



Indian Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies

# NEWSLETTER

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# EDITORIAL

## **Pedagogy in the Age of Post-Truths**

Our academic enterprise has hitherto been well sustained by a whole range of cultural theories, both indigenous and imported. From post-colonialism to post-humanism, and from *desivad* to *dalit-vad* what have we not consumed for our academic greed? And despite problems in negotiating with the jargon and ingenious taxonomic denominations that these theories constantly unleashed, we clung on to them for certain very enabling reasons. We could harness these theories to pluralize our pasts, re-invent our traditions and re-map our genealogies with necessary intellectual flexibility. The words like 'dialectics', 'dialogism' and 'diaspora' with all their attendant connotations of cultural flow and exchange did excite us to herald the possibility of an increasingly translational and transnational world order. We were at least allowed to differ and disagree, we could afford to think and converse in non-absolutist ways. Inside the classrooms, we could trigger debates and afford self-reflexivity, enlivening in the process our routine pedagogy to the level of some kind of intellectual activism.

But the recent turn of events, both inside the nation and outside, has caused a setback, if not a total reversal, to our hard-acquired belief in cosmopolitan modernity or planetary co-existence. First Brexit struck us as an unexpected one-off kind of an episode. We remained more or less in the self-denial mode till Trumpism despite its loud and uncouth post-truthisms triumphed against all critical estimates to deflate our enthusiasm about the promises of borderless, multicultural and global world. Today we are harked back into the era of racialism, communalism and nationalism as originary virtues to be fiercely safeguarded. We are pushed into a disciplinary mode of a regressive kind. Each act of questioning the stereotype or cultural construct can now easily be seen potentially as an act of transgression and intellectual infringement.

While the whole world waits anxiously to see how the new events unfold in the days to come, we, as teachers of literature, are already headlong into a pedagogical predicament. Let me recount my very recent quandaries, which I had to undergo while coming to terms with Agha Shahid Ali's prescribed poem "The Country without a Post Office" in a classroom of students who are already usurped by the media with its surcharged debates of nationalism and Islamophobia. Even if one metaphysicalizes the poem and suggests that Shahid Ali mourns the loss of faith and the possibility of human-divine connect in a landscape of perpetual violence, one runs the risk of being accused of unnecessarily obfuscating or at least soft-pedaling a poem of patently 'anti-national' intent. The range of aesthetic indirections or allegorical associations that a literary text is invariably warped in is forever lost in the rhetoric of visceral post-truthisms.

Just a day after Trump's electoral victory, I had to take up Mahesh Dattani's *The Final Solution*, as my next teaching assignment. Of course my predicament is compounded for what the play suggests and what Trump stands for constitute a polarity of serious proportions to be negotiated pedagogically. Either one can choose to foreground the issue of 'transferred resentments' as core thematic of the play, or re-contextualize the reading of the play in the context of the rise of the alt-right all over the world. If the former option is used, the pedagogy becomes outdated, and if the latter option is chosen, the play begins to sound obsolete. What

the votaries of 'the final solution' from Hitler to Jinnah, and their latest post 2010-demagogues in India and abroad preach and espouse, the play fiercely contests. How to retain the literariness of literature thus is biggest challenge that pedagogy will have to negotiate in the days to come.

Another writer, who again as a part of prescribed reading I had to deal with, was Imtiaz Dharker. Her 'Purdah' poems offer critical opportunities to understand the ambivalences of veiling in the Indian context. But the moment, the poet is introduced particularly as a Pakistan-born Muslim poet, now settled in Mumbai; it brings uneasy whispers in the classroom. Hardly these whispers die, another round begins. This time, no Muslim or Pakistani writer becomes the cause of commotion; it is Mahasweta Devi and her *Breast Stories* that cause a sense of consternation. Imagine the pedagogical challenge of teaching her story "Draupadi" against the backdrop of what happened in a Central University in Haryana! A group of motivated teachers and students thought of paying homage to the departed writer by staging a play based on this story, and the whole establishment termed the event 'anti-national' simply because the story portrays some Senanayak as a molester.

In the coming semester, as the syllabus goes, my next writers are 'Nirala', 'Faiz' and Namdeo Dhasal. Even a simple paraphrase of their 'protest' poems can easily lend me into a soup. I can easily be branded a naxal or one who sympathizes with the naxalites. Given this scenario of suspicion, the very joy of entering into delightful protracted debates with students through the prescribed texts in the classroom or in the canteen has dampened, if not totally vanished. The lurking shadows of self-styled repositories of culture stalk the academia with a renewed sense of legitimacy. The teachers who venture to extend classrooms into animated mini-theatres of activism run the risk of being branded as offenders or criminals. What is at stake therefore is not only just the art of teaching but also the very future of literature.

At this crucial juncture of civilizational crisis, the demise of three major writers – Mahasweta Devi, Gurdial Singh and UR Ananthamurthy, who through their fiction and prose never wavered to expose the oppression of the subalterns both by the state and the landlords – makes things all the grim. The newsletter carries three brief write ups – one each on Mahasweta Devi, Gurdial Singh and Buchi Emecheta – in the form of homage to them. While the sensationalism of post-truth may hold sway for some time, their writings steeped in the realist tradition of fiction-writing would always be remembered for their truthfulness and audacity of conviction. IACLALS has invoked the names of such writers in the past through its different seminars and conferences, it will continue to do so in its endeavor to steer us through the gloom we are besieged with.

**Akshaya Kumar**

**Professor, Punjab University, Chandigarh**



# CONFERENCE

IACLALS ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2017

February 15-17, 2017

CO-HOSTED BY IIT GUWAHATI

**Location, Identity, Solidarity - Hegemonic Formations and Contestations  
(With a Special Focus on the Northeast)**

Temsula Ao writes in "The Old Story Teller" that

Grandfather constantly warned  
That forgetting the stories  
    Would be catastrophic  
    We would lose our history,  
Territory, and most certainly  
Our intrinsic identity.

"History, Territory, Identity", or as our topic has it "Location, Identity, Solidarity", are complex notions that are yet seen as fundamental to our construction of selfhood for our understanding of relationships between communitarian and private meanings (for instance in the "layering of customary laws with new ideas of selfhood and personal responsibility" in regional histories of the Northeast), and it is through our stories that we construct our pasts, presents and futures.

In recent times, the question of spaces and the ways in which we occupy them has become preeminent – in terms of homes, nations, identities, maps, territories, regions, and their exilic others – migrations/immigrations, displacement, travel, nomadicity. Whether we speak of the forces of globalization or nationhood, we need also to contextualize it in terms of how people affectively identify with certain locations, even though it may entail the transgressive possibility of erasing or crossing borders and boundaries. These locations may be held in common, or be completely unique and particular and yet deeply held. We may hold such positions with pride (even battling humiliation), passion (sometimes overcoming passivity), and creative construction (sometimes constructing the very location we hold). These formations, whether hegemonic or not, mobilize an array of contestatory responses and choices as regards our locations, articulated through the politico-aesthetic claims of language, gender, religion, race, tribe, caste, community.

It is this mode of recognizing difference and marking it, that creates the possibility of solidarities and alliances, whether rendered as a choice made through individual agency, or impositions made through a misrecognition of political ends. In the contestation between self and other, the question is what is the choice of the other predicated on – whom do we choose/designate as the other, why, and when, are questions that complicate agency and

autonomy, and are made keener when we explore the many ways in which this is culturally de/legitimized.

This conference seeks to address these questions and attempts to ask how we can participate in this process creatively and culturally, asking other questions along the way – what is the role of the engagee-observer? How do we speak of the aesthetics of pride, passion, of exemplifying and commemorating difference, forging alliances across memory and future?

The IACLALS Annual Conference 2017 will explore these questions with a special focus on the Northeast. Thus, participants could also focus on the crisis in location in the context of multi-ethnicities on one hand and a monolithic imagination of the Northeast on the other. They could also explore North-East literary and cultural productions to tease out the complexities of affective solidarity with location, one of the key ideas of this CFP.

The conference hopes to explore the following questions and topics among others:

- Region and the Nation in Indian Literature(s).
- Literature of Conflict/Resistance/Subversion
- The Notion of Mainstream (?) and Sub-strata in the Literatures of a Multi-lingual Country
- Is Regional Necessarily Marginal?
- Ethnic Marginalities and the Nation
- Translating the Marginal
- Performance Spaces and the Marginal
- Enacting Marginality
- Metropolitan Canon Formations
- The Limits of Identitarian Politics
- Folkloric Aesthetics and Cultures
- The Bhashas and the Northeast
- Located but Excluded?: The Case of the 'Northeast'
- Defining Location: Nation, Region, Borders and Beyond
- Is the Northeast a 'Location'?: The Politics of Place-making
- How Valid is the Category, 'Literatures from India's North-East'?
- The (In)adequacy of Solidarity: Rethinking Alliance as Intimacy
- Identity Politics and the Burden of Dis-identification
- Is the Regional 'Anti-national'?
- Positions as Locations: The Affective-Ideological Response
- Imagining the 'Mainland' as 'Motherland': Cultural Norms/Forms of Citizenship
- Ghettoisation of Spaces and Representation in Literature
- Sacred and Profane Spaces: Rituals of Anti/Sacralisation.
- Agitating from the Outside: A Politics of Resentment
- Performing Antagonisms: Political Praxis in (Non) identitarian Resistance
- Community Practices and Performative Cultures of the Lived Everyday
- New Earths: Imagining Future Enclosures and Commons
- How the World is Socially Constructed? Archaeology and the Northeast.

