

# REPORT

## FOSWAL LITERATURE FESTIVAL

ON

## 'ENVIRONMENT and LITERATURE'

with PARTICIPATION

OF

BIMSTEC COUNTRIES :

BANGLADESH, BHUTAN, INDIA,

MYANMAR, NEPAL, SRI LANKA

and THAILAND

March 27, 28, 29, 2022

Organised by :

**FOUNDATION OF SAARC WRITERS  
AND LITERATURE**

in collaboration with

**SAHITYA AKADEMI**

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Foundation of SAARC Writers and Literature (FOSWAL) is a PIONEER in creating cultural connectivity among the neighbouring countries, since 1987, to create peace and tranquility in the Region through writers and intellectuals.

**FOSWAL HAS ORGANISED 61 MEGA LITERATURE FESTIVALS SO FAR.**

**FOSWAL** launched its vision of cultural bonding among the neighbouring countries in **1986**, and emerged **as the first and the only non-government organisation working for Track II 'Public Diplomacy'**, in the specific area of culture, for creating cultural connectivity through a **Think Tank** of Intellectuals and Writers, Creative Fraternity and Peace Activists, Folklore-Buddhist-Sufi Scholars, Folk and Tribal Scholars; Folk Performers and Artists, Theatre and Film Artists, Painters and Dancers-Musicians, who have common sensitivities and common concerns for the socio-cultural-political-economic-tribal-gender issues of the region.

Foundation of SAARC Writers and Literature has been working on restoring peace among the SAARC countries 1987, we got 10 visas, for the first time after Partition, for eminent writers from Pakistan.

We had a glorious Indo-Pakistan Writers Conference in which about 5000 writers from across India participated.

So, for the **FIRST TIME AFTER PARTITION**, 10 Pakistani writers set foot on Indian soil. And we had the **FIRST EVER INDIA-PAKISTAN WRITERS CONFERENCE**. Most outstanding writers came : **Intizar Hussain, Ahmad Faraz, Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi, Fakhar Zaman, Mohammad Mansha Yaad, Ahmed Salim, Akhtar Hussain Akhtar, Sibtul Hasan Zaigham, Fehmida Riyaz, and Afzal Ehsan Randhawa.**

It was September 1987.

The Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India COMMISSIONED us to do the FIRST-EVER SAARC WRITERS CONFERENCE was organised in **April 2000**.

“We are the mad dreamers of the SAARC region. Let governments do their political and diplomatic work. Let us, the writers and the creative fraternity of the region, endeavour to create bridges of friendship across borders, and beyond borders” : declared the 2000 Resolution.

Though we have been building bridges of cultural connectivity with all the countries of the SAARC region **since 1986**, we traced the **centuries-old civilisational and cultural links even beyond SAARC region**, extending to Afghanistan and Myanmar, and expanded our vision and thrust with total passion, determination and commitment, **from 1999 onwards**, when we started inviting writers from Afghanistan and Myanmar also.

This participation of Afghani poets **eventually** culminated in **Afghanistan becoming the eighth member of SAARC in 2007**.

In 2009, poets from **Burma (Myanmar)** also participated in our SAARC Festival of Literature, in Agra.

**SAARC SECRETARIAT** realized the importance of our work, and the **Secretary General Dr. Nihal Rodrigo HOSTED** the Inauguration of our **SECOND SAARC LITERARY AND CULTURAL CONFERENCE**, in SAARC Secretariat's own Auditorium Hall, in Kathmandu, in **November 2000**.

The **SAARC Charter** was **amended during the 13th SAARC Summit in Kathmandu**, and **'cultural exchanges' included in the SAARC Constitution**.

Our Status has been **SAARC APEX BODY**, which is now lying on hold till the next SAARC SUMMIT.

It is a **life-long commitment and devotion** for which the eminent **Writer President of FOSWAL Ajeet Cour** has also been honoured with the National Honour : **'Padma Shri'** : as a Cultural Pioneer in the SAARC region and writer.

We have done translations of creative literature and ideas of all the SAARC countries and published 48 Anthologies

of Poetry and Fiction and Ideas.

Since Pakistan and Afghanistan out of the picture right now. We have been advised by the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India to REPLACE these two countries with Thailand and Myanmar, and call it FOSWAL LITERATURE FESTIVAL with PARTICIPATION OF BIMSTEC COUNTRIES : BANGLADESH, BHUTAN, INDIA, MYANMAR, NEPAL, SRI LANKA and THAILAND.

Foundation of SAARC Writers and Literature (FOSWAL) organised **FOSWAL LITERATURE FESTIVAL ON 'ENVIRONMENT and LITERATURE' with PARTICIPATION OF BIMSTEC COUNTRIES : BANGLADESH, BHUTAN, INDIA, MYANMAR, NEPAL, SRI LANKA and THAILAND**, in collaboration with Sahitya Akademi on March 27, 28, 29, 2022.

