An animated evening to talk on translation of Bangla literature

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IT was a very different kind of evening at IUB when litterateurs were on the floor of a seminar room to talk on the difficulty of translation from a literary creation of one language to another. There was no class-room rigors or dry lecture of teachers on text-based topics. Dr Radha Chakrabarty, Professor of English, Gargi College, Delhi University, India raised the issues and problems of translation of a story or a novel from one language to another and she eloquently presented "the violence", as she called, "in use of vocabulary".

Dr Radha read out some passages from her own book "Crossings", a collection of twenty translated short stories from Bangla, ten each of notable Bangladeshi and West Bengal writers, who included Syed Shamsul Haque, Hasnat Abdul Hai, Rashid Haider, Selina Hossain, Shirsendu Mukherjee and others. She explained her experience in translation and struggle to keep the original quality of the story and the distinctiveness of the individual writers.



The presence of versatile writer-poet Syed Shamsul Haque, novelist and travelogue writer Hasnat Abdul Hai, woman activist-novelist Selina Hossain and a number of translators in the meeting animated the event and added to the intensity of discussions. The young students got an opportunity to meet their well-known writers and hear about their creativity.

Prof Niaz Zaman of Dhaka University, herself a writer in English, now advising faculty at IUB, conducted the programme introducing Dr Radha Chakrabarty, winner of Dr Radhakrishnan Award 2006 and translator of writings from several famous West Bengal and Bangladesh writers. Prof Shawkat Hussain, Professor of English, Dhaka University and now at IUB and Prof Bazlul Mobin Chowdhury, Vice Chancellor, IUB spoke on the occasion stating the necessity of good translation of Bangla literature into other languages so that the richness of our poetry, novels, short stories and drama can be made known and appreciated by readers of outside world.

Dr Radha said that emotive passages, different socio-cultural settings of the story, colloquial words, mind-set of characters pose the most difficult challenge to any translator of any language. Sensitivity in use of vocabulary was critically analysed by Dr Dr Radha in response to issues raised by participants. Interesting questions were asked by the students who were very enthusiastic to know more from the well-known writers of the country about our writers and poets over the tea-cup discussions which followed the presentation. The seminar turned into a literary "adda" and an animated atmosphere prevailed throughout.

The Language Centre at Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) which organized this literary evening last weekend at Baridhara campus has promised to hold such informal discussion seminar on literature regularly to generate interest of the younger generation about our rich repository of literature.