

PROGRAMME

Wednesday, December 2, 2009 at 4.00 p.m.

Invocation

Welcome Address : **Dr.M.Solayan**
Principal,
Sri Venkateshwara College of Education.

Presidential Address : **Mr.KN.Ramajayam**
Managing Trustee,
Visionary Trust.

Valedictory Address : **Dr.T.Ramasamy**
Registrar
Bharathidhasan University
Tiruchirappalli.

Vote of Thanks : **Mr.Karthikeyan**



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SRI VENKATESHWARA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

(Affiliated To Tamilnadu Teachers Education University)

PERAVURANI - 614 804.

Cordially invites you to the

Inaugural Function

of the

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
EDUCATION, CULTURE AND LITERATURE
OF GREECE AND INDIA**

on 2nd December 2009 at 10.00 a.m.

*at the **S.T.D HALL, PERAVURANI.***

Presidential Address

Mr.KN.Ramajayam

Managing Trustee, Visionary Trust.

Inaugural Address

Dr.K.Chellappan

Former Director, State Institute of English, Chennai.

Keynote Address

Dr.Andreas L.Katonis

Professor of Linguistics, Thessaloniki University, Greece

Special Address

Dr.V.Rajagopalan

Principal, Sri Venkateshwara Arts and Science College
& Syndicate Member, Bharathidhasan University.

Felicitations

Dr. M.Paramasivam

Dr.Punithambal

Dr. Vijayalakshmi

Mother Teresa Women's University.

Dr. Kek Lian wah

Dr.Seethalakshmi

University Putra Malaysia.

Nanyang Technological University. Singapore

Mr.K.Rajavel

Secretary,

Sri Venkateshwara College of Education.

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Former Director,
State Institute of English.
- Keynote Address : **Dr.A.L.Katonis**
Professor of Linguistics
Greece.
- Special Address : **Dr.V.Rajagopalan**
Principal,
Sri Venkateshwara College of
Arts and Science &
Syndicate Member,
Bharathidhasan University.
- Vote of Thanks : **Dr.V.Ramaiyan**
Dean,
Sri Venkateshwara College of Arts and
Science.

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Keynote topics in Greek and Indian Literature
Andreas L. Katonis
University of Thessaloniki, Greece

(International Conference on Education, Culture and Literature of
Greece and India
Sri Venkateshwara College of Education, Peravurani, Tamil Nadu, South
India,
2nd December, 2009)

Literature in Greece has about the same time-depth as have different ethnic literatures in India, and just like the language and the literature experience in this country, in Greece too, both language and literature live on and still develop continuously.

Greek literature begins with two ripe, perfect products: with the Iliad and the Odyssey, two epics attributed traditionally to one poet, Homer, who lived in the 8th c. BC. "Traditionally", because "Homer", i.e. "Homeros", may have been a generic name, a kind of pseudonym meaning the 'compiler' or 'composer'. The word is thought to have to do with the adverb "homou" ('together') and the verb "ararisko" ('to fit together'). A "homeros", then, is nothing more than a gifted person able to fit several separate songs together and to perform them as a long, single poem. Similarly, the word "harmonia" which gives English 'harmony', has the same root -ar-. A "harmonia" ('harmony') means, in this way, originally, things whatever put together properly. This, however, need not be the matter of this communication.

A French proverb says "Cherchez la femme", 'try to find the woman', meaning that in every important event, in politics or elsewhere, there is a woman either as a motive or, at least, as a propelling force in the background. Looking for a proper topic for this communication I thought exactly of this: the narrative of the Iliad, the older Homeric epic, is about a great war in the second millennium BC between the united Greek kings and Troy as the capital and leader of several equally united forces in Asia Minor (the actual Turkey).

There may have been various historical reasons for this clash which was a reality but the epic finds only one: the abduction of Helen, the beautiful wife of Menelaos, king of Sparta, by Paris, son of the Trojan king Priamos. Troy's fate was to be captured. Menelaos sought help from Agamemnon the chief king, and the united forces of all the Greek kingdoms invaded and destroyed Troy. A reconciliation between Helen and Menelaos followed and they returned to Sparta. We find a parallel to this in the Ramayana, similarly a great epic. There is an abduction, that of Sita, with heavy consequences. There is no place to analyze the episode but I think that in the case of an abduction the lack or the presence of the willingness of a woman is a secondary detail only; a structural approach in mythology and literature certainly

would find deeper similarities. Such similarity is perhaps that at least in one version Sita returns to her husband.

An even more important instance is the case of Antigone, the heroine of Sophocles, the second in the row of the greatest Greek dramatists. To her, we find a parallel in the Tamil epic Silappathikaram. It is about Kannaki, a simple woman, whose husband was killed by the king. She was bold enough to oppose the king's order, and sought justice. Antigone was similarly bold but her fate was very tragic. She opposed the king's will when she buried her brother Polyneikes. Kreon, a tyrant type of king, prohibited the burial because he considered Polyneikes a traitor.

Antigone was an exponent of divine law and she was ready to die for her deed. In a larger sense, it pays to remember that this problem was part of a more general philosophical question consisting in the *physis-nomos* complex which was present not only in politics and in philosophical thinking but even in what could be called the ancient linguistics (think of Plato's dialogue *Kratylos*).

In the Sophoclean interpretation, Antigone's motives were those of *nature* (*physis*), and the king's motives were those of *law* (*nomos*), i.e. the legislation of a tyrant who gave "law" against nature. In the Athenian democracy of that time this was understood with a special sensibility because the famous Periclean democracy maintained that written and unwritten law were the same thing, and consequently no contradicting individual and institutional law existed.

Antigone's tragedy, who preferred to kill herself, was not the only tragedy. Haemon, Kreon's son, who loved Antigone, wanted first to kill his father as a revenge. Kreon, rather cowardly, escaped, and then the son killed himself. Following this death, Eurydike, Kreon's wife, committed suicide. The tyrant king's tragedy was complete: he remained alone, he cursed himself and he lost his sight. This was also symbolic: the king did not see what he should have; think of Sophocles' other play, *Oidipous*.

Long before Shakespeare, this is a Shakespearean drama. Written in 442 BC, it was considered the best, and remains one of the greatest achievements in literature until this day. "Cherchez la femme" – looking for the woman, the female figures, you arrive at the frontiers of divine and human law, an ever existing problem in Greek literature and thinking.