## REPORT

IACLALS ANNUAL CONFERENCE, IIT Guwahati, 15-17 February, 2017

IIT Guwahati opened a piece of their edenic campus and their generous hearts to us for this year's Annual IACLALS Conference, Location, Identity, Solidarity – Hegemonic Formations and Contestations (With a Special Focus on the Northeast). Verdant, tree lined and with many lakes, the stunningly beautiful campus offered photo ops at every corner, and thus the 10 minute walk from the guest house to the conference venue usually stretched to half an hour or more. The luxurious accommodation and the conference halls were also near perfect and topping this hospitality was the fabulous array of Assamese food served each day.

Easy as it would have been to rapturously lose ourselves in all this, it was the high standard of papers presented and the invigorating discussions at each session that really gave this conference its greatest high. The better part of the proceedings was given to papers that looked at the North East, its poetry, popular theatre, children's literature, and of course its cultures of protest through some valuable new areas of research and work.

The Meenakshi Mukherjee Prize this year went to our youngest prize winner yet, Shailendra Kumar Singh. Shailendra is a Research scholar at Jamia Millia Islamia, and he won the prize for his paper "Premchand's Prose of Counter-Insurgency in Colonial North India", published in *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*. The CD Narasimhaiah panel had 5 finalists, as against the usual count of 4, thanks to excellent papers. Despite the toughest competition ever, Natasa Thoudam, Research Scholar from IIT Bombay, won the Prize with a convincing lead for her paper, "Houses and Maps as Boundaries of Home and Homeland in Ashuli Kaisa's Blogs". Many congratulations to both the MM and CDN Prize winners, Shailendra and Natasa.

The conference's only dampener was the absence of our keynote speakers, Prof Hiren Gohain and Prof Temsula Ao. Prof Gohain's ill health prevented him from being able to join us and the tense ground situation in Nagaland made it difficult for Temsula Ao to travel. Indeed we missed them, even as Mamang Dai our Plenary speaker brought in great intensity, exuberance and spirit with her address as she did to the much appreciated reading session.

Since this was election year, a GBM was held under the able stewardship of Prof Somdatta Mandal. The unanimous say of the house requested continuity of charge and the existing team, as under, was re-elected.

Prof GJV Prasad CHAIRPERSON  
Prof M Asaduddin VICE CHAIR  
Prof Subhendu Mund VICE CHAIR  
Dr Rina Ramdev SECRETARY  
Dr Angelie Multani TREASURER

We at the IACLALS would like to thank all our members for reposing their faith in us and also for continuing to make this an intellectually vibrant space of shared ideas and research.



Our warmest thanks once again to our wonderful co-hosts Prof Rohini Mokashi-Punekar, Prof Liza Das, Prof Archana Barua, Dr Sukanya Sharma and Dr Debapriya Basu, as also the enthusiastic, ever smiling and helpful student volunteers who took care of all the conference and hosting details including time-keeping during the sessions, relieving the chairpersons of this burden! So impressed was everyone with this method of keeping time that many suggested this be followed in future conferences too.

We look forward to taking the 2018 Annual conference to greater strength, buoyed by the high standards maintained by this year's conference at IIT Guwahati.

**Rina Ramdev**  
**Secretary, IACLALS**

## **IACLALS ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2017**

### **Co-hosted by IIT Guwahati**

**"Location, Identity, Solidarity – Hegemonic Formations and Contestations (With a Special Focus on the Northeast)"**

#### **Day 1, 15<sup>th</sup> February**

##### **Session 1a**

Payel Ghosh	Dissenting Bodies: a Performative Reading of the Kangla Protest
Mukul Chaturvedi	Embodied Resistance in Hesinam Kanhailal's 'Draupadi' and Amar Kanwar's 'Lightening Testimonies'
Debaditya Bhattacharya	Whose 'Body' is the Nation? : The Shameless Women of the Righteous State

##### **Session 1b**

Geetha Bakilapadavu	Identity and self- affirmation: Manganiar's dialogues through Music
Someshwar Sati	Disability Studies in India: A Counter Hegemony Disciplinary Formation
Payal Jain	The sense of belonging together: Locating a critique of anthropocentrism in Dhruva Hazarika's short Stories

##### **Session 2a**

H S Komalesha	"Poetically Man Dwells: Locality, Identity and Solidarity in Kedarnath Singh's Banaras
Mini Chandran	Appropriated and Mainstreamed: Indigenous Narratives from Kerala

Murari Prasad                      The Indo-Guyanese Diaspora in Giautra Bahadur's *Coolie Woman*

### **Session 2b**

Kalyanee Rajan                      Marginality, Identity and Womanhood: Reading Ambai's "Black Horse Square" with Mahasweta Devi's "Draupadi"

Abhigyan Prasad                      Narrating the Present: The Representation of Conflict in Novels from the Northeast

Debarati Bandyopadhyay      Fractured Land and Literary Refraction: Reading the North-East

### **Session 3a**

Anjali Daimari                      Cultures in Imagination, Building Solidarities: Northeast India in Narrative

Rajashree Bargohain & Rohini Mokashi-Punekar      Poetry, Identity and the Geography of Culture: Representations of Landscape in Poetry from Northeast India

Sanjib Kumar Baishya              The Culture of Consumerism: A Critical Analysis of Bhraamyamaan Theatre in Assam

### **Session 3b**

Sarah Mariam                      Translating Marginality: The Echoes of the Subaltern in *Hirma ki Amar Kahaani*

Bendangrenla S Longkumer      Construction of a Subversive Naga History through writing the Personal

## **Day 2, 16<sup>th</sup> February**

### **Session 4a**

Siddhartha Chakraborti              On the Deployment of Sex in Assamese Science Fiction: *The Research, Biological* and other stories by Dinesh Chandra Goswami

Violina Borah                      Violence and Fear in Folk/Fairy Tales: Reading BurhiAairXaadhu Through Kothanodi

Layla Mascarenhas                      Identity Politics and the Burden of Dis-identification



#### **Session 4b**

Marlyn Lalnunmawii Sailo	Linguistic, Literary and Cultural Hybridity in Contemporary Mizo Literature
Jaydeep Sarangi	‘Inner Rites of Passage’: Interrogating Land, Politics and Identity in <i>Malsawmi Jacob’s Zorami: A Redemption Song</i>
Shobha M	Ethnic Marginalities and India: The Case of Mizoram in Zorami

#### **Session 5**

##### **CDN PANEL**

Deblina Hazra	Stories from These Hills Called Home: (Re)-Constructing Identity through History and Memory
Natasa Thoudam	Houses and Maps as Boundaries of Home and Homeland in Ashuli Kaisa’s Blogs
Ritwick Bhattacharjee	Fantasizing History I. Allan Seally’s <i>The Trotter-Nama</i> as a Mythology
Sagar Taranga Mandal	When the Elephant is Talking: Trials, Hunting and Intersectionality in Tarquin Hall’s <i>To the Elephant Graveyard</i>
Srinjoyee Dutta	‘Enter(ing) into History as history’: (En)gendering the translation of Adivasi identity in Nirmala Putul’s <i>Beghar Sapne</i>

#### **Session 6**

##### **Announcement and Award of CDN Prize and MM Prize**

Shailendra Kumar Singh in conversation with M Asaduddin

#### **Session 7**

##### **Writers’ Meet:**

**Readings by Mamang Dai, Somdatta Mondal, Jaydeep Sarangi, Subhendu Mund, Geetha B, Simran Chadha, Jyotirmoy Talukdar, Shweta Garg, Kalyanee Rajan, and others**

##### **GBM**

## Day 3, 17<sup>th</sup> February

### Session 8a

Kalpana Bora Barman	Narrating the Self: A reading of Easterine Iralu's <i>A Terrible Matriarchy</i> and Tamsula Ao's <i>Once Upon A Life: Burnt Curry and Bloody Rags</i>
Sania Hashmi	Not Khasi, Not Dkhar: Reading Anjum Hasan's <i>Lunatic In My Head</i> And <i>Neti, Neti: Not This, Not This</i>
Rashmi Buragohain	Identity Negotiation: The Colonial Woman in Anuradha Sarma Pujari's <i>Mereng</i>

### Session 8b

Jabeen Yasmeen	A Story of the Land, People and Identity: <i>Pora Gaonot Pohila Bohag</i> (2001)
Nilanjana Mukherjee	Map Stories from the North Eastern Frontier
Miranda	History of Modern Imphal: State hegemony and politics of space, and its local responses

