

27th MARCH

SESSION IX

NEW VOICES OF YOUNG WRITERS

The first session began with **Abdul Ghafoor Lewal** in the Chair and **Abhi Subedi** gave



On the dais : Prof. Abhi Subedi from Nepal; Prof. A.K. Rashid from Afghanistan; Ms. Jharna Rahman from Bangladesh; Mr. Abdul Ghafoor Liwal from Afghanistan, Dr. Nihal Rodrigo from Sri Lanka.

the keynote address. Since this was a session on the next generation, that is the younger writers, Abhi Subedi spoke on the challenges before the new generations, the problems they have to come to terms with and the selectiveness they have to aim for to be noticed.

Abdul Ghafoor Lewal in his presidential address raised the very pertinent question of who should be considered young? Those who are young in age or those who have not reached a level of maturity in ideas and concepts.

Humera Rahat from Pakistan, read out a paper on the New Voices in Literature in Pakistan.

Mr. Lyansong Tamsang particularly discussed the concept of sacrificing space for the sake of the minority community.

As a Lepcha, that is a very small community, he insisted that writing is an inner urge. He said that as a senior writer, he always told the younger ones that you have a mighty pen—so write and create. You have the ability to change the world for the better.

Nayyara Rehman, as a young Pakistani writer herself, pointed out the fact that Pakistani writing in English has particularly attracted the attention of the West and received International recognition.

She said that the last decade had been particularly vibrant.

In his intervention **Nihal Rodrigo** reminded everyone that there is the SAARC Cultural Centre in Colombo, Sri Lanka, that also has charge of publishing. He said that he was particularly interested in publishing the contemporary works from new pens.

The Panel Discussion was chaired by **Sharan Kumar Limbale** and the guest of honour was **Refaquat Ali Khan**.

Sharan Kumar Limbale talked at length on the marginalization of the Dalits and the scheduled castes. He pointed out how the dalits were not allowed to use pen or paper and it was only after Baba Saheb Ambedkar that dalits started reading and writing. In the process they started recording their own histories, their pains and their humiliation. This led to the vast body of Dalit Sahitya.

Among the young writers **Amandeep Sandhu** who has published one book, 'Sepia Leaves', spoke about the subaltern and the history of geography. He said that these two aspects had influenced him most in his writing.

Manjul Bajaj another young poet and short story writer, said that she was the inheritor of two languages, Hindi and Urdu and had to learn English as well and she now used it the most. She was not willing to give up on either of the three.

The session dedicated to the young writers ended with that.

SESSION X

SAARC IDENTITY AND GLOBAL CULTURE

The Second session was chaired by **Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan**, and the Guest of Honour was **Prof. Mushirul Hasan**.



On the Dias : Mr. Zareen Anzor from Afghanistan, Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan, Prof. Mushirul Hasan.

Mushirul Hasan began his address by saying that he had always looked at poetry as something very superior and had often used poetry from important poets in his historical writings. He commended the effort of Ajeet Cour for continuously striving to bring together so many writers from so many countries. This kind of coming together brought with it a feeling of belonging amongst the writing fraternity that was so important for peace and meaningful dialogues.

However, he mentioned that literature had been used to create otherness as well, like



Prof. Mushirul Hasan

the literature of the Qadiyanis and the Arya Samajis. This kind of literature was meant to create enmities. Writers he said had been using very different parameters to build nationalism. He also said that writers can grasp realities much more than historians or sociologists.

Partaw Naderi presented a paper on political poetry, claiming that political poetry originates when a poet stands up and says that I do not accept you.

In Afghanistan he recounted, poetry of resistance can be said to have started in the 19th century. He also mentioned many poets who had written political poetry in the 20th century. He

ended his presentation by saying that if poetry is not political in a land like Afghanistan that is going through such strife, then, it should be made political.

Dr. Rani Massey, scholar and professor, also presented a paper on "The Impact of Globalization on the contemporary SAARC Women's Writing".

She made a point that SAARC women writers must represent the Asian identity, so that we are not recorded in history as the 'Lost Voice'.

