



# IACLALS

Indian Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies

## E-NEWSLETTER

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**Issue guest edited by:**

**Kalyanee Rajan and Subhendu Mund on behalf of IACLALS**

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## EDITORIAL

### **Re-Reimagi(ni)ng Identities Contextualising Global South and Carl Oglesby**

The theme of the IACLALS - Dept. of English, Jadavpur University Conference 2020 – ‘Reimagi(ni)ng Identities in the Global South: Challenges, Transgressions and Articulation’ – raised a number of concerns in one’s mind. Identity is an issue which never leaves the Indian life, more so post-globalisation.

The CFP for the conference began with a very popular sentence from Toni Morrison’s 1987 novel *Beloved*: “Freeing yourself was one thing. Claiming ownership of that freed self was another.” The cfp further says:

... the most treasured of all human events in modernity has been the achievement of freedom by the individual and by peoples. ‘Claiming ownership’ of these free selves has been the most daunting of tasks in the postcolonial era. With the new millennium we have reached a new world order in which the ‘global south’ has emerged as a significant geopolitical imaginary to displace older concepts of the ‘Third World’ or ‘Developing Countries’ in a bid to challenge the hegemony of more affluent and economically developed countries of the ‘global north.’

Morrison’s *Beloved*, published 32 years ago is based on the life of Margaret Garner, an African American who tried to escape from slavery in 1856. When she knew she was being captured, she killed her daughter to save her from slavery. We find the relevance of the narrative even after 163 years because it evokes basic issues of freedom which concern us even today. ‘Claiming ownership’ has indeed been the most challenging task for all those who have come out of long years of colonisation and subjugation.

But one might ask whether creating new identity tags and fixing them on the “free slaves” (read “the decolonised”) is going to solve their problems – free them from the mental, political, economic and other forms of control which makes the idea of freedom a paradox? “Global South” is the new academic buzz word, the new ‘identity tag’ with which many countries in the global south are labelled. The Global South is the new term used by the World Bank to refer to low and middle income countries in developing Asia (including the Middle East), Africa, Latin America, the BRIC countries (excluding Russia), the Caribbean, etc. in contrast to the “high income” countries of the ‘Global North’. The term is supposed to have replaced other contested ones like ‘Third World’, ‘Developing Countries’, ‘Backward Countries’, etc.

In the last few years, the term Global South has gained currency and has been happily accommodated in the academic discourses as well, giving it legitimacy by the western academia, especially in the postcolonial studies in literature and social sciences. Needless to say, Indian literatures including Indian writing in English have been subsumed under the new appellation. Through such nomenclatures as ‘Anglo-Indian Literature’, ‘Indo-Anglian Literature’, ‘Indo-English Literature’, ‘Indian Writing in English’, and ‘Indian English Literature’; Indian English literature has also been obliged, at different historical times, to come under such broader categories as ‘Literature of the Dominions’, ‘Literature of the Colonies’, ‘Commonwealth Literature’, ‘Literature of the Third World’, ‘New Literatures in English’, ‘Anglophone Literature’, ‘the englishes’, ‘Literatures of Developing Nations’; Post[-]colonial, South [East] Asia, and now Global South. An impressive corpus of literary as well as not-so-literary studies have come up

since the publication of Willy Brandt's report, titled as *North-South: A Programme for Survival; Report of the Independent Commission on International Development Issues* (1980). Global South has of late become a popular trope for seminars, conferences, symposia, journals, and the like. One can find any number of sites, besides the ones exclusively devoted to Global South Studies, where issues concerning Global South are being posted. Anne Garland Mahler has contributed an exhaustive bibliography on Global South to [oxfordbibliographies.com](http://oxfordbibliographies.com) which shows how it has emerged as a dominating literary engagement. In her Introduction to the entry, she also informs that 'it has traditionally been used within intergovernmental development organizations – primarily those that originated in the Non-Aligned Movement – to refer to economically disadvantaged nation-states and as a post-Cold War alternative to "Third World"'.

It is popularly believed that the term emerged out of postcolonial discourse but I am afraid it is not so. It is also often [wrongly] reported that Carl [Preston] Oglesby first used the term in 1969 in an essay called 'Vietnamism has failed ... The revolution can only be mauled, not defeated' published in a special issue of the *Commonweal* edited by him. It is true that Oglesby is the first to have used the term in 1969, but he used it in 'Notes on a Decade: Ready for the Dustbin', published in the *Liberation* (August/December 1969, pp. 5-19): "a special double issue on the movement", which included a feature on 'Symposium: The Movement Ten Years from Now'. Along with Oglesby, the other contributors to this symposium were such thinkers, scholars and activists as Jack Newfield, James Aronson, Julius Lester, Mark Naison, Bill Crawford, Bob Cook, Noam Chomsky, Staughton Lynd and Arthur Waskow. The *Liberation*, a magazine identified with "the New Left", was founded, published, and edited by David Dellinger, Bayard Rustin, Sidney Lens, Roy Finch and A. J. Muste, and was active from 1956 to 1977. It appears that the magazine, during its existence of about twenty-one years, had attained a prominent standing for its focused activism and the essays and articles on several issues concerning America and the world. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s well-known essay 'Writing from Birmingham Jail' was first published in its June 1963 number.

More intriguing for me than the term Global South is the way it had been used first and by whom and its context. What intrigues me most is its relevance even in today's world. Therefore it needs to be explained why I feel it important to know more about Oglesby, his paper (he calls it a "letter") and the context in which he wrote it.

Who was Carl Oglesby?

Oglesby (1935-2011) was an American writer, academic, playwright, musician and political activist; a public figure known for his anti-war activities and as a leader of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). Besides a good number of essays and lectures, his works include plays like *The Peacemaker* (1962), *Containment and Change: Two Dissenting Views of American Foreign Policy* (with Richard Shaull, 1969), *The Yankee and Cowboy War: Conspiracies from Dallas to Watergate* (1976), *Who Killed JFK?* (1991), *The JFK Assassination: The Facts and Theories* (1992) and *Ravens in the Storm: A Personal History of the 1960s Anti-war Movement* (2008). He has been described as "An activist, writer, lecturer and teacher," who has "participated in, written about, and analyzed some of the most important events in the recent history of the United States." A write-up on him called 'Background on Carl Oglesby' included on the page "Carl Oglesby Papers" in the Special Collections and University Archives (SCUA) of the University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries says:

His experiences before, during and after the Vietnam War as a political activist changed the trajectory of his own life and contributed significantly to the American political discourse on many subjects such as Vietnam War, Watergate, World War II, and the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and Martin Luther King. In his long career as writer and

activist he has addressed many issues, spoken at hundreds of universities and protests as well as traveled the United States debating various political issues.

When Oglesby mentioned “Global South” in his “letter” it was neither accidental nor by the way: it emerged out of his stream of thoughts and one can easily see its relevance to our times. In this article, which begins with “hopeless” as the keyword, Oglesby chiefly dwells on SDS and “student power”, and writes quite animatedly on the sudden increase of “vanguardism” and comments: “Sometimes the vanguard is the black ghetto community, sometimes only the Panthers, sometimes the Third World as a whole, sometimes only the Vietnamese, and sometimes apparently only the Lao Dong Party” (16-17). In the process of re-viewing the decade going to end, he is chagrined about the failure of “the movement” in “the capture of real power in the university system”. In his article he spontaneously touches issues/subjects like “the Cold War”, “SDS”, “revolution”, “Marxism-Leninism”, “imperialism”, “Columbia”, “Cuba”, “Vietnam”, “white-skin-privilege”, “cultural revolution”, “Liberalism”, “Socialism”, “the cultural revolution”, “the Panthers”, etc.. His article concludes with his disappointment over what he calls “vanguarditis” (18) which had of late crept in to “the movement”, and hopes for “a swelling base, not a vanguard” in the coming days.

It is in the concluding paragraph of his article that Oglesby uses the term:

Or if a vanguard, then one which would rather *ride* a horse than look it in the mouth. One which wants students to get power and open up the campuses, blacks to win the franchise and elect some mayors, architects to be against the war and advertise that fact in the *Times*, clergy to be concerned and preach heretical sermons, inductees to dodge the draft and soldiers to organize a serviceman’s union, workers to have more pay and shorter hours, hippies to make parks on private property, liberals to defeat the ABM, West Europe to escape NATO, East Europe the Warsaw Pact, *and the global south the Western empires* – and the American people as a whole (by any means necessary!) to be free enough to face their genocidal past for what it was, their bloody present for what it portends, and their future for that time of general human prosperity and gladness which they have the unique power to turn it into. And for being still more “revolutionary” than this implies, let us confess that time alone will tell us what they might mean. (*Emphases mine* 19)

Half a century has gone by after Oglesby wrote these words but they have lost their relevance. It is, therefore, essential to re-imagine identities in the context of the changing realities while being rooted and located.

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## **Dr Subhendu Mund**

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## TRIBUTES / OBITUARIES

### GIRISH KARNAD

(19<sup>TH</sup> MAY 1938 – 10<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2019)



#### **CALLED AWAY, GIRISH KARNAD DIES AT 81**

“A man must commit a crime at least once in his life-time. Only then will his virtue be recognised.”  
Girish Karnad

In his strenuous and brilliant career of five decades Girish Karnad committed the crime of becoming India’s leading playwright, actor, translator, film director, critic, and a loud voice of progressivism. A wide range of accolades and honours which include 10 National Film Awards, Jnanpith award, Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, Sahitya Akademi Award, Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan by the Government of India recognized his genius and versatility. He was proclaimed a “colossus” by Ramachandra Guha for advocating the voice of truth, championing the ideals of secularism and freedom of expression.

Born on May 19, 1938 in Matheran, Maharashtra, Karnad was the third child of Dr Raghunath Karnad and Krishnabhai. Karnad graduated from the Karnatak University in 1958 and eventually made his way to Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar (1960-63) to study philosophy, politics and economics. Given his competence and high calibre, he was elected the President of the Oxford Union in 1962-63. On his return from England, he started working with the Oxford University Press, Chennai from 1963 to 1970. It was during this period that he met Saraswathi Ganapathy, a doctor and director of healthcare projects, at a party. They married in 1980. The couple was blessed with two children, daughter, Shalmali Radha, and son, Raghu.

Karnad explored his creative genius with playwriting. In his literary repertoire, he exploited history and myth to critically examine the contemporary political, cultural and economic concerns of post-independence India. He pedalled his way to playwriting with his first play *Yayati* in 1961 when he was only 23. The play captured the conflict of interest between the individual and the society in India. It was followed by *Tughlaq* (1964) which contrasts past and present to capture the disillusionment of immediate period of independent India. The third play *Hayavadana* (1971) which was based on *Thomas Mann’s* 1940 novella, *The Transposed Heads*, focused on the theme of liberating women and individualism. All the three plays capture the conflicting reality of Indian middle class who had pinned high hopes to the new independent India. Apart from these, the other remarkable plays of Karnad include *Nagamandala* (1988), *The Fire and the Rain* (1995), *A Heap of Broken Images* (2006), *Wedding Album* (2009), and *Boiled Beans on Toast* (2014). As Kannada was Karnad’s preferred language of writing, his plays were later translated into English as well as in other Indian languages.

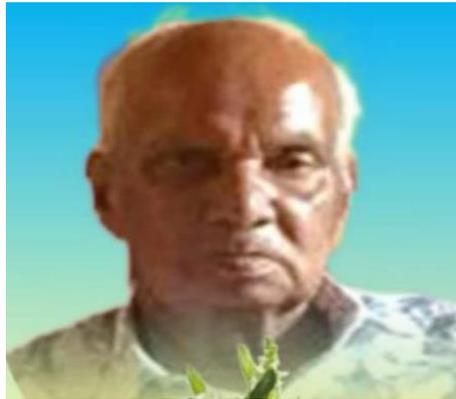
In cinema, Karnad mainly preferred to act and direct movies set in the backdrop of literary works. It was with the adaptation of U R Ananthmurthy's seminal Kannada novel "Samskara," that Karnad made his acting and screenwriting debut in 1970. Apart from acting, he had the privilege of directing films like "Vamsha Vriksha", "Tabbaliyu Neenade Magane", "Ondanondu Kaladalli", "Kanooru Heggadithi" in Kannada cinema and Hindi films like "Godhuli" and "Utsav." He was also an important figure in parallel cinema/ new India movement which was known for its serious content, realism and socio-political concerns. Karnad's venture into Shyam Benegal directed movies like "Nishant" (1975) and "Manthan" (1976) are exemplary in this context. In Hindi cinema, Karnad gained fame with movies like, "Swami" (1977), "Pukar" (2000), "Iqbal" (2005), "Dor" (2006), "8\*10 Tasveer" (2009), "Aashayein" (2010), "Ek Tha Tiger" (2012) and its sequel "Tiger Zinda Hai" (2017). Even on television, he played some unforgettable roles like Swami's father in the first series of "Malgudi Days" (1987), based on the short stories of RK Narayan and the protagonist's father in the children's science fiction series "Indradhanush" (1989). He also hosted the weekly science program, "Turning Point" (1991- ). As a veteran actor and playwright, Karnad served as director of the Film and Television Institute of India (1974-75), and chair of Sangeet Natak Akademi, the national academy of performing arts (1988-93). He was also the director of the Nehru Centre, the cultural wing of the high commission of India, in London from 2000 to 2003. In 2002 his play "Bali – the Sacrifice" was staged at the Leicester Haymarket theatre. His last work, "Rakshasa-Tangadi," published in 2018 is a historical play that captures an important event in Karnataka's history.

Above everything, Karnad was a progressive and a highly responsible intellectual who epitomized the freedom of expression, championed the cause of the subaltern and openly attacked religious fundamentalism. He not only campaigned for preserving the sanctity of a secular India but also fought for the rights of the LGBT community, women, Dalits and religious minorities. Transcending every prejudice, he never hesitated in speaking truth to power even at the cost of his own life. Karnad's absence marked an unfathomable loss for a nation which is in dire need of such an unapologetically brave and politically conscientious thinker. Unlike many Karnad seems to have understood, "There is a price to pay for speaking the truth. (However) There is a bigger price for living a lie."

**Dr. Shaifta Ayoub**

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**G.K. DAS****(10<sup>TH</sup> JULY 1934 – 3<sup>RD</sup> JULY 2019)**

**Prof Gour Kishore Das** (known to all of us as GK Das, often referred to as GKD) passed away in July 2019, at the age of 84. He was a conscientious teacher, an influential scholar, and a good human being. Senior members of IACLALS who may or may not have been taught by him will remember him as our gracious host as VC of Utkal University during our Annual Conference in 1996.

I always found him genuinely interested in younger scholars and their research. He was a loved and respected teacher at the University of Delhi, when I was a student there, one of the stars of the department. The department had many stars but GK Das was a major star, one could even say that he was one of the poles (perhaps the South Pole) of the department.

The other pole star was Prof AN Kaul, definitely the North Pole to Das's South. I don't think opposites attract each other but they attracted different groups of students. Das was the man who believed in the possibility of good research in literary studies in India. He was right but, unfortunately for me, he had lost me in MA itself. He was a conscientious teacher, as I noted earlier. He also didn't like students who did not seem conscientious. This meant that he threw me out of the MA class that he was teaching, deeming me insolent and arrogant because I wasn't taking notes and when he asked me why I wasn't, I had replied I was listening to him keenly. He was a scholar, and indeed he brought together so much in his lectures that indeed I was listening carefully to him.

So, when I went for my interview for admission to M Phil, when I met him on the stairs, my heart fell. I didn't know what to do other than an MPhil and here was the man who had thrown me out of class for me never to return! He smiled broadly at me, called me by my full name (nobody ever did except my teachers at school, and they would do so when they were pissed off with me!), put out his hand and said, "Congratulations. You got an outstanding in the paper. I was wrong, you were paying attention and reading the right books." I was floored. This was GK Das – a gracious, generous, and kind human being.

But I thought I was too frivolous for him and didn't take any of his courses in MPhil. So, when IACLALS held one of its conferences at Utkal University, when he was Vice Chancellor there, I went to meet him with Prof Meenakshi Mukherjee and Prof Harish Trivedi, I wondered if he would even remember me. He did. As he greeted them, he turned to me and saying my full name again congratulated me for all my work thus far. He put his arm around me and announced to Prof Mukherjee and Prof Trivedi that I was one of his students whose work he followed keenly. I was overwhelmed – I didn't think I had done much work to impress the well-known Forster scholar.

When writing about GK Das it would be unforgivable not to note that he published widely on EM Forster. His *EM Forster's India* (London: Macmillan, 1977) is an extremely well-known book, as

is the book he co-edited with John Beer, *E M Forster: A Human Exploration* (London; Macmillan, 1979). In this century, he co-edited with his colleague Christel R Devadawson *Forster's A Passage to India: An Anthology of Recent Criticism* (New Delhi: Pencraft International, 2005). He was also a Lawrence scholar, publishing with Gamini Salgado and co-edited volume *The Spirit of D H Lawrence: Centenary Studies* (London: Macmillan, 1988).

I cannot end this piece without stating that I regret not taking his courses in MPhil and thus not keeping more in touch with him. I met him quite a few times after the Utkal visit and, on each occasion, he was his gracious self, inquiring after me and my wife and commenting on my reviews or papers. It was clear that he cared for the people he had interacted with in his long career.

It is not surprising then, that to many of us, his death seems like a personal loss.

**GJV Prasad**

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\*PC: <https://sambadenglish.com/odisha-educationist-prof-gour-kishore-das-no-more/>

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## JEAN ARASANAYAGAM

(2<sup>ND</sup> DECEMBER 1931 – 30<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2019)



“I pluck my poems out of air/the vineyards of the imagination rich with/ripening grapes, each fruit a syllable,/clusters and clusters of images looming/with the wine of the spirit of inspiration”.

—”Creating poems”

This is the way Dr. Jean Arasanayagam created magic through her writings till July 30, 2019, when the magician was rudely snatched away and the music and melody that she invoked was silenced. She was one of the foremost Sri Lankan writers, who wrote in English and carved a space for Sri Lankan writing at a global level. Her work, *Apocalypse '83* not only confronted the unrest of 1983, (which was for her both personal and political) but was also instrumental in creating the framework for Sri Lankan literature to grapple with nationalism and postcolonial history. In the Foreword to *Lines drawn on water* she had stated that “writing, recording, witnessing, investigating the past and its horrors, man’s inhumanity to man are all grist to the mill”. Her poems had captured many hues of the Sri Lankan life—identity, ethnicity, violence, struggle, pathos, power and upheavals. At the same time, Jean skillfully included anxieties of being a woman and reflected motherhood, family life and domesticities too in her works. Poems such as ‘Mother-in-law’, ‘Mother’, ‘His Family’, and ‘Glass Bangles’ are illustrative of her gender perspectives. Jean had more than 50 books – both fiction and non-fiction – and few of them were translated into French, Danish, Swedish, and Japanese.

She was born into a Dutch Burgher family on Dec 2, 1931. She obtained her undergraduate (BA) degree from the University of Ceylon, Peradeniya and her M.Litt in Literary Linguistics from the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow. While teaching at St Anthony’s college, Katugastota and later at Teachers Training College, Peradeniya she inculcated in her students a keen passion for poetry and drama. Her move away from her elite Burgher family and her marriage to Thiagarajah Arasanayagam invoked in her a relook at the concepts of race, marginalization, and victimization. She was a recipient of several awards and prizes nationally and internationally. A few of these include the Sri Lankan Arts Council Prize for Poetry (1985), the Indian Sahitya Academy Premchand Fellowship in 2014 and the Sahityaratna award in 2017 by the Sri Lankan government for her lifetime contribution and the Gratiaen prize in 2017. In recognition of her literary talent, she was awarded a Doctorate in letters from the Bowdoin College, USA.

What many may not know is that she was also an artist who had exhibited her work at Commonwealth exhibition in London and the Lionel Wendt Art Centre in Colombo. She never thought much about the various accolades she gained and stated in an interview for Newsgate, “For me, awards, do not mean any kind of celebrity status or material gain. Those do not count in my agenda. It’s the creativity that inspires, and what through the years I have learned of giving one’s self and carrying on this mission to change the world — That’s what the writer has to do,

without fear.” She disliked being bogged down and hence it was exceedingly difficult to label her. In a way, this also characterized her wild spirit which nurtured her unconventional style as well as her originality and creativity. Her works characteristically celebrated different themes. If her *Apocalypse '83* etched pain and suffering, then *Lines drawn on water* was a celebration of life. *All is Burning*, her 1995 collection of short stories shed light on the horrors of war and of survival and heroism. Her first work, *Kindura* depicted the anxiety of the hybrid and this sense of being fractured and divided and this aspect of carrying multiple identities was part of many of her writings. Her reminiscences of the Dutch arrival were skillfully portrayed in *A Colonial Inheritance and Other Poems* published in 1985, while her Tamil identity formed part of the *Reddened Water Flows Clear* and *Shooting the Floricans*.

It is a personal loss to me as in 2005 when I first met her, I was enamored by her vivaciousness, her cheeriness, and her beautiful easy laughter. After this initial meeting, I had begun to read and write about her works and had also included some of her poems in my course on New Literatures. I had visited her in Kandy in 2013, when she kept cheerfully talking about her recent books and spent time telling me about the talents of her husband and daughter. The family picture of her along with her husband and daughter, marking out books to gift to me will forever remain etched in my mind. She cannot be replaced but surely her words of humanity, identity, survival, courage, heroism, will remain forever and I think this is what she desired too.

### **H. Kalpana Rao**

Professor & Head  
Department of English  
Pondicherry University

\* PC: <http://www.srilankaguardian.org/2019/08/jean-aranayagam-life-of-poet-ends.html>

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## AVADHESH KUMAR SINGH

(20<sup>TH</sup> JUNE, 1960 – 12<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2019)



### REMEMBERING A SCHOLAR EXTRAORDINAIRE OF INDIA STUDIES

It has been slightly more than a year since the passing away of Prof. Avadhesh Kumar Singh on 12 August 2019. The news of his untimely demise struck his innumerable friends, admirers, and students with a feeling of intense shock and bereavement not only because he was actively associated with many of them in their projects and other academic scholarly pursuits, but more so because of his presence amongst them as a person of inimitable grace and humility, something that came naturally to him. He was one among the rare brand of Indian academicians who were equally at home with Western, Sanskrit and *bhasha* literatures, a comparatist in the true sense of the term, and a progressive votary of the holistic philosophy of Indianness.

Born on 20<sup>th</sup> June 1960, Prof. Singh had an MA in English and earned his PhD for his thesis on “Myth and Symbolism in Modern American Drama with Special Reference to Eugene O’Neill”. He was the founder Head of the Department of English & Comparative Literary Studies, Saurashtra University, Rajkot, and taught there from 1989 to 2006. He was the Vice Chancellor of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University, Ahmedabad, from 2006 to 2009, before joining as Professor & Director of the School of Translation Studies & Training, Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi. He was subsequently appointed as the Vice Chancellor of Auro University, Surat, a position he was serving at the time of his untimely passing. He also offered his services as the Convenor of the Knowledge Consortium under the auspices of the government of Gujarat. Apart from that, he served as the member of various boards and committees of national importance, including those in Union Public Service Commission, Distance Education Council, Sahitya Akademi, Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, University Grants Commission, National Assessment & Accreditation Council, and Central Institute of Indian Languages. These were besides his engagement with internal committees of various Indian universities, namely, Jamia Millia Islamia, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Jadavpur University, M.S. University, to name a few. He was also awarded the British Council Academic Visitorship to Corpus Christi College, Oxford University, in 1997. The heavy administrative responsibilities that he was entrusted with should not blind one to the fact that he took out time to engage academically with areas like the critical traditions of Indian *bhasha* literatures, Indian and Western knowledge systems, comparative literary and cultural studies, and the traditions of Indian epics across space and time.

The scope of his engagement with India studies was wide and immense; his vision of Indian literature and culture was all-encompassing yet discerning; his methodology of research was critical yet comprehensive. His efforts towards conceptualising an Indian school of comparative literature as well as formulating sustainable models for studying the historiographical traditions in Indian *bhashas* were some of his ongoing engagements, as evident from him being the General Editor of the series called ‘Critical Discourses in South Asia’ under Routledge, Taylor & Francis.

