



From L to R: Srinivas Reddy, Lakshmi Holmstrom, Arshia Sattar and R Sivapriya

# In the Shoes of the Other...

Day 1 of Tarjuma – The Festival of Translators 2013 at IIT Gandhinagar on Thursday looked at the ‘power’ writers can bring to regional works

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In a one-of-its-kind literary festival in the city, IIT Gandhinagar organised Tarjuma - The Festival of Translators 2013 that brought together writers, translators, academicians and professors to an audience keen to learn about and listen to the nuances of translation and the challenges involved.

The idea behind organising Tarjuma Festival was “to celebrate the contribution and art of translation”. Associate Professor, Humanities and Social Sciences, Rita Kothari says it was a conscious choice to call it a festival. “A festival celebrates, thereby making it more prominent because it tends to sometimes go into

the publicity and the recognition... Tarjuma fest was to make a correction in that perception,” adds Kothari.

The word Tarjuma, too, comes from Arabic and Persian and into Urdu. It embraces many meanings of translation, not only from one language to another but also from one context into another.

Considering translation is an art believed to make or break a work, a translator’s role is important when ‘representing’ a piece of writing. “This can be judged only on a piece-by-piece basis. There may be cases where authors haven’t been served well by translators,” says Kothari.

On the other hand, she says, we got to know of Bama Faustina Soosairaj, for example, only through the

‘Translating the Classic’ session by Srinivas Reddy (also co-organiser of Tarjuma Festival), Arshia Sattar, R Sivapriya and Laxmi Holmstrom dealt with tackling the challenges of translating Valmiki’s Ramayan, the Mahabharata or certain epics from South India; it focussed on looking at ways to create the old idiom in the new India, also keeping in mind readers of those classics.

Mini Krishnan, Rita Kothari, Neerav Patel and Priya Adarkar spoke on Translating Marginality, on Dalit literature and the translator’s need to assess the emotions and understand the portrayal attempted by marginalised writers. To believe everything is translatable is arrogance, they agreed, and in the words of Neerav

oblivion and translators don't get the kind of importance they should," she says, referring to the book, *The Translator's Invisibility* by Lawrence Venuti. The book argues how through the ages nobody gets to know who translated the things that we have read. "That is because we render translators as invisible, they don't get



translation of Laxmi Holmstrom. Laxmi talked about the Sri Lankan women, the Tamilians in Sri Lanka, the poetry women have written about wars in Sri Lanka, those which she has translated in *War, Women and the Politics of the Body* session," says Kothari.

Patel: "Translatability is not possible for Dalit poetry. Even if I translate most accurately, would the meaning be communicated to the people in the US or the UK?"

Translation Across Forms, a discussion by Mallika Sarabhai and Shanta Gokhale was interesting in its manner of communication. Sarabhai broke into a quick performance based on an Urdu poem, *Woh Jo Hum Mein Tum Mein Karach Tha*, essaying the different roles of a woman or portraying Draupadi's character in Mahabharata. Gokhale spoke about the challenges of living the emotions of the writer, in this case actress Durga Khote, whose autobiography she translated.