### Session 8c

Madhuri Saikia	Colonial Tea Garden Bungalows- creating identity and a sense of place in the tea districts of Upper Assam
Dolikajyoti Sharma	The Question of 'Location': Reading Place in Writings from and on the Northeast
Albeena Shakil	Writing Globally, Nationally and Locally: An examination of Intersectionalities in the novels of Siddharth Deb, Anjum Hasan and Mamang Dai

### Session 9a

Liza Das	Political Economy Approaches to Subnationalism and Regionalism: Major Contributions from Assam
Jyotirmoy Talukdar	<i>Ai Biplob TV te Dehabo Na: Why Miyah Poetry Will Not Be Televised</i> in Assam

### **Session 9b**

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Deepthi S     | Ruling the Minds of the People- National Anthem and the Indian Identity   |
| Bhumika Rajan | 'Literary Categories and Literary Articulations: A discussion of Malsawmi Jacob's Zorami and Easterine Kire's Bitter Wormwood'. |

### **Session 9c**

- |                |  |
|----------------|--|
| Shweta Garg    | Performing Women and Women Performing in Manipur   |
| Anurima Chanda | The Second World War from a Naga-Ahom perspective: Violence, Honour and Revenge as Rites of Passage to Adulthood in Siddhartha Sharma's <i>The Grasshopper's Run</i> |

### **Session 10a**

- |                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| Ved Prakash         | Gloomy days and Curfewed nights: The displacement of Nagas through the short stories of Temsula Ao |
| Prajna Paramita Ray | 'The Last Song': Reading Resistance in Temsula Ao's 'apolitical' tale on Naga Insurgency           |

### **Session 10b**

- |                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| BR. Alamelu           | Poetics and Politics of Patriotism: Re-reading Robin S. Ngangom                          |
| Amitendu Bhattacharya | The Poet and the Princes: Cultural and Historical Connections between Tagore and Tripura |
| Simran Chadha         | Refracted witnessing: Narratives from the valley   |

### **Session 11**

**Valedictory Address by Mamang Dai**



# TRIBUTE/OBITUARY

## Mahasweta Devi: Author as ‘Reader’ of Cultures of Existence



Mahasweta Devi's literary corpus demonstrates how an author is first and foremost a 'reader' of cultures of existence before anything else. Her evolution as writer, author and activist, emerges from this very fact making her literary corpus in the post-independent phase truly unique. The nature of her reflection is intensely dialectical as her literary language suggests. It is a critical play of the creative and the translative modes of intellection, which are two specific modes of human cognition that authors who choose to 'read' from lived lives and cultures have at their command. It is this characteristic in her writing that makes her narratives a rich intermingling of folklores from the tribal world of Santhals, Mundas, Shabars and the Lodhas of West Bengal, Orissa, Bihar, Jharkhand and Chattisgarh region.

Born in January 14, 1926, Dhaka, Bengal Presidency of British India and now Bangladesh, Devi's writings span through a range of human experiences captured in her hundred odd long fictional narratives and twenty collections of short stories apart from her forays into other literary genres. Her engagement with the poor, the landless and the dispossessed made her a natural ally of tribal communities, dalits and the subaltern. *Bortika*, a quarterly that was being edited by her since 1980, has been a mouthpiece of the poor and the dispossessed. Though much is known about her role as a social and political activist-cum-writer, and some of her writings have been fortunately translated (and continue to be translated) into English and many other languages, little perhaps is known of her role as a translator as well. She had translated the writings of Jim Corbet into Bangla for instance, which was published as *Jim*

*Corbet Omnibus* (2 vols) and there is a need to critically engage with her role as author, translator and editor as well.

She has indeed been a kind of vanguard of the social and political movements of the Left, like her uncle Ritwik Ghatak, the noted film-maker and fiction writer from Bengal. And like him, she has been much maligned and misunderstood by not only her critics from the Left, but also by her late husband Bijon Bhattacharya associated with the IPTA, and her son, Nabarun Bhattacharya, a noted writer himself. The fact that Devi's works have been translated into English, Japanese, Italian, French, as well as other Indian languages by so many seminal scholars, and some of her works have been adapted into films and plays, one of the most seminal being the Kalakshetra Manipur production of *Draupadi* based on the story 'Dopdi' which appears as a sequel to the novella *BashaiTudu* in English translation, is indicative of the fact that a writer like Devi, whether appreciated, misunderstood or maligned, is here to stay for several decades to come. Indeed, gone are those days when writing emanated from a close reading of lived experiences of cultures that one chose to be *at home in*. It is this aspect of her life that makes her a *karmayogi*, no matter what *dharma* she followed. And *karmayogis* have an inspirational role.

**Anuradha Ghosh**

Associate Professor in English, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi

\*Image courtesy: <http://indianexpress.com/photos/picture-gallery-others/mahasweta-devi-a-voice-committed-to-empowerment-of-tribals-in-india-2940604/>

# TRIBUTE/OBITUARY

## Gurdial Singh: A Master Craftsman of Punjabi Literature



In Punjabi literature, which has largely been dominated by high-caste Jat Sikh writers, Gurdial Singh has successfully earned a niche for himself by telling us the stories of the oppressed and marginalized low-caste people of Punjab. For his invaluable contribution to the literary world, he was awarded with the Sahitya Akademi Award (1975), Padma Shree (1998) and Jnanpith Award (1999), while also being awarded with Punjabi Sahitya Akademi Award (1979), the Soviet Land Nehru Award (1986) and Bhai Veer Singh Fiction Award (1992). His novels have been translated into English and two of his novels have also been adapted into films.

His grand journey began from a humble background in the village Bhaini Fateh, near Jaitu in District Faridkot in the poor family of Ramgarhia artisans. His father, Jagat Singh, was a carpenter and also a blacksmith, and his mother, Nihal Kaur, was a housewife. As recounted by Rana Nayar, his father would craft wheels for bullock carts in winters and make trunks and water tanks in winters. The early lessons that Gurdial Singh learnt from his household were to work incessantly in the midst of hardships. He also mastered the art of craftsmanship by assisting his father in his work. Plato, while expressing his dislike for the poets, might have preferred carpenters over the poets in his Republic saying that carpenters are still closer to reality than the poets, and it seems Gurdial Singh has redeemed all carpenters of the world

by crafting his novels and short stories with the care of a carpenter, though writing novels was not merely a matter of craftsmanship for him, but a way of life. This shaped his aesthetics.

He faced hardships of life from his childhood. Owing to the economic circumstances, it was not easy for his father to support his education. It was the school headmaster who encouraged Gurdial Singh to pursue education against his father's wishes. He started his professional career as a JBT teacher and slowly worked his way up to a schoolteacher, later to a college lecturer. Finally, he retired as a professor of Punjabi from the Regional Centre of Punjabi University, Patiala.

Interested in painting in his childhood, Gurdial Singh painted in his writings the image of Punjab he saw, lived and experienced in his lifetime. His literary career started with a short story titled 'Bhaganwalen' published in *Panj Darya*. This *bhaganwala* (the fortunate one) writer did not stop after that. In his entire literary career he produced around ten volumes of short stories, about 8 works of children's literature, 9 novels, 3 plays and autobiography written in two parts. With his first novel, *Marhi Da Deeva* (1964) he established himself as a literary writer. It can be claimed that in this novel, Gurdial Singh gave to the world first Dalit protagonist in Punjabi literature. Jagseer, the protagonist of the novel, is born in the family of a sharecropper. Jagseer's is the tale of unheroic protagonist or almost an antihero, who only suffers economic hardships, bears the pain of unrequited love, gets addicted to opium and dies in a miserable state without being able to change anything either in his personal life or at the level of social structure. Jagseer's is the story of a failed man. But his novel being rich in "critical realism", as said by the novelist himself, tells us the story of those who live on the margins of the society. Their tragedy is not the result of any tragic-flaw in them or conspiracy by the gods; they are, rather, victims of the social and economic structure of the society.

*Marhi Da Deeva* deals with the question of ownership and changing human relationships in the context of Green Revolution. In most of Gurdial Singh's novels, his characters struggle, act and live in the changing social and economic context, which brings out the drama of human life in action at its best. *Unhoye*, set in pre-independence India, tells the story of Bishna, a stubborn man who cherishes high ideals and strong convictions in life. The novel gives us an insight about the struggle of man in the given social structure; impact of industrialization and how circumstances lead to dehumanization of man. *Rete Di Ik Muthi* deals with how in the blind pursuit of worldly and materialist goals fundamental aspect of human life is left behind, human relationships suffer and values decay. The novel tells the story of an ambitious



painter, who leaves his wife behind to chase his dreams, and his wife's loneliness causing corrosion of her fidelity.