This project was a consequence of his two-decade-long engagement with myriad aspects of India studies, articulated through a series of publications he had, which include *Indian Feminisms* (co-edited with Jasbir Jain, 2001), *Indian Renaissance Literature* (edited, 2003), *Critical Discourse in the Colonial Period* (co-edited with Sanjay Mukherjee, 2005), *Indian Knowledge Systems* (in two volumes, with Kapil Kapoor, 2005), *Ramayana through the Ages: Rama-Gatha in Different Versions* (edited, 2007), *Voice of Women: Gargi to Gangasati* (2008), and *Revisiting Literature, Criticism and Aesthetics in India* (2012), to name a few. He had also carried out the responsibility of editing a biannual journal of literary and critical studies called *Critical Practice* since 1994. Prof. Singh's humility of character and sincerity of academic pursuit combined with his innate faith in comparative methodology of literary study was well and truly evident in his prefatory acknowledgement to his book *Revisiting Literature, Criticism and Aesthetics in India*, where he had written: "Since I am a product of India, I have my emotional attachments to it, yet I strove with full sincerity to be objective by exorcising them. The questions by their enormity and ubiquity encompassed various disciplines, and my limitations as a student of literature limited my responses, though my exposure to and practice of comparative study of literature and poetics helped me." His understanding of Indian literature was always guided by an intuitive belief in deeper interactions between *bhasha* literary cultures themselves in addition to their response to the Sanskrit cosmopolitan culture. A belief in interliterary processes within Indian literature therefore made him look at the phenomenon of translation as much more than mere linguistic-cultural transference for he considered the discipline as crucially intersecting with the 'technological turn' of the twenty-first century. He understood translation as offering itself "as a bridge across different cultures and their knowledge systems, and their five basic aspects: acquisition of knowledge, preservation of knowledge, creation of knowledge, dissemination of knowledge and application of knowledge" ('Translation Studies in the 21st Century', *Translation Today*, Volume 8 No.1, 2014). Besides, he considered *anuvaaad* as a cementing force between different languages in the post-World War II era and by means of which these languages crossed the national boundaries within which they had hitherto been confined. As a theoretician, Prof. Singh attempted to integrate the basic premises of Comparative Literature, World Literature, and Translation Studies to open up possibilities for a healthy and constructive interaction between the three in the twenty-first century. More importantly, he espoused the Indian situation as an ideal meeting ground for the three disciplines both historically and theoretically. Consequently, he searched for a methodology within the epistemological framework of India studies, and his multiple works on the said subject bore testimony to the stated fact.

On a personal note, I had the good fortune of interacting with him on multiple occasions during the last ten years or so. I met him mostly during the CLAI conferences where he would make it a point every time to interact with us and inquire about our academic progress. I fondly recall the occasion when he visited Gauhati University in March 2017 to deliver three lectures on Comparative Literature for a refresher course on the subject. I had personally invited him to deliver a keynote address in a seminar on Mahabharata in August 2018 at Guwahati. Unfortunately, he could not make it to the occasion owing to some urgent official commitments. Little did I know that it would turn out to be the last time I would speak to him! His demise shall remain an irreparable loss to the entire Indian academia. However, his legacy as a scholar and teacher par excellence shall remain undimmed and unscathed for the generations to come. He went away too soon; however his memories are here to stay forever. We miss you, sir, and we shall fondly remember you every time we talk about the things you loved to talk about.

### **Dr. Dhurjjati Sarma**

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\*PC: <https://aurouniversity.edu.in/>

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**KIRAN NAGARKAR**(2<sup>ND</sup> APRIL 1942 – 5<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2019)

Bi-lingual Marathi and English writer, Kiran Nagarkar, winner of the Sahitya Akademi Award for his novel *Cuckold* (1997) in 2001 and the *Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany* in 2012, where his novel *God's Little Soldier* (2006) generated and sustained considerable interest, passed away in Mumbai at the age of 77 due to brain hemorrhage. An irreverent and deeply ideological novelist, playwright, screenwriter and film critic, he veered on the verge of popularity and acclaim throughout his literary career, remaining mainly a treat for the connoisseurs. Known for his sexual frankness and hailed as “an artist of the erotica” by Khushwant Singh, the writer faced #metoo allegations in 2018 by three female journalists who felt uncomfortable by his verbal and physical overtures during interviews. This, however, was hardly the first controversy to plague Nagarkar. His first Marathi novel, *Saat Sakkam Trechalis* (1974), initially upset the Marathi literary establishment for its experimental prose only to be subsequently hailed for its pathbreaking modernist language and urbane themes amidst bitterly divided opinions. His post-Emergency play, *Bedtime Story*, initiated in Marathi and finished in the English language, faced the ire of the censor board in 1978 and could not be staged till 1995 due to extra-legal censorship by the Shiv Sena and others. The play's re-rendering of *The Mahabharata* questioned the difference between righteousness and evil, leaving little choice between the bleak and bleaker sides. His next English novel, *Ravan and Eddie* (1994), was the first of his trilogy comprising of *The Extras* (2012) and *Rest in Peace* (2015).

A barely concealed take-off of Salman Rushdie's acclaimed *Midnight's Children*, Nagarkar's protagonists, Ravan and Eddie, like Rushdie's Saleem and Shiva who were born at the stroke of midnight on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947, were also born in the momentous year of 1947, with Ravan on a Christmas eve, but their lives in a Bombay chawl hardly embodied any grand national or political allegory. Rather, the inconsequential struggles of the two, much like Bollywood film extras, provided a sample of the teeming richness of everyday travails of ordinary subjects who scrambled to find purpose, meaning, control or agency in life. If Nagarkar unsuccessfully courted Rushdie scholars with this subtle literary gesture, he soon became a casualty of a full-blown English-*bhasha* controversy triggered by Rushdie. The year 1997 was significant. It was the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of India's independence. Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* became a first major Indian novel to break into the American markets, winning the Booker Prize amidst much acclaim. However, in the introduction to his coedited volume, *The Vintage Book of Indian Writing 1947-1997*, Rushdie infamously made disparaging remarks about prose writings in India other than English. In the ensuing bitter and polarised debates, Nagarkar's masterpiece, *Cuckold*, got lost for a while in the din.

As a bi-lingual writer, Nagarkar fell squarely in neither the Indian-English nor the *bhasha* camps and felt abandoned by both. The little initial serious critical attention received by *Cuckold* was on

account of Nagarkar's supposed Chitpavan Brahmin legacy of Hinduism amidst an Indian-English fictional scenario dominated by religious minorities, prompting him to emphasize his Bhramo Samaj antecedents in subsequent years. However, the novel slowly grew in acclaim. While apparently a long novel comprising almost entirely of the interior monologues of the Rajput prince-in-waiting of Mewar, Bhoj Raj, the husband of Meera Bai, whose rival was none less than Krishna, the demolition of the Babri Masjid was written all over the subtext. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century context of the declining Sultanate and the imminent threat of the upstart central-Asian Mughal, Babur, the fictional Bhoj Raj felt alienated by the outdated values of Rajputana valour and gallantry. Secretly accessing excerpts from the *Baburnama* through his spies, Bhoj Raj shared almost an intimate affinity with the enviable and modernizing Babur from afar. This subtle gesture of Nagarkar towards Babur, who was dominating public and political debates as a hate figure, was lost on many critics who hailed his genius.

It was in his post-9/11 novel, *God's Little Soldier* (2006), however, that Nagarkar grew more directly political and baited Rushdie more overtly. Woven masterfully as another novel of interior monologue, Nagarkar refused to blame Islam or Muslims for the menace of terrorism. Rather, Nagarkar narrated the tale of a terrorist Zia, aka Lucens, aka Tejas, who changed his faiths thrice, but remained an extremist in all three. Traversing from India to London to Kashmir, Afghanistan, United States and more, one of the first solo terror acts of Zia was a failed attempt on Rushdie's life. Zia's approximations of Rushdie's personality in order to guess his next public appearance were examples of tongue-in-cheek writing by Nagarkar. However, the most scintillating ideological confrontations in the novel remained between Zia and the letters of his Kabir-quoting brother Amanat, which always managed to jolt Zia to the core, with Zia always clawing his way back to his extremist and supremacist beliefs. In *Jashoda: A Novel* (2017), Nagarkar focused his attention on the life of an impoverished and spurned village woman's desperate migration to the city along with her children and mother-in-law. In the long line of female protagonists created by male novelists over several generations, the figure of Jashoda was viewed by critics as beguiling and intriguing, leaving readers lukewarm about her cold and unsentimental demeanor in the face of many odds. In the novel, Nagarkar cast his glance not at middle class angst and subjectivity, but at a class starkly visible yet invisible in cityscapes. His female protagonist embodied character traits of some of his previous female characters like Meera Bai of *Cuckold* or Parvatibai of *Ravan and Eddie*, who were immune to the machinations and charms of men, were not beholden to them and survived with the determination of a heart of iron. With *The Arsonist* (2019) he again returned to the Kabir of the medieval Bhakti movement as an answer to growing contemporary fundamentalism and intolerance, much like the Meera Bai of his earlier novel.

Kiran Nagarkar's legacy will perhaps remain a divided one. His literary career seems to mirror the lives of his characters who could only think but rarely express or realize themselves to their fullest. A master of subtlety, he was courted by controversies but rarely thrived in them, returning repeatedly to his interiority to write contemplative fiction. His serious contemplations, however, are likely to remain relevant and thought provoking for many. As someone who had the occasion to meet and briefly interact with the writer, he seemed reconciled to not being entirely understood.

### **Albeena Shakil**

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\*PC: <https://jaipurliteraturefestival.org/speaker/kiran-nagarkar>

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**NABANEETA DEB SEN****(13<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 1938 – 7<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2019)**

What do you say when a doyenne in the field of literature dies? That she was a colossus in the field of literary studies? Any summing up of the achievements of Nabaneeta Deb Sen would sound and seem like a comprehensive survey of a substantial chunk, of the field of Comparative Literature studies in India. A pioneer in the field of Comparative Literature, Nabaneeta Dev Sen's scholarship brought her international fame and acclaim. She was not only a scholar and researcher, but also a popular teacher both in Jadavpur, as well as in the many institutes where she taught ranging from reputed academic institutions in the United States, the United Kingdom, Mexico, Germany, France, Japan and Israel. A graduate of Presidency College, she had masters' degrees from Jadavpur and Harvard universities and a PhD from Indiana University. Winner of the Mahadevi Verma Prize in 1992, a Sahitya Akademi award in 1999 and a Padma Shri in 2000, Dev Sen was a poet, novelist, columnist, short story and travelogue writer, in short, a litterateur of many parts. She also served in leadership positions in many state-level, national and international literary institutions and acted as a member of the jury for many important literary prizes in the country. She was the vice president of the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad and the founder and head of the West Bengal Women Writers Forum.

Born to the poetic lineage of Acharya Narendra Dev and his wife, Radharani Debi, in Kolkata on January 13, 1938, Nabaneeta got married to the Nobel laureate and economist, Amartya Sen, in 1958. They were divorced in 1976. In her early poems, she did not hesitate to lay bare the pain she must have gone through as a divorcee under 40 and a single parent to two children. At this juncture, however, she worked on her doctorate and then joined Jadavpur University.

Dev Sen has over 80 books in print, in multiple genres. Her books have been translated to many languages. Dev Sen herself knew more than a smattering of languages, ranging from Bangla, English, Hindi, Oriya, Assamese, French, German, Sanskrit to Hebrew. To paraphrase the words of Dipesh Chakrabarty in the Indian Express, it is challenging in a brief obituary to convey the spectrum of Dev Sen's interests or to convey a sense of her extremely versatile talent. Her versatility was moreover, always mixed with a "distant, penetrating but, ultimately, forgiving sense of humour" which permeated her writings. She moved almost seamlessly and seemingly effortlessly between many genres of writings, from poetry, short stories, novels and novellas, travel writing, children's literature, one-act plays, essays, belles-lettres to academic literary criticism. Her writings in English belong only to the last category, all of her other writings which add up to about 80 volumes, are in Bangla. Chakrabarty also mentions that, in one of her autobiographical essays, Dev Sen with her characteristic humour, described her two eyes as being different in the way they saw the world and gazed upon it. Her right eye, she said, was always full of mirth and laughter and was drawn to all that was fun and pleasurable in life. Her left eye, however, was forever turned inwards and nothing that was deeply ironical or sad about the human condition could escape its notice. This, Chakrabarty observes, was probably her way of explaining why all her critical observations of the world were always tinged with a gentle and wry sense of

humour. Just a few weeks before she passed away from cancer at the age of 81, she echoed a funny line from Sukumar Ray's nonsense verse – "Alrite, kamen fite" (Alright, Come and Fight) as a title to her short essay where she wondered if cancer and death at the age of 81 is such a "big deal" after all. She wondered why friends and well-wishers were grieving. Whether this self-ironic stance and almost a tinge of black humour is born out of indomitable courage or a stoic acceptance of the inevitable order of things, is left to the reader to decide.

Among her popular works are 'Bama Bodhini', 'Nati Nabanita', 'Srestha kabita' and 'Sita theke suru'. A forthright and strong advocate for women-centred narratives, many of her works focus on the figures of female protagonists. Among other significant pieces is an archival piece of research along with a commentary, called "Chandrabati Ramayana". Her English translation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Bangla poet Chandrabati's version of the Ramayana –together with her discussion of the text, the 16<sup>th</sup> century Telegu poetess Molla's Ramayana, some texts in Marathi and Maithili, as well as the more contemporary Telegu writer Ranganayakamma's "Ramayana Vishavruksham" (1974-76), will remain an enduring contribution to feminist scholarship on the study of the epic.

Her essay/critical commentary on "Chandrabati Ramayana" details the rediscovery of a version of the Ramayana by a sixteenth century rural woman, called Chandrabati. Dev Sen's piece is a tour de force of feminist criticism where she speculates on the possible reasons for its dismissal by the male custodians (often self-appointed) of the literary establishment. Chandrabati's book, dismissed by these critics as a fragment and therefore incomplete, focuses on Sita's "baromashi" (in the genre of a seasonal tale), Sita's story details her birth in the form of an egg to Mandodari, her subsequent journey to the court of King Janak and then her marriage to Rama. The account of her birth puts a very different spin on Sita's genealogy. According to Chandrabati's version, Rama's credentials as a husband and father are questionable. This contrarian view was perhaps unacceptable to the literary establishment, and a systematic "silencing" of the text took place. Uncompromising in her belief in personal and intellectual freedom, Nabaneeta Dev Sen belonged to a generation of academics who did not hesitate to speak truth to power. She will continue to inspire coming generations of students, scholars and writers.

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\*PC: <https://www.telegraphindia.com/west-bengal/nabaneeta-dev-sen-passes-away/cid/1717704>

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**SAROS COWASJEE****(12<sup>TH</sup> JULY 1931 – 8<sup>TH</sup> DEC. 2019)**

Literary critic, novelist and short story writer Saros Cowasjee was born on 12 July 1931 in Secunderabad. He received his B.A. from St. John's College, Agra, and his M.A. from Agra University in 1955. He worked as a lecturer in English at Agra College (Agra University) from July 1955 to July 1957. He was awarded the J.N. Tata Scholarship (1957-1959) and went to Leeds to study for a Ph.D. He completed his Ph.D. in English at the University of Leeds in 1960. His thesis was on the work of Sean O'Casey, under the supervision of the eminent Shakespeare scholar G. Wilson Knight.

Cowasjee worked as Assistant Editor at the Times of India Press, Bombay, from 1961 to 1963, before going to Canada and joining the Department of English of the University of Saskatchewan, Regina Campus (later the University of Regina) in 1963 as an instructor, and was promoted to full professor in 1971. He retired in 1995 and was appointed Professor Emeritus. He taught a variety of courses, but was best known for his classes in Commonwealth Literature. He was Research Associate at the University of California, Berkeley (July 1970 — June 1971), and Visiting Commonwealth Professor at the University of Aarhus (Denmark), from January to June 1975. He was a guest lecturer in numerous universities in Europe, Australia, India, Fiji and Singapore.

I had the pleasure of meeting him in 2009, when he visited India and Bangladesh; Jamia Millia Islamia was one of the universities where he lectured. He was a thoughtful person, with a great sense of humour. He was an animal lover; when Jamia Millia Islamia agreed to refund air freight costs for transporting his archival donation from Canada to India, he asked for the rupee equivalent of \$500 Canadian to be paid to a charity working for animal welfare (the university gave the amount to "People for Animals").

Cowasjee donated his papers to Jamia Millia Islamia; the collection is now housed in Jamia's Premchand Archives and Literary Centre. Of particular interest to scholars of Indian Writing in English would be the manuscript of *Private Life of an Indian Prince*, Mulk Raj Anand's novel, in his own handwriting with substantial revisions in the text, throwing light on the author's craft. Typescripts include *Reflections on the White Elephant*, with changes made by the author in his own handwriting, and *The Last of the Maharajas*, a screenplay of Anand's *Private Life of an Indian Prince* by Saros Cowasjee, approved by Anand.

The collection contains Cowasjee's correspondence with Mulk Raj Anand from 1965 to 2002 — more than 300 letters, some in manuscript. Some of these letters were printed in *Author to Critic: The Letters of Mulk Raj Anand to Saros Cowasjee* (1973). The archives also include Cowasjee's correspondence with eminent British writers and critics, and with twenty Indian English authors, such as Manohar Malgonkar, Kamala Markandaya, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Raja Rao, G.V. Desani, Khushwant Singh and Ruskin Bond. His correspondence with Maneka Gandhi regarding animal

welfare, and documents related to the transfer of Mulk Raj Anand's papers to the National Archives of India, a task in which Cowasjee was instrumental, are also available in Jamia's Premchand Archives. Researchers on Irish drama would be interested in Cowasjee's correspondence with Sean O'Casey, including his answers to numerous questions concerning his life and writings posed by Cowasjee.

He was the author of two novels, *Goodbye to Elsa* (1974) and *Suffer Little Children* (1982) and three collections of short stories. *Goodbye to Elsa* has a somewhat rambling narrative; the protagonist is Tristan Elliott, a young professor at a Canadian university. His father, a British pilot, died when Tristan was four years old; his mother is an Anglo-Indian working as a nurse in Delhi. His loneliness (related to his divided psyche as an Anglo-Indian) leads him to have affairs with various women, in Dublin, in Leeds and in Canada. The satire is more focused in *Suffer Little Children* (revised and reprinted in 1996 as *The Assistant Professor*). Tristan, teaching at a Midwest university in USA, has recently been released from a mental asylum. He falls in love with Maura at a nude-therapy session, and supports her when she makes friends with women who are members of associations like SKAM (Society for Killing All Men) and SOL (Sisters of Lesbos). He grows quite fond of her one-year-old daughter Clare, and kidnaps her when Maura rejects him. The novel presents an entertaining picture of rivalry among academics in the small university.

Cowasjee's short stories are entertaining in the best sense of the term. He published three collections: *Stories and Sketches* (1970), *Nude Therapy* (1978) and *Strange Meeting and Other Stories* (2006). The variety of moods and modes is impressive. There are love stories, ghost stories, and stories about the exploitation of the poor and low caste. Some stories are about divided loyalties, while others reveal the tragic consequences of wars and partitions. There are some light-hearted stories too. "A4" is a delightful story of young lovers who catch the same bus, route number A4. "A Short Story" is about a writer unsuccessfully trying to write one.

As a critic, Saros Cowasjee published five books and forty research papers in books and journals, and edited and wrote introductions to thirty books. His first book, *Sean O'Casey: The Man Behind the Plays* (1963), went into several editions, including an American reprint in 1964, and a paperback in 1965. *'Coolie': An Assessment* (1976) and *So Many Freedoms: A Study of the Major Fiction of Mulk Raj Anand* (1977) are among the first book-length studies of Mulk Raj Anand. He edited and wrote introductions to many of Anand's novels: *Private Life of an Indian Prince* (1970), with a new introduction 2008; *Untouchable* (1970) with a Preface by E.M. Forster and Afterword by Cowasjee; *Coolie* (1972); *Seven Summers* (1970, Penguin 2005); *The Big Heart* (1980, new revised edition 2015). *The Village, Across the Black Waters* and *The Sword and the Sickle*, the three novels featuring Lalu, appeared together for the first time in *The Trilogy* (2016) with a detailed introduction by Cowasjee.

He was an authority on the literature of the Raj, and edited many anthologies of fiction, such as *Stories from the Raj* (1982), *More Stories from the Raj and After* (1986), *Women Writers of the Raj: Short Fiction* (1990), *The Best Short Stories of Flora Annie Steel* (1995) and *The Oxford Anthology of Raj Stories* (1998). He also wrote critical introductions to new editions of many Anglo-Indian works, long out of print: Flora Annie Steel's *On the Face of the Waters* (1896), Edmund Candler's *Siri Ram Revolutionist* (1912), Christine Weston's *Indigo* (1943), Philip Mason's *Wild Sweet Witch* (1947). such as and anthologies, such as *Stories from the Raj* (1982); *More Stories from the Raj and After* (1986); Christine Weston's *Indigo* (1987, 1993); Philip Mason's *The Wild Sweet Witch* (1989), *The Competition Wallah* (1991) by Sir George Otto Trevelyan and J.R. Ackerley's *Hindoo Holiday* (1979). He was General Editor of Arnold-Heinemann's "Literature of the Raj" Series, from 1984 to 2000.

Saros Cowasjee has made an invaluable contribution to literary studies, not only through his own perceptive analysis in books like *Studies In Indian and Anglo-Indian Fiction* (1993) and *So Many Freedoms: A Study of the Major Fiction of Mulk Raj Anand* (1977) but also by drawing attention

to “Anglo-Indian” fiction, novels by British writers about India. He will be remembered both for his fiction and for his personal interaction with Mulk Raj Anand, which reveals a lot about their personalities; the correspondence with various publishers provides insight into the process of editing and book publishing. Saros Cowasjee passed away on the 8th of December, 2019 in Regina, Saskatchewan in Canada.

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\*PC: <https://www.uregina.ca/library/services/archives/collections/writing-theatre/cowasjee.html>

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## TUTUN MUKHERJEE

(17<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 1952– 7<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2020)



### REMEMBERING PROFESSOR TUTUN MUKHERJEE IN THE WARM WATERS OF LOVE AND RESPECT...

It's always a painful exercise to write about someone after her death, and that too, when the person was a big part of active communication and soul making process. I consider my wordy tribute to Tutun-di as a 'feeble tribute of applause' to a person who inspired many thinking heads as a 'spirit beautiful and swift'.

Tutun-di stands tall in the midst of the monsters of life's waste. We wrap distances and unfurl memories. Born on Nov. 17, 1952, Tutun-di earned a BA from the University of Patna in 1974. She completed her MA degree in English from the same University. The Ganges in Patna knew her well! Later on she received her PhD from Osmania University, Hyderabad. After teaching for a good lengthy spell at Osmania, she joined at Hyderabad Central University as a Professor of Comparative Literature. She retired from HCU in the late 2016. Her recent areas of interest were women's writing, theatre, Dalit literature and translation. Prof. Mukherjee was the Principal Investigator for the UGC MHRD e Pathshala for PG English of which I served as the coordinator for paper I. I was going through all her communications before I started my humble tribute to this great soul maker. I rediscovered how affectionately all these letters were written. Tutun-di believed in the principle of the routine course of the sun rising – no one can deny the sun rising. She wrote for equality and justice for all. In an article on Bengali Dalit writer and activist Manohar Mouli Biswas she wrote,

“He has not, nor intends to, ever give up the battle against caste-class stratifications and stereotypes to usher in a future of hope and resilience.”

She was a champion shoulder-giver for the cause of Dalits in India. Prof. Mukherjee wrote a number of introductions and endorsements for books by Dalit writers and books on Dalit writers. She was in regular touch with dalit feminist writers. She inspired them all. She believed that writings from the margins demand and deserve centrality of attention. I never found her a difficult person to approach. She was always there to bring new experiential truths to the table, and to build up bridges across time, allegiances, and empathies. Prof. Tutun Mukherjee, a prolific author, editor and translator worked on different fields of knowledge, and made substantial contributions to various facets of literature and literary studies. Many of her books are collaborative productions. With Prof. Mohan Ramanan and Prof. Panchanan Mohanty she edited *The Humanities in the Present Context* (2009). Her book with Niladri R. Chatterjee, *Androgyny and Female*

*Impersonation in India: Nari Bhav* (2016) presents unique interactions with performers of the dwindling art ways of female impersonation. Her book, *Companion to Comparative Literature*, 2012 is a document of profound scholarship in the field. She translated *The Parrot Green Saree* (by Nabaneeta Dev Sen), 2019. Translation was close to her heart. *Staging Resistance: Plays by Women in Translation* (Oxford India Paperbacks), 2012 is a unique book for the readers and stage lovers. She was a theater lover. Tutun-di has signal contributions on many Indian English playwrights. The list is huge! Prof. Tutun Mukherjee passed away on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2020 at Hyderabad. When we lose a close one, our sanity freaks; madness rules. She is with us as a great asserter of the present, an inspiration for generations of truth seekers. Teachings can extend fuzzy loops to console the heart that bleeds. Artists will die; their art shall remain.

Our Tutun-di will be missed in the company of a daily clock and the sun!

