

Report on **The Vocal Conference 2023**

Equal Opportunity Cell
8th February, 2023

Introduction

The VOCAL Conference 2023 aimed to provide a platform for students to engage in discussions about various literary works and societal issues. Held at 1st Floor of College of Social Work (Autonomous) Nirmala Niketan, on 8th February, 2023, the event sought to foster critical thinking, promote reading interest, and facilitate collaboration among attendees.

Conference Overview

The conference began with a warm welcome from Dr. Vaijayanta Anand, setting the stage for the day's events. An overview of the preparation and planning of the conference was provided by Shravanee Raut, highlighting key contributions of each member of the committee. The theme of the conference was introduced, paving the way for insightful discussions.

Program Highlights

Student Panelists and Books Presented:

1. Tejas Pawar presented 'Adhunik Bharatatil Dalit' by M. S. Michel.

Summary of the book presented by Tejas Pawar is as follows,

'Adhunik Bharatatil Dalit' (Dalits in Modern India) by M. S. Michel is a significant work that delves into the experiences, struggles, and aspirations of Dalits in contemporary India. The book meticulously examines the socio-economic, political, and cultural dimensions of Dalit life, shedding light on the discrimination, oppression, and marginalization faced by this community.

Through a combination of historical analysis, sociological insights, and firsthand accounts, Michel elucidates the complex dynamics of caste-based discrimination and its impact on Dalit identity and agency. The book explores various facets of Dalit empowerment movements, highlighting the role of leaders, activists, and grassroots initiatives in challenging caste-based hierarchies and advocating for social justice and equality.

Furthermore, 'Adhunik Bharat til Dalit' critically examines the intersectionality of caste with other forms of oppression, such as gender and class, revealing the intersecting vulnerabilities and struggles faced by Dalit women and marginalized communities.

Overall, 'Adhunik Bharat til Dalit' serves as a comprehensive resource for understanding the contemporary Dalit experience in India, offering valuable insights into the ongoing struggle for dignity, rights, and emancipation within the complex tapestry of Indian society.

2. Jyoti Balakh presented 'Upara' by Laxman Mane.

Summary of the book presented by Jyoti is as follows,

'Upara' is a poignant and powerful novel written by Laxman Mane, which provides a gripping portrayal of the struggles and resilience of the marginalized community known as the Mahars, who are considered 'untouchables' in Indian society. Set in the rural landscapes of Maharashtra, India, the narrative follows the life journey of the protagonist, Jabya, as he grapples with the oppressive caste system and strives for dignity and liberation.

The novel vividly depicts the harsh realities faced by the Mahars, including social discrimination, economic exploitation, and cultural marginalization. Through Jabya's experiences, Mane explores themes of identity, social justice, and the quest for selfhood amidst a backdrop of caste-based oppression.

As Jabya navigates the challenges posed by caste prejudice and societal expectations, he embarks on a journey of self-discovery and resistance, challenging the oppressive structures that seek to confine him to the margins of society. Along the way, he encounters moments of camaraderie, love, and solidarity, which serve as beacons of hope amidst the darkness of systemic injustice.

Through its raw portrayal of the Mahars' struggle for dignity and equality, 'Upara' serves as a powerful indictment of caste-based discrimination and a testament to the resilience and courage of oppressed communities. The novel ultimately calls for a more just and inclusive society, where every individual is afforded the opportunity to live with dignity and respect, regardless of caste or social status.

3. Rupesh Sutar presented 'Shivaji Kon Hota' by Govind Pansare.

Summary of the book presented by Rupesh Sutar is as follows,

'Shivaji Kon Hota' (Who was Shivaji?) by Govind Pansare is a seminal work that seeks to demystify the legendary figure of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, a revered historical figure in Indian history. Through meticulous research and critical analysis, Pansare endeavors to unravel the myths and misconceptions surrounding Shivaji's life and legacy, presenting a nuanced and multidimensional portrait of the Maratha king.

The book delves into Shivaji's early life, upbringing, and political career, shedding light on the socio-political context of 17th-century India. Pansare examines Shivaji's military exploits, administrative reforms, and diplomatic strategies, highlighting his role in challenging Mughal hegemony and establishing a Maratha empire in western India.

Furthermore, 'Shivaji Kon Hota' critically interrogates the construction of Shivaji's image in popular imagination, exploring how various historical narratives and cultural representations have shaped perceptions of the Maratha king over time. Pansare challenges romanticized and mythologized portrayals of Shivaji, arguing for a more nuanced understanding of his complex personality and political ideology.

The book also examines Shivaji's legacy in contemporary India, discussing his enduring influence on regional politics, identity formation, and popular culture. Pansare emphasizes the importance of critically engaging with historical figures like Shivaji, interrogating their legacies, and reassessing their significance in the context of modern India.

Overall, 'Shivaji Kon Hota' is a comprehensive and thought-provoking exploration of one of India's most iconic historical figures, offering readers a deeper understanding of Shivaji's life, achievements, and enduring impact on Indian society and politics.

4. Zainab Ishtiyaq presented 'I am Malala' by Malala Yusufzai.

Summary of the book presented by Zainab is as follows,

"I Am Malala" is a compelling autobiography written by Malala Yousafzai, a Pakistani activist for female education and the youngest-ever Nobel Prize laureate. The book chronicles Malala's remarkable journey from her childhood in Swat Valley, Pakistan, to her activism for girls' education and the attempt on her life by the Taliban.

The narrative begins with Malala's idyllic upbringing in Swat Valley, where she was raised by her loving family and developed a passion for learning. However, her life changed dramatically when the Taliban gained control of the region and imposed strict regulations, including banning girls from attending school.

Undeterred by the Taliban's threats, Malala continued to advocate for education, speaking out against the injustices faced by girls in her community. Her activism gained international attention, leading to her nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize and her eventual shooting by a Taliban gunman in 2012.

Despite the attack, Malala survived and became a symbol of courage and resilience. "I Am Malala" recounts her miraculous recovery and her ongoing commitment to advocating for education and women's rights on a global scale.

Throughout the book, Malala reflects on the power of education to transform lives and overcome adversity. She shares anecdotes from her childhood, insights into her family life, and reflections on the challenges she has faced as a young activist in a hostile environment.

Ultimately, "I Am Malala" is a testament to the indomitable spirit of one young woman and the universal struggle for education and equality. Malala's story serves as an inspiration to readers around the world, encouraging them to stand up for their beliefs and work towards a better future for all.

Each student offered a unique perspective on their chosen book, contributing to a diverse range of discussions on societal issues and literary themes.

Concluding Remarks

The conference concluded with reflections on the day's discussions, emphasizing the importance of literature in addressing societal challenges and fostering empathy and understanding. Attendees were encouraged to continue their exploration of literature and engage in meaningful dialogue.

Conclusion

The VOCAL Conference 2023 provided students with an opportunity to showcase their literary insights and engage in thought-provoking discussions. The event successfully promoted reading interest, critical thinking, and collaboration among attendees. It is hoped that the connections made and insights gained will contribute to further advancements in the field of literature and societal discourse.