*Anne Ghorey Da Daan* is the narrative of shrinking kinship, unemployment and migration with special focus of Punjabi working class. *Parsa* (1999), on the other hand, is set in human consciousness. The novel is more about the journey of a Jat-Brahmin, who emerges as a 'Karam-Yogi' in the narrative. Even if the novel is about an individual's story, the voices of culture and history can be heard in the memory and consciousness of Parsa. His dual identity reminds the reader of dual identities found in ancient Epics and the immediate historical turmoil and unrest such as naxalite movement in Punjab can be seen in the undercurrents of the novel. Parsa as an individual deals with everything that disturbs the order and tries to find solution to every problem. After having portrayed Jagseer, who becomes a victim to his circumstances; Bishna in *Unhoye* (1966) and Moddan in *Addh Channi Raat* (1972), who resist the oppressive social structure; the protagonist of *Parsa*, written in the later years of his career, finds solutions in his inner self. His novels probe the philosophical question of human existence and moral challenges faced by man in the context of changing socio-economic reality.

Like Thomas Hardy, Gurdial Singh gave us regional novels in Punjabi telling us the tales of people in the Malwa region of Punjab. Gurdial Singh's understanding of human self can be deciphered from his characters, who are the result of social, cultural and historical milieu they belong to. In most of his novels, his characters are in conflict with the circumstances determined by the socio-economic structure. In Gurdial Singh's perspective contemporary history co-exists with ages old cultural history of the land he belongs to. In his narrative space, Malwa region of Punjab does not emerge as an idyllic or romanticized rural space; rather it emerges as a space of struggle, deprivation and dispossession. He has put the low caste, Majhabhi Sikhs and the working class of Punjab in the centre stage of his fictional world and lent voice to the voiceless in Punjab. Perhaps that's why he dedicated the Jnanpith Award to the rich cultural heritage of Punjabi literature and people he wrote about.

**Vivek Sachdeva**

**Professor, Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, Dwarka, Delhi.**

**\*Image courtesy:** <http://www.firstpost.com/india/eminant-punjabi-writer-jnanpith-awardee-gurdial-singh-passes-away-at-83-2959442.html>

# TRIBUTE/OBITUARY

## Buchi Emecheta: An Obituary



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Buchi Emecheta (1944 – 2017) was one of the most prolific writers from Nigeria, one who made England her home and wrote about her multi layered diasporic self. Her novels are a treasure trove reflecting the myths and Orality of Africa interspersed with the changing face of time and the perceived modernities of the urban situations both in Nigeria and the West. Her writing is a sociological study reflecting the past and present of the lands she inhabited.

Buchi Emecheta was born on the 21st of July 1944 to Alice (Okwuekwuhe) Emecheta and Jeremy Nwabudinke. Jeremy was a railway worker and her mother a homemaker. There was very little money in the family so only her younger brother could be sent to school. Young Buchi won a scholarship to the Methodist Girls' High School at the age of 10. Her mother was to die within a year of that and Buchi was passed around from one relative to the other during the school vacations. Her father had passed away a year back. Very soon the young girl realised her great affinity for books and started to spend her vacations in school ensconced in the library. Her fertile imagination helped her plan out exotic vacations in her head which she would share with her friends when they came back after their vacations.

At a mere age of sixteen she married Sylvester Onwordi, a student to whom she had been engaged to since the age of eleven. He was to leave for England soon after that for further studies. Emecheta accompanied him with their two children. Three more children were to be born to the young couple in rapid succession. Onwordi was an unworthy partner who tortured his wife and even burnt the first draft of *The Bride Price* which she had given him to read. She left him soon after that and started working at the British Museum Library. At nights she went to school and earned herself a degree in Sociology from the University of London in 1972. Years later she would also receive a Doctoral Degree.

Emecheta's life and books were closely intertwined – each drawing sustenance from the other. Her novels are part autobiographical documenting her lived experiences as a Black woman in the London of the '70s. She also hearkened back to her past uncovering the myths and stories of Ibuza linking the past of the Ibo womanhood with the contemporary times. Emecheta was a prolific writer penning over 20 novels from the period of 1972 to 2000. She also wrote children's fiction and plays. Some of her most celebrated novels are *In the Ditch* (1972), *The Bride Price* (1976), *The Slave Girl* (1977), *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979), *Double Yoke* (1982), *Destination Biafra* (1982) and *The Rape of Shavi* (1983).

Emecheta won the New Statesman Jock Campbell Award for Commonwealth Writers in 1979, Best of Young British Novelist in 1983 and the OBE in 2005. She became a Fellow at the University of London in 1986. She received an honorary Doctorate of literature from Farleigh Dickinson University in 1992.

I read Emecheta for the first time during my Master's in JNU. Through our Under Graduate studies there had been no whiff of any other literature but what had come out of Britain and America. So it came as a complete surprise that there was this Black woman from Nigeria who lived in England, possessed a distinct mind of her own and had taken up cudgels against the Colonial discourse. One of the first novels I read was *Joys of Motherhood* which immediately reminded me of a story I had read in Bangla – Mahasweta Devi's "Stanadayini" translated as "The Breast Giver" by Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak. Nnu Ego and Jashoda are both mothers to many children but die lonely deaths dreaming of the children they had had. The similarities do not end there. There was the Nationalist discourse, of women being treated as second class citizens, stories of multiple mothering, Colonialism and its effect and the trauma of being marginalised within one's domestic sphere. Suddenly I had found an author who seemed to be telling my story though we were in two different continents and apparently seemed to have nothing in common.

Later I was to choose Emecheta as one of the authors to work on for my Doctoral thesis. By now I had started to feel a kinship with Nigeria which I had hitherto not visited and this author seemed to inspire a rare kinship between my reality in India and the perceived realities in Nigeria. The fact that there could be a woman who managed to write a novel without the proverbial "room of her own" was something a Third World woman could empathise with. Not only was she at the lowest rung of the economic ladder but also the fact that she was raising five children singlehandedly. The interesting fact was that she felt fulfilled as a mother and managed to write because of her children and not in spite of them. Though Flora Nwapa

and Buchi Emecheta were two of the forerunners in the field of Anglophone writing coming from Africa, they were not recognised as serious writers. The trinity of Chinua Achebe, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Wole Soyinka had been established as the major voices coming from the continent. The prejudices were so deep that the women writers were not even reviewed by the critics. So the woman writer was fighting on multiple fronts – to allowed to write and get published and then to be noticed by the literary critics and being considered a serious writer. Writing about women and their struggles was perceived as non-serious writing and therefore fit to be ignored.

During my subsequent travels in Africa the bonds deepened and I was to meet many incredibly brave women who were hard working, industrious, well read and well spoken. The life stories were similar to ours – battling patriarchy on several levels and showing a constant zest for charting out new paths. For most academic women Emecheta continues to remain a beacon of hope. She has taught them the mantra of never giving up.

Emecheta suffered a stroke in the year 2000 and passed away in her home in London on the 25th of January this year. Remembering the incredible debt they owe to Emecheta, her Black sisters have spoken effusively about her courage and determination which inspired many. Flora Nwapa called Emecheta her sister in arms. Chimamanda Adichie acknowledged her debt to Emecheta while penning down her award winning novel Half a Yellow Sun. In the words of Emecheta, “Black women all over the world should re-unite and re-examine the way history has portrayed us. I work toward the liberation of women, but I'm not feminist. I'm just another woman.”

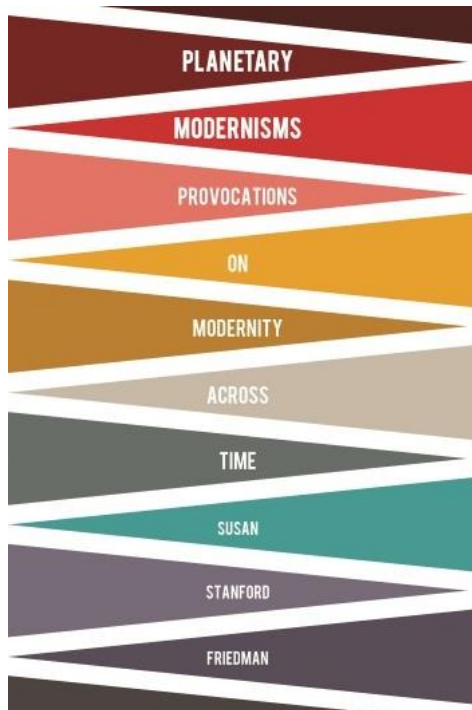
**Nandini C Sen (PhD)**

**Associate Professor in English, Bharati College, University of Delhi.**

**\*Image courtesy:** [https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/10/books/buchi-emecheta-dead-nigerian-novelist.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/10/books/buchi-emecheta-dead-nigerian-novelist.html?_r=0)



# BOOK REVIEW



*Planetary Modernisms: Provocations on Modernity Across Time*

**Susan Stanford Friedman**

**New York: Columbia University Press, 2015.**

**Rs. 2,673.00/- 451 pages ISBN978-0-231-17090-1**

Susan Stanford Friedman's discussion of "modernisms" and "provocations" on modernity comes from the perspective of a Professor of English at the University of Wisconsin Madison. She is regarded as a leading voice that has brought into question modernist scholarship in recent years. Her argument is that modernism as a literary form has many dimensions. It should not be approached as an exclusive European event located in inter-war years but as a cultural discourse with wider ramifications, one of which is the decolonization of the third world nations. She builds her arguments around cosmopolitan as well as nomadic and oceanic worlds from the point of view of anthropology, geography, cultural theory, gender studies and art. She feels that, "...the planetary turn in modernist studies .....[has] enabled a new way of reading geohistory and its manifestations..." (p. ix).

