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PRESS RELEASE

Literary Conference on “How Much has Literature Changed?” inaugurated by Smt. Droupadi Murmu, Hon’ble President of India at Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre, New Delhi

Today, Sahitya Akademi, Ministry of Culture, Government of India, in collaboration with Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi, organized a thought-provoking Literary Conference on “How Much has Literature Changed?” at Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre in New Delhi. The event, which brought together distinguished writers, poets and critics from diverse literary backgrounds, was inaugurated by the Honourable President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu.

Smt. Droupadi Murmu, Hon’ble President of India, in her inaugural address said that she has had respect and gratitude for writers since her childhood. It had been her desire to invite writers to Rashtrapati Bhavan, and she appreciated the efforts of the Akademi in bringing this wish to fruition. She recalled Utkalmani Gopabandhu Das’ lines in Odia, which she later interpreted as “Wherever I am on the soil of this nation, I am as grateful as I would be on the premises of Jagannath Puri Yatra”. She drew parallels from literature, citing the story of Sita-Rama from Valmiki Ramayana as a unifying force in society. Reflecting on her personal experience, she shared how Fakir Mohan Senapati’s story “Rewati” had a profound impact on her life, highlighting the influence of literature. According to her, ordinary people can draw inspiration from literature and strive to realize their ideals. She called Pratibha Ray’s novel *Draupadi* as a great example of a classic rooted in human sensibilities. She said that literature does change with time but there are certain elements like compassion and sensibility which do not change. She further said that today’s literature cannot be called didactic literature since it is based on one’s experience.

Dr Madhav Kaushik, President of Sahitya Akademi, felicitated Smt. Droupadi Murmu, Hon’ble President of India, and Sri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Hon’ble Minister of Culture and Tourism, Government of India, with a shawl and a publication of Sahitya Akademi. Sri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat speaking as the Guest of Honour opined that instead of asking how much literature has changed, it would be more appropriate to consider how much society has changed, as literature is a reflection of society. He cited example of Munshi Premchand as a writer who always attacked the evils of society. He said that under the able leadership of Sri Narendra Modi, Hon’ble Prime Minister of India, our nation is undergoing an era of cultural revival. Organizing this programme under the aegis of the President of India signifies a conscious cultural renaissance in the nation, he said.

At the beginning of the inaugural ceremony, Ms Ranjana Chopra, Special Secretary and Financial Advisor, Ministry of Culture, Government of India, while addressing the gathering praised Sahitya Akademi as one of the most prominent institutions under the Ministry of Culture, highlighting its numerous achievements and impactful activities in recent years, such as bringing out the book on Netaji Subhas Bose in record time or organizing international level programmes like Unmesha, among others. She called them great achievements of Sahitya Akademi. Expressing further, she said that the future of literature will evolve with technological and social advancements, posing challenges to preserve its originality. She expressed her gratitude towards the Hon'ble President of India and the Hon'ble Minister of Culture and Tourism.

The inaugural ceremony was followed by a captivating Poets' Meet, "Straight from the Heart", in the evening at 5.30 pm, in which poets from various Indian languages participated. Dr K. Sreenivasarao, Secretary of Sahitya Akademi, felicitated the poets with Angvastram. Dr Madhav Kaushik recited a few Urdu couplets and a couple of ghazals, as the Guest of Honour during this session. The poets who recited their poems included Sri Ranajit Das (Bengali), Smt. Mamang Dai (English), Sri Dileep Jhaveri (Gujarati), Sri Arun Kamal (Hindi), Sri Mahesh Garg (Hindi), Sri Shafi Shauq (Kashmiri), Smt. Damayanti Beshra (Santali) and Sri Ravi Subramaniyan (Tamil). With their words infused with raw emotions, all the poets shared unfiltered expressions of joy, sorrow, love, and longing, creating an intimate connection with the audience. Sri Sheen Kaaf Nizam, eminent Urdu poet and scholar, chairing the session, said that poetry is not listened to but is felt. He recited many of his popular Urdu ghazals and concluded the session.



(K. Sreenivasarao)