

Report of National Seminar on “Postcoloniality, Subalternity, and Indian Writing in English: The Open Learning Praxis” organized by the School of Humanities on October 1, 2015.

The School of Humanities, Netaji Subhas Open University organized a UGC-DEB sponsored Research project-based national seminar titled “Postcoloniality, Subalternity and Indian Writing in English: The Open Learning Praxis” on October 1, 2015. The venue of this conference was in the seminar hall, 1st floor, NSOU, Sector-1, DD-26, Kolkata-700064 at the University main campus. The seminar was conducted out of the DEC research project grant allocated to Srideep Mukherjee, Assistant Professor of English, vide Office Order No. 4074 dated 12.03.2014, for his research project titled “Reading Indian Drama in English and in Translation: An Open Praxis Project on Representations of Dalit Identity”.

As the attached flyer will show, the Seminar thematically took upon Indian Writing in English as an accepted category in academia, and intended to focus upon its nuances and varieties, from the perspective of syllabus framing. This gave the seminar a two- pronged approach – scholarly interest for advanced level researchers, and the rationale of syllabus framing at the Undergraduate and Postgraduate levels of the discipline of English at this University.

Naturally, the conference attracted scholars around the nation with its multi-dimensional thematic outreach. In the inaugural session, Dr. Manan Kumar Mandal, Officer in Charge, School of Humanities addressed the audience by welcoming all the participants, scholars and dignitaries. Srideep Mukherjee, Assistant Professor of English, and the Organizing Secretary of the Seminar, introduced the theme of the seminar by highlighting key issues for selecting the theme of the seminar. In his brief address, he pointed out that the seminar intended to explore, not the early issues that were constantly debated in this genre, but how the related and contested categories of Postcoloniality and Subalternity had actually made the scene much more prone to scholarly debates.

Eminent Scholar Professor Sukalpa Bhattacharjee, Head, Dept of English, North Eastern Hill University, Shillong delivered the keynote address on “Theorizing Indian Writing in English:

Identities, Politics, and Representation”. She raised different indispensable issues and concerns identified with Indian Writing in English. She went on to say that one needs to understand the position and the role of contemporary critical debates which are undergoing in/ around IWE. She raised an important question regarding the thematic, structural and formal components of Indian Writing in English. Are we not generalizing IWE, particularly in the context of any writing in English, of which we willy nilly treat it as a part, and therefore run the risk of homogenising? Finally, she addressed the politics in canonizing IWE particularly in the context of alternative literatures emerging at the peripheries of mainstream India like Tribal Literature, Dalit Literature and the Literatures of North- East India. The Presidential address was given by Professor Shanta Mahalanobis, Sr member, PG, BoS, English, NSOU. Arijit Ghosh, Lecturer in Journalism & Mass Com. School of Humanities, NSOU extended the vote of thanks.

In the first Technical Session, Dr. Albeena Shakil, Fellow, IAS, Shimla brought up one of the most debatable topics of IWE, which was the subject of canonical and non-canonical literary texts. Other invited speakers at this session were Dr Tajuddin Ahmed, Assistant Professor at Aliah University, and Dr Subhendu Sarkar, Associate Professor at Ranaghat College, Nadia. While Dr Ahmed spoke on the position of Muslim women in early IWE novels, Dr Sarkar deliberated upon Indian Drama, specially focusing upon literary output from North East India.

The Second Technical Session that took place post-lunch was animated with a varied range of topics presented by six (6) paper presenters. The session was chaired by Professor Sukalpa Bhattacharya of NEHU. There was a fruitful discussion on the pedagogy of curriculum framing in this field of studies, and the Undergraduate syllabus in English offered by NSOU was lauded by all present.

At the Valedictory Session of the Seminar, the Organizing Secretary distributed certificates to all the participants. Learners of NSOU who attended the Seminar benefitted from the discussions, as most of the papers that were presented touched upon the curricular framework of this University. All participants, invited and registered, were informed that an edited volume would soon be published, and they were requested to submit their full papers within a month’s time.

Compiled by Srideep Mukherjee