The reason why it is claimed to be a provocative book, perhaps the writer feels that modernities and modernisms have been intertwined and have violent element in them: "...the recurrent nature violent modernities throughout the *lounge duree* of global history set the scene for reported aesthetic breakthroughs, for poets abandoning conventions of their immediate predecessors and seeking new forms to represent the historical ruptures..." (p.302). The book is an essential read for those indulging in the cultural studies in academia as well as otherwise. It spreads out the horizons of the terms like modernity and modernisms beyond the confines of the terms as they are conservatively comprehended and construed in the Departments of English across the world. Her focus is rather on planetary modernisms – modernisms spread all over the over with their own specific geo-cultural matrices.

*Planetary Modernisms* has three-part structure. Part I, "Rethinking Modernist Studies" takes an inventory of problems and possibilities of the interdisciplinary field/s. The Part II, "Rethinking Modernity, Scaling Space and Time" draws on narrative theory and suggestive possibilities of figural in order to rethink modernity across large-scale time and space. The writer also discusses "now" of the modernism in this section. The Part III focuses on "Rethinking Modernism, Reading Modernisms," it converges on "modernity" as a geo-historical condition to the aesthetic expressivities.

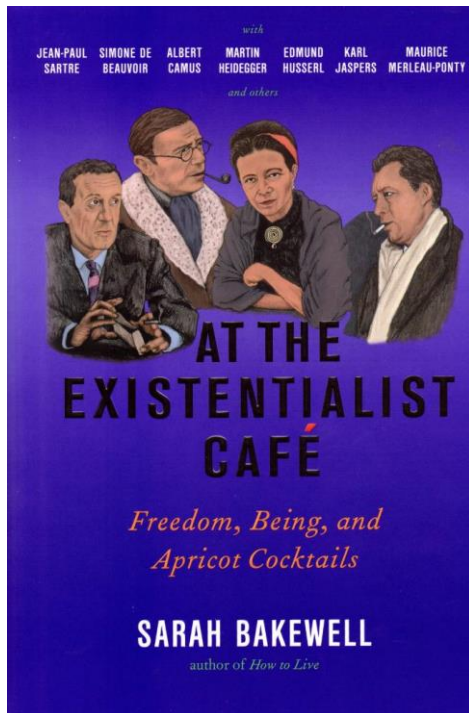
Despite her intellectual sweep, Friedman does not adequately touch upon the issues of "modernity" and "modernisms" in non-Western societies or even regional literary domains with necessary anthropological details. She explicitly asserts that her conception "does not incorporate every period of human history," but only those characterized by "sharpened change, radical ruptures, accelerated mobilities" (p. 318). However, her statements and assumptions at times convey political tone and ambitions. Contemporary critical theory is self-conscious, but Friedman keeps the role of the reader/ critic as filter very much in mind. *Planetary Modernisms* is a labour of respect for her subject, because of which one reads with admiration. It is insightful and provocative for the borderless world.

**Pradeep Trikha**

**Professor**

**Mohanlal Sukhadia University, Udaipur.**

# BOOK REVIEW



*At the Existentialist Café: Freedom, Being & Apricot Cocktails*

Sarah Bakewell

London: Chatoo & Windus, 2016

₹799, Pages 440

Despite its alleged beginnings in the rugged streets of the city-state of Athens, philosophy is no longer in vogue. But it definitely was for a group of individuals who made philosophy a lifestyle in thinking and living during the early twentieth century France. These people were economically penniless, morally liberated, ethically committed, politically radical, socially experimental and psychologically uncompromising in their pursuit of freedom and authentic existence. Daring, creative, alive, fearless and tireless, they came to be known as *the Existentialists*. These philosophers, artists and writers aspired for, what almost became a biblical commandment to them, 'the things themselves'.

It was the German philosopher Edmund Husserl who came to their rescue through his radical defense of phenomenology as the only logical method to grasp any object 'in-itself'. Husserl, via his studies in phenomenology, had already undertaken a critique of the dominant philosophical attitudes of the times, the natural sciences, neo-Kantianism and Hegelianism. Jean-Paul Sartre in fact went right up to Berlin in his quest to study phenomenology. And he



instantly fell head over heels in love with phenomenology. It was, for him, a revelation. Phenomenology allowed Sartre to make anything, say a coffee cup or a piece of music, a topic of serious discussion by facilitating a meticulous analysis of *my* experience of it.

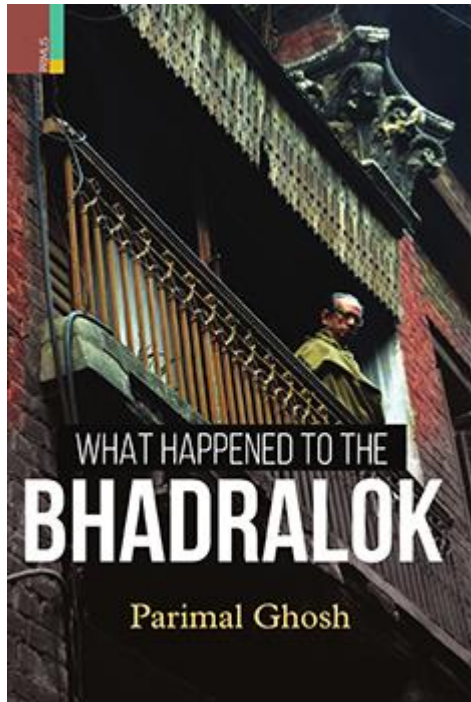
Next, it was the turn of the “magician from Messkirch” Martin Heidegger, as Sarah Bakewell writes, who cautioned them of falling prey to ‘the they’. Sartre expressed this fear in his well-known words, ‘Hell is other people’. Heidegger and Sartre both forewarned the human individual of this latent tendency to forget oneself in the crowd, and thereby, lose one’s uniqueness and specificity. Unlike Heidegger, the human individual for Sartre was essentially and radically free, and s/he should strive to become the ‘for-itself’. After studying phenomenology under Husserl, Heidegger published his classic work *Being and Time*, dedicated to Husserl only, in which he appropriated Husserl’s phenomenological method by polishing it for his own purpose of delineating the problematic of ‘Being’ in the contemporary times. Heidegger’s repertoire of concepts, like anxiety, care, finitude, boredom and melancholia came as a breath of fresh air because of their rootedness in the concrete experience of everyday life. It inspired a whole new generation (Hannah Arendt, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Herbert Marcuse and Hans-Georg Gadamer) of thinkers who accepted the coming challenge of thinking the human existence anew.

And then the War came with occupation and devastation that actually made the existentialists aware of their brittle existence, ephemeral happiness and bourgeois complicity. The War also brought to foreground the hidden complicities of Heidegger’s philosophy and his anti-Semitism. Heidegger’s Nazism had put all philosophical enquiries under the scanner. For, if such subtle and meticulous thinking made a human being indifferent to such large-scale planned murder of the innocents, then there has to have a fundamental rethinking of philosophical vocation and its inherent limits. As the rifts started to widen among the existentialists because of their political allegiances and ethical commitments, they all started to drift apart into different intellectual directions.

It has always been difficult to define existentialism. Is it a mood, an attitude, a perspective or an orientation? Notwithstanding this ambiguity, it has always attracted thinking individuals concerned about articulating their relationship to life. This ambiguous nature literally makes it fruitful and flexible to individuals, situations and change. The existentialists were alive, active and thinking individuals who really dared to take control of their own lives in a conscious manner despite making many mistakes, personal and political. But they made choices, right or wrong. And in the contemporary times, we must learn from the existentialists this courage to take hard decisions and tough choices. Bakewell’s book is a lucidly written history of ideas, personal anecdotes and philosophical debates that lets one taste perspectives, anxieties and moods.

**Dharamjeet**  
**Assistant Professor**  
**Punjab University, Patiala.**

## BOOK REVIEW



*What Happened to the Bhadrakalok*

Parimal Ghosh

Delhi: Primus Books, 2016

200 pp., Price \$ 59.95. Hbk.

ISBN: 978-93-84082-99-4

### **The Bhadrakalok Question**

Parimal Ghosh's *What Happened to the Bhadrakalok* is an ambitious attempt to historicise and trace the trajectory of the Bengali gentleman or *bhadrakalok* from its inception through its complex discursive growth, from its location in the economy of colonial aspiration through the narratives of nationalism right down to neoliberal cosmopolitanism. It is a work that would intrigue and excite students and scholars interested in colonial and postcolonial contact-zones and its associated identity-politics, urban ethnography as it relates to masculinity studies, colonial desires and intersubjective mimicry. Written elegantly and offering an impressive historical range, the book appears as a timely examination of identity and identity-politics in

colonial and post-colonial Bengal and how such politics informed the aspired gentlemanly construct of masculine behaviour. As one would expect from a book of this scope, *What Happened to the Bhadrakalok* is also a fine study of the strategic negotiations across discursive spaces, embodied performance, and cross-cultural exchanges that produced and problematised hegemonic Bengali male identity.

