

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, JAMIA MILLIA ISLAMIA, NEW  
DELHI**

**IN COLLABORATION WITH  
SOUTH ASIA INSTITUTE, HEIDELBERG UNIVERSITY,  
GERMANY**

**ORGANISES MINISTRY OF EDUCATION (MHRD) SPARC  
SUPPORTED ONLINE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON**

**LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES  
AND THE 'VERNACULAR' IN  
SOUTH ASIAN COLONIAL  
AND POST-COLONIAL  
LITERATURE(S) AND PUBLIC  
SPHERES**

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**15TH MARCH 2021- 17TH MARCH 2021**



**Book of Abstracts**  
**Day One**  
**MONDAY, 15 MARCH 2021**

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS**  
(10:25 AM-11:25 AM IST)

**“The Idea of the Vernacular in India- A Historical Overview”**

**Prof. G. N. Devy**, Author, Cultural Critic, Public Intellectual and Former Professor of English, MS University of Baroda

**Abstract**

My lecture will present a historical overview of how some languages were seen as vernaculars and others as 'Languages'. It will begin with the 4th century BC Paninian system of classification and move through Bhartrihari's idea of language, Matanga's description of the language diversity in India, the 'riti' theory based on the knowledge about regional varieties, al Beruni's description of Indian diversity and come up to Sir William Jones' understanding of languages in India. The lecture will further add notes on George Greirson's classification of languages and dialects in his Linguistic survey of India and close with my survey published as The People's Linguistic survey of India. Having detailed the principles used for 'particularizing' languages, I shall offer a short theoretical statement on what a 'vernacular' is and what it does to 'language'.

**Bio-Note**

Ganesh N. Devy is a thinker, cultural activist and an institution builder best known for the People's Linguistic Survey of India and the Adivasi Academy created by him. He writes in three languages—Marathi, Gujarati and English. His first full length book in English (After Amnesia 1992) was (hailed immediately upon its publication as a classic in literary theory. Since its publication, he has written and edited close to ninety influential books in areas as diverse as Literary Criticism, Anthropology, Education, Linguistics and Philosophy. G. N. Devy was educated at Shivaji University, Kolhapur and the University of Leeds, UK. Among his many academic assignments, he held fellowships at Leeds

University and Yale University and has been THB Symons Fellow (1991-92) and Jawaharlal Nehru Fellow (1994–96). He was Professor of English at the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda (1980-96). In 1996, he gave up his academic career in order to initiate work with the Denotified and Nomadic Tribes (DNT) and Adivasis. During this work, he created the Bhasha Research and Publication Centre at Baroda, the Adivasis Academy at Tejgadh, the DNT-Rights Action Group and several other initiatives. Later he initiated the largest-ever survey of languages in history, carried out with the help of nearly 3000 volunteers and published in 50 multilingual volumes.

### **SESSION 1: Plenary Address (11:30 AM- 1:00 PM IST)**

#### **“A Vernacular Archive of Sex and Sexuality: Personal Annotations”**

**Prof. Charu Gupta**, Professor, Dept. of History, Faculty of Social Sciences,  
University of Delhi

#### **Abstract**

My plenary lecture and paper will draw from my research of more than thirty years on different subjects and arenas, to reflect on how and why the vernacular has been my constitutive archive to study sex and sexuality in colonial India. Questioning the authority and authenticity of the official archive, and inspired in part by the intellectual provocations of Dalit and feminist studies, I will not only point to erasures and silences in the archives, not only seek to read between the lines, but show how my work attempts to reframe the archive by exploring diverse histories of sexuality in vernacular imaginative texts. The widely differentiated vernacular public sphere of early twentieth century north India reveals how dominant trends towards greater regulation of sexuality jostled with potential instabilities and counter-sexualities, making room for a more robust history of sex and sexuality. The vernacular has been central to my work also because, unlike a focus on cataclysmic events, it is a tactic of the everyday, the mundane and the anecdotal, where gender, sex and sexuality are often ubiquitous. My lecture and paper will posit three different sites of enquiry by drawing from the vernacular of early twentieth century. I will first discuss the sexual anxieties around servants and domestic workers. Second, I will consider the intersections between romance, sexuality and religious conversions, where there was an increasing construction of the lustful Muslim

male and the foolish Hindu woman. Finally, I will reflect on vernacular sexology from the margins by discussing the writings of a woman and a shudra. The potential of employing a feminist vernacular as a critical methodology will be explored through 'records of incrimination', reflected in the Hindi writings of upper caste Hindus.

## **Bio-Note**

Charu Gupta teaches in the Department of History, University of Delhi. She did her PhD from SOAS, University of London. She has been a Visiting Professor and ICCR Chair at the University of Vienna, a Visiting Faculty at the Yale University, the Washington University and the University of Hawaii. She has also been a Fellow at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Delhi, the Social Science Research Council, New York, the Asian Scholarship Foundation, Thailand, the Wellcome Institute, London, and the University of Oxford. Her publications include the following books: *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community: Women, Muslims and the Hindu Public in Colonial India* (Permanent Black, 2001 & Palgrave, 2002) (paperbacks 2005, 2008, 2012; kindle e-book 2013); *The Gender of Caste: Representing Dalits in Print* (Permanent Black & University of Washington Press, 2016; paperback 2017) and *Contested Coastlines: Fisherfolk, Nations and Borders in South Asia* (Routledge, 2008, 2018). She has edited various books, including *Gendering Colonial India: Reforms, Print, Caste and Communalism* (Orient Blackswan, 2012) and *Caste and Life Narratives* (Primus, 2019, co-ed. S. Shankar). She has also been the guest co-editor of special issues of the journals *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, *Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly* and *Cultural Dynamics*. Her writings have been translated into Bengali, Marathi and German. She has published several research papers in national-international journals on themes of gender, caste and religious identities. She serves on the editorial board of *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, *Gender and History* and *Journal of Women's History*. She is presently working on life narratives in Hindi in early twentieth century north India.

### **"Territorialising Language, Thinking the Political through Debates around Language 1920-1960"**

**Dr. Veena Naregal**, Associate Professor, Institute of Economic Growth, University of Delhi

## **Abstract**

This paper explores the category of 'region' as a territorial entity around language as it emerged through the decades following the revocation of the Bengal Partition. Language and linguistic communities acquired a new salience as demands for political reform and responsible government precipitated debates around territorial redistribution, constitutional norms, and distribution of franchise. These debates to reconfigure spatial and territorial parameters of constituent units, decide the scope of franchise and delimit political rights for minorities were as much about maneuvers to fix the place of key markers of caste, religion and language within Indian democracy. Drawing on constitutional debates, higher educational policy and regional discourse in Marathi, the paper explores the elaboration of the 'regional' as a site for the exercise of political coherence, elite control and a modicum of connect with popular will. Additionally, it throws light on how the linking of territory and language impinged upon the category of regional as it was elaborated through the expanded Indian university system in the late colonial period.

## **Bio-Note**

Veena Naregal is Associate Professor in the Institute of Economic Growth, University of Delhi. Her research interests include language and Indian democracy, disciplinary/institutional histories and regional theatre histories.

**“A South Asian Vernacular Public Overseas: Tamil in the Straits Settlements, c. 1870-1942”**

**Prof. Torsten Tschacher**, Professor, Dept. of History and Cultural Studies, Freie Universität, Berlin

## **Abstract**

The idea of a 'South Asian vernacular' during the colonial period conjures up the idea of a relatively simple language-hierarchy, with English as the dominant idiom of colonial power, a few privileged South Asian vernaculars recognized by the colonial government, and a large number of languages that did not receive any public support. But how did this language-hierarchy look from the perspective of South Asians settled

overseas, as traders or laborers in another colony? How were South Asian publics constituted in conditions that were different from those at home? In how far were patterns reproduced or changed? And what language ideologies were formulated in the diaspora, in comparison to developments in South Asia?

One interesting case to consider these questions is the development of Tamil print and publishing in the Straits Settlements (Singapore, Penang, and Melaka) between the latenineteenth century and the Japanese occupation in 1942. From the 1870s onwards, Tamil newspapers and books began to be published locally, mostly by Muslim printers. Until World War I, Tamil publishing in the Straits Settlements largely followed local patterns. After the war, the situation changed, and with the impact of both Indian and Dravidian nationalism, the local Tamil public sphere became more 'diasporic' in the sense that it became more dependent on discourses produced in India.

### **Bio-Note**

Torsten Tschacher is currently teaching at Freie Universität Berlin. His research focuses on the history, society and discursive traditions of Tamil-speaking Muslims around the Bay of Bengal. He has published widely on questions of identity and community formation in Tamil Muslim societies as well as Muslim literature in Tamil. A research monograph entitled *Race, Religion, and the 'Indian Muslim' Predicament in Singapore* was published in 2018 with Routledge. Currently, he is preparing a book-length study of Islamic textual cultures in the Tamil-speaking world between 1572 and 1842, as well as co-editing a volume on non-sectarian traditions of celebrating Muharram.

## **SESSION 2: Plenary Address (3:00 PM- 4:20 PM IST)**

**"Beyond hegemonic binaries: English and the 'vernaculars' in post-liberalization India"**

**Prof. Javed Majeed**, Professor of English and Comparative Literature, King's College  
London

## **Abstract**

The stimulating Concept Note for the conference 'Language ideologies and the 'vernacular' in South Asia' calls for a re-examination of the notion of vernacularity vis-à-vis English in contemporary India. In response to this Note, my paper begins by considering how tertiarization, the knowledge economy, and the global spread of neoliberal free-market doctrines have naturalised the use of English as the language of global competitiveness in post-liberalization India and in the global South. In doing so, it draws on the emerging field of language economics (Ricento 2015), as well as on studies of the relationships between the tertiary sector as a defining element of the globalized new economy and language ideologies (Duchêne & Heller 2012). A combination of a world systems approach to language (de Swaan 2002) with language economics helps us to understand how the dominance of English is globally sustained through cost savings, privileged markets, economies of scale, and legitimizing effects, and how that dominance is reproduced in key nations of the global South such as India. As language economists have shown, in the 'cognitive capitalism' of the knowledge economy language is a factor in the production process, and language learning is reconceptualised as an economic decision (Duchêne & Heller 2012, Spowage 2018). This has had an impact on the language economies of India, in which the ascendancy of English as an index of global competitiveness co-exists with other languages in regional and statelabour markets. My paper addresses the intersections between language ideology, economic processes, and language work in what Frankel (2005) has described as India's 'enclave economy with islands of excellence distributed between regions, states, and urban and rural areas' (p. xiii). In this context, 'language workers' in callcentres are emblematic figures of late capitalism (Boutet 2012). It is in call centres that we see the new language ideologies and the 'linguistic Taylorism' of contemporary global capitalism (Duchêne & Heller 2012), with English as an index of globalism, at work. This indexicality is also evident in the dominance of English as the language of instruction in Indian Institutes of Management. I consider how that dominance has arisen historically, and I argue that the colonial legacy of English needs to be carefully distinguished from the key factors which have contributed to this dominance since 1945, that is, the colonial legacy of English in India is not necessarily a primary factor in the formation of English as an indicator of globalism in the subcontinent. Without fully displacing the earlier

colonial/postcolonial dynamic between Indian languages and English, the conditions of late capitalism after the end of the Cold War and the liberalization of the Indian economy have created another dimension to this dynamic, which has to be taken into account. One important facet of the positioning of English vis-à-vis the 'vernaculars' in postliberalization India is the former's posited 'neutrality'. In management studies, the use of Business English as a circumscribed and shared communication code in the global business community, which is not tied to a cultural identity rooted in a narrowly defined ethnos, is an example of this neutrality. This neutrality is reinforced in other key domains of the Indian polity, and is part of what Kachru (2005) has called "linguistic schizophrenia" in India (p.116). However, as Duchêne & Heller point out, while the new centrality of linguistic form and practice in economic production has affected our ideas of language, and language and culture are increasingly treated in economic terms, this has not replaced older discourses which treat language as indexing cultural identity, allegiance and peoplehood (see also Schieffelin et al, 1998). In South Asia, it is the so-called vernaculars that are associated with these qualities and categories. As the Concept Note for the Conference puts it, the 'vernaculars' are 'invested with qualities like groundedness and expressive strength'. They index a rooted authenticity and an autochthonic legitimacy, and evoke a specific 'structure of feeling', to use Raymond Williams' term. However, as is the case elsewhere, these discourses of profit and ancestral pride are intertwined and are dialectically inter-related. An English-vernacular binary obscures this interactive relationship, and also obscures the ways in which, as Kachru puts it, 'on the one hand, we have nativized English discourse, and on the other hand we have Englishized discourse in South Asian languages' (p. 115). It also ignores the regional sub-varieties of South Asian English, created through the interaction between regional languages and English, and the contest between American and British English for hegemony. This binary therefore distorts and mystifies the sociolinguistic realities of language mixing in India as well as the pluricentrism of world Englishes. It also legitimizes the institutionalisation of a particular kind of hierarchical multilingualism in India (for this hierarchy, see Babu 2017 & Agnihotri 2015), which hegemonizes both English and some Indian languages in concert with each other. The English-vernacular binary is therefore, at odds with this joint hegemonization of English and key vernaculars in the prestige hierarchy of languages in India. This joint hegemonization of prestige forms of language, both English and Indian, involves constructing an ideology of classicism, which I will discuss in my paper. Furthermore, the two terms of the



English-vernacular binary share an ideology of nativism. Despite widespread bilingualism in India, language movements and the very notion of the linguistic states in India are implicitly premised on the category of the monolingual native speaker. Even though world Englishes are pluricentric, monolingual paradigms cast a long shadow over the representation and teaching of English, and exocentric linguistic norms continue to exert power in South Asia in relation to English. In both the case of English and the vernaculars, then, the figure of the 'native speaker' is instrumental in defining the apparently common-sense linguistic boundaries of authentic belonging, in relation to which the 'non-native speaker' is positioned (to paraphrase Martin Gill (2012) discussing English and immigration in Britain, p. 273).

