

डॉ. के. श्रीनिवासराव

सचिव

Dr. K. Sreenivasarao

Secretary

साहित्य अकादेमी

(राष्ट्रीय साहित्य संस्थान)

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/

21 September 2023

PRESS RELEASE

Birth Centenary Seminar on Manoranjan Das, eminent Odia playwright

21 September 2023

Sahitya Akademi organized a Birth Centenary Seminar on Manoranjan Das, eminent Odia playwright, at 10.00 a.m. today at the Akademi's Auditorium on the 3rd Floor, Rabindra Bhavan, New Delhi. At the outset, Dr. K. Sreenivasarao, Secretary, Sahitya Akademi welcomed the distinguished guests. He elaborated on the absurdist traits introduced by Manoranjan Das in the Odia theatre which later influenced the successive generations of theatre in Odisha. A monograph on Manoranjan Das, brought out by the Akademi, was also released during the session. Dr. Gourahari Das, Convener, Sahitya Akademi's Odia Advisory Board, said Manoranjan Das has been a legend of Odia drama who wrote 16 full length and 35 absurd plays. He also quoted a few lines from the biography of Manoranjan Das. Sri Ananta Mahapatra, eminent Odia Dramatist, said Manoranjan Das was an individual who represented creative generation. He spoke in detail about the significance of plays of Manoranjan Das in Indian theatre and also read an excerpt from his play *Nandika Keshari*. Sri Bijoy Kumar Satapathy, Member, General Council, Sahitya Akademi, in his key-note address elaborated on the keenness and technique of Manoranjan Das's plays. Ms. Sikata Das, daughter of Manoranjan Das and also an eminent Odissi dancer of international fame, shared her emotional life journey with her father and spoke on all of his plays in chronological order. Prof. Kumud Sharma, Vice-President, Sahitya Akademi, who chaired the inaugural session, reflected on her understanding of Manoranjan Das's plays saying that they were not meant for the masses but for those who represent the creative thinking or intellectual class. In her process of decoding Manoranjan Das, she read out an excerpt from the introduction of one of his play, *Aranya Fasal* and reflected him to be very much relevant in contemporary times. Sri Bhartruhari Mahtab, Hon'ble Member of Parliament, also spared time and graced the occasion by his august presence.

The First Session was chaired by Sri Nirmal Kanti Bhattacharjee, eminent Bengali scholar. He recalled Manoranjan Das as the first modernist dramatist of Odia. Prof. Jatindra Kumar Nayak, Sri Ajay Patnaik and Sri Sriraman Mishra presented their papers during the session. Prof. Jatindra Kumar Nayak said he was introduced to the world of the plays of Manoranjan Das while translating his memoir in English. Sri Ajay Patnaik talked about the similarities of themes and background in the plays of Mohan Rakesh and Manoranjan Das. Sri Sriraman Mishra pointed out that the de-colonialism taking place in literature and theatre during 1960s, and how as a result of which the folk-tradition was imbued in the theatres of Manoranjan Das.

The Second Session was chaired by Sri Satyabrata Rout, who narrated one of his personal life incidences with Manoranjan Das. Sri Tarunkanti Rout, Sri Prabodh Kumar Rath, Sri Pradeep K. Mohanty and Sri Bijayananda Singh presented their papers during the session. Sri Tarunkanti Rout emphasized on the ingenuity of Manoranjan Das' plays which could easily be adapted for stage and radio both. Sri Prabodh Kumar Rath said that Manoranjan Das' plays could widely be divided in three phases – the initial phase, where he wrote for the masses, the second phase where he wrote for the intellectual audience and third phase which produced a few more of such plays. Sri Pradeep K. Mohanty called Manoranjan Das a pioneer of writing of realistic plays. Sri Bijayananda Singh, former Convener of Akademi's Odia Advisory Board, brought to notice the organisational and leadership aspects of the life of Manoranjan Das, besides those of a dramatist – through which he held innumerable important positions at state and central level during his lifetime.

Sri Krishna Kimbahune, Deputy Secretary, Sahitya Akademi thanked all the dignitaries and guests for their participation and for sharing insights into the experimental world of Manoranjan Das.

K. Sreenivasarao