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New Alipore College,  
Kolkata

\*PC: <https://www.siasat.com/obituary-professor-tutun-mukherjee-1786021/>

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**GEORGE STEINER**(23<sup>RD</sup> APRIL 1929 – 3<sup>RD</sup> FEBRUARY 2020)**MAN OF WORDS DIES AT 90**

A man, who knew four languages, was infinitely learned and an intellectual, Francis George Steiner, died on February 3, 2020 at ninety years of age. His oeuvre included *Tolstoy or Dostoevsky* (1959), wherein he compared the different viewpoints of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky; *The Death of Tragedy* (1961), which probed into ancient Greek literature to mid-twentieth century; *Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature, and the Inhuman* (1967), a book of criticism on language and literature, for which he became quite well-known; *In Bluebeard's Castle: Some Notes Towards the Redefinition of Culture* (1971), exploring the ideas about the origins of European anti-Semitism; *Extraterritorial* (1972), suggested how strongly he was drawn to technical work in linguistics, science and philosophy; *Fields of Force: Fischer and Spassky in Reykjavik* (1973); *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (1975), his best-known book which influenced later translation studies; *On Difficulty and Other Essays* (1978); *Martin Heidegger* (1978); *Antigones* (1984); *George Steiner: A Reader* (1984); *Real Presences* (1989); *Anno Domini: Three Stories* (1964); *Proofs and Three Parables* (1992); *The Deeps of the Sea* (1996); *A cinq heures de l'après-midi* (2008), books of short stories; *The Portage to San Cristobal of A. H.* (1981), his controversial novella in which Jewish Nazi hunters found Adolf Hitler alive in the Amazon jungle thirty years after WW II; *No Passion Spent* (1996), a collection of essays on Kierkegaard, Homer in translation, Biblical texts and Freud's dream theory; *Errata: An Examined Life* (1997), a semi-autobiography; and *Grammars of Creation* (2001), based on his Gifford lectures with a wide range of subjects from cosmology to poetry.

"No one now writing on literature can match him as polymath and polyglot, and few can equal the verve and eloquence of his writing," wrote Robert Alter (*The Washington Post* December 30, 1984). Steiner survived the havoc of the Holocaust when he came to Paris with his parents. He said: "My whole life has been about death, remembering the Holocaust" (*The Guardian* March 17, 2001). The desolation formed the background of all his work. He said: "We got away with a miracle," he told *The Guardian*. "Not one of the Jewish children in my Lycée class survived — not one. This haunts my work" (*The Washington Post*). "The black mystery of what happened in Europe is to me indivisible from my own identity," he wrote in the essay "A Kind of Survivor." In *Language and Silence*, Steiner wrote: "The house of classic humanism, the dream of reason which animated Western society, have largely broken down... We know now that a man can read Goethe or Rilke in the evening, that he can play Bach and Schubert, and go to his day's work at Auschwitz in the morning." He was equally at home translating a literary piece into the languages he knew as he was writing about Greek classics, passion for which started when he was six-years-old as he wanted to know the end of Homer's *Iliad*, and Kierkegaard, Freud (who was his father's friend), Heidegger (who inspired him the most), Lévi-Strauss, Cellini, Bernhard, Chardin, Kafka,

Gogol, Mandelstam, Cardinal Newman, Verdi, Brecht, Wittgenstein, Montale, Liszt, Koestler, and the linguistics of Chomsky.

He was born in Paris on April 23, 1929 with a birth defect. His right arm was 9 inches shorter than his left arm. Steiner points out that his mother gave him the confidence to deal with his deformity. "From her came the conviction that if it's difficult, it must be fun and worth doing. Today the rule of benevolent therapy is to buy shoes with zippers. I could have had them. It took 10 months for me to learn to tie a lace; I must have howled with rage and frustration. But one day I could tie my laces. That no one can take from you. I profoundly distrust the pedagogy of ease." (*The Guardian*) He was a thinking man who was fascinated with the origins of human speech, the myth of the Tower of Babel and its significance, the advantage of being a polyglot, the exact duties of a translator and the superiority of multi-tongued, or, as he called them, "extraterritorial," authors like Beckett, Borges and Nabokov. He credited his mother for him being a polyglot. "My mother, so Viennese," remembered Steiner, "habitually began a sentence in one language and ended it in another." In his autobiography *Errata: An Examined Life*, he recalled the "perpetual joy" at being raised in a home where three different languages were spoken (*The Guardian* February 5, 2020).

He said: "I'd love to be remembered as a good teacher of reading." He held reading to be of utmost importance for a moral calling. It should, he added, "commit us to a vision, should engage our humanity, should make us less capable of passing by" (*The Paris Review* 1995). He argued: "Ninety-nine percent of humanity contributes nothing to the sum of insight, of beauty, of mortal trial in our civil condition" (*The Guardian* 2020). He challenged his readers into higher thinking but he was never condescending. He was one of the greatest thinkers, philosophers, critic and literary genius who would be sorely missed by the academia. He can only be kept alive by reading and re-reading his works, thus honouring his commitment to 'reading.' Steiner married Zara Alice Shakow in 1955 who died ten days after him on February 13, 2020. He is survived by a son David and daughter Deborah and two grandchildren.

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\*PC: <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/postscript/the-seriousness-of-george-steiner>

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**EDWARD KAMAU BRATHWAITE**(11<sup>TH</sup> MAY 1930 – 4<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2020)**ON THE PASSING OF EDWARD KAMAU BRATHWAITE**

The renowned Barbadian poet, historian, and academic Edward Brathwaite, popularly known as Kamau Brathwaite, passed away on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2020. He was 89.

Brathwaite will be remembered for his untiring attempts to arrive at a distinctively Caribbean form of poetry—a form that would not only celebrate Caribbean voices and language but also evoke the African rhythm made of Ghanaian blues, jazz, calypso, reggae, and talking drums. Brathwaite rejected the British iambic pentameter as he believed that it was unsuitable for the Caribbean context. He wanted to forge a form of expression and idiom capable of carrying the weight of lived experiences such as slavery, hurricanes, and a subterranean African culture and civilisation. As he suggested in the powerful essay “The African Presence in Caribbean Literature” (1974), he indeed believed that West African traditions and rhythmic patterns not only resembled but had also influenced and shaped their Caribbean counterparts. *The Arrivants: A New World Trilogy* (1973) is Brathwaite’s most well-known work and it reflects the experiences of African peoples who have migrated in and from the continent. The journeys that Brathwaite evokes in a rather poignant and evocative manner throughout the text include those undertaken during the Middle Passage and slavery as well as those in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the US, France, and UK in search of better socio-economic circumstances.

The following extract from ‘Rights of Passage’, the first book of *The Arrivants*, evokes Rastafarian idiom and voice and reggae rhythm.

*Rise rise  
locks-  
man, rise  
rise rise  
leh we  
laugh  
dem, mock  
dem, stop  
dem, kill  
dem, an go’  
back back  
to the black*

*man lan'*  
*back back*  
*to Af-*  
*rica.*

The passage also indicates the emphasis that Brathwaite placed on the development of a listening community and oral performance. For him, the languages of the peoples of the Caribbean were in no way inferior to English. They weren't subsidiaries or dialects of the Queen's tongue and embodied a "tidalectic" movement in their own. The tidalectic movement—composed of a ripple and two tides—presents a sharp contrast to Hegelian dialectic of the thesis and the antithesis that resolves in the synthesis. In *History of the Voice* (1984), Brathwaite goes on to suggest that the tidalectic movement of Caribbean languages constitutes a "nation language", language that evokes the African aspect of their heritage. As luck would have it, the University of Pennsylvania Centre for Programmes in Contemporary Writing (PennSound) has archived a number of readings or performances of poetry by Brathwaite. Undoubtedly influenced by the reading-style of T. S. Eliot, each of these indicate his concern for evoking authentic Caribbean experiences, rhythms, and lifestyles. The archives can be accessed at:

<https://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/x/Brathwaite.php>.

In the last two-three decades of his life, Brathwaite's writing style became significantly personal and idiosyncratic. Instead of focussing his creative energies on the expression of collective experiences to signify an organic Caribbean subjectivity, he began reflecting on his own views and life. As a result, he moved away from the tidalectic towards what he termed "Sycorax video style" after Caliban's mother in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. He claimed that the ghost of Sycorax was caught in his printing machine and gave his published poetic works distinct shapes, textures, and designs. These visual innovations that manifest in the form of specific fonts and spacing on the page, according to him, signify the changes that marked the slow but sure evolution of his own poetic voice. Some of the writings in the Sycorax video style can be accessed at:

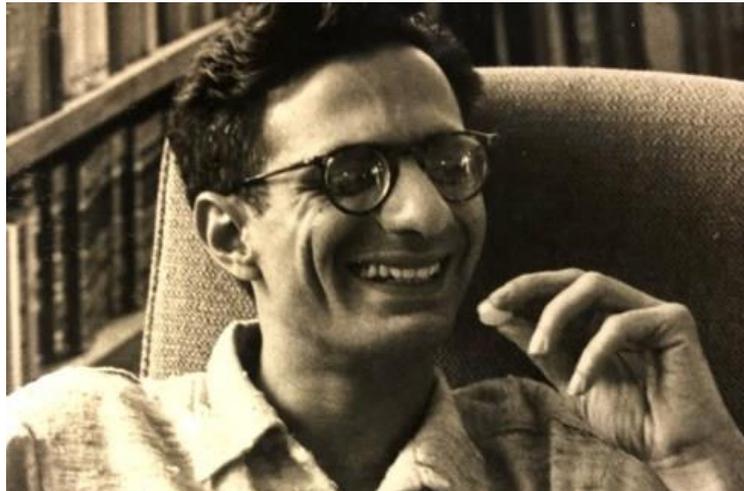
[https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/currentstudents/postgraduate/masters/modules/en9b5worldlitanthropocene/brathwaite-letter\\_sycorax\\_copy.pdf](https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/currentstudents/postgraduate/masters/modules/en9b5worldlitanthropocene/brathwaite-letter_sycorax_copy.pdf).

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\*PC: <https://as.nyu.edu/content/nyu-as/as/departments/complit/about/news/news-for-2019-2020/markingthepassageofkamaubrathwaite19302020.html>

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**KRISHNA BALDEV VAID****(27<sup>TH</sup> JULY 1927 – 6<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2020)**

Krishna Baldev Vaid (27 July 1927 - 6 February 2020) was a highly reputed Hindi novelist, short story writer, playwright, translator and diarist. He taught English literature in Hans Raj College and in the Arts Faculty in the University of Delhi, in the Panjab University, and then for twenty years (1966-1985) in the New York State University at Potsdam. Along the way, he had obtained a Ph. D. from Harvard for a dissertation published as *Technique in the Tales of Henry James* (Harvard UP, 1964). Vaid was born in Dinga (now in Pakistan) and crossed over as a refugee to India at the age of twenty. He later said that he could have written in any of four languages: Panjabi, Urdu, Hindi and English, and his decision to write in Hindi about India while living in America for a long time had remarkable creative consequences. With characteristic candour, he said in an interview with his French translator Annie Montaut that he thought that “writing in Hindi was more of a challenge for me than writing in English.”

The trinity of his early novels reflects his experiences of childhood and of Partition: *Uska Bachpan* (1957; self-translated later as *Steps in Darkness*) *Bimal*, *urf Jayen to Jayen Kahan* (1974, self-translated as *Bimal in Bog*), and *Guzra Hua Zamana* (1981; *A Broken Mirror*). These works of vivid realism in a style highly verbally inventive established him as a writer not only of promise but indeed of high accomplishment. The novels that followed were less populous and more pared down, and the dark core at the heart of his early books now grew more pronounced. He was increasingly preoccupied with loneliness, isolation, anguish, and even despair at the difficulty of making significant human connection. Self-excoriation became a thematic obsession, with metaphors of exile infusing narratives which were not ostensibly about exile. In fact, nearly all his works are set in India, and one of his novellas is titled *Dard la-Dawa* (Pain without Remedy).

His later books also grew more and more experimental in a surrealist, modernist and even post-modernist sense, occasionally with a distinct erotic hue – which was termed pornographic by some disgusted readers and disinclined publishers. Often, what Vaid sought to explore was not sexuality itself but what may be called the complex psychology of prurience. When I was once invited to contribute a small selection from Hindi to a book of Indian erotica, *The Parrots of Desire* (2017), Vaid was one of the three authors I chose, translating a female monologue from his novella *Nasreen*, which is partially intertextual with Molly Bloom’s final monologue in Joyce’s *Ulysses* while it throughout maintains its distinct Indian context, cultural orientation, and Hindi-Urdu playfulness. Vaid himself translated to great effect some congenial authors from Hindi into English, and equally from English into Hindi, notably his intimate friend from youth Nirmal Verma, Muktibodh, Lewis Carroll, and Samuel Beckett. Vaid’s life was that of an exile, but with a significant twist. His first thirty-plus years were spent in undivided and then divided India; for

the next twenty-five years he lived in the U.S. researching and teaching English and American literature; he then came back to live in India for another quarter-century; and then he returned to the U.S. in his eighties to spend his last few years with his three daughters there. This may be seen to correspond broadly with the four ashramas or phases of the traditional Hindu life, though Vaid would have laughed outright at the suggestion. In any case, the zig-zag turns of his peripatetic postcolonial life make the trajectories of Rushdie, Seth and Ngugi look like straight lines. One of his last books is titled *Pravaas-Ganga* (2011; River of Exile).

Another unique achievement of his was to blend his Hindi with Urdu with a degree of sophistication and startling novelty that hardly any other writer of either Hindi or Urdu could match. His Urdu was given depth by the Persian and Arabic that he had learnt in his early years. Krishna Sobti, with a similar Partitioned background, mixed Hindi and Panjabi in her works as no other writer has, not even Amrita Pritam, and Sobti and Vaid published an engrossing book of their conversations recorded when both were together for a while at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla.

It was my good fortune to get to know “Vaid saheb” (as we Hindi-speakers called him, though most other authors were called “Nirmal ji” etc.) during the decades following his return to India in 1985. He phoned me out of the blue one Sunday morning in 1990 after reading a book-review of mine in the *Times of India* in which I had not only mentioned him but also quoted from his work. The Hindi literary world is a bustling and yet intimate space and we often met at some literary event or the other, or at the India International Centre socially, and also once at his home in Vasant Kunj when he invited me and my wife to dinner, with the then CEO of Penguin India as the only other guest. Among my abiding memories of Vaid saheb is him briskly walking up to me at several such Hindi events, coming up close, and holding me by the arm while he himself laughed and rocked from one foot to the other; he was a short man of light build with an unfailing charm and elegance about him. He would on such occasions merrily berate me for some crime or the other that I had lately committed – like gifting a copy of a special issue of the *New Yorker* to a foremost Hindi critic who was now going around from one conference to another using it as the exotic and dazzling basis of his lectures, minting good money into the bargain.

But the most memorable occasion I shared with him was a conference on the “Indianness of Indian Literature” held in Leiden in 2000, when we stayed in the same hotel and were together morning noon and night for four or five days. On our very first evening there, even before the conference had begun, he curated a hilarious conversation amongst several of us in the hotel bar, which sought to resolve the conundrum that I had been chosen to give the keynote address while also present at the conference were Mani Kaul, K. Satchidanandan, and of course Vaid himself. “What do these people in Holland see in you,” he asked me, laughing, as he got me another drink, “that we in India can’t?!” It was a rollicking evening, with Vaid at the top of his inventive comic vein. His own paper was on the interrogation of “India” in one of his short stories, a rare instance of a discussion by a writer of his own work not at a chatty literary festival but at a high academic event, a bit of a tight-rope walk, but then he had been a professor as much as any of us.

After he returned to the U.S. in 2010, we kept up a desultory but for me delightful email correspondence. When I praised the virtuoso quality of his English once, he replied in Hindi – saying that that was a direct consequence of my having praised his English! With his wit and warmth and deep cordiality or *shaistagi*, he was always a joy to be with, or to hear from. One may add that this was not quite the same always as the experience of reading him, which was usually exhilarating and illuminating, but could sometimes be challenging, and in some of his more experimental books, even bewildering and tedious – and not only when he was (possibly mimetically) describing *ennui*, a favoured theme. Vaid did not brook many contemporaries as worth being his peers but he did bend a knee playfully to the novelist and poet Agyeya (1911-87), who was almost a generation older than Vaid and is thought by many to be the greatest modernist writer in Hindi. And he openly envied a younger writer who too, like Agyeya, had won

considerably greater critical renown and also wider popularity than Vaid, Nirmal Verma (1929-2005). Vaid dismissed them both as “romantic realists” (which may seem to be two different charges rolled into one) while cherishing his own preferred mode of “fantasy,” even when depicting subaltern characters such as a child-beggar. Such forthright pronouncements too seemed part of his sturdy authenticity.

Vaid’s own place in a little niche of the Hindi canon seems assured. There has been no writer in Hindi quite as experimentally adventurous and deeply cosmopolitan as him, so dark and yet so playful, and with such a vast range of multicultural, multilingual, and multi-layered imaginative resourcefulness. There is perhaps no one to compare with him in Indian English either, for that matter, in which most of our monolingual exiles write.

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\*PC: <https://lithub.com/in-memory-of-krishna-baldev-vaid-pioneer-of-modern-hindi-fiction/>

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**RENATE HELGA SARMA****(1941 – 14<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2020)**

Renate Helga Sarma died of oesophageal cancer in Dusseldorf, Germany on 14 March 2020. Formerly a Reader in German in the Department of English at Aligarh Muslim University, Dr. (Mrs.) Renate Helga Brigitte Sarma, a German national, was a bilingual scholar and had done her PhD in English on R.K. Narayan. She remained active as a writer and translator even after her retirement in 2003 from the University.

Renate taught German to a generation of students and faculty members who were her students in certificate and diploma courses the classes of which were held in the afternoon in the Faculty of Arts .German was not part of the regular BA and MA courses in Aligarh Muslim University but the certificate and diploma courses, open to all, attracted students and teachers from different streams. Condolences poured in as the news of her death broke, with her former students remembering different aspects of her personality. Najma Akhtar, Vice Chancellor of Jamia Millia Islamia, remembered her “loving teacher” of German language. Sana Syed, a US based columnist, remembered her copy of *War and Peace* which Renate had gifted her. For playwright and actor Sayeed Alam she was always an ‘Angrez Alig’. Historian Ali Nadeem Rezavi “was converted into her admirer” after he attended her classes in 1980-82 and Asif Hasan, a professor of medicine in Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College of the University, was so impressed to “find a foreigner in AMU campus so well accustomed to Indian culture”.

Renate was born in 1941 in Homberg where her father Erich Fehr and mother Auguste Fehr had moved, leaving their native town Kassel after it was heavily bombed during the second world war. An active member of Social Democratic Party of Germany and a trade union leader, Erich Fehr faced persecution from Hitler’s Nazi Party and was not allowed to hold any job during the Nazi regime. After the war he worked as the head of the Rentamt, an office which administered church properties and finances, and later in employment exchange. He was also elected as the chairman of the district council in 1956, contributing his bit in the reconstruction of Germany. Renate’s mother was a homemaker. Renate’s house in Homberg had a well -laid out garden with fruit trees and flower plants. Renate inherited her liberal beliefs and love of flowers and plants from her parents. After attending school at August Vilmar, Homberg, Renate studied at Philipp-Universitat Marburg from 1961 to 63 and 1964 to 67, in between teaching German at The College of Wooster in Ohio, where she was a Fulbright Scholar for a year. She met Sreeramula Rajeswara Sarma, an Indian scholar pursuing doctorate in Indology, at Marburg, a relationship that would prove to be mutually very rewarding for both. They secured jobs at Aligarh Muslim University in 1969, she as a lecturer of German and Sreeramula of Sanskrit. They married in 1971 in an extremely simple manner and spent close to four decades in Aligarh before moving to Germany in 2007. Early in her career Renate completed her PhD in 1972 on R.K. Narayan from Marburg, Germany.

Clad always in a traditional Indian sari and riding a bicycle, Renate was a very popular figure in Aligarh which hardly had any European presence. Almost everyone in the city knew her. She was

fully adjusted in the campus life of the University, interacting with friends with warmth and helping her students and colleagues willingly. Many of colleagues have their own interesting anecdotes to share about her human side. Faiza Abbasi, an assistant professor at AMU and sometime her neighbor, was impressed by her kindness to see her taking care of an injured bird. Preeti Sayeed, who teaches philosophy at Aligarh Muslim University, recalls how Renate used to buy meat for 50 paisa everyday for a crow who used to perch in her house looking for food. Renate also got peeled peas for Preeti everyday when she was carrying her daughter in 1985. In the pre-internet days many of her colleagues learnt the pronunciation of difficult German words from Renate. Nietzsche looked somebody else, and probably less formidable, when pronounced by her. Renate never sought any administrative positions in the University, but once entrusted with any position, she performed the task to perfection. As Person in Charge of the Department of Lands, Gardens and Parks in the university she made the campus green and verdant, landscaping it with flowers and plants, especially nurturing the many varieties of Cassias, Bauhinias, and culturally important *Saraca Asoca* and *Crataeva adamsonii*. And as Manager of the university's Abdullah Nursery school, her main concern was to admit children of poor IV grade employees of the university.

She was very exacting and meticulous in her work as a member of the editorial board of *The Aligarh Journal of English Studies*. The journal, it may be recalled, was started by Professor Asloob Ahmad Ansari in 1976 and it has published articles of, among others, F.R. Leavis, G.Wilson Knight, Kenneth Muir, Kathleen Raine, Richard Elman, Laurence Lerner and a host of well-known Indian scholars. Renate made her own contribution in raising the standard of the journal through her careful editing. She also wrote a few articles for the journal on R.K. Narayan, James Baldwin, Thomas Mann, and Gunter Grass. It was not only the journal but also the University's Annual Report which gained from her editorial skills every year in the later part of her career. Renate was also a very competent and hard-working translator from German into English. She translated Horst Kruger's *Indian Nationalists and the World Proletariat* (2002) , running into five hundred pages, in just three months. As a translator she also collaborated with her husband Sreeramula Sarma, and together they translated Fuat Sezgin's five-volume *Science and Technology in Islam* (2011). Renate Sarma loved flowers of all kinds and she knew everything about the plants and flowers in the University which has a vast green campus. Even after leaving Aligarh in 2007, says her husband, "we thought every summer nostalgically of the crimson Gul Muhars and the golden Amaltases in the Campus." One reason why she liked Dusseldorf, where the couple had been living after they left Aligarh, was the floral diversity of Volksgarten garden in the city.

Renate Helga Sarma is survived by her husband S.R.Sarma and son Ananda. Aligarh Muslim University and Indian Association of Commonwealth Literature and Language extend their heartfelt condolences to her family and remember her contribution to the world of language and literature scholarship. Renate Sarma, was laid to rest under a maple tree in the forest cemetery in a wooded countryside outside Dusseldorf, a place serene with the music of bird songs.

### **Mohammad Asim Siddiqui**

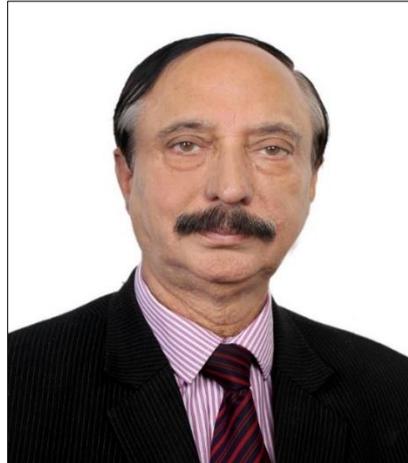
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\* PC: <https://www.thehindu.com/society/history-and-culture/lady-on-a-bicycle/article31110048.ece>

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**H.K. KAUL****(21<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER 1941 – 1<sup>ST</sup> JULY 2020)****CARRY THE FRAGRANCE FURTHER: A Tribute to Dr. H.K. Kaul**

We in The Poetry Society have gone through a period of deep grief, losing two of our very important poets within six months of each other. First, we lost our respected Vice-President Dr. Ganga Prasad Vimal, an eminent poet in Hindi, and the former Director of the Central Hindi Directorate (Department of Education) who received many awards and honours for his works. Sadly, he passed away in a car accident in Sri Lanka in December, along with his daughter and grandson. It was a big shock to Dr. H.K. Kaul and all of us. Before we could recover from the shock, we lost Dr. H.K. Kaul, our most loved and respected President of The Poetry Society (India) on 1<sup>st</sup> July this year. We were devastated by the tragic news. We had pinned our fond hopes on some of his parameters that had shown improvement according to the doctors, when we got the sad news that made us go numb with disbelief.