The paper concludes by briefly discussing and addressing some key questions for the conference to consider. Can we move beyond the English-vernacular binary, and if so how? What might an emancipatory as opposed to hierarchical multilingualism look like? Is it possible to dehegemonize English and the Indian languages privileged in hierarchical multilingualism by moving away from the monolingual paradigms rooted in the notion of a native speaker? Can we and should we move beyond the colonial-postcolonial studies paradigm which reinforces this binary? Is it possible to resist the conception of languages as commodities and economic assets without reinforcing a nativist paradigm and a 'pastoral' (Wee 2012) view of language, which treats it as a proprietary entity inherited across generations of speakers belonging to the same community and occupying a specific territory, in short, as an 'inalienable carrier ... of the community's ancestral values' (p. 63)?

Finally, how and why is India a fitting site for generating ways to move beyond, and formulating alternatives to, these paradigms, and building on this, can we re-think the term 'India' in wider more imaginative ways which are not coterminous with the bounded territorialities of the political map of the subcontinent?

## **Bio-Note**

Javed Majeed is Professor of English and Comparative Literature at King's College London. He is the author of a number of books and articles on modern South Asia, including *Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill's the History of British India* and

Orientalism (1992); *Autobiography, Travel and Postnational Identity: Gandhi, Nehru and Iqbal* (2007); and *Muhammad Iqbal: Islam, Aesthetics and Postcolonialism* (2009). He is also the editor, with Christopher Shackle, of *Hali's Musaddas: The Flow and Ebb of Islam* (1997), and with Isabel Hofmeyr, of *India and South Africa* (2016). His two-volume study of G.A. Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India was published as *Nation and Region in Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India and Colonialism and Knowledge in Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India* (2018).

### **"A multilingual vernacular: Krishna Sobti's ideas on language"**

**Prof. Francesca Orsini**, Professor of Hindi and South Asian Literature, South Asia Section, School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics, SOAS, London

#### **Abstract**

How do language ideologies work in and for writers? Are they consistent with their own work? How can their ruminations on language be resources for our collective thinking? Krishna Sobti was always a proud nationalist and a strong believer in Hindi, yet her own literary language comprises many registers and is shot through with words and expressions from "other" languages. As we know, she took back her first novel (*Channa*) when the publisher objected to "too much Punjabi". Drawing on Krishna Sobti's dense essays on language—recently painstakingly analysed by Rosina Vuille—this talk will reflect on Sobti's language ideology and writing practice, and what we can learn from it.

#### **Bio-Note**

Francesca Orsini is Professor of Hindi and South Asian Literature at SOAS, University of London, a Fellow of the British Academy, and the author of *The Hindi Public Sphere* (2002) and *Print and Pleasure* (2009). She has just finished a book on the multilingual literary history of North India, and is leading the ERC research project "Multilingual locals and significant geographies: for a new approach to world literature", from the perspective of North India, the Maghreb, and the Horn of Africa.

## SESSION 3: Paper Presentations (4:20 PM- 5:35 PM IST)

### **“Language Ideologies of a Goan Desk Calendar”**

**Dr. Layla Mascarenhas**, worked as Visiting Faculty at BITS Pilani, K. K. Birla Goa Campus and as Assistant Professor at V.M. Salgaocar College of Law, Miramar – Panjim, Goa

**Frederick Noronha** has been a journalist, alternative publisher of books, online networker and photography enthusiast.

### **Abstract**

‘The Wit and Wisdom of Ancient Goa’ is a quaint little desk calendar with 366 Konkani proverbs, compiled by José Lourenço of Amazing Goa Publications and illustrated by Goa’s cartoonist Mário de Miranda. The Konkani proverbs are earthy and reflect the relevance of the wisdom of a simple oral culture of the past to the urban, post-colonial present. This paper presents a few examples of these idioms and attempts to trace their cultural resonance and local flavour. The deceptively simple calendar has two languages on each page: The vernacular Konkani proverb with the English translation and idiomatic meaning explained below. Furthermore, two scripts appear on the page for the Konkani idioms: The Devanagri script and the Romi script. This paper seeks to elucidate the cultural reasons for the two language scripts that appear on the page, and to comment on the status gaps and language ideologies of the different scripts and the two languages used in the calendar. The artwork adds to the communicative act by adding a cartoon language to the page. The paper comments on the significance of the artwork and the visibility of the artworks of cartoonist Mário de Miranda in the public sphere. His use of easily recognizable stereotypes adds to the humour of the visual language. The language ideologies of the use of the vernacular in Goa vis-à-vis English for written literature is also touched upon.

### **Bio-Note**

Layla Mascarenhas spent 19 years raising a family of four children while working lecturebasis at different institutions in Goa, and teaching Piano and Electronic Keyboard at home. She trained several students for international exams conducted by Trinity College, London. She then worked full-time as Visiting Faculty at BITS Pilani, K. K. Birla

Goa Campus and later as Assistant Professor at V.M. Salgaocar College of Law, Miramar – Panjim, Goa. Her doctoral research was on Children’s Literature, and she continues researching and writing. She writes short fiction and poetry. She lives in Goa.

Frederick Noronha has been a journalist, alternative publisher of books, online networker and photography enthusiast. He has also been documenting various aspects of Goa since the 1980s. In 2021, he completed his doctoral thesis related to twentieth-century publishing in Goa, the first home of movable-type printing in Asia since 1556.

**“From English to Hinglish to Indic: A Reflection on the Evolution of Digital Folk Video Culture(s) in India and the ‘YouTube Vs. TikTok’ Controversy”**

**Meenakshi Yadav, Ph.D., Centre for English Studies, JNU**

**Abstract**

The internet in India is in its 26<sup>th</sup> year of existence and during this time it has come a long way. One of the most significant aspects of this evolution has been the transition from the dominance of English in the first decade and a half to the explosion of Indic language content and its associated cultures and ethos in the last couple of years. The democratisation in broadcasting that was enabled by the coming of internet in India coupled with the rise of Web 2.0 User Generated Content (UGC) websites and social media platforms led to the emergence of digital folk culture(s) in India – cultures which were formed through the efforts and engagements of ordinary people. Over time, these cultures have evolved significantly and have become very influential in the public culture of India, especially among the youth. This paper will study the digital folk video culture(s) in India and look at its evolution from a linguistic point of view. This paper will explore how and why the early UGC content in India was predominantly in English, the shift towards a mixed Hinglish aesthetic, and to the final explosion of Indic language content, its related cultures and ethos in the digital public culture in India in the last couple of years. Along with the above, this paper will also look at the reception, interaction, contestation and negotiations that have occurred between the English, Hinglish and Indic digital folk/UGC video communities historically during the different phases of the evolution to look at what it reflects about the language (and its associated culture) hierarchy in India and how it contests the existing English Vs. Indic hierarchy.

This paper will also explore how this contestation has reached a fever pitch in the contemporary times as was reflected in the 'YouTube Vs. TikTok' controversy of May 2020. Finally, this paper will explore the implications the dominance of Indic languages and their associated cultures on the democratic and participative medium of the internet will have going forward for the larger public culture in India.

## **Bio-Note**

Meenakshi Yadav is a Senior Research Fellow pursuing her PhD from the Centre for English Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India. Yadav specialises in Digital Cultural Studies and her PhD research focuses on the evolution of digital cultures in India with specific focus on User Generated Content and the evolution of digital video viewing publics in India.

## **“Towards a Republic of Vernacular (World) Letters: On How to Planetarize World”**

**Arindam Saha**, M.Phil Scholar, Kazi Nazrul University Asansol, West Bengal, India

## **Abstract**

This proposal builds on Pascale Casanova and Franco Moretti's interventions on reworlding existing templates of World literature, arguing how to broaden the geographic territoriality of world literature, ending in that way the current Anglophonic bias and hegemony in this field. In doing that it takes on board issues of inclusivity, ubiquity, modes of linguistic and ideological freedom, and equal representation of writings between the worlds. This is, in other words, an attempt of deterritorialization and reterritorialization of world literature, actualizing in that process Casanova's idea of a 'World Republic of Letters' which will be democratic and representational enough to deconstruct the Anglicized monopoly of world literature. The dominance of English alienates a large section of the global population whose nomadology in planetary thinking and literary expression through their vernacular articulation requires necessary recognition. These nomad-selves demand narrative plurality and linguistic democracy. Borrowing the ideas of contemporary scholars in this field like David Damrosch, Pheng Cheah and Baidik Bhattacharya who have argued for an alternative idea of world



literature in their recent works such as *What Is World Literature? What is a World?: On Postcolonial Literature as World Literature and Postcolonial Writing in the Era of World Literature: Texts, Territories, Globalisations, etc*, this proposal too offers a critique of the existing notion of 'world' in world literature as exclusively Euro-centric. Following them, I argue for an idea of world-making in the context of world literature and I do that through my discussion of vernacular Indian texts and some specimen of Iraqi poetry available in Bengali translation. I also engage with seminal essays of Indian authors such as Rabindranath Tagore and Kazi Nazrul Islam on world literature to see how they offered an alternative concept of re-territorializing world literature. I shall demonstrate how proper recognition and translation of regional literary texts of different non-European and non-American countries can actually planetarize world literature which is at present limited within its Anglophonic boundedness.

### **Bio-Note**

Arindam Saha is Research Scholar (M.Phil) in the Department of English at Kazi Nazrul University and formerly a Research Associate in Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) sponsored Major Research Project on New Social Movement, Media & Civil Society in Contemporary India: Paradigm Shift in Public Protest and Political Mobilisation which was being carried out in Kazi Nazrul University, Asansol, West Bengal, India. He is now working on world literature and postcolonial literature. He has presented paper twice in International Conference at Queens College, CUNY, NY, USA and other places in India. He has been commissioned to review in International journals named *Information, Communication and Society* (Routledge), *Asian Journal of Communication* (Routledge), *Media, Culture and Society* (Sage) and also published paper in an UGC care list journal, *Sahityasetu: A Peer Reviewed Literary e-journal*.

### **SESSION 4: Keynote Address (7:00 PM-7:40 PM)**

**“Lingual estrangement: can we call a language our own?”**

**Prof. Sudipta Kaviraj**, Professor of Middle Eastern, South Asian and African Studies, Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian and African Studies, Columbia University

## **Abstract**

Lingual estrangement: can we call a language our own? I shall try to think through the problem that in colonial settings, our language of experience and language of reflecting on that experience tends to become disjuncted. Can I say for instance that Bengali is my language? - meaning of course not what this clause literally means, but the fact that Bengal language owns me in some sense. I shall try to explore whether this is true, and what this means. I shall then explore what are the problems of using English as our main language of social science reflection. In the last part, I would like to explore the opposite proposition: that being situated between two languages instead of being immersed in one may also have some advantages; and explore this constantly 'translational' situation with a few examples of concepts of social philosophy.

## **Bio-Note**

Sudipta Kaviraj is a specialist in intellectual history and Indian politics. He works on two fields of intellectual history: Indian social and political thought in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and modern Indian literature and cultural production. His other fields of interest and research include the historical sociology of the Indian state, and some aspects of Western social theory. He received his Ph.D. from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Prior to joining Columbia University, he taught at the Department of Political Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He has also taught Political Science at JNU, and was an Agatha Harrison Fellow at St. Antony's College, Oxford. He is a member of the Subaltern Studies Collective.