## **INAUGURAL SESSION**

### **27 MARCH, 2022**

The inaugural session and the first four sessions on Sunday, 27 March 2022, were held virtually. Poets and authors from Thailand and five of the eight SAARC countries—India, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka were present virtually in the literature conference. Dr. K. Sreenivasarao, Secretary, Sahitya Akademi, welcomed the chief guest, the guests of honour, other eminent persons, and erudite. In his welcome speech, Dr. K. Sreenivasarao spoke about cleanliness as not just for one's own health but also as better atmosphere surrounding ourselves. He said, "Today's occasion can be considered as one of the fundamental steps to be taken towards creating awareness about our mother nature. It is on such occasions that literature plays a vital role, giving meaning to the words a whole new purpose. As a popular saying goes, 'A picture tells thousand stories' but literature is much deeper than a painting or picture and its role is much



more varied than them.”

Speaking on the subject, Dr. Sreenivasarao added, “Literature does not only create awareness about a subject but also instruct us inform us on the ways of living in present and future. It gives us a perspective of things. In Indian literature when one reads Valmiki's *Ramayana* or Vyasa's *Mahabharata* or Kalidasa's masterpieces or even the works of great writers of early 20th century, portrayal of how communities and societies are treated, how the environment is preserved are plenty. Such portrayals are not limited to Sanskrit or a few other languages but, in every language, one can see such literary representations of period. Writers and poets observe their environment and express it in words that strike a chord with readers. Similar depictions like that of literature of India can be found in the medieval literature of countries like Sri Lanka and Nepal. I am ecstatic to see that these countries have made it to this conference along with Bangladesh, and Bhutan. These literary portrayals are continued once again through time and can be read across various genres. The complex relationship between human beings and environment has been captured and portrayed very well in all genres in the literatures of these countries even though objective and goal of each creation look different. Isn't that the real beauty of literature?”

In this conference, one can watch readings in various languages of these countries along with the representations of various dimensions of relationship between human beings and environment, such as women, environment and literature Photography and Cinema as tools for the environment sensitization, farmers, and environment in folklore.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS by Ajeet Cour,

Padma Shri awardee and President of FOSWAL welcomed all to the 61st FOSWAL Literature conference!

She has been organizing SAARC Literature Conferences and Festivals for more than three decades now and it's a great gathering of literature enthusiasts twice every year.

Ajeet Cour informed everyone that the creative effort to bring writers and intellectuals of the SAARC countries under one

roof to raise a unanimous voice for peace, was launched by her in 1987. In 1999, the Ministry of External Affairs began collaborating with them, and so her conferences and festivals gained recognition across borders and became huge mega events, both in India and in all the SAARC countries.

Since FOSWAL couldn't invite Pakistani and Afghanistani writers this time because of Government policy, and it was difficult for Afghanistani writers to travel, the Ministry of External Affairs advised FOSWAL to replace these two countries with Thailand and Myanmar.

She then whole-heartedly welcomed old and new participants. This new combination was called BIMSTEC and that's why they called this conference: **'FOSWAL Literature Festival On 'Environment and Literature' with participation of BIMSTEC Countries : Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka And Thailand.**

Ajeet Cour said, "Through this medium, I would like to share with you my pain and anguish for the suffering people of Ukraine, who have spent last few months living in constant fear under the shadow of bombs. People had to leave their home country to save their lives. Families dispersed and broke as young men stayed back fighting to save their land, their country, their dignity. Our hearts cry looking at the gory sights of the ongoing war." She further spoke about how Afghanistan also went through a similar situation the previous year and many writer friends living



there are in perpetual fear. “Who knew that there'd be days when one would have to fight to save their own lives? Our Afghani friend, Najib Manalai, a great scholar who has taken refuge in Paris, wrote to me yesterday that all girls schools are closed in Afghanistan and they're forced to stay at home, in a veil! My heart goes out to all the recipients of injustice,” she added with a heavy heart.

Cour then invited other eminent writers to express their thoughts on the topic. “I take pride in welcoming our Chief Guest Prof. Chandrasekhara Kambara, an eminent writer and also the President of Sahitya Akademi; Dr. K.S. Rao, a scholar and the Secretary of Sahitya Akademi; Keynote Speaker Prof. Ashish Nandy, one of the topmost scholars in the world and all the honoured scholars from India and from the neighbouring countries who will speak on the Contemporary Literary Scenario in their countries, and share the environmental concerns of their countries: Dr. Tara Gandhi Bhattacharjee, a prominent writer and granddaughter of Mahatma Gandhi; Ambassador Dr. Suresh K. Goel, a respectable diplomat and former Director General of ICCR; Hon'ble Mr. K.J. Alphons, Member of Parliament, Dr. Gowher Rizvi, Advisor to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh; Prof. Manzoorul Islam, a prominent Bangladeshi writer; Dr. Kunzang Choden, the senior-most writer of Bhutan; Prof. Akhtarul Wasey, a scholar of Islamic Studies; Prof. Abhi Subedi, a poet and theatre person of Nepal; Ms. Kanchana Priyakantha, a well-known writer and publisher from Sri Lanka; Dr. Madhav Kaushik, the Vice President of Sahitya Akademi who has penned thirty novels, and last but not the least Dr. Anand Kumar, a poet, novelist, and the Director of our Literary Conferences.”

She further addressed, “In our region, besides sharing our clouds and monsoons, birds and animals, oceans and rivers, flora and fauna, we also share long civilizational journeys, horizontally and vertically, on micro and macro levels. We share our pain, agony, and happiness too. For all people of BIMSTEC countries, who are aware of their precarious life on this planet, environment and climate change are two primary concerns. Acknowledging that these concerns need immediate attention, we've gathered here to make a change!”

