

Words Uncensored

Monday, 10 October 2016 | Saritha Saraswathy Balan



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‘When language reaches its limit or silence becomes a language’ formed the core discussion in the last part of the curtain-raiser of ILF Samanvay, the annual Indian languages Festival. By Saritha Saraswathy Balan

Celebrated contemporary artist Amitesh Grover wondered why critics give Shakespeare the credit for being the author with the largest vocabulary. Tongue-in-cheek, he even went on to calculate his own vocabulary, arguing that most contemporary writers possess a larger vocabulary than Shakespeare ever did!

The courtyard of Indian Habitat Centre in the muggy evening witnessed cheeky yet original conversations. Akansha Rastogi, another artist, spoke on the potential of a visitor who can shock the whole concept on which a painting exhibition hinges. “The anonymity that a visitor's book offers to pen one's thought is liberating,” she opined. The event also saw Arnika Ahldag enact and develop individual narratives, opening them up for public interpretation.

One of the listeners suddenly interrupted the flow with her genuinely puzzled query in Malayalam -her mother tongue. “How can pople understand what is being said, if all of you keep talking in English. How fair is that!|” she asked. It was then the turn of a Bengali man whose dialectical slang added an ethnic flavor to the whole dialogue.

Rastogi shared an experience of people leaving a museum in tears. “I don't know what made them cry...which work of art....language failed,” she exclaimed. Grover narrated the story of a man who used to go on walks with a tortoise in tow in Paris. He had to slow down his pace to that of his crawling companion. Grover went on to think aloud of a language whose pace could be slowed down.

The annual Indian languages' festival -ILF Samanvay- presented the last part of its curtain-raiser series on Thursday at IHC, before its main event scheduled to be held from November 5-7. As part of the No Tongues Barred (#ntb) Art Articulation Series, ILF hosted the ‘Apophenic Talks: An Enacted Conversation’. Deeksha Nath (independent critic and curator) curates the Art Articulation Series for ILF Samanvay.

The artists projected a ‘language’ that communicated keywords- mourning, labour and sleep, with Rastogi speaking on how the body metabolism adjusts itself to these concepts. Ahldag also tried to give a new definition to Censorship: “There is Censorship which tempts.” One of the listeners pointed out that no language is complete without communication through eyes. “We do often think that words reflect language. I love Christian weddings. There, the priest works magic with the language. He pronounces you man and wife,” Grover shared.

The conversation at one point came to the level of introspection where one wondered if language ever reached its limits...where no further word could be said...where silence itself becomes a language. Words, sometimes, have to take on the imagery of Silence.

The evening witnessed an interesting role-play between the audience and the artists, wherein the audience became the artist. Commenting on the event, Deeksha Nath said, “Apophenic Talks was the final event in the series #No Tongues Barred. And as such, we pay tribute to the positioning of the festival as a space for multiple voices to speak in whichever form they choose.” As part of the visual art section of ILF Samanvay, the performances by Gorver, Rastogi and Ahldag set the tone for the inter-discourse spaces between various art forms that forms the highlight of the upcoming exhibition.

Dr. Rizio Yohannan Raj, Creative Director- ILF Samanvay, said, “We live in conditions where attention span is susceptible to disruptions, making us dependent on other mediums to comprehend what we have lost. Through the index of key words given to the audience, they choose their own distractions, meanings and make personal interpretations. The artists have been encouraging this realisation among the public, through sustained context-driven and art-based projects.”

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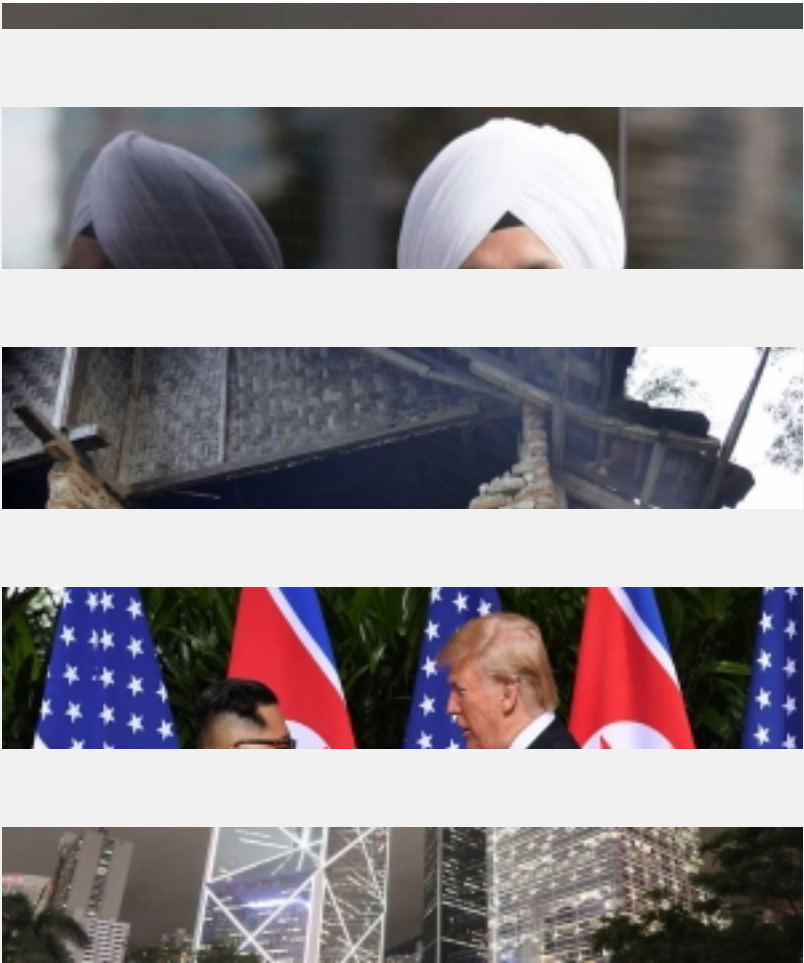


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