

Exploring ties between literature and history

Staff Reporter

PUDUCHERRY: A three-day workshop on "Writing Literature and History: Ideas and Practice" began at the French Institute on Wednesday with a detailed analysis on a sub-topic "Literature as History of Social Change" by historian K.N. Panikkar. In a 45-minute lecture, Mr. Panikkar drove home the point that history and literature shared considerable common ground as both are embedded in social process.

Literature does not happen outside history, but within it. Yet, literature and history differ fundamentally in the manner in which social reality is embodied and represented. While in literary representation, imagination constitutes the central element, historical representation is governed by evidence and factual accuracy. Nevertheless, both are representations of reality and not reality itself, however, much a historian or a writer tries to relate the narrative to the known



Historian K. N. Panikkar giving a lecture at the French Institute in Puducherry on Wednesday. - PHOTO : T.SINGARAVELOU

facts, he said.

Despite the distinction, the relationship between literature and history is characterised by a close interface between the two. History is the subject matter of litera-

ture, as its universe is humanity and humanity has no existence without its history, Mr. Panikkar pointed out.

Both history and literature perform the same role in society, though in different

ways to make the social process intelligible - history by identifying forces which bring about changes and by unravelling their dynamics, literature by making implicit meanings accessible through

the medium of interpersonal relations and emotional experiences.

The workshop is organised jointly by the IFP, Progressive Writers Association, Puducherry and Tamil Nadu.