The strength of this work, easily discernible even from a quick read, lies in its plurality of perspectives as it sets out to examine the production, promotion and perpetuation of the *bhadrakalok* identity drawing on historical documents, popular works of fiction and film as well as on ethnographic studies. There are interesting – frequently fresh – readings of fiction, films, theatre and sporting events where the contested categories of colonial and postcolonial *bhadrakalok* masculinity manifested themselves as a discursive drama. The book is also careful to locate such readings in the broader narratives of nationalism and colonialism that informed and problematised the economy of aspirations and appropriations influencing *bhadrakalok* formation. Starting from the birth of the *bhadrakalok* in late 19<sup>th</sup> Century colonial Bengal through a study of the Hindu hegemony of such identity-politics, examining the representations of Bengali gentlemanly masculinity in detective fiction, sports fiction and theatre, *What Happened to the Bhadrakalok* offers an astonishing range of readings through a wide variety of texts. Its examination of Bengali male identities through masculine markers in popular sports culture, especially football, through the entanglement of educated suaveness and informed intelligence as embodied by the Bengali detectives Bomkyeshe Bakshi and Feluda in popular fiction and through the politics of performativity and ideological identity in Bengali theatre is rich and resourceful. The author manages to inform as well as intrigue the reader through a wide range of readings, references and representations.

What is often lost in the process, however, is a robustness of research and depth of study as the author attempts to cover too many topics, often leaving the serious reader stranded in unfinished or hurriedly attempted analyses. Although the overarching narrative of the book is the historical birth, growth and demise of the *bhadrakalok*, the chapters often do not cohere together and there is a definite sense of self-indulgence and narcissism that sometimes informs the writing. The serious reader would often be taken aback by the personal anecdotal quality that frequently replaces the desired degree of research one would expect from a book of this academic aspiration and promise. While there are interesting attempts to examine the discursive configurations and navigations of the *bhadrakalok* through a variety of readings, the book sometimes struggles to deliver a consistent and complex research on its chosen subject

and often descends to personal readings and anecdotal analysis. The main problem with the book is its structure and the discontinuity across the chapters. While the introduction starts off with a nostalgic note with personal and anecdotal details, it does describe the cultural capital and educational enterprise that historically informed the Bengali *bhadralok* identity. The third chapter on Calcutta's Bengali theatre offers some interesting readings on gendered performativity and politics of identity. But instead of the sophisticated study of the colonial and post-colonial markers of Bengali *bhadralok*, the book tends to rely on some simplistic and reductionist readings that fail to engage with the more complex questions informing the subdivisions of gentlemanly identity-politics. Thus its claim in the fourth chapter ('Was there a Muslim Bhadrak'') that there was virtually no Muslim Bengali *bhadralok* sounds strange and undeveloped even as it attempts to historicise the Hindu hegemony in dominant identity-politics and the economy of privilege with the advent of British imperialism in Bengal. The geopolitical issues informing the Muslim identity in Bengal are sketchily summarized and insufficiently explored. One would have expected a more nuanced study of the political, sartorial, gastronomic and linguistic issues informing the cultural shift from pre-British to post-British Bengal, a shift that discursively extended onto an entanglement with the Anglophile Hindu middle-class masculinity. There is almost no mention of the non-Bengali – especially Marwari – presence that played a key commercial role in the shift from Nawabi Muslim masculinity in Bengal to an Anglophile white-collar urban masculinity (the *bhadralok* construct). Indeed, a study of the multicultural masculinities against which the Bengali *bhadralok* identity situated itself would have been an excellent sub-chapter in a book of this scope, one which is sadly missing.

In a similar vein, what is conspicuously absent in the book is a study of the *bhadramohila* (the well-mannered suave Bengali lady) as a cultural construct that emerged in colonial and post-colonial Bengal. While the book takes pains to examine how the *bhadralok* identity emerged through the white-collar jobs and discursive networks, it never mentions how such jobs and networks were increasingly inhabited and accessible to Bengali women who ceased to exist merely as a strategic homemaker and began to form their own homosocial public and professional spaces. Such a study would have enriched the general scope of this work. As in most of the book, arguments in the fourth chapter are often not completed, often producing half-formed theses that barely qualify as rigorous research. The study of texts from sports literature in chapter five ('A Passage of Football') is mostly merely descriptive, often offering summaries of the selected texts without any thesis-thread that could convincingly examine

the politics of *bhadralok* formation and its subversion in the sporting agon. Instead, what we have are long passages from the chosen texts followed by clichéd descriptions of the same that often eschew any attempt at insightful close reading. The seventh chapter ('My Grandfather's House and Some Thoughts on Kolkata's *Para*') offers an interesting examination of neighbourhood networks and their associated identity-politics while weaving in an ethnographic study of urban and peri urban spaces and how such spaces construct and conform to various codes of gentlemanly behaviour.

One of the finest features of this book is an elegant and engaging study of liminal spaces at the interface between discursive and personal orders of embodiment. This would intrigue readers and scholars interested in the entanglement of spatiality and gendered behaviour in an economy of cultural aspirations and appropriations. The final chapter of this book ('Where have all the *Bhadraloks* Gone?') appears heavily subjective, nostalgic and perhaps romantic as it traces and attempts to explain what it describes as the disappearance of the *bhadralok* in the new-age globalised metropolis. It does deliver an interesting study of the entanglement between financial capital and educational capital but its easy binary between the ideologically committed *bhadralok* of the yesteryears and the consumerist urban man of today appears simplistic as the book hurries towards its conclusion.

*What Happened to the Bhadralok* has a lot going for it. For one, the very topic of the book is one that will attract the general reader and the interested scholar alike. Its historical scope is impressive and so is its range. While its weaknesses lie mainly in its inconsistent research strength and frequent forays into anecdotal analyses, it nonetheless offers a rich resource of references, readings and reflections and is a significant study of the trajectory of Bengali gentlemanly masculinity through various discursive formations and ideological climates. It is a very welcome addition to the increasing body of scholarship in colonial ethnography and masculinity studies.

**Avishek Parui**

**Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences,  
IIT Guwahati.**





## RECENT EVENTS AND REPORTS

### Book Launch cum Seminar on “Premchand in World Languages: New Frontiers in Premchand Scholarship”



Premchand Archives and Literary Centre (JPALC) Jamia Millia Islamia in collaboration with publishers Routledge/ Taylor & Francis Group organised a Book Launch cum Seminar on the topic “Premchand in World Languages: New Frontiers in Premchand Scholarship” on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2016, 10:00 am onwards at the Tagore Hall, Dayar-e Mir Taqi Mir, Jamia Millia Islamia. The welcome note was given by Sabiha A Zaidi, Director, JALPC, while the book, “Premchand in World Languages: Translation, Reception and Cinematic Representations”, by M. Asaduddin published by Routledge/ Taylor & Francis Group was released by former Vice Chancellor of the University, Shri. Shahid Mehdi, accompanied by stalwarts such as Vasudha Dalmia, Harish Trivedi and Abdul Bismillah.

Introducing the book, M. Asaduddin shared his experience of working with the many contributors of diverse nationalities and scholarship, and described how the book developed into its present form from the three-day international seminar on “Premchand in Translation” held in 2012. Working on this highly challenging endeavour, with the volume straddling

different languages and cultural histories of the world, helped him unearth important facets in terms of reception of Premchand into other cultures and nations, for instance while the print run of Premchand was between 1100 and 3000 copies in India in the Soviet Union, whereas that of his translated works in USSR was between 50,000 to 90,000! Hence, collaborative academic efforts involving so many scholars, such as this book are essential for a holistic study of authors of the stature of Premchand. Sharing opening remarks about the book, Shri Shahid Mehdi lauded the publication as a unique and significant contribution to the field of Premchand Scholarship. He also spoke about Premchand as his own translator, and the causes therein which needed to be paid attention to. He mentioned being impressed by Premchand's non-fiction writing and emphasized the relevance of studying varying aspects of Premchand, also highlighting the fact that though Premchand did not seem keen about writers' unions, he was elected as the first chairperson of the Progressive Writers Association.

Harish Trivedi, also a contributor to the book, delivered the presidential address, underscoring the indispensable contribution of the book in several fields, Translation studies, cultural studies, reception studies, and World literature to name a few. Trivedi also illuminated several aspects of Premchand scholarship stemming from the current engagement that merit attention and need to be addressed in several subsequent volumes. This was followed by a business session chaired by Vasudha Dalmia, which saw engaging presentations on diverse themes of the book by contributors and academics like Abdul Bismillah, Sonya Surabhi Gupta, Rashmi Doraiswamy and Shailendra Kumar Singh. Using several textual instances, Bismillah brought to light the fact that Premchand in fact seemed to have significantly reworked or even rewritten many of his works in the two languages, Hindi and Urdu; while Sonya Surabhi Gupta focussed on the virtual untranslatability of Premchand's social world and dealt with a recent, rather off the mark Spanish translation of Premchand's works. The immensely stimulating business session was followed by a constructive question and answer session by the rapt audience comprising of faculty members, seasoned academics and students, with many significant pointers raised and engaged with.

