

International Conference

on

## Comparative Literature: At the Crossroads of Culture and Society

Organised by

Centre for Comparative Literature,

Bhasha Bhavana, Visva-Bharati

In association with

Comparative Literature Association of India

Dates: 16 & 17 January, 2016

### A Concept Note:

'Comparative Literature', 'culture', 'society' – these terms have been used frequently in contemporary academic discourses that stem from the drive towards "interdisciplinarity" without addressing the tools to map the available reference points within a particular socio-cultural milieu. Our focus in this seminar is to examine the inter-relation of these concepts from the perspective of comparative studies in literature(s) and culture(s). The development of Comparative Literature in India and elsewhere as an academic discipline has been continuously shaped by certain socio-political events, like *Bangabhanga*, World War II, Cold War, (to name a few). These events are linked with socio-cultural phenomena like "multiculturalism" (Bernheimer, *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism*), "globalization" (Saussy, *Comparative Literature in the Age of Globalization*), as well as disciplines/concepts like Cultural Studies, Translation Studies, World Literature and – perhaps the latest – Comparative Cultural Studies. Does Comparative Literature mean merely comparing two texts from two different socio-cultural milieus? What is the value of language as a sign system and as a creative tool, in such an endeavour? In a multilingual situation how can language as a major socio-cultural index (beyond oral/written) become a significant point of departure in understanding the negotiations mentioned above, is our primary concern.

The conference seeks to delve deep into this anxiety and explore the precise links – if any – between the practice of Comparative Literature and the location of the practitioner. Do the needs of the comparatist influence the means and methods and if so, how? As a practice, Comparative Literature opens itself to

such internal questions, and we would like to explore the relations between the different ways of practice and their locations – comparing the comparativism that arises in different locations.

If comparative literature as a perspective allows itself to “change”, ‘comparativism as an ethics’ allows us to take into our pedagogy and our practice its commitment to understanding the other with the humility and the willingness to change in the face of difference. Difference in language to start with and then extending our “understanding” around, gender, caste, class, ethnicity, religion, location and many more. Standing at this historical juncture, we feel the need to bring this discussion to bear upon both disciplinary expectations and “interdisciplinarity”.

We invite focussed and analytical papers which would address these theoretical complexities and enrich our understanding of the points of intersections between Comparative Literature and culture/ society.

**Subthemes will include:**

- Comparative Literature: Theory, Practice
- Re-thinking Visvasahitya
- Towards Indian Comparative Literature
- Comparative Literature and Translation Studies
- Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies
- Comparative Literature in the Age of Digital Humanities
- Rethinking Individual and Society
- Comparative Aesthetics
- Literary Theory and Comparative Literature
- Endangered Languages and Cultures/ Indigenous Knowledge Systems
- Feminist Theory and Art/ Feminist Cultural Production
- Theorizing Multiculturalism/ Globalization
- Art and Censorship
- Literature and Political Writings
- The Politics of the ‘virtual’ society

**Abstracts (300 words, maximum) of papers, related to the broad theme of the Conference, are invited by November 20, 2015. Authors should mention clearly their name and affiliation. Please note, we will be unable to consider abstracts received after the last date.** The Broad Areas mentioned are only suggestive. Presentation time will be 15-20 minutes. Abstracts must be sent here: [cclvbu@gmail.com](mailto:cclvbu@gmail.com).

Abstracts can be in Bangla, English, Hindi, Assamese, Odia, Marathi, Sanskrit, Tamil, Urdu, Santhali, Indo-Tibetan, Russian, Italian, French, German, Spanish, Japanese and Chinese. If selected, participants will have to translate their abstracts, and subsequently papers, into English for

**circulation.** All abstracts will be sent for blind peer-review and selected participants will receive an acceptance letter by **December 10, 2015**. In order to participate in the conference, selected candidates will have to send their complete papers by **January 10, 2016**.

### **Best Paper Award to Students at the Conference (TWO)**

Since 2015, the Comparative Literature Association of India has decided to institute **two** prizes at its annual conferences, one for the best paper presented by an MA student from any literature discipline, and one for the best paper presented by a research student at the MPhil and PhD level in Comparative Literature. Participants under the age of 35, registered for MA, MPhil and PhD courses in Indian and foreign universities are eligible to compete, provided:

- (1) They indicate their desire to compete
- (2) Submit proof of studentship along with the abstract.

Once notified that their abstract has been selected for inclusion in the conference programme, MA, MPhil and PhD students wishing to compete must submit the complete paper within the date mentioned above. Six papers (three from each category) will be shortlisted for presentation at a special session of the conference. Selection of shortlisted candidates will be on the basis of blind review of papers received by an expert committee. Final selection of two best papers will be on the basis of the papers received followed by the presentation of the shortlisted papers at the special session.

#### **Registration fees shall be applicable as follows:**

▪ <b>Outstation participants</b>	-	<b>Rs. 2500/=</b>
▪ <b>Local Participants</b>	-	<b>Rs. 1500/=</b>
▪ <b>Research scholars</b>	-	<b>Rs. 1500/=</b>
▪ <b>Students</b>	-	<b>Rs. 1000/=</b>
▪ <b>Foreign participants</b>	-	<b>US \$ 200/=</b>

Outcome of the Conference: An edited volume of research papers to be published by the Centre for Comparative Literature, Bhasa Bhavana, Visva- Bharati and subsequently released during 2017 CLAI Biennial Conference.

For any queries please write to us here [cclvbu@gmail.com](mailto:cclvbu@gmail.com)

CLAI Members please write to: Professor Chandra Mohan, General Secretary, Comparative Literature Association of India (CLAI), C-93 (GF) Inder Puri, New Delhi-110012 (email id: [\*\*c.mohan.7@hotmail.com\*\*](mailto:c.mohan.7@hotmail.com) Mobile: 09810683143)