

June/July 2019

ASAA NEWSLETTER

Association for the Study of Australasia in Asia

Website: www.asaa.net.au

Hyderabad Literary Festival 2019



HLF 2019: Writers from Guest Nation China

The ninth edition of Hyderabad Literary Festival was held from 25-27 January 2019 in association with the Government of Telangana, and with the support of the Karvy group of companies, several literary and cultural organizations, and publishing houses. China was the Guest Nation and Gujarati the Indian Language in Focus. HLF 2019 paid tributes to Mrinalini Sarabhai (1918-2016) and Kaifi Azmi (1919-2002) to mark their birth centenaries. Interestingly, the tributes to these legendary artistes were paid by their equally famous daughters: the celebrated dancer Mallika Sarabhai and the acclaimed actor Shabana Azmi. To commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the Festival also paid a special tribute to him.

While continuing with its regular features—talks, panel discussions, stage talks, film shows, exhibitions, workshops, cultural evenings, and events for children and young

audiences—HLF 2019 introduced a new feature: an exclusive platform for poetry where amateur and established poets from the city and outside read, performed, and rapped their poems and lyrics in English and Indian languages. Among the poets presenting their work were Astri Gosh, Dileep Jhaveri, Hoshang Merchant, Hussain Hydari, Ila Arun, Jameela Nishat, N Gopi, Raj Rao, Rizio Yohannan, and Sridala Swami.

The more than 100 speakers included Aakar Patel, Govind Nihalani, Gurcharan Das, Ketan Mehta, Mallika Sarabhai, Pranay Lal, Rajendra Singh, Shabana Azmi, Shashi Deshpande, Sitanshu Yashaschandra, Sudhir Chandra, and Vinay Sitapati.

Auguring well for the participation of Australia as a Guest Nation at HLF 2020, a delegation of Australian publishers, festival directors, writers, and academics attended HLF 2019. The group included Anna Solding, Chris Feik, Jane McCredie, Marieken Hardy, Paul Sharrad, and Philippa McGuinness.



HLF 2019: Kommu Koya dancers

Presentations on Kaifi Azmi, Mrinalini Sarabhai, a musical presentation on SD Burman, a soulful performance of electronic sufi music, and an evening of Garba enlivened the audience. In addition, over two dozen workshops, competitions, and lecture-demonstrations—on a range of topics from storytelling to shoe-making, sign language to self-realization—kept the nearly 10,000 visitors busy and engaged.

T Vijay Kumar
Director, HLF

In Memory of a Roving Scholar



Geoff Davis (1943 – 2018)

In the early hours of 22nd November, 2018, three days before his 75th birthday, our teacher, colleague and friend Prof. Dr. Geoffrey V. Davis died in Aachen. He had been diagnosed with

pancreatic cancer a few weeks before; he underwent an operation that could not save his life, and after a short, hard battle lost out against a deadly antagonist that had taken him by surprise and plucked him out of an exceptional *vita activa* led with seemingly indomitable energy for years after his retirement. Our thoughts are with his wife Ingrid, his life companion of many decades, who was also by his side during his last weeks.

One of many vivid memories I have of Geoff Davis is that of a lecture on the exploits of the ‘roving reporter’ Egon Erwin Kisch in Australia delivered at the Conference of the Association for the Study of the New Literatures in English (ASNEL) in Kiel in 2005 (and published under the telling title “‘One step on Australian soil and you’re history’: Nicholas Hasluck’s novel *Our Man K.*, Egon Erwin Kisch and the White Australia Policy” in 2007). With his inimitable style combining scholarly erudition, political engagement and ironical humour, Geoff quickly had the audience roaring at the inept attempts of befuddled politicians to keep Australia safe from the ‘communist threat’ they saw embodied in the outspoken critic of Nazi Germany, and made the former marvel at Kisch’s transnational engagement for social justice and his indomitable courage (Having been banned from setting foot on Australian soil, Kisch jumped from the ship that had brought him to Melbourne, broke his leg after a six-meter fall, and later successfully engaged in a legal battle for his right to go on a nationwide anti-war lecture tour).

The connection Geoff set up in that talk between German literary history and Australian politics was by no means fortuitous; nor was his interest in social justice and the political role of literature

and culture in countries like South Africa. Geoff actually entered academia through German studies; he wrote his PhD on the work of Arnold Zweig, the socialist-humanist writer persecuted by the Nazi regime who emigrated to Palestine and returned to the German Democratic Republic after the end of World War II. Geoff retained a vivid interest in German literature throughout his academic career which soon after came to focus on a quite different province of world literature.

Born in Birmingham in 1943 and educated at Oxford, Geoff Davis belonged to an initially quite small group of pioneer scholars who sought to establish the study of what was then still called “Commonwealth Literature” in Germany and internationally. His influence in and impact on this rapidly expanding field soon extended far beyond the position of foreign language lecturer that he held at Aachen University from 1966 onwards. He was one of the founders of the *Association for the Study of the New Literatures in English* (GNEL/ASNEL) in 1989 and played a major role in the *Association of Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies* both on a European level (he was Chair of EACLALS from 2002–2008 and from 2011–2014) and as International Chair of ACLALS from 2007–2010. He was co-editor of *Cross/Cultures: Readings in Post/Colonial Literatures and Cultures in English*, easily the most important and influential book series published in the field, and of *MATATU: Journal for African Culture and Society*, and author of a truly astonishing number of edited volumes, special issues and essays on African, Canadian, Australian, New Zealand, South Asian, indigenous and Black and Asian British literatures and cultures. The two-volume *Festschrift*

Engaging with Literature of Commitment (Rodopi 2012) pays ample tribute to the extraordinary contribution that Geoff, the “worldly scholar” (as the subtitle of the second volume aptly put it) had made to postcolonial anglophone literary and cultural studies – and testifies to a truly worldwide network of friends, colleagues and mentees that he built up during his long academic career. This career had by no means ended with his retirement; if anything, he had seemed to have become even more energetic, taking on new commitments as editor, conference organizer, and keynote speaker, and continuing his innumerable journeys across the globe that had already turned him into a legendary roving scholar in the 1980s.

