

Department of English

Report 2015

This year has been marked for the English department at Kamala Nehru College by a range of enriching journeys and academic interfaces. It chugged to a promising beginning with faculty from the department accompanying an interdisciplinary student group from the college on the fifth edition of Delhi University's Gyanodaya Educational Trip, this time to Assam and Arunachal Pradesh as part of the '*Dharohar: The Glory of the Northeast*' project during the winter break that ushered in 2015. The experiential learning trip to the western part of Arunachal Pradesh covered Bhalukpong, Bomdila, Dirang and Tawang for a project on the intangible cultural heritage of Arunachal. The group subsequently made a presentation at Antardhvani (20th to 22nd February), the Delhi University platform for showcasing the results of such research initiatives.

The department organised a two-day international conference '*Urban Spaces: Representations, Practices, Experiences in the Indian Subcontinent*' at India International Centre on the 5th and 6th of February which opened with a keynote address by Professor Ravi Sundaram from the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies. The Plenary session on 'Inhabiting the City' saw Dr. Shilpa Phadke (Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai), Dr. Brinda Bose (Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi) and Anandana Kapur (independent filmmaker and researcher) address issues of gendered safety, student protests and children's spaces in the city, respectively. Papers during the conference covered a spectrum of research domains such as representations of the city and urban spaces in film and literature, urban spaces as a stage for performance, spaces of/for resistance, graffiti and illegality in Delhi, urban villages, displaced communities in Kerala and Sri Lanka, trauma and memory in riot scarred spaces. The conference closed with Sameera Jain screening and discussing her documentary film '*Mera Apna Sheher (My Own City)*'.

Hogwarts opened its gates to the Muggle world for the English Literary Society's annual festival LitLuminous on 'Harry Potter and the World of Fantasy' on 27th February. Dr. Giti Chandra (St. Stephen's College), Anita Roy (Zubaan) and Samit Basu (author of *The Gameworld Trilogy*) led the way to Platform 9 ¾ with a panel discussion that segued into student paper presentations and literary competitions.

Students and faculty attended as delegates 'Interrogating Masculinities' an international conference at St Stephen's College, Delhi University from 6th to 8th April 2015 as well as Professor Craig Brandist's (University of Sheffield) lecture on "Antonio Gramsci: The Cultural and Political Dimensions of Hegemony" at the Faculty of Arts, Delhi University on 6th August. The departmental mentorship programme for students writing academic papers for publication in *Literophile (ISSN 2347-3681)* has worked towards research papers for 'Love and/in Campuses' and 'Victoriana – Class, Capital and Manners' under faculty guidance. Three student papers were accepted for publication this year. The Department Newsletter *White Noise* was published in November with a range of creative and academic pieces.

A series of programmes were arranged to bring alive the Indian Classical Literature segment of the curriculum. The screening on 30th July of performative lectures on Bharata's *Natyashastra* by Dr. Padma Subramaniam dealt in detail with aspects of stagecraft like stage-design, music, dance and makeup. The episodes also elucidated the theory of Rasa, a significant aesthetic contribution in the Indian Classical paradigm. Girish Karnad's film *Utsav*, which is an adaptation of the Indian classical play *Mricchkatika* by Sudraka, was screened on 14th August. Faculty and students attended theatre performances of Kalidasa's *Abhijanashakuntalam*, directed by Rita Ganguly and staged at the National School of Drama, New Delhi from 11th to 15th September.

On a lighter note, 'Comic O Mania' on 20th August saw the students showcase varied interpretations of comic characters and personae. This was followed by the department organizing a guided tour of the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, on the 22nd of August. This premier gallery of the country houses modern and contemporary Indian art. Its treasures include masterpieces by Indian as well as international artists tracing the trajectory of modern art in painting, sculpting and photography. The special exhibition-on-show was a vibrant retrospective of Amrita Shergil's oeuvre. The art on display also allowed for greater insight into modernist movements and aesthetics from an Indian viewpoint. This was later juxtaposed with a western angle through the screening of the silent Chaplin classic *Modern Times* (1936) on 31st August which is a satire on the condition of the labourers under industrialisation.

The Literary Society and Book Club also organized a book reading session of the novel, *Love, Not For Sale* by Anurag Garg on 3rd September. In an engaging session, the prolific writer shared his experiences of writing this interesting read which centers on the love story of two individuals but tries to explore the dark world of prostitution and human trafficking. In addition to the informative presentation and glimpses into the reality of red-light areas, the session stimulated students to discuss concerns related to sex-workers. A session with Anjum Hasan and Anil Menon to showcase their latest books – *The Cosmopolitans* and *Half of What I Say* – is slotted for 18th January, 2016.

The closing Literary Society event of the year was the screening of Shekhar Kapur's 'Elizabeth' (1998) on 17th October. The tumult during the succession of Queen Elizabeth in 1558, after the rule of her half sister Mary, fraught with religious tensions and public unrest was reconstructed to map Elizabeth's transformation into one of the greatest rulers England ever had. The film threw light on sixteenth century England, especially during Elizabeth's time and led to an enthusiastic discussion on the women of that age, the idea of marriage, religious beliefs, women rulers, Elizabeth's alleged love life and the growth of England under her rule.

Toni McLaughlan (University of Delaware) is visiting faculty with the department for the 2015-2016 academic year as part of a collaboration with the English Language Fellow (ELF) programme of the Regional English Language Office (RELO, American Embassy). She is handling specialised academic writing courses, remedial classes and communication skills modules for our students. A Faculty Development Programme on 'Teaching English Communication Skills' with Toni McLaughlan as resource person was organised by the department and RELO from 16th to 18th November at the American Centre. It drew participation from professors and scholars at Delhi University, Jamia Millia Islamia and Aligarh Muslim University. This collaboration has also resulted in three faculty members being awarded scholarships by RELO for online courses on 'Fundamentals of TESOL' and 'Teaching English Communicatively'. Two faculty members have been awarded the Professional Development Travel Grant for Practicing ESL/EFL Teachers and Toni McLaughlan has been awarded the TESOL Leadership Mentoring Programme Scholarship by TESOL International enabling them to attend the 50th Anniversary TESOL Convention at Baltimore in April 2016.

As part of the Katha-IGNOU initiative "Translating India: Understanding Diversity" faculty and students have been participating in translation workshops and teachers' collectives working towards framing translation-based curriculum from 21st September. The Translation and Media Certificate Course organized by the department in collaboration with Katha is slated for January-February 2016 bringing the year to a very promising close.