

## IACLALS Annual Conference 2026

on

### “Food and Food Cultures in the Global South: Aesthetics, Intersections and Mediations”

co-hosted by

The Department of English, Bangalore University, Jnanabharathi Campus, Bengaluru  
12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> February, 2026

### Conference Report

The Annual Conference of the Association of Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies in India (IACLALS) on “**Food and Food Cultures in the Global South: Aesthetics, Intersections and Mediations**” co-hosted by the Department of English, Bangalore University, Jnanabharathi Campus, Bengaluru, was held from 12 to 14 February, 2026. Professor Shobha M. (Conference Convenor), Professor Sindhu Janadhan (Conference Coordinator), Dr Raghavendra (Technical Advisor) and their team of research scholars and post-graduate students efficiently and enthusiastically managed the academic and special sessions of the conference over the three days. Located inside the sprawling Bangalore University campus with its undulating slopes and a variety of flowering trees marking the onset of spring, three, state-of-the-art conference rooms of the Babasaheb Ambedkar School of Economics (BASE) served as the venue of the conference. Well-manicured lawns and verdant landscapes provided a perfect backdrop. The fresh, balmy air on the cool mornings and evenings added more charm to the ambiance. The theme resonated with a large number of delegates, making it a large conference with about a hundred, high-quality presentations. The wide corridors and lobby of BASE witnessed enthusiastic intellectual deliberations and discussions that spilled over lunch and tea breaks which were marked by a scrumptious array of culinary spreads.



Rangoli patterns made by the students signifying the theme of the conference

The Inaugural session opened with the welcome remarks by Professor Shobha M, the Head of the Department of English, Bangalore University and IACLALS board member. Professor Swati Pal, Vice Chair of the IACLALS introduced the IACLALS. Professor M Asaduddin, Chairperson IACLALS, underscored the contemporary relevance of the theme of the conference adding that food is intimately embedded in local cultures and food culture is rapidly

changing with the digital revolution. Vice-Chancellor Bangalore University and chief-guest, Professor Jayakara S M then welcomed the delegates and stressed the relevance of the humanities, social sciences, specially literature in helping comprehend the complexities and challenges of human experiences. The Registrar Bangalore University, Ms. K T Santhala conveyed her best wishes to the Department of English, which is also celebrating its golden jubilee this year. The session closed with a Vote of Thanks given by Professor Sindhu Janardhan.



Professor Shobha M delivering her welcome address



The Inaugural session

(L-R) Dr Raghavendra, Prof. Sindhu J, Prof. Shobha M, Prof. F Rizvi, Prof Swati Pal, Prof. M Asaduddin, Prof. Jayakara S M, Ms. K T Santhala, Prof. N Haider and Prof. A Mannur



Releasing the Book of Abstracts and the conference schedule  
(L-R) Prof F Rizvi, Ms. K T Santhala, Prof. Jayakara S M , Prof. M Asaduddin, Prof. Swati Pal, Prof. Shobha M

Professor Anita Mannur, Professor of Critical Race, Gender and Culture Studies, American University, Washington DC United States of America, delivered the keynote address. In her paper “Edible Aesthetics: Food, Form and the Cultural Politics of Taste across Borders,” Professor Mannur talked about the relevance of tactility in food preparation and culinary practices in South Asian homes. She emphasised the relevance of re-centering brown hands – hands in action in the preparation of food, and delighting in the pleasures of partaking it. Her talk set the tone for the conference and emphasised the importance of both, theorising food and food studies, as well as enjoying the process of food preparation and consumption. The session was chaired by Professor M. Asaduddin.



Professor Anita Mannur delivering the keynote address

The conference saw about a hundred presentations, spread over the three days in twenty-seven academic sessions and four special sessions. Insightful papers negotiating various aspects of food and food culture foregrounded food in relation to a variety of aspects associated with processes of its preparation, the aesthetics of its presentation and the politics of its consumption. Several papers upfronted food and caste politics, sustainability and self-representation in Dalit fiction, Dalit autobiographies and in cinematic representations of Dalit people and communities. They explored and debated ideas surrounding who cooks for whom, who cooks and who consumes, who gets to cook for whom and who consumes what. Among the numerous themes that were under study, several deconstructed gastronomical patterns in regard to taste, aroma, smell, rituals and faith, disability, hunger, deprivation and ecology. Also in focus was food as cultural memory; in digital aesthetics; in historical and mythic texts and tradition; in relation to identitarian politics; as a tool to control and exercise surveillance; the semiotics and semantics of food in food narratives; memorialization of food in diasporic communities and in cultural archives; food as a means to identity formation; food as metaphor; food and flavourful genderlect, and a host of associated themes. The papers testified to the wide range of the areas of enquiry to which food and food cultures of the global south can be subjected and to the extensive academic and critical engagement of the presenters with ideas pertaining food.

