

<p><i>Complit</i>বর্তা E-newsletter of Centre for Comparative Literature, Bhasha Bhavana Visva-Bharati</p>	<p>Issue 3 (Sep-Dec 2019)</p>
	<p>December 24, 2019 ৭ পৌষ ১৪২৬</p>

From the Office Desk

Another year has come to an end. And with that we are bringing out another issue of our *Complit*বর্তা. This issue does not mark the end of yet another year, rather, we hope of a new beginning. There were moments of sorrow as we lost Dr. Laxmidhar Malik – a dear colleague from Department of Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit, Bhasha Bhavana, Visva-Bharati. He taught Sanskrit to our M.A second year students. We mourn Nabaneetadi's (Professor Nabaneeta Dev Sen) demise which is an irreparable loss for her students and the CL fraternity. But we fondly remember that she had also taught us to be proud Comparatist like her, accepting life with a great sense of humour and an indomitable spirit to overcome sorrow.

In the last few months of our academic and personal interactions with students and teachers, we have realised that the moment has come where tolerance and patience should be our motto in everyday practices - on an individual level and as a community. Collectively, we should learn from each other through our exchanges which are literary and at times extra literary. We should try to hold each other's hands to overcome all the biases, stereotypes and embrace the differences in and around us.

As always, you can reach us at cclvbu@gmail.com for any suggestions or critical inputs.

Remembering Nabaneeta di



A well-known feminist litterateur to the world, Professor Nabaneeta Dev Sen (1938-2019), was a stalwart of Comparative Literature. One of the very first students of Comparative Literature at Jadavpur University, she was also to be credited for the dissemination of this relatively new discipline in India.

Successfully blending her 'creative', 'academic' and 'activist' selves, Dev Sen fascinated the world with her feminist retellings of *The Ramayana*, her works on the structural study of Epics, as well as the humorous tales which showcased her appreciation of everyday reality. And her ways of confronting that reality had always been refreshing: be it her explanations of complicated literary

terms like 'Indian literature', or writing feminist fairy tales for children. Official recognitions (Sahitya Akademi Award in 1999 and Padma Shri in 2000, among others) never deterred her from interacting spontaneously with students and young scholars, and encouraging them incessantly. To many of her friends and students, the name 'Nabaneeta Dev Sen' was synonymous to celebration of life despite all its adversities; and her writings would continue to remind us that life was to be celebrated.

An avid traveller all her life, Dev Sen always enjoyed journeys to new places. We hope she would be enjoying this new journey to an unknown realm as well.

Bon voyage, Nabaneetadi!

Torch Light March

December 16: The students of Visva-Bharati assembled in front of the Upasana Griha at Santiniketan to raise their voice against a very controversial bill called the CAB (Citizen Amendment Bill). This Bill gave the right of citizenship to the non-Muslims who were earlier excluded from the NRC. In a secular country like India where Bismil and Azad fought side by side like blood brothers, no government body can implant the idea of one nation-one religion. This was proved by the students across India like from



Jamia Milia Islamia, Delhi University, JNU, Aligarh Muslim University and many more varsities. The Police brutality on the youths was barbaric and clearly sanctioned by the authority. Some lost their hands and eyes in the attack with tear gas and pellets while some succumbed to death from the firing of bullets by the Police. The Police entered the hostels and libraries of various universities in Delhi and totalled it with their *lathis* and hatred. The students of Visva-Bharati accompanied by their professors first walked from Upasana Griha to First gate, then to the Central Office and then to the post office where effigies of the perpetrators of such violence were burnt. Chants and slogans of *Azadi* filled the air. The students sang songs of Rabindranath with their heads held high and without their voices trembling even for a minute as every moment reminded them of how it is their freedom that is at stake now. We at Visva-Bharati stand in solidarity with the students of the universities across India. It is time we keep in mind the inhuman brutality that has been rendered upon us and work towards getting our freedom back.

