

IACLALS ANNUAL CONFERENCE

January 22-24, 2016

Co-hosted by

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Kakatiya University, Warangal, India-506 009

Call for Papers

Right to Write: Literary Controversies and Controversial Literatures

The literary controversies, being as turbulent and common as the peaceful debating of literature, deserve scholarly attention for they influence the literary spaces. Several creative works, from *Angarey* (1932) that was a forerunner of the Progressive Writers' Movement in India to *Aavarana* (which was criticized as a novel that distorts historical facts) to the recent *Madhorubhagan* (*One Part Woman*) by Perumal Murugan, (who not only withdrew the book but gave up writing), have been debated acrimoniously.

The scholarly works, some of them being withdrawn by the publishers (Wendy Doniger's *The Hindus: An Alternative history*) too have been quite controversial. A.K. Ramanujan's *Three Hundred Ramayanas: Five Examples and Three Thoughts on Translations* courted controversy when prescribed in University of Delhi for it argues existence of many versions of the Ramayana, presenting Rama and Sita as siblings in one of the versions. The controversial books are banned by successive governments because of electoral compulsions or ideological exclusionism. These contexts enable the reading of reviews, literary festivals, prefaces, criticism and seminars, to snowball into controversies having religious or political ramifications. It is sometimes felt that the authors' own penchant for controversies, aimed at the market, becomes a deliberate source of conflict. Ismat Chughtai, Saadat Hasan Manto, Samaresh Basu, Khushwanth Singh, Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, Shobhaa De, Taslima Nasreen have remained controversial, at times leading to fatwa and/or exile.

Playwright Girish Karnad questioned the organizers of NCPA in Mumbai for their decision to give V.S. Naipaul a lifetime achievement award. Karnad also rated Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore as a playwright of mediocre merit evoking protest. Ashish Nandy's comment on dalits at Jaipur Literature Festival: "It is a fact that most of the corrupt come from OBCs and Scheduled Castes and now increasingly the Scheduled Tribes" became equally controversial. The controversies surrounding the paintings of 'Picasso of India' M.F. Hussain or acclaimed film maker, Deepa Mehta's *Water* generated interesting debates in the media.

The controversial works of arts, resulting in or courting the controversies, have bearing—negative or positive—for scholarly contexts. Against this backdrop, how does one understand literary controversies and controversial literatures? Do the sources of the controversies, be it political or religious, offend the accepted and established norms of the day and create fear and insecurity amongst a section of the society? To what extent are the

controversial debates healthy? Do the controversies contribute to better understanding of the works, or do they deny due literary spaces to the authors? Do the controversies, embracing difference, adopt identitarian stances? Is writers' freedom of speech absolute or relative? Do the controversies shoot the books into prominence, sidelining more important issues of immediate concern? What is the contribution of the controversies to the cause of scholarship? How do the controversies affect culture, caste, class, race and gender? Do the controversies inform scholarly debates? Do the controversies bridge the ever increasing gap between scholarship and practice? Finally how to turn the controversies into meaningful scholarly engagement?

The IACLALS ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2016 seeks to provide a platform for debating the interplay of literary controversies, identities, ideologies, taboos, caste, religion, gender leading to ban and other censoring practices. Papers are invited on all kinds of controversies related to literary works, films, paintings, theory, and history.

Abstracts of 300 words with a bio-note of 50 words may be submitted to iaclalsconferences@gmail.com by 30th September 2015. Acceptances will be mailed by 15th October 2015.

This conference is open only to members and others are encouraged to avail of membership before sending abstracts for the conference (please write to angeliemultani@gmail.com for membership information)

The full paper, on acceptance may be submitted by Nov 30, 2015 (this is ALSO the deadline for submission of your papers for the CD Narasimhaiah Prize for the Best Paper Presented at the Annual Conference; please indicate if you wish to be considered for the prize).

Entries are also open for the Meenakshi Mukherjee Memorial Prize for the Best Academic Paper published by a member during the period 2014-15. Members may submit their papers for consideration to iaclalsconferences@gmail.com by 1st November 2015. You should have been a member of IACLALS when you published the paper.

REGISTRATION

Non-refundable Registration fees to be paid by December 20th 2015. You will be notified about the details of payment in due course.

GJV Prasad
Director, Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Advanced Study
Chairperson, IACLALS
Editor, JSL

Professor
Centre for English Studies
School of Language Literature & Culture Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University

New Delhi 110067 India