Stressing upon her concern about the environment, she



said, "It's heart-wrenching to see innumerable rare species of birds on the verge of extinction, a stark fall in the number of trees, and ruthless behaviour of humans towards the environment. Let me share with you a story of our long struggle, when my daughter Arpana and I, with a few like-minded people, fought a legal battle in the Supreme Court against the authorities committed to butcher several acres of a South Delhi Protected Forest for Commonwealth Games. The forest of 8,900 trees and home to thousands of peacocks, rare eagles, lakhs of little sparrows, mynahs, bulbuls, was to be converted into brick-and-mortar structures. We won the case after long struggle, and the Supreme Court ordered replanting of 2,900 trees in the same spot, from when 8,900 trees had been bothered, which was a first-time success in the favour of trees, in the history of Delhi. We restored the early morning symphonies of the birds that echoed in the forest every morning."

Discussing the impact of humans on earth, Cour emphasized, "What we all need to understand is that this cosmos has to be taken care of well, and the fragile balance has to be maintained. If humans cannot disrupt the orbits of sun, earth, moon, stars, galaxies, because they are too far away, should they pounce upon and destroy all that is at their disposal? Who gave humans the right to destroy what they did not create? This land is not entirely theirs but is shared with millions of other living species!"

She then questioned the audience, "Can we raise our own BIMSTEC-specific voice in international environment forums to save the planet from extinction?" and requested them to take it upon themselves "and' give back the planet that never stopped giving us its magnificence in bounty. Our voices should go beyond boundaries and borders! So, talking about our problems related to our environmental degradation is the need of the hour. We should speak up in chorus and work towards bringing about a change in narrative via our stories and poems!"

She concluded her address with a hope for better tomorrow and said, "I wish we were here together, physically, and hug each other! With the hope that the pandemic will fade away by November, we will gather here in Delhi, physically, from 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> November. Let us keep



our fingers crossed! Once again, I extend my warm welcome to all our guests.”

**Prof. Ashish Nandi then took over the stage to discuss current problems.**

He said, “I would like to be as unpleasant as I can in this



inaugural session by telling you the problems which we face today whenever we talk about environment and its future. The biggest problem is that environment has not been adequately politicized. If it is politicized this might sound very strange because in many countries people are sick and tired of politics. In India, for example, environmental issues have not come within domain of politics and in a democracy

if you cannot put it on the table through politics, it is unlikely that environmental issues will have salience or serious support for any parties. One needs to find answers to how to politicize the environmental issue.”

Continuing his thoughts on current challenges, Nandi said, “Secondly, I do notice a deep fear of the future and of many countries which are represented even by the participants of this conference. There people would rather want the short-term futures with the economic projects of development than assessing what each developmental input will do in long term. I agree that the countries from which we come have much lesser development than US or many other northern Europe countries, but these so-called advanced countries are not more advanced than us; they simply moved to solutions like electrifying cars”

“We are very uncomfortable about talking the lacks in our system, but I'm afraid that unprecedented future is inescapable if you close your eyes. It is like the practice of ostriches during storms to bury their head in the sand. Let me give a more recent example. There has been a lot more interest in river Sarasvati, which once was a magnificent river and there was a civilization on both banks of it. Eventually, it died out as at that time, there

was no environmental consciousness. River Sabarmati also is no longer a river as every two or three weeks when it begins to swell, the authorities release that water into new water, which results in its slow death. I must say that it pains me a lot because the river on the bank of which a civilization had grown and one of the finest products of the civilization, Mohan das Karamchand Gandhi lived, has died,” he added.

Nandi further requested, “Let's remember these examples and raise questions to our scientists about the correct data regarding the degradation of the rivers and harm caused to the wildlife and environment in general. I would request them that if their hands are tied due to political restrictions, then they can release it to organisations that are willing to bring a change.”

He said, “So, this is a world in which we are living, and this is the world which we have to negotiate with constantly. So, when I started my speech saying I will try to be unpleasant today, I am voicing millions who pay the cost of such ignorance at the hand of those in power. I hope I have been able to help you see the urgency of this matter and I thank you for your patience and efforts.”

**Ambassador Suresh K Goel** spoke next and emphasised the role of human values.

He opened his statement by thanking the delegates and said, “Hearties thanks to all of you for joining and before I start, I would like to compliment all those who put things in perspective and highlighted the problems that we're facing today. We all are aware of the environmental situation we're dealing with right now. Firstly, we need to really develop the human values that are required to battle this problem. You would have noticed that this year's theme of this Festival is 'Literature and Environment', but this is actually under the umbrella of BIMSTEC as Madam Ajeet ji mentioned and I think this is a very significant change which has been done. I think to focus on BIMSTEC will help expand the coverage of the



Conference. BIMSTEC takes our cultural consensus forward from South Asia into the Bay of South to Southeast Asia and I think from that point of view, I would like to applaud Ajeet Cour ji as well as Sahitya Akademi for organizing this festival.”