**Day Two TUESDAY, 16 March 2021**

**SESSION 1: Paper Presentations (9:00 AM–10:00 AM IST)**

**“Bhasha Literatures in Colonial and Post Colonial Context of India”**

**Arifa Banu**, B.A. (Hons.), Dept. of English, JMI, Delhi, and **Zarak Rais**, B.A. (Hons.),  
Dept. of English, JMI, Delhi

## **Abstract**

How is it that Bhasha literatures which have had literary histories of more than a millennium and have authentic and mature traditions, were suddenly subaltern-ed with Macaulay's statement neglecting Orient literature as meritless? This process of "Otherization" which dominated the language ideologies of the Colonialists entered the literary discourse of Indian languages terming them as "dialects" or meritless "vernaculars". In this process of inflicting its own language ideology and culture, the colonialists created a "parody" of their mother country and its literature. When nations become independent and gain an entry into the ostensible postcolonial world, the nationalistic literature wants to return back to the glory of bhasha literature. This desire of restoration is unachievable and therefore, the systems of power that the colonialists leave, employ some languages as "dominant" and some termed as merely vernacular and dialects. In order to trace the trajectory of bhasha literature during the colonial and post colonial period, we have taken as our primary texts, G.N. Devy's "After Amnesia" with its exclusive focus on Indian Literary Criticism and Meenakshi Mukerjee's "The Perishable Empire" and Balchandra Nemade's "Nativism" to see how regional literature and their translations have changed over time. In this paper, we also analyse how "Indigenist Theories" impact our earlier understanding of bhasha literature and how they are different from the Occidental language ideologies.

## **Bio-Note**

Arifa Banu has done her Bachelors in English Literature from Jamia Millia Islamia. She has presented a research paper in JMI in a National Seminar on Gandhi. The title of the research paper was "The Layman and the Mahatma: Gandhi in Indian English Literature". She has also written a research paper on the political speeches of Jawaharlal Nehru. She has also done a certificate course in translation proficiency from JMI. She is currently working as a translator at Al-Mawrid Global. She is about to pursue her Masters in English Literature.

Zarak Rais has done her Bachelors in English Literature from Jamia Millia Islamia. She has been a Team Leader at AISEC and Research and Development Intern at Enactus. She is a content writer at The Jamia Review and also writes book reviews. She is currently

interning at Global Citizenship Foundation as an editorial and content writing intern. She is about to pursue her Masters in English Literature.

### **“The Status of English Language and its Vernacularisation in India”**

**Bushra Jabeen**, Ph.D. Scholar, Dept. of Applied Sciences and Humanities, JMI

#### **Abstract**

The global status of English language is varied in nature. It has attained the status of an official language in the nations like America, Britain, Australia and New Zealand and is treated as a native language. In the countries like India, Singapore, Israel and South Africa, English has been treated next to the widely spoken official language and has an equal importance; unlike the nations like Japan and China which treats English as a foreign language. The status of English language in India has been gripping the base of almost all the facets, ranging from education, global trade, entertainment to media, society and peer circle communication or socio-cultural interaction. However, the seed of the status of this language can be traced back in the roots of the ideologies of English language introduced by the British visit to the nation in 1800s with the primary objective to trade in India and established the East India Company. By the introduction of the Charter Act of 1813 the East India Company lost its hold in the India economy and trade. In the time span of 1913 to 1957 there were many educational institutions established in the metropolitan city of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras along with many missionary schools at primary, secondary and high levels in different parts of the nation. In 1830s, Thomas Babington Macaulay introduced English language and western concept to the Indian education system. Today, with the advent of the internet facility and the communication fluency in the glocalised scenario, English language has penetrated deep into every nooks and corners of the nation. It is perceived as the decadal transition of the status of English language from a typical lingua franca to attaining the status of a vernacular in India. This research work is basically a literature exploration into defining the vernacularisation of English in modern India.

## **Bio-Note**

I am currently a Ph.D. research scholar in the department of Applied Sciences and Humanities, Faculty of Engineering and Technology, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, India. I have pursued my M.Phil. in Languages and Linguistics from Jadavpur University, Kolkata. The title of my thesis is 'Behavioral Geography and Linguistic Pidginisation: A Socio-psychological Analysis of The Students Of Kolkata'. Although am basically from the geographical background in academics and have been awarded a B.Sc. and an M.Sc. in geography from Calcutta University and Aliah University, respectively; I am inclined towards an interdisciplinary approach in research. "The Vernacular Discourse of Education in Colonial India and its Impact on Independent India"

### **"The Vernacular Discourse of Education in Colonial India and its Impact on Independent India?"**

**Shreya Sahay**, Master's Graduate, Dept. of History, DU

## **Abstract**

In 1772, when Warren Hastings arrived at the scene of a famine ridden Bengal, he understood that 'the quickest route to the heart of a people is through the language of the country.' With that in mind he set forth an endeavour to transform the commercially driven merchant into an empire builder, the urgency to learn Indian languages being a prerequisite for the same. What began as an exercise to decode law under the garb of 'Oriental discourse' soon translated into a greater attempt to solidify imperial control and to establish hierarchical relationships. The Vernacular, being at the center of this attempt was fiddled through the means of education, which eventually became a full-fledged branch of imperial administration. The paper thus, seeks to delineate a chronological and thematic journey of the vernacular through colonial pedagogy, based on an amalgam of primary and secondary sources, broadly exploring three dimensions. Keeping Edward Said's notion of Orientalism at the base of our arguments the first section would imperatively discuss the early colonial encounters with Indian languages viz. Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic as well as the 'Vulgar languages', alongside episodic narratives of educational institutes like the Poona College, where the state wielded control through



differentiated language policies. The great Anglicists vs. Orientalists drama which unfolded in 1823 and the infamous Minute of Macaulay dethroned the vernacular from its status of antiquity. In the aftermath of which arose a context, where the education of the entire populace of India was widely accepted as a state duty, the second part of the essay intends to examine these official strides, particularly, the Wood's Despatch (1854) and its emphasis on vernacular being the medium of instruction for primary learning, in terms of the position of the vernacular the subsequent education commissions (Hunter, Raleigh etc.) contemplated on the same lines. The third and final dimension seeks to affix and review the impact of English education with regard to the status of the vernacular in independent India's education policy. From the Kothari Commission (1968), and its 'Three-Language Formula' to the recent New Education Policy (2020), and its stress on the 'mother tongue', how far have we actually come from the shadows of imperialism. Has the relevance of the vernacular in education really transitioned from being hierarchical to foundational?

### **Bio-Note**

My name is Shreya Sahay. I am a Master's graduate from the Department of History, University of Delhi. I specialize in Modern Indian History. Having History as my major during under graduation from Jesus & Mary College, University of Delhi. The five years of my pedigree has culminated into a deep understanding of the subject and placed me at a unique position to analyze both colonial and contemporary issues. This is exemplary in the kind of research I had undertaken as part of my Master's, which include an array of themes pertaining to colonial education, law, society, culture, polity and economy. I aspire to translate the same perspective as a budding researcher.

### **SESSION 2: Plenary Address (10:00 AM–11:00 AM IST)**

#### ***"Territorial Reimaginings in Arun Kolatkar's Poetry"***

**Dr. Anjali Nerlekar**, Associate Professor, South Asian Literature, Rutgers School of Arts and Sciences

## **Abstract**

This essay will look at local exchanges and the resultant intertexts of the 1970s and beyond in the border areas between Marathi and Hindi writing. Instead of starting at the landscape view, this paper will focus on the hyperlocal point of the material artefact and expand from the trajectories that are embedded within. The artefact in question here is the letter written by the Marathi poet and translator, Chandrakant Patil to the Marathi Dalit modernist poet, Namdeo Dhasal which then was published at the start of the Marathi book of poems by Dhasal, *Tuhi Iyatta Kanchi*. This letter memorializes the coming together of Chandrakant Patil, Namdeo Dhasal, the Marathi literary canon, Hindi literary sensibilities, Dalit literature in Marathi and in Hindi, in the aftermath of this seminar. Through examining the paratexts of this opening letter (thick with intimacies and cross-linguistic solidarities) that has now become part of a poetic text, I want to explore the ways in which the writing worlds of Hindi and Marathi intersect and produce a different set of frames to read both literatures. As Dilip Chitre writes elsewhere: "Life on the bridge is a life between languages." (*Bombay Review*, no 1, 1989). The inbetweenness of things is the key. Patil's letter to Dhasal, about the Hindi Sahitya Akademi Parisamvad, published in a prominent Marathi book of poems provides a hinge to open a space to read the literatures of Hindi and Marathi together and chart a mixed legacy of modernisms across the two languages.

## **Bio-Note**

Anjali Nerlekar is Associate Professor in the Department of African, Middle Eastern and South Asian Language and Literatures. She has authored the book, *Bombay Modern: Arun Kolatkar and Bilingual Literary Culture* (Northwestern University Press, 2016; *Speaking Tiger*, 2017). She has co-edited a special double issue of *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* ("The Worlds of Bombay Poetry," Spring 2017) and is co-editing a forthcoming special issue of *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, along with Francesca Orsini, on "Postcolonial Archives." Her other publications and research include work on multilingualism and literature, Indo-Caribbean and Postcolonial literature, and comparative Indian and postcolonial modernisms. Her ongoing project (in collaboration with Dr. Bronwen Bledsoe at Cornell University South Asia collections) is the archive of multilingual post-1960 Bombay poetry at Cornell University titled "The Bombay Poets Archive."

**“The Literary Sovereign: Colonial Histories and the Modern Culture of Letters”**

**Dr. Baidik Bhattacharya**, Associate Professor, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi

**Abstract**

This paper offers a revisionist literary history and argues that the modern culture of letters was largely shaped by colonial histories. The central idea of the “literary” as a sovereign order of textuality—autonomous, autotelic, and singular—was coproduced in the second half of the eighteenth century with an exceptional model of colonial sovereignty in British India. Drawing on diverse material from the colonial archives, this paper argues that this model of literary sovereignty was fashioned through the colonial encounter with various Indian languages and cultures, producing the central template for the modern idea of the literary as a distinct language and textual organization.

**Bio-Note**

Baidik Bhattacharya is Associate Professor at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi, India. He is the author of *Postcolonial Writing in the Era of World Literature: Texts, Territories, Globalizations* (Routledge, 2018). He is the coeditor of *The Postcolonial Gramsci* (Routledge, 2012) and *Novel Formations: The Indian Beginning of a European Genre* (Permanent Black, 2018). His essays have appeared in journals such as *Critical Inquiry*, *New Literary History*, *Boundary 2*, *Novel*, *Interventions*, *Postcolonial Studies* among other places.

**SESSION 3: Paper Presentations (11:00 AM-12:15 PM IST)**

**“Telling Lives in Forked Tongues: Reading Shanta Gokhale and Nabaneeta Dev Sen’s autobiographical writings”**

**Dr. Dhruvadi Chattopadhyay**, Assistant Professor, Department of English, SNDTWU, Mumbai

## **Abstract**

Literary practices of the subcontinent have more often than not been read within the defined trajectories of their linguistic frameworks; the vernaculars and English occupying two different worlds. The only interface(s) between them being the 'mediated' traffic of translations. Given the contested colonial literary histories of India---where the modern vernaculars and English came into prominence almost simultaneously---- this sequestered framework limits the possibilities of understanding the connected nature of literary practices in India. Criticism around women's life-writing in India have deliberately or otherwise, largely stayed away from discussing the overlapping nature of linguistic practices. Contrary to the course of discussions of women's life writing that have obfuscated linguistic practices in search for critiquing hegemonic discursive practices and subjective agency, I argue that a certain kind of bilingualism has been central to the presence of counter-discourses. The rise of marginalized feminisms that emerged in response to a hegemonic savarna feminism, foregrounded 'testimonios' (to borrow Sharmila Rege's term) written in the vernacular. I argue that this left the uppercaste privileged woman to reinvent the genre to articulate their angst for a subjective agency. As writers of fiction, translators and academicians, Shanta Gokhale and Nabaneeta Dev Sen choose to write their lives both in their vernaculars as well as English. Looking for means to legitimize their self-representational practice they heavily rely on self-deprecating humour. Reliance on humour not only deflects from emphasizing on a stable subjectivity but also locates the narrative authority away from within the text. These complex negotiations are to be read in-between languages and not despite them. Taking cue from Gokhale and Dev Sen, I further argue that these 'new' subjectivities in an attempt to accommodate novel frameworks of experience cautiously choose the inbetween spaces of the vernacular and English as their preferred site of identity production.

