



Indian Association for  
Commonwealth Literature  
and Language Studies

NEWSLETTER

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**Edited by: M Asaduddin on behalf of IACLALS**

## EDITORIAL

### Space, Place, Displacement ...

Notwithstanding what the Bard of Avon told us about the imagination giving to “airy nothing a local habitation and name”, there are actual places – cities and towns, that have existed as natural habitat for writers and provided them inspiration and unending source materials for their creativity. Whether it is the London of Dickens, W.M. Reynolds and a host of others, or Paris of Balzac, Flaubert and others, or Istanbul of Orhan Pamuk, the fact remains that we cannot think of these writers without their association with particular cities. Also, at particular moments of history, some cities have remained particularly hospitable to writers and artists. If we think of modern Indian languages and literatures, we find that for each language, there was a town or city that acted as a habitat or conduit for writers. Kolkata for Bangla (at one time for Assamese and Oriya too), Pune and Mumbai for Marathi, Allahabad, Kanpur and Varanasi for Hindi, Delhi, Lucknow and Hyderabad for Urdu, and so on. Being real (as opposed to airy nothing) and located in the humdrum of daily life with an identifiable cartography does not make them any less inspirational or potent than a Macondo or a Malgudi. This is also demonstrated by the now popular ‘Noir’ series on many cities of the world that reveal their dark, underbelly. One is aware of Bombay Noir edited by Altaf Tyrewala and Delhi Noir by Hirsh Sawhney. Volumes on other Indian cities could well be there or maybe on their way.

These thoughts ran through my mind as I happened to read four novels in English in the past few weeks with the same city, Shillong, as their setting. In two of them the evocation of the city is so powerful that it assumes the dimension of a powerful character. The four novels are: Dhruba Hazarika’s **A Bowstring Winter**, Anjum Hasan’s **Lunatic in My Head**, Belinder Dhanoa’s **Echoes in the Well** and Bijoya Sawain’s **Shadow Men**. It is interesting that though all the four writers were born or brought up in Shillong and immortalized the city that was often designated as the “Scotland of the East” in their works, they will not be considered ‘native’ because they aren’t Khasi or Khasi enough (in case of Bijoya Sawain) and will be regarded by the Khasi fringe as ‘dkhar’(outsider) with all its pejorative and dangerous associations, an unfortunate fact the full import of which will become evident as we go along.

Shillong was the capital of undivided Assam. Developed as a health station and educational hub by the British it stood for elite western education (some of the institutions still retain their prestige), culture and cosmopolitanism in the context of Assam. Professional classes from different ethnic groups settled down there and lived in perfect harmony. But then identity politics and ethnic unrest started from the sixties of the last century and led to successive division of Assam into seven states (the so-called Seven Sisters). The Khasi Hills, Jaintia Hills and Garo Hills were formed into a separate state by the name of Meghalaya in 1972 with Shillong as its capital. However, the new state which was supposed to fulfil the aspirations of the tribal population soon witnessed violent, parochial movements against non-tribals accompanied by arson, plunder and murder that led to mass exodus of people who had made Shillong their home for generation. When that mission was accomplished, and no external enemy could immediately be manufactured, the tribes began to fight among themselves. The cosmopolite culture of the city built over generations of people living together lay in tatters.

The four novels give a moving portrayal of Shillong that once was: Sunlight streaming through clouds, hills covered in mist, rain-washed terraces and roads, wind whizzing through pine trees lining up the roads, waterfalls, music, young men with guitars, rock concerts, Pink Floyd enthusiasts, pretty girls with silken hair, St. Edmund's college, pork chopped in five different ways, aroma of momos etc. etc. One can depict scenes of such beauty only when one has loved the city passionately. But then, the writers, particularly the last three, all women, also depict how glory gradually disappeared from the city and horror crept in, slowly, stealthily, imperceptibly, but inevitably. This horror is manifest most vividly in the writings of Bijoya Sawain, precisely because she continues to live there while the other writers have moved on. Here are two vignettes that describe both the beauty and the horror. The first extract constitutes the opening section of Anjum Hasan's Lunatic ... while the second extract is from the middle section of Bijoya Sawain's Shadow Men.

Two o'clock on an April afternoon the colour of dusk. Pine trees dripped slow tears, windows literature up in classrooms and banks, film posters pasted on the stony embankments of Laitumkhrah's wet streets slowly turned to mush. Firdaus Ansari walked past the Chic Choice beauty parlour, a dimly literature Chinese restaurant, a bookshop with the examination guides and primers in its window bleached golden white.

She often walked this street on her way to college and never took any notice of these

things. She looked at people, however, and people looked at her. A mere glance was usually enough to reveal the important things about them – the languages they spoke, their social position, how long they had lived in Shillong. Firdaus knew that the woman waving to her from the window of the beauty parlour, her friend Sharon, was a quarter British, a quarter Assamese of the tea planter variety, and half Khasi; that the short, scruffy men from the restaurants, out shopping for vegetables and chicken to put in the evening's noodles, were from distant Nepal but had probably never stirred out of Shillong since their parents migrated here; that the two men with long, black umbrellas and jholas, out to fetch their children from school, were Bengalis who were born here; that the woman with orange hair who ran the liquor store was Goan and, since there were very few Goans in Shillong, something of a freak case, but that the man with the spherical bald head leaning on the counter of his book shop was not, because he was Sindhi and had plenty of compatriots in the city. Firdaus was none of these. She refused to introduce herself as a Bihari because though her parents were from Bihar, she was born in Shillong and had never lived anywhere else. What did that make of her? In Shillong's eyes if nothing else at least a dkhar, a foreigner, someone who did not have roots here, did not have the ground needed to put roots in.

### **(Lunatic in My Head)**

“The men here are ... well see first they were bewildered and wondered what was happening. So they pinpointed the problem, an easy, comfortable explanation to their ... what did I say? Yeah, bewilderment. They worked out this great big solution and we got a state of our own. Still things were going wrong so they zeroed on all outsiders ‘because they are stealing our jobs’. Except for those who had the money to pay, the rest had their homes burnt, their bodies battered. Many fled, some clung on, the Bengalis, Nepalis, Biharis and, of course, wealthy Marwaris, Sindhis, Sikhs. They stayed but they lived according to the new rules. Yet things are still going wrong. So now it's become the Garos. These are all punching bags. Out of sheer frustration we punch, we shoot, we ... kill.”

### **(Shadow Men)**

The point to reflect on is that the above is true not simply about the Khasis, but the million mutinies that are raging in the North East, and some other parts of the country, in the name of identity politics, which is turning places that were known for their beauty, elegance, distinct culture and leisurely and peaceful life into areas of conflict. It is in the fitness of things that writers from the North East should have responded to this phenomenon and voiced the anguish of the common people

through their writings. Their love of the place, Shillong, acts as a catalyst.  
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The response of IACLALS members to the second issue of the Newsletter has been very encouraging for us. Please suggest any new feature that you want introduced in the Newsletter, and do continue to send your reports, reviews and cfps. See you all in Goa!

**M Asaduddin**

## CONFERENCE AND SEMINAR REPORTS

### National Seminar on Understanding Aboriginal Australia

The Centre for Australian Studies, Institute of English, University of Kerala organized a National Seminar on the theme of Understanding Aboriginal Australia on 8 and 9 January 2015. The purpose of the Seminar had been to explore how the indigenous people of Australia share innumerable similarities with India's own indigenous tribes and cultures, since both occupy ambiguous terrains within the nation state and radically critique the notion of national identity. It is in the context of contemporary struggles and debates over time, space and identity that this seminar situated itself. The two – day deliberations looked into the cultural, political, social and economic aspects of Aboriginal life in Australia. This seminar also looked at the broad areas of Nation, Representation, Gender, Spatial Identities, Histories, Myth, Religion, Culture and Political Movements and Struggles among Aboriginals in Australia.

Prof. C.P Ravichandra, Dept. of Studies in English, University of Mysore rendered the Inaugural and Keynote Address titled “Historicizing Silence: Introducing Australian Aboriginal Poetry”. Just prior to the keynote speech, Dr Suja Kurup P.L., the Convener of the Seminar and the Director, Centre for Australian Studies and Dr G.S. Jayasree , Professor and Head, Institute of English, University of Kerala, elaborated the theme statement by delineating the relevance of the Seminar Topic, both in India and Australia. Prof. Ravichandra spoke of the umbilical relationship between the speaking voice and land in the poetry of the aborigines and remarked that a new explanation need to be found for aboriginal question.

In the first plenary session, Mr. Michael Seymour, who hails from Darwin, Northern Australia delivered a lecture on Australia and the Aboriginals. He pointed out that though Australia is a rich country with lot of resources, the aborigines remain dispossessed and are adversely represented in Australian prison. He pointed out that the problem of the aborigines is an international shame to Australia and remarked that more work needs to be done in the areas of education and health to improve the lot of the Aborigines in Australia.

