

CULTURE COURSE 2006

The Culture Course of this year, held from 1st to 7th of October, was, as have been its previous editions, a major event in our annual calendar of activities, as also a significant success. It had as its theme 'Forms of Cosmopolitanism/Cosmology', a choice made in view of a pressing challenge facing us today. Humanity has witnessed, throughout its history, the evolution of an immense variety of world-views and life-visions, wherein communities and civilizations have attempted to fuse the material and the metaphysical aspects of their existence into practical and meaningful wholes. Not only distinct but even disparate at times, these conceptual frameworks have somehow over centuries learnt to negotiate, interact and co-exist with one another, maybe tensely but also tolerantly, and most of the time mutually enrichingly. In recent times, however, this diversity and its fine balance have been increasingly placed under severe stress by the subtle and not-so-subtle imposition of a standardized, hegemonic world-view by the global power centres located in neo-colonial spaces. Traditional societies, like India for instance, now find it more difficult than ever before to arrive at forms of creative reconciliation of differences and contesting forces. In such a context, only a deeper understanding of the past forms of cosmology and a finer analysis of the contemporary challenges to them, Ninasam felt, could guide us towards a proper resolution of the problem. Thus the choice of the theme.

As in the past, the Culture Course consisted of two interrelated components: (1) day-time sessions devoted to lectures, discussions and demonstrations, a large majority of which centred on the theme, while the remaining were meant for imparting basic skills in art appreciation, and (2) evening sessions devoted to performances of various kinds that made up a cultural festival.

Resource persons from a wide range of academic areas, art forms, and socio-political persuasions contributed to the success of the Course: Dr. Ashis Nandy, sociologist, Fellow of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi, delivered two lectures on 'Cosmopolitanism and the Modern City' and 'Alternative forms of Cosmopolitanism' and also held an interactive session with the participants. Dr. Shamik Bandopadhyaya, expert on literature, theatre and film spoke on 'The Changing forms of Cosmopolitanism over centuries' while Prof. Ki. Ram. Nagaraj, Kannada critic, discussed 'Cosmopolitanism and the Kannada Creative Imagination'. Dr. Sundar Sarukkai, Professor, Dept. of the Philosophy of Science, National Institute of Advanced Studies, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, dwelt upon 'Cosmopolitanism and Science' and, in addition, took part in a panel discussion with Dr. Srikanth Shastri, of the Indian Institute of Science, on 'The Problems of the Language and Methodology of Science'. Sri Vivek Shanbhag, software engineer and Kannada writer, spoke about 'Cosmopolitanism and Globalisation' while Sri Sugata, journalist, lectured on 'Cosmopolitanism and the Contemporary World'. Sri Prakash Belawadi, who works in theatre, film and television and Sri Raghunandana, theatre director and culture activist shared a panel discussion on 'Cosmopolitanism and the Media'. Sri G. Rajashekhar, culture and literary critic, presented his views on 'Modern World Politics and Cosmopolitanism', while Dr. Muzaffar Asadi, political scientist, offered his reading of 'The Present-day Socio-political scene and Cosmopolitanism'. Dr. Rajendra Chenni, Professor and Head, Dept. of English, Kuvempu University, also a writer and critic and

Prof. G.K. Govinda Rao, teacher and film, theatre and television personality spoke about 'Literature and Cosmopolitanism'. Sri Lakshmisha Tolpadi, Sanskrit scholar, gave a lecture on 'The Indian Epics, Scriptures and the idea of Cosmopolitanism', while Dr. Chandrashekhara Kambar, Kannada professor, writer and folklorist, discussed 'The Kannada Folk World and Cosmopolitanism'. Prof. Manu Chakravarthy, Professor of English, Bangalore, analysed the relationship between 'The Literary Imagination and Cosmopolitanism'. Smt. Pratibha Nandakumar and Smt. Vaidehi, both Kannada writers, and Prof. Asha Devi, literary critic, shared a panel on 'Women and Cosmopolitanism'. The valedictory address was by eminent Kannada writer, Prof. H.S. Shivaprakash, presently teaching at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, in which he spoke on 'The Metaphysics of Cosmopolitanism'.

There were in, addition, some interactive sessions, such as the ones below: Three theatre productions formed part of the Cultural Festival of the evenings: 'Birugaali', a Kannada adaptation of Shakespeare's 'The Tempest', and 'Undaagi Gunda', a Kannada play, both performed by Tirugata, the repertory wing of Ninasam; and 'Krama Vikrama', a Kannada translation of Shakespeare's 'Measure for Measure'. A fourth theatre production, 'Uchalya', based on the autobiography of a Marathi Dalit writer, was performed during one of the day-sessions of the Course. There were sessions exclusively set aside for discussions on all these productions, where the participants came out with responses, reservations questions and comments; these sessions were moderated by resource persons.

Further, there were screenings during the Course sessions of films like 'Seven Islands and a Metro', a documentary on Mumbai City by Madhushree Dutta, 'Solaris', a science-fiction work by the Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky, and 'Haseena', last year's National Award winner by Girish Kasaravalli. While the discussions on the first two films were handled by Smt. Sudheshna Banerjee, a film scholar from Calcutta, Kasaravalli himself was present for the session on his film, where he not only fielded queries from the participants but also delivered a special lecture. Shri Sikkil Gurucharan, noted Karnatic musician also gave a lecdem session during the Course.

The evening festival during the Course this year included the following: 1st Oct. 06 – The first performance of Ninasam Tirugata, *Birugaali*, a Kannada adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* by Kuvempu, Directed by Abhilash Pillai; 2nd Oct. 06 – The first performance of Ninasam Tirugata, *Undaadi Gunda*, a Kannada adaptation of Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* by Parwatawani, Directed by Iqbal Ahmed; 3rd Oct. 06 – A Hindustani music recital by Pt. Alka Dev Marolkar from Goa; 4th Oct. 06 – A Karnatic music recital by Vd. Sikkil Gurucharan from Chennai; 5th Oct. 06 – Performance of a play by Ninasam, *Kramavikrama*, a Kannada translation of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* translated and directed by Akshara K.V.; 6th Oct. 06 – Poetry Recital by two contemporary Kannada poets, Sri H.S. Shivaprakash and Sri Jayanth Kaikini and traditional poetry presentation by Kuntur Kalashetty and his troupe from Chamarajanagara district; 7th Oct. 06 – Bharatanatyam dance performance by Sri Sridhar and Smt. Anuradha Sridhar, Bangalore.

A statistical overview of the people involved in the Course is as follows:

- Total number of Participants: 179
- Male: 110, Female: 69
- Students: 113, Teachers: 9, Professionals: 17, Others: 40
- Resource Persons: 32 (Male: 22, Female: 10)
- Performing Artists: 89 (Male: 60, Female: 29)