

**International Seminar  
on  
“Angarey and the Progressive Writers’ Movement”  
16<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> December, 2022  
hosted by  
Department of English, Avadh Girls’ Degree College (AGDC), Lucknow  
in association with  
Indian Association of Commonwealth Literature and Language  
Studies (IACLALS)  
in hybrid mode**



In 1932 four young writers contributed to a collaborative anthology *Angarey (live coals)* comprising nine short stories and a drama in Urdu. They either belonged to Lucknow or were associated with educational institutions in the city. *Angarey* was meant to be a reaction against the lassitude of Muslim society and the literature it consumed. Its publication created an uproar. It was criticized severely for being sacrilegious and profane; proscribed by the British government of the United Provinces and all copies ordered burnt. *Angarey* endorsed the presence of a generation of writers who challenged orthodoxy, supported socialism and the nationalist cause. In 1936, the *Angarey* contributors garnered support to formally launch the All-India Progressive Writers’ Association (AIPWA) at the *Rifah-eAam* Club in Lucknow. The movement ensured that literature and art became vital organs articulating the actualities of life. Thus, the AIPWM began as a bourgeois enterprise aimed at the uplift of the underprivileged. It propelled social realism, psychological realism, feminism, anti-colonial sentiment, foregrounded the political struggle for freedom and expressed anger and anxiety over the socio-economic conditions of the masses. It may be

conceded that *Angarey* brought together a group of writers who became directly responsible for the creation of the most influential and powerful literary-political organization in the sub-continent.



In order to commemorate the ninetieth year of the publication of *Angarey* the Department of English, Avadh Girls' Degree College (AGDC), Lucknow, in collaboration with the Indian Association of Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (IACLALS) hosted a two-day seminar inviting scholarly papers with a view to revisit the collection and the movement it catalyzed. Avadh Girls' Degree College is a higher education institution for women. Founded in 1958 as Loreto Degree College, it was taken over from Loreto Convent by the Government and handed to the Avadh Educational Society in 1975. Affiliated with the University of Lucknow, it is a leading institution, imparting value-based education. AGDC runs Arts and Commerce faculties and a Master's programme in English. The institution inculcates academic excellence and lays equal emphasis on extra-curricular activities.

The “*Angarey and the Progressive Writers' Movement*” seminar received enthusiastic response from over fifty delegates. Overseas delegates joined virtually while most of the domestic delegates travelled to Lucknow from across the country, to present their papers. A few joined virtually. The weather in Lucknow was pleasant. The seminar got off to an excellent start on the morning of 16th December, 2022. The inaugural session was held at the AGDC Auditorium. It began with the lighting of the lamp by the dignitaries, Prof. M. Asaduddin, Chief Guest and Chairperson of IACLALS, Prof. Swati Pal, Vice Chair, IACLALS, Prof Nishi Pandey, Convenor of the seminar, Prof. Bina Rai, Principal and Co-convenor, Prof Fatima Rizvi, Organising Secretary and Prof Ranjana Krishna, Treasurer of

the Seminar. The session was well attended. Members from the college managing committee invited guests, and faculty from the college were also present.

Prof. Nishi Pandey welcomed the guests and read the Patron Ms. Zarrine Viccajee's message. In his address, Prof. M. Asaduddin discussed the impact that *Angarey* made in literary circles and the way it modernized society. Professor Carlo Coppola, Professor Emeritus Hindi-Urdu at Oakland University delivered the Keynote address, "Finding *Angarey*: a Personal Journey," virtually. Professor Coppola talked about his academic journey 'finding' *Angarey*; its impact in the West and recent translations of the text against his own. He also talked about emerging areas of research in relation to the book and the movement. Professor M. Asaduddin chaired this session and made the concluding remarks. Prof Bina Rai delivered the Vote of Thanks for the session. She thanked the dignitaries and the guests and concluded with a Dushyant Kumar couplet: "*Mere sine me nahi to tere sine me sahi, ho kahin bhi aag, lekin aag jalni chahiye.*" The programme concluded with the singing of the National Anthem.

The seminar had fourteen business sessions spread over two days.



Four online sessions and ten sessions in physical mode were conducted from the venue. All the sessions were well attended by delegates, participants, and students, and were well documented by rapporteurs from the Department of English and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow and AGDC. Enthusiastic discussions followed all the business sessions. Volunteers ensured that all sessions ran smoothly.

