

festival of letters

9-14 March 2015

Sahitya Akademi NEWS BULLETIN

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

Festival of Letters 2015 continued for the sixth day at Rabindra Bhawan complex on March 14, 2015. Day six started with the third day of the three-day seminar on 'The Region and the Nation in Indian Fiction.' Ms. Renu Mohan Bhan, Deputy Secretary, Sahitya Akademi, who coordinated the day's event, welcomed the participants and audience and spoke briefly about the various activities of the Akademi in promoting different genres of literature and covering all the regions and sections of the country.

In the seventh session devoted to 'Women and Nation in Indian Fiction' and chaired by Dr Rukmini Bhaya Nair, three eminent scholars, Ms. Volga, Dr Leena Chandorkar and Dr Anamika, presented their papers "Lived Realities of Dalits in a Free Nation: Some reflections on the novel *Swarajyam*," "The 'Woman Question' in Gauri Deshpande's Fiction" and "Weaving a nation on a 'Novel' tapestry: The womanist perception of a nation in three recent novels" respectively.

In her inaugural remarks, Dr Rukmini Bhaya Nair, congratulated the Akademi for arranging a session on women and nation and praised its efforts to make women writers more visible across the country. She observed that this triangulation of region, nation and women in literature is not new in the country and traced it back to Rabindranath Tagore's earlier writings. Dr Nair also spoke about the mind and sexuality, the question of otherness in discourse and the place of feminist writings in literature.

Ms Volga, in her speech revolving around the novel *Swarajyam* talked about the congruence between the feudal culture and power of the State in building the nation in the early years of independence and observed that this congruence is strengthened by capitalist, patriarchal, and communal forces to oppress dalits, women, minorities, ethnic and linguistic groups. Dr Leena Chandorkar, in her paper on Gauri Deshpande's feminist novels, talked about the dilemmas of early feminist writers in Marathi fiction world and observed that it is Gauri Deshpande who opened the gates for open discussion on man-woman relationship and acted as a springboard for other writers to address various feminist issues in Marathi fiction. Dr Anamika in her lecture, talked about the challenges and problems faced by the writers while addressing women's issues and talked about the inability of many feminist writers to breach the line of transcendence in Hindi, Urdu and other such language fictions.

In the eighth session of the seminar devoted to "Dalit and Nation in Indian Fiction" and chaired by distinguished Dalit writer and scholar Ms. P. Sivakami, three noted scholars, Ms. Maya Pandit, Ms. Rammika Gupta and Dr Harish Narang, presented their papers "Nation from below: Anna Bhau Sathe and Construction of Nation and Region," "Bharatiya Katha Sahitya Mein Dalit" and "The Idea of Region and Nation in Dalit Literature" respectively. Ms. Sivakami, inaugurating the session, talked about how the early Indian fiction, literary exercises and discourses were





primarily aimed at promoting nationalism and observed that even for some time after independence literature was focusing on nationalism primarily due to state institutions and structures all over the country were designed in such a way as to promote nationalism. Another reason for preference of nationalism over regionalism is that the very idea of extended regionalism is derivative to the concept of nation even though the very idea of nation is built on region. In this kind of scenario Dalits can at best said to be identified with sub-regional rather than regional structures and literature. For, region itself tends to mask caste hierarchies and promote ethnic identities. The biggest gain of Dalit fiction is that it has discredited traditional caste / ethnic identity politics and has put fraternity which will give them equal footing as others. She congratulated Sahitya Akademi for organizing liberal seminars and symposia across the country.

In the ninth session devoted to “The Region and the Nation in East Indian Fiction” and chaired by Prof Indra Nath Choudhuri, three noted scholars, Dr Ram kumar Mukhopadhyay, Dr Udaya Narayana Singh and Sri Mahendra P Lama, presented their papers “The Region and the Nation in Indian Fiction – Bengali,” “Foregrounding Hinterlands – Amiyabhushan's Literary Landscape in Dukhiyar Kuthi” and “The Region and the Nation in Indian Nepali Literature: Connecting threads, instruments and institutions” respectively.

