

Dear CLAI Members,

We are pleased to display the abstracts of the four proposals which have been accepted for the Group Section presentations at the ICLA Congress to be held at the University of Vienna, from July 21 to 27, 2016.

CLAI members who are interested in presenting a paper in any of these Group Sections are welcome to submit their individual abstract to the coordinator of the group concerned for consideration. An abstract should be well-written, short (around 250 words) with an aptly defined title. It must be e-mailed to the relevant coordinator of the group section by July 31, 2015, positively.

However, members who intend to send their abstracts independently are welcome to make online submission as per the instructions given in the website at <http://icla2016.univie.ac.at>.

For any related information, you are welcome to contact:

Chandra Mohan, General Secretary, CLAI (c.mohan.7@hotmail.com)

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With regards,

Chandra Mohan

General Secretary, CLAI

THE ICLA CONGRESS AT VIENNA, JULY 21 TO 28, 2016.

THEME: SOUTH ASIAN PATHWAYS: LANGUAGES, GENDER AND POLITICS

This proposal draws its connectivity from the ICLA Congress sub-theme titled: "Many Cultures: Many Idioms". Primarily, it is related to the ICLA Research Committee project on "Literary and Cultural Interrelationships between India, Its Neighboring Countries and the World".

The proposal is directed at exploring various cultural similarities, differences and developments in the South Asian region as ideas and cultures have traveled and intermingled and also as there is a shared past between India and Pakistan, India and Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and other SAARC countries.

The panel, likely to spread over all the 5 days of the conference aims at working through the politics, gender relations and languages (as they have evolved on different soils) and tracing patterns of similarities and differences, with the aim of working out areas of peace, of the possibilities of negotiations, the role of religion in defining a society, as well as gender positions, the diversity in objectives, the rights of the state versus the rights of the individual, the right to relate to others outside the boundaries of one's nation, the similarity or difference in political struggles. An amazing scenario of relationships emerges and needs to be seen from different perspectives of location, politics and of time/history.

It would also be interesting to move through the shared history and influence of colonization and its totalizing aura, yet look for interstitial space for resistance, protest, non conformity. It is important to locate those spaces where power is negated, negotiated, imitated, parodied or even usurped. Also, since we are in a post colonial position, we occupy an extremely uneasy and compromised position. Moreover, in South Asia, cultural positions are mediated by dialogue, narration, translation, captions, camera etc. We could perhaps look at all this. And of course, explore trans-nationalism. The question of language is extremely pertinent. We could see what has happened to accepted notions of language and its meanings, both at the level of semantics and syntax. Although we are looking at translations, this area could also be explored, because this is very importantly tied up with sexuality/gender.

Further, while discussing the oral traditions we also need to look into the surviving elements of the oral and aural in contemporary culture. It may further be explored how pluralism and multiculturalism are reflected in the poetics of South Asian Region.

It is expected to be a highly exciting and interesting group section/session wherein eminent scholars and researchers from India, South Asian and other countries would submit their abstracts. The research committee coordinator will forward the selected and edited abstracts to the ICLA Congress Academic Committee at Vienna well on time.

Dr Chandra Mohan

(II)

Section: Language – The essence of world literature

Theme: The language of power – the language of resistance

Group Section Title: The Many Languages of Communist Cultural Resistance in India

Abstract: Socialist politics in India predated the Russian Revolution, but systematic socialist/communist propaganda began after 1917. By the 1930s, a serious attempt had begun to build a Marxist cultural movement. This group section will focus on the plurality of reception of Marxist/ socialist-realist cultural politics in the different Indian languages, in the way class struggle, anti-colonialism, caste exploitation and gender oppression were woven together, in novels, stories, drama and poetry. Looking at Urdu-Hindi, Bangla, Malayalam, and Tamil literature (and if possible others) in both synchronic and diachronic frames from the 1930s Progressive Movement to the era of mass communist oppositions in independent India, the group will seek to examine the ways in which the language of communism, charged with being alien, was able to respond to Indian realities. Attempts will be made to look at the concept of Socialist Realism developed by the Soviet Writers Congress and its application under quite distinct Indian conditions.

Papers will seek to address the reasons for the lasting communist cultural impact in some languages and its relatively greater decline in others, along with tracing diverse strands of interaction between political lines and cultural production. A preliminary working hypothesis is that where caste, class and gender intermeshing were properly articulated in literature, there was a lasting relevance. By contrast, when an English educated middle class interpreted party line and imposed its hegemony, reception was superficial and often weakly related to Indian social and cultural realities.

