

**National Conference and Festival**  
**Celebrating Indian Literature and Culture**  
K L University & ISCS  
28 – 30 March 2016

The three-day National Literary Conference and Festival on the theme “Celebrating Indian Literature and Culture” organized by K.L.University in collaboration with the Indian Society for commonwealth Studies got off to a grand start. “I cannot heave/ my heart into my mouth,” Cordelia in *King Lear* said. To describe the grandeur of the event is no easy task and hence a bare heart-felt account, no more, no less. Dr.Raja Ambethkar added to the glamour of the occasion as the master of the ceremony. The inaugural function began with the traditional lighting of the lamp by the guests on the dais and Dr.K.K.Sunalini, Convener, giving a brief account of the Conference. Dr.M.Latha, Head of the Dept of English, presented a profile of the activities of the Department which consists of as many as 32 teachers. In his inaugural address, Prof.C.R.Visweswara Rao, Former Vice-Chancellor, Vikrama Simhapuri University, Nellore, referred to literature as a barometer of civilization and replica of culture. Outlining these features, he touched upon the various phases of Indian writing in English as they reflect the challenges offered to colonization and Eurocentrism, complicity with language, “linguistic nomadism”, and the neo-colonial as it continues through the postcolonial phase. He pointed out how hybridity and cultural amphibianism have given new dimensions to the interrogation of textuality in Indian literature. Prof.M.Ramamoorthy, Hon’ble Chancellor of KLU University, spoke about the interrelationships among language, literature, and ethics and touched upon the perennial quality of literature. He employed the Arnoldian “touchstone” method in order to identify where the ring of eternity is to be discovered. Sri P.V.Sunil Kumar, Inspector General of Police, Guntur range, was the Chief Guest on the occasion and he dwelt upon the relationship between culture and society in the production of literature. He was introduced by Dr.K.B.Glory. Prof.P.Rajasekhar, Professor of English, Acharya Nagarjuna University, who was the Guest of Honour, gave a brief talk on the idea of celebrating literature and culture from the fourth world perspective. He was introduced by Dr.P.V.Ravi Kumar. Prof.R.K.Dhawan, President, Indian Society for Commonwealth Studies, New Delhi, detailed the objectives of the ISCS and pointed out a unique feature of this Conference: papers submitted for presentation at the Conference were carefully selected, pre-judged by the publisher, painstakingly edited, brought out in book form under the title *Indian Literature and Culture*, and released at the Conference itself by the Hon’ble Chancellor of the University. This is a first of its kind. Edited by Dr.K.K.Sunalini, Conference Convener, and brought out elegantly by Prestige Books International, *Indian Literature and Culture* containing 50 essays in all is divided into ten sections and it places before us the heritage of Indian culture as manifested in diverse fields like literature, folklore, television, and the media. It gives us a glimpse into the cultural spectrum of the nation and its vistas as it were through multiple creative configurations and is thus expected to be a good resource for scholars. The customary *Souvenir* containing the abstracts of the Conference presentations was released by Sri P.V. Sunil Kumar, the Chief Guest. Prof. R.K. Dhawan,

President, ISCS, in his address described Indian culture, in the manner of Rabindranath Tagore, as a vast expanding banyan tree with deep roots and shade, described by Milton as the “pilloried shade.” Dr. Roshwitha Joshi, Indo-German novelist, addressed the gathering on the penetrable layers of creative writing and said the writer is endowed with a unique vision of holding in balance a juxtaposed set of attitudes and values. She also said, “Circean Enchantress,” as Milton, in his puritan derision, described the woman as seductress metaphor becomes an object of ironic, humorous depiction at the hands of the contemporary artist. The inaugural session ended with a vote of thanks by Dr. Ch. V. Ramani.

The first plenary session in the afternoon was on Fourth World literature and Prof. P. Rajasekhar laid its philosophical foundation by placing it in a comparative perspective and making a plea for mainstreaming the theme of dalit victimization. Making a fervent plea for discussing caste and indignities heaped upon the dalits at greater length, he made a case for the expression of dalit subjectivities with Dr. B. R. Ambedkar as the centerpiece of the ideological construct.

