

Tarjuma, the journey of translators, begins at IITGn

Speakers talk about the process of translating classic texts like Ramayan and other ancient scripts.



Vijay Soneji DNA

Has anyone ever thought of the kind of debates, deliberations and dilemmas translators go through while doing any translation. Probably not. But the answer to the question as to why translators should be honoured can be found at Tarjuma - Festival of Translators, organised by the Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar.

A host of translators, who have translated the literature of different languages into English, came together at Tarjuma, a two-day event that kicked off at IITGN on Thursday.

On the first day, the best translators of classic and contemporary literature talked about the process of translating classic texts like Ramayan and other ancient scripts.

They also discussed the issues one experiences while translating the literature of the marginalised. Priya Adarkar, veteran editor of publishing houses and translator of Maharashtrian playwright Vijay Tendulkar's plays, talked about the difficulty of translating Maharashtrian Dalit literature into English.

Gujarati writer Neerav Patel, on the other hand, talked about the difficulties faced by a translator to convey not only the exact meaning but also the message of the text from one language to the other. He also gave an example by reciting his own poetry written in Gujarati and translated into English by him.

Professor Rita Kothari talked about the translatability and un-translatability of literary works. She also said the glossary at the end of the book can only give semantics references but not what place it had in worldview and why that particular allusion was being made.

A similar issue was also reflected on Translations across the forms by Shanta Gokhale, Mumbai-based Maharashtrian novelist, playwright, translator and bilingual columnist. She talked about the difficulty while translating a Russian short story into a script for a film.

For instance, in a scene where the whole town sat down for dinner where the protagonists of the story met, she had to turn that to a dinner of the upper caste community because in a feudal society like India's, a whole town eating together may just not be possible.

At the same session, dancer and activist Mallika Sarabhai talked about her journey of translating Rabindranath Tagore's literary works into stage performances to present him in totality, and how she translated stories from Harsh Mandar's book, Unheard Voices, through the tunes of popular Hindi movie songs. Sarabhai also performed Pakistani poet Kishwar Nahid's poem and showed how it could be expressed by translating it into a classical dance.

Source: DNA, 26 July, 2013