In the opening lines of the Preface to his last collection of poems *Encounters with People and the Angels of Hope* (New Delhi, Authors Press, 2017), Kaul says ‘poetry is born out of our passion and duty to express our true feelings that we experience in our lives. These feelings come to the fore when they are stirred, disturbed or overhauled by unforeseen, unwanted or intensely desired events in our lives.’

The section titled “Kashmiri Pundits” in this collection addresses the question that resonates with the entire nation: what happens to the people who once belonged to this beautiful valley and who have a rightful claim to it? The following lines by Kaul poignantly capture what it means to lose one’s home.

*Here on the slopes of Shankaracharya  
I face Dal Lake at the dusk of an era...  
I have no home in this ancestral valley...  
I am a wanderer now rolling along*

Terror shrinks living and breathing spaces, and narrow the ‘roads’ in our mind into “diminishing spaces” he says in the poem “As I Stroll”.

Kaul will live on in his poems, and in The Poetry Society that he founded and nurtured with total dedication and conviction.

As a Founder Member and President of The Poetry Society (India), Dr. Hari Krishen Kaul was a moving spirit for all of us who were associated with TPS. It feels unreal to tell ourselves that he left this world on his onward journey. The truth registered painfully when tributes poured in from

people to express their gratitude and appreciation for this exemplary, selfless Karma Yogi who always kept a quiet, low profile, even as he nurtured the poets who were associated with the Poetry Society. His absence will be tangible, for he lingers on in our consciousness as a subtle perfume that permeates our lives. As the Director of DELNET, together with Dr. Sangeeta Kaul as his Network Manager, he made a huge difference to the lives of authors, earnest research scholars and students by the excellent system of resource-sharing that came as a boon we always prayed for. Books were made available to us from the remotest corners of the country so that we could pursue our studies without any impediment. Words fail when we try to express our immense gratitude to DELNET and its two key figures, Dr. Kaul at the helm and Sangeeta, readily reached out to help us with the books we needed.

As the President of The Poetry Society (India) that Dr. Kaul founded in 1984, along with a few other founder-members, and as the Editor of The Journal published by The Poetry Society, Dr. Kaul's sterling contribution to the cause of poetry is immeasurable. He generously offered the facilities of DELNET in the lovely ambience of its campus for the meetings and activities of Poetry Society. It soon became a hub of poets who gathered to read and to listen to poetry. With Dr. Sangeeta Kaul as the indefatigable Secretary, the Poetry Society got a new lease of life. Together with the Treasurer Mandira Ghosh, they made for a capable team. It was always a pleasure to get involved in the various programs ranging from poetry competitions that drew a nation-wide participation, to poetry readings, workshops, seminars, and Annual Lectures by eminent poets and academics. We had festivals for folk poetry in Bengal and Uttar Pradesh curated by Prof. Rumki Basu and Sanjula Sharma respectively. Professor Basu also did an extended, program on "Navarasa" spread over a few years which was memorable. Notable amongst the programs was an All-India Poetry Competition for children that was hugely successful. The poems by children and young adults took up large social, political and environmental issues, and were expressed with freshness and originality. Dr. Kaul organised an event for the winning children at the India International Centre for which the chief guest was none other than the former President Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam. As expected, Dr. Kalam was such a big hit with the children that the IIC Auditorium crackled with the dynamic chemistry between them!

Most importantly perhaps, Dr. Kaul brought about an altruistic attitude to poetry that is based on the belief that poetry is essentially a socially engaged activity, and that it is more enjoyable as a shared experience. A self-centred attitude that is narcissistic and mired in one's own creative concerns isolates a poet. Taking time out to listen to the poems by other poets and working toward the activities of a poetry organisation definitely enlarged our horizons as we learnt a lot from poetry from diverse cultures and languages. Over the years, The Poetry Society evolved as a warm circle of poetry lovers who bonded with each other as one family. Despite the early Cassandras who had cynical prophecies to make, The Poetry Society has functioned for more than three decades as a happy gathering of poets, poetry-lovers and their supportive families and friends. It will continue to be for all those who wish to continue the legacy of Dr. H.K. Kaul. In his moving tribute to the late Dr. Ganga Prasad Vimal, in the latest and the last issue of The Journal that he edited, Kaul writes Vimal ji 'has left a quiet but unmistakable fragrance in the air. Will we poets, be the voice of conscience and carry this fragrance further?' he asks.

To which we should respond with a resounding "Yes!" as we take a pledge to carry forward his vision and mission for the Poetry Society (India).

**Dr. Lakshmi Kannan**

Founder Member, and Member, Governing Body of the Poetry Society (India), and Board of Advisors, The Journal of TPS. Honorary Member, IACLALS

\*PC: The Poetry Society of India

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**MANABENDRA BANDYOPADHYAY**(1938 – 4<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2020)

Professor Manabendra Bandyopadhyay was popularly known to most, who were familiar with him and his significant contributions, as Manab Babu. Manab Babu was of the first batch to graduate from the Department of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University, and went on to teach in the same department for many years before he retired in 2000. He belonged to a generation of teachers and a time when the academia was all about lively and enriching interactions and constant striving to meaningfully contribute to the larger society. Manab Babu was a pioneer in translating other literatures in to Bangla. He is rightfully remembered for his contributions in enriching the language and literature of Bangla. From 1985 he edited and facilitated the publication of five volumes of *Adhunik Bharatiyo Golpo* (Modern Indian Short Stories) – a pioneering effort in getting stories from other Indian languages translated in to Bangla. He was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award for his translation of Vaikom Muhammad Basheer’s Malayalam short stories in 1993. He understood the importance of accessibility of literature of other languages for the Bangla reading audience.

Manab Babu has left behind a legacy. He was one such academic, scholar and creative soul who himself translated several Latin American and European fiction and poetry. When asked what led him to translate so extensively from the Latin American, African and East European literatures, Professor Bandyopadhyay would explain – “But most importantly, it was a question of relevance. Colonisation produces some unique experiences, and this is what links these peoples together.” A visionary who thought and worked much ahead of his time – giving translation studies the important space in academic curriculum that it justifiably deserves and recognising the invaluable import of inter-cultural exchange through literatures, Manab Babu’s passing has left a void that will be hard to fill.

**Prof. Nandini Saha**

Regional Representative, East Zone, IACLALS  
Professor,  
Department of English,  
Jadavpur University,  
Kolkata.

\*PC: <https://www.anandabazar.com/editorial/memories-on-writer-and-translator-manabendra-bandyopadhyay-1.1190529>



## REPORTS

### **IACLALS ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2020** **Co-Hosted By The Department Of English, Jadavpur University** **February 5-7, 2020**

#### **“Reimagi(ni)ng Identities in the Global South: Challenges, Transgressions and Articulation”**

A three-day Annual Conference of IACLALS was held from 5 to 7 February, 2020 at Jadavpur University, Kolkata. Participants gathering during the pleasant winter of Kolkata at the beautiful campus of JU were welcomed by Prof. Nandini Saha, HoD of the Department of English, who introduced the theme and arrangements of the conference. Opening remarks were made by Prof. GJV Prasad, Chairperson IACLALS followed by an introduction to IACLALS by Prof. Subhendu Mund, Vice Chairperson, and vote of thanks by Rina Ramdev, Secretary of the Association. The Keynote Address was delivered by Prof. Sukanta Chaudhuri, Professor Emeritus, Department of English, JU. He cast his net wide to reflect on the identity question and adduced a range of global thinkers who have meditated on the question of identities. Chaudhuri excavated the works Tagore, Amartya Sen, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Akhtar Zaman to underline multiple dimensions of identities and how those identities are constituted by assimilating ingredients from varied sources. Any argument regarding the purity of genealogy or tradition is regressive and has dangerous consequences for humanity. He pointed out in great details how identities in the global south have been fluid and evolving over centuries of impacts and influences, amalgamation and assimilation.

Ten sessions of paper presentation were held on the first day. In one session, presenters engaged with female friendship and solidarity in the age of revivalism, the potency of subaltern female imaginary to interrogate imperial hegemonies, and the extension of the domestic in the public realm for refugee women. Another session saw the examination of the migrant quest beyond nationality and its binaries, as well as travel across plural spaces creating new identities. The third parallel session included several interesting juxtapositions - of Ghalib with Manto, of Eastern India with Eastern Europe, and of a High court judgement with a poem- to make a case for hearing unheard voices, emphasizing the precarity of the self in a fast changing fragmented world, and reimagining the forest as a heterotopic space.

The next session engaged with fictional visions of a world without borders; with poetry and translations haunting the rhetoric of borders, and the possibilities/limitations of cultural transgression in border crossing. Another session included papers about the possibility of lateral solidarity between the mothers of Association of the Parents of the Disappeared Persons (Kashmir) and of Madres de Plaza de Mayo movement (Argentina), Kashmiri fictional narratives on the liminal lives of children, and the memoirs of wrongfully imprisoned and exonerated prisoners. Another parallel session interrogated the categories of the global south, postcoloniality and humanity with papers dealing with narratives about emigrant girmityas and “free” Indians in Africa, early colonial emigration to Ireland, disconsolate homelands in Sri Lanka, and organ trafficking based on the exchange of body parts. Yet another session dealt with both drama and film to investigate Heisnam Kanahailal’s theatrical productions from Manipur, Shyam Benegal’s *Manthan*, blockbuster film *Baahubali* and 20<sup>th</sup> c. Hindi theatre to examine the concepts of resistance, subjugation, post-truth and marginality.

The next round of paper presentations included evaluation of the representation of Sundarbans tigers, as well as national/universal fictions from Bangladesh; papers also dealt with myth making about true patriots, invocation of epics in drama and folklore in novels; and queer narratives in Kannada and diaspora fictions.

The invigorating first day of the conference ended with a GBM of the IACLALS, which included presentation of the report of activities and finances over the last three years, the election of a new team, but most importantly a moving farewell to the outgoing team that successfully lead and nourished IACLALS over the past several years. Under the Election Officer, Prof Somdatta Mandal, the existing team comprising of Subhendu Mund, M. Asaduddin, Rina Ramdev and Angelie Multani, led by GJV Prasad, handed over the charge of the organization to M. Asaduddin, who took over as the new Chairperson alongside Swati Pal as Vice Chair, Albeena Shakil as Secretary and Kalyanee Rajan as Treasurer.



The second day of the conference started with papers examining the transition of the Assam movement from 1979 to the present times, and partition memories/oral accounts by third-generation survivors living in rural West Bengal. A parallel session examined fictions around the cities of Allahabad, Bangalore and Varanasi to interrogate geographical contours, social inequalities and destabilizing changes. Papers in another session looked at the global south from the prism of Indian Ocean historiography and early colonial adaptation of Malik Muhammad Jayasi's *Padmavati* into Bengali, Toni Morrison's utilization of wide forms of black expressivity and a comparison of Palestinian, Kashmiri and Tamil poets living in exile.

The CDN Prize finalists this year were Huzaifa Omair Siddiqi, Ishita Sareen, Srinjoyee Dutta, Diksha Beniwal and Ritwick Bhattacharjee. Based on pre-conference submissions, the finalists were shortlisted by a panel comprising Prof Rajiva Varma and Dr Anuradha Ramanujan. The finalists presented their papers in the packed HL Roy hall. The CDN Prize jury comprised of Prof. Supriya Chaudhuri, Prof. Angelie Multani and Prof. Murari Prasad. Setting a new record,

Srinjoyee Dutta won the CDN Prize for the second successive time for her paper - 'More vegetal than sexual': An ontological reading of gender and madness in Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*.

This was followed by the award of the Meenakshi Mukherjee Memorial Prize 2020 to Ritwick Bhattacharjee for his paper, "The Politics of Translation: Disability, Language and the In-between", published in *Disability in Translation: An Indian Experience*, eds. GJV Prasad, Someshwar Sati. The Jury members this year were Sirpa Salenius, University of East Anglia, Tapan Basu, University of Delhi and Subhendu Mund, Vice Chair of the IACLALS. Ritwick discussed his published paper in a lively conversation with Dr. Someshwar Sati.

The second day ended with papers presented across three parallel sessions. These included papers on Indian female stand-up comics on YouTube and other web streaming platforms, an analysis of Divakaruni's Draupadi and the case of orientalisng India in award-winning film, *Smile Pinki*. Papers interrogated colonial science myths of visualizing the invisible, recent intercultural and transcultural approaches in pedagogical exercises in Europe, transnational and transcultural retellings of Chinese fiction, and the history of emotions in South Asia, particularly in early Hindi historical novels. Another session also included papers that evaluated recent education policies in India especially the NEP-2019, the case of democratic contentions on caste on open platforms like Wikipedia in contrast with Twitter and other platforms, and the archaeology of memory in building in digital archives of music in India.

Presentations on the third and final day continued till the afternoon with papers on recent memoirs by Dalit women breaking new grounds in Dalit women's autobiography, and the digital archiving of resistance through the *Dalit Camera*, a YouTube channel since 2012. Papers also examined emotional manifestations of unproductive time in the globalised South, sexuality and transnational identity in recent Afghani fiction, and thanatopolitics and restructuring of individual and collective memory in post-2003 Iraqi fiction. Another session included papers that examined south-to-south relations through evaluation of eleventh century Bengali Buddhist scholar *Atiśa*, the ambivalence of Southern urbanization in Delhi fictions, and deformed, reimagined or reimaged homes in narratives. The final parallel sessions of the conference saw one set focus on children and childhood to examine difference, trauma and adolescent identities in multiple forms of literature including graphic novels. Another session included papers examining the intersection of health, masculinity and identity in colonial Bengal, and novel-in-stories about violence and fragmentation in Karachi. Papers in another session demonstrated the eccentricity and intersection of identities in the Indo-Caribbean 19<sup>th</sup> century diaspora from a queer perspective, neoliberal rationality and representational tropes of the queer subject on the Indian screen, and heterotopia of transgressive identities and the crisis and/of deviation in Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*.

Alongside theoretical investigations, the intellectually stimulating conference was significant both for its focus on South Asian literatures as well as a significant number of papers looking East. Such food for thought was matched if not exceeded by the actual food served throughout the duration of the three days of the conference, especially the delightful conference dinner. The IACLALS Annual Conference 2020 ended on a note of a deep sense of gratitude to the Jadavpur University team for the impeccable organization of the conference and the outgoing IACLALS leadership for their outstanding contribution in nurturing the links of the association with successive generations of young scholars.

**Prof. Albeena Shakil**  
Secretary, IACLALS

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## **BANGALORE UNIVERSITY LITERARY FESTIVAL**

### **12-13 June 2019**

Bangalore University Literary Festival was organized by Equal Opportunity Cell (EOC), Empowerment Cell for Differently Abled (ECDA) and Department of English in collaboration with Vimochana's Open University, Bengaluru from 12 to 13 June 2019 at Jnanabharathi Campus, Bangalore University. The theme of the Festival was 'Subaltern Voices.' The panellists were distinguished writers, scholars and artists from various fields known for their creative and artistic potential.

The Festival was inaugurated by the well-known Kannada poet-playwright and Dalit activist, Prof. Siddalingaiah, who is credited with starting the Dalit-Bandaya movement and Dalit writing in Kannada. He drew attention to the emerging voices from the marginalized groups in literature and art, and the need for more platforms such as Literary Festivals to engage in meaningful deliberations of the same. Award winning film director, B.M. Giriraj was the Chief Guest. Special invitees were Prof. B.K. Ravi, Registrar, Bangalore University and Dr. Corrine Kumar, founder of Vimochana, Bengaluru. The Inaugural Programme was presided over by the Honourable Vice Chancellor of Bangalore University, Prof. K.R. Venugopal.

The theme of the first session in the afternoon, 'Challenges before the Youth,' was well addressed by Prof. Nataraj Hulyar, the noted Kannada writer, critic and Director, Centre for Gandhian Studies, Bangalore University. He shared his insights on the present education system, challenges that today's youth are facing in terms of employment opportunities, access to information and most importantly, to develop originality and individuality in expression. The second session was devoted to young, budding poets who read their poems in Kannada and English. Under the theme 'Subaltern Expressions' in the evening, the audience were treated to an energetic performance from the famous Janamana group, Mysuru. Led by Janny and Chintan Vikas, the singers enthralled the audience by a powerful rendition of songs of Dalit poets in Kannada.

On 13 June, the morning session with the theme 'We and the Society,' began with a thought-provoking presentation by Prof. Rajaram on 'Narratives of the Differently Abled Persons.' The subaltern perspective he rendered on some of the narratives of the differently abled writers invited vibrant responses from research students and PG students in the audience. A parallel session was devoted to the screening of three documentary films from Vimochana's Open University: 1. 'Resilient Rhythms' (issues concerning Dalits), 2. 'Please Mind the Gap' (issues concerning LGBT), and 3. 'Courts of Women: Reimagining Justice' (issues concerning women). The film screening was followed by a discussion in which students participated actively. Dr. Corrine Kumar spoke about the short term and long term courses offered by Vimochana's Open University and the other social work that the university is involved in.

In the fourth session, 'Conversation with Jayanth Kaikini,' Prof. Vaishali, Head of the Department of English, Bangalore University, engaged the famous poet, lyricist and winner of DSC prize for South Asian Literature, 2019, Jayanth Kaikini in a meaningful discussion of his poems and popular songs in Kannada films. It was followed by a lively Q & A session with the audience. In the fifth and the last session in the afternoon, Prof. Jamuna from the Department of History charted a comprehensive history of Indian feminism with a special reference to Kannada writers under the theme, 'Indian Women in Transition.'

#### **Webinar Series in the Department of English, Bangalore University, Jnanabharathi Campus, Bengaluru:**

1. Ms Chaitra Nagammanavar, Assistant Professor, organized a special online lecture on 2 May 2020: "W B Yeats, Ireland and Modernity." The speaker was Imran Mulla, Pavate Fellow, Department of English, University of Cambridge, UK.

2. Dr Shobha M, Associate Professor, organised a special online lecture on 23 May 2020 on “Public and Private Spheres: The Question of Gender.” The speaker was Dr. Gayatri Devi, Associate Professor of English, President, PASSHE Women’s Consortium, Lock Haven University, Pennsylvania, USA.
3. Dr K.S. Vaishali, Professor and Chairperson, organized the following online lectures:
  - “Narration in Cinema,” by Dr. Nikhila H, Professor, Department of Film Studies, The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, Telangana, on 10 July 2020.
  - “Research Possibilities in English Language Studies,” by Dr. Ravinarayan, Professor, Regional Institute of English South India, Jnanabharathi Campus, Bengaluru, Karnataka on 11 July 2020.
  - “What is happening in Humanities these days?” by Dr. Ashwin Kumar, Senior Fellow, Centre for Learning Futures, Ahmedabad University, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, on 17 July 2020.
  - “From Neoclassicism to Romanticism: the Impact of Transitioning Worldviews,” by Dr. Cherian Alexander, Professor, Department of English, St. Joseph’s College (Autonomous), Bengaluru, Karnataka, on 20 July 2020.
  - “Themes and Concerns in Postcolonial Indian Cultural Criticism,” by Dr. Rajaram, Professor and Head, Department of English, St. Joseph’s College of Commerce, Bengaluru, Karnataka, on 25 August 2020.

**Dr. Shobha M**

Regional Representative, South Zone, IACLALS

Associate Professor,  
Department of English  
Bangalore University  
Jnanabharathi Campus  
Bengaluru.

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**One-Day National Seminar on  
“Gandhi and Literature: Exploring the Ideological Fronts”  
as part of Sesquicentennial Celebrations**

**Organised by: Department of English and Modern European Languages,  
University of Lucknow**

**Date: 19<sup>th</sup> August 2019**

**Audience: 300- 350 participants**

**Venue: J K Hall, Department of Social Work, University of Lucknow**

Link: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZ7VY6Y-nVg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZ7VY6Y-nVg),

[www.facebook.com/groups/544399208919139/search?q=gandhi%20seminar](http://www.facebook.com/groups/544399208919139/search?q=gandhi%20seminar)

The Department of English, and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow, organized a one-day national seminar ‘**Gandhi and Literature: Exploring the Ideological Fronts**’, celebrating the sesquicentennial birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, on August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019. The inaugural session of the seminar included a welcome address by Prof. Ranu Uniyal, Head of the Department, an introductory note by Prof. Nazneen Khan, keynote address by Prof. Neelum Saran Gour, (Dept. of English, University of Allahabad), and plenary address by Prof. S.Z.H. Abidi (Dean, Faculty of Humanities, Integral University). The seminar aimed at bringing to the forefront the ideals that Gandhi represents, and offered perspectives on his life, teachings, and ideologies.

Prof Gour held that Gandhi ji provided an open-ended platform for all kinds of discussions, holding the umbrella over the opponent in every situation providing them the space to voice their opinion. Prof. Abidi called Gandhi a great inter-text which was influenced by the literary work of the past and in turn influenced the upcoming literature.



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## OCEANVALE WORKSHOP

Kirori Mal College  
25<sup>th</sup> -29<sup>th</sup> September, 2019

Characters with abnormal bodies and unstable minds have populated our creative imagination since time immemorial. We only need to think of the hunched back and psychotic Manthara in the Ramayana, or the blind king Dhritarashtra and his crippled brother-in-law Shakuni in the Mahabharata to realise that this is true. But why do characters with abnormal bodies and unstable minds crowd our literary narratives? What do these characters and the way they are implotted in these narratives tell us about the society and culture in which they are produced and disseminated? To explore these and other allied questions, the Department of English, Kirori Mal College, University of Delhi, organised a four-day workshop on 'Representing Disability in India: Texts and Contexts' from the 25<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> September, 2019.

The workshop was inaugurated by the Principal of the college, Dr. Vibha Singh Chauhan. She warmly welcomed the participants and invited them to unravel and problematize normative notions of normalcy that are deeply embedded in our literary tradition. Underlining the great value of such an academic exercise, Dr. Chauhan suggested that these notions tend to condition and even define our attitudes and responses to disability and disabled people. Building upon the Principal's opening remarks, Dr. Someshwar Sati, the convenor of the workshop outlined the need to refrain ourselves from the common placed tendency of treating corporeality and corporeal deviance as self evident

categories of human experience. Disability, he argued, is largely constituted in language and institutionally reproduced through various forms of social and cultural practices that tend to devalue abnormal bodies and unstable minds. The urgent need of the hour, Dr. Sati, declared was to liberate disability from the debilitating confines of corporeal difference and accommodate the phenomenon within the discourse of human diversity. With this objective in mind, the Oceanvale scholars (the participants), in the course of the workshop, found themselves actively involved in the task of decoding the various aspects of disability representation- the impact of these representations on the materially embodied experience of disablement, the political imperative shaping the narratives of corporeal difference and the influences of highly particularised local cultural context on the constitution of epistemic and discursive notions of corporeality.



The tone of these wide ranging academic engagements, however, had been set by the resource persons for the workshop- Dr. Shilpa Anand, Dr. Shubhangi Vaidya and Ms. Karuna Rajeev, who at the very outset acquainted the participants with the quotidian realities of disabled existence. People with disability, they poignantly observed, routinely experience social stigma and cultural labelling on account of their corporeal and cognitive difference. Normative assumptions of normalcy, they argue, are institutionally produced and sustained in society and culture through these and similar gestures of othering that devalorize the lives of non-corporeal embodiments. It, therefore, comes as a matter of little surprise that many of the presentations made on the occasion approached the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and various other Indian myths and legends as narratives that produce and perpetuate normative assumptions of what it means to be normal. It was observed that characters with abnormal bodies and unstable minds in these narratives generally embody negative personality traits and function largely as props to make the idea of the normal appear more explicit. While some of the participants in their papers, outlined how the loss of a limb or any other form of sensory faculty or mental stability become tropes to frame tragic realities, others considered the various ways through which the representations of stumbling and stammering are appropriated to elevate comic moments in literature and cinema alike. The

workshop also attempted to inflect the understanding of the experience of disability from the perspective of the disabled persons themselves. In this context, both fictional and non-fictional life writings by disabled people like Firdaus Kanga's 'Trying to Grow' and Ved Mehta's 'Vedi' and 'Face to Face' were considered and widely discussed. The analysis of Indian disability representation carried out at the workshop provided the participants with valuable insight on the constitution of disability in the Indian context and enabled them to evolve ways to think and talk about concepts of corporeal difference that are socio-historically rooted in the Indian cultural milieu. Given that the ideological contours of the disability research in India is principally defined by the hegemonic sway of the western academia and largely carried out through a metropolitan conceptual prison, the analysis of disability text from within an indigenous perspective was a highly gratifying academic exercise.



But unfortunately, disability in India is yet to become a fully institutionalised and legitimate field of academic inquiry. Times are, however, changing and so is our intellectual orientation towards disability. The workshop on 'Representing Disability in India: Texts and Contexts', organised by Kirori Mal College, was, thus, a unique opportunity to think about aspects of human experience that a liberal academia, never tired of flagging feminist, Dalit and other marginal issues, tends to routinely ignore and gloss over. The workshop concluded with Mr. Rudrashish Chakraborty expressing the hope that many such workshops will be organised in future.