Goel then said, “I am not a literary writer, but I mostly write about international relations and other things, but I believe literature is a mirror to our own culture. English literature relates to our own ethos—the way we think and view the world. So, from that point of view literature is a very important part because it shows the mirror to the society, not in a kind of sporadic manner but in a continuous manner. If authors from different regions can examine the development of the folk literature, I think that would be a great contribution to our understanding of each other. In addition to it, we may find some commonness in the linguistic mediums that we use because the idioms again are reflective of our cultural identities. So, if the modern writers can also examine these commonalities or how they differ from each other, then I think that would give everyone a wider view of different cultures.”

**Hon'ble K J Alphons addressed the audience and**

**said,** “I don't consider myself to be a famous writer, but my recent book on analyzing the achievements of the



government had a full chapter on environment and what India needs to do in terms of making things better. I have said this before as well, but I'd reiterate that Ajeet ji is kind of my soul mate because on every Christmas, she sends me a letter which I read multiple times. I've even collected them over the past five years. It shows how her heart beats for humanity and for

the universe. It becomes a kind of the cornerstone of my thinking process for the next one year.”

“I've travelled across the world quite a bit as a tourist. I think fundamentally, if you look at all this literature, it has got so much to do with human's linkage with the nature,” he added.

Alphons continued, “Today I read in the newspapers that

35 of the 50 most polluted cities in the world are in India and the national capital of India, Delhi, is the most polluted capital in the world. This worries me and I raise these questions in the parliament very often—What is humanity doing for its survival? Will the government take responsibility that humans inflict cruelty on the planet? The entire underlying philosophy of Indian culture was that we are one with the universe, air, fire, water and also with every human species and also non-human species. It's our responsibility to act unanimously and combat these issues.”

He further iterated, “I feel elated and congratulate governments and organisations which take initiatives to create basic infrastructure for the poor, construct toilets, and give women the basic amenities they deserve. I'm so happy we have in this group of people, who highlight in their writings the suffering of Ukraine and Sri Lanka because it's so important to take care of our neighbors. That's why I said that when Ajeet ji sends me that one paragraph letter which reflects the soul of humanity and the help it needs from all of us, it makes so much sense. So, I will also try to do a little bit more for the environment. Let's reflect on these via our writings and raise a unanimous voice.

I thank you again for being here.”

**Manzoorul Islam from Bangladesh**, took over the meeting and said, “I'm delighted to hear what professor Ashish Nandi has shared. He's someone who always provokes you to think out of the box and today, his lecture is no exception. In fact, the first sentence he spoke speaks volumes and tells us exactly where we stand. It's true that environment has been politicized by all the big groups and parties that play a major role in controlling the production, distribution and consumption of fossil fuel, and are eventually responsible for carbon emission and for damming big rivers.” He gave an example of Amazon River that's disappearing every year and the effects of its disappearance. And of forests' environment, pollution, is not something which stays confined within a



geographical territory. He continued, “It’s wrong to assume that one country’s environmental pollution doesn’t travel to another country. Environment doesn’t care about borders and carbon emissions in the West will eventually find a place in the air and rivers of the so-called underdeveloped or developing countries.”

Expressing concerns about the neighbouring countries and his own country, he said, “We are thinking about development at the cost of environmental degradation. There should be plans as to how to mitigate the problems that will arise out of these development wars that would go on in Bangladesh. These problems have been going on forever but this advanced plan is missing because it would put certain parties into difficulty or jeopardy. So I don’t see that addressing environmental damages before a plan is passed would happen in our country or any of our neighbouring countries.”

Reiterating Prof. Ashish Nandi’s statement, Prof. Islam said, “It’s very wise to say that we should politicize environment in the right way, so that at the end of the day, it’s pleasant. So, I take his unpleasantness because at the end, I hope if the marginalized people, or those who are affected directly for our countries, have a satisfaction that their words are heard, that would be pleasant enough.”

He then thanked every delegate and conveyed special greetings to Ajeet Cour ji, who, he said, is respected the most for her kindness. He continued, “Ajeet ji, thanks for inviting me to this conference and it was such a pleasure listening to your words of wisdom. I benefited from it and after listening to Prof. Ashish Nandi talk, I always carry something home—something that stays with me. So, thank you all.”

**Kunzang Choden**, the senior most writer of Bhutan, gave a warm welcome to the audience and said, “Good morning to everyone and greetings from my little valley tucked away in the Himalayas. I’m happy to see all the familiar faces and I’d like to convey special thanks to Ajeet Cour ji for being the key factor for assembling us here today. It’s always a very humbling experience for me to be able to listen to the articulation, philosophies, thoughts, and visions of all the other speakers.”

Choden opined, “I’m not an environmentalist per say, but I am really interested in folk literature, and I cannot give you more thoughts or visions or ideas on what has already been articulated. Having said that, I’d like to highlight a few things.



By looking at and trying to understand what our traditional beliefs about nature and our relationship to nature has been, I have learned so much. From what I've heard from all of you, it is a frightening journey of modernisation that we are going to undertake, and I think from the focus of what the eminent speakers have said today, I don't know trying to take control of nature and planning for better lives and welfare for ourselves was the best option. So, today I want to appreciate where I am today—in a little village, where spring is just coming and whenever I look out of my window, I see lines and lines of farmers carrying farmyard manure to their fields because it is the potato planting season.”