Coordinator: Kunal Chattopadhyay – kunal.chattopadhyay@gmail.com

(III)

Comparative Literature in India: The Multilingual Muse

Panel Co-ordinator: Dr. Soma Mukherjee, Assistant Professor, Centre of Comparative Literature, Visva-Bharati

Semantic interaction between languages spoken across the Indian subcontinent is a historically verifiable linguistic fact. While the literatures composed in these languages bear considerable traces of this linguistic interaction, literary studies in India has remained largely oblivious to this plural reality, conceptualising “Indian Literature” as a constellation of various individual language literatures. The disciplinary and hermeneutic practice of Comparative Literature in India, however, is predicated upon the continuing existence of this plurilingualism as it exhibits itself in the very ‘texture’ of Indian literatures.

As a result of a shared pattern of linguistic development, verbal art in each of the Indian languages has always had at its disposal a shared vocabulary of cultural expressions. One of the aims of this panel is to show how the presence of this vocabulary has been useful for, rather than obstructive of, creative de-familiarizations in Indian literary art across time and space. Mainly historiographic in nature, the panel will examine the polyglottism of Indian writers, the use of multiple registers in individual literary texts drawn from multiple language sources and most importantly, the heterogeneous and plural nature of each of the individual language systems as evidenced from their respective literatures.

The panel will try to buttress this understanding of literary multilingualism with an analysis of the logic and politics of linguistic standardization, an ongoing process that began with the intervention of British colonial policies in the nineteenth century, leading to the linguistic division of Indian states after independence. The papers included in this panel will try to show how this tension affects the practice of Comparative Literature in India and how it responds to the various institutional manifestations of this tension.

Copy of the accepted PROPOSAL for a Group 'C' Section at ICLA Congress

Coordinator: Dr. Mythili Rao, Jain University, Bangalore, Email:
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Title: Marginalized Literatures and their Assertions in Multilingual Societies:
Comparative Perspectives

The proposal takes its cue from the contemporary scenario where we find the status of minority discourses, tribal, aboriginal and Dalit literatures in the context of mainstream writings in multilingual and multicultural societies in India and elsewhere in the world. The plea in favor of retaining the pluralist heritage consists of diverse ethnic and tribal communities, visualizing that every flower has the right to grow and spread its own fragrance to make up the cumulative beauty of the garden called multicultural society of a nation.

One of the most important boons of the post-colonial and post modern discourse is giving voice to the marginalized. Here we would like to look at the term 'marginalized' in two ways or contexts. During colonization and in the post –colonial era, on the one hand you have the literature created by the country in response to the colonization and on the other we have the response of one section of society from within the country which has been relegated to the margins due to the very structure of the society. In both these situations we have one group exercising power over the other and another which is suppressed and overpowered / vanquished. In this entire process language plays a key role. In fact, it takes all the necessary steps to see to it that the 'other' is made to feel neglected despite its rich literature. If language is the vehicle for expression of culture then those cultural expressions also get affected in these circumstances. The combined appropriation of language and culture leads to a sense of loss of identity for the subjugated. Many multicultural countries which are being studied under this rubric are: India, Canada, Australia or any other country, which was colonized. A country like India is faced with yet another challenge and that is of being multi-lingual. Constitutionally the country is divided into 27 linguistically organized states. What lends to the linguistic complexity of India is the presence of many minor languages and dialects in every state apart from a main regional language.

It took some-time for it to reclaim the lost time and land. But it seems to be responding and retorting with equal force thereby asserting itself – making space for itself and creating an identity. Literary voices from the margins have challenged and sometimes altered the existing literary traditions. It is interesting to look at the ways in which issues of development, man-environment relationship and rights of indigenous communities are addressed in contemporary Indian literature. Every literary work bears the stamp of a culture. An ideal situation would be

where this mutual exchange does not become a matter for exhibition but contributes to the growth of knowledge and wisdom and leads the society to 'mutual illumination' (Bakhtin).

CLAI Members who are interested to make their presentations under the academic program of this group 'C' section of the ICLA Congress are requested to send their abstracts to me at my email id given above. As per the instructions of the ICLA committee, an abstract should be well-defined and not more than one page. The abstracts received will be considered for inclusion in the panel in consultation with senior colleagues of CLAI. You are welcome for any query.