## **Bio-Note**

Dr. Dhruvadi Chattopadhyay is Assistant Professor in Department of English, SNDTWU, Mumbai.

## **“The Ghostly Vernacular: Language in Indo-Fijian Poetry”**

**Dr. Tana Trivedi**, Amrut Mody School of Management, Ahmedabad University,  
Gujarat, India

### **Abstract**

Sudesh Mishra, a contemporary fourth generation Fijian-Indian-Australian poet chronicles the post memories of ancestral trauma associated with indenture and settlement of Indians in Fiji through language. His poetry, though written largely in English, incorporates and enfolds multilingualism in a way that subverts the historical colonial claim to the language, opening a window into the emerging language dynamics of the Indian diaspora in the Pacific. Transported to the Pacific islands in the late nineteenth century under the colonial rule to work on the sugarcane plantations, Indians bore the burden of displacement and trauma, only to be ousted once again after the political coups of 1987 and 2000. The precarity of their lives has been chronicled through Mishra’s poetry that is haunted by Hindi Bhojpuri, Fiji Hindi, Fijian and Colonial English, all alluding to the vestiges of colonialism, indenture, and movement. The objective of this paper is twofold: to read into and analyze Mishra’s poetry for his use of language as embodying heterogenous journeys not just of people but also of languages, and to examine the transnational form that language takes through his narratives, largely representing the state of his own identity as a transnational poet. Thus ‘vernacular’ in case of the Indians living in Fiji, is a highly crepuscular space that is inhabited by the ghosts of languages no longer present. It is an ever evolving, fluid space that is replaced by dislocations that create newer spaces, constantly questioning the historical past.

### **Bio-Note**

Tana Trivedi is faculty at the Amrut Mody School of Management, Ahmedabad University, Gujarat, India. Her areas of interest and research include postcolonial diaspora, oceanic literature, and memory studies.

## **“Divided Subjectivity, Minor Man and the Postcolonial Nation: A study of Shekhar: A Life”**

**Abhishek Pundir**, Ph.D. Scholar, Dept. of English, JMI



## **Abstract**

In recent scholarship emphasis is laid on the confluences of cultures in contact zones—global/colonial and local—which allow for the making of location-specific modernities (Friedman; Gaonkar; Laura Doyle and Laura Winkel) Exploring multiple modernities then inevitably entails reconsidering the homogenising stance of western modernity and incorporation of ‘geo-histories’ and cultures of the planet. In South Asia modern subjects are embedded in complex relations of power with the west, their postcolonial position presents complications for any theorisation of location-specific modalities. It is to this conundrum that we dispense with the picture of globe divided into a western centre and non-western periphery (Appadurai, 32). Friedman focuses on the history of the world before industrial capitalism and argues in favour of *Longue Duree* to resist the dominant categories of western modernity. And suggests forming a ‘collage’—establishing a montage of differences—as a technique to truly globalising modernities/modernisms (48). The birth of modern subject in India could be fruitfully located in a dialectical relation of vernacular and cosmopolitan, a multidirectional circulation of cultural practices and certain ‘intensification of intercultural contact zones’(Friedman). In the *Longue Duree* of modernities in Indian languages one can delineate several historical developments that intensified cultural exchanges and reshaped worldviews. One of these historical epochs marked the ‘valorisation of the vernacular’ in the face of foreign[language] domination and the rise of nationalistic fervour (Pascale Casanova). However, with the assertion of national sovereignty and inauguration of Indian nationstate, the categories of global/colonial and vernacular begin to settle down into a veritable assemblage. The paper through its analytical study of Agyeya’s *Shekhar: A Life* explore the intersectionality of global and vernacular that continue to dominate the debates around modernity-modernism in Hindi. The dialectical and dialogical relation of globalised English and Hindi vernacular(s) further complicates the emergence of modern man in Hindi literature. By juxtaposing the global and vernacular with the colonial and postcolonial, the paper also attempts to rethink the genealogies of the modern man in Hindi literature.

## **Bio-Note**

I am currently doing PhD at the Dept. of English, Jamia. My areas of interest are: Indian Philosophy, Modernity-Modernisms, Philosophy of Religion, Marxism and Translation Studies. Kindly download the attached file.

## **SESSION 4: Paper Presentations (12:15 PM- 1:30 PM IST)**

### ***“Vernacularizing Science in Colonial Bengal: A Translational Site of ‘Other’ Archives”***

**Indrani Das Gupta**, Assistant Professor (Ad-Hoc) in the Department of English, Maharaja Agrasen College, University of Delhi

## **Abstract**

The idea of science that permeated in the nineteenth century formed the bedrock of colonial modernity. However, colonial technoscientific knowledge was not framed merely as ‘tools’ but identified as forms of knowledge (Macleod & Kumar 20). Drawing upon critics like John Reider (2008) and Patricia Kerslake (2010), it has been understood that the vernacular understanding of science that dawned in the first decade of the nineteenth century and continued to proliferate in the twentieth century engaged with these tools and forms of colonial knowledge. How do we read these forms of knowledge in the vernacular? In Anwesha Maity’s analysis, the terrain of science fiction narratives in colonial Bengal functioned as a “response to the scientific mindset” introduced through the vectors of colonialism (459). What exactly defines the ‘Western scientific mindset,’ and how did the Bengali science fiction vernacular literature respond to this mindset? Critics like Gyan Prakash (1999), Boddhisattva Chattopadhyay (2013, 2016), Debjani Sengupta (2010) have all sought to examine this response as a form of intercultural translation and in terms of willful domestication of western science. While I agree that domestication and even celebration of Western science’s foreignness (drawing these terms from Lawrence Venuti [1995]) is visible, it still does not exhaust the possibilities that transpired in the vernacularizing of science in the early Bengali science fictional writings. In this paper, the vernacularizing of science in colonial Bengal, which, borrowing from Bishnupriya Ghosh, I refer to as “other archives,” negotiated this mindset of “discourse production and reception” in terms of “metadiscursive practices”

(Bauman and Briggs 140, 142). These 'metadiscursive practices,' I argue, inform vernacular science fictional writings from Bengal from the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Drawing upon Bauman and Briggs' analysis of metadiscursive practices, I shall examine how the Bengali vernacular science fiction actively engaged in production and reception acts, where Western science's authority and legality were accommodated, assimilated, critiqued, and resisted. As documented in Bengali vernacular science fiction writings, defined by Adrish Barman (1960) Boddhisattva Chattopadhyay as "kalpabigyan" (2013, 2016), scientific knowledge emerged as a contested terrain marked by the perspective of Western discourse of science as a harbinger of modernity and its concomitant interface with indigenous actors, vernacular texts, practices, and languages. These early 'kalpabigyan' texts traversed a terrain marked by dynamism and contradictions, a site of uneasy alliances. The early 'kalpabigyan' texts from Bengal interrogate science's futuristic vision to investigate the "ethics of colonial relations" (Samanta 2). The paper will primarily analyze Sukumar Ray's text, Heshoram Hushiyer-er Diary (1922), first published in the Bengali Children's magazine, Sandesh. The text is analyzed via the lens of one of the central colonial practitioners of scientific imaginary, the explorer, who is also a maverick storyteller. Through its linguistic improvisations and its references to popular nonsense literature of the day, this text opens up the 'metadiscursive practices' of vernacular science fiction writings as an act of reading, a translational space, a troublesome space of interrogating boundaries and an active process of negotiation represented in the practice of redrawing the human-animal relations.

Keywords: metadiscursive practices, explorer, storyteller, act of reading, ethics of colonial relations

### **Bio-Note**

Indrani Das Gupta is working as Assistant Professor (Ad-Hoc) in the Department of English, Maharaja Agrasen College, University of Delhi. Currently pursuing her Ph.D. from Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia in the area of Indian Science Fiction, she is engaged in the examination of the interface of science fictionality, paradigms of nation-state inflected with postmodernist and postcolonialist approaches, and the social variables that constitute the ontological human existence. She has published prolifically in international journals and books.

## **“Making(s) Hindi Modernity and ‘Hindu Science’ in Colonial India: A Reading of Devaki Nandan Khatri’s Chandrakanta”**

**Dr. Bharti Arora**, Faculty, Department of English, Tagore Government Arts and Science College, Pondicherry University

### **Abstract**

Reading Devaki Nandan Khatri’s wonder tale *Chandrakanta* (1892), the paper probes how the rise of commercial publishing and Hindi public sphere in nineteenth century facilitated the indigenisation of imperial scientific discourses. Literary genres like periodicals, journals, novels, wonder tales, and romantic fiction played a foundational role in institutionalising Hindi modernity in colonial India. These genres facilitated a range of negotiations between the emergent discourses on science and their impact on extant religious and cultural processes. Shruti Kapila (“The Enchantment of Science in India” 2010) has called these processes as “insurgent knowledge practices” (128) which, even as they forged tenuous connections with the domain of science, could never be wholly constituted by it. *Chandrakanta*’s trysts with Hindi were contingent on precisely these insurgent knowledges. Thus, the wonder tale foregrounded not only questions of language, community, and nation in colonial India but also contributed towards evolving what Gyan Prakash (*Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India* 1999) terms the “second sight” (47). By doing so, it cultivated not only scientific temper but also re-formed the socio-religious beliefs, customary norms and gendered biases of the times. All this shall be explored in detail in my presentation.

### **Bio-Note**

Bharti Arora is a faculty at the Department of English, Tagore Government Arts and Science College, Pondicherry University. She has completed her Ph.D. in English from Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. She has recently published a book, based on her thesis, titled *Writing Gender, Writing Nation: Women’s Fiction in Post-independence India*, Routledge (2019).

## **“Alien Genres: Wonder and Western Science in Colonial Hindi Science-Fiction”**

**Ishita Singh**, Assistant Professor, Department of English at Jesus and Mary College,  
DU

### **Abstract**

The generally accepted term for Science-Fiction (SF) in Hindi is ‘vigyan-katha’ or ‘vigyangalp’. By the end of the nineteenth century, there was an increasing visibility of new forms of technologies that were a product of colonial knowledge and western science. Staging of this alien science, through museums and exhibitions, for an overwhelmingly native audience as an instrument of education relied on the restaging of it as a mesmerising spectacle so that wonder may translate into understanding. SF in Hindi is another example of the new technologies that emerged at the end of the nineteenth century that played a significant role in the pedagogy of science. In colonial North India, Allahabad and Benaras became the intellectual centers of this new knowledge. The journals *Saraswati* published by the Arya Samaj and the *Nagari Pracharani Patrika* published by the Nagari Pracharani Sabha played significant roles in the proliferation of scientific education along with the promotion of Hindi in colonial North India. These journals and publishers in Benaras and Allahabad became central in the publishing of Hindi SF. Hindi SF is brimming with moments that are explicitly framed as eliciting wonder (*ashcharya*); this experience of wonder is further intensified in two ways; one, by incorporating elements and tropes from other genres like romance, fantasy, horror and detective into the narrative; and two, by constructing character types and a world that is understood to be ‘western’. For this paper, I will examine colonial Hindi SF through the lens of wonder, its articulation within the world of the text and its arousal in the reader. The double estrangement due to both the SF sublime and the colonial encounter with the new strange and alien will be at the centre of my inquiry into the articulation and reinvention of wonder in colonial Hindi SF texts.

### **Bio-Note**

Ishita Singh is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Jesus and Mary College, Delhi University. She has completed her MPhil in History from Ambedkar University, Delhi. She studied English Literature for her Bachelors and Masters at Miranda House. She has presented her research at various international conferences and

has published with reputed journals. Her recent publication is an edited volume of William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with Prentice Hall India. Her research interests include women's writing, speculative fiction, science fiction, fantasy, utopia and dystopia, and Hindi Literature.

