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‘Unmesha’ ends with brainstorming on feminism & issues of LGBTQ+

Lit Fest Convoques Indigenous

Alisha Ali & Ritik Khare | TNN

Bhopal: With exemplary sessions and panels covering socio-political, marginalised and economic facets of literature throughout India, the Unmesha festival ended on a high note on Sunday.

‘Feminism & Literature’, ‘Multilingual Short Story Readings’, ‘Different Strokes’, ‘Tribal Poets Meet’, ‘Publishing in Indian Languages’, were some of the many sessions held simultaneously at Ravindra Bhawan.

Chaired by prominent writer and director of Jaipur Literature Festival Namita Gokhale, the ‘Feminism & Literature’ session discussed the varied calls for autonomy, freedom and agency for women through feminist literature, and different kinds of ‘feminisms’ followed by the literary tradition throughout the world in various eras and epochs. The session featured renowned writers like Preeti Shenoy (author of ‘Life is What You Make it’), Sonora Jha (‘How To Raise a Feminist Son’), Telugu writer and translator, C Mrunalini and Leena Chandorkar (‘Eye Me Myself: A Study of Six Women’s Autobiographies’).

The writers, in the course of the session, talked about their literary influences such as the archaic Greek poet Sappho, English novelist Charlotte Brontë, Urdu novelist Ismat Chughtai and Indian-American writer Chitra Ba-



Ashwani Kumar, Sandeep Bhutoria, H S Shiva Prakash and Pankaj Mittal during the ‘Soft Power of India’ session on the concluding day of the International Literature Festival held at Ravindra Bhawan, in Bhopal on Sunday

nerjee Divakaruni, to name a few.

Another session, entitled ‘Different Strokes,’ featured gay and trans writers discussing their intersectional works, which advocated for awareness and education about LGBTQIA+ issues. The session was chaired by Hoshang Merchant, known as modern India’s first openly gay poet and the editor of gay anthology ‘Yarana’.

Other speakers in the session included A. Revathi, a trans writer and theatre artist, Kannada writer and counselor Vasudhendra, trans writer Mrityika Chatterjee, trans poet Sanjana Simon, Malayalam trans poet Vijayamalika, and writer and first openly transgender Indian college principal, Manabi Bandyopadhyay.

Some speakers recited their poems and spoke on the challenges faced by the queer community in our society. A. Revathi told TOI, “Often writers ignorantly write about trans people when they should indulge in proper research

of the subject and try to understand the hardships of a trans person before undertaking such a task. Now we have platforms to educate people about these concerns, which weren’t available to us before. And the government should dedicate more time and space to such initiatives,” said Revathi, the author of the 2004 Tamil book *Unarvum Uruvamum* (Our Lives, Our Words) which documented the real life accounts of people from the trans community in South India.

The other sessions were allocated to ‘Publishing in Indian Languages’, ‘Role of books in Indian Independence Movement’, ‘Discussion on Unity in Diversity’, ‘Challenges Before Translators in Indian Languages’ and other such literary themes and questions. The proceedings concluded with ‘Songs of the Soil’ at Tribal Writers’ Meet, and ‘Darpan’, a segment which screened documentaries on eminent Indian writers.