

**Report of 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 XVI Biennial CLAI International Conference on 20th – 22nd November, 2023 on Interplay of Community, Textuality and Orality: Comparative Perspective on History, Culture and Society. The conference was organized in association with Comparative Literature Association of India and in collaboration with National Translation Mission, CIIL, Mysore; Institute of Language Studies and Research, Kolkata & Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi. The conference has received an overwhelming response from all across the country and abroad. The organizing committee had received over 325 abstracts out of which 120 abstracts has been selected for presentation. The conference had 105 paper presenters from India and abroad including a large number of paper presenters are from northeastern part of India.

The inauguration of the conference was attended by Shri Kunga Nima Lepcha, Honourable Minister of Education, Government of Sikkim. Following upon the introduction to the conference by Convenor, Dr. Saswati Saha, Professor Rosy Chamling, Dean, School of Languages and Literature, Sikkim University welcomed the guests and delegates to the conference. There were address by Shri K.V.S. Kameswara Rao, Registrar, Sikkim University, Prof. Tapati Mukherjee, CLAI President, Kolkata Chapter, Prof. Chandra Mohan, CLAI General Secretary of CLAI, Dr. Tariq Khan, Project Director, NTM-CIIL, Mysore and Prof. Swati Guha, Director of ILSR, Kolkata.

The keynote speaker for the conference was Patricia Mukhim, Editor, The Shillong Times, author and activist who spoke on *Oral Tradition versus Paradigms of Textuality* in the context of Northeast India. The first plenary session included a talk by Prof. Swati Guha, Director, ILSR who spoke on *Language Multiplicity, Margins and Comparative Frames* and Dr. J. Daniel Elam, Assistant Professor, Department of Comparative Literature, The University of Hong Kong who spoke on *Anticolonial World, Anticolonial Comparisons, and Anticolonial Literatures*.

The first panel discussion was titled *Locating the Multivalence: Language, Textuality and Cultural Pluriverse of North Bengal and Sikkim – In Loving Memory of Ren Lyangsong Tamsang*. The session was moderated by Prof Anindya Sekhar Purakayastha, Professor, School of Translation and Cultural Studies, ILSR and the speakers were Prof. Rosy Chamling, Dean, School of Languages and Literature; Dr. Sayantan Dasgupta, Associate Professor, Department of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University and Dr. Mrinmoy Pramanick, Head, Department of Comparative Indian Language & Literature, University of Calcutta. The session dealt with the diverse linguistic and literary traditions of India with a special focus on Northeast. It engaged with the diversity that has developed as a result of the various traditions, history, memory, oral and textual practices of the multi-lingual communities explored how comparative perspective may be used as a means to negotiate the differences among the communities. It revisited the complexities of languages which preserves within it the art forms, folk literature, history and memory of the indigenous communities.

The speakers for the second plenary session were Dr. Kanchuka Dharmasiri, Senior Lecturer, Department of English, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, who spoke on *Many Faces and Phases of Ravana: Perspectives of Sri Lanka* and Prof. Anindya Sekhar

Purakayastha, Professor, School of Translation and Cultural Studies, ILSR, Kolkata, who spoke on *Archives of Indigenous Modernity: Retracing the Power of Orature on the Centenary of the Mymensing Geetika*. The first day of the conference was concluded with Sisir Kumar Das Memorial Lecture that was delivered by Professor Dorothy Figueira, Distinguished Research Professor, Comparative Literature, University of Georgia and the title of her lecture was *Comparative Literature: "the Quintessential Undisciplined Discipline"*.

The second day of the conference opened with the third plenary session which was chaired by Prof. Ipshita Chanda, Professor of Comparative Literature, English and Foreign Language University. The speakers were Prof. Jib Lal Sapkota, Professor and Head, The Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal who spoke on *Environmental Justice in Literary Imaginings: Voices from the Margins* and Prof. Irshad Gulam Ahmed, Professor Emeritus, Department of English, Salesian College (Autonomous), Siliguri who spoke on *Literature and Marginality: Interplay of Marginality, Orality and Environment in Literature and Culture of NorthEastern India*.