Jharna Rehman also presented a paper in this session.

The session was closed by an extremely



Mr. Partaw Naderi from Afghanistan



Dr. Rani Massey



Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan

eloquent, analytical speech by **Dr. Kapila Vatsayan**. Leading scholar of the global cultural scenario and author of several books, she talked about the nation states posing the question whether they represent a shared civilization? What are the definitions of these boundaries? She then went on to analyze the contribution of the oral literature that travelled all over this region, crossing boundaries and borders. She emphasised the point that we should celebrate the fact that we have multi-identities within the single identities.

Kapila ji elaborated that we have divided our literature into ideologies : leftist, rightist, committed, dalit, etc. One needs to look at the

collective orality of the literature on the whole. Literature must transcend time and space beyond national, civilizational and historical boundaries. Only then can it be real literature. That is why we still read Homer, Vyas and Valmiki.

SESSION XI

CELEBRATING RABINDRANATH TAGORE AND NAZRUL ISLAM

The session was chaired by **Prof. Syed Shahid Mahdi**.

Soundari David of the SAARC Cultural Centre gave a short brief on the Centre in Colombo, Sri Lanka. She also informed that through this centre, poetry and short story



Ms. Soundarie David from Sri Lanka



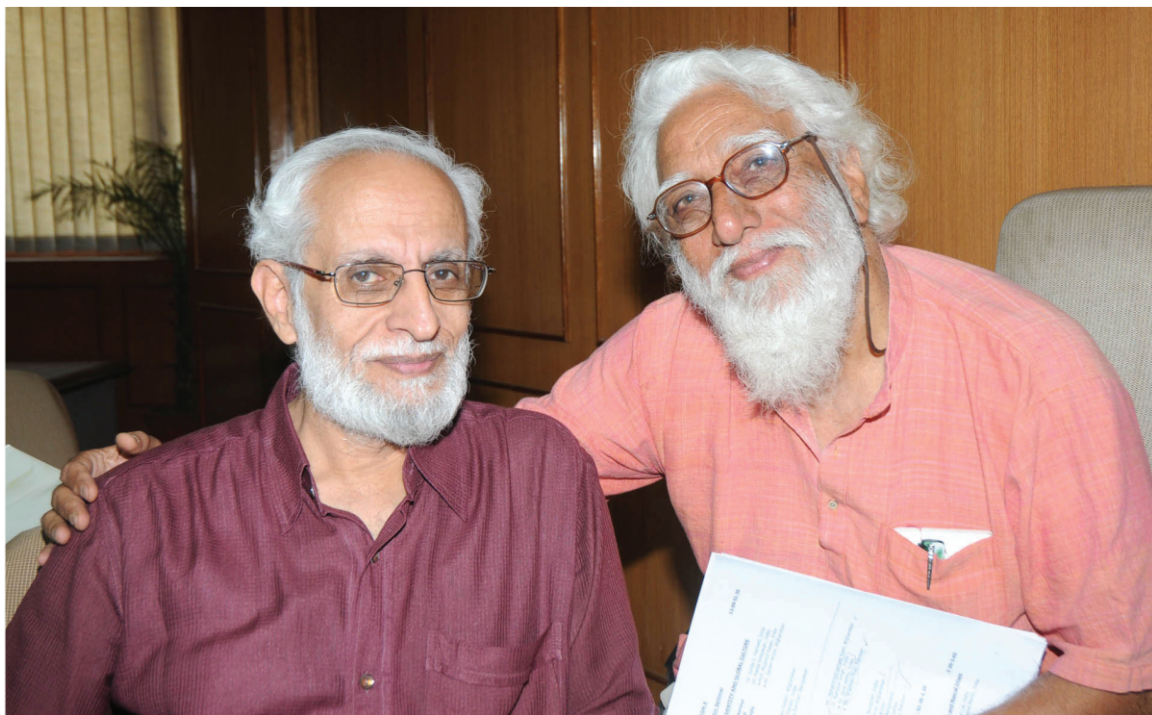
Prof. Samik Bandyopadhyay

collections shall be published and promoted.