In the tenth and final session devoted to “Critiquing Region, Nation and Indian Fiction” and chaired by Prof Indra Nath Choudhuri, three noted scholars Dr Siraj Ahmed, Dr A.J. Thomas and Dr Avadhesh Kumar Singh presented their papers “Refracting the Region and Nation through Cities: Redefining Indian Fiction in English,” “Life of Migrant Workers in Kerala Reflected in Contemporary Malayalam Short Fiction” and “Against Bonaifaction: 'Region' and 'Nation' as Cognitive Categories and Indian Novel” respectively.

Providing the concluding remarks for the seminar, Dr K. Sreenivasarao thanked all the writers and scholars who came from all over the country to participate in the national seminar and making it a grand success. He informed the audience that the Akademi had covered the theme via regions and genres. He highlighted the important speeches made and moments during the seminar. He hoped the young, talented scholars and writers invited for the seminar made full use of the opportunity providing by interacting with and learning from some of the best writers and scholars who participated in the seminar. He said that Akademi will look seriously into all the important and interesting points raised during the seminar and will try to organize literary events across the country on those lines. He thanked the writers' community again and observed that but for them this seminar would not have been possible.





Spin-A-Tale

Under its one of the flagship programme Bal Sahiti and as part of the Festival of Letters, Sahitya Akademi organized a day-long programme for children, "Spin-A-Tale" at Rabindra Bhawan Lawns on March 14, 2015.

In the inaugural session, Dr K. Sreenivasarao, Secretary, Sahitya Akademi, welcomed Mr Tajima Shinji, well-known Japanese children's writer and other dignitaries present along with scores of children who had assembled to participate in the programme. He talked about the importance of children to the society, relevance of good children's literature and Sahitya Akademi's role in it. He enumerated various activities, publications and awards of Sahitya Akademi to promote Children's literature in India. He explained that children's welfare and literature are not merely confined to urban spaces and that is why Sahitya Akademi is taking the best of Children's literature available in the country to various corners of India and in 24 official languages. He advised the children present that childhood is the best time of life and they should

concentrate on developing good habits, lead a healthy and clean life and stick to the truth.

On the occasion, English translations of Mr Japanese Writer Tajima Shinji's *Gaudi's Ocean* and *Legend of Planet Surprise* were released. Speaking at the release function Mr. Tajima Shinji said the book released today were the ones he wrote about 40 years ago when he himself was a child. He talked about the importance of providing good reading materials to children to enable them to develop themselves into strong and balanced personalities. He read out excerpts from the book.

Sri Rakesh Srivastava of Machan Group of Performing Arts talked about his experience in training differently abled children for the choreographic presentations in Anchal Special School. Ms. Vidushi, Director, NDMC, also spoke on the occasion and talked about the challenges in presenting information and knowledge to varied children.

In the 'Story Telling' session, Devendra Mewari, Madhu





Pant and Robinson read out their stories. In the poetry competition the theme was 'Swachh Bharat'. Several children in the age group of 6-18 years participated and the following children won prizes:

Children below 12 years:

1st Prize: Ananya Gupta 2nd Prize: Abhay. Consolation Prizes were given to Kanha Trehan and Pawari.

Children above 12 years:

1st Prize: Vidhushi Jain 2nd Prize: Gaurav Pati 3rd Prize: Umesh Kumar

Consolation prizes were given to Kashiram and Osheen.

In the afternoon session a workshop on '**Illustrating Children's Books**' coordinated by Debabrata Sarkar and Manas Ranjan Mahapatra and a panel discussion on 'Writing Books for Young Adults' featuring Nivedita Sengupta, Manasi Subramanyam, Priyamvada Bhattacharya, Manisha Chaudhury and Manasranjan Mahapatra and moderated by Pranav Kumar Singh took place.

The event was coordinated by Ms. Gitanjali Chatterjee, Deputy Secretary, Sahitya Akademi.



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