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An Evening to Remember Gabriel Garcia Marquez: A Mini-Symposium organised by the students of the Department of English

By Vaidyanath Nishant, Department of English



A caricature of Marquez in a pensive mood invited everyone to the hall. April 25, 2014 was a warm day and the hall was filled up soon. The evening began with Bonita Rai welcoming the gathering and everyone followed by a 2 minutes silence as a mark of respect to Marquez. Then the mood of the event changed. After all, it was not a gathering to mourn the death of Marquez; it was meant to celebrate his life and his writings. The speakers and the guests were introduced and welcomed with presenting the kadha. The Introductory speech by Mingma Choden set the mood for the evening and the symposium (We reproduce the text of this in this issue). The first speaker, Prof. Basudeb Chakrobarty, Head, Department of English, spoke on the aspects of magic-realism and a brief biography of Marquez.

He also brought out comparisons between Gabo's writings and others. Chetan Sreshta, writer and architect (who is also the author of the King's Harvest), changed the mood of the gathering giving a humorous speech and also reading excerpts from Marquez's works. His narrations brought alive the writings of Marquez. He also shared his personal experiences reading Marquez. This was followed by a speech by Dr. V. Krishna Ananth, from the Department of History Department. He spoke on Marquez as a Journalist referring The Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor. And that this work had forced Marquez leaving his home and country and his life as an exile in Europe; as a Foreign Correspondent.

Marquez's series of articles published in El Espectador stirred up controversies and angered the regime in Columbia. He also mentioned about Marquez's writing skills in his short-stories. Dr. Ananth also spoke about how Marquez wasn't just limited to literature and about times when everyone was drawn into reading Marquez; that his

works reflected the turmoil within Latin America.

That Marquez is not limited to the barriers of disciplines was evident. Dr. Satyadeep Chettri, from the Department of Chemistry, Sikkim Government College proved this if proof was needed. He started the speech by reading the letter from Marquez to the President of the US after the 9/11 incident. He too mentioned on how Marquez's writing cuts across boundaries and cultures. Prof. T.B.Subba, Vice-Chancellor, spoke a few words on what solitude is about and introduced to the audience a Marquez within the crowd. Prof. Gulshan Kataria, Head, English Department, Panjabi University, who was one of the Guests at the event, resembled Marquez, when he removed his glasses; he looked exactly like the person in the caricature.

This was followed by a few words shared by the guests. Prof. Anisur Rehman from Jamia Millia Islamia University spoke on the pleasure of reading Marquez as a teacher of poetry. Prof. Kataria mentioned that he was surprised to see such an event organised by the students in such a remote corner of the country when rest of the campuses across India had not thought of something like this. Prof. Irshad Gulam Ahmed, who will be joining the Department English soon spoke of how imagination doesn't have any limits and recalled an interview he had with Kamala Das. Imagination he said has no limits and that when converted into words introduces creativity.

After this the house was declared open. The crowd got to hear a few words from Dr. H.B. Chettri, the sitting MLA from Kalimpong. His daughter too shared her experiences reading Marquez. This was followed by two songs by the students of the English Department. The boys got the crowd swinging and tapping their feet. The programme was concluded by a wrap-up of events by Pankaj Thapa.

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Marquez in Our Times: Some Reflections

The old Colonel waits for his pension. He swims across the tides and waves, surviving storms and gale. Sometimes, I wonder if I will have to go through such waiting. Will I have to wait for a living? That is what Marquez's writings have done to me. It has crept deep into me and keeps me wondering and thinking.



His works are set in the inner villages of Latin America. Macando seems to be his favourite village where he sets his stories and novels. Macando is totally cut off from the outer world. Here, the people live a normal life, which seems abnormal to others. Usually, big things are dealt with easy casualness. That method of writing he seems to have got from his grandmother. Science is new to this world and is often introduced by the travelling gypsies. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the display of ice by the gypsies is celebrated with surprise by the villagers. Marquez is associated with magic-realism. And not many writers have the capability of juxtaposing real with surreal elements. The villages in his

novels and stories are completely cut off from the outer world. This, I later realized while reading his Nobel acceptance speech, *The Solitude of Latin America*, was not just the villages, but the whole of Latin America.