In the session after Lunch the well-known scholar of Arts and Aesthetics and professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University **Prof. Samik Bandyopadhyay** read a paper on Rabindranath Tagore and his response to the crisis of Civilization. This crisis began for Tagore probably with the World War I.



Ajeet Cour and Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan : sharing their affection for each other.



Dr. Alok Bhalla with the poet Manmohan Singh Mitwa



Ms. Ajeet Cour with the legendary Safdar Hashmi's mother.



Arpana Caur with Ms. Sonam Ongmo from Bhutan/USA

Prof. Samik Bandyopadhyay quoted Tagore saying “The western concept of liberalism crumbles under the western imperialism.” It was Tagore who coined the term “Samrajya Madmatta” or the Drunkenness of Imperialism.

Tagore was revolted by the news that a shackled Nazrul Islam, while being shifted from one jail to another, was sighted at one of the railway stations. Inspired by this

Rabindranath wrote “Red Oleander” where a mad singer is jailed and shackled.

When Tagore was asked to interfere in the treatment being given to Nazrul Islam, he said, “To ask an idealist to abandon his ideals amounts to killing him.”

The second paper of the session was by **Dr. Malashree Lal** and focused on another relationship of Tagore. The paper was titled 'Tagore's views on the 'feminine': Epistolary Moments'. The paper drew its source from the letters written to an Argentinean writer Victorio Ocampo.

Prof. Syed Shahid Mahdi who chaired the session compared the backgrounds of Nazrul Islam and Rabindranath Tagore and their very different reactions to the same events.

A song from Nazrul Geeti was sung by the Bangladeshi writer **Jharna Rehman**.

'Journey Through Tagore' put together by **Averi Chatterjee**, **Minoti Chatterjee** and **Alok Bhalla**, a theatrical performance, had glimpses of his stories, his poems and incidents of his life.



Prof. Minoti Chatterjee



Prof. Avereer Chaurey

SESSION XII

RESOLUTION

Prof. Alok Bhalla presented the RESOLUTION prepared by Representative of all the 8 SAARC countries :

- **Partaw Naderi**, Afghanistan
- **Prof. Manzoorul Islam**, Bangladesh
- **Mr. Tshering Dorji**, Bhutan
- **Dr. Sitakant Mahapatra, Dr. Abid Hussain, Prof. K. Satchidanandan**, India
- **Mr. Ibrahim Waheed**, Maldives
- **Prof. Abhi Subedi**, Nepal
- **Ayesha Zee Khan**, Pakistan
- **Dr. Nihal Rodrigo**, Sri Lanka

The Resolution is as follows:

We, the writers, academics, journalists, artists and peace activists from each of the eight SAARC countries, gathered here in Delhi to celebrate the life of the mind and of the arts, under the auspices of Foundation of SAARC Writers and Literature, do hereby declare that that our politicians-makers, economic advisers, civil society representatives, religious leaders must make every effort to contain and moderate every tendency to create social, communal, caste, gender or regional tensions between the nation states and among their peoples. Just as writers can talk to each other without fear of religious, caste and gender vilification, musicians can appreciate the infinite variety of tunes that express their inner being, artists can look at the work painters and artisans without ethnic biases, critics can read texts from every region without national prejudice, and traders can do business across borders without threat, we urge that our political and religious orders ensure that there is always an atmosphere of peaceful tolerance, cultural appreciation and religious concord between the nations and the communities that form SAARC.

We express our profound revulsion at the use of hasty forms of violence to settle national disputes, political differences, negotiate environmental concerns, or manage religious misunderstandings between the nation states that constitute SAARC. We believe that every disagreement can be resolved through dialogue and every cultural, moral, or religious issue can be discussed and debated for its peaceful resolution.

We resolve that the governments of each of the SAARC countries must pledge that every boy and girl of every region, without exception, has the right to go to school and an education which respects his or her fundamental rights as a citizen and a human being.