“Since last few years, we have become dependent to some degree on chemical fertilizers and this year there was a sudden panic about lack of chemical fertilizers, but we have our own fertilizers we have our cattle and that was so reassuring to say that we've come far but we have not left our roots,” she further said.

Requesting the audience to hold on to their roots, she added, “I hope we never forget the concept of enough. Now I'm an old woman but even as a child I remember the elders always said that your biggest value is when you can say 'enough'. Question if you need more or if a bigger house or a better car will be enough for you. So, I don't have a lot of things to say but I want to say that we should hold on to some of our traditional beliefs. We know that generations before us have lived the way they lived but I firmly believe that living with nature is very important as we learn to live respect and appreciate it.



Last, I'd like to again thank you all and Ajeet ji for making this possible.”

**Prof. Abhi Subedi** the great poet and theatre director of Nepal, then gave his views on changing environment and



said, “Hello, all. I just want to say that whenever we organized meetings about ecology, environment, and nature, we evoke the literary tradition and not to talk about nature. However, here, for example, a Nepali environmentalist talks about the melting of Himalayas and the ecological problem, but at the same time also talks about the poetry of the glorification of the Himalayas. So, this kind of double perception of nature is a character of South Asia

of our region.”

“However, literary writers have always been questioned as to what role they play in changing the environmental conditions. But the writers here have written about mythology and folklore and so this is one way of responding to the chaotic situation that is happening around the world. So, this is the underlying theme of the relationship between ecology and literature and nature and that's what we do in this conference. We listen to the voices of the writers, painters, and artists. We, as writers, may not be able to do much but what we can do is that we can address the creative power of mind and the spirit of liberation. So, I guess I'm confident that this seminar is about the very spirit of liberation, that inner confidence which our poetry evokes, and this is a very important achievement that we have made at this meeting.

With these few words, I would take your leave. Thanks a lot,” he concluded.

**Kanchana Priyakantha, Sri Lankan writer and publisher addressed the audience and said,** “I have been taking part in the literature conferences organized by



FOSWAL since 2017 and I had high hopes that we could meet each other at this year's BIMSTEC literature conference, but the prevailing Corona situation in the world forced us to do the opposite.



Nevertheless, Hemingway is now the old man in the sea and the main character, Santiago, says that a man can be destroyed but not defeated. Santiago's courage and pride pushes him forward throughout the novel even when it looks like hope is lost but is never defeated. Likewise, even though the situations are challenging Ajeet ji and Arpana ji never gave up on their noble cause brought the family members back virtually in collaboration with Sahitya Academi. So, I extend gratitude to the entire team for their ceaseless endeavors and extend thanks to the organizing committee for selecting environment and literature, our only home as the main team of this conference.”

She further elucidated, “As we all know that Earth is the home to over 7 billion people and this amazing planet has allowed millions of species of plants trees and animals—from the smallest bird to the biggest blue whale—to live on it. We rely on our planet for everything we need like food, water and oxygen. We mustn't forget that we've only got one earth and we must learn to be grateful to her for letting us to live on her. Unfortunately, the so-called most intelligent species on the earth, the human beings, have forgotten about the luxury the earth has offered to us. I am sure that we will be able to listen to number of important scholarly articles on how literature is intended to contribute to the assurance of the existence of human beings on this beloved earth in order to prevent her extinction.”

### **Budhacharan, Thailand**

Budhacharan from Thailand commented, “First of all I'd like to appreciate the organizing team and all the friends



from different parts of the world. I've been listening for the last hour and a half to great speakers sharing their concerns about the environment. When we talk about environment as a concept, then we talk about the many different way of looking at it but when we talk about the nature, we talk about the most fundamental values that this environment that needs—peace.”

He added, “I want to show you all a different perspective that I learned from my guru Maharishi. You're researching your own nature, your own consciousness, you go where the sun is and you understand the first ray of the sun and you see how that ray of the sun comes out and how it teaches each other that this is one Vedic sign of Vedas of India. You'll see how the memory, called 'smriti', wakes up and then the sound comes out, called 'shruti', and this is how the whole environment came out with all the literature and its poetry.”

**Dr. Anand Kumar, a scholar, poet, novelist from India,** thanked everyone for bringing their expertise and experience in the discussions, and for engaging in such fruitful, constructive, and open exchanges.



### **The First Session: Poetry Session**

The First Session was chaired by Bhisma Upreti from Nepal. Amarendra Khatua from India read his poem *Climate Change* and two other poems, Senjuti Barua from Bangladesh read out his poem, *Revenge* and *I Don't Have a Knife*. Namgay Peldon from Bhutan read out her poem, *Beautiful Environment* and *Environmental Challenges*. Mihir Chitre from India read her poem *Varanasi December 24*, *Tosh* and *McLeodganj Miniature*. Bina Theeng from Nepal read out her poem *Unacknowledged but Beautiful Life Struggle of Mother* in Nepali. A.J. Thomas and Deo



Prakash Choudhary from India read out their poems *We are Just Like Other* and *Tomorrow it Will be Like This*. Laxman Prasad Gautam and Bhisma Upreti from Nepal read poems *Desires* and *Poem of the Hill* in Nepali and English translation as well.

