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PRESS RELEASE

**A two-day Literary Conference on "How Much has Literature Changed?" held at Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre, New Delhi**

The second day of the two-day Literary Conference "How Much has Literature Changed?", organized by Sahitya Akademi, Ministry of Culture, Government of India, in collaboration with Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi, was set in motion at 10 am with the second session on "Feminist Literature of India: Breaking New Grounds", which was chaired by Pratibha Ray. While speaking as chair, Pratibha Ray emphasized that feminist literature is a diverse expression of creativity and not a separate entity. Feminist writers have challenged patriarchal norms, creating space for authentic female experiences, shaping India's cultural and social landscape and inspiring future generations towards a more inclusive society. The first speaker, Anamika said that Indian feminist literature is pushing boundaries, redefining relationships. Women seek mental maturity in men, nurturing them to grow. The second speaker, Thamizhachi Thangapandian discussed about the retrospective and aspirational issues of India, focusing on Tamil and Dravidian contexts. The third speaker, Anuja Chandramouli opined that feminist literature has broken generations of silence and censorship. Brave women have risked much to express themselves. The fourth speaker, Mahua Majhi, while delving into key aspects of feminism, explored the expressionist and creative writing of women in Hindi literature. The fifth speaker, Nidhi Kulpati observed that women's writing was initially marginalized in her society, but times have changed, expanding its scope. Pioneering authors like Mahadevi Verma, Mannu Bhandari, Shivani, and Krishna Sobti laid the groundwork. The last speaker, Preety Shenoy emphasized that feminist literature in India isn't just a reflection of society, but a guiding light that illuminates the unseen and gives voice to the silenced. Finally, K. Sreenivasarao, Secretary of Sahitya Akademi, highlighted the Akademi's initiatives to support women writers. He mentioned several programmes organized by the Akademi quite often such as *Asmita*, *Mulakat*, *All India Dalit Writers' Meet*, and *Tribal Women Writers' Meet* which are fully dedicated to women writers. These efforts, demonstrate the Akademi's firm commitment to promoting women's writing and amplifying their voices, he stated.

The third session, "Change in Literature Vs Literature of Change," witnessed Kumud Sharma, Vice-President of Sahitya Akademi, in the chair along with five prominent speakers. At the outset, Yatindra Mishra remarked that literature only records what happens in its time or era, it does not change the time or era. Yet, literature continues to be written, faithfully documenting the change. Rita Kothari observed that it is worth noting how a writer identifies with change. Literature offers an opportunity to search oneself, she added.



Rashmi Narzary opined that change in literature and literature of change cannot be discussed in isolation to each other as they are interdependent. This interaction between the two is the key to growth, revolution, understanding and integration of cultures and societies. Mamta Kalia stated that literature has a slow but lasting impact on society, which is ever-changing with an unpredictable movement. Having concern over literature's threat, she emphasized the need to make a culture of reading books essential. Girishwar Mishra said that literature emerges within the realm of time, embracing its realities. With its imaginative and spiritual essence, it critiques society and environment, transcending temporal bounds. Kumud Sharma, speaking as the chair, emphasized that literature should go towards history while engaging with the present. She remarked that books are essential to life. While change is a definite part of life, she posed a question that whether literature can bring about that change. She ended with recitation of a few lines of a poem about art.

The fourth session, "New Directions of Indian Literature in Global Perspective" was chaired by Abhai Maurya. The first speaker, Sujata Prasad spoke about the contributions of Indian novels, besides discussing some recent Indians writings like Gitanjali Shri's *Ret Samadhi*. HE Navtej Sarna focused essentially on Indian writing in English and considered that a very significant transformation is clearly discernible. Indian writing in English is now exploring new boundaries, both in form and in content, he added. Lakshmi Puri spoke about a paradigm shift away from cultural and national self-loathing. She also emphasized that the English language serves as a shared space for dialogue. Kynpham Singh Nongkynrih said that he is a firm believer in literary rootedness. This does not imply insularity or a preference for the local over the global. HE Diana Micheviciene, the Ambassador of the Republic of Lithuania to India, credited Sahitya Akademi for being at the forefront of sustaining literature in Indian languages and fostering international collaborations and translations. As chair, Abhai Maurya said whenever a great upheaval takes place in a country, literature also undergoes a great upheaval. He cited example of the avant garde movement of Russia and the criticism it faced. He considered that world literature is one that crosses the boundaries of time and space. K. Sreenivasarao making concluding remarks said that this event has been a milestone in the history of Sahitya Akademi. We got this rare opportunity to have this event at the Rashtrapati Bhavan for which we thank Smt. Droupadi Murmu, Hon'ble President of India. We also thank the First Lady of India for finding time to inaugurate the Literary Conference. We extend our deep gratitude towards Sri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Hon'ble Minister of Culture and Tourism, Government of India, for all his encouragement and support that he has been offering not only for this conference but for all the programmes of the Akademi.

At 4.30 pm, there was a scintillating presentation - Saga of Devi Ahilyabai Holkar on the occasion of her 300th Birth Anniversary by Himanshu Bajpai and Pragya Sharma.



(K. Sreenivasarao)