In all these years, Geoff Davis truly kept a window onto the world open for many of us in German academia. His cosmopolitan academic interests and his firm commitment to the social responsibility of literature as well as of literary and cultural studies constantly reminded his audiences and readers of the far-flung transcultural and transnational connections linking up Anglophone literatures and cultures across the globe – and of the extraordinary diversity of local and regional contexts in which these literatures have their being in a globalized world. As Arundhati Roy might put it, there is now a Geoff-shaped hole in the universe for all those privileged to have known and to have worked with him. But there is also an inspiring legacy of a scholarly life lived to the full, based on deep and loyal friendship, untiring conviviality and burning intellectual engagement. This we will need to recall as we grope towards understanding our loss.

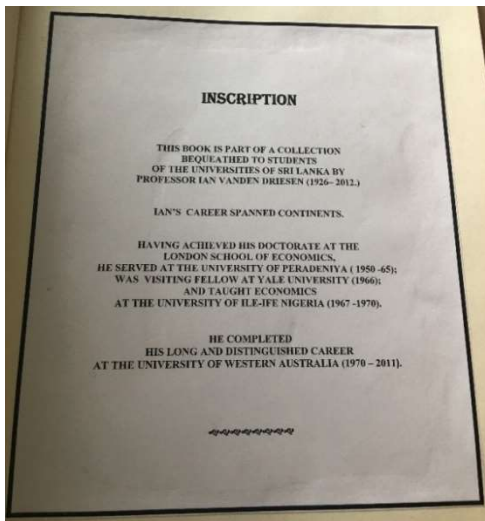
Frank Schulze-Engler

[Acknowledgements to Brigitte Glaser]

An Australian Academic Remembers His Sri Lankan Ties



A project involving the dispatch of a number of specialist books authored by the late Professor Ian vanden Driesen and intended as a gift to universities in Sri Lanka was finally concluded in June 2019. Ian always looked back to his first teaching position at the (then) University of Ceylon after his completion of his doctoral studies at the London School of Economics, with a nostalgia and affection of which this gift will remain a tangible remembrance.



The books, *Indian Plantation Labour in Sri Lanka in the 19th Century* (1998) and *Five Essays on the Labour History of Western Australia* (2003) carried a note duly inscribed on its title page, detailing the bequest.

Many Sri Lankan well-wishers contributed to the completion of this project, which was not easy to fulfil earlier, considering the island's troubled history. Its auspicious moment arrived in 2018 when the (then) Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Mr. Vasantha Senanayake dined with a group of Sri Lankan and Australian academics and officials at the University of Western Australia on March 28, 2018. He spoke of the need to develop educational and cultural ties between the two countries. When the vanden Driesen books were mentioned, he suggested they could be sent to Sri Lanka through the office of the Consul in Perth Mr. Rosh Jalagge. The latter, most co-operatively dispatched a consignment of forty-two books to the Department of Foreign Affairs in Colombo and the care of an officer, Mr Satya Rodrigo son of a former Ambassador to Australia Mr Nihal Rodrigo who was also former Secretary to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Colombo and his super-capable wife Chitra, our long-time friends from earlier years.

Various movements of people and untoward events had resulted in considerable delays and confusions but finally, through the helpful interventions of these friends, the books were finally delivered into their personal care. More problems lay ahead – contacting universities in different regions and research institutions in distant parts of the island and numerous academic and logistic details had to be negotiated. Here the most remarkable intervention occurred providentially. A well-informed friend of a friend, Mr. Kumara Liyanage, had realized the kind of specialism and disinterested goodwill required in this context and assisted us in finding an admirable custodian for

the books: Dr. Roshan Rajadurai. Dr. Rajadurai presented the impossible combination of a sophisticated scholar and specialist in the study of the development of the plantation industry in Sri Lanka besides being an eminent personage in its hierarchy and a person of great goodwill. The successful completion of this project was entirely due to his intervention.

These latter stages were completed with exemplary professionalism by Dr. Rajadurai and his admirable staff; this was more remarkable with further challenges encountered due to the tragedy of the terrorist massacres in Sri Lanka which occurred in May/June of this year and other unfortunate events.

List of the books dispatched to universities and institutions spread across Sri Lanka

1. University of Peradeniya
2. Post Graduate Institute of Agriculture
University of Peradeniya
3. University of Kelaniya
4. University of Colombo
5. Faculty of Agriculture & Plantation
Management – Wayamba University
6. University of Uva/Wellassa
7. Rajarata University
8. University of Sri Jayawardenapura
9. University of Ruhuna
10. Sabaragamuwa University
11. University of Moratuwa
12. University of Jaffna
13. National Institute of Plantation
Management

Ian's book on Indian labour on the tea-plantations of Sri Lanka was not widely available in the island and many researchers had written to him for copies or extracts, a request not easy to fulfil from Perth. This project was one way it was made possible to fulfil his long-held wish. Many thanks to all who

assisted with so much goodwill and efficiency.