The speaker in the successive plenary session, the next day was Dr. Swati Pal,

Associate Professor, Janki Devi Memorial College, New Delhi and General Secretary, Indian Association for the Study of Australia. In her lecture titled “Getting Their Act Together”: How Theatre helps Indigenous Communities in (re)claiming Identities”, she traced the evolution of Budhan Theatre during the colonial times in India and embarked on a cross-cultural journey by connecting it to the Ilbijeree Theatre in Victoria, Australia.

The paper presentations by delegates from various colleges in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, spanned and covered the wide expanse and contours of Aboriginal culture in Australia. A special feature of the Seminar was the Slide Presentation on Aboriginal Culture by Ms Anuja Raj and Ms Soumya S., the Research Scholars at the Institute of English, University of Kerala. The Seminar was attended by presenters from the universities and Colleges of Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

*Suja Kurup P.L., Centre for Australian Studies, University of Kerala, Kerala*

### **Indo Australian Relations: Retrospect and prospects**

The Seventh Biennial Conference of the IASA was held at Thiruvananthapuram, from the 23rd to the 25th of January, 2014, in collaboration with the University of Kerala and JNU. The supporting partners of the Conference were ICSSR, Australian High Commission, AIC, Kerala Tourism and ShinMaywa. The Conference started with Prof Santosh Sareen, President, IASA welcoming the participants. Mr Bernard Phillip, Deputy High Commissioner of Australia to India and Chief Guest, highlighted the role of people-to- people contact in strengthening Indo Australian ties in his speech. Special Invitee, Ambassador TP Sreenivasan, Vice Chairman of Kerala State Higher Education Council, pointed out that both countries often challenged each other. Pro- Vice Chancellor of Kerala University, Dr N Veeramanikandan, referred to the need for building academic cooperation between the two countries. Four books were released at the Inaugural, written/edited by IASA members. They were: Reimagining India and Australia Culture and Identity edited by D. Gopal and Alan Mayne ; Dynamics of Diversity Culture and Literature Australia and India by Pradeep Trikha; Globalisation State and Governance by Shaji Varkey and Silent Days Poems by Jaydeep Sarangi. Shaji Varkey proposed the vote of thanks. Jack Turner, writer and broadcaster, found a captivated audience as he read from his book Spice: The History of a Temptation.

In the two-and-a-half-day Conference there were four Plenary lectures. Anvita Abbi indicated the chain of continuity between the Andamanese population and the Australian Aboriginal through the single dispersal theory and the presence of a 'possible human language' in the speech of the early colonisers of South Asia. Prof Richard Nile's talk focussed on the need for deeper intellectual engagement between Australia and India. Prof Devleena Ghosh charted the life of Komalam Craig, an activist and teacher at Shantiniketan who married an Australian and spent time in Australia where she joined radical women's groups. Prof Peter Gale's lecture followed along similar lines where he looked at the life of Sister Mary Theodore and the story of MITRA.

A panel discussion on the prospects of Australian studies in India in literature and the social sciences also took place steered by Prof Makarand Paranjape. The discussants were Profs Santosh Sareen, GJV Prasad, Shaji Varkey, Gopa Kumar and Peter Gale.

Apart from the aforesaid, nine other sessions of paper presentations were held. That poetry and song can be used powerfully to validate the identity of such marginalised communities as the Indian Dalits and the Australian Aboriginals was an aspect pointed out by Indranil Acharya and John Napier. Maritime issues were dealt with in the papers by Suresh R and Riddhi Shah. Jaydeep Sarangi and Suresh Frederick examined the nature of poetry by Michelle Cahill, Oodgeroo Noonuccal and Rabindranath Tagore in an ecocritical framework. Exploring various aspects of fiction in India and Australia were three presentations by Sharon Rundle, Aleena Manoharan and Sheeba Princess. Vincent Alessi made a highly visual presentation of Aboriginal art in Australia. Trevor Hogan reflected on the changing face of Australian Suburbia. Yagamma Reddy and Rupakjyoti Borah studied the various dimensions of India-Australia participation in the Indo-Pacific region. That women can and do challenge male/ colonial hegemony through their writings was underlined in the papers by Shaweta Nanda and Anindita Sen. There were two papers on the Indo Australian Strategic Relationship presented by Surojit Mahalanobis and Josukutty CA. The final session saw some interesting issues being raised regarding single parenting by Kamala and a study of the situation of the Indian Migrant in Australia by Roanna Gonsalves .

The Valedictory Session was a time for looking at the Conference and the role of IASA in helping to promote Australian Studies in India through a critical lens, the



speakers being Yagamma Reddy, Richard Nile, Swati Pal and Santosh Sareen. The Conference concluded with a vote of thanks by Meenakshi Bharat. There was a scintillating Cultural Evening on the 23rd wherein Kerala Tourism sponsored a spectacular dance performance. This was followed by readings by Sujata Sankranti, Meenakshi Bharat, Sharon Rundle and Jaydeep Sarangi from their creative works with humorous inputs by GJV Prasad. And the delicious Kerala cuisine on all days of the Conference but especially the dinner post the Cultural Evening hosted by Kerala Tourism made for a palatable experience indeed!

*Swati Pal, General Secretary, IASA*

### **Planning Modernity: Colonial Continuities, Postcolonial Disjunctions**

The 'city' might serve as an excellent tool to measure modernity against, but what if it was one forced on to the city by planners who were also their colonizers? In that special case of modernity acquisition cities might have had the favourable opportunity of being inseminated with so many things much ahead of their times, but at the same time they also become victim to planned violence that thrusts a sudden transformation, thus breaking their natural continuity of life. It is with the aim of exploring this shifting relationship between urban planning, violence and literary representation from colonial into postcolonial times that the network of 'Planned Violence: Post/colonial Urban Infrastructures and Literature' (funded by the Leverhulme Trust) decided to conduct its second workshop, "Planning Modernity: Colonial Continuities, Postcolonial Disjunctions" in the once-colonized capital city of Delhi at Jawaharlal Nehru University on 24th-25th of October, 2014. The location itself served as an apt example of what this workshop was aiming to understand better. Set amidst the rapidly growing posh urban space of South Delhi, the JNU campus seems to be a resistive symbol with its own plush greenery that definitely stands apart from its concrete surroundings.

Against this backdrop, began the two-day long workshop that saw the presence of renowned academicians and thinkers, along with a fantastic crowd that kept up the spirit of the workshop with their excellent observations and comments. It began with the Introductory session where the Welcome Address was delivered by GJV Prasad, followed by presentations by the other Network Convenors - Elleke Boehmar, Alex Tickell, Pablo Mukherjee and Dominic Davies. The rest of the workshop was carried

forward by different panel discussions that ranged from topics related to Global Metropolitanism, Gender, Urban Transitions, New Cultural Forms vis-a-vis the City to the questions of Agency, Protest and Control associated with the City. However, among the many highlights of the workshop was the series of Keynote Speeches that were delivered by the likes of Manju Kapur, Narayani Gupta, Vishwajyoti Ghosh and Rana Dasgupta.

This workshop was truly one of its kind as it also found time to break away from the seminar room to the outside as the participants embarked on a guided historical tour of Mehrauli with none other than Sohail Hashmi whose Delhi Heritage Walks are highly informative and refreshing - being imbued with narratives of his own personal memories of the spaces. A special mention must also be made of the performance "Tender is the Night" by Gourab Ghosh before Dinner at the University Cafeteria, voicing the experiences of a transvestite inhabiting the urban jungle of Delhi. The workshop ended with a Roundtable Discussion, where Elleke Boehmer, Pablo Mukherjee, Pamila Gupta, Alex Tickell and Lakshmi Menon came together to reflect on the various ideas that had been generated through the conference, to take them up for further analysis in the concluding chapters of the workshops scheduled for Johannesburg and Oxford.

