

Research Committee :
Literary and Cultural Interrelationships between India,
Its Neighboring Countries and the World

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Report -2013

Let me begin by making a reference to major civilizational cradles of the world which impact our life and letters almost every day, and more importantly it reflects the philosophy of the ICLA in general and its Research Committee's project on the "Literary and Cultural interrelationships between India, its neighboring countries and the world" that we have in hand right now, in particular:

"There are four main cradles of civilization, from which elements of culture have spread to other parts of the world. These are, moving from East to west, China, the Indian subcontinent, the 'Fertile Crescent', and the Mediterranean, especially Greece and Italy. Of these four areas India deserves a larger share of the credit than she is usually given, because, on a minimal assessment, she has deeply affected the religious life of most Asia and has provided very important elements in the culture of the whole of South-East Asia, as well as extending her influence, directly or indirectly, to other parts of the world." (A.L.Basham, *Introduction to a Cultural History of India*, Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1975).

Research Explorations and Studies Undertaken:

A mainstream model is adopted while undertaking the research explorations and studies relating to the Project. It is being done at the five levels, given below:

- (1) To invite research-based presentations by the Faculty and Research students in the National and International Seminars and Conferences held on the themes of Comparative Literature during 2011, 2012 and 2013.

- (2) To have an academic interaction with the scholars and organizations from the neighboring countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, Srilanka, Iran and invite their contributions to the explorations being carried out under the rubric of the project.
- (3) To hold a special session / workshop on the theme of the project at the ICLA Congress in Paris. The event has attracted 15 eminent scholars, including first time from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Srilanka, Canada and the U.S.
- (4) To introduce the related course studies in the curriculum of the Schools and Departments of Comparative Literature and Translation Studies in the Central, State and Distance Learning universities of India.
- (5) To publish special monographs under the special assistance program provided by the UGC to the university departments. Also to bring out volumes on the presented papers in the aforesaid national and international events.

I am glad to report that the team of the eminent scholars associated with this project from India and abroad took up the challenge of venturing into knowledge based research on the Literary and Cultural studies which determine the gospel of connectivity and interrelationship based on the principle of reception and sharedness. Let me provide a detailed account on each item, one by one.

I. Younger Researchers' Initiative (from neighboring countries in the Indian sub-continent) to take part in International Conference held at Central University of Rajasthan, Kishengarh, March 2011.

It happened for the first time in the annals of Comparative Literary Studies in the Indian Subcontinent that the special session on the research project at the CLAI International Conference held in 2011 at the Central University of Rajasthan, Kishengarh attracted three young research students: Arafat Mohammed, 'Mohammed Ali and Kazi Rahman from the Jehangirnagar University, Dhaka (Bangladesh) who came all the way to make

their presentations in cross-cultural contexts on the theme Minority Discourses. Besides, Prof Ameena Ansari's Alternative Discourses of Power: A Comparative Study of Select Asian Muslim countries, Prof Ipshita Chanda's Cultural Minority Discourses and Professor Jasbir Jain's "Living in Times of Terror" –all papers building theoretical and research foundations, exploring interrelationships among different communities provided a good impetus to the start of the project on a serious note. The papers will constitute a special section in the forthcoming publication of the proceedings of the conference which is being edited.

II. A Special Event: Traditions of Dissent in the Sub-continental Literatures and Cultures: International conference held at the Central University of Kerala, Kasaragod, October 2012.

A giant leap was taken up by with the commendable efforts of Prof. Jancy James, President, CLAI and Vice Chancellor, Central University of Kerala (Kasaragod) in organizing a three day international conference on the theme "Traditions of Dissent in Sub-continental Literatures and Cultures", at the Department of Comparative Literature, by Prof. Joseph Koyippally, Coordinator, which was primarily based on the theme of the ICLA Research project. The conference was conceived to focus on the various traditions of art-verbal, visual and aural-that distance themselves from the mainstream and hegemonic cultures in India and the subcontinent. It aimed to understand the nature of such dissenting positions as expressed in the artistic production that stems from them: to explain the locational specificities and explore their connections with 'global' streams of culture, both before and after the carving of the geopolitical entity named India. Although dissent can be of various forms, conference attempts to seek the expression of dissent in art, rooted in structures of feeling that characterize specific times and places. Hence the artistic product that it is taking as a case for study may arise from social, political or religious positions of dissent, but our actual object of study is how these dissenting positions shape modes of expression, conditions of cultural production, transmission and reception. Comparative Literature brings to the study of arts tools that combine the understanding of theme, genre and historical location, both at the conjuncture of production and of reception of the artistic object in