**Dr. Someshwar Sati**  
Associate Professor  
Department of English  
Kirori Mal College  
University of Delhi

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**The inaugural IDSC Annual International Conference  
DEGLOBALISING DISABILITY: TEXTS AND CONTEXTS  
21<sup>st</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2019**

**Organised by The Department of English and Modern European Languages,  
University of Lucknow and the Indian Disability Studies Collective (IDSC) in collaboration  
with PYSSUM**

Anybody who has ever been to Lucknow, will most definitely have visited the famous Tunday Kabab at the colourful Aminabad market. However, not many among them would be aware of the history behind the coinage of these soft, buttery, melt-in-your mouth kababs. It is said that when Nawab Asaf-ud Daula grew old and lost all his teeth, he discovered much to his chagrin, that he was no longer able to enjoy the taste of kababs - chewy as they were - like before. A contest was

announced, where anybody who would be able to make him the softest kababs would be the winner. One-limbed Haji Murad Ali, who had lost his left arm while playing kite on the terrace, was the one to win the Nawab's heart. Based on colloquial lingo, where a person with Murad's disability was known as "tunday", these kababs came to be known as Tunday Kababs.

Given this rich legacy of the city, there could not have been a more appropriate destination to hold the inaugural IDSC Annual International Conference on "Deglobalising Disability: Texts and Contexts". Organised by The Department of English and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow, and the Indian Disability Studies Collective (IDSC) in collaboration with PYSSUM, from the 21st to 23rd of October, this first-of-its-kind conference provided scholars from all over the country and beyond, a much required vibrant space to engage with the discourse of disability - both in theory and action. Spread over a period of three days with one keynote address, one book launch, two plenary sessions, two disability sensitisation programmes, and eighteen academic sessions, this conference saw a large turnout of almost a hundred participants, making this event a huge success.

Set in the grand Malviya Hall of the University, the Inaugural Session began with the lighting of the lamp followed by a Saraswati Vandana by the students. Prof. Ranu Uniyal gave the welcome address and invited Dr. Someshwar Sati to introduce IDSC and its objective behind organising this conference. Among various other things, Dr. Sati spoke about how the need to find an alternate discourse of disability based on the Indian reality had motivated the birth of IDSC in May 2019. He underscored the fact that this area is yet to become a part of our academic consciousness, creating this urgent need to engage with the phenomenon in our centres of higher education. Mrs. Anju Mishra spoke next, introducing PYSSUM which was set up in 2005 with the sole purpose of helping children with disability.

The keynote address was delivered by Dr. Gaelle Sobott, a disabled writer living in Sydney and the founding director of Outlandish Arts (a disabled-led, not-for-profit arts organisation), where she spoke on the need to create a global archive of disability autobiographies in order to explore the relations between materially embodied experiences of disability and its literary representations. This was followed by the book launch of *Disability in Translation: The Indian Experience*, freshly minted out of the Routledge press. Prof. GJV Prasad graced the occasion with a special address, speaking about his own personal engagement with disability through his nephew, Ishwar Natarajan, who was born with multiple disabilities. He wonderfully summed up the entire speech by stating that we are all differently abled in some way - so, either all of us are, or no one is! Bringing this session to its fruition, Prof. Nishi Pandey delivered the vote of thanks.

This made way for the academic sessions, where a huge spectrum of topics were covered. Discussions ranged from the question of cultural representation of disability to one's individual experiences with it. How is disability portrayed, be it in books for children or adult novels or films, and how does it inform our own engagements with it? While a large part of the presentations tried to unpack this concern, many other presenters raised other difficult questions, starting with how disability friendly social media sites are to how abled-bodied spaces react to disability discourses. There were also debates over the efficacy of using assistive technologies in this domain.

The personally charged, highly impassioned, plenary talks by Dr. Hemchandra Karah, Dr. Shilpa Anand, Dr. Shilpa Das and Prof. Banibrata Mahanta, took the conference to a different level altogether. Not only did the speakers enrich the academic event by sharing their personal notes from their long years of engagement with disability studies, but also left the audience with some important realisations by forcing them to revisit their own experiences with disability. Be it the debilitating effect of the dominance of the western discourse on Indian disability studies or the 'normal' beauty standards on disabled women, be it the association of charity with the subject of disability or the uncharitable picture of society in response to a disabled child born in a family - these talks did not leave any aspect of disability unexplored.



The highlights of the conference included a visit to PYSSUM and Antarchakshu, a disability sensitisation programme developed by the Xavier's Resource Centre for the Visually Challenged (XRCVC), St. Xavier's College, Mumbai, conducted by Krishna Warriar along with Dr. Sandip Singh. It gave the participants a scope to venture beyond the theorisations of disability within the academic space to a more hands-on experience of it. Apart from the academic sessions, a special dinner was also planned by the organisers, where an open stage saw the participation of many delegates including Abhishek Anicca (a disabled writer, poet and researcher based in Delhi), Dr. Sobott and Prof. Uniyal. The valedictory session drew the curtain over the conference, where apart from handing out the certificates, the events of the conference were summed up by Dr. RB Sharma and the vote of thanks was delivered by Dr. Fatima Rizvi.

Apart from satiating the academic appetite of everyone present there, this conference also left behind a lot of fond memories for the participants to carry back with themselves. Over endless cups of tea and rich platters of Lucknowi cuisine, the conference managed to create a space for the participants to come together as a group not just as academics but fellow travellers on this journey. This was largely made possible by the warm hospitality extended by Prof. Uniyal and her entire team at the English Department, Lucknow University, for which the IDSC team will forever remain grateful. The conference ended with the promise of regrouping again in a year's time with another enriching conference in another part of the country.

**Dr. Anurima Chanda**

Assistant Professor  
Department of English  
Birsa Munda College, Siliguri  
West Bengal

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**The inaugural IDSC Annual International Conference**  
**DEGLOBALISING DISABILITY: TEXTS AND CONTEXTS**  
 21<sup>st</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2019 REPORT II

A three-day International Conference was organised by the Department of English and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow, in collaboration with Indian Disability Studies Collective (IDSC) and PYSSUM on **Deglobalising Disability: Texts and Contexts**.

Date: 21<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> October, 2019. Venue: Malviya Hall, University of Lucknow

Link: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ItHvT14gAVU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ItHvT14gAVU)

[www.facebook.com/groups/544399208919139/search/?q=disability%20conference](http://www.facebook.com/groups/544399208919139/search/?q=disability%20conference)

The Department of English and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow, in collaboration with Indian Disability Studies Collective (IDSC) and PYSSUM (a centre for inclusive education of the differently-abled) organised a three-day International Conference on Deglobalising Disability: Texts and Contexts. The Inaugural session was held at the Malviya Hall. Professor Ranu Uniyal, Head, Department of English and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow, welcomed the invited guests and participants, and delivered a note on the importance of sensitizing people towards the theme of the conference. The Keynote Address was delivered by Dr. Gaelle Sobott, an Australian writer. She is a disability rights activist who has numerous books to her credit. She talked about the contextual aspects of disability, and the theory of inclusion. Dr. Someshwar Sati, from Kirori Mal College, Delhi University, spoke about IDSC, while Mrs. Anju Mishra, Director Academics at PYSSUM, gave an over-view of her experiences at the centre for the specially-abled. *Disability in Translation: The Indian Experience* edited by Dr. Someshwar Sati and Prof. G.J.V. Prasad (Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University) was also launched during the session. The conference focused on the various narratives dealing with challenges faced by persons with disability. Dr. Fatima Rizvi, the organizing secretary, and Dr. R.B. Sharma, treasurer of the conference, contributed to the success of the conference. The conference was lauded by academicians, eminent luminaries and scholars from different fields alike.



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## THE AUSTRALIAN SHORT STORY FESTIVAL

18-20 October, 2019



### Hawthorn Arts Centre, Melbourne, Australia

The Australian Short Story Festival is an annual celebration of short stories in written and spoken forms. One of the first platforms to focus exclusively on the short story form, the Festival is committed to bringing together audiences with short story writers, storytellers, publishers, and editors of literary magazines. Inimitably responding to the contemporary resurgence of this aesthetically demanding narrative form, the event has been consistently managing to make serious and singular contributions to the culture of short story writing in Australia and the world.

The 2019 Melbourne event, locally hosted by Swinburne University, opening the audience to the vibrant diversity of the literary form, fielded both Australian and international short story writers and oral storytellers. Guided by the underpinning imperative of cultural diversity and inclusiveness, the inaugural promise of scintillating variety by Julia Prendergast, the festival Director, was eminently fulfilled by the pulsating multicultural fare through the three packed Festival days. Indigenous writers drew attention to the richness inherited from their oral cultures; indie comic writers took the occasion to make their voices heard and fun-filled jamming sessions brought together ‘something old, something new, something borrowed, something short.’

The programme was a-brim with focused segments of serious critical engagement with the short story form which delved into technical questions of the craft like authorial presence in short storytelling and the origin of characters and story worlds. Additionally, innovative and compelling subgenres like creative nonfiction, speculative fiction were accorded ample time throwing up interesting discussions on the strange, the wonderful, the weird and the shady in short fiction. Extended dialogue on how ideas play out on the page took on the notions of hybridity and the power of storytelling. Even as recent and forthcoming publications were tabled, nitty-gritties about literary magazines, the publishing industry, the changing, developing markets for the short story and the reverberations of the prize culture were debated.

Most significantly, driving contemporary thematic concerns like the #Metoo Movement and tolerance and intolerance became the subject of many a thoughtful session. I had the unique privilege of having our (Meenakshi Bharat and Sharon Rundle) Indo-Australian Volume 4, *Glass walls: Stories of Tolerance and Intolerance* (Orient Black Swan, 2019) both released and allocated a complete session.





The session featured both Indian and Australian writers reading from their stories, followed by an in-depth discussion and a Q&A session. Applauding the ‘timely’ publication at a time when ‘otherization and polarization’ were peaking in the world, the book was released by Colombo-based Sri Lankan author and critic, Dr Devika Brendon and the session chaired and managed by Sharon Rundle.

One of the supporting highlights of the Festival was an exhibition on short fiction which highlighted the space that graphic fiction has made for itself within the gamut of this form and an exhibition and sales counter hosted by the Readings Foundation and book retailers. One came away from the multifaceted 2019 Australian Short Story Festival with the lasting impression of a thought-provoking, thoughtfully curated satisfying experience.

**Dr. Meenakshi Bharat**

Associate Professor  
Department of English  
Sri Venkateswara College  
University of Delhi

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**Two-Day International Conference on  
Kala pani Crossings #2: Diaspora and Gender across the Indian  
and Atlantic Oceans**  
26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of February 2020

A two-day International Conference entitled “Kala pani Crossings #2: Diaspora and Gender in the Indian and Atlantic Oceans” organized by the Department of English and French at Pondicherry University in collaboration with EMMA University of Montpellier 3 in France was conducted at the Seminar Hall, School of Humanities on 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of February 2020. It was attended by 22 participants from India and abroad and 25 research scholars as well as M.A. students.

This symposium followed up on the seminar ‘Kala pani Crossings: India in Conversation’ that was held at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla (September 23-25, 2019). Kala pani Crossings #1 had meant to throw more light on the 19<sup>th</sup> century migrations from India to Fiji, Mauritius, the Caribbean and Africa, and to revisit the history from the perspective of India. Over one million Indians were transported between 1834 and 1917 to sugar colonies under the system of indentured labour in order to meet the demand for cheap, unskilled labour after the abolition of Atlantic slavery in 1833. Yet, it is a chapter that has been excluded from Indian history.

Kala pani Crossings #2 intended to focus more precisely on the gender dimension in the migrations and in the historiography. The conference started by the opening remarks from the organizers Prof. Kalpana Rao, Dr. Ritu Tyagi and Dr. Judith Misrahi-Barak who contextualized the problem of Kala pani crossings within the field of Diaspora Studies trying to understand the gendered dimension in the indentured and post-indentured societies and discussed the scope of this conference that was particularly interested in exploring the intersections of diaspora and gender within the diasporic and Indian imagination in order to investigate the ways in which race, class, caste, gender, and sexuality intersect with concepts of home, belonging, displacement and the reinvention of self. There were 14 papers presented and two film screenings taking into consideration both the anglophone and the francophone indentured world and their different or shared perspectives. The papers tried to discuss various issues in order to comprehend how diasporic locations/positions marginalise women by alienating them from their home, or empower them as they emerge from nationalistic narrative to a transnational experience, allowing women to problematize/rethink home-host dichotomy; what are the possibilities of negotiation or resistance, and how those possibilities are determined by race, class, caste, or ethnicity.



The originality of the conference was in the emphasis on Indian perspective on this problem. The papers deliberated on how the traditional standards of Indianness and gender relations are reshaped through the diasporic experience, what can be gained in India by theorizing diaspora through a feminist framework, in particular what it brings for contemporary Indian women and what kind of connections, dialogues, and solidarities can be conceived today between the Indian women at home and their diasporic counterparts. This symposium offered a very constructive platform for discussions on many women writers from old diaspora such as Ramabai Espinet, Shani Motoo, Mahadai Das, Gaiutra Bahador in order to understand how their literary texts retrieve histories of migration from women perspective and negotiate multiple ideas of home, multiple ways in which gender impacts diaspora to create spaces where normative practices can be challenged in favour of individual experiences, and multiple strategies to engender fruitful and dynamic connections today between India and its old diaspora.

Co-convened by **Prof Kalpana Rao, Dept of English**, Dr Ritu Tyagi, Dept of French (Pondicherry University) and Dr Judith Misrahi-Barak, University Paul-Valery Montpellier 3 (EMMA)

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## One Day Symposium on Feminism: Popular Culture, Media, Literature & Performance

5<sup>th</sup> March, 2020

A One day symposium entitled “Feminism: Popular Culture, Media, Literature & Performance” was organized by Dr. H. Kalpana Rao & Ms. Koyel Chanda, Research Scholar in the Department of English on 5<sup>th</sup> March, 2020. It was attended by 90 participants who included research scholars, M.A. students and faculty members. This symposium was organised to celebrate International Women’s Day and to highlight the rich history of women’s literature as well as the collective effort of women’s activism that had influenced various spheres. The symposium hosted two invited talks by Dr. Sukrita Paul Kumar, faculty (Retd) Department of English, Delhi University and Dr. Krishna Manavalli, Professor, Department of English, Karnatak University, Dharwad. Dr. Sukrita Paul Kumar delivered the lecture titled “Narrating Gender; Women in Indian Literature” while Dr. Krishna Manavalli talk was titled “Mother Myths: Gender Matters in Chandrasekhar Kambar’s Writing”. The symposium also hosted a poetry reading session where Dr. Sukrita Paul Kumar read out a selection of poems from her published collection. To bring out the remarkable history and legacy of women led movements all over the world, the research scholars and students from the Department of English as well as School of South Asian studies organised a panel titled “Women and Protest”. The participants of the panel were Koyel Chanda, Sanjukta Das, Athira Mohan, Megha Manjari Mohanty, Irram Irfan, Shilpashree Mishra, Bibhu Luitel. The panel focused on the wide range of issues taken up by women activists ranging from sexual violence to climate crisis. The panellists brought out the protest movements led by women in South Africa, France, Chile, Middle East, Nepal and India.



The academic deliberations were followed by a cultural programme organised by the M.A students, Department of English. The programmes included poetry reading, songs, dance performances and ramp walk.

**Scholar Co-ordinator – Ms. Koyel Chanda**  
**Research Scholar**

**Convenor— Dr. H. Kalpana**  
**Professor & Head**

Department of English  
Pondicherry University  
Puducherry

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## **SERIES OF WEBINARS BY READERS CLUB INTERNATIONAL**

Readers Club International (a public Library network), a wing of Children's Literature Research Centre, Agartala, Tripura. organized an International Webinar in a homely and congenial atmosphere from Readers Club International Centre, Agartala on 'Library Marketing: Opportunities of Library Services' on 7 July 2020 at 12pm. Subhrangshu Sekhar Bhattacharya, Secretary, officially opened the webinar and introduced the panellists by name and profession and Dr Bhaskar Roy Barman, President, in his address of welcome stressed the timeliness of organizing such webinar. Dr Badhan Barman, Guwahati University, elaborated on how to market the library. Marketing is not used in the sense of buying and selling goods; it is a process of luring readers into the library in the manner of luring buyers into the market. Prahlad Jadav, Senior Knowledge Manager, Khaitan & Co., in his long speech, encompassing different aspects of library marketing, elaborated upon it. Dr. B. Sanjay, Librarian, Tripura University, brought the oft-used term 'Branding' linked to marketing into his speech and explained how branding of the library identifies the users. As many as 1832 scholars, including 336 from abroad, registered for the webinar. On 14 July 2020 at 12 pm Readers Club International organized an international Webinar on 'Preservation and Conservation of Manuscripts and Library Materials' from Readers Club International Centre. Subhrangshu Sekhar Bhattacharya, Secretary, officially opened the webinar and introduced the panellists. Dr Bhaskar Roy Barman, President, delivered the address of welcome. Dr Hari Sankar Chakraborty coordinated the programme. Speakers: Dr Ramesh C. Gaur, Dean and Director, IGNCA, Ministry of Culture, New Delhi, Dr Mahesh Kumar Singh, acting Vice-Chancellor, Tripura University, Dr P. Perumal, formerly Conservator and Librarian, Tanjavur, presently Tamilnadu State Coordinator, Tamilnadu Manuscript Mission, Tamilnadu, Sunil Ganeshan, Director, Roja Muthiah Research Centre, Chennai and Ms Nadeeka Ratnabulu, Senior Lecturer, University of Kulaniya, Sri Lanka spoke about different methods of preserving and conserving manuscripts against the onslaught of time and the damaging by worms. Dr Mahesh Kumar Singh in his speech told of how knowledge of Chemistry greatly helps in preserving and conserving manuscripts. As many as 2860 scholars including 798 foreign scholars registered for this international webinar. The countries represented are: Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Ethiopia, Philippines, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bangladesh, Nepal, Ukraine, Japan, Singapore, Australia, Russia, Columbia and Argentina. To celebrate the Librarian's Day, Readers Club International organized an international webinar on library technology and library innovation on 12 August 2020 at 6pm in collaboration with MyLOFT Eclat Engineering, USA. Subhrangshu S. Bhattachaya, Secretary, RCI, inaugurated this international webinar in the presence of Dr Bhaskar Roy Barman, President, RCI, Dr H.S. Chakraborty, Vice-President, RCI and Mr Sanjib Deb, Adviser, RCI. Mr. Marshall Breeding, Founder & Editor, Library Technology Guides, Library Consultant, Speaker and Author, USA, spoke in elaborate detail on trends in library technology, stressing opportunities to innovate libraries of India and suggested how to make proper use of the opportunities available at their disposal. Prof. Partha Pratim Mukhopadhyay, Department of Computer Sc. & Engg, IIT, Kharagpur & PI, NDLI Project, deals in his elaborate speech with the role of the National Digital Library of India (NDLI) in transforming education in India and

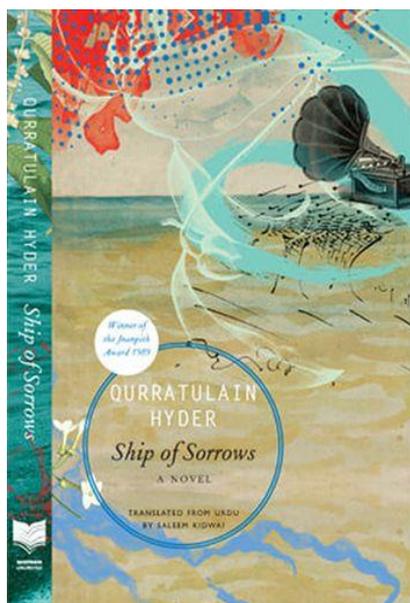
improving upon the educational system now obtaining in India. Mark Ritchie, MyLOFT, Eclat Engineering, in his enlightening speech, emphasized meticulously practising library technology the moment it has been acquired. Mr Pralhad Jadhav, Associate Director, Library Management, Khaitan & Co. Mumbai, characterized library as a smart hub for digital intelligence. Mr Jatin Baraiya, CEO, Eclat Engineering, Gujrat, India, spoke about digitization of library.

**Dr. Bhaskar Roy Barman**

President,  
Children's Literature Research Centre,  
Tripura



## BOOK REVIEWS



### ***Ship of Sorrows* Qurratulain Hyder**

Translated from Urdu by Saleem Kidwai

Women Unlimited, 2019, ISBN: 978-93-85606-23-6, 316 pages, ₹ 550/-

### ***An Honourable 'Afterlife'***

*Ship of Sorrows* is the English translation of Qurratulain Hyder's second novel, *Safinae ghame dil* (1952) written during the tumultuous years in Pakistan immediately following the partition of the country. It is regarded as a sequel to her first novel, *Mere bhi Sanamkhane* written on the eve of India's independence when the author lived in India. *Ship of Sorrows* obliquely mentions the circumstances that had compelled the author's family to migrate to Pakistan in 1947 and provides the reader the view of the Muslim upper class towards Partition and the notion of exile, which is vastly different from the experience of common people depicted in Intizar Husain's work, most notably, *Basti*. *Safinae ghame dil* was followed by *Aag ka Darya* (1958) her *magnum opus*, while she was still in Pakistan, after which she returned to India where she lived and wrote an impressive body of work, fiction and non-fiction, till she breathed her last in 2007. Urdu's finest writer in the twentieth century, Hyder had equal felicity in English and, to my knowledge, she enjoys the distinction of being India's most prolific self-translator.

Daringly experimental for a novel written in Indian languages in the fifties of the twentieth century, *Ship of Sorrows* deals with the lives of the Muslim feudal families in northern India in the two decades preceding partition, exemplifying the composite culture of the time popularly known as *Ganga-Jamuni* tehzeeb. The ensemble of character in the novel is more or less the same as in her first novel, *My Temples too*, as also the literary and cultural geography, although the worldview presented in *Ship of Sorrows* is less optimistic, the tone more ironic, even cynical at times. Existentialism casts a long shadow in the book which is not surprising considering the fact that both Sartre and Camus were very popular in the Indian subcontinent in the fifties and sixties of the twentieth century and influenced many modernist Indian writers.

In a review of *My Temples, too* (2005) I had mentioned that the milieu of Hyder's novelistic world is Forsterian, the world of 'only connect' where individuals were trying to reach out to one another

to build up meaningful personal relationships with the help of ‘good will plus culture and intelligence.’ Rakhshanda, the main protagonist of that novel, along with Vimal, Pichu, Kiran and Christabel, despite being scions of the feudal gentry, were young professionals working together with great optimism for a better world. They lived in a self-contained world that revolved around Ghufra Manzil, Chatter Manzil and Dilkusha Club. As said, *Ship of Sorrows* has almost the same cast of characters, only a few more in number than the earlier novel – Anne (the author-narrator), Fawad, Arun, Ali, Riyaz, Mira, Rahil, and Elmore – who were brought up in the tradition of liberalism and free thinking and inhabited the same self-contained world encompassing three cities, Dehradun, Mussoorie and Lucknow, with Gopalpur as a yearly retreat of reflection and meditation during Muharram. The novel explores the tenor of life lived in a feudal milieu and the leisurely life of the upper class households. The focus is on the younger members of these families exploring life for themselves and shaping their destinies. They know that they are on the cusp of change, inhabiting a transitional world between tradition and modernity, and Hyder depicts evocatively how they navigate through it by placing them in different challenging situations. Early in the novel she gives us a fine vignette of the people and the milieu she is speaking about:

These were the sort of people who, just to create the right atmosphere, held dinner parties with candles burning in silver holders, and spent the night discussing a single couplet of Ghalib or Nasikh.