His works takes us through the rivers and vegetations of Latin America. We live in the mud houses

with iron roofs. We come to know about the culture and we can find it similar to our own culture in many ways. In his work *The Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor*, we can find his skills as a journalist. The entire story is written in report writing format. His travels as a foreign correspondent across Europe helped him develop his writing. His novels have a lot of instances of the political turmoil of Latin America. The constant political unrest of the continent reflects in this. Marquez's grandfather is brought alive by him in his novel, through Jose Arcadio Buendia and his grandmother through his imagination. And Marquez continues to live in us through his writings, which we have read, read and will continue to read.

Editor's Note

April 2014 was a hectic month for the teachers in the University. Apart from teaching, the preparation of the Self Study Report for NAAC kept us busy during the month. And with offer letters being sent to those selected for teaching positions in the various departments, new teachers have begun to arrive in the university. The process of reviewing and revising the syllabus for the Under Graduate courses offered in the affiliated colleges and the departments (offering integrated courses) have been completed and awaiting approval by the various school boards and then by the Academic Council.

An ICSSR sponsored capacity building workshop, stretching into two weeks was conducted by the University between April 16 and 29, 2014. Dr. Manish, Associate Professor and Head, Department of International Relations and Dr. Indira K., Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology coordinated the programme in which as many as 30 teachers from across the country

and including some from the University participated.

A symposium on Gabriel Garcia Marquez conducted by the students of the Department of English on Friday, April 25 was perhaps the highlight of the month that went by. It so happened that three eminent teachers from outside Sikkim University were here as part of the committee to review the syllabus in the Department of English and their presence and participation in the symposium added grace to the occasion. The students were particular that they were not mourning the death of Marquez but to celebrate the writer and his works.

Apart from a report on the event, we carry a short note on the writer and his works in this issue. And we have Anne Marie Gurung's sketch too in this issue.

Dr.V.Krishna Ananth
(for the editorial board)



Invited Lectures:

Dr. V.Krishna Ananth, Associate Professor,
Department of History
Delivered two lectures titled: 1. Meaning and Aspects
of Research, Research Problem & Review of Litera-

ture and 2. Writing for the Media at the ICSSR Spon-
sored Capacity Building Workshop for Young Faculty
at Sikkim University on April 16 and April 27, 2014.

Publications:

Dr. Dhriti Roy, Assistant Professor,
Department of Chinese Language
"Fifth Century Common Era: Reorienting Chinese
Buddhist Monastic Tradition, Redefining India-Chi-
na Buddhist Monastic Relations: A Critical Study",
by the ICI, New School, New York under their
Working Papers Series on 12 April 2014.
[indiachinainstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/
NEW-YORK-EDITED-PAPER-](http://indiachinainstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/NEW-YORK-EDITED-PAPER-)

Dr. V.Krishna Ananth, Associate Professor,
Department of History
•Where Does the Aam Aadmi Party Stand? Econom-
ic and Political Weekly, Vol - XLIX No. 14, April
5,2014, pp 13-15
•An Analysis of the Poll Scene in Tamil Nadu,
Economic and Political Weekly, Vol - XLIX No. 17,
April 26, 2014, pp 14-15

Achievements:

Dr. Dharmendra Pratap, Assistant Professor, Depart-
ment of Horticulture,
has been selected as the Fellow of the Society of
Applied Biotechnology (FSAB). The FSAB marks
the recognition of Dr. Pratap's work in control of
plant viruses. He is a pioneer in characterization of
many plant viruses including the hitherto unknown

begomovirus of eggplant. He also developed virus
resistant transgenic tomato plants and eggplant. The
research work is very useful in the area of plant
biotechnology.
The Society for Applied Biotechnology (SAB)
selects five persons every year for the fellowship,
which will remain valid for the life of the awardee.



Photographs by Sandeep Kumar Rai and Sujal Pradhan, Dept. of Journalism and Mass Communication