### The Second Session: Interviews and Conversations

Fakrul Alam from Bangladesh in conversation with Shakhawat Hossain from Bangladesh about animal rights, environment, literature, and poetry of Jibannanda Das and



Rabindranath Tagore.

Kamala Wijeratne, in conversation with Chitra Jayathilake, from Sri Lanka discussed about her poetry and shorts stories.

Chitra Jayathilake asked Kamala Wijeratne about the diverse themes in her poetry to which she answered that change is a very important theme in her writings such as

war, sufferings of the women as wives and as mothers and as daughters, pollution of the environment, problems arising out of urbanization and violence in the society.

In the third and last conversation of the second session, Rinzin Rinzin and Namgay Peldon from Bhutan discussed about planting of trees, green zone, organic farming and less use of chemical fertilizers in Bhutan.

### The Third Session: Reading of Fiction

In the third session, Ayeshwini Lama from Bhutan read a



chapter from her novel *To the End of the Sky*, a story about two friends who are soul mates in ways greater than just a romantic relationship.

Gayatri Majumdar from India discussed her literary work, and her book titled *The Dream Pod*, and she read a small paragraph from her non-fiction book, *The Lotus of the Hearts*. She also read a bit from *Memory of a Seed*.

### The Fourth Session: Paper Presentations

This session was chaired by Mr. Anil Sood from India.





Govinda Giri Prerana from Nepal presented his paper titled 'Environment and Literature'. He said that in ancient times there were no writings. People used to sing the songs of nature. After that writing significantly changed the pattern of presentation. He then talked about global warming and climate change in his paper.

Sharkar Abdul Mannan from Bangladesh presented his essay on the book *Amar Dekha Noya China* by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, a travelogue of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman which was recited by Sharkar Abdul Mannan.

Aseem Srivastava from India in his short presentation on 'The Devaluation of the Earth as Home', quoted popular scientists from the United States who died many years ago. An astrophysicist said, "from cosmos the earth appears as just a tiny blue dot. That's all we are, but that's not how our egos feel, because we feel very high and mighty and big and proud, and we are the conquerors of nature, and we are the species for which God created the Earth, etc.". He talked about the uniqueness of Earth in his presentation.

Anil Sood from India presented his paper, 'Pollution–Policy Paralysis'. He said, "Environment today is a victim of policy paralysis and to satisfy the greed of few corporates in every country."

### The Fifth Session: Poetry Session

The Fifth Session was chaired by Muhammad Nurul Huda



from Bangladesh. Bimal Guha from Bangladesh read his poem 'Against War' and 'Oh Corona'. Pushpa Raj Acharya

from Nepal read out Nepali poem in 'Chhand' (meter), inspired by Kali Ganga river. And recite another poem 'Dream Catcher' in English. Binod Khaitan from India read his poem 'Ghar' in Hindi and 'First rain of the season'. Mukul Kumar from India read out his poem 'The clouds of tears' and 'A Testimony to Divinity'. Chador Wangmo from Bhutan read her poem 'Silence of the Forest' and 'Changing Time'. Sekhar Banerjee from India read his poem 'The lilies and the whole', 'The historians' and last one was 'Baksha Forest Camp'. Muhammad Nurul Huda from Bangladesh read his poem 'Corona Free' and 'Inserts of Food'.

### **The Sixth Session: Fiction Session**

The Sixth Session was chaired by Mamang Dai from India.



Iroshan Fernando from Sri Lanka spoke about one of his three books, *The Unknown Wanderer*, written in Sinhali language. This book based on one sided love, suicide and about the people who can't share their feelings.

Riku Dhan Subba from Bhutan discussed his book of short stories, *In Love with Butterflies*. He recited short story, *Father's Love*, a story about how education took away children from parents from rural areas in Bhutan.

In the last session, Mamang Dai discussed about her book *Waiting for Rain*.

### **The Seventh Session: Paper Presentation**

The Seventh Session was chaired by Abhi Subedi from Nepal.



Ahmed Ahsanuzzaman from Bangladesh talked about Documentary Film which zooms in on the river Jamuna and engages in environment sensitization. That documentary was shot in 2002 and it's about a tale of Jamuna river.

Rashmika Mandawala from Sri Lanka presented paper on ecological approach from a book which published in 2008 in Singala language based on eco criticism. “The writer who wrote this book continuously wrote about environment and its crisis,” said Rashmika Mandawala.

K.V Dominic a well-known poet and scholar from India presented his paper titled, 'The Impact of Covid-19 on the Environment'. He said that nature won't compromise for us, it is a systematic constant flow, and it will go on. While talking about Covid-19, he said that survival of all species is based on survival of the fittest.

In the end of the session, Abhi Subedi from Nepal said, “poets of the earlier generation did not see any problem with nature and saw no disruption in the ecological balance. Nature was always held as the inspirer and giver of some kind of precious energy to poets and all the humans and sentient beings of this region”.

### **The Eighth Session: Interviews and Conversations**

Kanchana Priyakantha, in conversation with Anupama





Godakanda from Sri Lanka, talked about how her specific special and temporal location has contributed as being a poet a short story writer and a novelist. Manzoorul Islam from Bangladesh shared his views about how environment connects people and places and local imaginations.

