

Report on the Erudite Program

9th February 2018

The four-day Erudite Scholar-in-Residence program was inaugurated in the morning of 9th February 2018 by Dr. Rajan Varughese, Member Secretary, KSHEC (Kerala State Higher Education Council). Dr. Rajan Varughese, in his inaugural lecture talked about the changes being effected in KSHEC and also the new vision and direction of the institution. He said that KSHEC has taken its first step towards outcome-based education which will make the graduates competent enough to meet social expectations. The council has already set in motion a process to assist State Universities in adopting the mechanism. The Universities will identify their graduate attributes, which indicate skills and qualities graduates will develop, in addition to knowledge in their core subjects, while doing a course. “ Prior statement of attributes will ensure clarity in the objective of teaching and help students in self-evaluation. It will democratise and make transparent the processes of teaching and evaluation” he said.

There were several papers from across colleges and universities in India by students, researchers and faculty members. There were papers by the members on the faculty of Assumption College, Changanacherry, SN College, Kollam, researchers from JNU, School of Social Sciences, MG University, students of Political Sciences, Govt. College, Nattakom on a range of themes.

The paper on K.R Meera’s *Hang woman* titled “Noose around the Noosemaker” deals with the parasitically exploitative sensationalism of the present day Indian media that perceives personal experience as merely of commercial value as news. The other paper from Assumption College was on cuisine and its cultural value. This paper titled “The Edible and the Inedible: A Study based on Jaspreet Singh’s *Chef*” spoke about food and its emblematic trope of national ethos

portrayed the sensitive foodscape by magnifying the link between war-ravaged Kashmir and food.

The paper entitled *Dalit Feminism and Discourses on Citizenship: An investigation on Dalit Women's Society, Kurichy* was remarkable for its critical chronicling of a bold social movement by a group of women doubly marginalised in terms of their caste identity as well as their gender identity. The paper titled "Popular Life of Nationalism" tries to look at popular representations of bellicose nationalism in supposedly anodyne corporate terms of advertisements which of late are becoming more and more "patriotic" in nature. And the paper entitled *Ethnographic Knowledge and the Idea of Colonialism : The Case of Dalit Christians in Kerala* challenges some of the dominant assumptions in academia and popular imagination about Dalit Christians. The paper, marshalling empirical proof, also unpacks the structures of caste domination prevailing in the Syrian Christian Church in Kerala.

The first lecture by Dr. T. T. Sreekumar, was on nation and nationalism. He tried to unpack nationalism at different structural levels. He historicised the category of nationalism to postulate that nations emerge as a grouping differentiating itself from and as opposed to an *other*. The Egyptians, during the 16th century BCE thought of themselves as distinct from the Asiatic peoples just as Greeks in the 5th century BCE assert their common Greekness in terms of shared kinship (blood relation) and language. Nations emerge over time as a result of numerous historical processes and the time and memory is territorially negotiated in terms of religion, as in the state of Israel, culture as in the case of the Han Empire in China, or language as in the case of Greek city state. Next part of the discussion focused on nation as a fundamental unit of economic discourse and the democratic conception of political participation, social mobility of industrial capitalism. The talk also covered the Marxist conception of nation form and the Hegelian state and civil society. His presentation also

touched on the post-colonial take on “Nation state” in *Who Sings the Nation State* and the state of individual being citizen, exile, refugee, alien and so on.

The performance oriented workshop on day two was led by the Sangeeth Nataka Academy award winning director, Mr. Vinod Kumar K. The workshop was followed by a theatre performance by the participants and a discussion chaired by Dr. T. T. Sreekumar. The workshop was the longest compared to the other days. It began with a warming up session where the participants engaged in the exercise of communicating with their bodies and went on to get a feel of politically stage managing their bodily movements. Dr. T. T. Sreekumar, a participant in the workshop concluded the session with a comment on the political space of the theatre and the body as a site of relations emerging as a tool of political resistance and theatre as an activity of social space of possibilities.

His second talk “New Media, Digitality and Cyber Culture” was on post-humanism, humans, cyborgs, how machines have turned into a companion species. He began with the Western Enlightenment definition of the rational human that has undergone a radical reinterpretation in the post-modern cultural space and how cyber age has questioned the notion of the self in the context of online multiple selves. It focused on a critique of traditional human with an essential subjective self and moves on to reconfigure the human self as adaptive and constantly readjusting to new technologies, and engaged in technological enhancing of the human faculties.

The talk at M. A. College, Kothamangalam was titled “Surveillance Privacy and Digital Capital” and began with a discussion of the architectural model of the panopticon that Foucault interprets as a style of domination. He goes on to discuss the new media platforms that have emerged as data banks as well as corporate vendors of big data.

