

## **REPORT FROM THE ICLA STANDING RESEARCH COMMITTEE ON SOUTH ASIAN LITERATURES AND CULTURES (JANUARY 2022 TILL DATE)**

This report for the ICLA on the Standing Research Committee on South Asian Literatures and Cultures comes at a difficult time when we are still trying to come to terms with the loss of our co-chair, Professor Chandra Mohan. Professor Mohan was the co-chair of this committee and also the General Secretary of the Comparative Literature Association of India. His dynamism is missed by this Research Committee. However, we will make up for his absence by reaching out to young scholars and researchers working on South Asian cultures and Literatures across the Humanities and Social Sciences.

Dr Sayantan Dasgupta who is the Secretary of CLAI and a member of the EC of ICLA, now joins Prof. E.V.Ramakrishnan as a co-chair of the ICLA Standing Research Committee on South Asian Literatures and Cultures.

The ICLA Standing Research Committee on South Asian Literatures and Cultures has been fostering research and pedagogical activities related to the study of South Asia in all its varied manifestations.

The Committee featured prominently in the recently concluded online conference on “Comparative Literature: Mapping Milestones, Tracing Trajectories” organized by the Department of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, in association with the Comparative Literature Association of India. The event was held from 23 to 25 July, 2024. This conference featured three sessions related to the ICLA Standing Research Committee on South Asian Literatures and Cultures. The session on “Nation & Identity” on Day 1 (Chair: Dr Rindon Kundu, Sri Sri University, India) featured the Committee, So did the session on “Translating Narratives” on Day 2 (Chair: Dr Rini Bhattacharya Mehta, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, USA) and the session on “Poetics and Comparative Literature on Day 3 (Chair: Sayantan Dasgupta, Jadavpur University, India).

The Department of English and Comparative Literature, University of Kerala, hosted a three-day international conference on “The Politics of Memory and History: Beyond the Postcolonial and the Postmodern” (13-15 March, 2023). The Concept Note of the Conference was presented by Prof. E V Ramakrishnan, and the Keynote Address was delivered by Dr. T. T. Sreekumar, Professor, Department of Media & Communications, EFLU. Plenary speakers included Prof. B Hariharan (Head, Institute of English, University of Kerala, TVM), Dr. Malavika Binny (Asst. Prof. and Head, Department of History, Kannur University), Professor Dorothy M. Figueira (University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia, U.S.A), Dr.Laura Jakica (Community Program officer, City of Melbourne, Australia), Prof. Saugata Bhaduri (Center for Linguistics and Cultural Studies, JNU, New Delhi), Professor Simi Malhotra (Dept. Of English, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi), Dr. Sreebitha P.V (Dept. for Studies in English, Kannur University) and Dr. Mohamed Shafeeq Karinkurayil (Manipal Centre for Humanities, Manipal).

Members of the committee have been very active in the area in the current session. **Professor Anisur Rahman** published his book, *Hazaar Rang Shaairi: The Wonderful World of the Urdu Nazm* (New Delhi: HarperCollins, 2022). The book opens up a new vista into the study of the

Urdu poetic tradition in Pakistan and India; it has been received very well in critical and literary circles and has spurred on a series of discussions and reviews.

His article, “Languaging Gesture: Gesturing Language: A Case for Rekhti Poetry”, was published in *Transcultural Humanities in South Asia*, edited by Waseem Anwar and Nousheen Yousaf (London/New York: Routledge, 2022).

He has also spoken at a number of fora on South Asian literatures and cultures in recent months. He delivered the Keynote Address, “Rang Rang Shaairi, Rang Rang Tarjuma,” at the event organized by the University of Mumbai in collaboration with the University of Munster, Germany, on April 06, 2023.

He also delivered a Public Lecture titled “Mir Bayaan: Three Hundred Years Later,” organised by Pashyantee Bilingual, New Delhi, on June 11, 2023. He delivered the Keynote Address, “Indian English Poetry Today,” at New Alipore College, Kolkata, on January 06, 2023. In addition to these, he gave the Plenary Address titled “In T. S. Eliot's Classroom: My Students and Me,” at the international conference on Hundred Years of *The Waste Land*, at Aligarh Muslim University, on February 25, 2023. He also gave the Keynote Address, “What is Not Vulnerable After All: A Universalist Position,” at the National Seminar on Vulnerability Studies, University of Hyderabad in collaboration with UNESCO Chair on "Vulnerability Studies", on August 23, 2023.