### **SESSION 5: Plenary Address (3:00 PM–4:00 PM IST)**

#### **“Jazbat and Josh. The transformation of Urdu journalism around the First World War”**

**Dr. Margrit Pernau**, Senior Researcher, Max Planck Institute for Human Development, Center for the History of Emotions, Berlin

#### **Abstract**

Urdu newspapers were no newcomer in the twentieth century. They had a varied history in the nineteenth century, from the Delhi Urdu Akhbar to the reformist journals like Tahzib ul Akhlaq and the widely distributed and influential papers like the Awadh Akhbar and the Paisa Akhbar. 1912, however, brought to the fore a whole range of new foundations: Abul Kalam Azad's *Al-Hilal*, Zafar Ali Khan's *Zamindar*, Mehdi Hasan's *Medina*, and last but not least Muhammad Ali's twin publications, the *English Comrade* and the *Urdu Hamdard*. The latter offers a unique chance for investigating the impact of vernacularization on the linguistic, but also the emotional and political style of newspapers. Why did Muhammad Ali feel the need for two separate newspapers (rather than just publish a translation or a bi-lingual edition)? What were the consequences of choosing one language over the other? What could rather be said in English and what in Urdu? Was there a difference in the emotions expressed in either language? What were the implications for the ways in which political goals could be formulated and propagated? What did this mean on a more general level for the concepts of politics and of political subjectivity? How do these findings compare to the other Muslim Urdu newspapers mentioned earlier?

#### **Bio-Note**

Dr. Margrit Pernau has holds a PhD in Indian history from Heidelberg University (1991) and a Habilitation from Bielefeld University (2007). Since 2008, she is senior researcher at

the Max Planck Institute for Human Development, Center for the History of Emotions, Berlin. Her publications include *Ashraf into Middle Classes. Muslims in nineteenth Century Delhi* (2013), *Feeling communities* [Special issue]. *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, (2017), *Monsoon Feelings. A History of Emotions in the Rain* (with Imke Rajamani and Katherine Schofield, 2018), *Emotions and Modernity in Colonial India, From Balance to Fervor* (2019). She is currently working on a book project on *Emotions and Temporalities in twentieth century South Asia*.

### **“Urdu Language Ideologies and Pakistani Identity”**

**Dr. Arian Hopf**, Lecturer, South Asia Institute, Heidelberg

#### **Abstract**

Pakistan was founded in 1947 as a separate country from India and struggled for an autonomous identity right from its beginning. It was founded as a country for the Muslims of undivided India and comprised the Muslim-majority provinces in the NorthEast and North-West. Yet, most supporters of the Pakistan movement came from outside the eventual territory so that internal differences came to the surface soon after independence. Thus, the question of what unites this country was posed right after 1947 and seems to remain unanswered till date. Without doubt, Islam served as a central aspect for defining Pakistani identity. However, the political category of Muslim was still new and soon after partition from the ‘Hindu’-India lost its appeal while ethnic or linguistic bonds were increasingly emphasised. Another essential part of the identity of Pakistan hinges on its distinction from India – a country which now inherited most of the geographical places connected to Muslim history in the Subcontinent. Urdu was declared Pakistan’s national language – a language that had no dissemination as first language in the territory of Pakistan, but was spread in the area of Delhi and Uttar Pradesh, now part of the Indian territory. Despite the essentiality of distinguishing its identity from India, Pakistan also could not eliminate its historical and linguistic link to India – a dilemma that shall be analysed in this paper. Central aim of this paper is to widen the perception on the debate of Pakistani identity in the academic literature which seems to be restricted to a narrow perspective of Pakistan as an Islamic country. Even though the significance of this aspect cannot be denied, still this paper aims at exposing counter-narratives, which were significant and simultaneously present in the early years of Pakistan’s

independence, to the meta-narrative of an Islamic identity. In this regard, Urdu was deemed as symbol or essence of an Indo-Muslim culture. Yet, this blurs the strongly needed demarcation to India with Urdu being based in present India. In this paper, I will discuss different narratives to tackle this dilemma.

### **Bio-Note**

Arian Hopf is lecturer for Urdu at the South Asia Institute, Heidelberg. He has recently completed his PhD on the concept of religion in colonial South Asia with focus on the Aligarh Movement. His PhD will soon be published as *Translating Islam, Translating Religion*.

### **SESSION 6: Paper Presentations (4:00 PM-5:15 PM IST)**

#### **“Confronting the ‘high’ vernacular: Non-Brahmin writings and the question of aesthetics and social exclusion in early 20th century Western India”**

**Surajkumar Thube**, D.Phil. Scholar, Faculty of History, University of Oxford

### **Abstract**

The evolution of the notion of a ‘Public’ in the colonial Indian context can be traced to the period when regional languages started confronting the hegemony of English language in more ways than one. It was broadly by the mid-nineteenth century that the hierarchical status of ‘high’ English and ‘low’ vernacular underwent a significant recalibration. My intention in this paper is to highlight the aftermath of this dynamic in the interwar period in Western India. I seek to analyze the growing anxiety of power sharing between Marathas and Brahmins to show how the idea of a ‘dominant’ public sphere, largely shaped by the urban, English educated upper-caste elites, was resisted by the rise of lower caste, vernacular writings in early twentieth century Western India. The existing scholarship on nineteenth century Western India has informed us of how the ideological influence of native, upper caste intelligentsia on press, education policy and other channels of communications was crucial in advancing upper caste interests as a social class. Without breaching the colonial divide of ‘high’ English and ‘low’ Marathi, these urban educated, upper caste elites continued to consolidate a distinct set of upper caste



morals and ethics. This was primarily done through legitimizing one particular variety of Marathi, primarily spoken in urban areas of Poona and Bombay. By focusing on the rise of non-Brahmin writings from early 20th century, I seek to argue that the nineteenth century narrative of 'bilingual hierarchization' made a transition to a 'vernacular hierarchization' between Brahmins and Non-Brahmins. In order to argue for the rise of different Marathi registers, I will focus on Prabodhankar Thackeray, a figure whose polemical and oratorical contributions have largely been ignored in the shaping of the Marathi public sphere. Using Thackeray's emerging public presence, I argue that the Non-Brahmin idea of the public was more diverse, fluid and even had space for conflictual linguistic and performative assertions as compared to the largely monochromatic idea of the public in the 19th century. I seek to analyze this diversity by focusing on Thackeray's commentary on everyday life through his magazine Prabodhan. This will be connected to how his peculiar linguistic assertions also brought a new dimension to the performative sphere, especially to theatre plays and public speeches. I will try to show how Thackeray's biting language and earthy sarcasm informs us about the constant jostling for public legitimacy between Brahmins and Non-Brahmins from the 1920s. By focusing on one public figure, I also seek to underscore the importance of 'prosopography' as a type of methodology to give a more nuanced understanding of converging and diverging social traits of an evolving public sphere.

### **Bio-Note**

Suajkumar Thube is currently pursuing a Dphil at the Faculty of History, University of Oxford. His working research title is Print, Language and Counterpublics: The Marathi Public Sphere in Late Colonial Western India, ca. 1920-1947. His aim is to analyse and investigate the emergence of lower castes as counterpublics; via their participation in print and performative spheres. This will be done to explain their resistance of the social dominance of upper caste elites through the use of distinct language registers. He has previously contributed articles and essays in print and online forums like Scroll, Indian Cultural Forum, The Diplomat, LSE Review of Books, Oxford Review of Books, Oxford University History Society Journal and The Book Review magazine.

**“Re-reading Dalit Writings in Translations: Understanding the Nexus  
between English Language and Dalit Empowerment”**

Vandana Lal, Ph.D. Scholar, Dept. of English, DU

## **Abstract**

Caste in India is heterogeneous in character and ridden with graded inequality. The location of the Dalit subject even about twenty years into the 21<sup>st</sup> C, accordingly, traverses from an urban-based educated middle class Dalit to a rural-based scavenger. Hence, to discuss Dalit writings in multilingual India as a homogenous archive is as problematic as homogenizing it in the English language through translation. As Rita Kothari 1 notes that while caste experiences as documented in Dalit writings are trenchantly local in nature with region-specific registers, the English language has 'no memory of caste' (61). Kothari has further observed that "Indian languages do not constitute for all Indians a proud inheritance, which "globalisation" and similar invasive forces may allegedly besiege. This is essentially an upper-caste view and luxury; those who wish to redefine themselves must do so by abandoning this inheritance and embracing English." (Kothari 2003, 65). The Dalit response to English is precisely shaped by this argument. The hegemonic sections in India govern, like every other aspect, what is standard Indian language and what is not. The thus authorized standard language would obviously not reflect the speech/language of the unlettered/disempowered groups. The cultural difference prevalent between English and a non-standardized Dalit dialect in India, to quote Kothari, is "no more marginalizing than an Indian language" (65). Hence, the attempt by the hitherto disempowered to bridge the gap between their local registers and the standard regional language is almost equally challenging as espousing the much more promising English. The English language helps the Dalits do away with the hegemony of standard regional languages. Chanderbhan Prasad's admiration of Macaulay as is evident from his proclamation of Macaulay as the father Indian modernity and Dalit empowerment, stems from Macaulay's historic 1835 decision to introduce English system of education in India. Prasad believes that Macaulay's insistence on English helped break the sovereignty of Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian. Renowned for his proclamation of the English language as a Mother Goddess to Dalits and the other marginalized sections, Prasad is equally critical of the Sanskritic influence on the Indian languages which perpetuate and consolidate unequal linguistic and social structures. Prasad feels a philosophical and political affinity towards English, which the hegemonic castes in India have always felt towards Sanskrit. In a way, espousal of

English is also significantly a refusal to bow down to the Sanskritic traditions and ideologies. To use Rita Kothari's terms, the English language offers a modern and secular discourse. Kothari firmly asserts that even if caste is non-existent in the English culture, the English language is nevertheless a repository of vocabulary of human rights.

Hence, if we perceive English as a casteless language and also as a language which is still not within the reach of Dalits, then one may ask how it suits the Dalit cause? A doubt arises as to whether a language of the oppressors/colonizers, one that exhibits power, can articulate the fragmentation and resilience of the dispossessed? Can Dalit Writings in English translation prove as an illustration of counter-hegemonic and alternative use of English language? These are a few questions that this paper will aim at discussing.

## **Bio-Note**

M.Phil. in English from the University of Delhi, Ms. Vandana has been teaching as an Assistant Professor of English at Daulat Ram College, University of Delhi for more than five years. She is presently pursuing Ph.D. in English from the Department of English, University of Delhi. Her research areas include Autobiographies and Life narratives, Dalit Aesthetics, South Asian Literary Historiography and Indian Literature.

### **“White Lady Translators and the Vernacular Experience”**

**Aalim Akhtar**, MPhil, Center for English Studies, JNU

## **Abstract**

Begum Sikander Jehan (1817-68), the ruler of Bhopal undertook the Hajj pilgrimage in 1867 and recorded her journey in a diary, one of the first of its kind, in Urdu. It was translated into English as *A Princess's Pilgrimage* by the wife of the British resident in Bhopal and published in 1870 from London by Allen and Co., a publishing house known to publish books from the 'Orient.' The original in Urdu was discovered this year and digitized by the School of Oriental and African studies, London. The translated text is an example of the Anglophone world coming directly to not just carry a South Asian vernacular 'experience' overseas, but also to shape it, mould it, and give it a new identity.

In this paper my aim would be to see how the original gets actively shaped in the process of translation through a paratextuality – cover pages, publishers, footnotes, appendixes, introductions, prefaces – that seems to ‘envelope’ the Begum’s writing. Through this paratextual focus, I will try to show how the ‘white lady’ translator gives the vernacular text a new identity without directly influencing the very text on the page. I ask: what does the material history of this translation tell us about the interaction between the global and the vernacular? Was this interaction always ‘textual’ or did it involve other material practices such publication and printing? How were such translation practices mediated by the colonial context? What can the materiality of the text tell us about the influence of the Anglophone language ideology on the vernacular? By doing so, I would be focussing on how – in spite of decades of absence of the original in Urdu – the translated text could still tell us about the ways in which a South Asian vernacular functioned in a transnational network of publishing and translation, mediated by a global-colonial context.

### **Bio-Note**

I am currently doing my MPhil at Center for English Studies, JNU under Prof Udaya Kumar, having done my Masters from the same center and my Bachelors from Kirorimal College, Delhi University. I wrote MA dissertation on The Princess’s Pilgrimage titled ‘A Princess’s Pilgrimage: The Hajj travelogue of Begum Bhopal’ under the supervision of Prof GJV Prasad. Presently my research interests lie in the religious life writings from the late colonial period where I focus on emotions and religious practices.

### **SESSION 7: Plenary Address (5:30 PM–6:00 PM IST)**

#### **“How Reverse Translation Alters the Meaning of Philosophical Concepts”**

**Prof. Ruth Vanita**, Professor of English and Co-director, South & South-East Asian Studies,

College of Humanities and Sciences, University of Montana

### **Abstract**

This paper begins a preliminary enquiry into the impact of what I will term reverse translation. This is when a philosophical concept, such as dharma, is repeatedly

translated into English, using terms from a Judeo-Christian lexicon, such as religion, and then the English word is translated back into another Indian vernacular.

