Vivekananda Institute of Professional Studies

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Vivekananda School of English Studies (VSES)

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Vivekananda School of English Studies organized an Expert lecture on ‘Introduction to Literary Theory’ for the students of B.A. English (Hons), semester 1 and semester 3 in the B-Block Auditorium on 3 rd September 2019. The speaker for this lecture was Prof. Simi Malhotra, Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia and also Director, Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research. Dr Avani Bhatnagar introduced the guest and Dr Salonee Priya, Associate Dean, VSES welcomed her.



Prof. Simi began the lecture tracing the trajectory of the Philosophers like Plato and Aristotle who engaged with life and created a comprehensive understanding of the same. Their non-compartmentalized approach created a cohesive worldview for them. Coming down to literary criticism she talked about the shift in the process to view literature, where criticism lead to the specific study of the techniques used in the works of literature in particular. They were the people who created works of literature and simultaneously worked on the techniques used to create that work. They created the vision for artistic beauty.



Objective correlative of T.S. Eliot, John Keats’s Negative Capability, Mathew Arnold’s idea of touchstone were some of the examples she gave. From Criticism the literary journey travelled through the changing scientific temperament where the upcoming theorists defined literature with a theoretical perspective which was a reaction to the philosophers who initiated the study of philosophy in arts. Charles Darwin, Karl
Marx and Sigmund Freud were some theorists who contributed in the shaping of 20th century thought process. She also talked about two schools of thought that approached life at the level of idea and sensory perception respectively. She traced the idea of the 19 th century German Philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer who talked about “Will to Truth”.She also discussed the further questioning of another renowned German Philosopher Fredrick Nietzsche who countered the above argument saying our will is not a free will, it is predefined to move in a certain direction; this is how we move.

Further they discussed about the idea of truth and untruth where Nietzsche did not give primacy to just the truth, but valued the untruth as an inclusive force of understanding. And as truth is the outcome of selective experience of one, therefore with Nietzsche's ideas power discourse entered, to look at the nuanced reflections of the work of art. Literary theory connects politics and philosophy with power. She concluded by substantiating in detail about the theories of Charles Darwin, Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud.The stimulating lecture was followed by an equally energized discussion where students asked some relevant questions with regards to the journey of literary theory, its impact in today's time and the role of language in its creation. Dr Hardeep Kaur proposed the vote of thanks.

