

**LITERARY AND CULTURAL INTERRELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN INDIA,  
ITS NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES AND THE WORLD Report ( 2014-15 )**

Members of the Research Committee

1. Prof. I.N. Choudhuri, President, CLAI, New Delhi.
2. Prof Chandra Mohan, General Secretary CLAI, New Delhi
3. Prof. Jasbir Jain, Director, Institute of Research and Interdisciplinary Studies, Jaipur
4. Prof. Anisur Rahman, Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia (Central University), New Delhi.
5. Prof. E.V. Ramakrishnan, Professor Emeritus, University Grants Commission, Central University of Gujarat, Gandhinagar.
6. Prof. Ipshita Chanda, Department of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University, Kolkata.
7. Prof Kavita Sharma, President, South Asian University, New Delhi
8. Prof. Manorama Trikha, former H.O.D., Department of English and C.L., University of Meerut, Meerut.
9. Prof. Rachel Bari, Department of English, Comparative and Culture Studies, Central University of Gujarat, Gandhinagar.

Associate Members

10. Prof. Dorothy Figueira, Distinguished Professor, Department of Comparative Literature, University of Georgia, Athens.
11. Prof. Munazza Yaqoob, Chair, Department of English, Female University, Islamabad, Pakistan.
12. Prof. S. Walter Perera, Dept of English, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka
13. Prof Mashrur Shahid, Dept of English, Jahangir University Dhaka, Bangladesh.

*I. Presentations of papers in the Panel's focus area in the plenary sessions at the International Conference on Comparative Literature at the University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, March 1-4, 2015.*

**a) Panel 1 : "Cultural Foundations of South Asia".**

It took its cue from Dr Kapila Vatsayan's key sentence: "The region called South Asia today is distinct from India or Indian". Professor Ameena Ansari from Jamia Millia Islamia Central University, New Delhi and Prof Taqi Abedi from Canada in their presentations developed a broader discourse on South Asia as a space for multiple configurations, of tradition and ethnicity, religious and secular movements and also movements of resistance and affirmation. Prof Ameena Ansari focused on the fact that today literary production in the Indian subcontinent foregrounds the emergence of the text as a chronicle to communicate the alternative history of the marginal, the silenced or the inarticulate. It could be perceived as literary historiography in which the fact fuses with fiction, record mingles with rhetoric, and metaphor, metonymy and allegory shake hands with dates, events and people. Prof. Abedi underlined the importance of the psyche of the South Asian culture and literature which is predominant in the Indian diaspora in the world.

Prof. Rachel Bari in her presidential remarks stated that given the insecurities and apprehensions about identity prevalent in the South Asian communities residing in any part of the world. It is also the time that one met this openness and lucidity and looked at it more as variety rather than a challenge and a threat.

**b) Panel 2 : "Socio-Literary Movements in South Asia".**

Prof. Prof Jasbir Jain in her paper entitled "*Travels of Maoism in China, Nepal, Tibet and India*" explained how Maoism's application has appeared in different cultural contexts in the adjoining countries. In her perceptive analysis she remarked that it was dictatorship in China, democratic movement in Nepal and in India it is outside the democratic movement and it aligned itself with violence in Tibet. She dealt with different literary texts to illustrate the vital view-points.

Prof. Manorama Trikha presented a seminal paper on "*Apotheosis of Gandhi in Independence Movement and its 'Literary Space'*". Through the explication of three plays Asif Currimbhoy's *An Experiment with Truth* (1969), Nand Kishore Acharya's *Bapu* (2005) and Partap Sharma's *Sommy* (2005) revealed how Gandhi broke new grounds at socio-political, personal and spiritual levels, altered the country's patterns of thought and changed the way of living. In a similar vein, Prof. Nandini Bhattacharya in the paper "*The Politics of Embodiment : Gandhi and Satyagraha*" submitted by her, referred to the Satyagrah movement as a redemptive act. She explained it to be the first step towards the rendering of Asiatic bodies as pertinent and ethical.

Prof. Safdar Imam Quadri, in his research-based presentation on "*The Literary Impact of Sufi Bhakti Movements in South Asia: A Multilingual Discourse*" testified his thesis with illustrations from the rich corpus of Sufi and Bhakti narratives explained an interesting mode of transferring themes and symbols from one religion to another has long been a well-attested practice in South Asia.

Prof. Munazza Yaqoob in her paper entitled "*Cityscapes of South Asia in Hamid's How to get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia and Adiga's The White Tiger*" presented political-ecological analysis of urban spaces. The paper explored and discussed the two authors' view-points regarding socio-economic, political and ecological processes that shape cityscapes in India and Pakistan. The comparative study presented a powerful critique of capitalist expansion and serve to activate resistance to oppressive urban social control policies of capitalism.