Cynthia vanden Driesen
University of Western Australia

CISLE Conference on “Transcending Boundaries: Migrations, Dislocations and Literary Transformation”



Professor Wolfgang Zach, University of Innsbruck and Professor Igor Maver, University of Ljubljiana organized the conference at the Centre for the International Study of Literatures in English, Ljubljiana from 16-20 July 2018.

This was a truly delightful meeting of many friends of long acquaintance along with introductions to new and fresh young talents—a characteristic of all the conferences which Wolfgang Zach (and wife Hannelore) have now become internationally famous for. Wolfgang was ably assisted by Igor Maver and his team from the University of Ljubljana. This triennial conference is always attended by many ASAA members. Wolfgang has been long-time friend to ASAA and the themes of his conferences attract an international gathering of scholars. This was no exception. Many conference attendees from Australia in particular, drew on their own personal experience, besides the accounts of creative writers and theorists, to present

papers which elicited lively interest from great interest from all those present.

It was particularly good to meet Edwin Thumboo (Singapore) who now makes only a rare appearance at conferences and listen to his evocative poetry covering a wide range of experience. Besides being regarded as Singapore's 'poet laureate' over many decades, Edwin has served as the first Patron (Asia) of ASAA. Satendra Nandan's presentation was well-planned and presented with considerable flair while exuding considerable feeling in its drawing on the highly personal content of a remarkable life. Cynthia vanden Driesen drew on her co-edited (with husband Ian) volume recording the contribution of the Sri Lankan community based in all the different states of Australia over a one hundred years of settlement in Australia. Other resources drawn on were the creative works of Sri Lankan writers now settled in Australia, who, incidentally, have been guests at ASAA conferences in India and Sri Lanka over the years and were well-known to the audience present. Jane Fernandez brought a note of urgency into the proceedings through her study of Richard Flanagan's *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* and invoking her awareness of the desperation of migrants driven sometimes to suicide in attempting to cope with the multifaceted challenges of their changed life-situation. This was an antidote to the tone of 'happy hybridity' that may perhaps have been the tone of other presentations. Meira Chand was unable to attend due to family illness. Karen Aribisala sent a paper though visa complications prevented her attendance.

Other contributions—from the creative writers and academics from the Philippines; from Egypt, from Canada—

the Canadians always make a distinctive contribution), from the United States, the United Kingdom, Africa and elsewhere promise that the collection of papers emerging from this conference will be well worth waiting for.

As is characteristic of CISLE conferences attendees were treated to a great cuisine at varied venues but were also treated to cultural events, dance and music which all contribute to an unforgettable cultural experience.

Cynthia vanden Driesen

University of Western Australia

Seminar on “Democracy and Immigration: The Cases of Catalonia and Australia”

On May 30 and 31 2019, the Centre of Australian and Transnational Studies at the University of Barcelona organised a seminar under the heading “Democracy and immigration: the cases of Catalonia and Australia”. The purpose was to discuss the many commonalities and remarkable idiosyncrasies of both areas in connection with these two topical issues. Three plenary lectures were devoted to different matters: Stewart King discussed the concept and forms of literature and nationalism in “Immigració i literatur nacional: els models australià i català”; Pompeu Casanovas and Marta Poblet illuminated aspects of the Catalan footprints in the antipodes in “Catalan – Australian Identities: a Melbourne Journey”, and Avel·lí Flors-Mas focused on the linguistic situation of Catalonia in “Immigració i llengües a Catalunya: de les polítiques als resultats”. To these added a very informative special feature session entitled “Founding and Editing International Literary Journals in the Internet Age: a personal account” by

Australian guest speaker Gillian Dooley. Several papers discussed the cultural hybridization resulting from Catalan migrations to Australian landscapes, like Sue Ballyn's "Catalonia and Australia: Early Bilateral Migrations and the Story of Ramon Porta" and Geoff Belligoi's "A Change in the Heart". Belligoi remarked that the increasing figures in international adoptions turn out to be a major form of promoting a much-desired cultural permeability. A parallel inflection towards affect surrounded the very suggestive paper presented by Vanessa Castejón, who in "Self-determination and in-betweenness" incorporated elements of Pierre Nora's *ego-histoire* and fascinated the audience.

Issues of cultural memory emerged as well in Núria Sara MirasMoronats' "Literatura i exili: desarrelament, pàries i l'ambigüitat de la memòria", as well as Lorne Walker-Nolan's "Australian Secessionism: Western Australia", each of them focusing on either part of the globe. A new perspective on history and literature was brought in by Montserrat Camps Gaset, who in "Una lectura actual de la tragèdia agregada: literatura, democràcia i la figura de l'altre" drew connections between the past and the present via classical Greek authors and characters. The complexity of linguistic and educational matters when it comes to democratic cultures and immigration was bound to appear in the course of the sessions, with excellent papers such as Josep Baró Casanovas' "Democracy, Immigration and School: the Case of a Public School in the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona" and Caty Ribas Segura's "Learning to speak: Languages of instruction in Australia and the Balearic Islands". Finally, the poignant issues of reception policies, regulations and

ethical considerations were addressed by two well-informed contributions: Sílvia Juventeny's "L'estat actual del dret d'asil a Catalunya i reptes que afrontem" and Martin Renes's "Upon watching Tracy Moffat's *Vigil: Building Fortress Australia and Fortress Europe*".

The panel sessions were punctuated with several screenings: for once, the special projection of the documentary *Broken Circles: The Return from Exile* by Greek-Australian film-maker based in Barcelona Peter Sotirakis. Together with this, the short films "The Island", "Nowhere Line" and "Europe's Migration Tragedy", by Gabrielle Brady, Lukas Schrank and Mark Stone, respectively, stimulated discussions and insights.

