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Cauvery is not just about water: former Madras HC judge

The Hindu Bureau

CHENNAI

For the people of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, river Cauvery is not just about water. "She is the giver of food, literature, music. Everything that makes our life Cauvery is connected," said Prabha Sridevan, former Madras High Court judge.

She launched the book, *Cauvery - A Long-winded Dispute*, published by *The Hindu* here on Tuesday authored by its senior associate editor T. Ramakrishnan.

Ms. Sridevan said her great grandfather had been one of the signatories of the agreement on water sharing. Later her grandfather was an assistant engineer when the Mettur dam on the river was con-

structed. Her husband, as a special government pleader, made several trips to New Delhi to appear at hearings of the Cauvery dispute cases in the Supreme Court.

'Managed to be fair'

"It is difficult to spell what Cauvery means to us. Therefore, it is perhaps very difficult to be objective. Mr. Ramakrishnan has managed to be very fair," she said, adding that being fair would enable a person to be truthful. "Cauvery is not just a matter of dispute between two States. The issue is much more complex involving many aspects, including demand side management, an area that has received little attention," she remarked.

"Language does not separate us. The boundary



Prabha Sridevan, third from left, retired judge of the Madras High Court, with N. Ravi, Director, Kasturi and Sons Ltd; Nirmala Lakshman, Chairperson of The Hindu Group of Publishing Private Limited; T. Ramakrishnan, author of the book; and N. Ram, Director, THG Publishing Private Limited at the launch of the book, *Cauvery - A Long-winded Dispute*, in Chennai on Tuesday. M. VEDHAN

line does not separate us," she said, referring to an anecdote in the book where a woman from a remote village in Karnataka refers to the river waters as 'namma neeru' (our wa-

ter). She suggested that the book be translated into Kannada and Tamil as "it tells us how the pendulum swings and how at some point some extraneous factor that has nothing to do

'Equally objective'

Kasturi and Sons' director N. Ravi, who has written the foreword for the book, said Cauvery is a unifying source as a cultural icon but as an economic resource, becomes contentious. "It is because of the asymmetry of power on the one side and the use on the other," he said.

"Actually, living in Tamil Nadu it is very difficult to be objective," Mr. Ravi said, recalling that S. Guhan, a former bureaucrat in Tamil Nadu, had objectively reviewed the issue in his book, *The Cauvery River Dispute: Towards Reconciliation* published by *The Hindu* in 1993. The current book is also "equally objective in treating the Cauvery

without taking sides".

N. Ram, director, THG Publishing Private Limited, said Mr. Guhan had studied international agreements regarding rivers in other countries as well. He appreciated Mr. Ramakrishnan for meticulously digging out data and taking a firm stand on issues relating to the Cauvery.

Mr. Ramakrishnan said the idea was to make people of the entire Cauvery basin realise that "the river is a common precious resource to be used judiciously. There is enormous scope for the riparian States to work closer in the years to come as the river's environment is facing serious challenges."

The book is available for purchase at

<https://publications.thehindugroup.com/bookstore/>