vocal intelligentsia has not reconciled itself to the inevitable economic change. He explained how aping the false identities by the successive governments and massive mis-governance have percolated down to affect the cultural structures all over the country. He pointed out the mind-set of the young people of 21st century has not fallen from the sky but is the result of the above factors in the past sixty years. He picked the adoption of English as a medium of education ahead of native languages of India especially

Sanskrit, out of those factors for discussion and further enumeration. He lamented that this adoption of false language and identity has seeped deep into villages across India with many a family willing to compromise numerous factors and rushing to give English education to their children. Prof Bhyrappa highlighted how aping an alien tongue affects us right from the conceptualization to expression and observed that Literature written in English by native Indians can never become first rate. He thanked the Akademi for giving this opportunity to talk on its Foundation Day.

Programmes for March 14, 2015

National Seminar on 'The Region and the Nation in Indian Fiction', Akademi Auditorium, 1st Floor : **10a.m.**

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

Cultural Programme : Rajasthan Folk Singing, Meghdoot Complex : **6.30 p.m.**



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