This was the new Lucknow. But beyond the Iron Bridge, the Lucknow of *Fasana-e Azad*, Mirza Ruswa and *Awadh Punch* was still alive. Opium eaters gathered in Nakhkhas and spun long tales. Mussolini’s conquest of Addis Ababa was discussed, quail and kite flights were held. There was sadness and disillusionment in their lives, but they were cheerful people who, despite their misery, tried to help others. They lived their lives reciting Kabir and Anees, and even on their death beds, used double entendre. Comparisons between different schools of singing and of performances at poetry readings became a matter of life and death. The magic of *Fasana-e Azad* was alive, and the Begums still used *itr* smelling of rain and henna. In the evenings, on the shady roads of Sikandra Bagh and Hazratganj, the British came out on horseback. (23)

It is a charmed circle, a very limited world, fenced in by the privileges of feudal entitlements. The sordid realities of daily life and its ugliness are resolutely kept at bay. Of course, there are small hints that tell discerning readers that all is not well in the idyll. The appearance of a character like Khunkhunji demonstrates that the façade of aristocratic grace and refinement was maintained by the advances received from moneylenders and pawn brokers, that marriages were sometimes contracted depending on which groom could redeem the mortgaged property of the genteel family, and despite the flaunted emancipation of women, it seems that they are still a long way off from acquiring real agency. A heartwarming feature of Hyder’s art is a sharp sense of irony that illuminates contradictions in human beings of which they themselves are unaware. For example, the narrator says about the newly-minted advocates of Hindi that they composed poetry in Urdu and opposed it in the most chaste and elegant Urdu. *Zarafatnigari* (humour) which has a long and rich tradition in Urdu is closely woven into the texture of her language which is always a delight to read. The dialogues in a Qurratulain Hyder novel or short story are places where witty sparks fly out in all directions exhibiting the author’s total control over the language replete with puns, repartees and innuendos, much of which has survived in the current translation. We know that the best humour springs from one’s ability to laugh at oneself and one’s own people. Hyder takes a self-deprecating, wry look at her own circle:

This was the breed of upper middle-class Indians that had grown up with English choruses and Morris dances. They had lived at a strange, pitiable, comic crossroads. They thought of themselves as the inheritors of an old feudal culture and were proud of it. Now they were ready to abandon all the wranglings [sic] of their religion and move across the border....For one moment, distancing myself intellectually and emotionally, I thought about how I would have looked at this version of my life had I been a progressive critic, which unfortunately I am not .... (214)

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From one Gymkhana to another – Mohammad Bagh Club, Lahore and Karachi Gymkhanas – life was proceeding very smoothly and in a well-ordered manner. The adventure of the country's partition had turned out to be an exciting experience when overnight, they flew from Kanpur to Lahore in a Dakota, piloted by a Polish girl. (232)

In fact, a sensitive reading of her works makes one believe that she was convinced of the validity of the maxim that the most civilized way of being sad is to be humorous.

Uncharitable readers might find Hyder's fictional world limited by her class, that her preoccupations were insufferably *haute bourgeoisie*, her sympathies not wide enough to embrace the *hoi polloi* and the terrible plight of the common people; that the characters portrayed in *Ship of Sorrows* are self-indulgent drifters, some of them irrevocably moving towards doom which they so eminently deserve. However, the fact remains that Hyder never claimed herself to be a chronicler of the common people or the quotidian. She felt comfortable in depicting people of her own class and never pretended otherwise. For her, there was something incomparably beautiful in the grace and charm of the inclusive Lucknowi *tehzeeb* and she made it her preoccupation to record it for posterity, much like Françoise Sagan, her contemporary and a precocious writer like herself, writing her groundbreaking first novel *Bonjour Tristesse* at the age of 19, dealing with the elegance, sophistication and hedonism of the French upper class.

In reviewing translated books, reviewers rarely give serious attention to the process of translation, often denying translators their due and undervaluing their efforts. They are either unwilling or unable to discuss the complex and arduous process that involves transfer of a linguistically and culturally rooted text to a new and vastly different linguistic and cultural tradition. Normally, the bulk of the review is expended on the original author or in unraveling the plot or storyline whereas the review is supposed to be about the text mediated by the translator, more appropriately, the translator's text. A translated text exists in an independent zone or a contact zone between the source language /culture and the target language/culture and its stature and impact often depends on the quality of mediation by the translator. A translator can make the reputation of a writer just as he can mar it irredeemably.

This is greatly relevant for a book like *Ship of Sorrows* where the efforts and scholarship deployed by the translator in taking the novel to a wider (global) audience are truly impressive. Such a culturally rooted and hugely allusive text must have required much more than a readable linguistic transfer. The translator's comprehensive 21-page long Introduction situates the writer in her own tradition and in the context of self-translation of her own works. Then he catalogues the challenges offered by the text and explains how he faced them with commitment and determination. The multiple speaking voices within a chapter, nay, within a page and a paragraph would have been any translator's nightmare. The translator had to walk the tightrope of giving the reader in English the flavour of the original style, retain the voices and make them intelligible to the reader without unnecessarily muting or oversimplifying them. Then, transliteration of foreign names of persons,

places and objects and working out the allusions to world history and happenings must have entailed an enormous amount of research work. There were other challenges that the translator has met valiantly, so much so that this may be set up as a textbook example of how to translate a certain genre of books that demand scholarly engagement. I applaud Saleem Kidwai's painstaking efforts and have no doubt that his translation will rescue *Ship of Sorrows* from the neglect it has suffered in the original language and offer it an honourable habitation and 'afterlife' in English.

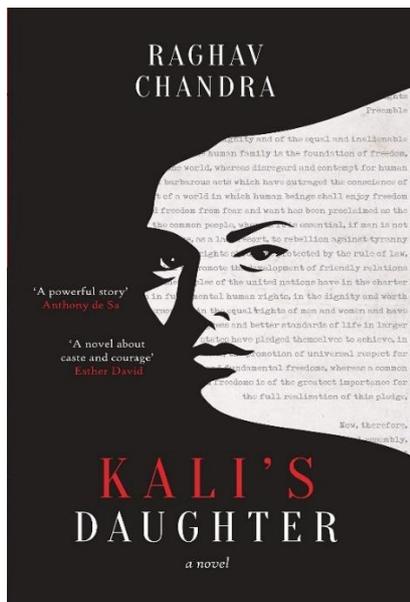
**M Asaduddin**

Chair, IACLALS

Dean, Faculty of Humanities & Languages  
Professor, Department of English,  
Faculty of Humanities and Languages,  
Jamia Millia Islamia.

[A shorter version of this review was published in *The Book Review*, VOW special issue, XLIV, 10, October 2020]

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### *Kali's Daughter*

**Raghav Chandra**

Pan Macmillan India, 2019. ISBN-13: 978-9389109214, 352 pages, ₹ 258/-

#### **“Love is a matter of convenience”, and other dictums**

The art of storytelling is among the oldest and richest in the world, and while narratives have undoubtedly changed and evolved by way of medium, form and aesthetics, the power of a well-told story resonates like nothing else. Stories connect with our deepest emotions, anxieties, fears, aspirations, desires and longing. It would thus not be amiss to say then that narratives are made up of the very stuff that comprises the act of living, and it is inevitably through tales well-told that we find insight and clarity regarding real-life dilemmas. It is no mystery then as to why collectives, from tribes, races, ethnicities to nations - each stakes a claim to its own rich cache of stories ranging as they do from folklore to modern-day parables. These are inevitably selected on account of their ability to typify the collective and impart to it the desired sense of identity and self image. This makes story telling then an art form as politicised as it is powerful and the politics in this regard arises from the ideas/images/stereotypes endorsed or challenged by the narrative.

*Kali's Daughter* in this regard is no different. As a tale about life, it is also an ode to resilience which the act of living time and again demands. The narrative tells the story of a young woman, Dipika Thakur's struggle against all odds. Not only does Dipika have to combat the patriarchal mores of her society but on account of the sheer accident of birth, she ranks lowest in the cast hierarchy. Our protagonist, the beauty with brains is a Dalit, born into a middle-tier government household. She however, does not accept the fate meted out to her by accident of birth but by sheer dint of hard work succeeds in qualifying for the UPSC examination. The omniscient narrative voice aptly refers to this as the “Everest” of all examinations but much to her parents chagrin Dipika chooses the diplomatic core – the Foreign Service – over the oft preferred administrative Service.

The tale proceeds henceforth to unravel the power-ridden machinations of the Indian bureaucracy and this is what makes it so captivatingly different – this unusual backdrop against which the multiple narratives comprising the saga of modern India unfold. Written by a senior bureaucrat from the Indian Administrative Service, Raghav Chandra, *Kali's Daughter* is a telling narrative. This is the story of contemporary India - about governance in contemporary India and it is not the

beleaguered Netaji vote bank system that we are decoding here but literally the architectural blue print of it all – the Indian bureaucracy.

*Kali's Daughter* takes us into the lives of the probationers – those selected on account of their merit, to run the country. So, the tale begins with different people from different backgrounds who set foot in Mussoorie's Lala Bahadur Shastri National Academy as probationers training to be future civil servants. The spectrum typifies the cultural diversity of the Indian landmass for while on the one hand there is Amandeep, hailing from an upper-crust, dyed in the wool family of three generations of bureaucrats, also an Oxford alumni and to begin with – a reluctant administrator, clearly coaxed and cajoled into the service by his rather over bearing and extremely Brahminical mother, on the other hand there is Vijay – the JNU intellectual, as dissident as he is hedonistically individualistic. And then there is Arundhati – the batch topper, also upper crust, westernised, rather cynical intellectual drawn with a largely promiscuous brush. She proves to be the perfect foil for the demure, Kali worshipping Dipika, who we are told is Gandhian to the point of staying back to clean her quarters while the others explore the delights of the Mussorie hills.

While the dictum that emerges, like a *mool mantra*, is that “Love is Convenience”, *Kali's Daughter* also locks horns with the development problems confronting the nation today particularly the social and cultural boundaries that delimit us as a people. The narrative is replete with vignettes typifying atrocities on Dalits which the young civil servant Dipika rightly pronounces as nothing less than Human Rights Violations and demands they be treated thus. As the probationers set out, they get their first feel of power in the “hukum” used to address them – completely a carry forward from the days of the Raj it makes the reader wonder how much colonial baggage we as a people continue to carry. For those who think that bureaucracy just sits in plush offices, this narrative shatters that stereotype:

A drought had been officially declared by the government because of a failed monsoon. Massive famine relief operations had been launched. For days, they had worked across the parched terrain and tried their best to save cattle and live stock from the disaster....they had slept in makeshift tents on the edges of the dry forests in Panna and Chattarpur and had to ward off hungry packs of wild dogs during the day. They would often stay awake through the night, and fall asleep only to be awakened by the blood curling roar of ravenous tigers....

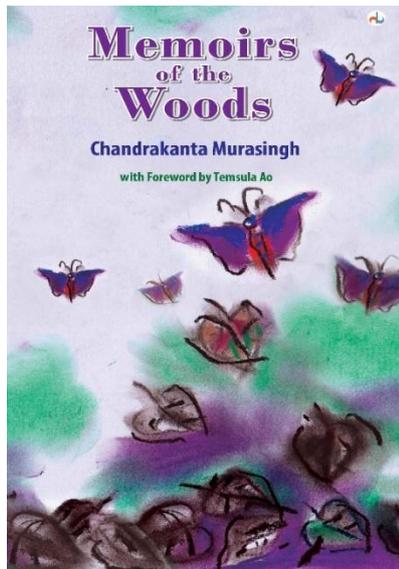
At the same time the narrative endorses the stereotype of the Bhartiya Nari through the portrayal of Dipika. Women brought up in westernised ways, like Arundhati are not to be entirely trusted while those like Dipika hold the mantle of Indian womanhood. So while the title *Kali's Daughter* refers to the innate strength of the many armed goddess Kali also symbolic of Indian womanhood, it does not carry this beyond acceptable limits and then of course, there is “Delhi” which carries connotations well beyond that of a physical location, even if it is a historically replete location now a cosmopolitan capital. The narrative shows what a power laden term “Delhi” is. It is “New Delhi” that decides when Vijay must be repatriated on account of “anti-government” views, and when Arundhati is threatening the national image of Indian womanhood and must be shunted off to another ministry.

How will the lives of these characters pan out against the politically correct straight jacketing required by government representatives? Will they follow the path chalked out for them by state and family or take the road less travelled? And how in these individual cases will character be linked to destiny? How does the Dalit question find presence through the character of Dipika? It is the answers to these questions that make *Kali's Daughter* a narrative as much about the victims of modernity as about the marginalised.

That said, *Kali's Daughter* is a standalone narrative about *babudom* and in that it towers over its predecessor *English August* which was more concerned with the voice of Augusthaya Sen whereas here the narrative truly introduces readers to an indispensable and unforgettable voice of Indian bureaucratic fiction.

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*Memoirs of the Woods*  
**Chandrakanta Murasingh**

Bhubaneswar: Dhauli Books, 2018. ISBN-13: 978-8193850503. 90 pages. ₹ 250.00

*Memoirs of the Woods* is a collection of fifty-seven poems by Sahitya Akademi award-winning poet Chandrakanta Murasingh, selected from a corpus of the poems so far published. The poems that fill the pages of the book are all translations by eminent scholars and academicians like Prof Saroj Chaudhuri and Bamapada Mukherjee and they are more or less well-translated, keeping true to the originals. The book derives its title from a poem, translated by Prof. Saroj Chaudhuri, and included in the anthology. In this poem then poet sees fit to entertain the readers with a soupcon of beauteousness of the surroundings of the village he happens to have visited, then to take them on to the portraiture of poverty, as in the following lines:

When I squat on the porch to rest,  
 The sow squeaks in the pen,  
 The body of the emaciated mother flashes blue  
 Through the rents in her clothes.

The collection begins with a poem entitled 'The Bridge' (translated by Bamapada Mukherjee). It deals with the river Deo drowning the footprints, rain-washed from above, into Lethe in Hyades, producing forgetfulness. Of the bridge the poet says:

The day is dawning,  
 The steps on the bridge  
 Rouse either bank  
 Breaking the silence of the dark. (1)

The people living on the two sides of the river love the river and the bridge and the poet longs to show the bridge to his brother who 'has turned rabid' because of the existence of a poisoned cell in his blood, but he does not know when he can, because he seems to be hearing the call from Death.

In the poem 'The Python Calls from Tong-Deserted' (translated by Bamapada Mukherjee), the poet is reminiscing of his childhood days he left behind in his pursuit of further studies, as is evident in the following lines:

A 'Chong' (full) of fish for Totema to bring  
Days on end did I spend  
Gazing into the water of the spring  
Getting used to a life by waterside (4)

In the poem entitled 'Rabindranath, In Your Golden Land' translated by Saroj Chaudhuri the poet remembers of Rabindranath Tagore who visited Tripura during the reigns of the last two Maharajas of Tripura and called Tripura a golden land.. Ironically, the poet says:

The price of Iron has shot up so high  
In this golden land  
That the poor Jumiah dares not to dream  
To make his chopper with iron any more. (7)

In the poem entitled 'Golden Cloud Drifts Away' translated by Saroj Chaudhuri, the poet abandons himself to a fit of rumination on the time of his life in his childhood when the golden cloud had drifted away, 'fluttering with glittering wings'. The following lines typify what the poet tries to bring home:

My young mother once stood radiant in the jhum  
Now, smoke billowing out of his misty vision  
The burden of usury bends the offspring's frame –  
Cavalier golden cloud sails away, sprinkling vermilion  
The seeds are 'Abhimanyu' in Kaurava's trap. (12)

'O, Poor Hachukrai', translated by Bamapada Mukerjee is a thought provoking poem. You have to read it twice or thrice to get at the philosophy of the poet underlying the poem. The poem begins with the poet's asking Hochukrai whether he hears the blind man mouthing a harangue, knocking his head against the ground, kissing the dust and singing:

O, my brothers and sisters  
Come to me, come by my side  
Let's touch our beloved soil. (20)

Then the poet sets out to describe the wretched conditions of Hachukrai and ends the poem with the following lines that enshrine a philosophical thought:

The flag waves atop the tree,  
Do you see  
That has been coloured  
By the blind!

The poem 'Gossip of Men', translated by Saroj Chaudhuri, takes the readers into a real-to-life atmosphere which is characterized by a bacchanalia of drunken fits. The poet seems to be gossiping with the silence, drinking wine, when his wife is sleeping deep. The following lines are worth reproducing:

Are you asleep, my dear?  
From the roof  
The dewdrops are leaping lightly  
Down on to the yard.  
The dog slinks in fright. (24)

Addressing his wife sound asleep, the poet continues:

The earthen floor, soaked with wine,  
Now turns and twists and whirls  
In our room.  
The dogs are barking outside,  
The thick strands of fog: gossip of men.

We have to pause awhile on the poem 'Hard Time' (translated by Prof. Saroj Chaudhury) where the poet has given himself over to a poetic outburst. In the first six lines the poet personifies the brook brooding and wondering in a soliloquy:

The silent forest languishes on top of the hill,  
Looks indifferently below.  
Its broken reflections float on the stream. (25)

In the second four-line stanza the poet directs the readers' attention on to the life 'the mother "teta" fish lives in terror in the stream:

Look, the mother 'teta' fish hastily  
Hides her shoal in the underwater grotto  
She knows there are nets and snares  
Spread all along the waters.

This sense of gloom persists in the rest of the lines. I shall conclude my review by talking about the poem 'Simple Words' (translated by Prof Saroj Chaudhuri). In the first three lines of the first five-line stanza the poet frankly expresses his inability to grasp hold of simple words with which to express the thoughts that torment his mind, because he finds himself 'detached from the earth', soaring up in the wind and, thus, alienating himself from the earthiness of the earth. The lines read:

How good would it be, if words of the mind  
Could be spoken in a simple way.  
It cannot be, for, I am now soaring up in the wind. (39)

The last two lines of the stanza enhance this feeling:

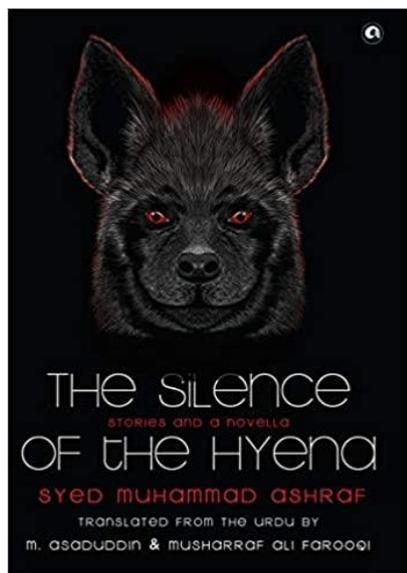
The earth below has been used up to make puppets,  
They are alive in cross-currents of colours.

In short, *Memoirs of the Woods* is a collection of well-translated poems which a lover of poetry would adore.

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### *The Silence of the Hyena*

**By Syed Muhammad Ashraf; Translated by M. Asaduddin and Musharraf Ali Farooqi**  
Aleph Books, 2020; Pages 224; Price INR 599/- ISBN-13: 978-9389836202

#### **Translating Animal Encounters**

*The Silence of the Hyena* is a collection of translated stories by Urdu writer Syed Muhammad Ashraf. Picked from three sources, the selections divide the text into two, more or less equal sections, the first constituting eight stories translated by M. Asaduddin and the second, comprising a novella, first translated by Musharraf Ali Farooqi in 2009 and reprinted herein. Urdu literature has, in the past, featured animals in various capacities. In the twentieth century, Muhammad Iqbal, Premchand, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Khadija Mastur, Khwaja Ahmed Abbas and Naiyer Masud are only a few writers who center animals in their works, but mostly, theirs have been occasional pieces which have received translators' attention. As a genre however, animal stories are a novelty in Urdu.

M. Asaduddin's and M. A. Farooqi's excellent and seamless translations of Ashraf's stories make the transition from Urdu to English seem effortless. However, a most skilled expertise that ensures preservation of the ethos, and the culture depicted in and by the source language text is at work. In spite of minimalist retention of culture specific vocabulary, the linguistic idiom employed by the translators makes it possible for the reader to relish the idiom and the flavor of the original language and to cherish the ambiance, the sights and sounds of Ashraf's characteristically rural, Indian landscape.

Ashraf's stories are set in the hinterlands and jungles of, in all likelihood, the Gangetic plane, a region familiar to him since his childhood as a place of belonging. They centralize wild, untamed or untamable animals. Ashraf's diegetic narrative style elevates nature as well as the animals to a prominence whereby they vie with his protagonists. As he penetrates their subconscious or delineates its manifestations, he externalizes ferocity. So, nature in its darker moods pervades; the jungle is remote and unfriendly; the animals are bestial. Man, in spite of all his civilizational attributes seems at times as, or more animalistic than the beasts in his crossings with them; at times confounded by them and at times beleaguered and helpless in their midst. The stories foreground animal behavior to depict animal consciousness, while playing continually on human sensibility – whether of the characters in the stories or of the reader. Bloodshed is common to all.

Asaduddin's translated title *The Silence of the Hyena* which also serves as the title of the collection evokes Thomas Harris' *The Silence of the Lambs*. Like Harris' novel, and the movie of the same

name, the stories, taken together, invoke psychological horror and a sense of inexplicable and haunting gloom. The intertextual connotations expand the scope of the translated stories and enable more suggestive readings than are possible in Ashraf. Unlike the stories of Jim Corbett that tend to dispel myths centering the paranormal or the uncanny and the jungle, Ashraf's stories, esoteric, sinister, and portentous, encourage them.

Belonging predominantly to this category are "Rogue" ("Roog") and the three interlinked hyena stories. The team that sets out to shoot the elusive rogue is confounded by illusions of rogues in the darkness of the night, each member feeling weak and fearful. The rogue remains at large. The hyena stories – "And Then Laughed the Hyena" ("Lakar bagha Hansa"), "The Hyena Cries" (Lakar bagha Roya") and "The Silence of the Hyena" ("Lakar bagha Chup ho Gaya") centralize the hyena as an obnoxious, deceitful, vile and crafty creature – in terms of the reputation it legendarily carries among humans beings. Frightened by the potential danger this relatively small animal poses, an entire family becomes delusional. The powerful carrion eater hunts and is hunted down. It laughs and cries eerily before being silenced. As a taxidermist's installation, it serves as a riveting emblem of the bizarre and inspires fear.

The opening story "Death of an Antelope" ("Chakkar") focuses on a cyclical pattern of assertion of sovereignty that warrants fatal combat among antelopes and "The Vulture" ("Giddh") highlights the inauspiciousness of worms, metaphoric or real, that make it easy for the scavenger to prey, the quarrelling hares being targets in this instance. Both stories represent the continuum of the law of the jungle.

Two stories, "Separated from the Flock" ("Daar se Bichhre") and "The Last Turn" ("Aakhri Mod Par") focus more on human temperament though animals are the means by which human nature is underscored. The migratory birds that have been shot down, their wings broken, serve as tropes for helpless families, particularly womenfolk, divided due to Partition in the former. In the latter, human behavior is contrasted with animal instinct humankind emerging callous by comparison.

The novella "The Beast" (*Numberdar ka Neela*) foregrounds the co-relation between man and animal in a realistic unfolding of events, centering a quintessential, megalomaniac Thakur, and his blue bull Neela, whose nurturing is a hobbyhorse that becomes an obsession. Farooqi's translated title enlarges the scope by comparison with the Urdu one which focuses primarily on the blue bull and his owner, the *Numberdar*. "The Beast" reconnoiters the possibility of bestial humankind whose opinions and actions also merit the nomenclature. Shrewd, chauvinistic, avaricious and conceited, Thakur believes he is invincible because his blue bull is his safeguard. Interwoven in the narrative are crime, committed with impunity, a marionette administrative system, a puppet police force that acts at the behest of Thakur and beleaguered villagers made vulnerable by multiple marginalities of caste, capital, moribund spiritual dogmas and the caprices of Thakur. Also thrown into the narrative are susceptibility to communal discord, lasciviousness, personal animosities and a craving for revenge. Taken together, Thakur, Neela, Thakur's younger son Onkar, and the entire organization of their day to day existence is an illustration of a virile masculinity that becomes the bane of an entire social and familial system. The domesticated blue bull cannot help its ruthless machismo and its savagery and many villagers fall prey to it before it batters to death his trusting owner. Written in 1997, the story remains pertinent for the rot depicted by Ashraf is unchanged.

Unlike the *Panchatantra* stories, Muhammad Ashraf's stories do not necessarily convey a moral purpose and unlike the stories of Ruskin Bond or Rudyard Kipling, they lack genial charm or humor. Preceding Ashraf's sustained interest in animals and the stories emerging thereof, is Syed Rafiq Hussain's corpus of eight animal stories centering large and small animals, resultant of a deep-seated interest in, and observation of animals and animal behavior, translated in English as *The Mirror of Wonders and other stories* by Saleem Kidwai. M. Asaduddin's and M. A. Farooqi's translations of Syed Muhammad Ashraf's stories contribute to the corpus of Urdu animal stories

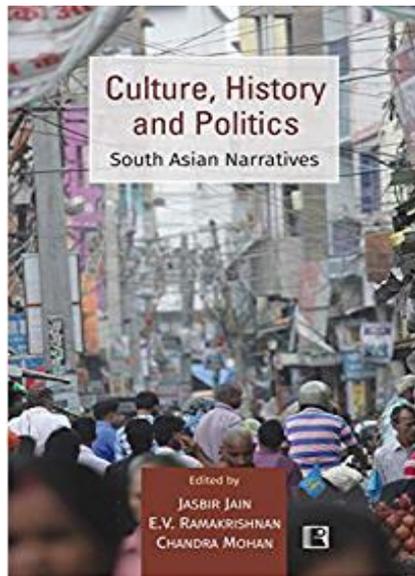
in English translation and to Urdu psychological stories in translation as well. They enable Ashraf's stories to stride two cultures and two language traditions and expand readership.