I am primarily interested in the second phase of translation, that of the largely unwitting and largely unmarked, gradual process by which the Indian-language word and concept shifts its connotations both for English and for non-English speakers through a process of reverse translation. Over time, not just the meaning of the word but the entire philosophical framework shifts. I use Bhagat Singh's "Why I am an Atheist" and its later Hindi translation "Main Nastik Kyun Hoon" as an example of how concepts like *astika/nastika* and rebirth shift. On the other hand, the incorporation of words like karma and dharma into English dictionaries do not change the meanings of concepts like "religion" in any significant way.

I will give some examples from various translations of the Gita (a text which I have taught for many years at the advanced undergraduate level) to reflect on this process. Much more work will be needed to examine the process and its extent; this is an attempt to map the terrain.

### **Bio-Note**

Ruth Vanita, former Reader in English at Delhi University, is Professor of English at the University of Montana. She is the author of many books, most recently *Gender, Sex and the City: Urdu Rekhti Poetry 1780-1870* (2017) and the novel *Memory of Light* (2020). She is completing her next book, *The Dharma of Justice: Debates on Gender, Varna and Species in the Hindu Epics*.

## **SESSION 8: Plenary Address (7:00 PM–8:00 PM IST)**

### **"New Voices, New Language: The Spoken Language Poetics of Tamil New Poetry"**

**Dr. Preetha Mani**, Assistant Professor, South Asian Literatures, Rutgers School of Arts and Sciences

## **Abstract**

Between 1959 and 1971, the Tamil little magazine *Eḷuttu* (Writing) helped to fashion a new trend of poetry writing—*putu kavitai*, or new poetry. This trend expressed explicit affiliations with modernist poetry movements across the world and self-consciously laid out a poetic agenda for modern Tamil literature. One of its key innovations was its theorization of the poetics of sound, which it linked to the cadences of spoken language rather than what *Eḷuttu* writers viewed as the reified conventions of classical literary language. This paper explores this position through an analysis of C.S. Chellappa's introduction to *Putu Kuralkal* (New Voices, 1962)—his groundbreaking edited anthology of *putu kavitai* poems by authors whom he—as founder and editor—had published in *Eḷuttu* between 1959 and 1962. Placing Chellappa's elaborations of *putu kavitai* poetics in conversation with the stance on spoken language that he and his contemporaries had developed for prose genres (particularly the short story), the paper asks what function Tamil writers who were connected with *Eḷuttu* accorded to poetry in postindependence India? It argues that by associating themselves with world poetry movements and privileging spoken above written forms of language, Tamil writers used *putu kavitai* to intervene in Dravidianist and Pure Tamil views of Tamil as an ancient and unadulterated language, which was particular to the Tamil people and the Tamil region.

## **Bio-Note**

Preetha Mani is Assistant Professor of South Asian Literatures and Member of the Core Faculty in the Program in Comparative Literature at Rutgers University, New Brunswick. Her forthcoming book, titled *The Idea of Indian Literature: Gender, Genre, and Comparative Method*, proposes a view of Indian literature as a field of comparative literature and shows the short story to be a major genre of postcolonial literature and central to the formation of the new woman. Her research and teaching interests include Hindi, Tamil, and Indian literatures; women's writing; feminisms in South Asia; world literature; translation studies; postcolonial studies; realisms; and modernisms.

**“Should Hindi count as a “bhasha” language when it pretends that Urdu does not exist?”**

**Dr. Snehal Shingavi**, Department of English, Comparative Literature, South Asia Institute,

## **Abstract**

This paper argues that the debates about high and low languages in India happen on two registers: the first, and the one more easily coopted by the nationalist ruling class, is between the bhasha languages and English (what some have called the debate between Bharat and India); the second, and more important given the political dispensation we face in India, is between Hindi and the other bhashas, with the former claiming a status as a national and majoritarian language. Those of us who are interested in the politics of anti- and de-colonization have to be sensitive to the fact that the anti-English crowd also contains within it a significant Hindu chauvinist element, such that the debate cannot be seen as simply a reprise of the anticolonial struggle in the postcolonial context. In particular, the status of Hindi as simultaneously a “high” language (with respect to the other languages in the nation) and a “vulnerable” language (with respect to the publishing industry), has played an important role of securing the myth of Hinduism as both the dominant, national religion and the vulnerable, endangered one. Several people have made the case that constructing a canon in Hindi literature has been the project of a majoritarian and communalist political ideology, so that Hindi and Hindu are seen to represent or define a common religio-linguistic community in North India that is also supposed to stand in for the entire nation. This paper asks three inter-related questions: first, whether we can create a political economy of the language debates in India that is not reducible to English-against-the-rest; second, whether we can understand why bhasha authors were the earliest defenders of English against a Hindi-Hindu-Hindustan politics of the northern states; and third, how we should resist and undo the project of Hindi hegemony, primarily by re-emphasizing a return to the study of Urdu.

## **Bio-Note**

Snehal Shingavi is associate professor of English at the University of Texas, Austin, where he teaches South Asian literatures in English, Hindi, and Urdu, as well as the literature of the South Asian diaspora. He received his PhD in English from the University of California, Berkeley and has taught previously at Notre Dame de Namur University and the University of Mary Washington. He is the author of *The Mahatma Misunderstood: the politics and forms of literary nationalism in India* (Anthem Books, 2013). He has

translated Munshi Premchand's Hindi novel, *Sevasadan* (Oxford, 2005), the Urdu short-story collection, *Angaaray* (Penguin, 2014), Bhisham Sahni's autobiography, *Today's Pasts* (Penguin, 2015), with Vasudha Dalmia, Agyeya's *Shekhar: A Life* (Penguin, 2018), and Joginder Paul's *A Drop of Blood* (Penguin, 2020). He has also published widely in places like *GQ India*, the *International Socialist Review*, *Postcolonial Text*, *South Asia*, *The New Inquiry*, the *South Asia Journal*, *The Book Review* and the *Annual of Urdu Studies*. He is currently working on two book length manuscripts, *A Critical History of Hindi Literature* (with Orient Blackswan) and *The Country, the City, the Jungle, and the Slum: the neoliberal landscapes of South Asian Literature*. His translation of Yashpal's Hindi novel *Geeta: Party Comrade* is forthcoming, and he is currently working on translations of Mannu Bhandari and Rajendra Yadav's joint Hindi novel *Ek Inch Muskaan*, the poetry of Zehra Nigah, and the fiction of Chandra Kiran Sonrexa.

### **Day Three**

**WEDNESDAY, 17 MARCH 2021**

#### **SESSION 1: Paper Presentations (9:30 AM-10:15 AM IST)**

***"Trauma and the Vernacular: Saadat Hasan Manto's Language Games"***

**Dr. Swatie, Ph.D. Scholar, Dept. of English, DU**

#### **Abstract**

The genealogy of trauma theory is rife with concerns about its Anglo-centric bias. Traumatic encounters are also linguistically encoded. (Eg: Freud's game of fort-da as a psycho-linguistic encounter. Or, Lacan's insistence on the logo-centricism of the unconscious as a linguistic concern). Clearly, much needs to be said about linguistic encounters of trauma in non-anglocentric or vernacular frameworks. What are, in other words, the vernacular idioms of trauma? The paper would approach this question from a medical humanities perspective rather than a medico-linguistic one. It would look at instances of trauma in literature, arguing that literature written in vernacular languages may present an alternative understanding of trauma theory in regional/ local contexts.



The paper would outline some of these instances through the writings of Saadat Hasan Manto. In Manto the aesthete's work, it would argue, there is an alternate idiom of trauma that looks at vernacular traumatic encounters. For instance: Partition becomes a madness that estranges, it occurs as a redistribution not just land but also rationality. Further, sexual violence as a traumatic encounter is embodied as a different form of trauma as well. Besides Manto, the paper would refer to other socio-historical works on trauma theory in India such as Asis Nandy's *The Savage Freud* and Sudhir Kakkar's *Culture and Psyche*.

### **Bio-Note**

Swatie holds a PhD from the Department of English at the University of Delhi. She is the author of *The New Normal: Trauma, Biopolitics and Visuality after 9/11* (Bloomsbury, forthcoming). She has presented and published her work nationally and internationally. Her interests range from US cultural theory to violence and trauma studies to discourses around sexual violence in Indian contexts.

### ***"Becoming Assamese: Language, Identity and Anxiety"***

**Nandini Kalita**, PhD Scholar and Teaching Assistant (Literature), Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at IIT, Delhi

### **Abstract**

The centrality of the issue of identity in contemporary politics in Assam hints at a kind of deep rooted anxiety about loss of identity which has taken the shape of subnational dissent, xenophobia or cultural isolation at several instances. In the course of this paper, I want to examine the extent to which this anxiety is linked to the fear of losing the Assamese language. How does this fear manifest itself in the era of neoliberal globalization? What is the relationship between identity and anxiety in this context? I also plan to probe deeper into the role of Assamese language in the process of identity construction in Assam. This paper will deal with discursive construction of identities focusing primarily on performative and enunciative functions of language. I want to suggest that aspects of the Assamese identity are not inherent but produced by performances in the realm of language. This paper will underline that language does not

merely describe traits of the Assamese identity but literally calls them into being. Examining the enunciative aspect would involve attempts to locate the existence of competing discourses. How do certain discourses exercise regulatory power over identity construction? How do resistant discourses emerge?

## **Bio-Note**

I am currently a PhD Scholar and Teaching Assistant (Literature) in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at IIT, Delhi. I have briefly worked as an Assistant Professor at LLDIMS, I am a graduate of English Literature from Sri Venkateswara College, Delhi University with a postgraduate degree from Jamia Millia Islamia. My research interests include, but not limited to the following areas; Literature from Northeast India, Continental Philosophy, Narratology, Philosophy of Literature, Religious Studies etc.

### **“Revisiting a construct, reinventing a cosmos”**

**Shrikanth BR**, Ph.D. Scholar, Dept. of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Bombay, Maharashtra

## **Abstract**

Sheldon Pollock provides an elaborate narration of vernacularization of Southern Asia in the medieval age and identifies it as culturally the most important and also the least studied phenomenon. Pollock’s argument envisages the complex interactions between the cosmopolitan (chiefly Sanskrit) and the vernacular (Kannada in this case). In this context, he posits the 9<sup>th</sup> century Kannada text Kavirajamarga, penned by Sri Vijaya, as the “first work in world culture to constitute a vernacular poetics in direct confrontation with a cosmopolitan language.” (20) Kavirajamarga, a treatise on Kannada poetics and grammar, over the centuries has become a symbol of Kannada pride and consciousness. Various scholars like JF Fleet, MM Kalburgi, Sheldon Pollock, and S. Shettar have engaged with the text and have produced lucid commentaries. One of the most recent significant publications on the text is K.V. Subbanna’s Kavirajamargamattu Kannada Jagattu (2000). In this paper I intend to focus on the idea of the Kannada ‘cosmos’ that K.V. Subbanna propagates through his reading of Kavirajamar. I shall analyse Subbanna’s engagement with the text within the context of a ‘crisis’ in Kannada language in the form of seminal

events such as the 'Boosa movement', Gokak agitation, border disputes with neighbouring states and so on. I shall trace Subbanna's move from the routine associations of the text with legacy and aesthetic finesse, to obtaining a new 'consciousness' that can aid a linguistic community deal with its immediate (global) present. I shall conclude by examining the contestations about 'history' and 'nation' offered thereby, within such vernacular imaginations.

### **Bio-Note**

Shrikanth B R is a research scholar of the PhD programme at IIT Bombay. He is working on the institutional history of Ninasam (Neelakanteshwara Natya Seva Sangha, a theatre organisation in Heggodu, Karnataka).

## **SESSION 2: Plenary Address (10:45 AM–11:15 AM IST)**

### **“Vernaculars across Texts: Modern Islam and Modern Literature in Bengal”**

**Dr. Neilesh Bose**, Associate Professor and Canada Research Chair, Department of History, University of Victoria

### **Abstract**

Vernacularization is an important element of literary criticism and literary studies in South Asia. Its importance is beyond dispute. However, the role of the vernacular condition or vernacularization as a model for understanding religion has yet to appear in tandem with studies of literary history. This paper aims to tie together the field of religious history and literary history through a look at Islam in Bengal from the first Koran in vernacular Bangla, of Girish Chandra Sen in the 1880s to the poetry of Nazrul Islam, esp. his poems in the 1920s fusing imagery from Islam into a larger framework. I argue that both developments – the vernacularization of Islam and the Islamicization of Bengali poetry belong in the same framework of a condition in which religion and literature must be seen as indispensable to one another. Drawing on literature in contemporary religious studies, such that of John Hawley, Christian Novetzke, and Patton Burchett, as well as literary criticism of Sheldon Pollock, it inputs Bengali Islam into ongoing discussions of the vernacular.