*Anurima Chanda, Research Scholar, JNU*

### **Literary Discussion on Swami Vivekananda**

A literary discussion was held on 12 January at 6 pm on the first floor of the Ujjayanta Book Market, West Tripura, India, under the joint auspices of the Sahitya Adda (Literary Rendezvous) and Tripura Poetry society to commemorate the 153rd birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda in a congenial atmosphere. Prantosh Karmakar, a well-known singer, inaugurated the literary rendezvous by singing a song to Swami Vivekananda. Dr Bhaskar Roy Barman, Patron, Sahitya Adda (Literary Rendezvous) and founding secretary, Tripura Poetry Society, spoke in his address of welcome of the relevance of Swami Vivekananda to the present age. When Roy Barman in course of his address said that stillness is the immanent hobnobber at this forum, a pertinent question was raised how it was possible for stillness to be present to hobnob with the bodied hobnobbers. In reply to this question Roy Barman said that it is only the poet who can visualize the presence of stillness

around him. Some hobnobbers objected to this hypothesis and asked whether Barman meant to say that other literary practitioners won't visualize the presence of stillness. Roy Barman replied that everybody is a poet, no matter whether they write poem or not and told the hobnobbers to invoke the poetry in them and then they will visualize the presence of stillness listening to them. Jitendrajit Singh, an eminent scholar of Tripura and the president of Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, informed the members present that an essay on Swami Vivekananda has been incorporated into the English text book of Class VIII and a part of an article by Swami Vivekananda into the English text book of class XI. He also suggested that students themselves be involved in discussion on Swamiji's life and work so that they would grow interested in him. Bidyut Bikash Dey, a retired headmaster, spoke in detail of how Swami Vivekananda devoted his whole life to uplifting the poor and the downtrodden and concluded his speech by saying that Swami Vivekananda preached non-dualism. Bibhu Bhattacharya, a renowned dramatic personality, who represented Tripura Theatre, interspersed the comments of Bidyut Bikas Dey with his own and vented his grievances at the way the youth nowadays are being lured away from the age-old tradition, religion and culture by their running after money. Vivekananda is to them just a religious prophet, he said. Kartik Banik, associated with Shilpa Tirtha, a dramatic organization, made a comment in his long speech that Swami Viveknanda should be taken out from inside the temple to mingle him in the milling crowd. Members accorded their appreciation to the comments and suggestions expressed in the speeches. Roy Barman summed up the speeches and said that he would try to hold a one-day conference on swami Vivekananda with students participating in it under the banners of Sahitya Adda (literary Rendezvous) and Tripura Poetry Society.

*Bhaskar Roy Barman, Agartala*

### **International Folk-culture Festival**

A five-day international folk-culture festival was jointly organized to celebrate the 124 death anniversary of the famous Baul singer Lalan Phakir from 13 to 17 November, 2014 at the Lalan Fair, Asannagar, Bhimpur, Nadia, West Bengal by Bharatiya Loka Samskriti Samsad and Sonarpur-Mathurpur Paribesh Samrakshna Samstha, Nadia under the aegis of the Siraj Shah Akhra, Nadia. This was done in collaboration with SAARC Cultural Society and Loka samskriti O Adibasi Samskriti Kendra, a centre for folk and tribal culture, Government of West Bengal. The first day of the festival, 13 November, was restricted to baul songs presented by

local artists. The festival from a technical point of view was inaugurated on the second day, that is, 14 November, and was inaugurated by Mr Swapan Debnath, Minister in charge of folk and tribal culture, Government of West Bengal. Gangadhar Mandal, Vice-President, Bharatiya Loka Samskriti Samsad, presided over the first day. A.T.M. Mamatajul Karim, working president, SAARC Cultural Society, Bangladesh, was the chief-guest. Among the special guests at the festival were Dr Bhaskar Roy Barman, Patron, Sahitya Adda (Literary Rendezvous), Agartala, Tripura, Devabhuti Chittaranjan from Nepal, Indrani Mukherjee from Delhi, Chandrakanta Chatterjee, President, SAARC Cultural Society, India, Kusum Kanti Biswas, Editor, Sera Khabar, a fortnightly newspaper, Nadia and Sobahan Ria, Md. Altaf Hussain, Srabanti Sharma from Bangladesh. Paresh Sarkar, Secretary, Bharatiya Loka Samskriti Samsad, spoke in his address of welcome of how he had organized the festival over the last twenty-one years and steered it into the 22nd year through the co-operation and help of the local people. In his inaugural speech Swapan Debnath, Minister said that human beings are the mainstream of culture and spoke at length of how the local people have been co-operating with the organizers in organizing this festival over the last twenty-one years since the establishment of the Siraj Shah Akhra in 1993. In his speech as the chief guest A.T.M. Mamatajul Karim said that he came from Bangladesh to India to participate in the folk-culture festival and was delighted to see the popularity Lalan enjoyed in India. The chief speaker Chandrakanta Chatterjee expressed himself delighted at the celebration with pomp and grandeur of the 124th death anniversary of Lalan Phakir. Dr Bhaskar Roy Barman, Patron, Sahitya Adda (Literary Rendezvous) said that it was Rabindranth Tagore who brought the Baul song into the limelight. He was profusely influenced by the Baul song in his early age and was instrumental in internationalizing the Baul song. Other speakers in their speech stressed the relevance of the festival to the present day and spoke of how the festival has grown over the last twenty-one years before stepping into the 22nd year. Many renowned Baul singers from India and abroad, including Paresh Sarkar, presented baul songs to the delight of the people present. Subhas Jana, eminent poet, presided over the third day of the festival, that is, 15 November, and Ramjan Ali from Bangladesh was the chief-guest. He said in his speech that the people themselves are the facilitators of the Baul culture and they only can give it a distinct identity of its own. The last two days limited themselves to Baul songs presented by eminent Baul singers from India and abroad.

*Bhaskar Roy Barman*

### Three-day Assamese-Urdu Translation Workshop

A three-day translation workshop was organized by the Sahitya Akademi at Parag Intercontinental Hotel, Guwahati, during December 27-29, 2014. I was invited to lead the workshop, along with Chandra Bhan Khayal, poet in Urdu and the convener of the Urdu Language Advisory Board, Sahitya Akademi. The project was to translate the classic Assamese short story collection, *Splendour in the Grass* edited by Hiren Gohain, into Urdu. It contained works by all the stalwarts of Assamese fiction starting from Lakshminath Bezbarua, the foundational figure of Assamese fiction, through Lakshmidhar Sarma, Syed Abdul Malik, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya, Shilabhadra, Mohim Bora, Jogesh Das, Chandra Prasad Saikia, Saurobh Kumar Chaliha, Nirupama Borgohain, Homen Borgohain, Bhabendranath Saikia, Indira Gosma, and up to Harekrishna Deka. As is the case with many Indian languages, there were no translators available who could directly translate from Assamese to Urdu. The only option was to translate from the English version.

The translators were selected from a cross-section of creative writers and academics from different parts of the country: Jayant Parmar, F.S. Aejaz, Suhail Ahmad Faruqi, Mazhar Mahmood, Mushtaq Danish, Mushtaq Anjum and Sanjib Kumar Baishya. The programme officer, Mushtaq Sadaf, also participated in translation and facilitated discussion.

The stories were sent to the translators several weeks earlier and they arrived with their versions of them in Urdu. Through the various sessions of the workshop these versions were refined, anomalies removed and cultural issues addressed. Sanjib was our local cultural informant who was often required to explain to the translators flora and fauna, male and female attire etc., sometimes giving visual representation from his laptop, or while we walked on the streets of Guwahati or went for little picnics in Kamakhya or crossed the majestic Brahmaputra river to go to North Guwahati where several scenic Vaishnava temples are located. In many senses, it was a traveling workshop. At one point in the workshop when we were struggling with what the English translator had designated as ‘elephant fruit’ and the original said ‘o-tenga’, Sanjib, in fact, took the initiative to get the fruit-cum-vegetable from the nearby market and enlightened us about how it is cooked in different ways and is supposed to help digestion. This is one of the many instances where we were helped by holding the workshop in the source language habitat. There were energetic discussions about how much of cultural cargo can be borne across without seriously

hampering readability in the target language, what to gloss and what not to etc etc. In the concluding session the translators talked about the insights they have gained from the workshop.

One of the highlights of the workshop was the mushaira that was held in the hotel on the second evening of the workshop. Several participants were published and prolific poets in Urdu who regaled the audience with their latest verses.

M Asaduddin

## SEMINARS AND SYMPOSIA: CALL FOR PAPERS & CONCEPT NOTES

**"Emergent Identities: Its Literary Representations", National Seminar at Mizoram University, 4-6 March 2015.**

The Department of English Mizoram University proposes to hold a three day national seminar on "Emergent Identities :Its Literary Representations" from 4-6 March 2015, with a view to examining the aspect of identity and the role of literature within the ambit of the same. Identity has often been related to aspects which may perhaps be related to a continuing discourse through communication of oneself and to others and it can also be created by individuals in and through the notion of culture. The proposed seminar is in tandem with the fundamental dynamics of the department's UGC DRS I - SAP project entitled "Emergent Literatures of North East India" .A significant amount of work has been achieved by the department on this front and several papers have been published by the faculty of the department, in this area and the seminar seeks to establish the significance of 'identities' and 'emergent identities' as located within the dynamics of literary representation.

The three day national seminar aims to stimulate and motivate greater academic interaction and networking amongst teachers/research scholars/students within the academia. The UGC DRS I-SAP project focuses itself upon the concept of emergent literatures and the seminar shall attempt to trace the significance of identities, which have ensued as a response to the study of emergent literatures in multicultural as well as interdisciplinary perspectives in arenas that are both

fictional and non fictional. The papers will deal with the following aspects of the subject of the seminar: race, class, religion, gender, ethnicity, ideology, nation, sexual orientation, culture, history, music, prevailing cultures, storytelling, narrative, environment, film and photography.

Select papers from the seminar shall be brought out in the form of an anthology.

#### Presentation Facilities

Multimedia Projectors for Power Point presentations will be made available.