It was a highly rewarding academic gathering, remarkable not only for the interculturality and interdisciplinarity which are the trademarks of the Centre for Australian and Transnational Studies' conferences and academic events since its inception, but also, this time, for its rather unusual multilingual character. The event concluded with a touching intervention by transnational novel-writer and former political activist Gloria Montero, who besides sharing some enlivening aspects of her own life relevant to the seminar's topic, read from her last novel in progress.

Isabel Alonso-Breto
Barcelona University

**Postcolonial Oceans:
Contradictions and
Heterogeneities in the Epistemes
of Salt Water**

Joint Annual Conference of GAPS and
IACPL

30 May-2 June 2019

University of Bremen

The three-day conference had many aspects of interest for ASAA audiences

but the best way to access comprehensive information would be through the website: http://postcolonialoceans.blogspot.com/p/blog-page_56.html

Two Keynote lectures were presented by Australian academics: Bill Ashcroft, University of New South Wales, Sydney: “Oceans: The Space of Future Thinking”, Anne Collett, University of Wollongong: “Building on the Strata of the Dead: A (Very) Brief History of Coral Reef Ecologies”.



Yvonne Owuor

The sessions also included a tribute to Geoff Davis by Peter Marsden: “Larger than Life: A Tribute to Geoff Davis (1943-2018)”. Authors invited included Yvonne Owuor (Nairobi, Kenya). Yvonne visited Perth (2017) as a guest writer to the African Studies Conference held at the UWA.



Ellen van Neerven

Of particular interest was the presence of an Australian Indigenous writer Ellen van Neerven, an award-winning writer whose mother is from

the Yugambah people of eastern Australia and father is Dutch. Born in Brisbane, Ellen has written a multi-award-winning fiction collection titled *Heat and Light* (UQP, 2014) and a poetry collection, *Comfort Food* (UQP, 2016). She currently teaches first-year poetry at RMIT. Ellen writes about the importance of looking after country (land, water, sea, animals) and learning from ancestors, as well as asserting a proud identity.

Brigitte Glaser
University of Gottingen

South Asian Diaspora



The internationally reputed London School of Economics (LSE) organized a programme on the role of South Asian Diaspora in England, on Tuesday, 30 April 2019. It discussed the contribution of South Asians to British life in terms of politics, literature and culture. Mr. Rajesh Agrawal, Deputy Mayor of London Corporation, delivered an illuminating talk on the subject. It was followed by a lively discussion and fruitful interactions. Dr. R.K. Dhawan (University of Delhi) was one of the invited participants. He was accompanied by his wife Dr. Usha Dhawan.

RK Dhawan
University of Delhi

**ISCS /OUCIP International
Conference on Globalization and
Multiculturalism**
Osmania University, Hyderabad
1-3 February 2019



Prof. S. Ramachandram, Vice-Chancellor Osmania University, inaugurated the conference. Dr. Konda Nageshwar Rao welcomed the guests and Prof. A Karunaker, Director, Osmania University Centre for International Programmes, outlined the ongoing activities of the Centre. Prof. R.K. Dhawan, President, Indian Society for Commonwealth Studies, New Delhi recalled that the ISCS in its 30-year academic journey, had unfailingly promoted Commonwealth Studies, held conferences, published conference newsletters, and brought out *The Commonwealth Review*. He invited the Chief Guest Feroza Jussawalla, Professor of English at the University of New Mexico to respond briefly to the introduction. Prof. Jussawalla mentioned her student days at Osmania University nostalgically and also her association with the ASRC and with Dr. William Mulder, the founder Director of the ASRC. Prof. C.R. Visweswara Rao, Chairman, ISCS, introduced the Conference theme of multiculturalism.



Dr. Suman Bala, Editor, *The Commonwealth Review*

Prof. S. Ramachandram, Vice-Chancellor, spoke on the inter-relationship between globalization and culture in a society where mobility and migration have become the order of the day. He also formally released the Souvenir containing the abstracts of the papers for presentation at the Conference and the latest issue of *The Commonwealth Review*. Dr. Suman Bala, Executive Secretary of the ISCS, briefly touched upon the scholarly preparation for the Conference and explained the salient features of the journal which has been recognized as an approved journal by the UGC. Dr. B. Vijaya, Associate Professor of English, Osmania University, proposed a vote of thanks.

In the second session, Dr. Feroza Jussawalla delivered the keynote address on “Seaming Sisterhood across Literary and Geographic Boundaries”. She pointed out how sisterhood is formed among migrant women enabling the formation of imagined communities. Drawing poignant attention to the subtle exploitation of women and the oppression of the subaltern voice, she pointed out how Zadie Smith and Monica Ali, through works, *White Teeth* and *Brick Lane*, forged a sisterhood among themselves and their characters

showing identity politics at play on a foreign soil.



The afternoon session started with a plenary talk by Prof. Joel Kuortti on “The Ordinarity of the Diasporic Kitchen” interpreting the significance of food, cooking and the kitchen in the wider context of cultural criticism and the theory of the diaspora with special reference to poetry and fiction by Anglophone Indian diasporic writers.

In the next session, well-known creative writer and author of *Trapped in Want and Wonder*, Roswitha Joshi spoke about the dilemmas before a migrant writer writing in a language that had become her adopted cultural possession.

The first session on the second day started with a plenary talk on “Canadian Multiculturalism at a Cross Road: Retrospect and Prospects” by Braj Sinha, (University of Saskatchewan, Canada). In the context of the aftermath of 9/11, the European refugee crisis, Brexit, and the Trump era, Prof. Sinha declared, had faced Canadian multiculturalism with a challenge.