**Professor Kavita Sharma**, president of CLAI, has been consistently making a significant contribution to the cause of the ICLA Research Committee. She is a veteran in the field of South Asian Studies. A former President of the South Asian University, New Delhi, she has been pushing the cause of an integrated study of South Asia vigorously. Her recent book, *India and China: Expansion, Equity and Excellence* (Springer, 2023) is a continuation in that direction.

She has given a number of Keynote Lectures in related areas over the last two years. This includes *Kasturba Gandhi: A beacon of Women Empowerment*, Keynote in Webinar, on March 07, 2024.

**Professor Subha Chakraborty Dasgupta**, member of CLAI EC, and former faculty of Delhi University and Jadavpur University, has been a long-time champion of South Asian Studies. She co-edited the pioneering *Critical Discourse in Bangla* (New York and London: Routledge, 2022), which foregrounds the critical writing tradition in the Bangla language in South Asia. This is a most valuable archive for researchers in the area and holds the promise of effectively decolonizing the pedagogy of Comparative Literature across the world particularly in the context of critical writing.

She has also published “Beyond Postcolonialism: Towards Decoloniality—A Novelist Reads the Bengali Novel”, an essay, in *Criticism, Literary Theory and Ideology*, published by Honoré Champion, Paris, 2024.

**Professor Tapati Mukherjee**, president of CLAI, has also done commendable and pathbreaking work related to the ICLA Committee on South Asian Literatures and Cultures. She published two co-edited books on Raja Rajendralal Mitra, the first Indian President of the Asiatic Society. They are *A Visionary through Lens : A Pictorial Biography of Raja Rajendralal Mitra* (2022) and *Rajendralal Mitra: Sardhadvisatabarsik smaran sankalan* in Bangla (a collection of articles on the 200th birth centenary of Rajendralal Mitra, 2024)

She has also contributed a number of articles and essays to various publications. Her “Sanskrit and Sanskrit Language: A Repertoire of Eternal Knowledge” was published in *Anviksha: Research Journal of the Department of Sanskrit*, volume 35 Part 1, Jadavpur University, 2022. Her essay, “Revisiting Sudraka’s *Mricchhakatikam* against the backdrop of political upsurge and social upheaval” was published in *Sudraka’s Mricchhakatikam: A Reader* (Bolpur.,Birut Bharatiya Jatiya Sammilani,2022). She also contributed a piece on “The role of ancient Indian religious and philosophical texts in stress management in a pandemic-devastated global scenario” to the *Nityananda Memorial Volume* (Howrah Sanskrit Sahitya Samaj, 2022). Her “Rabindra Bhavana Museum and Archive: A living chronicle of 19th century Bengal” was carried in *Biographical Museum: An Expression of National Identity* (Kolkata, Indian Statistical Institute, 2022).

She also contributed “Problems and Prospect of translating Indic treasures of knowledge with special reference to colonial intervention in 18th and 19 th century” to *Anviksha , Research Journal of Sanskrit*, Jadavpur University, Vol 36, Part 2, 2023. Her essay, “Education of Women in Ancient India in *Asramkanya, Prof Kalpika Mukhopadhyay Felicitation Volume* (Delhi, Pratibha Prakashan, 2024).

Professor Mukherjee has made presentations on various aspects of South Asia in various fora. She spoke on Vedic Literature and Dharmasastra in the Distinguished Lecture Series of Rabindra Bharati University in 2024. She was also the Resource Person on Swami Vivekananda and Nivedita' s artistic thought at the Belur Ramkrishna Mission College.

**Professor E.V.Ramakrishnan** has contributed several essays that have a bearing on South Asian literature and culture to edited volumes and reputed journals.

His recent publications in this area include some of the following essays:

“The Waste Land and After: The Making of Modernist Poetry in Malayalam”, *100 Years of The Waste Land: Indian Responses* edited by K.Satchidanandan, 2023;

“From Reception to Resistance: Multiple Languages of Indian Modernism”, *The Languages of World Literature : The Many Laanguages of Comparative Literature*, edited by Achim Holter, Walter de De Gruyter GmbH, Berlin/Boston. 2024.

“Modernism as Ideology and Experience: The Interface between Critical Thought and Poetry among Modernist Indian Poets”, *Criticism, Literary Theory and Ideology* edited by Dorothy Figueira et al, Honore Champion, Paris, 2024.

“Translating Difference: Reflections on the Interface between Novelistic Discourse and World Literature”, *Journal of Foreign Languages and Cultures*, Vol. 8, No.1, 2024.7.27

He has published two books during this period:

*Mikhail Bakhtin: A Critical Introduction*, in the series of books on Literary/Cultural Theory, Orient Blackswan, New Delhi, 2023.