#### Abstract

On or about 250 words should reach on or before 15th December 2014 MS Word format, Times New Roman ,12 Font, alongwith Title,Authors Names,Address,email to maggielpachau@gmail.com / [dthongam@gmail.com](mailto:dthongam@gmail.com)

#### Important Dates for the Seminar

1. Submission of Abstracts: 15th December 2014
2. Confirmation of Acceptance of Abstracts: 15th January 2015
3. Submission of Full Papers: 30th January 2015

#### Accommodation and TA

Due to constraints of funds, outstation participants are encouraged to arrange for financial support regarding travel, from their parent institutions/organizations. As accommodation within Mizoram University campus is limited, outstation participants are also given the option of booking rooms at their expense, in guest houses, economy and budget hotels within Aizawl city, and participants are requested to kindly inform the contact persons well in advance with regard to the same.

#### Registration Fee

This is inclusive of lunch, tea and conference kit, and it is not inclusive of accommodation. Outstation participants shall have to make their own travel arrangements.

#### Category

Research Scholars from Mizoram University:	1,000.00 Rupees
Students from Mizoram University:	300.00 Rupees
Others:	2,000.00 Rupees

#### Mode of payment

Registration will be done on the spot. All research scholars and students from Mizoram University are required to provide valid ID proof in order to avail of the fees stipulated above. Student/research scholar category seminar material will be provided.

#### Mizoram University

Mizoram University is a Central University established by an Act of Parliament, 2000. It has been accredited Grade A by NAAC in the year 2014. The university is committed to give its students a rewarding and inspiring place to pursue their education and research. It is located at Tanhril, in the Western outskirts of Aizawl city. Being an eco friendly society it is one of the first universities in the country to run effectively on solar power system. There are thirty departments and seven schools functioning at present in the university. For a more comprehensive aspect on the same kindly visit [www.mzu.edu.in](http://www.mzu.edu.in)

#### General Information about Mizoram

Mizoram is located in Northeast India, with Aizawl as its capital. The name is derived from Mi (people), Zo (hill) and Ram (land), and thus Mizoram implies "land of the hill people". It shares its borders with three of the seven sister states, namely Tripura, Assam, Manipur. The state also shares a 722 kilometer border with the neighbouring countries of Bangladesh and Myanmar. Amongst the most significant festivals of the Mizos, is Chapchar Kut, which is a spring festival that is celebrated with great festivity and mirth, wherein traditional aspects of Mizo culture are showcased. To be held on the 6th of March 2015 and coinciding with the third day of the seminar, a special outing will be organized for the participants of the seminar, in order to enjoy the exuberance of the season. For a more comprehensive aspect on the same kindly visit [www.mizoram.gov.in](http://www.mizoram.gov.in) and [www.tourism.mizoram.gov.in](http://www.tourism.mizoram.gov.in)

#### Weather



Mizoram has a mild climate, relatively and temperatures range from 7 to 22 °C (45 to 72 °F) in the month of March. You are advised to bring light woollens for the trip.

#### Contact Persons

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**CONFLICT AND RESISTANCE IN MULTICULTURAL INDIA AND**  
**AUSTRALIA**  
**EIGHTH BIENNIAL CONFERENCE OF IASA, 17-20 JANUARY, 2016,**  
**NEW DELHI, INDIA**

In an increasingly cosmopolitan world, burgeoning interconnections and intertwining see simultaneous re-discovery of ethnic roots and cultural identities. While a multicultural society recognises the diversity of a country; the diversity also becomes the bane for inequality and discrimination. Many of today's concerns are impelled by identity predicates and how they are construed. Identitarian claims of religious, ethnic and cultural varieties are frequently leading to conflict and tragedies. A need to manage diversity through policies of economic and political integration and participation is imperative to check confrontationist binary. Multiculturalism is a democratic policy response to the diversity. It is observed that while state polices are integrative and inclusive, social attitudes are slow to change.

Both India and Australia are secular democratic federations with written constitutions. Despite the differences in size, population, traditions, histories, social and political philosophies, the multicultural societies of the two countries share some common experiences and face the challenges of equity and social justice issues. Both have been colonised by British settlers and both have policies that aim to integrate potentially disadvantaged minority populations. India's civilisation is ancient and its

diversity has also been frequently influenced by conquerors and traders, many of whom settled permanently in India prior to British colonisation. India's dialogical tradition and non-dualistic ethos offers a unique example of peaceful transactions of multiple identities. In comparison, settlement in Australia is recent, although indigenous people dwelled for thousands of years before the British colonised and settled in Australia in 1788. However, the diversity in India is made more complex by regional disparities, the caste system and a rigid hierarchical social structure. In Australia policies towards the "first nations" or indigenous populations are founded on the respect for individual human rights and a civic and contractual definition of citizenship.

The impulse of globalization in the cultural sphere cannot be ignored. While globalisation is associated at one level with the destruction of cultural identity, at another cultural identity can also be viewed as a product of globalisation. Globalisation has undoubtedly enhanced the prospects of individuals nurturing several identities at once. People simultaneously own several affiliations ranging from the neighbourhood, city, region, country, gender, language, religion, profession, political and many others. Certainly none of these identities *per se* is taken to be the person's only singular identity. It is the blending of these collectives that influence identity today. Indeed we need to constantly explore and deliberate upon the manifold ways in which multiple identities and diversities mingle across religions and cultures.

The important and extremely relevant questions that emerge are: have both countries been successful in managing the multiple identities and diversities within their countries or are there certain underlying tensions that create situations of conflict and resistance? What are these points of rupture/stress? How are these articulated? Who articulates them? How are these resolved?

It is in this context that the biennial conference will deliberate the experiences of plural identities and how our diverse associations and affiliations are played out in any specific context.

The Seminar welcomes papers around the themes of conflict and resistance diversity, pluralism and multiculturalism such as:

Diversity and Pluralism: Polity and Society  
Multicultural Peace-building: Local Practices  
Impact of Globalisation  
Articulation of resistance in different ways - books, films, performances  
Issues of Racism and Immigration - Diaspora and Migrant population  
Rural-Urban divide  
Countering prejudice and ethnocentricity – Role of Law and Role of Education  
New threats: the shadow of terrorism  
Conflicts and challenges in implementing International laws on human rights

Kindly send abstracts of not more than 250-300 words, using Times New Roman size 12 font with a brief bio note and contact details to Dr Swati Pal at [palswat@gmail.com](mailto:palswat@gmail.com) and cc to Prof Santosh Sareen at [santoshsareen@yahoo.co.in](mailto:santoshsareen@yahoo.co.in) by Sunday, 8th February, 2015.

In case of joint papers, bio notes and contact details of all authors are required. You are also welcome to make a panel presentation; details of all panelists must accompany the abstract.

**CINEMA AND LITERARY ADAPTATIONS IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT:**  
**A WORKSHOP**  
**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, BHARATI COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF**  
**DELHI, DELHI, FEB 16, 2015**

Even though cinema originated independently of literature and shares with it little in terms of modes of production and manners of reception, it has always relied vitally on the latter for growth and sustenance as an art form in itself. From cinema's inception, film makers have transformed a range of literary texts and genres into the visual and the audio-visual form. This transference, of course, has been as varied and vivid as the texts which have been so adapted, and hence adaptations of literary texts may be considered more or less central to the consolidation of cinema as a popular, and populist, art form. Therefore, while the mores, tenor and politics of adaptation have, of course, varied – as has the debate over fidelity and (copy)right – the cinematic may be considered as being embryonically connected to the literary.

These connections, from the very obvious though often ignored literariness of the cinematic script to the much discussed transformative absorption of a multitude of

literary genres into the cinematic form, have been the subject of much comment and celebration, academic as well as artistic. In recent times, this closeness has become much more symbiotic as literary genres break through the tyranny of the written – the typed – word and play with speech as sound and with image as visuality. The emergence of these new literary prototypes along with the continued metamorphosis of the literary into the cinematic is what makes it interesting and useful to revisit the question of not just adaptation but of the cinematic and the literary as well.

It is this question – in the Indian context – which this workshop is interested in. Cinema's connections with and debts to literature in our context have been acknowledged and documented well by artists and critics alike, but we wish to revisit this connection in all its multifariousness so as to examine better the aesthetics, politics and semiotics of adaptations of literary texts with regard to Indian cinemas. Hence, along with engaging with the eternally pertinent questions of populism, semiotic politics, artistic fidelity, historicity, and commercialism, this workshop also seeks to engage with the literary as oral and as visual and, thus, with the uncertain, unfolding consequences of the dissolution of the literary and the cinematic as distinct art forms.

Accordingly, proposals are invited for papers of fifteen to twenty minutes' duration for an intensive workshop to be held at Bharati College on Monday, 15th February 2015. Along with academic papers, the workshop will also involve visits to some of the iconic cinema halls of Delhi and a discussion on the multifaceted literariness which they birthed and which has been thrust upon them. We encourage not just academicians, professional as well as amateurs, but also film makers and other artists to apply. We will be happy to assist outstation participants in finding suitable accommodation, but, unfortunately, will not be able to provide for the same. Participants may focus on any of the above or the following pointers, though we encourage them to bring different ideas to the forum as well:

Colonial cinema and commercial literature.