The next paper was followed by Prof. Jagdish Batra’s lucid analysis titled “Creating a Truly Multicultural Society: Manifestations, Malcontents and Means”. His talk proposed an avoidance

of reductionist approaches and the use rather of a dialogical re-assessment of the centre and the margins. Prof. Pradeep Trikha (Udaipur) discussed the significant contribution made by Australian South Asian women writers like Yasmine Gooneratne, Mena Abdulla, Chandani Lokuge, Sujata Fernandez, Chitra Fernando and others to bring out the features of the diaspora.

The lively panel discussion on “Does Women’s Writing Supersede Men’s Writing?” on the third day was vibrant with assertions like the one that women not only pose questions *for* feminism but they provide the basis *of* feminism. Taking the cue from the familiar debate on “Does Jhumpa Lahiri supersede Salman Rushdie?” some arguments advanced were based on the number of Pulitzer awards won in the recent period to indicate the intellectual space women currently occupy.

There was much variation in the paper-reading sessions that followed. In the face of rising Islamophobia and cultural stereotypes of Muslims, it was pointed out that a diasporic Muslim consciousness has developed which not only deflates the orientalist logic and Muslim cultural myths but also critically analyzes the Muslim society from within.

Chitra Divakaruni and Suniti Namjoshi’s work, as always, invited feminist interpretations of classics and re-reading of Indian mythology from a postcolonial and diasporic point of view.

Vikram Seth, J MCoetzee, Margaret Atwood, Ngugire figured in various presentations and critical space in this conference.

Autobiographies of Dalit writers such as Baby Kamble’s *The Prisons We Broke*, Y.B. Satyanarayana’s *My Father Balaiah* dealt with concepts of caste, class and gender oppression made for

the comprehensiveness of the coverage at this conference. If Mahasweta Devi's *Bedanabala* and Rizia Rahman's *Letters of Blood* portray the life of sex-workers in colonial Bengal and post-colonial Bangladesh respectively and are tales of the marginalized, postcolonial ecocriticism is another area of knowledge explored at the conference.

Explorations of African feminism led scholars to go to Adichie's *Americanah* and its exposition of the current meanings of blackness and sexism. There was much food for thought in the conference provided by some of the young paper presenters who covered diverse themes and a wide spectrum of literary modes and critical standpoints. There is a lot of potential in our younger scholars that needs to be nourished.

At the Valedictory session, Prof. R.K. Dhawan, President, ISCS, described these gatherings as literary festivals aimed at promoting knowledge and culture and exchanging viewpoints on these. On behalf of the participants, Prof. Jagdish Batra and Mr. Kedar Nath Sharma expressed their appreciation of the *Souvenir* and *The Commonwealth Review* edited by Suman Bala, Executive Secretary, ISCS, and the passionate care which she expends on this editorial work. Dr. Konda Nageshwar Rao, Joint Director, OUCIP, proposed a vote of thanks. The conference came to a close with the national anthem.

[Adapted Report]

Suman Bala
University of Delhi

Gandhi Symposium
Barton Campus ACT
July 23, 2019

The Symposium was held in honour of Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1948); to mark

his 150th birth anniversary. The central theme of the colloquium was: Gandhi's religio-political truths in an age of violent fundamentalisms. The 21st century has seen a resurgence of 'religious violence' accompanied by social, cultural, economic upheavals under the guise of a variety of fundamentalisms and populist nationalisms and the elections of 'strong leaders' in democratic elections in countries which affect lives all over the world.

Gandhi showed by his life and work, how we may counter the violence against empires and individuals through the powers of 'ahimsa' and 'satyagraha' embedded in the human spirit of love and faith in God. His message has a particular resonance in the state of contemporary world affairs and a world, fraught with nuclear threats and violence in the name of religion.

Speakers included Dr A R Gondone, the Indian High Commissioner of India, Professors Stephen Pickard, CSU, Sathianathan Clarke of Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, D.C., Satendra Nandan, Fiji-Canberra, William Pete Walker, Principal, Theological College, Sydney.

Satendra Nandan explored the manifold versions of Gandhi's ideas of truth, even as he (Gandhi) remained most focused on India's struggle against British colonialism. He traced the many connections between Christianity and Hinduism as these are traceable also in Gandhian maxims and the establishment of a respect for the Mahatma, the world over. He ends with an allusion to his (Nandan's) own personal journey from India to Australia.

Satendra's book *Gandhianjali* was launched at the Symposium.

[A very short excerpt from this presentation is included below. The full text will be published later this year].

Satendra Nandan's Presentation at the Symposium—An Excerpt

...Does Gandhi matter to us on this vast, ancient continent with the oldest, continuous cultural narrative? What does it mean to be an Australian? What are the Australian values by which we live, love and forgive? Could Australia become Australasia?

Why have we not produced a Gandhi-like mahatma on this continent? He's found on all the other continents in human voices and acts. Having been displaced from their ancestral hemisphere – unlike the Canadians and the Americans – the white Australians were more profoundly dislocated in Terra Australis. But within last fifty odd years, the Australian mindscape has undergone notable changes.

But decolonising the imagination is the longest journey. Do we still, more often than not, see the world through prison bars and feel falsely safe on an island when submarines are circling our shores? It requires the leap of the imagination and faith for in Australia the great experiment is on. More than most, Gandhi understood that human creativity is most wonderfully rooted in substance, in the human body and spirit. But it does not stop there – the aesthetic and ethics quicken the continuum between temporality and eternity, between matter and spirit, between man and the other.

