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Press Release

National Seminar on “Gandhi in Indian Literature”

The Seminar on “**Gandhi in Indian Literature**” continued for the third day on 2 February 2019 at the Akademi Auditorium in New Delhi. The seventh session on “**Gandhi in Indian Poetry, Plays and Performance**” was chaired by Prof. Anisur Rahman, literary critic, translator and poet. Sri K.S. Rajendran and Ms Ratnottama Sengupta presented their papers.

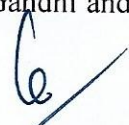
Prof. Anisur Rahman from the chair, presenting his paper, “Gandhi and Independence Movement Poetry” said that Gandhi has been represented variously in Indian literature. These representations historicise and contextualise him with reference to his vision of Indian society, politics, and culture, as well as his understanding of internationalism. Sri K.S. Rajendran in his paper, “Representation of Gandhi on Stage,” said that as a theatre director he had often wondered whether it would at all be possible to represent Gandhi in all his complexity on stage. There are several contradictory images of Gandhi before us. Which of the many Gandhis do we choose to represent on stage? The representation of a historical figure on stage or screen is fraught with questions of authenticity. Ms Ratnottama Sengupta in her paper, “Gandhi Through Films: One Man, So Many Portraits!” said that Gandhi did not leave a sect behind him. He did not approve of ‘Gandhism’ for he did not claim to have originated any new principle. Gandhi had said: “I have simply tried to apply in my own way the eternal truth of our daily life and problems....” Prof. Anisur Rehman concluded the session.

The eighth session, “Influence on Gandhi,” was chaired by Prof. Sukanta Chaudhuri, eminent writer, translator and editor. Sri Pranav Khullar and Sri Ramdas Bhatkai presented their papers. Sri Pranav Khullar in his paper “Gandhi and Louis Fischer” discussed the relationship of Gandhi and Fischer, an outstanding biographer of Gandhi, in a descriptive way. He concluded his paper saying a man like Gandhi is born once in a thousand years. A biographer like Louis Fischer is hard to come by. Sri Ramdas Bhatkai in his paper, “Gandhi and Gokhale” said that Gandhi was critical of some aspects of Gokhale’s work. Yet, Gandhi treated him as his political mentor and Gokhale treated him like his protégé till the last. He further said that we need to trace this relationship with all its nuances. Prof. Sukanta Chaudhuri concluded the session.

The ninth session was chaired by Sri Kamal Kishore Goenka, eminent Hindi writer and editor. Sri Bhairav Lal Das, Sri Madhukar Upadhyay and Prof. K. C. Baral readout their papers. Sri Bhairav Lal Das in his paper, “Lok Sanskriti Mein Gandhi” said that there are a number of stories in connection with Gandhi in folk culture, in which the miraculous powers of Gandhi have been proclaimed. It has been said that people believed Gandhi’s miraculous powers make Gandhi a Mahatma. Sri Madhukar Upadhyay in his paper, “Gandhi and Children’s Literature” said that if we leave Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi and Malayalam languages, then children’s literature on Gandhi is very little. Literature, especially for children of 1-5 years’ age, should be

arranged for publication as quickly as possible. Prof. K. C. Baral in his paper "Impact of Gandhi on North Eastern Culture" said that Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary celebration provides us an opportunity to reflect on his legacy as a thinker, politician and cultural figure. Revisiting Gandhi is also a responsibility that connects to the question: have we engaged enough with his thoughts, his philosophy and his understanding of India? Sri Kamal Kishore Goenka presenting his paper, "Indian Model of Gandhi's Journalism" from the chair, said that Gandhi's journalism was born in his expatriate life in South Africa. Gandhi's important works and thoughts were often initiated from South Africa. For this reason, historians believe Gandhi was made 'Mahatma Gandhi.'

The tenth session on "Contemporary Literary Discourses on Gandhi" which was chaired by Prof. Indra Nath Choudhri, former Secretary of Sahitya Akademi and eminent scholar. Sri Shahid Jamal and Dr. Varsha Das presented their papers. Sri Shahid Jamal in his paper, "Mahatma Gandhi and Democratic Values" said that Mohan Das Karamchand Gandhi stands tall among the global figures of the modern era. He held no office, pursued no career, accumulated no wealth and desired no fame. Yet, millions of people in India and around the world are captivated by his life and his achievements. Dr. Varsha Das in her paper, "Gandhiji and Empowerment" said that Gandhiji altered the course of history, not only in India but it impacted the whole world. He manifested and utilized his own inner potentials, and empowered hundreds and thousands of fellow human beings to do the same. Prof. Indra Nath Choudhri from the Chair said how Mohandas was transformed into a Mahatma. The journey was not easy. Gandhi had to sacrifice a lot, suffered humiliation and continued his struggle through satyagrah and ahimsa till the country got independence. He concluded the session saying that it is difficult to discard Gandhi and that his principles will always be relevant for generations to come.



(K. Sreenivasarao)