

डॉ. के. श्रीनिवासराव  
सचिव  
Dr. K. Sreenivasarao  
Secretary

साहित्य अकादेमी  
(राष्ट्रीय साहित्य संस्थान)  
संस्कृति मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार की स्वायत्तशासी संस्था  
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**PRESS RELEASE**  
**Dalit Chetna Programme, 27/12/2019**

Sahitya Akademi organized Dalit Chetna programme, an evening of Dalit Poetry readings by Sri Madan Veera, Shri Ritwik and Dr. Poonam Tushamad at Sahitya Akademi, Rabindra Bhavan, New Delhi on 27 December, 2019.

Dr.A.J.Thomas, Guest Editor, *Indian Literature*, welcomed the participants and the audience, and began the proceedings mentioning the tragic passing of Professor Ganga Prasad Vimal, renowned Hindi poet and fiction-writer, and also Arjan Hasid, eminent Sindhi poet and Fellow of Sahitya Akademi, and proposing a minute's silence in their memory.

The first poet of the evening, Shri Madan Veera, read out his poems in Punjabi, and their Hindi translations. He read out poems such as "Sabak," "Shatpahah," "A Text-Ignorant World," "Coat," "The Statement of a Calf," and the Hindi translation of the poem, "Take my resignation," to the enjoyment of the audience.

The next poet was Ritwik. His energetic, exciting and scintillating delivery captured everyone's heart. He read out poems like "Pensionwali Naani," "Balrama Maia," "Not Fair, But Love me," "Bhai, Bhai" and "First Insult, Then Award," were received with great applause by the audience.

The last poet Dr.,Poonam Tushamad read out her poems, "Kashmir" which she explained she had written three years ago, "Apna Desh, Parai Log," about the alienation the dalits experienced, "Ishk ke Mayna," "Angaaz," and "Bilkiz Bano." Her poems combined the emotional and intellectual elements competently, and gave the impression of an erudite poet.

There was a brief discussion after the readings, in which the relevance of the term 'dalit' was called into question, to which the explanation that it was not for segregation, but in acknowledgement of identity that this term was used, was presented. Dr.Balbir Madhopuri, eminent Punjabi dalit poet who was present, further explained that the term 'dalit' did not mean anything great or small, but a different voice, and its place in the mainstream of Indian literature. Other speakers also arrived at the same conclusion. The programme had a full audience. It was announced that the next programme will be on 29<sup>th</sup> January, which was a Wednesday, and not on the last Friday of the month.

K. Sreenivasarao