Fifty years ago, in a cheap London hotel, I read a remarkable book by an Australian author.

It is because of that book of fiction that Jyoti and I are here amongst you today. And our island continent is not a sunburnt country: it is a continent of human conscience and possibilities for more than ourselves. The remembered book was The Tree of Man by Patrick White. This great genius knew Gandhi well--his first novel Happy Valley, published in 1939, has an

epigraph from the Mahatma. Our valley may not be that happy any more but it's still wonderful to be a dangling leaf on the tree for under its shade generations may still find shelter and rest in a restless world.

For the tree is also the tree of Truth, if we can hear its abiding message in the rustling, bare branches and barks of our leafless trees: thus, withering in winter to the truth of our inseparable humanity that Gandhi preached and lived with a wondrous faith in people like us, the single word: LOVE.

Sydney School of Arts & Humanities (SSOA)

Sydney School of Arts & Humanities (SSOA) is a teaching, mentoring and publishing venture, subsidized by the City of Sydney Council which generously assists emerging writers. It sponsors several weekly meet-up groups to provide space and expertise for critical appraisal of short story, novel and memoir-writing as works-in-progress.



Asia-Australia Connect

SSOA recognizes its natural place in the Asia-Pacific region, and the meet-up classes truly reflect this cultural and geographic orientation within the discipline of teaching writing in the English language. The school has

actively worked with Indian Society for Commonwealth Studies. Dr. R.K. Dhawan, University of Delhi, has attended some of SSOA meetings as guest-scholar. For membership and other details, Contact: Dr. Christine Williams, Director, SSOA. cwilliams@ozemail.com.au

RK Dhawan
University of Delhi

European Work on Hinduism

Antonella Riem Natale



Antonella is Professor of English Language and Literary Studies and Pro-Vice-Chancellor International at the University of Udine, besides many other roles too many to list here. As Pro Vice chancellor she visited Australia in 2014 and signed MOUs with several leading universities. Her wide literary interests enabled her to assist ASAA in reviewing papers invoking Indian philosophy and religion in the course of publishing papers from the ASAA White Centenary Conference in Hyderabad (2012). Having won the Australia-Europe Award Scholarship in 1985 she pursued further postgraduate studies at the University of Queensland. She has regularly organised and promoted national and

international events focussed on Australia.

She has been invited by Cambridge Publishing to revise the manuscript of her work on *Hinduism and Coleridge*, due by 2020. It is a monographic study investigating Coleridge's philosophical and spiritual itinerary and how Hinduism influenced his psyche, philosophical approach and poetical inspiration. Both poetically and philosophically, Coleridge tried to resolve the extremes of human existence through a synthesis of both Western and Oriental visions through which the universe ultimately emerges as an organic cosmos rhythmically unfolding through an intricate web of influxes, echoes and correspondences.

With Stefano Mercanti (in the ASAA group of Associated Committee members) she is publishing a new issue of *Le Simplegadi* titled *Narrating Empathy: Story-Telling and Equitable Inter-Connections in Languages and Literatures*.

New Publications

Gandhianjali

Satendra Nandan

The volume *Gandhianjali* published on July 8 2019, celebrates the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948). The book is a collection of Dr Nandan's selected essays, articles, poems, meditations on the theme of Mohandas Gandhi's experiences spiritual and ethical development during his travels from South Africa to the South Pacific. and how he gave hope to millions at a most critical time in human affairs with his creative power of love and luminous suffering.

The collection includes essays on Gandhi and C F Andrews whose efforts

led to the abolition of the abomination known as British Indian Indenture. Several writings explore the poetics and politics of the Fijian-Indian indenture experience.

It also includes Satendra Nandan's acclaimed public lecture at the National Press Club in Canberra on the United Nations internationally observed Non-Violence Day.

There are poems written on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and refugees and the related themes of love and loss, life and loneliness, books and writing including several contemporary issues such as the killings in the Christchurch mosque.

Nandan's own experiences are filtered through and given expression in a personal essay titled 'An Uncommon Literary Journey'. It tells the story of his shoeless school days in a poor home without an English book to his education and early travels. He became the first non-native speaker of English from the South Pacific to be awarded a PhD in English from an Australasian university and awarded an Emeritus Professorship for his literary and professorial endeavours.

Satendra is a former cabinet minister in the Fijian Government of Dr Timoci Bavadra and was elected to the Fijian Parliament in 1982 and 1987. He also helped with the first draft of Fiji's new constitution on which two peaceful elections have been held in 2014 and 2018.

He's currently writing a novel set in Fiji, India and Australia as a Visiting Fellow at the Humanities Research Centre, ANU, and as an Adjunct Research Professor at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture, Barton Campus, Charles Sturt University.

Gandhianjali, his 20th book, was launched on 23 July at the Gandhi Symposium held in Canberra where Satendra was a key-note speaker.

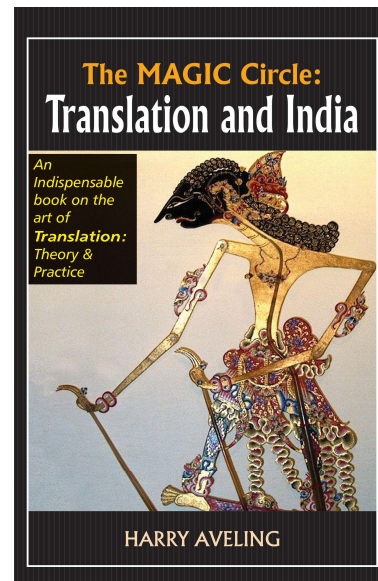
The publication of the volume has been supported by the Tappoo Charitable Trust in Fiji. **Gandhianjali** will be available at The Tappoo Bookshops in Fiji. ISBN 978-0-9924989-4-8.