*Cultural Poetics of Bhasha Literature: In Theory and Practice* Edited by E.V.Ramakrishnan, Orient Blackswan, (forthcoming in August, 2024).

Prof. Ramakrishnan delivered the key-note address at the annual conference of the Indian Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies, on the theme of “Wit, humour, and the Carnavalesque in Literature and Performance’ with special reference to Indian Literature”, at BITS, Pilani Goa Campus, on 15<sup>th</sup> February, 2024.

Delivered a talk on the “Emergent Trends in Recent Malayalam Fiction” at Maharaja’s College, Ernakulam, Kerala on 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2023.

Presented a paper on the “Digital Culture and Its Impact on Literary Studies” at the National Seminar on “Cyberculture and the Future of Literary Studies”, 28<sup>th</sup> November, organized by Krishna Menon Memorial Women’s College, Kannur, Kerala, 28<sup>th</sup> November, 2023.

Delivered a lecture on “Nationalism and the Making of Modern Indian Fiction” at the National Seminar held at Kaladi Shri Sankaracharya University, Tirur, 5<sup>th</sup> January, 2024.

He was invited as a speaker at the International Literary Festivals held at Thrissur organized by Kerala Sahitya Akademi (1-3, February, 2024); at Thiruvananthapuram organized by Mathrubhumi Publications (8-11, February, 2024) and at New Delhi organised by Sahitya Akademi, (11-15, March, 2024).

Professor Ramakrishnan was selected for the Sahitya Akademi Award for Malayalam language for 2023, by the National Academy of Letters, New Delhi. The award was for his study of the modern Malayalam Novel, *Malayala Novelinte Desakalanga*, Mathrubhumi Books, 2019.

**Professor Kunal Chattopadhyay, CLAI EC member**, is an historian by training and a comparatist by designation. He has been working on South Asian literatures and cultures going beyond borders. He presented his paper, “Attempting a Socialist Realist Recasting of the Bangla Literary Historiography: The Discussions Generated in the late 1940s”, at the 2022 ICLA Conference in Tbilisi, Georgia. His paper on “The Progressive Movement and Some Aspects of the Debate over Bangla Poetry”, focusing on South Asia, was published in *Literatures of the World and the Future of Comparative Literature*, edited by Peter Hadju and Xiaohong Zhang (2023). Professor Chattopadhyay also coordinated an online certificate course on ‘Knowing India: Academic Social Responsibility and the Humanities’ organized under the SPARC programme by the Centre for Translation of Indian Literatures, Jadavpur University, and the India Dialogue Partnership Programme of the University of East Anglia, from June 12 to July 19, 2024.

His paper on “Reception of Socialist Realism in Bangla Progressive Literature and Alternatives to It: 1930s to 1990s” was published in *XVI International Symposium Contemporary Issues of Literary Criticism Socialist Realism in Literature and Art Vol. 16 (2023)*. His lecture on “The Progressive Writers Movement and a Bangla Debate on Poetry” was published online on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ydy-oA1Z7-c&t=464s>.

**Professor Sayantan Dasgupta, CLAI secretary and ICLA EC member**, has been awarded a SPARC project on “Academic Social Responsibility and the Humanities in India: Researching, Archiving and Translating Indigenous and Marginalised Languages of West Bengal”, which he is carrying out under the auspices of the Centre for Translation of Indian Literatures, Jadavpur University, in collaboration with the India Studies Partnership Programme of the University of East Anglia, UK. The project concentrates on Nepali, Lepcha, Bodo and Kurmali. Some of these marginalized languages are used in three South Asian countries—India, Bangladesh and Nepal. He also participated in a number of activities related to South Asian Literatures and Cultures. He gave a talk on ‘Reading South Asian Identity through Literature: Seepage, Convergence and Conviviality across Borders’ as part of the online course on ‘Knowing India: Academic Social Responsibility and the Humanities’ organized under the SPARC programme by the Centre for Translation of Indian Literatures, Jadavpur University, and the India Dialogue Partnership Programme of the University of East Anglia, on July 19, 2024.

Dasgupta also organized “Translating Shiva Kumar Rai”, a translation workshop on the short stories of Shiva Kumar Rai, a Nepali-language writer from India, in June, 2023. The workshop worked with three South Asian languages—Nepali, Bangla and English.

