

Guest Lecture on Writing and Resistance by Tenzin Tsundue

Forum for Academic Excellence, Department of English organized a guest lecture on *Writing and Resistance*, delivered by Mr Tenzin Tsundue, an alumnus, poet, writer and Tibetan activist on February 10, 2020. Staff and PG English literature students participated in the lecture and reciprocated overwhelming response. He enumerated the importance of individual voices and the need for spontaneous expressions in writing. For him, writing one's own story is more liberating and illuminating. In this context, he ruminated if freedom is just political, or limited to raising flags and slogans. It is so much more – annihilation of caste, safety of women, growth of downtrodden. And that way, India may be independent, but far from free yet. He wanted the students to fight for freedom of this sort judiciously and in a non-violent way as thinkers, writers, educators and journalists.

Tsundue also delved into his own journey as an activist, poet and writer, and reminisced how as a student he often wrote poems touching upon the idea of home and brotherhood to his “rich friends with fancy houses”. He expressed how being in exile, slapped with court cases pushed him to think, write and express. Replying to question to a student, he said “The idea of exile is this – you have to leave your home, come to a new place and be unable to settle down, physically and emotionally. Your future looks bleak and you're trapped in the reality of today and the dream of tomorrow. But one who doesn't belong anywhere, can live everywhere. For me, home is not a house. It is the adjustment you make in your heart”.

He eventually reiterated the need to change the way English language and literature being taught. He further said that greater emphasis should be given to independent writing and thought in the curriculum: “English literature was started by the British as an experiment to make it easier for Indians to serve them. But for the last 271 years, we have been reading the same age-old Victorian literature, their comedy, politics, etc. While there's nothing wrong with this, we have to be able to write our own language and stories too. We must find our own voice.”