There was then a poetry reading session chaired by Dr. Yamini Pendyala. Dr. K. V. Dominic with his poem on the siachin glacier disaster raises questions of the futility of war and its inhumanities. Dr. T. Vasudeva Reddy read out his poems in which his image of a woman standing like “an expiring candle” and of “the pensive looks of books” and their “engraved graves” appealed to the audience and enlivened the scholarly atmosphere with the fresh breeze of creativity. This was followed by a brief lecture on “Coding and Decoding poetry” by Dr. E. Rama Bhaskara Raju in which he addressed the question of tackling an imaginative construct.

Last in the day, but not least in importance, were the three paper reading sessions in which the hard labour of the participants and the sigh of relief they heaved at the end of the paper reading were amply in evidence. As expected, there were papers on a wide variety of themes ranging from translation of the classics and their ethicizing in the process of contestation and adaptation to the contemporary time and clime, media and interlingual translation, film criticism, and of course as usual, critiques of Kamala Das, Anita Desai, Meena Alexander, and Amitav Ghosh, to mention but a few names. The self and its masks in autobiography, feminism and dalit feminism, multiculturalism, issues of identity and interlacing of cultures were among the many themes reflected upon. The idea of the woman as a subaltern voice revealed by dominant patriarchal ideology was another theme frequently subjected to critical review. While the range was bewildering, the focus was sometimes showed a fascination with contemporary critical fads or it was on the dreaded API series. Fads may be evanescent, but after all, Dandi in *Kavyadarsa* said, “How can a man ignorant of the science of poetics distinguish between excellence and blemishes? Has ever a blind person the power to comprehend distinctions in colour?” The overall tenor of the paper presentations indicated that, thanks to globalization, every local, regional, national culture revealed itself in a cross-illuminating light. But it was surprising that in the varied themes discussed “the illusion that cooked Salman Rushdie’s goose”, as the media

projected the event, and its embarrassing aftermath of creativity did not figure. Probably the young among us in this part of the country have a nose for the newsy other than this distraction. One may be tempted to mention this because it has been said that the novelist is the historian of the present and the historian novelist of the past. A salient feature of the Conference was that the paper presenters were not hurried through their paper readings and there was also reasonable scope and time for discussion and debate.

The second day began with paper reading sessions followed by a talk by Prof. K.V.Dominic, poet and critic, entitled "Multiculturalism in India: A Wonder to the World." By illustrating from his own poem "Multicultural Symphony," Dr. Dominic pleaded for a spirit of multiculturalism that ensures a syncretic gaze at civilization. The session was presided over by Dr.Ch.V.Ramani.

With Dr.Suman Bala, Executive Secretary, ISCS, in the chair, Dr.Roshwita Joshi gave an illuminating viewpoint of the creative writer on the art and craft of fiction, different of course from the ones by Percy Lubbock and Edwin Muir, with which we as students were familiar. She placed vividly before the audience the dilemmas before a migrant writer writing in a language that became her adopted cultural possession. In this story of her creativity, one could notice a distinct strain of humour on the oddities and angularities of life's situations, revealing an essential human centeredness. But this tends to be characterized by the publisher as a vision unique to a migrant. We are reminded of Jacques Derrida who said each book is a pedagogy aimed at forming its readers. However, the publishing houses today... presuppose a reader who has already been programmed. Let us be wary of this invasion. Dr. Roshwita Joshi's fourth novel *Trapped in Want and Wonder* was released on the occasion and Prof.R.K.Dhawan introduced the book to the audience. *Trapped in Want and Wonder* deals with one significant theme of great relevance in contemporary India that influences/afflicts the world of the media: "Shoot your way to glory. It's the rating that counts". Witty and satirical, Dr.Roshwita Joshi gives insights in this novel into issues interlaced with the media gaze.