The second panel discussion was chaired and moderated by Prof. Rosy Chamling, Dean, School of Languages and Literature, Sikkim University where the speakers were Prof. Pushpa Sharma, Professor, Department of Nepali, Sikkim University and Shri Gadul Singh Lama, renowned author and Sahitya Akademi awardee. The theme of the session was Literature, Culture and Society: Perspectives from Sikkim and as such the discussions were centred around indigenous languages, literatures, knowledge systems and pedagogical texts of Sikkim.

The third panel discussion was on the topic "Literatures of Resistance: Comparative Perspectives. The session was chaired and moderated by Prof. Sanjukta Dasgupta, Former Professor of English and Dean of Arts, University of Calcutta where the speakers were Prof. Suchorita Chattopadhyay, Professor and Dean, Faculty of Arts, Jadavpur University; Prof. Ipshita Chanda, Department of Comparative Literature, English and Foreign Language University, Hyderabad and Prof. Kunal Chattopadhyay, Professor, Department of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University. The day concluded with Swapan Majumdar Memorial Lecture delivered by Prof. Amiya Dev, Former Professor, Department of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University.

The technical sessions with paper presenters from all across the country and abroad continued parallelly. The technical sessions on both days concentrated on Northeast explored the possibilities offered by the past and prevailing literary and cultural traditions of the Northeast, keeping in view their relations of difference, continuity and unity with culturally and geographically diverse parts of the plural nation of India. They engaged with the issues of intertextuality and translation of literary and pedagogical texts between the languages of the Northeast and the rest of India and addressed questions of migration, acculturation, diversity, assimilation, homogenization and identity formation in relation to Northeast India. There were sessions dedicated to indigenous cultures of other minority communities of India. The papers presented the folk art, culture and traditions that are not much discussed in the mainstream literary practices. The areas were approached with a comparative lens. There was also session on the significance of the translation of pedagogical texts of indigenous knowledge systems and their inclusion in NEP syllabus.

The fourth and final panel discussion which was titled as Translation, Pedagogy and Indigenous Literatures in Contemporary Times. The session was chaired and moderated by Dr.

Saswati Saha, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Sikkim University. The speakers for this session were Dr. Mrinmoy Pramanick, Assistant Professor and Head, Department of Comparative Indian Language and Literature, University of Calcutta; Mr. Rindon Kundu, Assistant Professor and Director, Sri Sri Centre for Translation and Interpreting Studies, Sri Sri University, Cuttack and Dr. Abrona Lee Pandi Aden, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Sikkim University. This panel discussion was dedicated to issues related to language, translation of Indian texts and NEP 2020. This panel specifically attempted to align with the objectives of the National Translation Mission of translating knowledge texts to create a knowledge society by transcending language barriers and constitution of an inclusive knowledge society.

The valedictory address was delivered by Prof. Sanjukta Dasgupta, Former Professor & Dean of Arts, University of Calcutta which was chaired by Prof. Rosy Chamling, Professor, Department of English & Dean, School of Languages and Literature, Sikkim University. The topic of discussion in the valedictory session was “The Dialectics of Discrimination: Decoding the Triple Bind.” The three-day international conference concluded with a cultural programme after the vote of thanks and the certificate distribution programme.

The conference sought to establish how India as a nation has been greatly enriched by the complex cultural heritage of the rich traditions of India’s many linguistic communities thereby realizing the vision of “*Ek Bharat Srestha Bharat*”. There were sessions dedicated to Indian languages, knowledge systems and pedagogical texts as well. These discussions, we believe contributed to the understanding of the significance and promotion of the National Education Policy 2020 which endorses the development of cultural awareness among students and scholars to provide them with a sense of identity, belonging and an appreciation of the richness of Indian cultures and identities.