The sessions in the first half of the first day included papers that covered areas related to gender politics and identity; activism and dissent; trials of the progressive writers; Progressive poetry, confession, and anti-colonial sentiment. They included presentations from as far as Hyderabad, Bengaluru and Karachi.

The Plenary Address was delivered by Dr. Talat Ahmed, Senior Lecturer in the South Asian University at the Department of Edinburgh, in online mode in the post lunch session. The title of her talk was "The Making of the AIPWA Manifesto: Transnational Influences and its

Impact.” Professor Sukrita Paul Kumar chaired this session. Prof. Sukrita Paul expressed the need to approach and comprehend texts in interdisciplinary and intercultural contexts.

Dr. Ahmed shed light on the transnational influences and the impact of AIPWA. She began her address by talking about the circumstances – in India and Europe that led to the origin of the AIPWA’s manifesto. In her opinion, in addition to being a literary movement, AIPWA was also a social and political movement. Transnationalism is an exchange of ideas across borders, not just national borders but also intellectual, a conversation between writers, exchange of ethos and mutual respect. The proceedings of the session were very informative. In her concluding remarks, Prof. Kumar remarked that the spirit of dissent and protest is relevant even in today’s world, where she hopes that the writers will come together and look at the specificity of their cultures. An enthusiastic audience asked Dr. Ahmed several questions which she addressed expertly.



The post lunch business sessions included papers on Rashid Jahan, Sajjad Zaheer, Saadat Hasan Manto, IsmatChughtai and Rajinder Singh Bedi, made by delegates from the United

Kingdom, Lahore, New Delhi and Lucknow. All the sessions were all well attended and followed by energetic discussions.



The day's academic deliberations were followed by the cultural evening organized by the college. It began with an address by Dr.Salim Arif, on the "Spirit of Progressivism" and engaged enthusiastically with the young scholars, opening up more avenues for research. His address was followed by Ganesh Vandana, complemented by Rhythm Sarcar's dance performance. After her performance there was a kathak concert by the students of the college. The students then narrated snippets from the *Angarey* stories. Dr.Almee Raza read a story she had written. The evening concluded with dinner hosted by Avadh Girls College for the IACLALS office-bearers, faculty, guests, delegates and volunteers.



The second day included eight business sessions that saw presentations on the *Angarey* stories, and progressive fiction, drama, poetry and cinema. Several presentations read progressive sentiment in Bengali, Gujarati, Punjabi, Hindi and Assamese; as also the Progressive English novel. Among the writers and poets that featured in these sessions were Faiz Ahmed Faiz, SahirLudhianvi, Ahmed Ali, Mulk RajAnand, Yashpal, Bhisham Sahani, K.A. Abbas, Habib Tanvir, Ahmad Riaz, Sant Singh Shekhon, Kedarnath Singh, Tarashankar Bandopadhyay, Manik Bandopadhyay, Jyoti Prasad Agarwal and Swapnastha. Several presentations read Progressive influences on writers who did not overtly subscribe to the movement's ideals. Notable among these were Attia Hosain and Zeenuth Futehally. Memory, ideology – radicalism colonialism and postcolonialism, feminism, art, aesthetics, and resistance were only a few of the themes that were addressed. The presentations opened up debates on various issues and dynamics of Progressivism and the impact they made on literary genres across Indian languages.

The Valedictory address for the seminar was delivered by Prof. Sukrita Paul Kumar. The title of her talk was “Progressivism and Modernism: A Symbiotic Relation?” Prof. Swati Pal chaired this session. She introduced and welcomed Prof. Sukrita Paul Kumar.

Prof. Kumar read *Angarey* as a metaphor for the fire that burns within. She stressed the relevance of dialogue between progressivism and modernity. She spoke about the significance of translation and dwelt upon the necessity of setting up translation centers to promote interlingual transactions. Prof. Swati Pal summed up the session by contextualizing

Picasso's early work vis-a-vis progressivism, tradition and modernity and discussed how art evolves seamlessly across borders.

The valedictory address was followed by a report presented by Prof. Ranjana Krishna, summing up the events of the two-day international seminar.

Prof. Fatima Rizvi proposed the formal vote of thanks. She expressed her gratitude to everyone who contributed to make the seminar a reality.

The seminar concluded in an atmosphere of warm camaraderie and the promise of exploring new vistas in future under the aegis of the IACLALS.

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