

THE HINDU



At the lecture on language and cultural diversity at Jain University Centre for Indian Psychology

Language and cultural diversity

Jain University Centre for Indian Psychology organised a special session on 'Language and Cultural Diversity' recently. S. Sridhar, SUNY Distinguished Service Professor of Linguistics and India Studies, Director, Centre for India Studies, Stony Brook University, New York, was the chief guest. Sandeep Shastri, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Jain University, was also present.

Prof. Sridhar said: "All the experiences that I gathered as a student feels just like Wordsworth looking at daffodils thinking of it as pure bliss." He spoke about the unusual connectivity between language and thinking and the influence cultural diversities has on language. The relativity of language to the thought process, the relationship between the two and its impact on cognition and perception were discussed during the special session. Prof. Sridhar pointed out how language affects personality, elucidating the difference in the way a North Indian who speaks Hindi thinks and in the way a South Indian who speaks Kannada thinks. "If language limits our thinking then we all are prisoners of our language," he said.

The talk also highlighted what sets language apart from a dialect. Prof. Sridhar said, "Simply put, language is a dialect

with an army and a navy". He discussed how even until recently Konkani was considered to be only a dialect of Marathi. It was only after Goa became an independent State and declared Konkani as its State language that Konkani earned the stature of an independent language. He concluded that there is no such essential difference between language and dialect apart from that of the perception of the masses.