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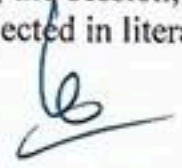
Press Release

National Seminar on Gandhi in Indian Literature

The National Seminar on “**Gandhi in Indian Literature**” which is being organized by Sahitya Akademi as part of Festival of Letters continued for the second day at the Akademi auditorium in New Delhi on 1 February, 2019. In the third session of the Seminar which was devoted to “Gandhi in North Indian Fiction,” and chaired by Dr S.L. Bhyrappa. Four eminent scholars, Dr Sribhagwan Singh, Sri Maalan V. Narayanan, Sri Prabodh Parikh and Ms Jaiwanti Dimri, presented their papers. Sri Sribhagwan Singh, author, critic, playwright and editor, in his paper on “Gandhi in North Indian Fiction,” said that though there is a lot written about Gandhi’s national role in connection with the khadi-charkha and social-welfare, yet there is comparatively much less written on his contribution towards reformation of sex-workers, which was also a part of his social-welfare works. Sri Maalan V. Narayanan, writer in Tamil and English, in his paper “Gandhi in South Indian Fiction” observed that Gandhi is a catalyst to a multitude of writers both in India and abroad. Speaking on the topic “Gandhi in Fiction of Western India”, Sri Prabodh Parikh, Gujarati writer and painter, stated that even a cursory glance at the index of various journals would show how some of the most talented writers, poets, dramatists and prose writers were responding with their best to negotiate the presence of Gandhi in their midst. Ms. Jaiwanti Dimri, writer, critic and translator; in her paper on “Gandhi in Fiction of East and North East” said that the persona of Mahatma Gandhi reflected in the interpretations and interpolations of Gandhian ideology and values in the mind of the common man, be it the paradigmatic issues of non-violence, untouchability, fasting, woman empowerment or the simple act of spinning the wheel. Dr. S.L. Bhyrappa, distinguished Kannada writer and Akademi Fellow, said that he was deeply impressed by Gandhiji’s education policy that underlined the importance of one’s mother tongue, and compared it with that of Rabindranath Tagore’s education policy. Sri Bhyrappa concluded by saying that it’s time we assessed Gandhi and his views from a new point of view.

In the fourth session, chaired by Prof. Sitanshu Yashaschandra, four eminent writers and scholars—Prof. Chinmoy Guha; Dr. Seema Sharma, Prof. Jancy James, and Prof. C.N. Srinath, presented their papers. Prof. Chinmoy Guha, Bengali essayist, scholar and translator, in his paper on “Gandhi and Romain Rolland” quoted the great novelist and thinker Romain Rolland: “It is not the man Gandhi that is at stake or even India...it is the Cause he represents, whose outcome, victorious or disastrous, may shape the destiny of Europe for a century or more.” Dr. Seema Sharma’s paper “Gandhi as seen by European and American Writers” dwelt on how Gandhi had utilized both Indian and Christian ideas of non-violence, but fashioned his own arsenal of concepts and practical techniques of action. In her presentation on “Gandhi in Asian Literature” Prof. Jancy James, ormer Vice-Chancellor of Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam and later, of the Central University of Kerala, Kasargode, author and editor said that Gandhian literature in India has inevitably become intense or sometimes cruel critiques of what India has made of Gandhi and Gandhism. Speaking on “Gandhi in Indian Fiction in English” Prof. C.N. Srinath, writer, translator and editor, observed, Gandhi wielded considerable influence on our writers.

The fifth session was chaired by Sri Giriraj Kishore, eminent novelist in Hindi. Prof Uday Narayana Singh, Prof. Badri Narayan, Prof. Jaindra Nayak and Prof. Madhu Singh presented their papers. Prof. Uday Narayan Singh in his paper dwelt on the different perceptions of the two giants of Indian public life of that time. Prof. Badri Narayan in his paper on "Gandhi in the Autobiographies of North India," narrated many anecdotes related to Gandhi with his other contemporaries. One of them was that some people believed and also spread the word that people who will not participate in his struggle for freedom will be cursed in one way or the other. Prof. Jatindra Nayak in his paper on "Meeting the Mahatma: Gandhiji in Odia Autobiographies" said that the records of intimate encounters with Gandhiji serve to show how, in all his political engagements, he eschewed empty abstractions and sought to connect avidly with the local and the individual. Prof. Madhu Singh in her paper titled "Between Beethoven and Mahatma: Revisiting Madeleine Slade's Autobiography *The Spirit's Pilgrimage* (1960)," said before Madeleine Slade became the disciple of Gandhi, she was a devotee of Beethoven, one of the greatest musical composers of the West. Romain Rolland the philosopher, humanist and mystic, introduced Madeleine Slade, blessed with "a certain sign of spiritual giftedness" to Gandhi. Sri Giriraj Kishore from the Chair recalled an incident, when he was 11-year old, of a public gathering which was being addressed by Gandhiji after India's Independence. He said in the meeting Gandhiji uttered three sentences—1. The country is Independent now, (2) you all are Gandhi and (3) now work for the country with even more devotion. Concluding the session, he said Gandhi has worked selflessly all through his life and he has always been projected in literary works of writers, scholars and researchers.



(K. Sreenivasarao)