In her paper “The contemporary Café Culture of Kolkata Gen Z, Millennials, and Class Hierarchy: Gustatory Cells as a Site of Tracking Colonialism and Neo-colonialism through Enculturation and Acculturation”, Pritha Sarkar traced the changing food patterns in the food culture of Kolkata cafés such as Flurys and Sienna over the years. She investigated the shift in gustatory habits that binds with the class composition, change in profession, and lifestyle of the emerging middle-class, the millennials and the Gen Z and also bears witness to the shift from colonialism to neo-colonialism and the commodification of ethnic cuisines. Alvina Ahmad focused on eating habits induced by disability in her paper “Disability and Food: Ingestion, Access, and Assisted Eating.” Since eating habits among the disabled are dependent upon external factors like modified ingestion and assisted feeding, her study raised questions of agency, bodily autonomy, and intimacy. Monib Ahmad’s paper “The Kitchen as a Battleground: A study of the Indian National Army” posited the kitchen as one of the invisible battlegrounds where the Indian National Army (INA) fought British imperialism. His study explored how the INA contributed towards uniting Indians under a common kitchen irrespective of caste and community. He examined how food, used as an instrument of division by the British was radically recontextualized as a point of anti-colonial resistance by the INA’s food policy that constructed a modern Indian identity. Haadiyah Marikar’s paper “Get the ghozhumba kanji, it’s nombuthoraka time: The Intersection of Food, Language, and Identity in the Study of Sri Lankan Englishes Spoken by Moors” adopted a sociolinguistic approach to empirically study the relationship between language and food in meaning making. Placing the spotlight on Sri Lankan Moors, a minority community to which she belongs, Haadiyah conducted interviews and group discussions with members in the community to study the role of the kitchen and food practices in creating an archive of language in identity construction of the Sri Lankan Moors. Maziah Shaaz adopted an interdisciplinary approach in her paper “Kitchen, Body, and Text: Food and Menstrual Taboos in South Asian Narratives” to establish an understanding of menstrual myths and taboos. It read the kitchen as a contested space, the body as a site of cultural inscription, and the text as a medium of resistance and remembrance in South Asian cultural narratives. She elucidated how menstruation inverts symbolisms inherent in food and food practices and marks the moment when food practices shift from being inclusive to discriminatory. Amandeep Kaur and Mohd. Aqib read Khalid Jawed’s *Ni‘matkhana*, or, *The Paradise of Food* from two different perspectives. Kaur’s paper

“Phantasmagoria, Disgust, and the Kitchen in Khalid Jawed’s *The Paradise of Food*” examined Jawed’s novel as deploying phantasmagoria, disgust, and abjection to reveal the kitchen as a metaphorical combat zone where the illusions of morality and civility are stripped to expose hunger as the universal yet destabilising force at the core of human existence. Building on Immanuel Kant’s Critique of Judgement and Kristeva’s theorisation of abjection, she studied how Jawed mobilises disgust to interrogate the fragility of cultural and moral boundaries. Mohd. Aqib’s paper “Translatable/Untranslatable Food: Examining the Translation of the Culinary Diction in *Ni‘matkhana* into English” examined Baran Farooqi’s translation of Jawed’s novel as performing a complex linguistic and cultural re-inscription, in which food becomes the principal site of translation. He read how the translation foregrounds the difficulty of transmitting culturally specific culinary practices and their attendant moral and affective registers. Tufan De examined sports fiction writer Moti Nandi’s novellas, *Koni*, *Kalabati* and *Striker* in his paper “Taste, Tradition and Athleticism: A Gastronomic Study of Three Novellas by Moti Nandi” with a view to theorize how these narratives conceptualize food, both, as a material necessity for building an aesthetic, athletic body and as a prerequisite for sustaining the active human physique. He problematized the discourse on food by situating it within a complex nexus between variables like class, age and gender, thereby arguing how the relation between idealized athletic bodies and disciplined dietary practices is equally shaped by socio-economic conditions.

All the academic sessions were well-attended by engaged audiences and followed by animated Q & A sessions and discussions.