question. From this perspective, it invited papers that explored traditions or instances of artistic creation spawned by positions of dissent with these tools and applied the methods of Comparative Literature to the study of visual, aural and performance cultures.

The topics addressed in the conference covered defining traditions of dissent, cultural and anthropological subtexts of traditions of dissent, intra-cultural and cross-border comparisons of traditions of dissent, mainstream political discourses and literary articulations of traditions of dissent, traditions of dissent and minority / community / history / nation, oral of traditions of dissent, positions of dissent and modes of expressions, role of cinema / media in the creation traditions of dissent, production and of reception of traditions of dissent, narratives and narratologies and transmission and reception traditions of dissent.

Eleven seminal and perceptive papers relating to the theme of the research project were presented. Prof. Avadhesh Kumar Singh, “Aesthetics of Dissent in the Indian Sub-continent with reference of ‘Faiz’”, Prof. Chandra Mohan, “Politics of ‘Dissent’ and ‘Disaffection’ in the tribal Discourse of the Subcontinent”, Prof. Dorothy Figueira, “Bhimayana: One Ramayana among Many”, Prof. E.V. Ramakrishnan representations as Resistance: A Reading of some testimonials from Malayalam”, prof. G.N. Devy, “Historiography of Dissent: Orthodoxy, Heterodoxy and Tradition in Bhasha Literature”, Prof. Harish Trivedi, “Critiquing Dissent”, Prof. Ipsita Chanda, “The Main who did not die: Representing the marvelous as Dissent”, Prof. Jancy James: “Revisits to Epics as Discourses of Dissent”, Prof. Jasbir Jain, “Performative Theatre As a Voice of Dissent: IPTA (India) and Ajoka (Pakistan), Prof. V.R. Prabodha Chandran Nayar, “Traditions of Dissent in Performing Arts in Kerala” and Prof. Walter Perera, “Dissent in Academic then and Now: Insights from the Sri Lankan Campus Novels in English”.

III. Special sessions on the theme of the project organized at the International conference on Comparative Literature held at

the Jadavpur University Kolkata, January 2013.

This conference saw three special workshop sessions on the ICLA Research Project entitled: “Literary and Cultural Interrelationships between India, its Neighbouring Countries and the World.” In the plenary session, chaired by Prof. Chandra Mohan, three seminal papers relating to the themes ‘Rumi and Kabir : A Reading and Perception in Cross-cultural Context’, ‘The Comparative Imagination in Indian and African Autobiographies, ‘From Outside, with love’: South Asia Through the Eyes of Otherized Native’, by Dr Tony Afejuku (University of Benin, Nigeria), Prof Anisur Rahman (Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi) and Dr Amith Kumar (English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad) respectively.

The second session, presided over by Dr Mashrur Shahid Hossain, (Bangladesh), included Khan Touseef Osman’s ‘Translation, Interpretation and Comparative Literature’, Professor Sucheta Pathania’s “Interrogating the Margins and Giving Voice to them: A Comparative Study of Gabriel Okara’s *The Voice* and Rohinton Mistry’s *A Fine Balance*” and Dr Bilal Hashmi’s ‘The Lesson of Etiemble’. The final session, chaired by Professor S P Shukla included Dr Garima Gupta’s ‘Semiotics of Translation : Issues of Gender across languages’, Ms Barnali Chanda’s ‘Motifs in the Strange and Fantastic Tales: A Parallel Study of Indian and Chinese Narrative Literatures during the 7th – 11th Century’, and Dr Urvashi Sabu’s ‘Shared Histories, Multiple Trajectories: A Study of Women’s Poetry In Urdu and Hindi From Pakistan and India’.