Prof. Anisur Rahman, in his presidential remarks took stock of the points made in the above presentations. He stated that there was a strong thread that brought all the presentations at par with each other. Violence, being a way of socio-political activism, could be touched down and contained only with the proportion of nonviolence approached and practiced by Gandhi. Further he emphasized that this culture of tolerance owed its origin in the Sufi-Bhakti tradition of the Indian subcontinent. All these, he added, were also amicably related with issues involved in environmental and ecological studies. The points he raised were substantiated by examples from socio-political history of South Asia and its major literary texts.

**II. Members' contribution in the form of lectures/addresses relating to the theme of the project:**

- a) Professor Chelva Kanaganayakam from the University of Toronto elaborated on the idea of South Asian Literature as a more enabling category than that of national literatures. He made a distinction between history of literature and literary history and stated that the latter allowed for a nuanced exposition of the processes of canon formation. He proposed an approach that allowed for understanding the genealogy of English writing in South Asia outside of the notion of influence and a singular model of modernity. This was stated by the late Prof Kanaganayakam at the seminar of Literary Historiography in India: Contemporary Perspectives, organised by Prof EV Ramakrishnan at the Central University of Gujarat, Gandhinagar, on January 10, 2014.
- b) Prof. Kavita Sharma, President South Asia University, delivered the Convocation Address on Higher

Education in South Asia as Chief Guest at 7th Convocation Program of Purbanchal University, Biratnagar, Nepal on March 14, 2015. She also made a presentation on Education and the Widening of the Consciousness in South Asia during 4th International Conference on Human Values in Higher Education — from 27th to 29th March, 2015 at Gaeddu College of Business Studies, Royal University of Bhutan, Gaeddu, Bhutan.

- c) Professor Senath Walter Perera, Department of English, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, presented a paper entitled “ ‘Imagined’ Censorship and the Sri Lanka Exilic Novel in English” at the IACLALS Annual Conference: Space, Place, Travel, Displacement, Exile held in Goa, India February 2015. He also presented the paper “Portrayals of the ‘Common’ Poor as [Un] common Wealth in the Sri Lankan Novel of Expatriation” at the 15<sup>th</sup> Triennial Conference of EACLALS Uncommon Wealths: Riches and Realities held in Innsbruck, Austria in April 2014.

### **III.** *Preparation of e-content for Comparative Literature pedagogy :*

The program has been launched by the faculty members of the Department of Modern Indian Languages and Literary Studies, chaired by Prof PC Patnaik at the University of Delhi. It has provided an impetus to the impact of cultural and literary inter-relationships for comparative literature. It is welcome as the most recent and significant addition to the development of ICLA Research project. This landmark project sanctioned by the University Grants Commission of India is currently engaged in developing e-content material which will be most useful for research and comparative literary studies in India and its adjoining countries.

### **IV.** *Introduction of academic course relating to the development of the Project:*

Literatures of South Asia and Literatures of Bangladesh were introduced as optional courses in a Comparative Literature MA course being taught under the auspices of the Centre for Comparative Literature, Viswa Bharti University, Santiniketan, West Bengal.

### **V.** *Recent publications relating to the Project :*

- a) *Discoursing Minority: In-Text and Co-Text* : edited by Anisur Rahman, Supiya Agarwal and Bhumika Sharma ( Rawat Publication, Jaipur, 2014).
- b) *Call of the Hills : A course text for Nepali Literature* made available in Bangla, edited by Seemantini Dasgupta and Kabita Lama ( UGC Centre for Advanced Study (Phase I), Jadavpur University, 2014).
- c) *Tamang Selo: Annotated Text and English Translation* edited by Sayantan Dasgupta and Shradhanjali Tamang (Jadavpur University Press in collaboration with Centre for Translation of Indian literatures, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, 2015). This is a collection of the Nepali-language Tamang Selo songs in a bilingual edition.
- d) Jasbir Jain, forthcoming monograph – *Between Memory and History: Forgiveness*.
- e) EV Ramakrishnan, ‘Habitations of Resistance: Role of Translation in the Creation of Literary Public Sphere in South Asia’ published in the book *Translation and Global Asia: Relocating Networks of Cultural Products* Edited by Lawrence Wong and Uganda Szepul, by Chinese University of Hong Kong Press.
- f) Munazza Yaqoob, ‘Consciousness-raising of women in South Asian Fiction in English: A Critique’ in *Pakistan Journal of Gender Studies*. Another work edited by her and Sofia Hussain is ‘women writers of the subcontinent(1870-1950)’ EMEL Publishers, Islamabad.

- g) Ipshita Chanda, “Bonobibir Johuranama : A Method for Reading Plural Cultures” forthcoming in *The Delhi University Journal of the Humanities and the Social Sciences, Vol 2, 2015.*

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