Tarakki aur flim.

Scripting literature, writing cinema.

Popularity and populism: cinema and literature.

Orality and(/at(?)) the frontiers of cinema.

Vlogging: literature as cinema?

Re-forming the past: historicist adaptation.

Proposals must be mailed as MS Word documents to the Department's email address, [conf.eng.bc@gmail.com](mailto:conf.eng.bc@gmail.com), by Saturday, 24th January 2015;

acceptances/rejections shall be conveyed by Wednesday, 28th January 2015. The proceedings will be recorded and presented as vlogumentaries on our blog and on the college's YouTube channel; they might also be published. This will be the first in a series of quarterly workshops to be organised annually by the Department of English, Bharati College; to access the online version of this CFP on our blog, visit [http://bharaticollegedepartmentofenglish.blogspot.in/p/blog-page\\_3.html](http://bharaticollegedepartmentofenglish.blogspot.in/p/blog-page_3.html).

## BOOK REVIEW

- **Prem Kumari Srivastava and Gitanjali Chawla (eds.) *Cultures of the Indigenous: India and Beyond* Vol. 1. New-Delhi: Authorspress. 2014. 257pp. Rs 900/**
- **Prem Kumari Srivastava and Gitanjali Chawla (eds.) *De-territorialising Diversities: Literatures of the Indigenous and Marginalised* Vol. 2. New-Delhi: Authorspress. 2014. 278pp. Rs 900/-**

Much water has flown under the bridge since the need to preserve and recognize the existence and contribution of people in margins was felt. Since then academic disciplines have devoted decades to understand and admit the damage done by exploitative paradigms like colonialism, casteism and commercialism.

With this backdrop, the editors of the two volumes seem to have not just designed and developed a valuable grid to relate common issues with specific concerns, they have mapped a trail connecting an overwhelming diversity of issues concerning the indigenous, formerly colonized and till date marginalised communities. They chart out the history of indigenous studies, the evolution of disciplines like anthropology, sociology and folklore studies through excavation, cataloguing and archiving of the indigenous people and cultures to serve colonial agendas or form civilizational hierarchies and later museumising and stereotyping the subjects of research to reflect on social reality in a postcolonial setting.

Having said this, in *Culture of the Indigenous: India and beyond* the editors in the Introduction chalk out the point of departure for the future course of indigenous

studies as the ‘revival of the folk and the indigenous in an economical and viable way benefitting the all encompassing area of sustainable holistic development’. This calls for new ways of engaging with the ‘other’. With the Foreword by Malashri Lal emphasizing on the thrust of this engagement with the ‘other’ to be both an acknowledgement of Indigenous peoples’ contribution and efforts to fulfill their rights, the first volume takes giant leaps in the Conceptual Framework itself where Folklorist Jawaharlal Handoo exposes the absolute nature and mechanism of dominant discourses silencing marginal voices while Anthropologist Julie Cruikshank shows the organic and lived nature of cultural artifacts like stories that facilitate the changing social roles of a member of a Canadian indigenous group. Papers exploring the interface of indigenous cultures with the New Media, on Bhangra, Kutch women embroiderers, Baul singers and the role of museums in the section on ‘The Tangible and the Intangible’, lead to attempts at rescuing and setting right the portrayals of the indigenous to serve a new purpose through the articles on the Cherokee, Inuit people, Odisha’s Dombaja dalits and Manipuri theatre Shumangleela in the section ‘Re-stor(y)ing’, culminating in the section ‘The Neglect’, an exposé of misrepresentation and threat to extinction in papers on Sri-Lankan Rodiyas, Rajasthani Bhils, Totos of West-Bengal and the universally practiced ritual of bed-time story telling smoothly pave way for volume 2.

*Deterritorialising Diversities: Literatures of the Indigenous and Marginalised* contextualizes the role of literature in the whole process of the indigenous and the marginalized being denied their due. The volume asserts the recognition of oral literary heritage as the first step towards the newer centres in the world. The Conceptual Frameworks are ably drawn through Malashri Lal’s article which brings together the negotiations of the indigenous people with transformations in their own cultural heritage, be it the folk songs of Santhal women, the story about the decorative scroll of Pabuji ka Phar found commonly in Rajasthan or the narratives of women from Chamba, Himachal Pradesh, to locate the identity of women in the 21st century.

The first section ‘The Common and Uncommon Registers’ in its wide geographical and cultural sweep establishes common grounds in first bringing the voices of the ‘other’ in an Odisha Paraja tribal’s exploitation in a colonial-commercial nexus mirroring the appropriation of a Taiwanese woman Sayun’s story for colonial propaganda and in Mahasweta Devi’s oral retellings of Mahabharata, and then healing wounds to carving a new identity, be it of an African-Caribbean woman in Paule Marshall or an African-American community in Gloria Naylor.

At this juncture, the role of institutional interventions is brought in under the section ‘Pedagogical Mediations’, where contemporary interfaces of wronged people with authorities is explored in the depiction of first and second language negotiations in a multi-national company’s off-shore office in Ghana that forges a link with the

psychological well-being of Gond Tribals of Madhya Pradesh for their actual social uplift, underscoring the need for making contemporary writing and critical frameworks more reflective of indigeniety.

'Marginalized Aesthetics', the last section in exploring a Dalit's suppressed psyche—the 'Dalit Dyche' in M.C. Raj's Raachi, and the nationalist appropriation of a Bengali children's tales collection-Thakurmar Jhuli with a vital introduction to native life and lifescape organically linked to the Canadian landscape in a Ruby Slipperjack novel echoes the concern with environment and geography in Judith Wright's poetry and the absence of Aboriginal voices from Australia, makes for a comprehensive study of writings from India, Canada and Australia.

### **Manjari Chaturvedi**

- **Clare Barker, *Postcolonial fiction and disability: Exceptional Children, Metaphor and Materiality*, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 256. Rs. 4970**

Postcolonialism and disability studies are diverse yet interconnected discourses crucial for the understanding of the ideological constitution of the idea of the nation and its systematic disenfranchisement of corporeally different bodies. Not surprisingly, many scholars across the globe interested in the politics and poetics of postcolonial identity have sought to establish a sustained dialogue between the two academic disciplines. Clare Barker, a lecturer of English Literature at the University of Leeds is one such scholar and her book, *Postcolonial Fiction and Disability: Exceptional Children, Metaphor and Materiality* is a prime example of such interdisciplinary cross fertilization.

*Postcolonial Fiction and Disability* is a theoretically sophisticated and ideologically nuanced exploration of the figure of the 'disabled child' in postcolonial fiction. Her illuminating readings of characters like Toko in Patricia Grace's *Potiki* (1986), Nyasha in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988), Lenny in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India* (1991), Saleem in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) and Azaro in Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* (1991) present these children as pivotal to postcolonial fictions' staging of national allegory. "Postcolonial literature is," she poignantly observes, "replete with exceptional child characters, often with physical or cognitive disabilities... whose lives... mirror the narratives of infancy, development, and conflict that accompany the maturation of the postcolonial 'child nation'" (2). Predictably, the postcolonial critical establishment has appropriated the figure of the disabled child as an evocative metaphor for the collective Third World national experience.

Barker is, however, highly critical of the metaphorical mode that has become the hallmark of postcolonial critical practices, as this emphasis on figurative readings of disability ironically sidelines the academic discipline's 'keen interest in the material nature of embodied experience' (2). According to her, "When their difference is understood to work in predominantly figurative ways, exceptional children are rarely identified by critics as disabled in any of the embodied social or material senses of the term.... Postcolonial criticism effectively erases disability from view, precluding its analysis as a socially significant phenomenon or a politicized aspect of identity" (3). *Postcolonial Fiction and Disability* therefore suggests that a representation of disability in postcolonial texts is also concerned with disability as an ontological, materially embodied, and socially contextualized phenomenon. The disabled protagonist of *Midnight's Children*, may, through his storytelling, articulate the voice of a nation and his fissuring body may figuratively be associated with postcolonial India's body politic. Yet, integral to the plot of the novel, she argues, is Saleem's narration of his early life as a multiple-disabled child. Saleem's account of his Bombay childhood centres around the anxieties and exclusions associated with his disability. Even when he grows up, Rushdie's semi-grotesque narrator is persistently subjected to procedures of surgical normalization.

Barker's assertion of disability as a materially embodied phenomenon not only unsettles the privileged status granted to figurative readings of disability in traditional postcolonial critical practices, but it also recasts disability as a form of identity experienced and understood in relation to the specificities of location. This distinctive book goes on to interrogate the totalizing tendencies of western disability theory by laying emphasis on "postcolonialism's historicized attention to local world views and conditions of production" (25). Nyasha's anorexia is, for instance, understood within the specific context of her "circumscribed position as a middle-class, western-educated black Zimbabwean female in the years of the chimurenga war of liberation" (28). Similarly, Toko's physical malformation is unraveled by placing his embodied difference within the specific context of Maori cultural politics.

