

Report – Department of English, MNWC

Webinar on “Poetry for the Fractured World : In conversation with Arundhati Subramaniam & Prof. Bashabi Fraser.”

15th June 2020

The Department of English, Maniben Nanavati Women’s College, Mumbai along with SNDT College of Arts & SCB College of Commerce and Science for Women organised a Webinar on ‘Poetry for the Fractured World : In conversation with Arundhati Subramaniam & Prof. Bashabi Fraser’ on Zoom Meetings platform on 15th June 2020 from 3:30 PM to 5:30 PM (IST).

The session began with a warm welcome by Dr Rajshree Trivedi, Principal of Maniben Nanavati Women’s College who introduced Dr Jaydeep Sarangi. Dr Jaydeep Sarangi played a key role in moderating the entire session.

Dr Jaydeep Sarangi introduced the first guest speaker Arundhati Subramaniam, noted Indian poet, writer, critic, writing in English to deliver her thoughts to all the participants attending the webinar. Arundhati Subramaniam shared her journey of writing poetry and her inspiration and devotion towards Bhakti Poetry. She revisited Arun Kolatkar, a well-known bilingual poet from Mumbai poet who wrote poems in Marathi and English and his Ability to look precisely at the fractured world. She spoke about the notion of pilgrimage, physical and metaphysical elements being inseparable in bhakti poetry. She ended her part of the session with the following endnote “With God we can spare”. Dr Jaydeep Sarangi asked her questions pertaining to the book of poems namely ‘When God is a Traveller’ (2014) she published which followed the themes like desire for adventure and anchorage, freedom and belonging, etc. She ended her talk with a recitation of one of her poems.

The next guest speaker for the session was introduced by Dr Jaydeep Sarangi i.e. Prof Bashabhi Fraser, co- founder and director of the Scottish Centre of Tagore Studies at Edinburgh Napier University, also a poet extraordinaire. Prof. Bashabi Fraser spoke about her experience about being a poet in the diaspora and believes that even though she has left India, India has never left her. She talks about the poet laureate Rabindranath Tagore who has been a crucial part of her making and sheds light on the impact of Bhakti poetry on Tagore and his writings.

According to her, the voices of the homeland never leaves the poet and believes that poets look at the past for inspiration and reiterates that that is what makes their poetry address the fractured self that might otherwise have stifled their voice. She feels that writers in the homeland carry the homelands with them when they write and opines that they do not find a fractured line between poets from the homeland and poets in the diaspora. She believes that poetry can bring worlds together. Poets address the fractures and bring the world together. She ended with thanking the two colleges for organising the webinar and making friends out of strangers through the webinar. She also reiterated that conflict is within the minds of those who perceive it. Dr Fraser spoke about the relevance of Tagore in the current times and concluded her talk with reading a poem written for her grandson, apt for the current situation of the pandemic and how the fractured worlds have affected human relations.

The participants were very inspired by the speakers and posed a lot of interesting questions which added to the essence of the session. Dr Jaydeep Sarangi very well moderated the session by asking important questions which were taken from the participants in the audience pertaining to poetry and the relevance of it during this pandemic period.

Dr. Pandurang Barkale , Head of Dept of English, SNDT College of Arts proposed the vote of thanks by extending a note of gratitude towards the Principals of the two colleges for their support for the webinar. He also thanked the speakers for the interactive and insightful session and all the committee members for coordinating for the webinar. He also thanked the participants for actively participating in the session. Around 288 national and international participants were present at the webinar. A feedback form was circulated and all were asked to fill the online form through the link and the session ended at 5:30 pm (IST).

(The recording of the webinar has been posted on the following link for record purposes)

<https://www.facebook.com/rahul.deshmukh.3538039/videos/3141216592631817/>