Session 1.3 chaired by Shyamala Narayan



Session 4.1 chaired by N. Mukherjee



Session 4.3 Ayesha Irfan presents her paper



Session 9.2 chaired by Jabeen Yasmeen

This year's edition of the Meenakshi Mukherjee Memorial Prize (2026) (for the best paper published during the past two years) was awarded to IACLALS member Professor Nishat Haider, Professor, Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi for her paper, "Representation of Memory and Trauma in *Manto*", published in *Memory Studies in India: Texts and Contexts* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill 2025). In a session chaired jointly by Professor Swat Pal and Dr Dhurjjati Sarma, Dr. Sarma engaged Professor Haider in a conversation which revealed her deep understanding of the nuanced representations of the lived experiences of Sa'adat Hasan Manto in Nandita Das' eponymous film as well as the critical framework within which she situated her paper. Professor Haider received the prize comprising a citation, a certificate and a cheque of Rs.10,000.

The distinguished jury comprised Professor Kailash Ch. Baral, former Professor of English and India Studies, EFL University, Hyderabad; Professor Subha Chakraborty Dasgupta, former Professor of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University and Professor Rachel Dwyer, Professor Emerita of Indian Cultures and Cinema at SOAS, University of London. With the award of this year's MMM Prize, Professor Haider enjoys the distinction of being the only IACLALS member to have received the award twice.



Prof. M Asaduddin presents the scroll and the cheque to Prof. N Haider. Prof. Pal and Dr. D Sarma look on

As always, the coveted C D Narasimhaiah Prize 2026 edition (for the best paper presented at the conference) was a closely-contested competition. This year, the five finalists – Aalisha Chauhan, Aniket Kumar Jha, Ashima Shrawan, Gaurav Singh and Sanyogita Singh were shortlisted after their papers were judged by Professor Ranu Uniyal, former Professor of English, University of Lucknow, and Professor Himadri Lahiri, former Professor of English at University of Burdwan, in the first-round, prior to the conference.

The three floor judges, Professor Meenakshi Pawha, former Professor of English University of Lucknow, Professor Babibrata Mahanta, Professor of English, Banaras Hindu University,

Varanasi, and Professor Gourhari Bahera, Professor English, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Gorakhpur University, Gorakhpur judged the contestants for their presentation skills and their responses to questions posed by delegates among the audience. This year's C D Narasimhaiah Prize contest comprising a certificate of commendation and a cheque for Rs. 5000 was a very closely contested one – perhaps the only one in the history of its institution by the IACLALS, to encounter a tie at both stages, with identical scores. The 2026 edition of the prize was shared by two contestants – Sanyogita Singh and Gaurav Singh, and the runners-up position was also shared by two contestants – Aalisha Chauhan and Ashima Shrawan. Huge congratulations to all of them.



The CDN panel with the floor judges and the IACLALS board  
(L-R) Prof. G Behera, Prof. M Pawha, Prof. B Mahanta, Prof. S Pal, Prof. F Rizvi, Aalisha Chauhan, Sanyogita Singh, Ashima Shrawan, Prof. M Asaduddin, Aniket K Jha, Gaurav Singh, Prof. D Dattaray, Prof. Shobha M, Dr. D Sarma

The IACLALS continued its tradition of releasing academic publications by its members (published within the last year) by hosting the book release session on the eve of the first day of the conference. The session was moderated by Dr. Dhurjjati Sarma. A total of six volumes covering areas of academic interest, literature in translation and creative writing were released. Series editor Professor M Asaduddin released his critical history of Kannada literature (Orient BlackSwan); co-editors Professors Sudha Rani and Rachel Irdaya Raj released their volume on memory studies in the digital age (Routledge); Professor Neenu Kumar released a manual to organizational behaviour (Book Age Publications), Professor Fatima Rizvi released her translation of Javed Siddiqi's pen-portraits (Om Books International) and Dr. Shweta Kapoor released two volumes of verse and fiction for children, published by Bigfoot Publications. The authors and editors introduced their volumes to the audience.



