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साहित्य अकादेमी
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संस्कृति मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार की स्वायत्तशासी संस्था
Sahitya Akademi
(National Academy of Letters)
An Autonomous Organisation of Government of India, Ministry of Culture



SA.16/14/

9 May 2022

PRESS RELEASE
Symposium on "Tagore and Nationalism"
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To coincide with Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore's Birth Anniversary and as part of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav, Sahitya Akademi organized a Symposium on "**Tagore and Nationalism**" at 4.00 p.m. today at Akademi's Conference Hall, 3rd Floor, Rabindra Bhavan, New Delhi in which five eminent writers and scholars – Sri Devendra Choubey, Dr. Mousumi Mukherjee, Dr. Ranjit Saha, Dr. Rekha Sethi, and Prof. S.P. Ganguly participated. The programme was chaired by Prof. Udaya Narayana Singh, eminent Maithili writer and scholar.

At the outset, Dr. K. Sreenivasarao, Secretary, Sahitya Akademi welcomed all the guest speakers with the angvastram. He briefly spoke about how Indian freedom movement has been a massive movement and Tagore's belief in humanity, "vasudev kutumbkam" philosophy and his broad spectrum of nationality. Prof. Udaya Narayana Singh, while addressing as chair recalled that in his obituary of Tagore, Gandhi had commented - "In the death of Rabindranath Tagore, we have not only lost the greatest poet of the age, but an ardent nationalist who was also humanitarian." This remark raises a question if there was a 'nationalist' hidden in Tagore while we are constantly told by critics that Tagore was opposed to the idea of nationalism? We look into this vexed question and some related issues. He concluded saying that such debates about limits of nationalism and demands for making it over-arching in running a nation-state, it was not hard to see why Tagore was raising his voice against the ideas of hegemonistic nationalism from the beginning. The challenge will be to see if one can unmake the current forms of nationalism more secular, more democratic, more sensitive towards all kinds of minorities – ethnic, religious and linguistic. Sri Devendra Choubey, a noted Hindi writer and educationist said that there have been too many narratives about Tagore's concept of nationalism and historians also have different opinions on which there was much debate. He said that Ambedkar, Bhagat Singh, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and Gandhi have been the contemporaries of Tagore. He talked about the concept of nationalism of Gandhi and Tagore which was altogether different. Sri Choubey said that one can know about the political sense of Tagore through his writings like Gora, Ghare Baire and many other books. Dr. Mousumi Mukherjee, Associate Professor and the Deputy Director at the International Institute for Higher Education Research and Capacity Building, O.P. Jindal Global University talked about Tagore's decolonial perspective on nationalism. She said, Tagore wrote his idea of nationalism in several papers and journals of international repute. Tagore stressed on the spiritual unity of man. She said, for Tagore, the freedom of mind is more important than political freedom.

Dr. Ranjit Saha, who is a writer and scholar in Hindi and Bengali said that the beginning of 20th century brought many a challenges in Tagore's life. He talked about the essays as also the lectures given by Tagore at various places in many countries and his huge personality as poet, painter and litterateur. Dr. Rekha Sethi, the Vice-Principal of Indraprastha College for Women, in her presentation said that one can see and study two aspects of Tagore – one through his non-fiction writings and another as a writer or as a litterateur. Tagore accepts diversity but not variability. Tagore differs on certain theories but also gives new concept of nationalism. He defines modernity by way of freedom of mind. Prof. S.P. Ganguly, former Professor and Chairperson of the Centre of Spanish, Portuguese, Italian and Latin American Studies of the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi spoke on Hispanic Reception of Tagore. He gave a brief account of Tagore's works which were translated into several foreign languages and the tremendous impact of Tagore in Mexico, Spain and several other countries. Several eminent writers and students were present in the programme.


(K. Sreenivasarao)