### The Ninth Session: Poetry Session

The Ninth Session was chaired by Rinzin Rinzin from



Bhutan. Ashraf Jewel from Bangladesh read his translated poem from Bangla *Mother Says* and *Poet and His Love*. Dibyajyoti Sarma from India read his poem *We Pick Flowers* and *We are Elsewhere*. Ashok Atreya from India read his poem translated from Hindi *The First Reporter from Heaven, Poster, and Washing Machine*. Sangeeta Gupta from India read a Hindi and an English poem *A Note to Me*. Kamrul Hasan from Bangladesh read his poem *Who will Speak Out* and *Kolkata*. Damodar Pudasainee from Nepal read out one of his poems titled *Voice of My Mountain*.

Naaz Singh from Nepal read his poems *Dilemma* and *Shadow*.

Nethmi Sandeepani from Sri Lanka read her poetry translated from Sinhali.

Rinzin Rinzin from Bhutan read his poem *Simple Wisdom*, and another poem as well.

### The Tenth Session: Fiction Session

K. Shriganeshan from Sri Lanka chaired the Session.

Sandaru Wijerathne from Sri Lanka discussed about her stories. She said that in her storys trees are not nonliving things; they are living beings who can talk and



communicate with human beings.

Anuradha Sarma Pujari from India talked about her Assamese book titled *There was a Forest Here* and read two paragraphs from her book.

K. Shriganeshan from Sri Lanka discussed about his translated book *Gomathi*—a story of a girl, a former freedom fighter, and after leaving revolutionary activities, she moved to Europe.

### The Eleventh Session: Paper Presentation

Dr. Kunzang Choden from Bhutan chaired the session.

Tulasi Prasad Acharya from Nepal presented his paper on



'Existing Nepali Literary Environment and Future Implications'. He said, "The current literary writing compared to the past is more open, decentralized and multi-vocal that brings in the importance of the culture of the marginalized and the rituals, and practices that have

some close affinity with nature and Earth”.

Priyanath Widanapathirana from Sri Lanka presented his paper, 'Art and Photography and Cinema and Literature as Tools for Environment Sensitization'. He talked about his latest documentary on Netflix, 'Breaking Boundaries'. He said, “The science of our planet indicates that planet Earth is sleeping dangerously close to a tipping point where it is impossible to turn.”

Dr. Kunzang Choden from Bhutan presented her paper, 'Environment and the Bhutanese Farmers'. She discussed about Bhutanese farmers and their relationship with their lands, spirits, and beliefs.

### **The Twelfth Session: Interviews and Conversations**

Abhi Subedi, in conversation with Shiva Raj Rijal from Nepal, said that he was inspired by hippies in Kathmandu in early 60s and 70s. In response to a question he answered, “I've been writing my own memoirs and then



trying to see why I got interested in the Japanese form of poetry, a simple three-line poem”. Apart from this, they discussed about ecology, politics, and environment.

Bimal Guha from Bangladesh, in conversation with Binoy Barman, said that it is a normal practice that environment should reflect in our poetry. He said that it's the responsibility of poets to raise the issue of environment through their poetry.

### **The Thirteenth Session: Poetry Session**

The Thirteenth Session was chaired by S. Pathmanathan from Sri Lanka.

Alok Bhalla from India read his poems—*The Grammar of*

*Ruins and Immemorial.*

A.J. Thomas from India read his poems *In the Eyes of the Beholder* and *Sarmad Shaheed*.

Meenu Minocha from India spoke about how a wood cutter in Arunachal Pradesh had been punished by nature and she expressed her concern over the environment.

Tarequl Ahsan from Bangladesh read his poems *Mad* and *The Bark*.

Mukunda Prayas from Nepal read a couple of poems.

Trina Chakraborty from India read three poems: *Resource*, *In the Train of Mist* and *Drawing Class*.

S. Pathmanathan from Sri Lanka read his two poems *Beyond Borders* and *The World Will Survive*.

### **The Fourteenth Session: Fiction Session**

Renuka Singh from India chaired the session.

A. Chellaperumal from India talked about his book titled *Forest and Tribal Tales in Literature*. He said, “I have collected details for tales and stories from most of the South Indian tribal communities, and I have published



essentially on the community called the 'urula' community. I publish these stories in more or less in their own dialect, though that dialect is not having any script, but they use the Tamil script”.

He recited a few lines from his book.

Niaz Zaman from Bangladesh read a bit from her novel *Baromashi Tapes*. She said, “It was inspired by how migrants and their families communicated through taped

letters before the cell phone became available and popular.”

Renuka Singh from India read from a book on environment by His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

### **The Fifteenth Session: Paper Presentation**

The Fifteenth Session was chaired by Kanchana Priyakantha from Sri Lanka.



Poonam Nigam Sahay from India presented her paper on the topic of 'Environment and Peace in Literature'. She spoke about eco-criticism, which is the way in which the literary study builds up the closed architectural bond between the human world and the ecological world.

M. Shaheenoor Rahman from Bangladesh presented his paper, 'Environment in Folklore'. He discussed about the history of folklore literature, how folklore literature should be understood and read by the society.

Mohammad Hasan Jan from Bangladesh presented his paper on the topic of 'Hearing the marginalized voices from Bangladesh and eco-critical reading of poetry of Garu and Chakma communities'. He said, “From centuries the indigenous peoples are directly dependent on nature for their livelihood without causing any major harm to the ecological balance mainly because they possess a strong ecological empathy towards and a spiritual bond with mother nature.”