## **Bio-Note**

Neilesh Bose is Associate Professor of History and Canada Research Chair of Global and Comparative History. at the University of Victoria. A specialist in modern South Asian history, his interests include colonialism, religion, secularism, and vernacular literary and cultural studies.

## **SESSION 3: Paper Presentations (11:30 AM-1:10 PM IST)**

### **“The Location of Theory: Postcolonialism in North America and India”**

**Dr. Suddhaseel Sen**, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Humanities and Social Sciences,  
IITBombay, Maharashtra

## **Abstract**

Some of the most important literary developments in modern Indian languages are inextricably tied in with the cultural encounter with European literature from the colonial period onwards. Such encounters were accompanied, during the colonial period, by the rise of nationalist sentiments among several Indian linguistic communities. Scholarship on Indian literature from this period that pays attention to textual and contextual detail usually avoid reading such encounters in terms of the canonical postcolonial concepts of cultural hegemony and colonial mimicry. Indeed, in the early years of the impact of postcolonial theory, several influential Indian scholars writing in English trenchantly questioned the relevance of these concepts, and instead read the consequences of the colonial encounter in terms of hegemony in the Gramscian, rather than the Saidian, sense. Moreover, Indian writers also engaged with French, Russian, and German literature in the 20th century, resulting in their coming into contact with sensibilities and ideas very different from those encountered in the colonial classroom. These rich histories of cultural encounters are usually ignored by the majority of North American postcolonial scholars in favour of the larger unifying tale of colonial victimhood and cultural crawling among the indigenous elite in the colonial era, followed by the purported spiritual liberation offered by postcolonial theory a few decades after independence. Surprisingly, such assumptions have become increasingly accepted among Indian scholars writing in English, a development that suggests that it is time to locate the post-colonial hegemony

of the West in the postcolonial theory itself. I, therefore, seek to chart the reception history of postcolonial theory in India, and to examine the implications of its hegemony on current Indian scholarship.

## **Bio-Note**

Suddhaseel Sen is Assistant Professor of English in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at IIT Bombay. He has a PhD in English (Collaborative Programme in South Asian Studies) from the University of Toronto and a second PhD, in Musicology, from Stanford University. Sen has been a Research Fellow for the Balzan Research Project, Towards a Global History of Music. His publications include a monograph, *Shakespeare in the World: Cross- Cultural Adaptation in Europe and Colonial India, 1850–1900* (Routledge, 2020); and essays on cross-cultural exchanges between Indian and British musicians; Richard Wagner and German Orientalism; nineteenth-century Bengali literature and culture; and films by Satyajit Ray and Vishal Bhardwaj, among others.

### **“Vernacular Languages and the Construction of Diasporic Identities: A Study of select Indian Diasporic Narratives”**

**Rameesa PM**, Ph.D. scholar, Department of English, University of Hyderabad

## **Abstract**

The politics of languages is an important aspect of diaspora narratives, as language can be looked upon as a major marker of cultural identity. The significance of vernacular languages in multicultural environments opens up various nuances of immigrant sensibility, ranging from attempts to ‘fit-in’, process of assimilation, estrangement, displacement and discrimination. The history of Indian diaspora writing reflects the writers’ creative sensibility to manifest Indianness through the element of nostalgia. Revival of the past and homeland in diaspora writing is achieved not just through the notion of memory, rather by incorporating indigenous markers into immigrant sensibility. Story and Walker observe that “marking out the social boundaries of ethnic groups is part of the process of constituting a diaspora, and the maintenance of ties to the homeland (a crucial part of the definition) requires the reproduction of markers that allow for members, of a diaspora to assert their claims (140)”. The use of indigenous languages in home spaces and community spaces in the context of diasporic narratives,

therefore, represents the larger question of ethnicity, race and nation. As a prominent cultural marker, the role of vernacular languages in the construction and negotiation of diasporic identities is focused in this Paper. I also hope to analyse the notion of “new linguistic world order” by exploring the power dynamics and hierarchy in the language ideologies in multicultural environments. The depiction of regional language teaching communities and accent training as a diasporic mode of revival technique will be studied in detail with reference to the works of writers like VS Naipaul, Raja Rao, Salman Rushdie, Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri, Farzana Doctor, and Minal Hajratwala. Linguistic conflicts in second/young generation migrants and the multiple implications of the shift in the language ideologies are also explored in this paper.

### **Bio-Note**

Rameesa PM is a PhD scholar in the department of English, University of Hyderabad. She is currently working on South Asian Queer Diaspora Writing. Her major areas of research interest include Indian writing in English, Postcolonial Studies, gender studies, and contemporary Diaspora writing

### **“Vernacular of Bihar and Bihari Identity: Colonial Contexts and Present Times”**

**Dr. Sabiha Hashami**, Faculty, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Goa

### **Abstract**

This paper presents the case of the true vernaculars (regional languages) of Bihar. By tracing the emergence of a new language and Bihari identity linked to it (which is neither standard Hindi nor the regional languages of Bihar). Since the British period there has been a dispute regarding language policy adopted in Bihar. Where, standard Hindi in Devanagari script became the language of vernacular education, courts, and local administration by 1880s almost 20 years before it got equal status with Urdu in the North Western Provinces and Oudh. This was done even though Grierson said in his ‘Handbook of Kaithi Characters’- “Unless the ungrammatical jargon of these petitions can be called Hindi or Urdu, Hindi is no more in possession than Norman-French was in possession as the language of England, at a time when the lawyers spoke what they called Norman-French in the law Courts. The matter, no doubt, is different in the North-West

Provinces, West of Benaras; for there, Hindi may fairly claim to be the vernacular of the country; but it is not, never was, and never could be, the vernacular of Bihar.” This move was fully supported by the landed gentry<sup>2</sup> as well as emerging Hindi intelligentsia of Bihar, who had close ties with the proponents of the Hindi movement in NWP. It was not only a move to replace Urdu and thus take away the advantage of the Muslims and Kayasthas but also to keep the language of the landowners<sup>3</sup> separate from the people who worked their lands. Now the Hindi spoken by general people of Bihar is a Koiné that developed due to the contact between standard Hindi and local vernaculars. This language is used in the local newspaper cartoons and in cinema<sup>4</sup> to mark Bihari identity. Dr. Sabiha Hashami currently teaches Linguistics in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Goa.

### **Bio-Note**

She has been a student of Linguistics since 2006 and she is passionate about the subject. Areas that are of utmost interest to her are Contact linguistics, Sociolinguistics and Sociology of Language. She is also interested in the areas of Language endangerment, Gender Studies, and Culture Studies. Interactions between language and society is the broad area in which she places her research. She studied in Centre for Linguistics, Jawaharlal Nehru University New Delhi from masters till PhD. In her M.Phil. she worked on the issue of language and identity in context of Hindi and Urdu as used today. In her PhD she worked on language contact and emergence of a new variety of Hindi in Bihar and Jharkhand. She was awarded PhD in June 2016. She has published several articles and presented research papers in national and international conferences.

### **“Panning the Local and the Global in Vernacular: Contemporary Trends in Select Malayalam Fiction”**

**Grace Mariam Raju**, Ph.D. Scholar, Dept. of English, JMI

**Rajitha P. Venugopal**, Ph.D. Scholar, Dept. of English, JMI

### **Abstract**

With its unique history and geography, Kerala’s socio-cultural vista has been enriched with myriad encounters of cultural exchanges and transactions that facilitated movement

of people away from and into its cultural landscape. While this had enhanced the cosmopolitanism of Kerala's society, it has also contributed to the language and literature of the region. Malayalam literature embodies within its universe a vibrant history of literary translations from across languages and cultures within India and across the world, to the extent that a character in an N.S. Madhavan's story says that Gabriel Garcia Marquez is his favourite Malayalam writer. Dilip Menon argues that Kerala's cultural milieu is located within a locally rooted cosmopolitanism that declares affiliation with other worlds and places. Kerala has a hugely vibrant translation culture where Latin American and Russian literatures were made available and widely read and owned as much as Malayalam literary works. All these point towards what Pnina Webner calls "vernacular cosmopolitanism...an oxymoron that joins contradictory notions of local specificity and universal enlightenment." In this regard Pollock further elaborates in an essay titled "Cosmopolitan and Vernacular in History," that "vernacular literary cultures, were initiated by the conscious decisions of writers to reshape the boundaries of their cultural universe." Malayalam literature's openness to international cultures can also be seen in the International Film Festival of Kerala and the Kochi Biennale. Trivandrum hosted the first ever Hay Literary Festival in India in the year 2010. In recent years there has been celebration of literatures in the public sphere through the yearly Kerala Literature Festival (KLF) and Mathrubhumi International Festival of Letters which give as much space to international, national, regional and local writers. Besides literary festivals, Kerala's literary public is shaped by public libraries, Kerala Literacy Mission, Publication Houses, and 'Little Magazines' that greatly contribute in creating a "literary cosmopolitanism" that is ubiquitous and inevitable. This paper would analyse the 'literary cosmopolitanism' (Nambidi 2011) evident in select Malayalam writings that have emerged post 2000, in which Malayalam fiction travels far and wide both in terms of themes and translation; which also brought in extra-local and extra-regional themes in its fiction. The cosmopolitan treatment of themes in recent Malayalam fiction for instance – Mukundan's *Delhi Gathagal*, K.R. Meera's *Hangwoman*, Benyamin's *Goat Days*, *Al Arabian Novel Factory*, *Jasmine Days*, T.D. Ramakrishnan's *Francis Ittikora* and Sugandhi Enna Andal Devanayaki, S. Hareesh's *Meesha (Moustache)* orchestrate a global discourse through local culture using the vernacular. From analysing these recent trends, this paper would argue that the corpus of Malayalam literature is always in conversation with cultures within and outside the region, reflecting its interest in politics and cultures of the world. Its canvas is open-ended, in a state of flux, constantly



expanding, and engaging, because there is always a receptive audience that is willing to listen to new voices and new stories.

Keywords: Vernacular; Literary; Cosmopolitanism; Kerala

## **Bio-Note**

Rajitha P. Venugopal, Ph.D. Scholar, Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia

Grace Mariam Raju, Ph.D. Scholar, Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia

## **SESSION 4: Paper Presentations (3:00 PM–4:15 PM IST)**

### **“Reconfiguring the Vernacular, Language Ideologies and Identity: A Study of Fahmida Riaz’s *Tum Kabir*”**

**Prof. Nishat Haider**, Dept. of English, Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI)

## **Abstract**

Banaatey hain hum ek farhang-e-nau [Come let us create a new lexicon] (from Fahmida Riaz’s “Nayi Dictionary [New Dictionary]” in *Tum Kabir*) Although Pakistani English literature is well-recognized globally, the diversity of vernacular language literatures in Pakistan (Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, Seraiki, and Baloch), besides creative works in Urdu (the national language), makes the issue of the postcolonial voice a complex one. Delineating a necessary dialogue between the intersecting veins of language, vernacularity, and literary tradition from a postcolonial perspective, this paper looks retrospectively at Fahmida Riaz (28 July 1946 – 21 November 2018), the Pakistani Progressive Urdu writer, Marxist feminist and poet whose life and works echo those very nuances of watan (home/country), saqaafat (culture), as well as the conflict between maqaami aur qaumi zubaan (vernacular and national language), which are complicated by the writer’s ideological, identitarian and gender positioning. Foregrounding Fahmida Riaz’s *Tum Kabir* (2017) that comprises poems composed between 2000 and 2015, this paper explores the ways in which the poet situates indigenous knowledge(s), constructs the nation, imagines the urban cosmopolitanism and enunciates the ramifications of capitalist economy to produce a new understanding of identity, one that crosses the traditional boundaries of location, gender, class, and religion. Fahmida Riaz received the eighth UBL Literary Awards 2019 for *Tum Kabir*. Combining adab bara-e-adab (literature

for the sake of art) and *adab bara-e-zindagi* (literature for the sake of life), Riaz's poetry is reflective of what Homi Bhabha has stated as the "particular ambivalence that haunts the idea of the nation, the language of those who write it and the lives of those who live it" (Bhabha 1990, 1). Through a close reading of Riaz's *Tum Kabir*, this paper maps out two intersecting major domains: first it attempts to enable our understanding of the linkages among society, culture and vernacularity by addressing/interpellating the subject in the context of capitalist market economy, globalisation, and development, and second, it explores the phenomenon of how vernacularity has been employed, looked at, manipulated, practiced, maintained, and preserved at the level of individual writers like Riaz, the political leaders and the indigenous people. Opposed to the state's imposition of "a unique and homogenous Pakistani self that was predicated upon both its putative difference from the Indian Other and the minimization of ethnic and regional differences among the nation's citizens" (Pemberton and Nijhawan 2009, 4), Fahmida Riaz not only subverts the language barriers, regional margins, and religious borders, but also plies through vernacular idioms to excavate indigenous modes of resistance.

