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The Centre for Chinese and South East Asian Studies, organised a two day International Symposium on “Language and Gender”

The Centre for Chinese and South East Asian Studies, organised a two day International Symposium on “Language and Gender: Looking at the Gendered Nature of Languages with Chinese and its Gendered Usages as a Point of Departure”, from 22-23 January, 2019, at the Committee Hall, Convention Centre, JNU, New Delhi. During the inauguration, Professor Rajendra Dingle, Dean of School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies and Professor B R Deepak, Chairperson of the Centre for Chinese and South East Asian Studies delivered the inaugural speech.

on ‘Shuowenjiezi’ (first systematic book explaining Chinese characters) and ‘Erya’ (A Confucius classic) as an example. She observed that only by knowing the past can we trace the origin and reveal the hidden and harmful nature of the system of language and its operational mechanism. By doing this one can hope to provide useful analytical tools for rational criticism on the present and take action to make changes.



This was followed by the keynote speech, by Professor Du Fangqin, eminent Gender scholar in China, from Tianjin Normal University. In her Keynote speech Professor Du, spoke about the systems and norms to the daily life usages of gender in Chinese language, by looking at the creation of its linguistic meaning and gender construct in the history of evolution of Chinese language. Her study was based on the research

The Convenor of the Symposium, Dr Usha Chandran, Assistant Professor, CCSEAS, gave a welcome speech introducing the symposium. The symposium was part of a UPE-2 Project, taken up by Dr Usha. It was the result of a realisation that in spite of the close connection between languages and gender, there is a huge gap left to be filled in language learning and there is a need to look at language learning also from a gender perspective. The idea and purpose was to bring in gender consciousness to the mainstream of language learning, as part of the agenda that gender issues should be

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Editor:
Prof. B.R. Deepak

It can be seen that the Chinese language is filled with examples of how one can locate gender in traditional societies throughout the history of humanity. Through this symposium there was an effort to bring some of that to the table, so as to be able to open our vision to the gendered composition of languages that we already know and are learning. Since we are also aware that similar to Chinese, Indian languages, other Asian and European languages are also gendered. Therefore, apart from Chinese and Indian scholar's presenting on Chinese language, the presenters included scholars from Indian languages like, Hindi, Bengali, Urdu, Malayalam; European languages like French, Spanish; and Japanese language.



This was followed by a panel discussion on "The Language Question and Gender". The discussants were, Professor Mary John from the Centre for Women's Development Studies, Professor Wei Guoying from Beijing University, Professor Sabaree Mitra, CCSEAS, JNU and Professor Li Yingtao from Beijing Foreign Studies University. The aim of the panel discussion was to introduce the history of gender issues and role of language in it, in modern India and China. It opened up several key issues on the question of language in gender, in several parts of India as well as China, giving a kick start to the two day symposium. The papers were broadly divided into eight themes namely Gender in Literature; Gendered Language in Media, Films and Performing Art; Gender in Language and Linguistics; Role of Gender in Translation of Theories, Ideas and Texts; Practice of Gender in Appellations and

Address; Role of Science in Language and Gender; Gender, Language, Politics and Power as well as Language, Gender and Culture.



Among the paper presenters who looked at the gendered aspect of Chinese language, there were 10 scholars from China and 6 from India. Apart from the three mentioned above, the other scholars from China were, Professor Jiao Jie, Professor Guo Haiwen, Dr Xu Cui, Dr Ma Congmin, Dr Liu Junhua and Ms Liu Wei from Women's Research Centre, Shaanxi Normal University, Xi'an, who came on the recommendation of the pioneer of Women's Studies in China, Professor Li Xiaojiang. Dr Li Jun, from The University of Shantou, Guangdong, presented her paper through Skype. The Indian presenters were, Dr Hemant Adlakha, Associate Professor, Ms Dayawanti, Ms Manju Hara and Dr Usha Chandran, Assistant Professors in CCSEAS, JNU, Ms Snigdha Konar, PhD student and Mr Uma Shankar, MA Student, CCSEAS, JNU.

The symposium also included paper presenters looking at the role of language in gender, who are experts in gender and Malayalam; Professor G Arunima, Centre for Women's Studies, JNU, in Indian languages; Professor Garima Srivastava, Centre for Indian Languages, JNU, in Japanese language; Ms Janashruti Chandra, Centre for Japanese Studies, JNU, in French language; Professor N. Kamala, Centre for French and Francophone Studies, JNU and in Spanish language; Professor Indrani Mukherjee, Centre of Spanish, Portuguese, Italian & Latin American Studies, JNU.

Just like a cherry on the cake, it included a scientist Dr Ramachandran Kotharambath, Department of Animal Science, Central University of Kerala, looking at the scientific explanation to the role of gender in creation of languages. The academic sessions were Chaired by Gender scholar, Professor Mary John from CWDS and Chinese language scholars of CCSEAS, Professor B R Deepak, Professor Sabaree Mitra, Professor Priyadarshi Mukherjee, and Dr Hemant Adlakha. The concluding remarks were given by Dr Usha Chandran and the Vote of Thanks in English was given by Ms Gargi Chaturvedi & in Chinese by Mr Raj Gupta, MA 1st year students of CCSEAS, JNU.



