

# festival of letters

9-14 March

2015

## Sahitya Akademi NEWS BULLETIN

Saturday, 14 March 2015

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



Festival of Letters 2015 continued for the fifth day at Rabindra Bhawan complex on March 13, 2015. Day five started with the second day of the three-day seminar on 'The Region and the Nation in Indian Fiction.'

Dr K. Sreenivasarao, Secretary, Sahitya Akademi, welcomed the participants of the first session of the day (third session of the seminar – “The Region and the Nation in South Indian Fiction”) and audience. He spoke briefly about the first day's presentations and highlighted some of the key points made in them. He also introduced the chair of the session, Prof K. Satchidanandan, distinguished bilingual writer, scholar and former Secretary of Sahitya Akademi.

Prof K. Satchidanandan, in his introductory remarks talked about the evolution of the concepts of region and nation in Indian Fiction. In the pre-independence era from the last decades of nineteenth century onwards till the middle of the twentieth century, novel was viewed mainly as a tool for narrating a nation. The independence movement lent enough fuel to this conceptualization. Early Indian novels were nothing more than a reflection or expression of collective angst and craving for freedom. However, novel being a western concept and art form restricted to a great extent multitudinal sensibilities of the Indian psyche. India has always been a multilingual, multicultural and multi-layered society. One Epic, Mahabharata, contained within itself the expression of collective consciousness

as well as regional sensibilities. To a great extent the post-independence regional novel structures are in one way or another going back to the root of that Epic or at least an aspiration towards that. Prof Satchidanandan also observed that regional fiction proliferated in the post-independent India. Histories of the regions and literature show that there are numerous exceptions to be taken care of. He cited two reasons for the proliferation of regional fiction – a) People tend to believe that region is more real and near than a nation and b) More often than not, people's issues take local form. Prof Satchidanandan also threw light on two important perceptions – 1) Various communities and groups such as Dalits, Adivasis, Feminists and trans-sexuals have a strong view point that they do not have any nation as such and 2) Globalization has led to a loss of sovereignty though on paper they remain as canons of political discourse.

Sri M. Mukundan, eminent Malayalam writer, in his paper “Region and Nation in Malayalam Fiction,” observed that nation-building is a perpetual process and all regional writings, especially regional fiction, should be perceived as contributors to the cultural unity of the country and the perpetual nation-building process. In his speech, Sri Mukundan drew attention to the various perceptions of India as a nation – among the people of ancient and medieval India, the perception of English and Moghuls who ruled the country and perceptions of





India as a nation in the post-independence era. He highlighted various aspects of making of the concept of region through a series of examples in Malayalam fiction such as O.V. Vijayan's legendary *Khasakkinte Ithihasam*, Potheri Kunjambu's *Saraswativijayam*, several stories of Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai, P.C. Kuttikrishnan and S.K. Pottekatt. Sri Mukundan differed from the popular perception and noted that the idea of nation existed in Malayalam literature much before the freedom struggle.

Two noted scholars Sri Ampashayya Naveen and Sri A.R. Venkatachalapathy, presented papers, "The Region and the Nation in Telugu Fiction" and "Black is Beautiful: The literature of the black cotton soil (Karisal) region of Tamil Nadu with special reference to the fiction of Cho. Dharman," respectively.

In the fourth session devoted to "The Region and the Nation in North Indian Fiction" and chaired by renowned Marathi writer and scholar and winner of 2015 Jnanpith Award, Prof Bhalachandra Nemade, two noted scholars, Prof Kanji Patel and Prof Rana Nayar presented their papers, "Tribe and Nation in Gujarati Fiction" and "Region and Nation in Punjabi Fiction" respectively. Inaugurating the session, Prof. Nemade said that demarcation of region is polemical and changes constantly and also that in one way or another all writers are regional writers only.

In the fifth session devoted to "The Region and the Nation in West Indian Fiction" and chaired by Prof Sitanshu Yashaschandra, renowned bilingual writer,

three eminent scholars, Prof Damodar Mauzo, Sri Mohan Gehani and Ms. Prachi Gurjarpadhye, presented their papers, "The Region and the Nation in West Indian Fiction," "The Region and the Nation in Indian Fiction: Perspective – Sindhi Fiction" and "The Region and the Nation in Modern Marathi Fiction – Shyamchi Aai, Ranangan, Bahishkrut, Vavthan, Baromas, Brr and Hindu" respectively.

