

enhance the mutual awareness and interaction between Indian and foreign cultures. In his poetry his main pre-occupation has been to explore love, home, nature, arts, mortality etc. and as a critic, he has underlined the abiding value of literature in its intellectual toughness, moral responsibility and self-questioning, upholding the view that literature offers 'the other reality, the other republic of imagination'. A frequent presence at some of the major conferences, seminars and poetry-festivals, he has raised his voice for the autonomy of literature as against contemporary tyrannies of ideologies, markets and fundamentalism. As editor of many prestigious journals he has done much to promote critical awareness of contemporary and classical arts and young talent in poetry and criticism. As an organiser he has more than a thousands events to his credit relating to literature, music, dances, theatre, visual arts, folk and tribal arts, cinema etc. He has been awarded the *Sahitya Akademi Award*, the *Dayawati Kavi Shekhar Samman* and the *Kabir Samman*. Eight book – length translations of his poetry have appeared in English, French, Polish, Urdu, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi and Rajasthani.

He has written two large books on the Paris-based Indian master Sayed Haider Raza and also one on 7 contemporary Indian abstract painters. He set up the renowned multi-arts centre, *Bharat Bhavan* in Bhopal; has been the first Vice-Chancellor of Mahatma Gandhi International Hindi University (set up by Govt. of India). For more than a year he doubled up as the Director-General of the National Museum, New Delhi and as the Vice-Chairman of National Museum of Man, Bhopal.

A prominent public intellectual of India, he has been a creative global-trotter and visited

## NCERT MEMORIAL LECTURE SERIES 2010-11

MARJORIE SYKES  
FOURTH MEMORIAL LECTURE



THEME

**Sahitya Kyon: Why Literature**

SPEAKER

**Shri Ashok Vajpeyi**  
Chairman  
Lalit Kala Akademi

CHAIRPERSON

**Shri Hemant Shesh**  
Secretary  
Information and Communication

ON 23 AUGUST 2010  
AT 2:30 p.m.

At the Assembly Hall  
Regional Institute of Education  
Captain D. P. Choudhary Marg  
Ajmer 305 004  
Rajasthan

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राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक अनुसंधान और प्रशिक्षण परिषद्  
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING

## NCERT MEMORIAL LECTURE SERIES

### A Brief

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) is an apex organisation, assisting and advising the Central and State Governments by undertaking research, survey and development; training and extension activities for all stages of school and teacher education.

One of the objectives of NCERT is to act as a clearing house and disseminator of ideas relating to school and teacher education. We have initiated the Memorial Lecture Series in order to fulfil this role and to commemorate the life and work of great educational thinkers.

Our aim is to strive to raise the level of public awareness about the contributions made in the field of education by eminent men and women of India. We expect that such awareness will set off a chain of discourse and discussion.

Thus, we hope, the Series will make education a lively subject of inquiry while simultaneously encouraging a sustained public engagement with this important domain of national life.

The Memorial Lecture Series covers public lectures commemorating the life and work of nine eminent Indian educational thinkers and practitioners.

We invite persons of eminence from academia and public life to deliver these lectures in English or any other Indian language. Our intention is to reach large audiences consisting particularly of teachers,

students, parents, writers, artists, NGOs, government servants and members of local communities. We hope these lecture series will be of use to our audience as well as the public in and outside the country in general.

### TITLES OF MEMORIAL LECTURES

- *Gijubhai Badekha Memorial Lecture*
- *Rabindranath Tagore Memorial Lecture*
- *Zakir Hussain Memorial Lecture*
- *Mahadevi Verma Memorial Lecture*
- *B.M. Pugh Memorial Lecture*
- *Savitribai Phule Memorial Lecture*
- *Marjorie Sykes Memorial Lecture*
- *Sri Aurobindo Memorial Lecture*
- *Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Lecture*

### TALK BY SHRI ASHOK VAJPEYI

#### **Sahitya Kyon : Why Literature**

#### ABSTRACT

Our times are unusually violent — there are nearly 100 wars, civil strifes, militant upsurges, local battles etc., going on in the world today according to a UNO report. Almost all religions have turned aggressive and violent, intolerant of their own plurality as also of others. Entertainment, sports, films, fashion etc. have all become aggressive. There is violence of the market, of the fundamentalists, of terror etc. Politics and economics etc., all have adopted forms of aggression.

Market economics are promoting forms of tyranny — tyranny of greed and consumerism, of uniformity, of a system in which the world is

being changed by objects rather than by ideas. Two great inventions of mankind namely 'individual' and 'society' are on the verge of being demolished.

Ours is also an age in which lies have been spoken and acted upon at the highest levels of state, politics and economy. The nature and place of truth in our times has come under assault and, in any case, moved to the realm of extreme ambiguity. Adherence to truth is a dying habit and, there are increasing temptations, in both public and private life, to drive one away from the path of truth.

There is a little time or space left for loneliness, for dreaming, for imagination. More and more people are disinheriting their mother tongues and are under the threat of losing their cultural roots and racial memory.

The lecture, while analysing this complex and puzzling scenario, would strive to locate literature, the need for it, in it.

### ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Ashok Vajpeyi, a Hindi poet-critic, translator, editor and culture-activist, is a major cultural figure of India. With more than 13 books of poetry, 7 of criticism in Hindi and 3 books on art in English to his credit, he is widely recognised as an outstanding promoter of culture and an innovative institution-builder.

Over the years he has worked tirelessly to