(L-R) Prof Sindhu J, Prof Swati Pal, Dr. Shweta Kapoor, Prof. F Rizvi, Prof. Neenu Kumar, Prof. Rachel Irdaya Raj, Prof. Sudha Rani, Prof. M Asaduddin and Dr. D Sarma and Prof. Shobha M with the books they released

Apart from the technical sessions featuring academic presentations, one of the regular showcase sessions at the Annual IACLALS conference is dedicated to providing a platform to members of the IACLALS who are poets. Day two of the conference saw the poetry reading session chaired by Professor Swati Pal (Vice Chair, IACLALS) featuring several young and senior poets including Professor Banibrata Mahanta, Professor Swati Pal, Professor Neenu Kumar, Mohd. Aqib, Saim Raza, Dr. Roopashree, Dr. Sowmya A, Kangkana Roy and Dr. Shweta Kapoor who recited their compositions covering a range of themes and subjects ranging from the personal to the social, philosophical and political, in English, Urdu, Hindi and Kannada. While most of the compositions captivated the audience with their compelling sensitivity, unflinching charm and introspective depth, a few induced mirth and hilarity.



Prof. B Mahanta



Mohd. Aqib



Dr. Roopashree



Saim Raza

The evening was further enlivened by a lec-dem – a lecture accompanied by soulful renditions of Kannada semi-classical vocals including folk-songs and *bhavageethe* to the accompaniment of music by Professor K S Vaishali of the Department of English, Bangalore University. Professor Vaishali is a reputed vocalist with several stage performances to her credit.



Professor Vaishali demonstrating a Kannada vocal

The conference was supported by the publishing house Orient BlackSwan that displayed a good number of their publications, including their most recent ones over the three days of the conference. Delegates were found browsing eagerly over the volumes and making purchases.



Glimpses of the Orient BlackSwan corner

The Annual General Meeting of the IACLALS was held on 13 February 2026, day two of the conference. Professor M Asaduddin, Chairperson, IACLALS, presided over the meeting and updated members about the past year's activities and accomplishments. He apprised that the international chairship of the ACLALS rested in India and the ACLALS triennial would be hosted here in 2028. He presented the balance sheet of previous year's (2025-26) financial matters – the revenues generated and expenses incurred. He urged members to submit proposals to host mini-conferences for which IACLALS gives a modest subsidy, specifically meant for institutions located in far-flung areas of the country. Professor Pal informed that the IACLALS journal Issue #11 will be published by the end of April 2026. Prof. Anjali Daimari, HOD of

English, Gauhati University, and Dr. Sarma, Department of MIL, GU submitted a proposal to host the 2027 IACLALS conference in Gauhati University, Guwahati. Members discussed the proposal at length and expressed their enthusiasm in meeting next year in a picturesque Guwahati. Senior IACLALS member Professor Chitra Panikkar seconded the proposal on behalf of the members. It was suggested that the theme of the conference centre rivers and riverways. Professor Shobha M requested the presenters to submit their completed papers within the next six weeks to ensure the timely publication of conference-related journal issue.



(L-R) Prof. Shobha M, Prof. F Rizvi, Prof. Anita Mannur, Prof. M Asaduddin, Prof. D Dattaray, Dr. D Sarma after the Annual General Meeting

Thereafter, the Vice Chancellor and the Registrar, Bangalore University, hosted the conference guests to a sumptuous dinner, which added to the warm camaraderie enjoyed by everybody.

The conference concluded with a valedictory session chaired by Professor Swati Pal. Senior IACLALS member Professor Murari Prasad delivered the valedictory address. In his own words, he “took a walk down the IACLALS memory lane”. He commented on the theme of the conference and the range of the papers presented.



Professor Murari Prasad delivering the valedictory address

The valedictory session was followed by the vote of thanks delivered by Professor Fatima Rizvi, Secretary, IACLALS, and by Professor Shobha M, Conference Convenor, Department of English, Bangalore University.



Prof. F Rizvi delivering the vote of thanks on behalf of the IACLALS

We at the IACLALS would like to thank our co-hosts at Bangalore University, Bengaluru for their warm hospitality – the delicious food and snacks served at the conference, the travel and residential arrangements, and for the excellent efforts made by them to ensure the smooth running of the three-day conference. We would like to say an especially warm “thank you” to all the dedicated rapporteurs, volunteers and the usherers at the Department of English who helped steer the conference with precision and participated enthusiastically through the three days; the chairpersons who conducted their sessions with engaged academic interest, the delegates who presented their papers, and the audience who enlivened each session with their incisive questions and comments.



The IACLALS team at the Conference. Chairperson Professor M Asaduddin is flanked by the keynote speaker Professor Anita Mannur and the valedictory speaker Professor Murari Prasad



With the student volunteers of the Department of English, Bangalore University

Fatima Rizvi  
Secretary,  
IACLALS