

The Research Committee

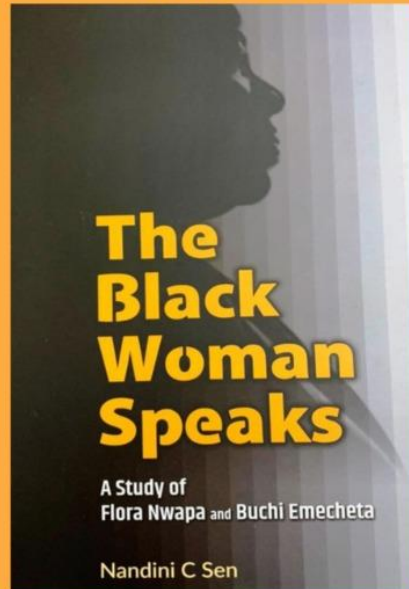
Bharati College

(University of Delhi)

Welcomes everyone to a Book discussion on

Dr. Nandini C Sen's

(Associate Prof., Dept. Of English, Bharati College)



On Friday, 21 February, 2020, 11:00 AM

Venue: Theater room (Bharati College)

Discussants

Prof. Harish Narang (Retd.)

Professor, Department of English and Linguistics (JNU)

Dr. Anjana Dutt

Associate Professor, Department of English, Deshbandhu College (DU)

*Followed by Conversation with the Author
and a brief talk on Post-Colonialism by the speakers*

All are cordially Invited

A REPORT ON THE EVENT

The Research Committee

Bharati College

Presents

A book discussion on

THE BLACK WOMAN SPEAKS

By Dr. Nandini C Sen

The research committee of Bharati College opened this year's series of academic events with a book inauguration and discussion on Dr. Nandini Sen's monograph "The Black Women Speaks". Dr. Nandini Sen is currently positioned as an Associate Professor in the department of English, Bharati College, University of Delhi. She has been the recipient of the Charles Wallace Fellowship to London in 2001 and 2009 respectively. She has also been the Asia Representative at the African Literature Conference in 2003 and 2009 respectively. Her recent Publications include Mahasweta Devi: Critical Perspectives (2012) and Africa and India in the 21st Century: Contexts, Comparisons, and Cooperation (2015). She has also Co-Edited the journals The Oriental Anthropologist (2015) and Alternations (2016) in collaboration with the University of Kwa Zulu Natal, South Africa. Her area of specialization is Literature and Indian Diaspora. Prof. Harish Narang and Dr. Anjana Dutt were cordially invited to speak and initiate a discussion on the book. Prof. Harish Narang is a retired Professor of Dept. of English and Linguistics, JNU and, Dr. Anjana Dutt is an Associate Professor of the Dept. of English, Deshbandhu College, DU.

Prof. Narang was invited first to take the podium to commence the discussion. He began with raising the significance of African literature and why it should be taught at universities across the country. He hinted towards a history that recoded the intrinsic ties of Africa and India in terms of its Diasporas. He suggested that various episodes in history which were politically motivated resulted in African Diaspora to flourish in India. He gave the example of Siddis of Karnataka, India who descended from the Bantu community from Southeast Africa. The community of Siddis was brought to the Indian subcontinent as slaves by Portuguese merchants. Similarly, the English also took strong men from Punjab to Africa to build railways in Africa. Also, in the 19th century the Gujrati businessmen migrated seasonally for four to six months to coasts of Malindi and Zanzibar to set up small stores. Later they would retreat to India along with the preceding months. Such events in history lead to the habitation of a large number of the Indian population in Africa and the African population in India

Dr. Dutt brought into light the evolution of the Anglophone literature in Nigeria. Again, taking us back to the times of European colonization, she elaborated on how the colonizers were indifferent to the African cultures and traditions. She further argued that pre-colonial African women were comparatively more emancipated until western colonizers forced their European Christian moral values onto the existing economic, political and social structures. Hence, the

oppression and the silencing of the Black women of Africa compounded because of her intersectional position in society. This is where Dr. Dutt gestures towards the importance of Dr. Sen's book which revolves around the discourse on how a Black woman tends to speak to be heard and what language does she adopt to do so. Dr. Dutt further goes on to comment that though the language that has been used by writers such as Chinua Achebe, Buchi Emecheta and Flora Nwapa were English, nevertheless these eminent authors appropriated the colonial language to formulate dense literature on African culture and society through the mode of storytelling. Such literary contribution emphasized on the emergence of a new discourse on feminism such as feminism with a "capital F" and feminism with a "small f". Dr. Dutt lastly congratulated Dr. Sen for her contribution to the field of African literature through her book.

Finally, Dr. Sen took the podium to talk about the relationship between two African Women writers which is contained in her book. And she depicts this relationship of Buchi Emecheta and Flora Nwapa to be "Sisters in Arms". Dr. Sen elaborated how two African Women emerged as infamous African writers defying strong hegemonic forces of colonization and patriarchal rule; and how they both inspired and invigorated each other. Dr. Sen further went onto describing the representation and the conception of women and specifically the notion of the mother in the books written by both the authors.

Towards the end, when the floor was open for the audience to question or comment on the discussed material, a few significant questions were raised. Such as- Does the book depict the sense of modernity influencing the writing of African women? Is motherhood affiliated to a sacrificial connotation? How is the writing of Buchi Emecheta and Flora Nwapa peculiar to one another? While addressing these questions; the speakers highlighted the standpoints of African women who were socially positioned by the means of a history of subordination and oppression. These African women were described to be proud and sacrificial mothers but women who embody a sense of agency. And this agency took the form of writing in the present context. Moreover, Dr. Narang commented that even though Emecheta and Nwapa's writing was contextually similar as they both throw light on the experiences of African women, however, they both inscribe a slight difference in their work. This difference emerges from the fact the Emecheta was living away from her country and Nwapa in her country, Nigeria. Such geographical positioning allows a variance in their standpoints which naturally gets reflected in their work.

The session ended with a huge round of applause for all the speakers who further ended the discussion by bringing to the light one of the most important aspects of the session and also Dr. Sen's book: we inevitably realize, when we read through dense African literature, the cultural fabric and societal construction of Africa and India remain to be similar at astonishing levels. One of them being, Africa though is represented as a unit it, however, encompasses an assemblage of fifty-four countries with unique cultures, language, and history. Similar to our sub-continent India, this is also an assemblage of thirty-six variant states and union territories. And it is because of such convergences, it is very important and necessary that both of the countries need to encourage exchanges of conversations through exchanging literature.

(Report prepared by Ms. Samhita Das, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Bharati College)