In the final analysis, this remarkable reading of postcolonial fiction with attention to both metaphorical content and material reality of disability is an illuminating study of how the phenomenon is understood and negotiated across a range of local contexts and global discourses, making it a must-read book for all those interested in the politics and aesthetics of marginal identities in postcolonial texts and contexts.

**Someshwar Sati, Kirori Mal College, Delhi University**



- **Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, *The Sun that Rose from the Earth*, New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2014, Pp. 600. Rs 699.00**

The Sun that Rose from the Earth is a compilation of five autobiographical and biographical narratives that blend the literary and the historical, to provide accounts of medieval and colonial Hindustan and a glimpse of modern India. The subtext central to all the narratives is Faruqi's celebration of linguistic, cultural and ethnic syncretism and hybridity. Faruqi's narrators and protagonists –men of letters, maulvis, saints, courtesans, and businessmen, are historicized, a propos their ancestries, whether ordinary or distinguished, against milieus favoring illustrations of aspects of the lives of select poets. Read together, their accounts of real and imagined histories pertaining to eras in which they strove, suffered, exulted, inspired and/or illumined their minds among the most excellent scholars, provide splendid narratives celebrating the crafts and cultural and literary advancement.

Faruqi's keen understanding of Arabic, Persian and Urdu academic, linguistic and literary heritage is evinced in the collection which is a repository of semantic, lexical and syntactic traditions governing Urdu and Persian poetry. The practice of amendment of amateur poets' (shagird) compositions by master poets (ustad) and the veneration accorded to them and to scholars are explicated; genres of Urdu poetry including romantic poetry, mystic Sufi poetry, visionary or spontaneous poetry, khayal bandi, sarapa and a variety of others are not only translated but the genres and styles elucidated. However, explicating these facets, customs or linguistic features causes interventions that interrupt the smooth propulsion of the narratives. In addition, the merits and superior academic learning within the frugal setup of madrasas are illustrated; the Sufi saints are revered and the festivities of the month of Basant fascinate all, whether Hindu or Muslim.

The Sun... offers a subversion of colonial perspectives that oversaw the gradual but certain destruction of a rich and textured cultural heritage in preference to utilitarianism, by center staging indigenous cultural perspectives. Faruqi's technique, involving a merger of two genres, the one literary and the other historical, blurs the distinctions that separate historical fact from narrative fiction. Despite the fictionalization of history, an informed or familiar reader may vouch for much of the factual representation and wealth of detail surrounding political histories of the subcontinent and descriptions of localities in Urban spaces; he/she may also feel assured in the general depiction of lifestyles of a people but Faruqi's fictionalization of aspects of the poets' lives/lifestyles, some voyeuristic rather than scholastic may be problematic, specially in the absence of a proviso.

A robust and hearty self-translation of the Urdu, Savaar Aur Doosry Afsane (The Rider and Other Stories) The Sun... is aimed perhaps at providing a substantial increase in readership. However, this may endanger it as a seemingly charming or

carnavalesque text, transporting the cross-cultural reader into the fantastical world of the Orient. The translated poetry lacks the ambiguities, profundity and multi-layered nuances characteristic to Persian and Urdu. Faruqi's presence is discernible throughout. Nevertheless, *The Sun...* provides authoritative accounts of the cultural milieu, the dignity and grandeur, the hardships, infirmities and uncertainties that were and are part and parcel of human subsistence.

**Fatima Rizvi, Lucknow University**

- **Saroj Kumar Mahananda ed., *Dalit Literature & Historiography*, New Delhi : Pragati Publications, 2014, pp. ix + 173. Rs. 995**

This book presents eighteen scholarly essays that engage with Dalit literature and historiography from various perspectives – myth and folklore, ethnography, reformist movements, cinema, economics etc – and across a wide geo-political spectrum, thereby testifying to the emergence of a pan-Indian Dalit protagonist who is depicted symbolically on the front cover as an “emerging figure...from dark histories of the past”. The central theme is further elaborated by the editor, Saroj K. Mahananda, in his “Introduction” where he critiques both Marxist and Subaltern theorists for their neglect of caste while deconstructing the Nationalist school of historiography, and then points to “the need and relevance of an exclusive dalit identity leading to dalit writing and dalit historiography”. (p. 5)

The first six essays provide a valuable intervention against established schools of historiography by suggesting that myth and folklore can become important sites not just for preserving but also for reconstructing Dalit memory and identity. The first essay “Dalit Historiography: Reading Surpanakha's Ugliness” by Saroj K. Mahananda is a radical re-reading of Surpanakha's story, as told in Valmiki's Ramayana. Here, the writer examines the Aryan concept of the ‘ideal woman’ vis-à-vis its non-Aryan counterpart prevailing among the Rakshasas, then interprets the mutilation of Surpanakha's face by Lakshman as the reflection of “a clash of civilizations”. The second essay “Folklore as History: A Study of Myths of the Gondas of Western Odisha” by Anand Mahanand continues the critique of historiography by referring to the writings of Hegel, Levi-Strauss, Northrop Frye and Hayden White, wherein the traditional approach to historiography was rejected and replaced by a new approach that viewed history as interpretation, emplotment and imagination. He then applies this approach to the study of Gonda myths of western Odisha. Vijay K.M. Boratti carries forward this argument in his essay “Dalits, Folklore and Colonialism: An Attempt at Historiography” wherein he compares the ‘nationalist/political’ dimension attributed to the Dalit folksongs of

Karnataka with the anthropological study of folklore in colonial times. The next essay “Cultural Memory Transmission among Madigas: A Study of Adijambava Mahapuranam” by Sudha Rani examines the role of the epic/myth performance of the Madiga caste of Andhra Pradesh in preserving and reconstructing Dalit memory. Likewise, Ramesh Malik’s essay “Ethnography and Dalit History” also addresses the mythological concerns of Dalit historiography.

Almost all the essays that follow thereafter trace the emergence of the pan-Indian Dalit protagonist in Dalit literature, in different languages and different literary genres. Asha Nair’s essay “Revisiting History in Dalit Autobiography” studies the significance of Dalit autobiography in critiquing mainstream history. In “Dalit History: Bama’s Karukku”, Darshan Lal and Ved Prakash attempt to place this noteworthy autobiography by a Tamil Dalit woman in the context of resistance movements by Dalits down the ages. In “Bhojpuri Dalit Literature: Trends and Issues”, Rajesh Kumar Manjhi and Santosh Kumar find the emergence of a vibrant Dalit consciousness in Bhojpuri Dalit literature. The next essay, “Recovering Fragments: A Reading of Modern Marathi Dalit Poetry” by Chetan Sonawane, speaks of the “tension between written history and oral history”, and then examines the ways in which modern Marathi Dalit poets have expressed their anguish, indignation and sense of revolt through poetry. Anil Suresh Adagale’s “Demarginalization: Revival of the Myths in Dalit Poetry” critiques the Brahminical concepts of ‘purity/pollution’ in the context of Dalit identity and literature. Dhawale Ajay Arun’s essay “Outcaste: A Memoir: A Journey from Slavery to Self-Esteem” explores Narendra Jadhav’s autobiography and traces the impact of Ambedkar’s teachings on its Dalit protagonists.

The next essay, “The Upper-Cloth Rebellion of 1859: Christian Reform and Dalit Identity Formation in Colonial Travancore” by Ivy Imogene Hansdak examines a prototypical reformist movement wherein Christian ideas of morality were linked with anti-caste protest to reformulate the identity of an ‘untouchable’ caste. Manohar Mauli Biswas’ essay “Minority Writers and Bengali Dalit Literature” examines the writings of Dalits in Bengali. Jaydeep Sarangi’s essay “The Wheel that Turned: Manoranjan Byapari Writes Back in Itibritte Chandal Jiban” attempts a reading of Byapari’s autobiography as a critique of the dehumanizing influences of a stratified society. Saba M. Bashir’s “Visual Historiography: Representation of Dalits in Hindustani Cinema” examines the visual representation of Dalits in Indian narrative cinema from the 1930s to the present decade. In “Graphic Novels and Bhimayana”, Shiv Kumar explores the graphic biography of B.R. Ambedkar as a collective history of Dalits. “Asserting Dalit Differences: Autobiography of M.M. Biswas” by Angana Dutta documents Dalit assertion and identity formation in the context of mainstream tradition and culture. Last but not least, Bishnu C. Nag’s essay “Economic History of Dalits” attempts an economic interpretation of Dalit history.