### **Bio-Note**

Dr. Nishat Haider is Professor of English at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi (India). She is the author of *Tyranny of Silences: Contemporary Indian Women's Poetry* (2010). She has served as the Director, Institute of Women's Studies, University of Lucknow. She is the recipient of many academic awards including the Meenakshi Mukherjee Prize (2016), C. D. Narasimhaiah Award (2010), and Isaac Sequeira Memorial Award (2011). She has presented papers at numerous academic conferences and her essays have been included in a variety of scholarly journals and books. She has conducted numerous conferences, seminars, workshops on gender budgeting and gender sensitization. She has worked on various projects funded by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, UNICEF, UGC and other agencies. She has lectured extensively on subjects at the intersection of cinema, culture and gender studies. Her current research interests include Postcolonial Studies, Translation, Popular Culture and Gender Studies.

### **"The Vernacular Press Act (1878) and the "Native" Response"**

**Maryam Sikander**, Ph.D. Scholar, Department of South Asia, SOAS University of London

## **Abstract**

The Vernacular Press Act (1878) and the “Native” Response In British India, the Vernacular Press Act (1878) was enacted to curtail the freedom of the Indian press and prevent the expression of criticism toward British policies, most notably, the opposition that had grown with the outset of the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878–80). The Act was proposed by Lord Lytton then Viceroy of India, and was unanimously passed by the Viceroy’s Council on 14 March 1878. The act excluded English-language publications as it was meant to control seditious writing in; publications in Oriental languages; everywhere in the country, except for the South. The Vernacular Press Act exposed the fault lines in the seemingly deceptive liberalism of the colonial government and its contradictory set of standards for the colony where dissent was disallowed in the vernacular. This paper seeks to look at the native response of late nineteenth century Hindi and Urdu newspapers in colonial North India at the Vernacular Press Act. While some pro- establishment newspapers like the Urdu Lytton Gazette, Avadh Akhbar and the Hindi Bharat Bandhu welcomed the move blaming “some seditious newspapers” for the “Gagging Act”, most newspapers vigorously denounced the act given that it curtailed press freedom in vernacular only. The Act invited “native” editors to question the logic of liberal governance especially because many newspapers (like the native “Punches”) copied and translated freely from the Anglo-Indian newspapers of the time. A close perusal of the Home Department reports, however, yields, that most of these newspapers used the opportunity to have a go at their competitors blaming them for seditious writing while others flew in defence of their contemporaries questioning the nature of “seditious writing” in the first place, allowed, as it was, in English. Finally, this paper will look at some of the techniques employed by native newspapers to dodge an increasingly censorious press. Satire and visual metaphorisation were some of the techniques that were instrumentalised for their indirect roundabout nature to critique colonial policies like increased taxation, excise duty, military expenditure and corollaries of colonial mis(rule) like famines. Oblique strategies of satire and visual metaphors relied on interpretive communities to decode dissent in the vernacular and became a tactical response to colonial watchdogs arrayed around native opinion in the vernacular.

## **Bio-Note**

Maryam Sikander is a doctoral researcher at the Department of South Asia, SOAS University of London. Her project, funded by the SOAS Research Studentship, looks at the transcultural life of a Victorian magazine called Punch (1841). She did her BA(Hons) English and MA in English from Miranda House, University of Delhi and her MPhil from Department of English, University of Delhi. At SOAS, she was awarded the Jit Kaur Babak and Chanchal Singh Babak Nottingham Research Award. She was also awarded the Charles Wallace India Trust Grant and the Curran Fellowship to research AngloIndian periodicals.

### **“The Standardisation and Vernacularisation of Hindi”**

**Meenakshi Yadav**, Ph.D. Scholar, Dept. of English, JMI

## **Abstract**

The introduction of print technology, railways, and postal services not only ascribed mobility to the information, discourses, and people, but also initiated a totalizing phenomenon that stimulated people to coagulate as (religious, national, caste, and linguistic) communities. The wave of modernity also created a chasm between the textual and oral discourses. The history of Hindi language is one example where the textual is privileged over oral discourse. A study of Hindi journals seems to alleviate such gaps in historiography. From announcing the important community, and national events to urging the readers to spread the word by mouth, the journals managed to bridge the gap between the older and modern communication networks. Journals enacted a crucial role in the vernacularisation and standardisation of Hindi by creating a Hindi reading public. Hindi journalism came across as a bridge for the spontaneous communication between oral and written discourses. Where the oral discursive practices sustained to ensure the relevance of the selective incorporation of Braj, Arabic, and Persian vocabularies in journals like Rajput (started in 1899 from Agra), the textual manifestations as periodicals, in turn, functioned as the exemplars of pure language. The standardisation of Hindi is the outcome of this dynamic interaction between oral and written discourses. The support for Sanskritized Hindi in late nineteenth century as the pure language (owing to its traditional association with Hinduism), and matr bhasha (mother tongue) did not necessarily consequent into its absolute acceptance. The relative appropriation of

Sanskritized Hindi by the periodicals in tandem with the varna status is striking. To begin with Brahman journals (Brahman Sarvasva, and Gaur Hitkari), the endeavor to embrace Sanskrit laden vocabulary rendered the articles incomprehensible for the masses. The paper presentation intends to focus on journals to delve deeper to understand the role of printed journals in the formation of cultural practices, and as the product of these cultural practices. The paper also looks at the material existence of the journal to comment upon its engagement with the contemporary linguistic and cultural discourses.

### **Bio-Note**

Meenakshi Yadav works as an Assistant Professor in Shivaji College, University of Delhi. She is a PhD scholar at the Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia. She has received M.Phil. degree from Department of English, University of Delhi. She has completed her graduation and post-graduation from Kirorimal College, University of Delhi. Her research interests include Hindi journalism in nineteenth century India, Dalit studies, subaltern studies, and cultural studies.

### **SESSION 5: Plenary Address (5:00 PM–6:00 PM IST)**

**“Koi sarhad na inhein roke’: Language flows beyond ideological boundaries”**

**Dr. Ravi Kant**, Associate Professor, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi

### **Abstract**

For the natives of the internet it is no news that languages riding on technologies travel far and wide, beyond borders, like the free movement enjoyed by Javed Akhtar’s ‘birds, winds and rivers’. However, it may surprise some of us if we are told that even such old technologies as cinema and radio were fired by and welcomed with a similar technotopian declarations promising shrinkage of (global) space and (real) transmission time. Like elsewhere, some of these promises came true in South Asia, even after postpartition cartographic sovereignties erected new, national-linguistic boundaries and installed ideological strategies to check infiltration of cultural artefacts and linguistic seepage. Punjab and Bengal were divided but Urdu films continued to be watched in East Pakistan and even Bangladesh, and Manto continued to be read in pirated editions in

India. Punjabi film industry did much better in Pakistan, and Urdu films in Pakistan could be often spotted showcasing Brajbhasha and Avadhi! Bapsi Sidhwa tells us that there was a curfew-like situation in Lahore when Doordarshan, Amritsar, telecast Meena Kumari's Pakeeza one Sunday afternoon in the 1970s, and Madame Nurjehan, landing up unannounced at Radio Ceylon one fine day, was astonished to hear pure Hindi and immediately demanded to be spoken to in Punjabi! The radio station itself, or rather its stardom in South Asia and its diasporic beyond, was a product of a clash between popular desire for film songs and their puritan five-year 'ban' on Akashvani by a highbrow nation that wanted to manufacture its post-colonial linguistic, musical and cultural template anew. The reintroduction of film songs at All India Radio in 1957 was an admission of defeat by the Indian state in the face of popular will aided in no small measure by a trans-national technology and market. The paper will weave together a multilingual, intermedia narrative about sonic neighbourhoods constructed within and beyond national boundaries, its chief architects being the listeners who shaped the entertainment map of South Asia by their insistent requests and persistent co-curations.

### **Bio-Note**

Dr. Ravi Kant is a bilingual historian, writer, and translator. He read, researched, and taught modern Indian and world history in various colleges of Delhi University before joining the Centre's Sarai programme at its inception in 2000. He is the author of *Medi a ki Bhasha-leela*, New Delhi, Vani Prakashan, 2016. His collaboratively edited books include *Translating Partition: Stories, Essays, Criticism* with Tarun Saint (2001); *Deewan e Sarai 01: Media Vimarsh: Hindi Janpad* (2002), *Deewan e Sarai 02: Shaharnama* with Sanjay Sharma (2005); His collaborative filmography includes *Andaz Production's Kali Shalwar* (2001), an adaptation of Saadat Hasan Manto's eponymous story, and *Jo Dooba So Paar* (2011). Ravikant's doctoral work, 'Words in Motion Pictures: A social History of Language of 'Hindi' Cinema', navigated inter-media sites such as print, broadcasting, and web in an effort to offer creative connections between these media forms and their diverse publics. The *Hinglis h Project*, in collaboration with SOAS, London, tries to make sense of contemporary bilingualism in North India. He also works for the Indian Languages programme at CSDS and its peer-reviewed journal *Pratiman*.

## **“In Defense of the Preamsar. Re-evaluating the Narrative of the Hindi-Urdu Split”**

**Gautam Liu**, Lecturer of Hindi, University of Heidelberg, Germany

### **Abstract**

This paper wants to question the common narrative of the divide of a common Hindi-Urdu-prose at the beginning of the 19th century. The work of Fort William's bhasha munshi Lallu Lal "Preamsar" is often referred to as an example par excellence of linguistic cleansing. My argument is that there never has been a common Hindi-Urdu-prose in the two centuries before. The language of the Preamsar is rather an organic development of a vibrant prose tradition in the Hindi heartland. Claims of linguistic artificiality of the Preamsar tend to reflect a modern discourse that idealises a "Ausgleichsvarietät". Though Hindustani had undoubtedly gained some popularity throughout the 19th century it was disowned by literary stalwarts such as Bharetendu Harishchandra and more importantly Premchand as a literary medium of Modern Standard Hindi. The reasons for this decision are further points in this paper.

### **Bio-Note**

Mag. phil. Gautam Liu studied Indology at the University of Vienna (Austria), where he taught Hindi from 2000 till 2007. In 2007 he was appointed as a lecturer of Hindi at the South Asia Institute of Heidelberg University (Germany). Mr. Liu co-authored with Dr. Ines Fornell the two-volume course book Hindi bolo! Hindi für Deutschsprachige. He also translated Uday Prakash's Hindi novel Mohandas into German. His current research interests lie in Mahatma Gandhi's conception of Hindustani as the future national language of India.

## **SESSION 6: Valedictory Address (7:30 PM–8:25 PM IST)**

**"Who wants to learn languages?"**

**Prof. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak**, University Professor, Department of English and Comparative Literature, Columbia University

## **Abstract**

This valedictory speech will attempt to respond to some of the ideas expressed in the conference. The perspective will start from Gramsci, who knew that: Written normative grammar . . . always presupposes a 'choice', a cultural tendency, and is thus always an act of national-cultural politics. One might discuss the best way to present the 'choice' and the 'tendency' in order to get them accepted willingly, that is, one might discuss the most suitable means to obtain the goal; but there can be no doubt that there is a goal to be reached, that adequate and suitable means are needed, in other words that we are dealing with a political act and end, going backwards, with the failure of the Buddha's intervention on behalf of Pali, and the inaccessibility of the Chagtai fragments of the Baburnama, except to the specialist; both over-exposed.

## **Bio-Note**

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is University Professor in the Humanities at Columbia University. Her books are *Myself Must I Remake* (1974), *Of Grammatology* (1976; translation with critical introduction of Derrida's *De la grammatologie*), *In Other Worlds* (1987), *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (1993), *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999), *Other Asias* (2003), *An Aesthetic Education* (2013), and *Readings* (2014). She has won the Kyoto Prize (2012) and the Padma Bhushan (2013). She holds twelve honorary doctorates. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" has become a worldwide classic



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