The next session was a talk on translation by Prof.C.L.L.Jayaprada who has recently translated Sri.Aurobindo's *Savitri* into Telugu. She narrated how the springs of Indian culture can be discovered through translation and made references to the postcolonial phase of translation and dalit & tribal translation. Prof.C.R.Visweswara Rao presided over this session and said that the great ages in literature have been great ages of translation. The afternoon session of the second day started on refreshing note with the release of Dr.Archana Suyal's work *Waiting for...* and her elaborate defence of the what, the why, the how, and the when of this waiting for. Prof.K.Ramakrishna, Registrar, KLU University, released the book and Prof.R.K.Dhawan and Dr.K.K.Sunalini were on the dais.

The next session was devoted to a lively panel discussion on Multiculturalism: Fact on Myth? With Dr.Babli Gupta in the chair, the panel consisted of Prof.Kalpana Purohit from Jodhpur University, Dr.Archana Suyal, Dr. G. Mohanacharyulu and Dr.C.Naresh from KLU University. Dr.Babli Gupta opened the discussion by saying that multiple ethnicities and multiple anchorages reveal how diversity is written into the text of the

language itself. The panel discussion began with a stress on the contribution of India to the concept and practice of multiculturalism. It further discussed the theory and practice of different nations in the west. Dr.Kalpana Purohit spoke on the initiatives of Australian and Canadian thinkers in advocating equal rights through civil campaigns and social theories. She described multiculturalism in terms of the salad bowl image. Dr.G.Mohanacharyulu sketched a panoramic view of a non-hegemonic, non-violent multiculturalism that was truly global. Dr.C.Naresh stressed the contemporary shortcomings in cross-cultural encounters between the hegemonic west and the other from Asian countries who sought to live in these new lands without surrendering their identities. Dr.Archana Suyal expressed her unshaken faith in human generosity. Dr.Babli Gupta raised the issues of provocations to peaceful coexistence that hinder multicultural processes.

The first plenary session on the third day began with a talk by Dr.T.Vasudeva Reddy on contemporary trends in Indo-English poetry. The session was chaired by another fellow poet Dr.K.V.Raghupathi from the Central University of Tamilnadu, Dr.Pavani introduced Dr.T.Vasudeva Reddy. Dr.T.Vasudeva Reddy drew the attention of the audience to the politics of dislodgement of poets, showing the contrived corridors and cunning passages in literary history, which of course is not uncommon in the poetic world. Every Milton had his detractors. An interesting feature of Dr. T.V. Reddy's talk was that he mentioned a number of poets of the more recent period and their poetic apparatus.

In the next session, Dr.Indira Babbellapeti, Professor of English, Andhra University, read some poems from her anthologies of verse and passed on memorable lines like "the heart and mind floated on surreal fears". Her poem on re-visiting Vijayawada evoked the dichotomies of past mingled them with the present entities of existence. She introduced her book of poems *Nomadic Nights* and spoke about the four-fold responsibility before the translator while referring to her translations. Prof. C.R.Visweswara Rao presided over the session.

The next session was a book release. Describing it as an achievement of the home turf, Prof.R.K.Dhawan introduced the author Dr.Sudhir Kekre and the multicultural spirit he embodied. The book, *The Rambler's Inn*, Dr. Dhawan said recalled in its humour and content the spirit of the eighteenth century England and its coffee house meditations on the trivial and the serious.

Sri Sunil Gera, engineer-entrepreneur-turned-creative writer, spoke in the next session on his evolutionary journey as a creative writer, the conscious preparation he made for it before he came forward with in first novel *Make Me Your Friend* (2012), and the final beckoning of the dream to fulfillment. The nurture of the writer within (It was said by a Telugu poet that the heart heaves into the throat seeking to express itself – "gunde gontukalona kottadutaadi"), the comingling of the prose and the passion of life – these are what Sri Sunil Gera spoke about while introducing his second novel *Stars in Your Lifecentred* on various facets of love.

