



Comparative Literature Association of India

XVI Biennial International Conference

In collaboration with

Department of English, Sikkim University

(A Central University established by an Act of Parliament of India in 2007)

26th-28th April, 2023


**Interplay of Community, Textuality and Orality:
Comparative Perspectives on History, Culture and Society**

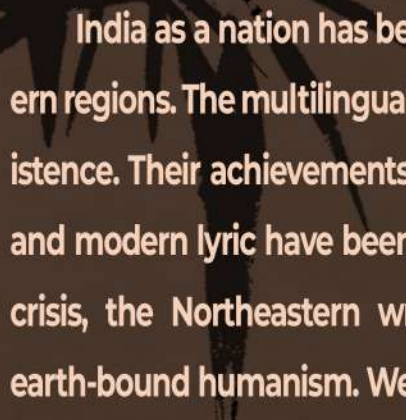



Concept Note:

Literary theory has contributed towards the recovery of marginalised narratives and discourses in literature during the last three decades. In this context, the recovery of diverse indigenous traditions has become an important task of comparative studies of literature. Nations emerged as 'imagined' communities. However, nation-states were not 'imagined' in the crucible of prolonged struggles of anti-colonial resistance in Asia, Africa and Latin America, but were born of the political exigencies of imperial powers. The disconnect between the plurality of imagined communities and the integrative logic of the authoritarian nation-state, runs through many of these societies. This is not to fall into the trap of reducing all 'third world' literature into 'national allegories.' The questions of representation and identity have acquired a salience today which they never had in the past. In the altered circumstances of post-colonial nations, competing nationalities assert their right to be heard and taken seriously. But this is an essential feature of all pluralistic societies.

Literature is a means of negotiating difference through dialogue. Degrees of difference suggested by terms such as 'textuality and orality', 'great and little', 'major and minor' are value-loaded terms, originating in specific historical conjunctures, specific to social locations and manifestations of constructed social hierarchies. In India, they date back to the pre-colonial past and include the neo-colonised or globalised present. With the arrival of print and modernity, they have gained new connotations that need to be studied. Questions of culture and politics, aesthetics and ideology, literature and performance cannot be easily segregated in the history of people who have long memories of dislocations, displacements and dispersals. The borderline between the oral and the textual which are unmarked in their art forms need to be revisited. Folk-literature offers a treasure house of their recollections of traumas and survivals, along with the distilled wisdom derived from their struggles to live in harmony with nature. Over centuries of their evolution, the mainstream and the great traditions have drawn sustenance from the invisible roots of little traditions that run deep into popular imagination and social history.







India as a nation has been greatly enriched by the complex cultural heritages of the North eastern regions. The multilingual states of Northeast India have been exemplary models of peaceful co-existence. Their achievements in modern forms of literature such as the short story, the novel, drama and modern lyric have been vital and outstanding. In these times of climate change and ecological crisis, the Northeastern writers have much to offer by way of recovering the essence of an earth-bound humanism. We would like to explore 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.

We invite papers with a comparative perspective that focus on literary texts and traditions in their historical, social and cultural contexts. They may not be exclusively about the literatures and cultural practices of the North eastern regions but should have a bearing on contemporary Indian social and cultural contexts. Papers which discuss theoretical issues are welcome, along with comparative studies of Northeast literatures and cultures with the other parts of India. Questions of gender and caste have had different connotations in the cultural history of the North eastern regions. These may be explored both within the pre-colonial and post-colonial contexts. The colonial epistemology and its positivist logic have created categories which violate the very spirit of the communities which are described as 'tribal'. Revisiting them will help us recover the voice of the people that has been erased out of existence by their taxonomy.

It will be rewarding, among other things, to engage with the issues of intertextuality and translation between the languages of the Northeast and the rest of India. We also encourage papers related to translation of knowledge texts of Northeast India. There has been a galaxy of Indian writers from the Northeast whose works have won national and international acclaim. Indian English writing that has emerged from the Northeast has a distinctive flavour of its soil, which makes it universal and local at the same time. Questions of migration, acculturation, diversity, assimilation, homogenization etc may be taken up for discussion in relation to the Northeast or other societies as they may unravel the process of 'othering' that inform the construction of larger identities.



A special session in honour of Temsula Ao will be held during the conference. As part of the conference, we shall also have Sisir Kumar Das Memorial Lecture and Swapan Majumdar Memorial Lecture.

Some of the sub-themes in the context of the main theme that can be taken up for discussion are as follows:

1. Region and the Nation
2. The 'Vernacular' Imagination
3. Folklore and the Carnival
4. The Sacred and the Secular
5. Self and the Other in Indigenous Traditions
6. Aesthetics of Orality
7. Literature as Resistance
8. Gender and Literature
9. The question of the 'minor' in Literature
10. Speaking from the Margins
11. Bilingualism and Translation
12. Translation, Pedagogy and Academic Social Responsibility
13. Memory as History
14. Comparative Literature and Academic Social Responsibility
15. Significance of Comparative Literature and Translation Studies in National Education Policy 2020

Abstracts of about 250 words along with a short bio-note of about 100 words may be submitted to claiconferencesu2023@gmail.com before the last date mentioned below. Papers may be presented in English, Nepali, Lepcha, Limbu, Bhutia and Hindi.

Important Dates:

Last Date for abstract submission: 10th February, 2023

Selected Participants will be notified on: 20th February, 2023

Last Date for Registration: 15th March, 2023

Registration Fees and Details:

Faculty Members/ Research Scholars: ₹3500/- (Without Accommodation)

Students without accommodation: ₹2000/-

Students with accommodation: ₹5000/- (4 nights stay)

International Participants: US\$ 200

Accommodation will be arranged only for students (UG/PG) upon request. For the other participants, the organising committee may assist them in finding suitable accommodation near the venue. Payments may be made to the hotel directly.

Upon acceptance, participants will be provided with registration details through email. The Registration Fees will include workshop kit, certificate, lunch and refreshments during the three days of the conference. Participants would need to become members of CLAI on receiving their acceptance letters in order to present papers, if they are not already members of CLAI.

The conference will be held primarily in physical mode, however some of the sessions will be live streamed.

For further information please visit: <https://www.clai.in/upcoming-event/>

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