Kanchana Priyakantha from Sri Lanka presented her paper on the topic, 'Environment and Peace in Literature'.

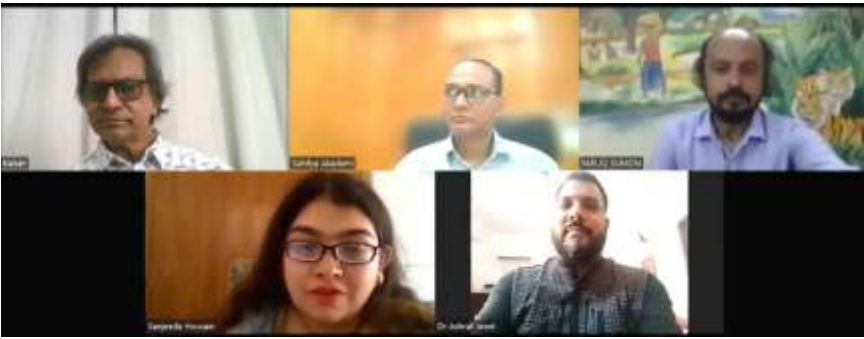


She said, “Earth is unlimitedly generous to these human beings but as usual the human beings are selfish and unfaithful”.

### **The Sixteenth Session: Interviews and Conversations**

Prof. Kaiser Haq chaired the Session.

Prof. Kaiser Haq, in conversation with Sanjeeda Hussain



from Bangladesh, said that the choice of any language by a writer is his personal matter, so that he chose English language. In this conversation both participants talked about environmental issues, the season of Dhaka, and literature.

The other conversation was between Ashraf Jewel and Faruq Sumon from Bangladesh. Ashraf Jewel said, “Poem is something which is the expression of a man, so what he observes or what he sees around him, he sings in his poems. In response to a question, he said that after his mother was injured in a bomb blast in his country, he started writing short stories. In the last of this conversation Ashraf Jewel discussed about his book *Pakhirosh*.

### **The Seventeenth Session: Poetry Session**

The Seventeenth Session was chaired by Prof. Hampa Nagarajaiah from India.

Ranjana Niraula from Nepal read out her two poems *War on Ukraine* and another in Nepali.

Paul Kaur from India read two of her Punjabi poems.

Ramakrishna Perugu from India read his poem in Tamil.

Samina Khanal from Nepal read her poem *Enlightenment* on peace and Buddhism.



Vanita Manchanda from India read one of her poems titled *In war*, and another one was about Punjab rivers.

Prof. Hampa Nagarajiah from India read his poems *Come Let's Plant a Tree*, from a Kannada book titled *Charuvasta*.

### The Eighteenth Session: Paper Presentation

The Eighteenth Session was chaired by Prof. Keshab Sigdel from Nepal.



Sabindra Raj Bhandari from Nepal presented his paper on the topic: 'Ecological issues in the Bhagavadgita'. He said, "Ecological reading of literature is known by different names such as eco-critical reading, eco-criticism and environmental criticism". He further said, "Bhagavad Gita especially highlights this issue: the interrelationship between plants, animals, humans, environment and the cosmos as well."

Nipunika Dilani from Sri Lanka presented her paper, 'An Analysis of Social Realism Portrayed through Nature in Sri Lankan English Poetry'. She said, "Ethnic riots in Sri



Lanka experienced three decades of riots until 2009, varied aspects of war have been turned in literature and it became one of the main themes of many of the poets in their poems”.

Tarun Saint from India presented his paper on the topic: 'Aspects of recent writings in the genre of climate change, fiction and in response to the pandemic'. He recalled the famous environmentalist Sunder Lal Bahuguna invoking the story of Ganga's descent to earth and Shiva's forestalling of likely destruction by laying out his stresses to contain the force of water.

Keshab Sigdel from Nepal presented his paper, 'Environment and Literature'. He presented his ideas on connectivity among literature, environment, and human rights.

### The Nineteenth Session: Poetry Session

Kaiser Haq from Bangladesh chaired this session and read two poems. Arjun Dhungana from Nepal read his



Nepali poem *Shadow*. Dhiraj Rai and K.G. Subba from Nepal read one poem each and Jharna Rahman from Bangladesh shared with the audience her translated poem from Bangla. Molly Joseph from India read her poem *Progress* and Lutfia Hannum Salima Begum from India read her poems *As I Sit Down to Write a Poem* and *Fallen Leaves*. While Mithilesh Shrivastava from India read his *Ek Kisan ka Bayan* and *Bhasha ke Bhitari Bahar* in Hindi, Balbir Madhopuri from India read his poem translated from Punjabi titles, *He said*.

### The Twentieth Session: Paper Presentation

G. Madhusoodanan from India presented his paper on the



topic, 'Environmental thing in Malayalam Literature.' He discussed about the changes taking place in Malayalam poetry in the last three-four decades. He highlighted the literature written on environment in Malayalam poetry.

Ketaki Datta from India presented her paper, 'Environment in Folklore' and cited examples from folklore literature to explain the major components of environment and their relevance.



## **Foundation Of SAARC Writers And Literature**

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