In the sixth session devoted to "The Region and the Nation in North-East Indian Fiction" and chaired by Dr Nirmal Kanti Bhattacharjee, three eminent scholars, Dr Anil Kumar Boro, Prof Th. Ratankumar Singh, Dr M. Asaduddin, presented their papers, "The Region and the Nation in Bodo Fiction: A Critical Appraisal with reference to a few Bodo novels," "The Region and the Nation in Manipuri Fiction" and "Literatures from North-East India: Problems of Definition and Anthologisation" respectively. In his introductory remarks, Dr Nirmal Kanti Bhattacharjee talked about the relationship between the concepts of region and nation. He observed that if the idea of region is more real than that of a nation, then we should explore more about the nature of their relationship, whether it is dialectical or complementary etc. He said there is a phenomenal amount of proliferation of regional fiction in the last three decades and wondered whether this means the death of the novel as a tool to depict or narrate the nation. Dr Asaduddin, in his paper talked at length about various issues and challenges in understanding fiction from North East and observed this itself stems from the challenges in understanding the region of North East. He also talked in detail about various other issues such as naming a cluster of literatures as North East literature when in reality there could be no such thing as North East literature but only individual literatures again marked or identified by a region such as Assamese, Bodo, Manipuri, etc. He also talked about various aspects of anthologizing within a particular classified literature, for example, Manipuri, and observed that each of these clusters have numerous dialects posing difficulties. Dr Anil Kumar Boro observed that Bodo fiction which is not more than five decades old, is highly sub-regional in nature and presents an iconoclastic view of homogenous branding culture.

Ms. Gitanjali Chatterjee, Deputy Secretary, Sahitya Akademi, coordinated this event.





## Purvottari: North-East and Northern Writers' Meet



As part of its commitment to promote and encourage literature from all the North Eastern languages and providing ample opportunities to litterateurs from North East regions to interact with writers from rest of the country, Sahitya Akademi organized a day long “Purvottari: North-East and Northern Writers' Meet' at Rabindra Bhawan Lawns on March 13, 2015.

In the inaugural session, Dr K. Sreenivasarao, Secretary, Sahitya Akademi, welcomed Dr Vishwanath Prasad Tiwari, President Sahitya Akademi, Dr Karabi Deka Hazarika, Convener, Assamese Advisory Board, Sahitya Akademi, who inaugurated the meet, the writers and scholars who had assembled to participate in the meet and other audience. He spoke about the ethnic and linguistic diversity of the North East and the literature contained in their oral traditions. He enumerated various activities, projects and schemes which Sahitya Akademi has launched for the promotion and encouragement of North East literature. He also talked about multilingual meets and the impact they create on the writers, especially young ones and stated that by participating in these meets which are held through the year and across the country, writers from North East are stand to gain a lot.

Dr Vishwanath Prasad Tiwari, in his speech said that in

most of the Sahitya Akademi programmes, Akademi has focussed on the North East literature and most of literary programmes organized by Sahitya Akademi are being held in North East after Delhi. North East is the only place where we find several unwritten languages around the globe and we come to know about all this only through oral literature. He summed up his speech with the recitation of one of his famous poem, “Gunaho Ke Saboot.”

Prof. Karabi Deka Hazarika inaugurated the programme and delivered the inaugural speech. She talked about different aspects of literature. She said that literature is one of the finest ways of self-expression. Literature is a fine task of aesthetic. This is the literature which brings people living in different parts of the country together. According to her “a single poem is itself a tiny book of literature.”

In the first session that was devoted to poetry reading, ten noted poets Bhavani Adhikari (Nepali), K. Joymati Devi (Manipuri), Uday Kumar Sarma (Assamese), Nabin Malla Boro (Bodo), Mithesh Nirmohi (Rajasthani), Udbhrant (Hindi), Pankaj Parashar (Maithili), Jagwinder Jodha (Punjabi), Saroj Kaushal (Sanskrit) and Majid Majaji (Kashmiri) recited their poems.





In the second session that was devoted to short story reading and chaired by Dr Anil Kumar Boro, four noted story writers, Jayant Madhav Bora (Assamese) 'Ravana' (in English Translation), Mayanglambam Kandesh Singh (Manipuri) 'Who is the unknown person' (in English Translation), Bhagwan Das Morwal (Hindi) 'Bas, Tum Na Hote Pitaji' and Bina Biswas (English) 'My Obituary' read out their stories.

In the third session that was devoted to poetry reading

and chaired by Sri Suresh Rituparna, ten noted poets, T. B. Chandra Subba (Nepali), Ranjit Kumar Barua (Assamese), Dinanath Basumatary (Bodo), H. Venubala Devi (Manipuri), Alka Sinha (Hindi), Darshan Singh Buttar (Punjabi), Shyam Besra (Santali), Shaukat Ansari (Kashmiri), Darshan Darshi (Dogri) and Rajesh Reddy (Urdu), recited their poems.

Dr Devendra Kumar Devesh, Officer on Special Duty, Sahitya Akademi, coordinated this event.

### A cultural programme featuring Rajasthani Folk singing by Bundoo Khan Langa and Answar Khan Manganair at Meghdoot Open Theatre



## Programmes for March 14, 2015

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

**Bal Sahiti** : Spin-a-Tale, Rabindra Bhavan Lawns : 10.30 a.m.



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