All the papers presented were intellectually stimulating and interdisciplinary in nature. With their expert level of scholarship, each paper presenters and chairs brought in diverse angles of looking at gender in Chinese, Japanese, French, Spanish as well as in some Indian languages which are part of our daily life. It was a unique and first of its kind experience for students at Chinese centre in JNU. Such an exposure to the rich and profound history, culture, society and politics of language was both stimulating and enjoyable for us language learners.

Though the international symposium mainly looked at the following big questions, it also left us with several other questions.

- 1, Do women and men talk differently?
- 2, Is Gender, Feminism, Women's Studies etc only meant for women?

- 3, How to look at Language learning from a gender perspective?
- 5, How Languages are misused to practice gender bias and how they are used to practice gender equality?
- 6, How can we learn the culture, thoughts and history of a society through their language?



The Symposium brought together and revealed the serious research work done by the presenters and was successful in bringing the awareness that role of gender in language is not something that has to be studied as a separate discipline, but rather needs to be made a part of the curriculum of language learning. Whereas, role of language in practicing gender should also be an important part of gender/women's studies. Though, the intention was to bring together scholars working on this theme, to urge our students and fellow scholars to look at language learning with gender awareness, however the fact that the symposium will be such an overwhelming success, in putting on the table diverse concepts of how gender is practiced through language was absolutely unimaginable. Along with answering some of the questions which are constant irritants in language learning and gender studies, it also posed new questions for us to put in further enquiries into it. *(Report by C. Usha, the convenor of the conference)*

Prof. B R Deepak delivered valedictory address at the International conference on Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in India and China organized by the Department of International Relations, Central University of Jharkhand on 21-22 February 2019

Prof. Deepak argued that Indians have been overshadowed by George Tanhams thesis that Indian do not have a strategic thinking or culture, and his argument that we are reactive and our policies myopic and that we may not address our problems unless a calamity unfolds, may hold water in the wake of Pulwama terror strike; however, to say that we did not have strategic culture is not true., for even if the mainstream Indian literature may be dominated by the religious philosophies but they are full of strategic thinking. Indian philosophical texts such as *Vedas, Epics, Upanishads, Puranas* and *Dharma Shastra* speaks volumes of strategic thinking and culture. Indian ancient experience of war enshrined in *Dhanurveda* and the epics and Kautilya's *Arthashastra* is far better and detailed than the *Art of War* of Sun Zi. It talks about a history of strategic culture from 4,000 BC to 1300 AD, which is over 5000 years old.



Yes our strategic culture has been absorptive, defensive and inward looking rather than aggressive, directed and expansionist as described by Sandy Gordon. But this emanates from the core values of Indian civilization in the form of *non-aggression or ahimsa, mutual respect, coexistence, compassion, forgiveness, self-control, sacrifice, truth, world is one family* etc. Secondly, people have argued that contrary to the continued and connected history of China we had no connectedness. This is the colonial interpretation of our history and need to be discarded off for there

has been a marked strand of continuity between the ancient civilisation of the Indus Valley and the present day Indian culture. It is true that the Indian culture is an amalgamation of diverse influences, people's ideologies and religious influences.



Even if India has not made it to the Soft power 30 index, but Indian yoga, Bollywood, Diaspora and even Islam an important component of the Indian civilization which is totally different from the Bahavi Islam are part of India's soft power. What is lacking is that our domestic economic drivers are not strong which may be addressed in the coming years, however, if we are talking about the Asian world order for future we need to look inward and engage in serious civilizational studies and build a critical mass in these, this in turn will start a debate on Easternization where India would be a leading component and in turn help ourselves to establish our own school of international relations.

Prof. B R Deepak delivered Keynote address at the national seminar on China Studies in India: Current Trends and Approaches in EFLU, Hyderabad on 7th March 2019



Prof. Deepak talked about the initiation of China studies in India right from the patronage of these by Mino and Jushua Marshman's translation of the *Analects* in the early 19th century to the Visva Bharati in the 1920s during the British India; and from the Ford Foundation funded program of the Delhi University in the 1960s to the establishment of the Institute of Chinese Studies in the 1990s, and finally to the 2009 act of Parliament by virtue of which India will set up a central University in each of the Indian states. He also highlighted the challenges and discussed ways to build capacities in the field of China studies.



Workshop on translation of Chinese classics, modern and contemporary works held at IIC on 25th March 2019



In order to take the stock of the progress made by the scholars, a workshop on the translation of 25 works on Chinese classics, modern and contemporary work was held by the NBT in IIC on 25th March 2019.

Articles in Media

Prof. B R Deepak

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