**Kalyanee Rajan, New Delhi.**

**\*Image Courtesy: Kalyanee Rajan**



**A Two-Day National Seminar on 'Translating/Transcreating the Cultures of Existence'**  
**(dedicated to the memory of Mahasweta Devi)**

**November 24-25, 2016, Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia**



The National Seminar on 'Translating/Transcreating the Cultures of Existence', held on 24-25, November 2016 in the Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia, organized under the aegis of the UGC SAP-DRS Phase III programme, was dedicated to the memory of the writer, activist and ideologue Mahasweta Devi.

Over the course of two days, there were six panels comprising of as many as 35 paper presentations, alongside nine plenaries and two papers in a mode of performance, foregrounding the importance of kinesics or body language. A wide range of subjects were covered over a period of two days in which theories of translation, translation praxis, creative praxis and adaptation of texts from one media to another were taken up. Some interesting papers on Computational Linguistics and Machine Translations were important interventions by M. Phil scholar Mehak Sawhney (University of Delhi) and Dr. Kavitha N. (University of Kerala) from the domain of Linguistics. Interesting insights on the works of Mahasweta Devi emerged from the plenary deliberations by Samik Bandyopadhyay (Tagore Fellow, JNU), Professor Somdatta Mandal (Viswabharati University) and Professor Ipshita Chanda (Jadavpur University). Their personal association with the author and their experience of translating some of her seminal works were important contributions enriching the Seminar.

In the inaugural address by Harjeet Singh Gill (Professor Emeritus, JNU), the semiotics of translation as a process was laid bare by a close comparative study of the semantemes in the Target Language to the Source Language texts of the narrative of Flaubert's *Saint Julian*. The fact that translation is a form of reading in a very specific sense was argued by Gill and a related idea of conceptualization was taken up by Professor Rajesh Sharma in his paper titled "The Promise of Translation". While Sharma engaged with Goethe's conceptualization of the epoch of 'interlinearity', in an attempt to understand Walter Benjamin's thoughts on literary translation and their significance, Professor Avadhesh Kumar Singh (IGNOU) focused on the idea of "Translation as Counter time" following Walter Benjamin's ideas juxtaposed interestingly with Kumarajiva's translational enterprise.

Professor Anisur Rahman's paper "Translating Love: Problematic of Repression and Expression" reflecting on the erotics of Rekhti poetry, Professor Harish C. Narang's (JNU) and Professor M. Asaduddin's (JMI) deliberations on the linguistic and cultural aspects of translation that has impacted the English canon in South Asia brought in yet another intersection of this ever-widening area of study.

The solo performance by Professor Saumyabrata Choudhury from SAA, JNU, titled 'Translations of "Situations" – A Performance based on Jan Kott's book *Shakespeare, Our Contemporary*' deserves special mention, as it is through purely non-verbal modes that the element of theatricality was enhanced, while verbal language was reduced to meaningless gibberish, problematising the times we are in. Parnab Mukherjee's (Only Campus Third Theatre performed) 'Unwarped – A Performance Duologue on Conversations between Mahasweta Devi and Akhtaruzzaman Elias' was a commendable intervention in a comic mode. The valedictory session, chaired by Professor Ameena K. Ansari, (Coordinator DRS) brought together personal impressions of AntaraDevSen (The Little Magazine) and Tathagata Bhattacharya (Bhashabandhan) who are both involved in popularizing emergent literary trends of world literature in English and Bangla respectively.

**Dr. Anuradha Ghosh**  
Associate Professor in English, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi

**Rakesh Sengupta**  
PhD Scholar and Project Fellow, UGC SAP-DRS Phase III, Dept. of English, JMI

**\*Image Courtesy: Kalyanee Rajan**

### Inauguration: Folklore Society Agartala

Folklore Society Agartala, Tripura was inaugurated at a cultural function held in a homely and congenial atmosphere on 1 February 2017 at 6pm on the occasion of the Saraswati Puja (worship of Saraswati, Goddess of Learning) under the auspices of Sahitya Adda (Literary Rendezvous) at the house of Dr Bhaskar Roy Barman, Patron at Banamalipur (Middle). On the Executive Committee of Folklore Society, Agartala are: Dr Bhaskar Roy Barman as Director and Executive President, Subrata Dey as Secretary and Baijayant Roy Barman as Joint Secretary and, as executive members, Prantosh Karmakar, Siuli Roy' and Sanjit Biswas . On the Advisory Board are: Dr Sitanath Dey, Subimal Roy and Gopalmani Das. Dr Bhaskar Roy Barman's house will act as its administrative office. This organization will work under the banner of Folklore Society, England.

The function was inaugurated by the lighting of the inaugural lamp and all the hobnobbers present participated in the lighting of the lamp. Prantosh Karmakar, a well-known singer presented the inaugural song. In his address of welcome Dr Bhaskar Roy Barman who formally inaugurated Folklore Society, Agartala spoke in detail about the future activities of the Society and the significance of its inauguration on this particular day. All other hobnobbers such as Subimal Roy. Dr Gopalmani Das and Tripti Das spoke about the significance and importance of Folklore Society, Agartala formed first time in Tripura. In response to Gopalmani Das asking him what has led him to contemplate forming a folklore society at his own endeavour Dr Bhaskar Roy Barman said that he had researched for more than twenty years on end into the folklore of North-East India at the advice of Dr Hiren Gohain, former professor of English at Gauhati University, Assam, and this research culminated in the publication of his book 'Folktales of Northeast India' by Gnosis', an imprint of Authors Press, New Delhi and that this book has been selected as a text book at Sidho-Kanho-Birsha University, Purulia, West Bengal. Prantosh Karmakar and Siuli Roy presented solo songs. Saswati Deb read an original poem and presented a dance. The function was, as usual, presided over by 'Silence'. Dr Bhaskar Roy Barman gave the vote of thanks.

**Dr Bhaskar Roy Barman**



# **FORTHCOMING/ CALL FOR PAPERS**

## **10TH ANNIVERSARY AEEII**

### **The 5th International Conference of the Spanish Association of Indian Interdisciplinary Studies AEEII**

#### **Writing/Righting Wrongs: Misrepresentation, Discrimination, Inequality**

**<http://jornades.uab.cat/aeii2017/en>**

**Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona,**

**29th November – 1st December 2017**

Acts of injustice in or with the Indian subcontinent have been committed by previous generations in institutional, social, political or familiar contexts. This conference seeks to highlight some of these wrongs and discuss the various ways they have been or should be righted. This conference is likewise geared by an inclusionary energy that connects diverse manifestations of “Indianness” against the background of an Indoceanic geography. W/righting wrongs involves acts of remembrance whereby memory and history coalesce, and, as a result, a dynamics of self-situated beyond the national/global dichotomy is delineated. The conference is intended to cover a wide range of disciplines so we welcome papers from historians, anthropologists, philosophers, art historians, environmental scientists, linguists and literary scholars and cultural studies practitioners. The topics proposed include but are not restricted to the following:

- Reparations for social wrongs: Dalits, tribals and subalterns
- Reparations for mass crimes and ethnic violence
- Acknowledging historical misrepresentations: imperial oversights, stereotypes in historical novels, the silencing of minorities
- Historical culpability: the legacy of colonialism, the connivance of the colonized
- Uncovering lost treasures in art, literature and music
- Rethinking Indian philosophies
- The role of the cinema: escapism or social commentary?
- Religious revivals
- Reinterpreting the epics
- Memories of the Partition: healing the wounds
- Questioning gender constraints: the voices of women, alternative sexualities
- Life writing: new approaches
- Reviewing environmental policies: ecological disasters
- Indian languages: Hinglish, translation policies

200 word abstracts in either English or Spanish plus a 100 word bio-note should be sent to india.uab@gmail.com. A selection of the papers will be published in No. 6 of *Indialogs* Spanish Journal of India Studies (April 2019) after blind review by external assessors.

**Deadline for proposals: 01/06/2017**

**Notification of acceptance: 01/07/2017**

**CFP: Indialogs Spanish Journal of India Studies**  
**Call for Articles Issue 5: Bodies**

Issue 5 of Indialogs will focus on the theme of the body from a wide range of perspectives. The representation of the human body in Indian culture differs enormously from the West. Women were closely associated with fertility, abundance and prosperity rather than sin and temptation, and sexuality has been embraced openly as can be seen in many temples all over the country.

Likewise, beauty was seen to be an essential aspect of the divine. Sanskrit has a large number of words that describe beauty or physical and sexual attraction and literary texts abound with imagery related to the body. However, this issue of Indialogs is not only concerned with classical images of the human body as we welcome articles that deal with the notion of “the body” in all disciplines including the following:

- Hindu representations of the body; the representation of the body in religious and philosophical texts
- The role of the body in contemporary narratives
- Indian weddings and ritual performances
- The centrality of the body to political authority in the Raj
- Medicine and public health; Western medicine vs Ayurveda; the donation of bodies after death; fertility; commercial surrogacy
- The beauty and personal care market in India; the importance of “presentability”; beauty pageants
- The embodiment of poverty and subalternity: working class slum women, tribals.
- The body politic in India; the Judiciary in contemporary India: the supreme body?
- The Partition: the dismemberment of the body of India.