Contact:

Anchalk@tappoo.com.fj

The Magic Circle: Translation and India

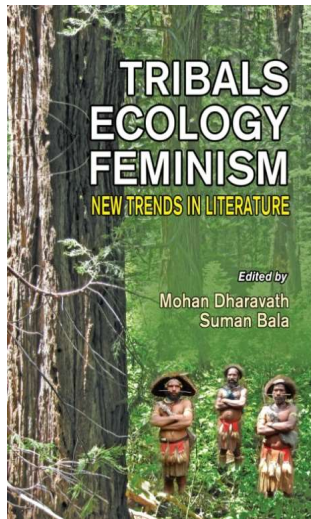
Prestige Books International, New Delhi



An indispensable book on the art of Translation: Theory and Practice, entitled *The Magic Circle: Translation and India* has been published by Professor Harry Aveling, Professor of Translation Studies, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia. Professor Aveling is a renowned Australian scholar who has translated many classic Indian texts. Brought out by Prestige Books International, New Delhi, the book describes a range of theoretical approaches and applies them to the

translation of poetry and two Indian legends--the purification of Sita and the death of Abhimanyu as they have been translated and transformed in Southeast Asia. The book makes a rich contribution to the corpus of fast-expanding Australasian Studies.

Tribals, Ecology, Feminism: New Trends in Literature
Prestige Books International, New Delhi



Dr. Suman Bala (University of Delhi) has co-edited with Mohan Dharavath a book entitled *Tribals, Ecology, Feminism: New Trends in Literature*. Tribals is a collective term used for the indigenous peoples living in India since ages. Natives in Canada and the US and Aborigines in Australia bear strong similarities with them. Living in the forests, these communities are close to Nature and an ecological evaluation yields fruitful results. In recent years, many tribal as also Dalit writers have expressed their life experiences through genres like autobiography, novel, plays and poetry. Critics also believe that women too, regarded by some as 'lesser human beings', have been oppressed in

the same manner over the centuries. Published by Prestige Books International, New Delhi, the volume addresses all these issues and contributes significantly to the on-going debate on the status of the subalterns.

**‘Sri Lanka Calls’
A Personal Glimpse: Australian
Comments on the Post-Easter
Carnage in Sri Lanka**

A friend wrote to a colleague about the warm welcome they received when they visited Sri Lanka soon after the terrorist bombings. One of several enthusiasts, told their story of Galle: “In our last couple of days here, several people kindly thanked us for visiting Sri Lanka. A couple of abiding memories of the friendliness here: one hotel offered a naturalist-guided tour of its surrounds. The guide was very pleased to have some patrons, especially with some knowledge of plants and animals (thank you to Roy, our general tour guide) - and his enthusiasm stretched the one-hour tour into two hours leaving us rather overwhelmed!

Atuktuk driver stationed outside our hotel in Galle, despite seeming to have no customers while we were there, was always upbeat about the Australian cricket team. After the win over England, he grinned at us the next morning “How come you didn’t party?”

Another dedicated enthusiast showed us around a turtle hatchery on a beach. Amazing the numbers of little critters, they raise for three days after hatching, before releasing into the sea.

The Gap Media and Reality: A colleague, who had also enjoyed visiting Sri Lanka, reflected on the gap between media images of problems in a

country and practical realities for the traveller. “Are you still going?” is the TV news viewer's anxious question. Media dramatic images, TV, distort facts - turn one place and time into a whole country. Travel to most countries is safe if you avoid symbolic or specific points and 5-star hotels eg Paris - Eiffel Tower, Champs Elysees. Sri Lanka - fine outside

Sri Lanka - fine outside Colombo, ok in most of Colombo. Above all people in tourist businesses in Sri Lanka offer more than the usual warm welcome. Surely – it's time to return to a place that has been identified as the number one tourist destination in South Asia and amongst other ties shares a deep love of cricket.

Stephen Alomes
RMIT, Melbourne

ASAA TEAM

Jane Fernandez—President, ASAA (Australia) holds a PhD from Macquarie University and a Masters in Tertiary Management from the University of Melbourne and Avondale. She is a professor at Avondale College of Higher Education. After 11 years in service as an academic, Jane was appointed in 2011 to the Senior Executive position of Vice-President (Learning & Teaching) and in 2013 to the role of Vice-President (Quality & Strategy) at Avondale College of Higher Education. In this role, Jane led in significant milestone projects for her institution, primarily, leading to the achievement of self-accrediting status for her institution and securing the jointly-conferred award scheme between Avondale and Charles Sturt University. Jane is the founding convenor of the Higher Education Private Provider Quality Network (HEPP-QN) which is represented by 33 institutions across Australia. Email: jane.fernandez@avondale.edu.au

Ralph Crane—Vice-President, ASAA (Australia) is Head of the English Programme at the University of Tasmania. He has particular interests in colonial fiction and the intersections of literature and geography. Ralph is a member of the editorial boards of the *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, and *The Atlantic Critical Review*. He has published three sole-authored books and at least seven co-edited books on Indian writing in English. His latest co-authored publication (with Jane Stafford and Mark Williams both long-term members of ASAA) is *The Oxford History of the Novel in English, Vol. 9, The World Novel in English to 1950*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. Ralph was Vice-President of ASAA (2006-2008) and co-edited the volume *Diaspora* with Cynthia vanden Driesen. Email: Ralph.Crane@utas.edu.au

