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PRESS RELEASE

All India Differently Abled Writers' Meet
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For the first time since its inception, Sahitya Akademi organized first of its kind a unique programme, titled All India Differently Abled Writers' Meet today in Sahitya Akademi's Auditorium, Rabindra Bhavan, New Delhi to get to know the perspectives of differently abled writers in different languages and different regions of India. The programme was inaugurated by Sri Arjun Ram Meghwal, the hon'ble Minister of State for Culture, Government of India. In his inaugural speech, he said that India will become strong only by using everyone's abilities. The present government is running with the aim of 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas'. Therefore, proper respect and participation of the disabled people is also being ensured in the building of the nation. Such gatherings would prove to be the best step to provide a platform to all of them. Mentioning many Divyang litterateurs, he said that without worrying about the lack of some colours in their lives, they create another rainbow of colours, which fills a new light in the lives of all of us. Referring to Surdas's favorite hymn - 'Prabhu ji, More Avgun Chit Na Dharo', he said that the pastimes of Krishna described by Surdas were as if he had presented them from a divine vision. He further said that the Ministry of Culture will try to organize such programmes in all the states.

The Guest of Honour of the inaugural session was eminent English writer and scholar K. Srilatha who shared the difficulties faced by Divyang people and said that we have to change our attitude towards Divyangs so that they can join the mainstream with us. Sharing the experiences of her daughter who has been facing dyslexia, she said that school education is the most difficult for Divyang children. Therefore it is very important to make our schools disabled friendly. She also asked for the inclusion of special libraries, books and activities for differently-abled students. Further, she said that disability is not only physical, it also has a mental form. Even though we are healthy and active, we have a handicapped mindset which is the most worrying and discouraging.

In his Presidential address, Madhav Kaushik, President, Sahitya Akademi said that Sahitya Akademi is trying to bring literary expression and sensibility on a single platform without dividing it into different parts, and in the coming times it would be possible that such programmes can be presented on a single platform instead of special conferences. He cited the example of Stephen Hawking while referring to the unlimited capabilities of disabled people and said that nature always compensates by giving a different quality to disabled people and their qualities become superior even to us normal people. Concluding the session, Vice President of Sahitya Akademi, Kumud Sharma, referring to Dharamveer Bharti's story 'Gul Ki Banno' and Nirala's poem 'Rani Aur Kani', said that there have always been characters in literature with physical disabilities. But now our attitude towards them has changed drastically. Such meetings will play an important role in building that consciousness, which is expected of our disabled writers. Earlier, welcoming everyone, Sahitya Akademi Secretary K. Sreenivasa Rao said that we can see the changing attitude towards the differently-abled in the literature from ancient times till now. Sahitya Akademi has always been providing a special platform to various scholars of literature and will continue to take similar initiatives in the future.

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The next session was *Kavi Sammelan*, presided over by Vinod Asudani and Suravi Chatterjee (Bengali), Sahaisuli Brahma (Bodo), Kusumlata Malik (Hindi), Nitin V. Mehta (Gujarati), S. Raghunatha (Kannada), Rilin Gemma Lyngdoh (Khasi), Sukhbir Mohabat (Punjabi) and Mohd. Aslam Badr (Urdu) presented their compositions. This followed by another session on 'My Literary Journey', chaired by Anil Kumar Aneja (English) and attended by Dhruba Jyoti Das (Assamese), Mariyath C.H. (Malayalam) and Biraja Routray (Odia) shared their hardships and journey of creative writing. All of them said that they took the help of literature to overcome their disability, due to which their life has become creatively significant.

The Chair of the session, Anil Kumar Aneja, said that two things are very clearly understood from this conference that fighting with disability does not require body parts, but courage and which we can achieve with the wings of emotions. The literary journey of differently-abled writers is completely different and unique from that of other writers. Mentioning many Divyang writers in the past, he said that we also need to bring them into the limelight. The last session of the Meet was also a Kavi Sammelan, which was presided over by Ch. Nagaraju, and Sanjay Vidrohi (Dogri), Prem Singh (Hindi), Tausif Raza (Kashmiri), Ramakant Rai Rama (Maithili), Chaitanya Dumbre (Marathi), Lalrampana (Mizo), Arjun Sharma (Nepali), R. Abhilash (Tamil) and Billa Mahender (Telugu) presented their compositions. The programme was well attended by several eminent writers, scholars and literary lovers. The Meet established that the world of the differently abled writers is indeed an indefatigable struggle, hope, faith, courage, trust, care and creativity.



(K. Sreenivasarao)