We believe that it is in the interest of peaceful exchange of ideas, opinions and beliefs that the countries should encourage cross-border exchanges and frequent meetings between writers, academics, artists, peace-activists and other members of the civil societies so that there is a continuous effort made by the peoples of the region to understand each others' problems and concerns better, build bridges of friendship and

find peaceful solutions.

We resolve that in the interest of peace in our region, no government infringes upon the right of any of its citizen to worship freely according to his or her faith and conscience; that no form of coercion is used to influence or change his or her convictions or faith; that no one, under any circumstance, is denied his or her right to criticism and free expression of idea and that no threat of punishment is made against those who use their fundamental and democratic right to express themselves.

We urge that means be devised whereby the views of the people can be brought to the attention of policy-makers for careful consideration and implementation.

We resolve that writers, artists, singers, peace-activists and others concerned with cultural and civil society issues, are exempted from Visa requirements to enable track II initiatives for promoting peace and free exchange of ideas in the region.

The Resolution was read out and was unanimously accepted by all the delegates

Alok Bhalla proceeded to deliver a vote of thanks to **Ajeet Cour**, **Arpana Cour** and all those who had worked behind the scene to make the conference successful. He also read out the declaration which was passed unanimously by all the delegates.

SESSION XIII

POETRY FESTIVAL

The last poetry session was chaired by the well known Bengali writer and poet **Nabaneeta Dev Sen**.

Some of the poets who read out their poems were :

Prof. A. K. Rashid in Pashto, **Gita Karki** in Nepali, **Shiraz Hasan** in Urdu, **Maheen Hisbani** in Sindhi and **Mithilesh Shrivastava** in Hindi.



Dr. Nabaneeta Dev Sen

At the end of the session **Nabaneeta Dev Sen** thanked **Ajeet Cour** for collecting a galaxy of writers and for giving space to everyone to be heard. She also thanked **Arpana Cour**, who she said is a silent worker, preferring to remain in the background but being one of the central pillars of the immense work being done by FOSWAL.

The other poets who presented their verses were : **Manu Manjil**, **Sandhya Pahari**, **Sabita Gautam** from Nepal, **Tshering Dorji** from Bhutan, **Bhagyalakshmi**, **Bishnu Mohapatra**, **Garima Mathur**, **Tarannum Riaz**, **Balbir Madhopuri**, **Pran G. Basak**, **Vimal Kumar**, **Mithilesh Shrivastava** from India, **Don**

Nissanka Wijemanna, **M. Ponnambalam**, **Sumithra Rahubaddhe**, from Sri Lanka, **Humera Rahat**, **Sanaullah**, **Rakshanda Naveed**, Pakistan



Mr. Manmohan Singh Mitwa

The Conference was concluded by a poem read by **Manmohan Singh Mitwa**, who was introduced by Ajeet Cour as someone who is a very hardworking person and an excellent organizer but who is also very introvert when it comes to putting forward his own creative capabilities.

IN CONCLUSION

The three day Festival of Literature was a great success. It helped to raise consciousness and awareness amongst writers for the need to interact and exchange ideas with other fellow writers. Writing has always been considered a creativity that reaches its zenith in solitude. Yet in today's dynamic world discussion and dialogue provide the motivation and impetus for panache to take form.

It brought to focus the urgent need for rigorous translation to promote a closeness between the writers of the SAARC countries.

It focused attention of the literary community on the vast body of oral literature that lies untapped and unexplored. This is part of our shared inheritance and must be documented and preserved.

It also pinpointed the fact that writers and poets have to continue to strive for peace and meaningful dialogue between countries that have political differences. Writers can help to smoothen out these points of friction so that firmer, stronger and longer lasting ties can be established.



Among the audience : First row : Ajeet Cour, Dr. Sitakant Mahapatra, Prof. K. Satchidanandan.
Second row : Mr. Amandeep Sandhu, Ms. Humera Rahat from Pakistan, Ms. Tahira Iqbal from Pakistan.