

HLF2012: A first-timer's impressions

Sriharikrishna Mocherla

On 18th January, 2012 - the third and last day, I had the fortune in attending Hyderabad Literary Festival - at the instance of my good friend U Atreya Sarma, a member of the Muse India team. Sessions went on concurrently in three halls - Golconda Auditorium, Kohinoor Hall and Taramati Premamati Rooms. It was a tough choice for me to chose the venue among the three. It was such a memorable experience that made me to put it in black and white and share my impressions through my maiden piece for Muse India e-journal.

The first item I witnessed was a panel discussion on the "Art of the Matter", the participants being Alekhya Punjala (famous Kuchipudi dancer), Vidya Rao (eminent Hindustani vocalist), and Pritam Chakravarthy, (leading theatre activist). They deliberated on the nuances of Bharata Natyam, Kuchipudi and other forms of art, vis-à-vis their aspect of performance.

Pritam Chakravarthy explained the emotional and sensory intelligence of an artist during their endeavours.

Alekhya Punjala in her elegant presentation dwelt on the comparative intricacies of Bharata Natyam and Kuchipudi, stating that art is a product of observation, a blend of what we see and what we perceive. Consciousness helps us to be more technical; she observed and concluded that 'women performers are not monolithic'.

Vidya Rao discussed the synchronization of voice and lip movement of dancers, while performing mudras.

The next session I attended was "Readings (English)" where Navkirat Sodhi (Delhi), Kazim Ali (USA), Prageeta Sharma (USA), and Meena Alexander (USA) read out their poetry. Navkirat Sodhi's 'My pen is alert', and 'Shake your telescopes to watch the twinkling stars' were fluent, and her ebullient voice enthralled the audience.

Kazim Ali's poems - "Rocks crumbled," "You made a promise you never kept," and 'Feathers fluttering, wings are small things' were engaging. His presentation on the scenic beauty of Kerala was really captivating. He said in his ode to Kerala that 'music and sunlight arouse me.' There were impressive images like 'horizon is lit', 'sacred idiot', and 'ocean retreats across the wind, sound, sound deep in the mind'.

Prageeta Sharma won the hearts of her audience with her mellowed voice and unique style. She touched upon exploring poetic imagination and its strange ways. 'Careless valentines', 'abstract recasting' and 'insight into the landscapes' confront the poet, in her view. Her poetry is endearing with expressions like 'human throb'.

In the post lunch 'Readings by The Little Theatre,' Shankar Melkote and his team read out the dialogues from some plays - with effective enunciation. To me, however, it appeared that expressions like the 'highest pinnacle' were avoidable pleonasms.

This performance was followed by another reading session of English poetry, and the poets were Kumarendra Mallick, MK Ajay (Kuala Lumpur), Sushmita Sadhu and Charanjeet Kaur (Moderator).

Kumarendra Mallick shared his reminiscences about his two-year old grandson in a poetic way and with mature mind.

Sushmita Sadhu (Kolkata) took the audience back to Robert Frost, who she said was her favourite poet, with her musings like 'pain is pleasure - pleasure is pain', 'Twilight of lunar magic wins my hope', 'Necklace of tears', and 'Petals begin to wilt'. MK Ajay's poems too were equally captivating with figurative expressions like "sweetness of salt".

The penultimate session was a real bonanza - an Urdu-Hindi Mushaira. Elizabeth Kurian Mona, Sardar Saleem, Jagjeevan Asthana, Syed Khalid, Narendra Rai and Tasneem Johar (Chair) competed and excelled with one another, rendering some entertaining presentations. They had the audience continuously wow them - with their optimum modulation, sweet voice, and perfect timing.

Then as the day drew to a close, the valedictory observations, remarks, pleasantries, and acknowledgments were befittingly made by T Vijay Kumar (Editor, Muse India and Professor, OU) and GSP Rao, Managing Editor of Muse India. Both of them profusely thanked and felicitated Amita Desai, Director, Goethe-Zentrum for her contribution in making the event the success it was. If I am this much moved just by one-third of the festival, how those who attended it entirely must have felt, I wonder.

I congratulate GSP Rao and his team of disciplined soldiers who organized this event in a meaningful manner - showcasing a blend of art, creativity, culture, and literature.

The informal interactions and bonhomie among the participants and the audience also served the cause of friendship. It's how I got introduced to quite a few people, and Seshu Chamarty (Associate Editor) is one among them - a very warm person indeed. So also GSP Rao was full of geniality. In the light of all this, I look forward to the next HLF with a sense of anticipation.