CALL FOR PAPERS
Revised Dates
(UGC DRS-II SAP Seminar)

14-15 March, 2019

Towards Indian Theory/Theories of Cultural Studies

Dept. of English and Cultural Studies, Panjab University, Chandigarh

The disciplinary enterprise of English Studies in India has always evinced a sense of responsibility in responding to the shifting contexts of culture. After Independence, influenced by the Nehruvian imperatives of co-existence, it sought to establish cultural linkages with the writings coming from other nations of the erstwhile Empire under the rubric of so-called Commonwealth Studies. Uneasy or dissatisfied with the rather non-interventionist and apolitical nature of this project, English Studies took a turn towards Postcolonial Studies through the volatile decades of the 1980s and 1990s. The postcolonial English Studies opened itself to the contentious issues of caste, religion, gender and race without showing any anxiety of succumbing to the ideals of cultural assimilationism. As canons withered, new knowledges and new platforms of expressions clamoured for recognition claiming their own particular contribution to the making of culture. English Studies, in another bout of self-reflexive reinvention, took a leap of stepping beyond the scope of canonical literary texts as its privileged resource of mapping culture. Soon films, photographs, fashion, food, music, sports and other popular manifestations of culture emerged as competing and complementary sites of textual mapping. The model of The Centre of Cultural Studies at Birmingham, with its interdisciplinary practices indeed proved very useful to re-configure the course of English Studies in India. In the last two decades, many universities in India have started either independent departments/centres of Cultural Studies or the language departments have been rechristened as Departments of Cultural Studies. Even as the new enterprise of Cultural Studies overwhelms us now, we are still not very certain about the ways in which it can possibly be harnessed to address the cultural conundrums of our own nation. While it is true that the theoretical formulations of Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall, Fiske and many other illustrious practitioners of Cultural Studies have benefitted us, it is time we derive our own negotiated frameworks to fingerprint the dynamics of culture that animate our everyday existence in India. Though one can go back to antiquity to suggest plausible ways to approach our culture that alone is not sufficient. The seminar therefore is confined to a critical understanding of debates that informed India’s Freedom Movement from 1857 onwards. As India struggled for Independence, its leaders, writers and activists posited a number of possible pathways for its cultural recovery and rejuvenation. From Vivekananda to Bhagat Singh, and from Raja Ram Mohan Roy to Gandhi and Ambedkar, a number of revolutionaries and freedom fighters flagged issues of ideology, language, caste, gender, religion and regionalism with sustained critical interest, involvement and activism. From Tagore to Sarojini Naidu, and from Premchand to Nirala – a host of writers also through their narratives, poems and
direct prose essays fore grounded the cultural matrices of emerging India during the colonial period in different ways. The seminar hopes to host discussions on the competing ideas of India – its models of development, linguistic federalism, translational practices and entertainment aesthetics – as reflected in the writings, autobiographies, speeches and photographs of our leaders, writers and even of subaltern subjects across the political spectrum, during the colonial period in the hope to discover an overarching aesthetic that might hold a representative potential.

The paper-presenters and invited plenary speakers can address some of the following sub-themes of the seminar:

1. Discourse of Swaraj and Satyagraha
2. Caste Question sand Upward Social Mobilization
3. Gender Reforms and Indian Renaissance
4. Debates of Nationalism
5. Theories of Indian Culture
6. Definitions of Indian Literature
7. Responses to Rising Popular Culture
8. Nativism and Linguistic Regionalism
9. Tradition(s) of India
10. Historicizing India
11. Religion as Locus of Nationalism
12. Representations of Rural India
13. Early Indian English Writing
14. Indology and the Discovery of the Oriental

Many more sub-themes can be enlisted. The speakers and paper-presenters are expected to address issues of Indian culture, and its critical re-discovery through close textual reading of the works of Indian thinkers, writers and activists during the colonial period, post-1857.

Those who are interested in presenting a paper in the Seminar can send their abstracts (300 words approx.) latest by 25th Feb. 2019 to the following email ID:

akshaya@pu.ac.in

The intimation of the selected abstracts would be mailed by 28th Feb 2019. The paper-readers would be given about 20-25 minutes for their presentation.

The registration fee for the participants/ paper-readers would be: Rs. 2000/ (for teachers/JRF’s) Rs. 1000/ - (for non-JRF research scholars and students)