The three workshop sessions featured incisive debates and discussions on various aspects related to the ICLA Research Project theme. They also saw extensive contributions from the audience at large.

IV. Unique use of ICLA Congress at Paris as Research Incubator to the Project.

Fifteen seminal presentations by the eminent scholars from India and adjoining countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and also from North America focusing on the theme of the project: “Literary and Cultural Inter-relationships between India, its Neighboring Countries and the World” will be presented at the workshop. The program is spread out to five days with presentation of three papers per day during the session from 11.00 to 12.30. Prof. I.N. Choudhuri, Tagore Chair, University of Edinburgh would address the opening session on the 19th July 2013.

The workshop looks at Literary and Cultural Relationships from the perspective of socio-cultural and religious consciousness focusing on research areas such as ‘Genesis of Interrelationships’, ‘Initiatives for Peace and Narratives of Healing in the Subcontinent’, ‘Love Songs to the Divine: Sufi Music in India and Pakistan’, ‘Ramayana as Cultural Linkages South Asian Comparativism’, ‘Cultural Politics of Tamilnadu and Sri Lankan Literatures’, ‘Shared Cultures and Different Spaces: Conflictual Relationship of Subjectivity’, ‘Poetry as a Site of Cultural Resistance in the subcontinent,’ ‘Songs of the Nation: Popular Lyrics from India and Pakistan’, ‘Contesting Boundaries Musically’, ‘Contemporary Resistance to Patriarchal and Colonial Heritage’, ‘Locating the Nama: Genological Research’, ‘A Palimpsest of History’, ‘Strings of Love across Language, History and Space: Music of the sub-continent’ and ‘Negotiations of Borderlands’

V. Introduction of Courses related to the Project:

a) Introduction of Nepali course at undergraduate level in Jadavpur in this academic year. The UGC-Centre of Advanced Study (CAS) in Comparative Literature (Phase 2) of Jadavpur University facilitated this by holding an attachment of students program with Southfield College Darjeeling, and preparing, through a two week workshop in September 2011, for translation Nepali stories into English, Hindi and Bangla. A Course-book for Nepali literature in translation, entitled *Call of the Hills* eds. Sayantan Dasgupta and Kabita Lama (Centre of Advanced Study, Jadavpur University, 2011) has been published in English. A similar volume in Bangla will be published in 2013.

b) Introduction of Urdu course at undergraduate level in collaboration with scholars from Jamia Milia Islamia; preparation of

translation of literary essays from Urdu into English in collaboration with visiting scholar Bilal Hashmi, New York University, who was a guest of the Centre of Advanced Study for two weeks in January 2013, to be published by the CAS in 2013-14.

c) At Indira Gandhi National Open University, Delhi, The School of Translation Studies and Training includes a course on literature in cross-cultural contexts, involving Indian literature in the subcontinent and world literature journey through translation.

VI) Publications related to the project are:

1. **Travelling with the Namah**, by Ipshita Chanda (Centre of Advanced Study), Jadavpur University, 2012.
2. **Cultural Narratives : Hybridity and Other Essays**, Ed. Jasbir Jain (Rawat Publications, Jaipur, 2012)
3. **Medieval Indian Legacy : Linguistic and Literary**. Indra Nath Choudhuri (Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts, New Delhi, 2012).

VII) Future Program during 2014

A well chalked out academic program relating to the research based presentations will be organized in conjunction with the SAARC (South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation). On this occasion we will have a literary festival of Indian subcontinent writers and poets. The noticeable factor shared by all is the usage of common languages. We share Urdu and Punjabi with Pakistan. We share Nepali with Nepal. We share Bengali with Bangladesh. We share Tamil with Sri Lanka and we share English with everybody else. So we have these tremendous connectivities and shared tradition. It involves our culture, our art, our music and an entirely new mindset.

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