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***Culture, History and Politics: South Asian Narratives***  
**Edited by Jasbir Jain, E. V. Ramakrishnan, Chandra Mohan**  
 Rawat Books, Delhi, 2019. Rs. 1100/- . ISBN-13: 978-8131610619

### **Revisiting the Plural histories and Cultures of South Asia**

The major contemporary discourses and enquiries in the South Asian region revolve around the linchpins of Culture, History and Politics. The volume *Culture, History and Politics: South Asian Narratives* edited by veteran academics Jasbir Jain, E.V. Ramakrishnan, and Chandra Mohan consists of seventeen select essays divided into three judicious sections titled “Shared Inheritance”, “Histories of Resistance and Reconciliation”, and “The Gendered Voice” respectively. The comprehensive introduction to the volume intriguingly titled “South Asia: Imagined and Real” by E.V. Ramakrishnan sets the tone of the volume dwelling in detail on the emergence of research on ‘South Asia’, the area and its allied concerns, the ‘revisionary approach’ towards South Asian scholarship and the phenomenal rise of Postcolonial societies which are constantly reinventing and refashioning themselves vis a vis the colonial west, as indeed the world as a whole. Ramakrishnan highlights the significant contribution of South Asian Fiction and Films towards the end of the twentieth century together with that of scholars such as Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Ranajit Guha and Dipesh Chakrabarty, which aided and spurred the realignment and crystallization of the discipline of South Asian Studies.

Laying bare the chief aim of the volume, Ramakrishnan explains that it intends to fill an evident gap in the scholarship on the South Asian region through its critical scrutiny of several vital loci such as ‘prevailing traditions’, ‘emerging trends’, engaging in revaluations of major texts and indicating newer opportunities of research for South Asian scholars to work on. Ramakrishnan also underscores the role of the research groups affiliated to the International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA) and the international forum it provides for facilitating larger and renewed conversations. Ramakrishnan also touches upon quite a few essential vertices analyses and enquiries such as the overt and covert ramifications of both Modernity and Globalization; the now endangered linguistic and cultural diversity characterizing the South Asian societies; the impact and the gradual undoing of regressive orientalist paradigms; the deeply embedded interlinkages of a shared history, languages, cultures, political economic and social systems in the region; a deeper critical investigation into the multi-hued literatures of classical and vernacular languages; the issues pertaining to translations and sustained negotiations of diverse modes of creative expression, blending in tradition and modernity.

The three sections of this well-crafted volume contain five, seven and five essays respectively, by established academics from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Apart from scholars based within India, it also includes an essay by Sri Lankan scholar, and Chair of SLACLALS, Senath Walter Perera, and another by Mashrur Shahid Hossain from Bangladesh. Senath Walter Perera's incisive essay titled "The Hopes, the Aspirations, the Guilt Embedded in Our Shaken Lives': Romesh Gunesequera's *Noontide Toll*" dwells in depth on the fiction of the Sri Lankan diasporic writer Gunesequera, his craft and the critics' response to his writing having undergone 'a subtle transformation'; the focus of the discussion being depiction of post-war Sri Lanka. Hossain's fascinating essay, imaginatively titled "The One, the one, the ones: *Advaita* and Select South Asian Poetics" excavates the shared histories of aesthetic concepts emerging out of closely intertwined cultures and literatures. While the essay by Neekee Chaturvedi maps Tibetan Buddhism and its negotiation across different South Asian Social Systems, the essay by Krishna Gopal Sharma juxtaposes Bulleh Shah and Kabir, from the Sufi and Bhakti movements respectively, to bring to fore crucial likenesses in their resistance to religious orthodoxy. Jasbir Jain's pivotal essay titled "The Dialectics of History: Narratives of the Empire's Wars", works around the twin pillars of memory and history vis a vis the two world wars by invoking the narratives depicted in the novels of writers such as Mulk Raj Anand, Kamila Shamsie, Amitav Ghosh to name a few. Sangeeta Sharma's essay analyses the consonances and dissonances of Indian and Pakistani narratives of partition, while Chandra Mohan in his piece containing archival information, examines the tribal narratives of NE India and NW Pakistan, both peripheral areas of undivided India and their political and cultural differences. Manorama Trikha's essay carries the narrative forward by examining the Indian and Pakistani streams of Postcolonial Drama and their quest for recovering their respective notions of nation and community. E.V. Ramakrishnan's insightful analysis of three fictional texts including *One Part Woman* by Perumal Murugan, uncovers the journey of women towards reclamation of agency over her life as well as body, her identity and sexuality with mostly tragic consequences. Devika Khanna Narula's essay scrutinizes the plight of women through three novels representing three complex nations of Afghanistan, Bangladesh and India, while Rachel Bari's essay on Women poets of South Asia offers a window between the worlds of Bhakti poetry and contemporary Indian Women's poetry. Tutun Mukherjee's essay in the volume brings in the rich cinematic perspective by discussing films from diverse South Asian Countries and their engagement with critical issues of ethnicity, racism, colonialism to name a few, which indicate the major sites of revision and retrieval in the context of South Asia.

The volume *Culture, History and Politics: South Asian Narratives* offers a much needed intervention which serves to reorient, in addition to offering fresh insights to South Asia Studies. It seeks not only to widen the horizons of study for newfangled projects of research, but also cements the necessarily multidisciplinary thrust of South Asia Studies, taking into account both topical concerns such as plurality of cultures, traditions, the complex interplay of caste, class and gender, along with the overarching concerns of globalization, modernity, environmental degradation and the like. This thoughtfully produced volume, with its enhanced publication quality that has come to characterize Rawat Publications, will prove to be an essential reading for scholars working on South Asia Studies and allied fields, furthering alternative dialogues and critical engagements.

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# CALL FOR PAPERS: CONFERENCES / VOLUMES

## IACLALS ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2021 (Online)

MARCH 18-20, 2021

### *Call for Papers*

#### Utopias and Dystopias in Our Times

With the Covid-19 pandemic slowly gripping the world in 2020, people, families, organizations, institutions, economies and nations have been jolted out of routine complacency. Multidimensional vulnerabilities and fragilities have been revealed. Amidst drastic changes in everyday life and sociability, scholars and thinkers across different fields have viewed the pandemic as an epoch-making event with the capacity to change the world for both the better and the worse.

Opinions vary between predicting the rise of global cooperation to exacerbating hyper-nationalist antagonisms; more collaborations and solidarities to growing segregation and polarization; the rise of biopower/biopolitics to the threat of armed warfare; enhanced ecological consciousness to greater anthropocentrism; the rise of posthumanism as well as hyper-individualism; economic ruin alongside audacious profiteering and so on. Growing concerns are also being expressed about science denial and circulation of unreliable information; the proliferation of automation, robotics, AI, and the online world; prolonged lockdowns and work-from-home drastically altering the dynamics of employment, aggravating unemployment, domestic violence, and impact on mental health. An inversion of Western-postcolonial/elite-subaltern stereotypes on the source of pestilence and disease is also taking place.

During this unsettling period of introspection and reflection, the literary terrain has also undergone changes. Surveys across the world indicate substantial increase in reading times and habits alongside renewed prognosis about literature as therapy. A steady flow of genre fictions like lockdown literature, pandemic literature and medical fictions are underway. Poetry has experienced a resurgence. Digital platforms for publication and dissemination of art and literature have proliferated, as have fierce debates about open and paid access and digital divides. The GPT-3 autoregressive language model for producing human-like texts by Artificial Intelligence has created an additional stir. The digital ecology of teaching, learning and research is felt to be asocial and anti-social, while the possibility of breathing the same air, touching the same resource or sharing the same space is also generating anxieties.

It is only apt that in such times, when a new normal is fast taking over, we revisit literary utopias and dystopias. At their simplest, utopias are imaginary places or societies that are ideal or perfect, and dystopias are imaginary terrains of destruction, dehumanization, suffering or injustice. While these forms are repositories of hope and despair, they are also crucially, imaginary, unreal and unrealizable. The coinage of the word utopia is attributed to the publication of Thomas More's Latin satire, *Utopia*, in 1516, as an ancient Greek combination of utopia as well as eutopia, no-place as well as good-place; while the earliest usage of dystopia is traced to 1747 to Henry Lewis Younger's poetic work, *Utopia: or, Apollo's Golden Days*, appearing as "dustopia" or bad- or unlucky-place before being popularly attributed to John Stuart Mill in 1868. Jeremy Bentham also employed the term cacotopia in 1818 in contrast to utopia, for a bad or wicked government.

Scholars like Lyman Tower Sargent have categorized utopias into three types: "the literary utopia, utopian practice, and utopian social theory" (2010, 41); while others like Frederic Jameson have emphasized that the "destiny" of "Utopia has always been a political issue" (2005, xi). Despite the modern origins of the two words, their antecedents have also been traced to ancient myths, epics and religions in both the Western as well as non-Western worlds. Notable utopian writings extend from Plato's *Republic*, Bacon's *New Atlantis*, H.G. Well's *A Modern Utopia*, Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* to Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain's *Sultana's Dream*, while dystopian works range from Yevgeni Zamyatin's *We*, Orwell's *Ninety Eighty Four*, Huxley's *Brave New World*, Suzanne Collin's *The Hunger Games*, Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* to Prayag Akbar's *Leila*.

By now, a wide array of utopian and dystopian literary types or sub-genres are recognized and theorized: political, statist, corporate, ecological (ecotopia), economic, scientific, nuclear, epidemiological, feminist, racial, religious, sexual, psychological, apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic, indigenous, colonial, postcolonial, philosophical, global, extraterrestrial and cosmological. Both utopias and dystopias have been understood and discussed as speculative fiction. Similarities and distinctions have also been drawn with science fiction and fantasy. Both are also associated with certain periodicity and historicity, with utopias prevailing more during the Enlightenment era till the nineteenth century with a brief surge during the 1960s and 70s; and dystopias associated more with the twentieth century and later.

Lately, distinctions have been drawn between dystopias and anti-utopias, the latter being interpreted primarily as critiques of utopias (Krishna Kumar, 1987). Greater emphasis has also been placed on understanding the ambiguities and ambivalences of utopias. Fredric Jameson goes as far as to argue that for any contemporary utopian project "anti-anti-Utopianism might well offer the best working strategy" (2005, xvi). In 2011, Margaret Atwood has coined a new term, "Ustopia," explaining it as, "a world I made up by combining utopia and dystopia – the imagined perfect society and its opposite – because, in my view, each contains a latent version of the other" ('the road to Ustopia,' *The Guardian*). In an increasingly polarized world, there is also discussion about my utopia being your dystopia and vice-versa.

So, what is the scope and significance of utopian or dystopian literary imagination in our times? Does the context of the pandemic provide a ripe ground for such leaps of imagination? This conference calls for papers on any of the following or related themes:  
Theorizing Utopias and Dystopias

1. Utopia, Dystopia and World Literature
  2. Colonial or Postcolonial Utopias and Dystopias
  3. Ecotopias
  4. Utopias, Dystopias and Feminism
  5. Dystopia and Utopias of AI, robotics, cyborgs and social media
  6. Political and Ideological utopias and dystopias
  7. Postmodern Utopias and Dystopias
  8. Globalization and utopian/dystopian fiction and culture
  9. Pandemic and utopian/dystopian imagination
  10. Indian or South Asian utopias and dystopias
  11. Utopias/Dystopias vis-à-vis speculative fiction, science fiction and fantasy
- The conference is open **only to members of IACLALS** (please visit <https://www.iaclals.com/membership.html> to know how to become a member).
  - **DEADLINE EXTENDED:** Abstracts (250 words) with a short bio-note (max 70 words) should be sent to [iaclalsconferences@gmail.com](mailto:iaclalsconferences@gmail.com) by **December 15, 2020**.

- Acceptance will be intimated by **December 25, 2020**.
- If you wish to be considered for the **CD Narasimhaiah Prize** for the Best Paper presented at the conference, please submit complete papers latest by **February 8, 2021**. Kindly indicate 'Submission for CDN Prize' in the subject line of the email. All others should also submit their papers by February 8, 2021 in no more than 3500-4000 words.
- Please note that presenters shall have fifteen minutes to read their papers.
- Registration to be completed by **January 15, 2021** (details will be sent along with acceptances). In view of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Registration Fees for this year's Annual Conference is as follows:
  - Rs. 200/- for Students without scholarship.
  - Rs. 500/- for temporary employees/unemployed.
  - Rs. 1500/- for those in permanent employment.
- IACLALS also announces the next edition of the **Meenakshi Mukherjee Prize** for the Best Paper published in the previous block of two years (2019-20) by a member of the IACLALS. Please submit your published paper with all details to [iaclalsconferences@gmail.com](mailto:iaclalsconferences@gmail.com) by **December 31, 2020**. You must have been a member of IACLALS when you published the paper. Past winners of the Meenakshi Mukherjee Prize can submit entries for the prize only after the completion of three years from the year they received the award. Papers submitted for the award earlier cannot be submitted again. Please indicate 'Submission for MM Prize' in the subject line of the email.

**M. Asaduddin**  
Chair, IACLALS

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**CALL FOR BOOK CHAPTER –  
“FEMALE PROTEST NARRATIVES: LITERARY AND CULTURAL  
REPRESENTATIONS FROM SOUTH ASIA”**

Contemporary regimes of protest in South Asia are informed and injuncted by its ever shifting geopolitical modalities. With the rise of globalisation, neoliberalism and multiculturalism, South Asian geopolitics comprise a quest for redefinition of biopower and subjectivity formations. As hegemonies of Western dominance are toppled, South Asian geopolitics are evolving as a complex assemblage of biopolitics, citizenship ethics and human rights concerns. In this evolving engagement with global politics, South Asia is fast emerging as a contending power itself with competent human and capital resources. An important consequence of this is the appearance of newer axes of fault lines in terms of polity, economy, religion, culture, art, and gender. This has transpired into multiple geopolitical fissures, one glaring example of which is the CAA, a politically manipulated definition of citizenship and the politics of belonging in the Indian subcontinent. South Asian non-unitary subjectivities dwell within the vectors of diverse vocabularies of protest that are social and political in nature.

In the light of this, protest narratives originate in a space of power conflict as a means to combat the exploitation of the weak by the strong - as a means of survival for the unempowered and unprivileged. Therefore a longing for empowerment, a desire to topple the authoritarian and a quest towards a just society is embedded within any protest narrative. The journey of struggle gets recorded in such narratives and irrespective of the outcome, the cultural productions of the

movements become important. Archiving of protest narratives is a significant task because such narratives dare to break away from the dominant cultural representations and present the voices of the marginalised. It critically enquires the heteronormative world of binaries bringing into limelight the fault lines in the dominant normative exclusivist discourses. An interesting hermeneutics of protest literature is its very fluid nature and multiple connotations. An important aspect is the moral and ethical relationship between aesthetics and political message informing the content of protest narratives. Protest as an agentic politics on one hand is hinged upon the philosophical question of individuality and the dynamics of social structure, while on the other, gains impetus from political issues. These political issues might be embedded within one's location and therefore protest narratives are also deeply shaped by one's embeddedness in specific geospatialities

Historically, gender has been identified as one such location of the genesis of protest narratives. Female voices have always been marginalised in a patriarchal social system.

Patriarchal politics of sexuality and gender identities have been conventionally partial to the heteronormative male voice. Females, both as a sexual identity as well as a gender construct have been involved in a long and tedious battle which still continues. Within the South Asian region too females have a long history of struggle, the trajectory of which can be traced to the emergence of the female Bhakti poets in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in the Indian subcontinent. While any form of protest poetry invites penalty in some form from the authority, when it comes to the female voices, discourses invading the body and sexuality further problematises the issue. In the South Asian context, these struggle narratives are various and multi-layered. They have different rationales of origin, varied historiographies and socio-political consequences, depending on their geopolitical locations but they all together can be brought under the umbrella of intersectional feminist discourses. Whether it be the landais from Afghanistan, miya women writing from Assam, Dalit women's narratives or narratives of queer women across the region, the modes of protest are against the dominant, monolithic, universalist ideology. The culminating point would be the ethical and humanitarian cartographies of protest narratives leading to formation of closely knit female communities of shared sufferings and solidarities resulting in a positive biopolitical production premised on affective frameworks of care, cooperation and collective political actions.

Within such a theoretical framework, the proposed anthology is interested in exploring the reconfiguration of female voices of protest in contemporary literature and popular culture and invites abstracts on but not limited to the following topics:-

Exploring various genres of narratives by women, focus may also be on mixed genre interpretations:

- Need for protest narratives
- Socio-political consequences of narratives of protest
- Feminism and protest/ resistance narratives
- Feminist postcolonialist perspectives on protest
- Protest, gender and the era of post truth
- Queer narratives of protest
- Protest shaped by the politics of location
- Protest and the politics of belonging
- Protest and Biopolitics
- Protest and Necropolitics
- Protest Memory
- Protest and Citizenship Rights
- Protest and Life-writings
- Protest and Illness narratives/narrative medicine

Protest and Disability Studies  
Protest in the age of electronic media  
Cultural representations of protest (In films)

Submit your abstract of not more than 350 words to [protestnarratives@gmail.com](mailto:protestnarratives@gmail.com) by 1st February 2021. The edited anthology will be published by a reputed international publisher.

Editors:

Dr. Nabanita Sengupta  
Assistant Professor of English  
Sarsuna College  
(Affiliated to University of Calcutta)  
Kolkata, West Bengal

Samrita Sengupta Sinha  
Assistant Professor  
Department of English  
Sophia College for Women (Autonomous)  
Mumbai, Maharashtra

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## **CALL FOR PROPOSALS: ROUTLEDGE STUDIES IN CREATIVE WRITING**

### **Routledge Studies in Creative Writing**

Editor: Graeme Harper

Associate Editor: Dianne Donnelly

Proposals are invited for this exciting new book series, with Editor Graeme Harper and Associate Editor Dianne Donnelly, supported by a global network of reviewers and peers. First books in the series will be published in early 2021. Routledge is the world's leading academic publisher in the Humanities and Social Sciences, serving scholars, instructors, and professional communities worldwide. Also publisher of the widely known journal *New Writing: the International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing*, Routledge was founded in 1836, and has published many of greatest thinkers and scholars of the last hundred years. "We're thrilled to be working with colleagues at Routledge on this monograph series, to take forward the work done over the past years in the critical study of creative writing. Routledge Studies in Creative Writing will publish the most exciting critical work in our field, strongly supporting the community of creative writing and creative writing studies scholars and practitioners, worldwide." Graeme Harper

Proposals for books in the critical or pedagogic study of creative writing are welcome! Initial ideas can be addressed to Graeme and/or Dianne at [books@studiesin creativewriting.com](mailto:books@studiesin creativewriting.com) or Graeme Harper – [gharper@oakland.edu](mailto:gharper@oakland.edu)

Dianne Donnelly – [ddonnelly@usf.edu](mailto:ddonnelly@usf.edu) Full proposals can be submitted using the Routledge Book Proposal Guidelines:

<https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/tandfbis/rt-files/Docs/Proposal+Guide...>

**Deadline for submissions:** December 23, 2020

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**GREAT WRITING 2021:  
GREAT WRITING THE INTERNATIONAL CREATIVE WRITING  
CONFERENCE**

**Great Writing International Creative Writing Conference**

**24th Annual Conference**

**Saturday July 10 – Sunday July 11, 2021**

**- Virtual -**

Proposals are invited for presentations at the 24th Annual Great Writing International Creative Writing Conference, to be held Saturday **July 10 – Sunday July 11, 2021**.

Great Writing 2021 will be virtual and presenters from around the world will be scheduled throughout both Saturday and Sunday – this format was used in 2020 and is being expanded this year. **The conference will be free and conducted on Zoom.**

**Closing Date for Proposals: Sunday December 6 2020.** Earlier submission is highly encouraged. **Proposals for presentation of critical work** about creative writing or **for creative presentations** (e.g. readings) are equally welcome. Great Writing includes research, teaching and creative writing practice topics, all aspects of creative writing studies, practice-led research, cultural, biographical and textual topics. In this 24th year of the conference, the range of presentation is already more vibrant than ever.

More details on the conference can be found at: [www.greatwriting.org.uk](http://www.greatwriting.org.uk)

1. Single presentations: **15 minutes, 5 minutes questions.**

2. 3 person presentations/panels: **60 minutes in total.**

**(Proposals:** 150 word description of your presentation – abstracts are published in the conference programme. Include and please format to assist program creation: title, 100 word bio note, for quotes use single inverted commas, italicize book titles)

Send proposals to: [conference@greatwriting.org.uk](mailto:conference@greatwriting.org.uk)

Proposals will be peer-reviewed.

The conference will also feature the **11th Annual New Writing International Creative Writing Event**. From December 2020 more details on the 2021 conference will be found

at [www.greatwriting.org.uk](http://www.greatwriting.org.uk)

For queries contact Conference Director, Professor Graeme Harper:

[graeme@greatwriting.org.uk](mailto:graeme@greatwriting.org.uk)

Or for general enquiries contact:

[conference@greatwriting.org.uk](mailto:conference@greatwriting.org.uk)

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**Call for Papers: THE JOURNAL OF WEST INDIAN LITERATURE  
Essays for JWIL Special Issue, “Movements and Moments: On Dub Poetry”**

Since its acknowledgement by the global literary scene in the 1970s, dub poetry has made several radical/political interventions. We can think of its emergence as part of several anti-colonial moments, as amplifying post-independence movements of Caribbean nations and the crumbling of the British Empire; and increasingly, we might attend to the community-mobilizing focus of its practice. Celebrating “nation language” demonized by the colonizer, dub poets have shifted the balance of criticism in favour of seeing Creole language registers as linguistic innovation, as art form, as anything other than unacceptable English, the predominant judgement by the colonial education system. As an artistic tradition, then, dub poetry problematizes the terms on which our

politics and the literary are negotiated, troubles demarcations between high and popular culture, and contributes to the musical, literary, visual, and dance movements of a “transnational Jamaica” (Thomas 2011).

Critics have foregrounded the embodied, gendered, and national significance of dub poetry (Brydon 1998; Bucknor 1998; Carr 1998; Casas 2004; Cooper 1994; Gingell 2005 & 2009; Puri 2005; Antwi 2016). What we have not considered enough is the transnational dimensions of this art form and its resonance. This special issue of the *Journal of West Indian Literature* is an invitation to re-narrate the cultural history of dub poetry and reevaluate the privileging of certain movements and geographical settings in global mappings of this Black art practice. We are particularly interested in tracing the lives of dub poetry from an anti-colonial nationalist poetics to a Black transnational poetics and performance culture. In this issue, we aim to situate dub poetry as a major influence on transnational Black movements and as an architect of anti-colonial environments in the Black transnational scene. In this way, we seek to expand the sonic territories of Afro-beats in the Black diaspora. We consider the ways in which dub poetry’s dissemination is “appropriated, popularized, and indigenized” in a transnational milieu and think about the reverberating “legacies of black-on-black transnational politics” (Chude-Sokei 2011). Such considerations turn us towards what Paul Gilroy identifies as “playful diasporic intimac[ies]” (1993) with all their conflicts, contestations and joys.

Articles accepted at *JWIL* are expected to be in English and 5000-8000 words in length. Please consult the submissions guidelines of *JWIL* at [www.jwilonline.org](http://www.jwilonline.org). Questions regarding the issue and the submission process should be addressed to [editorial@jwilonline.org](mailto:editorial@jwilonline.org).