On the whole, this book promises to add new material to Dalit literature, historiography and other related areas. However, it also has some minor

shortcomings, such as inconsistency in the use of upper case for certain important words like “Dalit”, “Protagonist”, “Historiography” etc, and the use of two different titles for Saba M. Bashir’s essay: “Dalits in Bollywood Films”, (Contents, p. vi) and “Visual Historiography: Representation of Dalits in Hindustani Cinema”, (Chapter 16, p. 121). Despite these errors, the book is highly commendable for its wide-ranging engagement with Dalit literature and historiography.

**Ivy Imogene Hansdak, Jamia Millia Islamia**

- **Shyam Selvadurai (ed), Many Roads Through Paradise: An Anthology of Sri Lankan Literature, Penguin Books, 2014. Rs. 499/-.**

Sri Lanka’s story has been typical. Like many diverse, multi-cultured societies which went through political and cultural decolonisation in the mid-twentieth century, Sri Lanka too succumbed to the temptations of ethnic majoritarianism, and progressively descended into a bloody chaos which resulted in a brutally violent rupturing of its political, cultural, and economic fabric. Like many such societies, the enforced, majoritarian peace which this chaos was recently crowned by has not been satisfactorily able to answer the charges of ethnic genocide and socio-economic exploitation, nor reverse many of the policies which led to these in the first place.

Accordingly, the story of Sri Lankan literature is not too different from that of such ruptured multi-cultured societies. Faced with the pressures of nationalistic jingoism and ethnic majoritarianism, and with the dilemmas of the flavoured rootedness of the mother tongue against the economic opportunities afforded by the coloniser’s language, Sri Lankan literature displays almost all the characteristics of post-colonial writing typical to many other erstwhile colonised societies: crises of identity, issues of national pride, of language and of economic entitlement make much of contemporary Sri Lankan literature distinguishably post-colonial.

Yes, the story of Sri Lanka, and of its literature, is not typical, and it is this atypicality which makes it all the more significant and important. That Sri Lankan literature is distinguishably post-colonial may be an academic platitude, but it is also, much more importantly, a comment on the urgent need to re-view the conditions which have engendered this post-coloniality, and the forces which further the fragmentations made natural to that society. *Many Roads Through Paradise*, Penguin’s anthology on contemporary Sri Lankan literature, seems to call for just such an engagement.

Edited by Shyam Selvadurai, *Many Roads Through Paradise* seems to offer the best of contemporary Sri Lankan literature from across its tortured linguistic, ethnic, and

economic barriers. The collection carries sixty-one pieces, some of which have been translated from Sinhalese and Tamil into English; many of these are excerpts culled from larger novels, but are presented so that they seem complete on their own but also provoke a desire to go ahead and engage with the larger work in its entirety. There is a healthy, representative combination of poetry and prose from a range of genres, the whole being divided into four thematic sections. The first of these deals with the vexed issue of class and economic entitlement in an increasingly divided and unequal world; the second with the crucial issue of cross-cultural tensions, alienation, exile, and diaspora; the third turns inwards to engage with sentiments, passions, and loss; and the fourth with ethnic violence and warfare which ravaged Sri Lanka for the better part of close to three decades.

In almost all of these, the island's geography and its flora and fauna recur consistently as foundational to not just thematics but also narrative style. Many pieces are conversational, with narrators involving readers in confessional asides, and with nature, the island's forests and beaches, its many seasons of the moon, repeatedly informing the first person 'I' in recovery of the personal and the subjective against the sweeping generalisations and glosses of the dehumanising, ostensibly objectively communal. A considerable number of these are descriptive, evoking memories of a culture lost to civil war and ethnic paranoia, of the processes which brought this divisiveness and violence into being, and of the difficulties of conceiving a home against the background of these. Not all, however, engage with socio-cultural tensions and hostility: the foibles and idiosyncrasies of individuals shaped by their circumstances, by colonialism and of nationalism experienced individually, and by adherence to values received as well as adopted, and of the quintessentially human aspirations attendant thereon, are also brought out well in the collection.

Remembering as well as re-imagining the best, the worst, and the mundanely everyday in the many stories of contemporary Sri Lanka, *Many Roads Through Paradise* cannot but seem a potpourri of hope and hopelessness, nostalgia and amnesia, the carrier of both a legacy of loss and violence as well as a vision of better things to come. Weaving the personal with the communal, Selvadurai's brief yet comprehensive introduction, "Reading for My Life", articulates as much, and seems poised to become one of those seminal representative commentaries which have become a staple of post-colonial studies. Of course, this anthology does address a growing need in academic circles for an accessible, representative collection of Sri Lankan works, and thus fills an increasingly apparent lacuna, but by illuminating the many roads which run cut across paradise and which, by their action, bring the various ideals which constitute it to a crossroad, it also, more importantly, serves as a reminder of the all too human losses which are almost always attendant upon cultural and ethnic majoritarianism and chauvinism. For us in India this is important lesson, an almost mirror image, for, after all, the story of India is not too different from that of Sri Lanka.

**Anubhav Pradhan, Ph.D student, Jamia Millia Islamia**

- **Sunita Sinha (ed), Modern Literary Theory: New Perspectives (Vol. i), New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors Pvt. Ltd., 2012**

The anthology opens with an erudite paper, 'Objective Agency and the Shakespearean Antique: A Transversal Perspective in the Light of Theatre by Bryan Reynolds.' The author, to begin with, tells the reader about how psychoanalytical feminism, post-structuralism, cultural materialism and new historicism inspired him, when he was just an undergraduate at UC, Berkley in the late 1980s, and in a while steers the reader's attention round to the objective agency. By objective agency he means 'things to perform'. In course of the elaboration upon the objective agency crop up term 'ostention' and the transversal movements. He then sets out to dwell in detail, as the title itself suggests he will, upon the Shakespearean antique in the light of the transversal movements. 'Ostention', says the author. 'refers to when a person, creature or thing is approached, used against its will, in a performance frame.' (P3) Apropos of the transversal movements he says that they are 'feelings, thoughts and actions alternative to those that work to circumscribe and maintain an individual's subjective territory.'" (P.19)

Nduka Oriono in the article 'Tracking Skilled Diasporas: Globalization, Brain Drain and the Postcolonial Condition in Nigeria' speaks at length of how the years of the repressive military rules, encapsulated in the term 'locus years' coined by Adebayao Williams, a Nigerian novelist, academic and social critic, has bequeathed 'a legacy of corruption and institutional decay' which led to the migration of 'several intellectuals'. Then the author elaborates upon the causes of the migration and profit and loss consequent upon the migration.

In her article 'Postmodernism and A.S. Byatt's Possession' Arpa Ghosh talks about the novel in the light of postmodernism. The novel concerns itself with the reading and restructuring of history and traces the lines of continuity that links history and fiction, .The theme of the novel centres on the lives of two Victorian poets, Radolph Hentry Ash and Christabel LaMotte, narrated by two committed British academics, Ronald Michell and Maud Bailey. In it are amalgamated in flashback, romance, extracts from letters and journals, fairy tales, myth and poetry.

‘Travel Theory’ by Jayashri Choudhury embellishes the anthology with a new element of knowledge. She enlightens the reader on different aspects of travel theory, such as colonialism and travel theory, McDonaldization of the world and so on.

Arindam Das’s ‘Perennialism, primordialism, Ethnicity and Theoretical Urgings of Nations’ probes the theoretical urgings of nation and nationalism against the backdrop of perennialism, primordialism and ethnicity and stresses the importance of territorialism vis-à-vis the ethnic aspects of nation.

In ‘Existential Postulation in The Book of Job’ Anita Myles deals with The Book of Job in the light of existentialism, This theory rooted in the nineteenth century stemmed from man’s questioning religion and the very existence of God. Existentialists aver that man owes it to himself to mould his own nature, to make personal decisions, to achieve personal freedom and to reach personal goals. In the light of this theory Myles discusses the story of job, of his piety, trial, suffering and restoration.

Shampa Ghosh, in her article ‘Surviving Whole: A Feminist Approach to Ecocriticism’ focuses on a feminist approach to environmental depiction of literary texts. In their well-researched paper ‘Gestic Feninistic Dramaturgy: A Study of Contemporary Indian Feminist Plays’, Anita Singh and Shresyasee Datta gives a lucid analytical interpretation of a new dramaturgy –Gestic Feminist Dramaturgy which, in the words of Sunita Singh, the editor of the present anthology, ‘has no author-defined consciousness and no resolution and creates a new class of audience.’

In her article , ‘Fiction and Style: A Case Study of Midnight’s Children’, Garima Gupta discusses the novel from a linguistic point of view. Reena Mitra, in her article ‘T.S. Eliot’s “Tradition and the Individual Talent” as an Anti-Intentional Essay’, provides a new reading to the celebrated essay. Vanashree, in the article ‘Predatory Intents and Pornographic Message: Tendulkar Writng “Orient” in Ghashiram Kotwal’ deals in detail with Tendulkar’s play. The writer shows in the play a strong presence of oral tradition drilled into the performance. Jackie Haque in ‘A Comparative Study of A Golden Age and kartography in the light of New Historicism’ presents the reader with a comparative study suggested in the title, in the light of new historicism.