He also organised “Writer Speak: A Discussion with Mamang Dai, Durga Prasad Panda and Maitrayee Patar”, writers representing three different languages from South Asia, in August, 2023.

Another workshop on “Translation and Academic Social Responsibility: Nepali Literature from West Bengal” was organized by Sayantan Dasgupta and Suchorita Chattopadhyay in February, 2024. Yet another workshop on “Translation and Academic Social Responsibility: Nepali and Bodo Literature from West Bengal” was organized by Sayantan Dasgupta and Suchorita Chattopadhyay in June, 2024.

**Professor Rindon Kundu, Treasurer, CLAI Kolkata chapter**, organized a Two-Week Online Faculty Development Programme titled, “Translation Studies from the Global South” under the aegis of the Sri Sri Centre for Translation and Interpreting Studies (SSCTIS) in association with the Association of Indian Universities (AIU) and Academic and Administrative Centre (AADC) at Sri Sri University (SSU) from February 19 to March 05, 2024. This FDP conceptualised by Dr Rindon Kundu, Director of SSCTIS, SSU attempted to deconstruct the “universal” concept of translation by investigating diverse discursive practices in “marginal spaces” and bringing together alternate perspectives and methods of translation from the Global South. Further details are available on this link.

<https://srisriuniversity.edu.in/sri-sri-centre-translation-interpreting-studies/>

Professor Kundu also presented a paper titled “Geo-modelling Translation Studies in South Asia: Interweaving Translation Studies with Geometry and Geography” at the conference titled ‘South Asia in Translation: Geography, Memory, and Textuality’ hosted by the New Delhi office of the Lakshmi Mittal and Family South Asia Institute, Harvard University, in collaboration with the National Translation Mission, CIIL, Mysore, from 5th to 6th October 2023 at IIC, New Delhi.

**Professor Prasad Pannian** delivered a paper (with Ms Achu John) titled “Prison Dispositifs and their Circular Elimination” in the World Congress Foucault: 40 Years After on Foucault and Postcolonial Governmentalities in South Asia jointly organised by the Institute of Language Studies and Research (ILSR) and Postcolonial Studies Association of the Global South (PSAGS), on 24th and 25th May, 2024. He also delivered the Keynote Address on “The Work of Art in the Era of the Posthuman” in connection with the National seminar in Govt. College, Mankada on 11th December 2023. Dr Pannian presented another paper (with Ms Achu John) titled “Incarceration, Intersectionality and Social Justice: Reading Rani Dhavan Shankardass's *Of Women Inside: Prison Voices from India*” in the international seminar on “Indian Society, Marginalised Sections and Social Justice: Experiences and Challenges” organised by Mahatma Ayyankali Chair, Dept of History, University of Kerala from 16th to 18th August 2023.

He delivered an invited lecture on a national workshop on “National Education Policy (NEP) and Comparative Literature” on “The Trajectory of a Department of Comparative Literature: Beginnings and Becomings” organised by the Centre for Comparative Literature, Bhasha Bhavana, Visva Bharati on 5th March 2022.

Dr Pannian has also edited *Dalit Habitus. Critical Essays in Malayalam* (Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, forthcoming).

South Asia was one of the areas of focus for the XVI Biennial CLAI International Conference organized by the Department of English, Sikkim University in collaboration with NTM-CIIL, Mysore, ILSR Kolkata and Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi. The Department of English, Sikkim University, organised the conference from November 20 to 22, 2023. The theme was “Interplay of Community, Textuality and Orality: Comparative Perspective on History, Culture and Society”. **Dr Rosy Chamling and Dr Saswati Saha** were coordinators of the conference.

The organizing committee had received over 325 abstracts out of which 120 abstracts were selected for presentation. A large number of paper presenters were from the northeastern part of India; the conference also saw sizeable participation from South Asia.

The keynote speaker for the conference was Patricia Mukhim, Editor, *The Shillong Times*, writer and activist. Speakers at Plenary sessions included Prof. Swati Guha, ILSR, Dr. J. Daniel Elam, University of Hong Kong, Dr. Kanchuka Dharmasiri, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, Prof. Jib Lal Sapkota, Professor and Head, The Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal, Prof. Irshad Gulam Ahmed, Salesian College (Autonomous), Siliguri, Prof. Sanjukta Dasgupta (formerly with the University of Calcutta) gave the Valedictory Address.

E.V.Ramakrishnan , Formerly affiliated to Central University of Gujarat

Sayantana Dasgupta, Jadavpur University

Co-Chairs, The ICLA Standing Research Committee on South Asian Literature and Culture

27 July, 2024