For details of guidelines see

<http://revistes.uab.cat/indialogs/about/submissions#authorGuidelines>

Deadline for submissions: 15th SEPTEMBER 2017

For further details, please contact the editor at [revista.indialogs@uab.cat](mailto:revista.indialogs@uab.cat)

Call for Papers

Special Issue of South Asian Diaspora to be published in 2018

on

**“Race Relations and the South Asian Diasporic Imaginary”**

Guest Editors: Delphine Munos & Mala Pandurang

Race Relations between South Asians and Africans/people of African descent has for long been a contentious issue. In today's multicultural societies, eurocentric notions of 'black' and 'white' have polarized the debate about racial relations and effaced the complexities of interaction between South Asian migrant communities and people of other ethical and racial backgrounds. In postcolonial contexts of Africa and the Caribbean specifically, the specificities and complex history of the racial relations between the African and the South Asian communities have fallen, by and large, below the critical radar.

Exacerbated as they have been by the colonial context, by the fact that Indenture was put in place as a quick-fix solution to the abolition of Slavery, relations between the African and the South Asian communities have been tense and antagonistic in Africa and the Caribbean, as evidenced in the fiction of M. G. Vassanji, the Kenya-born writer who was raised in a family of Indian descent in Tanzania. In Trinidad for instance, the ethnic stereotyping of Indians during the indenture period by Whites and Afro-Trinidadians alike paved the way for the conscious deployment and aggressive defense of Indian ethnicity as a means of resistance to creolization and assimilation in post-colonial Trinidad.

Refreshingly, the opposition between 'South Asian' and 'African' has also been challenged by scholars, writers, and visual artists, who seek to create new solidarities by deconstructing racial stereotyping and by highlighting points of commonalities between the histories of the South Asian and African communities in Africa and the Caribbean. Remarking that the Indian Ocean's routes of exchange date back to Antiquity and cannot solely be framed by the colonial encounter, scholars such as Gaurav Desai (*Commerce with the Universe*, 2013) and Dan Ojwong (*Reading Migration and Culture*, 2013) have recently extended the understanding of Afro-Asian cross-racial relationships across the Indian Ocean imaginary.

We invite papers exploring how the complexity of contemporary race relations between the South Asian and the African communities, as well as its legacy in Africa and the Caribbean, find expression through literary and cultural narratives. Interested contributors are requested to send an abstract of 500 words by January 2017 to Delphine Munos and Mala Pandurang ([Delphine.Munos@ulg.ac.be](mailto:Delphine.Munos@ulg.ac.be) and [mpandu@gmail.com](mailto:mpandu@gmail.com)). The issue is planned for 2018 and all accepted papers will be due no later than August 2017.

All invited and contributed manuscripts to this special issue will be peer reviewed. For guidelines of how to prepare the manuscript, please visit the journal website: <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/rsad>

Delphine Munos <https://ulg.academia.edu/DelphineMunos>

Université de Liège, Bât. A2 Département de langues et littératures modernes place  
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**Call for Papers for LITERARIA: An International Journal of New Literature across the  
World Vol. 8, No. 1-2, Jan-Dec 2018**

Special Issue on: Colonial Imprints in Postcolonial Cinematic Eye

The cinematic vision is the lens that captures dilemma of ethics, aesthetics and logic in relation to physics and metaphysics. It reinforces the camera eye of human mind to revamp the past in terms of the present knowledge in order to reclaim the origin and history, besides to authenticate the fact of the human mind and nature. The cinematic visuals revert the understanding of practices, tensions and perception and contribute in seeking answers to cultural sovereignty or cultural slavery. The film directors, producers, screen-writers have been keen in presenting cinematic imagination viz-a-viz colonial structures, which mostly configures centralism, homogenizing influence of national-imperial opposition. The research articles and papers should attempt to answer analytically as well as critically with the help of their observations and cultural studies on the cinema - How do the postcolonial filmmakers resist oppositional strains of post-independence and pre-independence of their modern nation states? How do contradictory forces in a film reconfigure a new understanding of cultural politics and diverse epistemologies? How does a film challenge global concentration against dominant discourse of hegemonic culture? How do the film graphic, devices, techniques and cinematic strategies address nation, nationalism and decolonization? If the films redress such issues, then how do they absorb spectator-onscreen relationship to find alternative interpretations?

The research papers double-spaced, in not less than 4000 words and not exceeding 5000 words and book reviews in approx 1200 words should be submitted electronically in MS-Word and PDF file formats to the Guest Editor/Editors, at their e-mail addresses given below not later than 30th Oct 2017.

All papers submitted to LITERARIA should be original, neither having been previously published nor being considered elsewhere at the time of submission. Authors can send us the manuscripts according to the MLA Format given in the 8th edition of the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. Please indicate "LITERARIA: Ecological Perspectives in Literature and Media" in the subject line of all e-mail correspondence.

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**CALL FOR PAPERS: FORTELL, Issue 35 (July 2017)**

ISSN No: Print 2229 – 6557, Online 2394-9244

**SPECIAL ISSUE**

**on**

**ASSESSMENT: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has brought the realization to educators and State education boards worldwide that the proficiency of students cannot be captured through mere summative tests and stressed the need to evaluate and assess student performance continually and systematically in a variety of ways resulting in valid ability related inferences. Mere testing has given way to assessing students through assignments, term papers, projects and the like. The mandate of a Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) has given the term 'evaluation' a different hue and shape. It is not by chance that the last letter of that acronym, CCE, is not A, for assessment, or T for testing but 'E' and that too, E for evaluation and not examination. It is true that globally, substantive research is being carried out in the domains of assessment for and as learning. Attempts are being made to document the varied shapes, sizes and forms of CCE. However, there is little documented evidence in the Indian context of such research and there is a long road ahead. This special issue on **Assessment: Issues and Challenges** is an attempt to fill this gap. We invite teachers and research scholars to share their research and views that deal with varied aspects of formative assessment, classroom evaluation or testing at all primary, middle and tertiary levels. Contributions that showcase innovative research, critical thinking and creative approaches would be given special preference. Along with articles on the above-mentioned theme, general articles are invited as well.

*FORTELL, a peer-reviewed journal of the Forum for Teachers of English Language and Literature, is published bi-annually in January and July by FORTELL, New Delhi. Copyright for the individual contribution rests with the author. However, FORTELL Journal should be acknowledged as the original source of publication in a subsequent publication. FORTELL retains the right to republish any of the contributions in its future publications or to make it available in electronic form for the benefit of its members.*

**GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION**

Soft copies of articles/research papers (2000-2200 words), reports (500 words), book reviews, (500-600 words), language games/activities (300-400 words) and letters to the editor (100-150 words) should be sent along with a photograph and a brief bio note of about 25-30 words to the Co-ordinating Editor at

[amrit.l.khanna@gmail.com](mailto:amrit.l.khanna@gmail.com) and [fortell.journal@gmail.com](mailto:fortell.journal@gmail.com).

The contributors should clearly indicate their name, email ID and phone number. Contributions should conform to the sixth edition of the APA style sheet in format, citations and bibliography. Contributors should give a declaration that the paper is original and does not violate the copyright law and it has not been published in any form elsewhere

before. Please look up the website <http://www.fortell.org/> regarding guidelines for submission of the manuscript.

**Guest Editors: Geetha Durairajan & Prem Kumari Srivastava**

**Geetha Durairajan** is Professor, Department of Materials Development, Testing and Evaluation, EFL University, Hyderabad.

**Prem Kumari Srivastava** is Associate Professor, Department of English, Maharaja Agrasen College, University of Delhi, New Delhi

**Last date for submission: April 30, 2017**



## PUBLICATIONS BY MEMBERS

1. Dr. M. Asaduddin
  - *Premchand in World Languages: Translation, Reception and Cinematic Representations*. Routledge India (South Asia Edition) and Taylor & Francis, U.K. (International Edition), 2016.
2. Dr. Bhaskar Roy Barman
  - *Literato-Cultural History of Tripura*. Nabachandana Prakashani, Agartala. 2017.
3. Dr. Simran Chadha
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  - "Literature, Refugees & the Nation state in Neil Fernandopull's "Dear Vichy". Published in *Osmania Journal of English Studies*, Deptt of English, Osmania University, 2015.
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6. Dr. Joel Kuortti
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7. Dr. Basavaraj Naikar

- *The Queen of Kittur-Partridge India* ([orders.partridgepublishingindia.com](http://orders.partridgepublishingindia.com)). 2016.
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- *The Collected Poetry of T.R.Rajasekharaiah*- CVG Books, Bengaluru. 2016.
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- Prasad, Murari. "Explicating the Indentured Migration in Amitabh Ghosh's *The Sea of Poppies*." *Journal of the Department of English, University of Calcutta*. Vol. XXXIX (2014-15): 16-22.
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