**The deadline for submission is February 15, 2021**, and essays should be sent to the attention of Dr. Phaniel Antwi (University of British Columbia) via email at [dubpoetryspissue@gmail.com](mailto:dubpoetryspissue@gmail.com). Original essays can be on a range of topics that include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Dub Poetry and the Black Lives Matter Movement
- Caribbean Poetics/Oral Traditions
- Dub and Reggae Aesthetics
- Rastafari Philosophy/Culture and the Reggae Phenomenon
- The Epistemology and Pedagogy of Dub Poetry
- Dub Poetry and LGBTQ Politics
- Dub Poetry and Afro-futures
- Dub Poetry in Jamaican Popular Culture
- Dub Poetry and Copyright Law
- Mental Health and the role of Dub Poetry
- Sound, Blackness, and Technology (analogue and digital)
- Miss Lou, Bob Marley, and Dub Poetry
- Gender Relations and Sexual Politics in Dub
- Dub plates, Sound systems, and Turntablism
- Dub and Musical Forms: Ska, Rocksteady, Reggae, Dancehall, Hip Hop, Jazz
- Dub Poetry and Carnivals (e.g. Notting Hill Carnival, Toronto’s Caribana)
- Deejaying (Toasting), Versioning, and Sampling in Dub Poetry

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## **BLACK LIVES MATTER SPECIAL ISSUE — CALL FOR PAPERS**

*Studies in Canadian Literature / Études en littérature canadienne (SCL/ÉLC)* invites interdisciplinary contributions to this expansive cultural archive of abolitionist and anti-racist art, writing, scholarship, and activism. We welcome reflections on the history of art and activism on Turtle Island/Canada and contributions of new art, creative writing, literary-critical scholarship, manifestoes, and other cultural interventions. We particularly welcome contributions that connect the history of abolitionist and anti-racist activism on Turtle Island/Canada with the activism of the present moment. We are also open to reflections on the issue of special issues themselves as we recognize that Black Lives Matter should not have to be a special issue within the history of Canadian cultural institutions in general and literary critical journals in particular.

Other topics include but are not limited to:

- Anti-Black racism in Canadian arts and cultural organizations
- Anti-Black racism and public health
- The intersections between Black Lives Matter and Indigenous decolonial struggles
- Blackness in (and out of) the Canadian canon
- The pedagogy of Black Canadian literature, from elementary to tertiary levels and beyond
- The intersections of Black Pride and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities with BLM
- The role of publishers and publications, and alternate means of publication
- Disability, ableism, and making space in Black communities
- Monumentalization: How do we remember and account for various histories?
- Acknowledging the elders: ageism and its effects on community
- Multilingualism: How does language affect BLM activism?
- The effects of policing and various social agencies, such as child welfare institutions

English submissions of essays of 6000-8000 words, including Notes and Works Cited, should conform to the *MLA Handbook*, 8th edition; French submissions to *Le guide du rédacteur* (Translation Bureau, 1996).

We also welcome poetry, artwork, manifestoes, and other cultural interventions of varying lengths of less than 5000 words. Please submit all work electronically via Word attachment to [scl@unb.ca](mailto:scl@unb.ca). Deadline for submissions is **6 January 2021**.

For further details about submissions, visit the journal's website at <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/SCL> or contact: Camille Isaacs, OCAD University, [cisaacs@faculty.ocadu.ca](mailto:cisaacs@faculty.ocadu.ca), or Karina Vernon, University of Toronto, [karina.vernon@utoronto.ca](mailto:karina.vernon@utoronto.ca).

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## **CALL FOR PAPERS: 28TH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF FILLM 18TH TO 21ST JULY, 2021 VIENNA, AUSTRIA**

**“Linguistic, Literary, and Cultural Diversity in a Global Perspective”**

### **Background**

The Federation Internationale des Langues et Litteratures Modernes (FILLM), a UNESCO affiliate in charge of promoting languages, literatures, and cultures organizes an International Congress every three years. The last two congresses were held in Ningbo, China and New Delhi, India. The next FILLM Congress, the 28th in the series, will be held in Europe at the University of Vienna,

Vienna, Austria from 26th July to 29th July, 2020 under the theme of Linguistic, Literary, and Cultural Diversity in a Global Perspective.

### **Main theme**

Diversity is a key concept in many academic disciplines and in our everyday life. We live in a more and more complex world that brings people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds together in one place. Diversity implies understanding that each of the individuals from these different backgrounds are unique and different and these differences must be recognized, tolerated, and even celebrated. Diversity comes along various dimensions including language, culture, nationality, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, socio-economic class, physical ability, religious belief, and political and ideological orientation, among many other differences.

Recognizing, understanding, tolerating, and even celebrating diversity is not just an end in itself; it can also be a means, a methodology to building, managing, and sustaining our common humanity, our common heritage in a global perspective. Diversity is essential if we are to achieve all-encompassing, global perspectives to addressing the problems that confront our common humanity. Globalization is truly global if it encompasses all these aspects of diversity mentioned above. As the time-honoured adage goes, there is Unity in Diversity. And this is especially so if we see diversity as a tool to helping us find solutions to the many global problems confronting us: socio-economic inequalities, terrorism leading to insecurities, upsurge in nationalism and populism leading to division and the erection of walls and other kinds strictures, and global warming, among a myriad of other problems.

### **Sub-themes**

At the Vienna conference keynote and plenary addresses, panels, and individual papers will address the main theme of Linguistic, Literary and Cultural Diversity. However, papers and panels are also invited on the following five sub-themes which are ultimately related to the main theme:

#### **1. Multilingualism and linguistic plurality in local and global perspectives**

Globalization is scaling the world down into a global village. People speaking different kinds of languages are mixing more than ever before. This contact linguistic scenario is producing pidgins, creoles and other kinds mixed languages both within and across national boundaries. Multilingualism and plurality of communication are both local and global phenomena. Papers for this sub-theme would address how this plurality, how this diversity is managed locally and internationally at people-to-people and at government-to-government levels.

#### **2. New genres of literature in the era of social media and new communication technologies**

New technologies of communication are providing us spaces in which the spoken and the written word are mediated. Mobile phones, You-tube, Facebook, Instagram and many other products that rely on the internet have become media in which linguistic and literary texts may be produced, communicated, and analyzed. Social media and new technologies produce new genres and new ways of communication. We are in the era of open access publishing, e-books, cell phone novels, and video-clip messaging. Papers for this sub-theme should address aspects of these issues and beyond.

#### **3. Cultural diversity in film**

How does film, along with other kind of moving pictures, promote cultural diversity? Do the major film industries in various parts of the world such as Hollywood, Bollywood and Nollywood provide linguists and literary scholars with different arenas and perspectives for studying language and literature? Papers for this panel will address these and other questions towards our understanding of the role of film in promoting linguistic, literary, and cultural diversity.

#### **4. Linguistic and literary studies in diaspora and migrant communities**

In a world of globalization, people are constantly moving across national boundaries and forming new trans-national communities that may have strong links to their source and host countries. We therefore have different spaces in which languages and literatures can be analyzed. New subfields that may be called diasporic linguistics and diasporic literatures have emerged and are evolving. Papers for this sub-theme would address this emergence and this evolution of linguistic and literary studies in migrant and diasporic communities in the 21st Century.

#### **5. German language and literature in global perspectives**

As the congress takes place in a German-speaking country, we need to take the opportunity to understand the language of our host in global perspectives. Papers for this sub-theme should therefore address the past, present, and future of German language, literature, and culture in global perspectives.

#### **Panel Proposals**

Scholars are encouraged to make panel proposals. The topic of a proposed panel should fall within the broad theme of diversity and consist of four to five speakers. Apart from that, it is up to the panel organizer(s) to decide on the format (roundtable, normal individual paper presentation, etc.).

In particular, FILLM would like to encourage its **Member Associations** to propose panels that address their particular area of study or regional languages and literatures within the broad theme of diversity. The congress organizers encourage all Member Associations to take advantage of this possibility to ensure that their perspectives are well-represented at the congress.

#### **How to make an Individual Proposal**

In order to propose an individual paper for the Congress, please submit a 300-word abstract **ONLINE**. <https://film2020.univie.ac.at/call-for-papers/>

To allow speakers sufficient time to acquire the necessary funding, the congress organizers will assess the abstracts as they come in. The deadline for submission is **December 31st, 2020**. We are looking forward to receiving your contributions!

#### **How to make a Panel Proposal**

Panel proposals should also be submitted as an email attachment to [film2020@univie.ac.at](mailto:film2020@univie.ac.at). Each panel proposal should appoint one main organizer who is responsible for compiling the proposal and communication with the congress organizers.

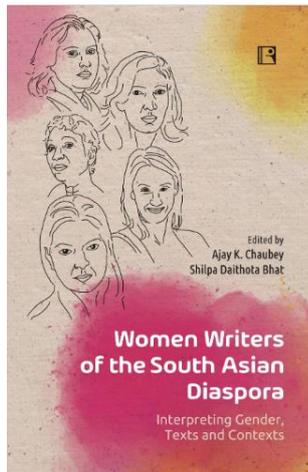
Your panel proposal should include the following:

- title for the panel
- 300-word abstract describing the topic
- brief description of the format (e.g. roundtable)
- title and brief descriptions of each panel participants' contribution (150 words)
- contact and affiliation details for the main panel organizer
- contact and affiliation details for each of the panel participants

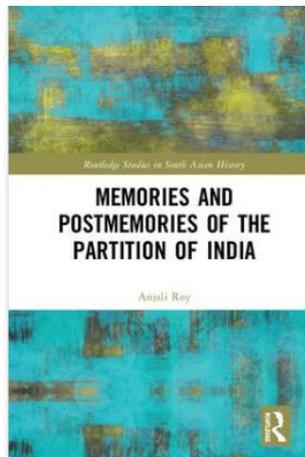
**Deadlines are the same as for individual proposals.**



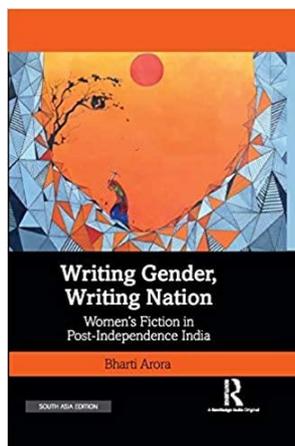
## NEW PUBLICATIONS BY MEMBERS



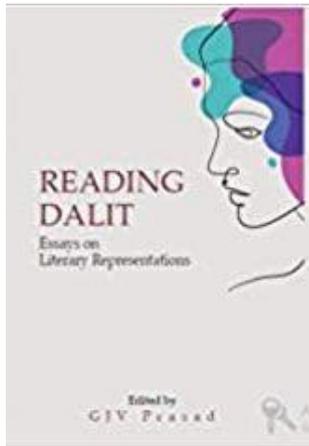
Ajay K. Chaubey & Shilpa Daithota Bhat, eds. *Women Writers of the South Asian Diaspora: Interpreting Gender, Texts and Contexts*. Rawat Publications, 2020. ISBN 9788131610596.



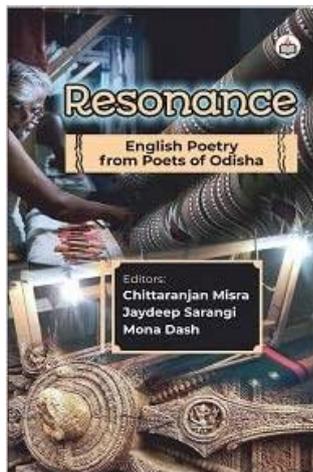
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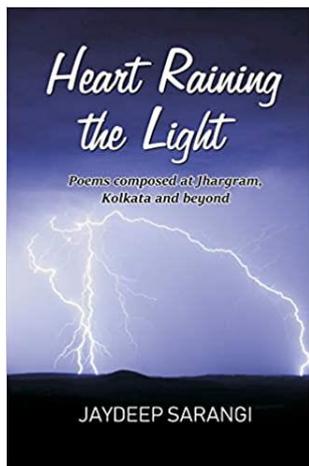
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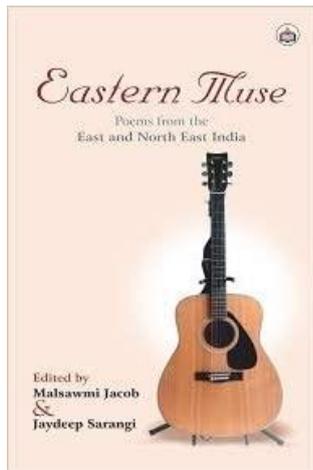
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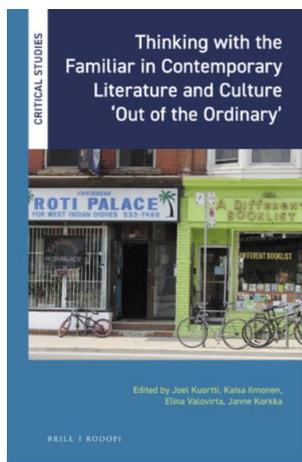
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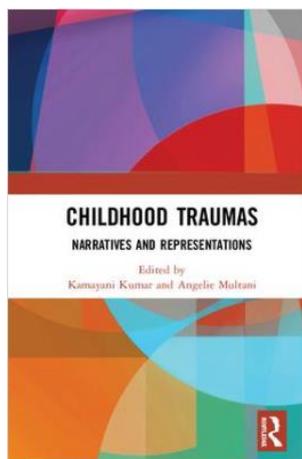
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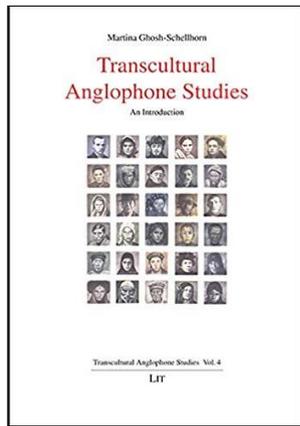
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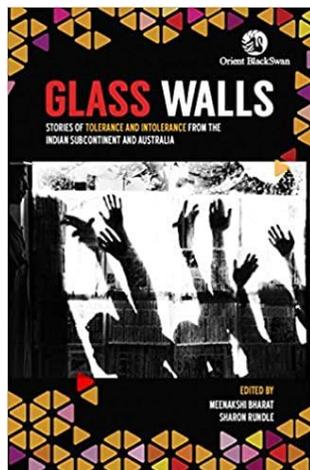
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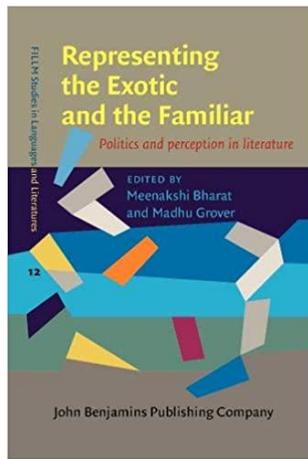
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Madhu Grover: Book Chapter titled “Transgressed margins: reading the ‘Other’ Kipling,” in *Kipling and Yeats at 150: Retrospectives/Perspectives*, (pp. 87-102) Eds. Promodini Varma and Anubhav Pradhan, London and New York: Routledge, July 2019. Pp. 274. ISBN-13: 978-1138343900.

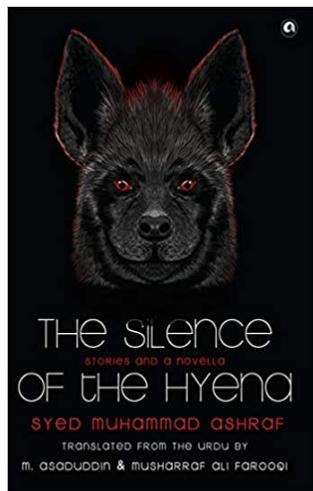
Madhu Grover: Book Introduction (co-authored) and Book Chapter (self-authored- pp. 35-49), “Kipling’s ‘wild and strange’ India: The ‘insider’ perspective of the short stories”, in *Representing the Exotic and the Familiar: Politics and perception in literature*, Eds.. Meenakshi Bharat and Madhu Grover, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, November 2019. Pp. 363. \$ 158/- ISBN-13: 978-9027204189



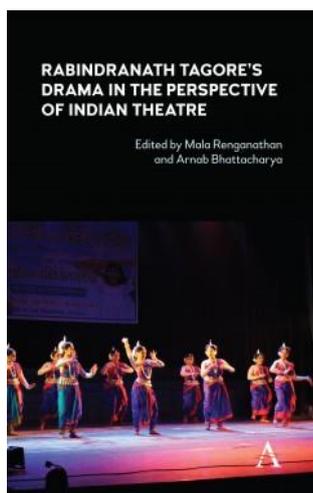
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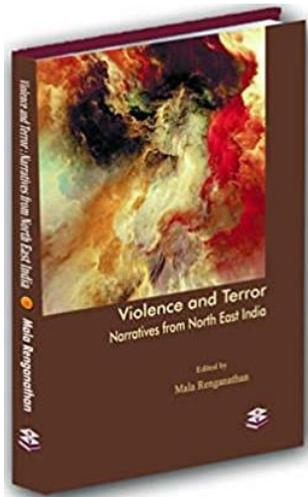
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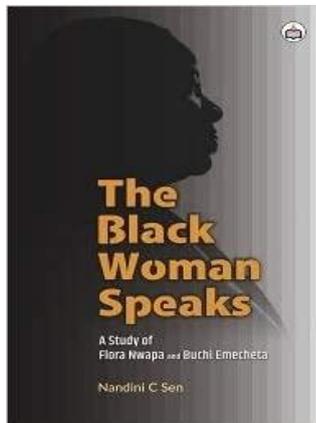
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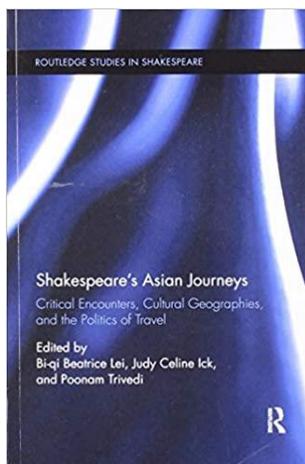
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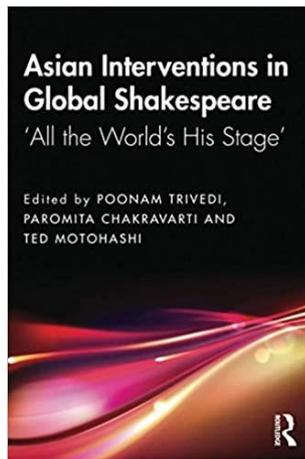
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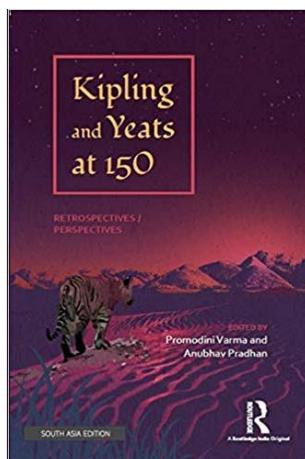
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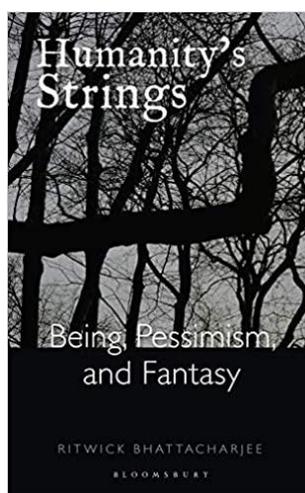
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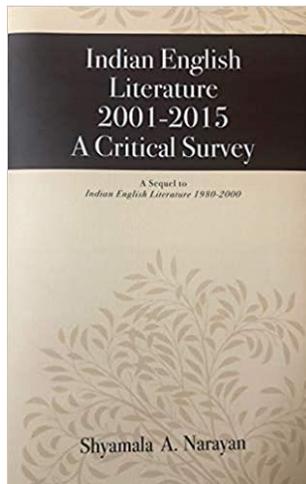
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Ritwick Bhattacharjee. *Humanity's Strings: Being, Pessimism, and Fantasy*. Bloomsbury, 2020. ISBN-13 : 978-9389000504.



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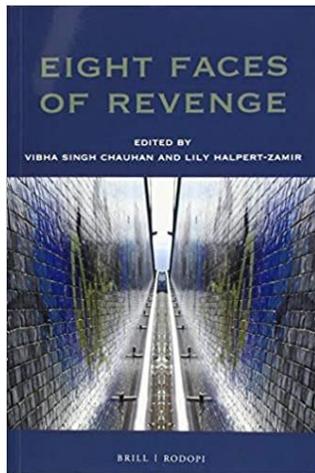
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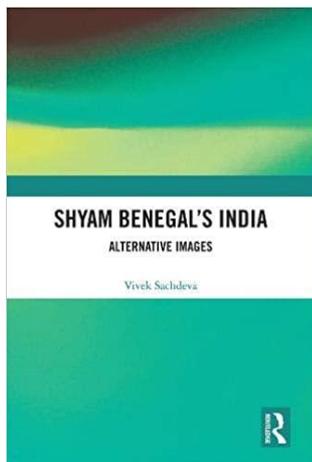
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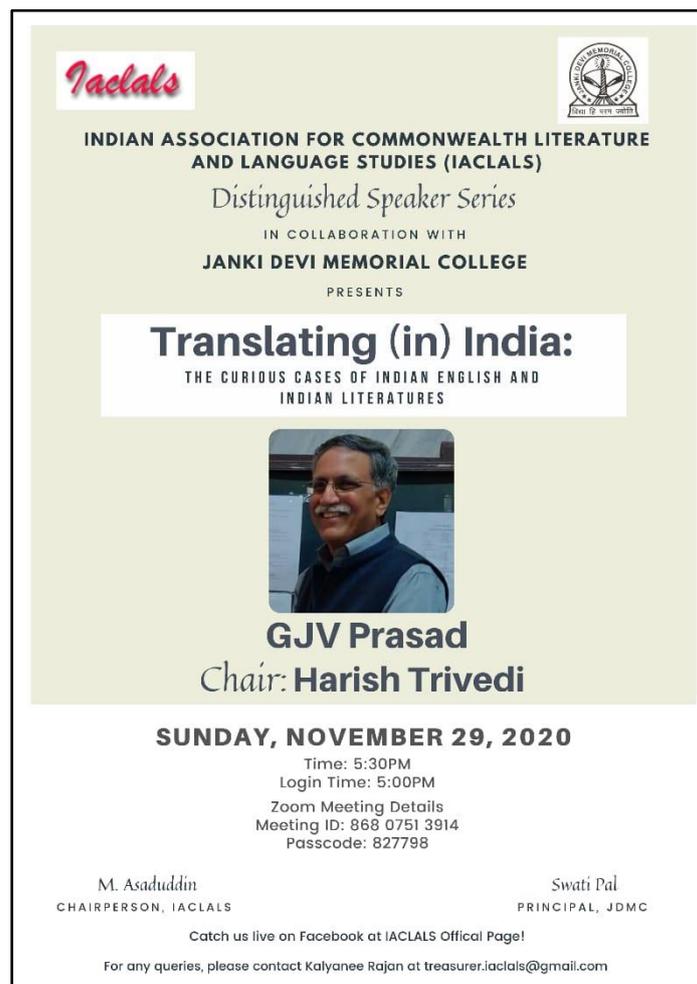
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## IACLALS DISTINGUISHED SPEAKER SERIES



The poster is for the IACLALS Distinguished Speaker Series. It features the IACLALS logo in red and white at the top left and the Janki Devi Memorial College logo at the top right. The text reads: 'INDIAN ASSOCIATION FOR COMMONWEALTH LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE STUDIES (IACLALS) Distinguished Speaker Series IN COLLABORATION WITH JANKI DEVI MEMORIAL COLLEGE PRESENTS'. The title of the lecture is 'Translating (in) India: THE CURIOUS CASES OF INDIAN ENGLISH AND INDIAN LITERATURES'. A photograph of GJV Prasad is shown below the title. The chair is Harish Trivedi. The event is on Sunday, November 29, 2020, at 5:30 PM. Login time is 5:00 PM. Zoom Meeting ID is 868 0751 3914 and Passcode is 827798. Contact information for M. Asaduddin (Chairperson, IACLALS) and Swati Pal (Principal, JDMC) is provided at the bottom.

**IACLALS**

INDIAN ASSOCIATION FOR COMMONWEALTH LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE STUDIES (IACLALS)

*Distinguished Speaker Series*

IN COLLABORATION WITH

**JANKI DEVI MEMORIAL COLLEGE**

PRESENTS

**Translating (in) India:**  
THE CURIOUS CASES OF INDIAN ENGLISH AND INDIAN LITERATURES



**GJV Prasad**  
Chair: **Harish Trivedi**

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2020**

Time: 5:30PM  
Login Time: 5:00PM  
Zoom Meeting Details  
Meeting ID: 868 0751 3914  
Passcode: 827798

M. Asaduddin  
CHAIRPERSON, IACLALS

Swati Pal  
PRINCIPAL, JDMC

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The **Indian Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies** (IACLALS) organized the inaugural lecture of its *Distinguished Speaker Series* in collaboration with **Janki Devi Memorial College** (JDMC, University of Delhi). The inaugural talk was delivered by **G J V Prasad** on '*Translating (in) India: The curious cases of Indian English and Indian Literatures*', on Sunday, 29th November 2020, and the session was chaired by **Harish Trivedi**.

The lecture was streamed live on the IACLALS Facebook page, and the complete video can be accessed here:

<https://www.facebook.com/iaclals/videos/201190901509537/>

Members can watch this dedicated page on our website for information regarding the next lecture: <https://www.iacials.com/dss--lectures.html>