Then came the encounter with the creative writer. In the Meet the Poet session, Dr.K.V.Raghupathi was the poet who shared his thoughts on the travails and pleasures of

writing poetry. Starting on note that gives familiar quotes on poets and poetry, where poetry stems from, what it is, Dr.Raghupathi said, poetry was response, that transfiguring, unifying, meaning conferring moment the implied personality of the poet arrived at. He elaborated this “chimerical transformative process” in his address. While illustrating from his poems, he dwelt on how writing poetry for him was a transcendental experience. One of the students of KLU University, Mr.B.Chaitanya, ECE branch, read his poems on the occasion to the great pleasure of the audience. Writing makes up a shelter and allows space in what would otherwise be hidden, crossed out, and mutilated, as Meena Alexander would say in her novel *The Shock of Arrival*.

The last two events before the valedictory were a film show *Swaatanya* (freedom) by Subha Niketan School, Kakinada, and a paper reading session. With this, all the seminar halls, Peacock, Jasmine, Rose, and Sunflower were put to use by Conference, making for the fulfillment of an expectation of the community and the funding agencies, optimum utilization of infrastructure.

The whole purpose of education is to turn mirrors into windows. The English Department of KLU University with Dr.K.K.Sunalini as the Convener of the Conference and Dr.M.Latha as the Head of the Department spent laborious days paying attention in minutest detail to organizing this event. They were ably supported, as one could easily notice, by a highly resourceful University administration committed to raising the productivity levels of higher education. The Indian Society for Commonwealth Studies (ISCS), New Delhi, has provided a rich and rewarding academic logistics support to this memorable event.

The valedictory function was held in Jasmine Room on 30th March 2016 with Prof. K. Venkata Reddy from the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, as the Chief Guest. His address was in line with the deliberations of the third day of the Literary Conference and Festival where the audience held dialogue with creative writers and translators, rather a rare event in Conferences where most often the critics steal the show. The Meet the Poet programme, the ones on current trends in translation, and addresses by creative writers on the art of writing, the "originary impulse," the state of contemporary poetry, the role of the writer in the multicultural universe enthralled the audience. Prof. Venkata Reddy offered a critical survey of the image and idea of the mother, a cultural construct, as manifested in Telugu poetry through the various ideological phases like Virasam, feminism, Marxism, and other landmark movements in creative writing. He cited extensively from the English translations of poets like Allam Narayana, Asha Raju, C. Narayana Reddy, Gopi, Challapali Swarupa Rani, Patibandi Rajani and others to show how very evocative metaphors, like "dawn" and "Lady Christ" were used to symbolize the mother's fertilizing power and sacrificial nature. Mr. Suman of the Department of English introduced the chief guest. Prof. C.R. Visweswara Rao presented a comprehensive report on the Conference, which he said would be published in the forthcoming issue of *The Commonwealth Newsletter*. Prof. L.S.S. Reddy, Vice-Chancellor, in his message, expressed his satisfaction with the areas of literature and culture explored in the

Conference and said that literature carries the message of culture and mirrors the values of the society. Prof. A. Anand Kumar, Principal, K.L. University, congratulated the Department of English and the Conference Convener on the successful conduct of the Conference and on the fruitful collaboration with the ISCS. Prof. R.K. Dhawan, President, ISCS, while thanking the staff, the authorities of the University, and the students volunteers who put their heart and soul into making the Conference a cherishable experience, said that the values that symbolize Indian culture like a great heritage that draws upon the collective unconscious and the spirit of tolerance were reflected upon in the Conference, even as these were subtly interfused with narrative strategies that evoke the contemporary scene. Prof. K. Venkata Reddy and Dr. Suman Bala, Executive Secretary, Indian Society for Commonwealth Studies were felicitated on the occasion. Dr.K.K. Sunalini, Convener, proposed an elaborate vote of thanks. The valedictory function was compered by Mr. M. Deva Santhanam Pillai.

Prof.R.K.Dhawan and Dr.Suman Bala put in relentless effort to make this Conference a grand success. They have to their credit several activities country-wide that raise the academic morale of the English teachers and brace them up to meet the scholarly challenges of the day. They deserve special appreciation for their contribution to the promotion of a knowing-doing culture in the academy.