Kavita Ivy Nandan—Secretary, ASAA (Australia) is the editor of *Stolen Worlds* (2005) and *Requiem for a Rainbow* (2001); the co-editor of *Writing the Pacific* (2007) and *Unfinished Journeys* (1998). Her first novel *Home after Dark* was recently published by the University of the South Pacific Press. She completed her PhD in Literature at the Australian National University and has lectured in Creative Writing and Literature at the University of Canberra, the University of the South Pacific, Charles

Darwin University and the Australian National University. Kavita was born in New Delhi, grew up in Suva and moved to Canberra in 1987. It is interesting to note that Kavita, while still a postgraduate, attended the historic first ASAA conference in Kerala in 1997. Email: nandan.kavita@gmail.com

Vijay Kumar Tadakamalla—President, ASAA (Asia) is Professor of English at Osmania University, Hyderabad. In Fall 2013, he designed and taught a course on the Indian Novel in English at The University of Utah. His research interests include postcolonial literatures, the Indian literary diaspora, and translation. He has co-edited *Globalisation: Australian-Asian Perspectives* (2014), *Focus India: Postcolonial Narratives of the Nation* (2007), and translated from Telugu into English (with C Vijayasree) *The Liberation of Sita* (2016) by Volga, and an early twentieth century classic *Kanyasulkam*(2002) by Gurazada Venkata Appa Row. He has interviewed several writers for print and electronic media. He was Fellow Oxford Seminar (2000), and Treasurer ACLALS (Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies; 2001–2004). He is a founder-editor of *Muse India: the literary e-journal*, and is a Director of the annual Hyderabad Literary Festival. Email: tvk2k15@gmail.com

K.T. Sunitha—Vice-President, ASAA (Asia) is Professor of English at the University of Mysore. She organised the ASAA Conference in Mysore in July 2010, bringing together several institutions, besides the University of Mysore: Professor C.D. Narasimhaiah's Dhvanyaloka as well as Professor Anniah Gowda's International Centre for Commonwealth and American Literature and Language Studies. She has presented research papers on Indian writers at Australian university conferences and taught Australian literature and presented research papers in the field at Indian and other international conferences. Email: kt_sunitha@yahoo.co.in

Parimala Kulkarni—Secretary, ASAA (Asia) is Assistant Professor in the Department of English, Osmania University, Hyderabad. She has an MA from the University of Hyderabad and PhD from Osmania University. Her area of specialization is Women's Writing. Her research interests include Indian Literature, Gender Studies, and English Language Pedagogy. She has co-edited a book on Contemporary British Literature-post 1990s. She is a recipient of UGC Research Award 2014-2016. Email: paripavan@gmail.com

Ishmeet Kaur—Editor, ASAA Website is an Assistant Professor in the School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies at the Central University of Gujarat, Gandhinagar. She teaches courses in English literature, language and communication studies and has also worked on translations of texts from Punjabi into English and vice versa. Her specialist interests in research lie in Australian Literature, Post-colonial Studies and Sikh Studies. She also works on Indigenous writing from Australia and India. Her doctoral thesis was a comparative study of Patrick White's novels and *Guru Granth Sahib*. She has recently published (2014) a work entitled, *Patrick White: Critical Issues*. She represented her University as an "Inspired Teacher" for the President of India's In-Residence Programme at Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi. Email: ishmeetsaini@gmail.com

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Greg Battye is Professor and Associate Dean of Education in the Faculty of Design and Creative Practice at the University of Canberra., His research includes photography, narrative theory and new writing technologies and new media forms. Greg's works are held by the National Gallery of Australia, the National Library of Australia and other national institutions. Greg has been vice-president of ASAA since 2007. Email: Greg.Battye@canberra.edu.au

Tony Simoes da Silva was Professor and Associate Dean of International Programmes with responsibility for S. Asia till he recently took up the position of Head of the School of Humanities at the University of Tasmania. Tony co-edits the *Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature (JASAL)* and *La Questioners Meridionale/The Southern Question*. He attended the ASAA conference at Osmania University and is well-known to many of our Asian colleagues. Email: Tony.SimoesdaSilva@utas.edu.au

Glen Phillips is a well-known poet and is Director of the Landscape and Language Centre at Edith Cowan University adjunct ECU professor. He serves on several literary boards and Foundations and is represented in more than 20 anthologies and is author or editor of 20 books. Glen has been a long-time supporter of ASAA initiatives, since its inception in 1995. Email: glenlyp@bigpond.com

Anjali Gera Roy is Professor in the Department of Humanities of Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur. She has published essays in literature, film and cultural studies on India as well as on African culture. She is now researching the transnational flows of Bollywood cinema and has recently co-edited several volumes in this field. She has been Asian President of ASAA since 2007). Email: agera_99@yahoo.com

Satendra Nandan is Emeritus Professor at the University of Canberra. He is also widely known for his creative work as and as a poet. In March 2012 he was awarded the prestigious Harold White Fellowship at the National Library to write his autobiography. He has lately been appointed a member of the Fiji Constitutional Commission (July 2, 2012). He helped found ASAA at the historic meeting at the ACLALS conference in Colombo in 1995 and has served as vice-president for many years. E-mail: satendra.nandan@gmail.com

Cynthia vanden Driesen is a Research Fellow with the School of Humanities, University of Western Australia. Her research and publications are mainly in the area of Australian writing and other New Literatures in English. With help from Satendra Nandan she set up ASAA at an international meeting of Asian and Australian academics in Colombo (noted above). She has served continuously as President since the inception of the Association and is more than glad to have found a successor to fill this position. E-mail: cynthia.v@westnet.com.au

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