Banibrata Mahanta and Kaushik Bhattacharya comment on different aspects of diaspora in their article ‘Reflections of Indian Diasporic Novel(s): Category, Theory and Praxis’. In his article ‘Filming of Literature’, Bhaskar Roy Barman, touches

upon the question: Does film resemble painting, music or literature? In the light of this question he sets out to discuss elaborately the Apu trilogy by Satyajit Ray.

N. Sarada Iyer's article 'Structuralism' sheds new light on this theory. Purnendu Chatterjee in the paper that concludes the anthology, 'Slanted Vision :Psychoanalysis and Religious Motifs in the Poetry of Kamala Das' remarks that a deep sense of spirituality surfacing as her poetic vision accentuates the explosive semiotics of Kamala Das's poetry.

**Bhaskar Roy Barman**

## BOOKS PUBLISHED BY MEMBERS

- Makarand R Paranjape (ed), *Healing Across Boundaries: Biomedicine and Alternative Therapeutics*, New Delhi : Routledge, 2015
- Makarand R Paranjape (ed), *Swami Vivekananda: A Contemporary Reader*, New Delhi : Routledge, 2015
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- Somdatta Mandal (ed. & tr.), *Wanderlust: Travels of the Tagore Family*, Kolkata: Visva Bharati Publications Dept, 2014
- Satchidanand Mohanty, *Cosmopolitan Modernity in Early 20th Century India*, Routledge India, 2014
- Ajay K Chaubey, *V S Naipaul: An Anthology of 21st Century Criticism*, New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 2014



## OBITUARY

### **M.K. Naik**

The world of Indian English literary studies lost one of its founding fathers with the passing away of Professor M.K.Naik on November 6, 2014. Scholar, critic, literary historian and translator Madhukar Krishna Naik was born in Karad, Maharashtra State, in 1926. He authored twenty-five books, including nine books of creative writing, and edited another ten. He obtained his B.A. and M.A. in English from the University of Bombay, and his Ph.D. from Karnatak University, Dharwad – he was the first research student of this university established in 1949. Naik joined the Bombay Educational Service in 1948, moving in 1957 to Karnatak University, where he was senior professor and head of the department of English when he retired in 1985. As head of the department, Dr. Naik was one of the first to support the study of Indian Writing in English and Canadian literature in India. Numerous distinctions and awards mark his academic career.

Along with K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar and C.D.Narasimhaiah, Naik made a major contribution towards winning recognition for Indian writing in English. Naik's *A History of Indian English Literature* (1982), covering books published till 1980, remains an essential reference tool. Its sequel, *Indian English Literature 1980-2000: A Critical Survey* (co-authored with Shyamala A. Narayan) appeared in 2001. He was the author of more than a hundred research papers, many of which have appeared in the volumes *Dimensions of Indian English Literature* (1984), *Studies in Indian English Literature* (1987) and *A Critical Harvest : Essays and Studies* (2005).

He edited many critical anthologies, bringing together diverse critics: *Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English* was a pioneering effort. Later, he put together the "Perspectives" series: *Perspectives on Indian Drama in English* (1977, co-edited with S.Mokashi-Punekar), was the first book length study of this genre. This was followed by anthologies on non-fiction Prose in 1982, Poetry in 1984, and Fiction, 1985, and *Aspects of India Writing in English: Essays in Honour of Professor K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar*, 1979.

Naik published poetry and fiction very late in life. Confessing that writing light verse has been his 'secret vice', he was sixty-three years old when he published *Indian Clerihews* under the pseudonym 'Emken'. This was followed by *Indian Limericks : A Second Book of Light Verse* (1990) and *More Indian Clerihews* (1992). *Indian Pot-Pourri* (1993) contains more limericks and clerihews, along with epigrams and parodies. One of the most amusing pieces here is a parody of Tennyson's "Break, Break, Break", written on board a ship in stormy weather, with the seasick passenger longing for "the tender grace of a dinner digested." *Beowulf and All That: An Unorthodox History of English Literature in Comic Verse* (1999) has a companion volume in *From Anne Bradstreet to "Main Street" and Beyond: An Unorthodox History of American Literature in Comic Verse* (2001). *Ancient World Clerihews* (2002) treats literature in classical languages like Greek and Sanskrit.

*Corridors of Knowledge: A Novel* (2008) was his first foray into fiction (*Treading on Air* published in 1996 contained the text of 25 radio talks he had given over the years). The novel has a strong autobiographical element in the early struggles of the central character to get an education. He starts teaching in a college, and we get delightful satire of the workings of a university, and how Ph.D.s are awarded. *A Passage to London and Other Indian Tales* contains twenty short stories, in three sections. The first section, "Myths in Modern Dress", takes up six episodes from the Mahabharata and the Puranas and provides scientific explanations for them. The next section, "Alternate History" has stories such as "The Great Escape: Shivaji's Flight to Agra" based on historical events. The third section, "The Present Day" has six stories set in contemporary India. The most enjoyable is "The Great Indian Critic", a satire on H.K.Dipika, and her original interpretations of Indian English literature. This is the only piece in the book which reveals Naik's usual wit.

His death is a personal and professional loss for me, the end of four decades of association. I first met him in 1966, when he had come to the University of Mysore for a seminar. He was one of the examiners for my M.A. Final viva-voce in 1968; later, he was an examiner for my Ph.D. He sent me copies of many of his books; I treasure them for his witty inscriptions. It was a rewarding experience to work as his co-author for *Indian English Literature 1980-2000: A Critical Survey*. He was always open to discussion as we commented on each other's chapters (we spent a small fortune on postage). *Twentieth Century Indian English Fiction* (2004) was also a collaborative effort. He actively encouraged me to update the History, but said that I would have to work on my own, He did not have the energy to write. He suggested

a title, *The First Decade: Indian English Literature 2001-2010: A Critical Survey*. In the last few years, he suffered from poor eyesight, and managed to keep up with his work with the help of his wife Shakuntala. Her passing away in 2012 must have been a great blow.

M.K.Naik was the last of the “big three” of Indian English literary criticism. An era has come to an end with his death. He will always be remembered for his lucid and witty style. He lives on, in his books and the next generation of scholars he mentored.

**Shyamala A. Narayan**

## HONOURS RECEIVED BY MEMBERS

T. Ravichandran, I.I.T., Kanpur was awarded the Fulbright-Nehru Academic and Professional Excellence Fellowship (Literature) for teaching and research in Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, USA, for nine months from 19 August 2014 to 18 May 2015.

## ANNOUNCEMENT: MEENAKSHI MUKHERJEE MEMORIAL PRIZE 2014

The Meenakshi Mukherjee Memorial Prize 2014 has been awarded to Dr Nilanjana Mukherjee, Assistant Professor, Shaheed Bhagat Singh College, University of Delhi for her essay "Drawing Roads, Building Empire: Space and Circulation in Charles D'Oyly's Indian Landscape", published in the journal, *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* (Routledge, 2014). MM Prize is awarded to the Best Paper published in the year preceding the conference, i.e. (2013-2014) by a member of IACLALS.

This year's Meenakshi Mukherjee Prize was judged by a panel of 3 distinguished judges: Professor Suman Gupta (Open University, U.K.), Professor Avadesh K Singh (Indira Gandhi National Open University, Delhi) and Professor

GJV Prasad (Jawaharlal University, Delhi, and Chair, IACLALS). M Asaduddin, Vice Chair IACLALS, was the moderator.

There were 10 entries for the Prize, and Professor Anjali Gera Roy's paper was adjudged a close second, and Rohini M Punekar's a close third, for which we would like to congratulate them as well.

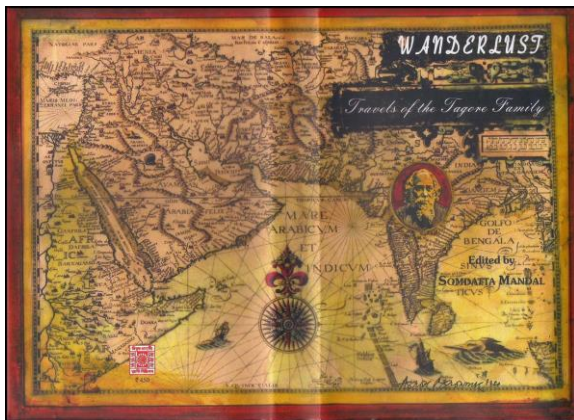
The Meenakshi Mukherjee Prize will be formally awarded to Dr Nilanjana Mukherjee at the IACLALS Annual Conference 2015 to be held at BITS Pilani – Goa, February 12-14, 2015.

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## NEW PUBLICATIONS BY MEMBERS



- Makarand R Paranjape (ed), *Healing Across Boundaries: Biomedicine and Alternative Therapeutics*, New Delhi : Routledge, 2015
- Makarand R Paranjape (ed), *Swami Vivekananda: A Contemporary Reader*, New Delhi : Routledge, 2015
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