



JYOTI NIVAS COLLEGE

Autonomous

Bengaluru , Karnataka

CONFLICT STUDIES- SPACES, WRITINGS AND REPRESENTATIONS.

Wednesday, 7th of September 2016, the Department of English of, Jyoti Nivas College held its-UGC sponsored National Conference on 'Conflict Studies,-spaces, writings and representations.'

The conference began at 9:15 am. The tradition of lighting of the lamp was carried out by Dr. Sr. Elizabeth, Ms. Maya Harave, Dr. Shantha V, Mr. Prantik Banerjee and Colonel Ryan Peter Lobo. Which was followed by a prayer by Dr. Susheela B, after which Ms. Maya was called on stage to give the audience an overview of the conference, she took them through a discussion of why it is necessary that we stand up to prevailing injustice and upheaval in our world. She recounted a staggering number of more than 10 million lives lost in conflicts such as the Vietnam War, the Korean War, the Sri Lankan crises and many more. Her speech concluded with the introduction and acknowledgment of the key note speaker, panellists and Sr. Elizabeth.

Next on stage was the key note speaker, Mr. Banerjee, who held the audience in rapt attention to his observations and analysis of how literature adapts to its environment. He holds a master's degree in journalism and philosophy, consulted as an expert academician; he has also published poetry and has been shortlisted four times for the Sahitya award for poet of the month. Hailing from Nagpur, Professor of Hislop College, Nagpur, he began his speech with an introduction to his home town, which is known for their oranges and snakes. He wished to bring 'a little bit of experience and wisdom', which the students received more than promised. His focus was on literature and conflict in three ways, 1. Literature of conflict, 2. Literature for conflict, 3. Literature in conflict. Much of his discussion revolved around the horrible tragedy that struck America on September 11th 2001, the twin tower attack that shook the entire world. He also threw light on the subject of the ethics in literary creations, when it is appropriate to represent such terror and what form of a moral code should the author keep in mind while making the attempt to recreate the event. Literature itself underwent a change after 9/11, it became the central theme in over 144 literary works, such as in the Mohsin Hamid's, 'The Reluctant Fundamentalist', Jonathan Foer's, 'Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close', to mention a few. His questions revolved around the predicament of how to make art when we are living in the age of terror. His discussion then moved onto the aspect of over representation in the case of 9/11 and on the under representation in the case of climate change. How, though climate change is one of the biggest threat that our only home is facing, we remain numb to voice out our concerns and even if these issues are discussed it is in the form of sci-fi novels, representing a dystopian society, but not seeing it from the present point of view. 'climate change resist language itself', showing how literature itself is in a state of conflict, he also went on to talk about the censorship board that kills creativity, fundamentalists claiming lives of writers in broad day light and of how it is necessary for us to continue to speak, "Especially in our country where we put writers on the back foot, because 'big brother' is watching you".

After a short tea break the event continued with the paper presentations, which was introduced by Dr. Preetha Vasan, the moderator for the paper presentation. She focused on 'changing conflict zones', she opined that both conflict and literature are dependent on each other for survival. Also how war and love being the two main reasons for conflict, the Ramayana and



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Ulysses for example. She also went onto the question of American ideology which was doubted in the Vietnam War, the paper also covered Holocaust writers, drawing our attention to how writing fiction on such a strong event almost makes the event itself seem fiction. She also went on to critic the work of Khaled Houssieni , the author of ‘Kite Runner’, how “The American dream was juxtaposed with the Afghan nightmare”. Her paper ended on a powerful note on how ‘literature moves toward wounding but also healing and literature makes possible of healing and restoration of human dignity’.

From a total of 40 only 10 papers were picked for the presentation, the presenters were allowed eight minutes to present their paper, where after seven minutes they would be warned to wind up. The papers varied in depth and concepts, each bringing in its own view of conflict and its influence in the 21st century. The presenters included students from Christ University, Mount Carmel College, two students for Jyoti Nivas and many more. The topics included the use of mass media as a tool by terrorist organizations, understanding masculinity in partition literature, a metaphor of Tibetan refugee in china, which was a paper presented by Tenzin of third year Communicative English student of Jyoti Nivas College, which was a thought provoking paper on the worlds silence to injustice. The other papers included bane for those without, which focused on the adverse effects of urbanization on the poor, this paper was focused its attention on developmental refugees. The next paper was on the representation of the many facets of Kashmir and select events. Followed by media popularity, entertainment industry and football hooliganism, the next paper was on the involvement of America in the Israel-Palestine conflict, the other papers were narratives of dislocation, disruption and disjunction, the role of women in conflict and the last paper being representation of resolution of conflict in literature, which was an attempt to make identities into numbers, so that we aren’t clouded by them while resolving a crises. Each paper received two questions, making it a very interactive space for the flow of opinions.

After the lunch break, the audience was made to watch a short film by Javed Iqbal, a film that focused on the internal and external unrest of both the urban and rural world. The session continued with the next event, the panel discussion. The audience was thrilled to meet the panellists, all of whom held a vast background of knowledge and experience in the field of literature and communication. Mrs. Sujatha Padmanabhan introduced the audience to the four panellists. The first was Ms.Mal Swami Jacob, an independent writer of seven books, she spent her childhood in Mizoram, studied in Shillong and completed her teaching diploma in Hyderabad. Her book Zorami was published in 2015, her other works include a collection of poems, 2 children’s books and narrative fiction. Next was Colonel Ryan Peter Lobo, who has encountered insurgency in the Kashmir war, also part of the recruiting committee of the Indian Army. Followed by Ms. Rohini Mohan, journalist and a writer, authored the book ‘seasons of trouble’, which was on the aftermath of the Sri Lankan war .The last to join the group was Ms. Ekta Mittal, co-founder of Maraa, she has conducted extensive research on migrants workers , hoping to discover ‘art in labour’. Each of them spoke on their concerns, ranging from matters of how there is a need to fight and the necessity to document everything but at the same time to maintain objectivity and fairness, the role of the Army and reasons to understand law and finally how we are all connected to every conflict the world bears, why it is a must to listen more and to remain curious. Ms. Mittal spoke about why films are important because they have the ability to



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move people, to shake them. At the same time Ms. Jacob spoke of another art form, songs; 1966 Mizoram expressed its turmoil through songs, 1. Stirring up the movement, 2. Lamenting, 3. Searching for peace. The discussion was based on questions posed by both the audience and Ms. Sujatha, it touched upon matter such as whose truth to believe, how to remain fair when two sides of a story is presented, why people give up after a long wait of no response. The answers were elaborate and very informative; the students also took an active participation during the discussion

After the panel discussion the panellists, Ms. Maya Harave and Mr. Prantik Banerjee were invited to the stage for the release of the conference proceedings. The conference came to an end with the vote of thanks by Ms. Suparna Sen Gupta, “we must speak out and up and so we did. Knowledge must be free; walls must not be confined, because conflict has become part of our consciousness.”