Carca: Exercise in Comparativisms (A Monthly Lecture Series)

From September 2019 to December 2019

Carca 6

Purbita Garai



The speaker of this year's sixth *Carca*, held on September 24, 2019 was Professor Swati Ganguly, Department of English, Bhasha Bhavana. The focus of this *Carca* series is to locate the history of disciplinary practices within Visva-Bharati, often analysing critically the very idea of the discipline within Visva-Bharati. The title of Professor Ganguly's presentation was "Orienting Research Studies in Visva-Bharati (1921-51)". She argued that Rabindranath Thakur's idea behind the formation of Visva-Bharati was primarily formulating a research based institute in a post contact situation. The major focus was mapping the several 'East – West Encounters' along

with the other areas which were closely aligned with this idea of a research based institute. Professor Ganguly pointed out that scholars who dealt with Oriental Studies like Sylvain Levi, Giuseppe Tucci etc had visited Visva-Bharati and became key catalysts in framing the future academic and research works at Visva-Bharati. On the other hand, scholars like Hajari Prasad Dwivedi, Kshitimohan Sen, Probodh Kumar Bagchi and others became instrumental in establishing different Indian and non-Indian language-literature departments/centres that had their own dynamics, reading the contacts zones and

the transactions. Professor Ganguly's important project is a study in historiography and will facilitate future research works with the domain of literary studies in the subcontinent.

Carca 7

Purbita Garai



Professor Kumkum Bhattacharya, Department of Social Work, Visva-Bharati was the speaker for the seventh *Carca* which was held on October 25, 2019. She spoke on “The Weaving of Ethics and Academics – Sriniketan”. The history of the significance of social work being part of the regular curriculum was unfolded by this erudite scholar, interwoven with anecdotes that exposed the politics of the establishment and survival of an idea manifested in the structural pattern of a department within Visva-Bharati. According to her, Sriniketan, and specifically the Department of Social Work is an organic growth of Rabindranath's ideas on the various outreach programmes within and without the school that was established within the *ashrama* that had the scope to embrace the home and the world. Rabindranath emphasised on the application and innovation over theoretical ideations. The idea that followed was empowering the local knowledge systems and inculcating the humility to accept the agency of the common people who were left out in the new form of education that was introduced by the colonisers.

Carca 8

Ishani Dutta

Professor Manoranjan Pradhan from the Department of Odia, Bhasha Bhavana, Visva-Bharati spoke on “Odia Sahitya Carca: Visva-Bharati Odia Bibhaga” on November 24, 2019. He began by talking about the history of the Odia Department, one of the oldest departments in Visva-Bharati. Its history spans



over seventy-two years. Professor Pradhan talked about the exchanges that happened between the state of Odisha (which became an independent state in as early as 1936) and Rabindranath and how these finally culminated in the establishment of the Odia Department. He also talked about eminent professors and researchers who were associated with the department since its formation – a history that began with Professor Prahlad Pradhan who was appointed by the Government of Odisha to teach at Visva-Bharati. He discussed the kind of research that the department undertakes and about its publications. He highlighted the fact that the department also focused on the reading and translation of ancient manuscripts as part of its curriculum. The talk emphasised the fact that ‘locatedness’ of the Odia Department at Visva-Bharati is one of the primary reasons why the topics and the issues taken up by the department are very different from those that are taken up by the various Odia departments in Odisha.

Carca 9

Md Arif Uddin Mondal



Dr Sangeeta Saikia, from Assamese Language Unit, Bhasha Bhavana, Visva-Bharati spoke on December 9, 2019. Her talk was titled “Visva-Bharatite Asamiya Bhashar Carca”. She started her talk with the history of the Assamese Language Unit at Visva-Bharati and also narrated the journey of its development over the years. She mentioned the interactions between the Assam and Santiniketan and how the Tagore family played an instrumental role in this. She underscored how such interactions helped in cultural and linguistic exchange. She briefly mentioned about some of the students

of Visva-Bharati who were present during the first few years of the Unit and also the teachers who shaped it. Dr Saikia gave a brief summary of the demographic composition of Assam and the idea of language and the various dialects of Assam. She concluded the talk with an update of the present condition of the Assamese Language Unit at Visva-Bharati and mentioned that the Unit is looking for collaboration with other departments to work towards mutual goals.

Special Lecture by Professor Ganapathy Subbiah

Deeya Bandyopadhyay

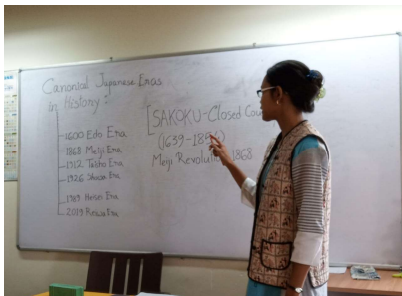


Professor Ganapathy Subbiah delivered a lecture on ‘Tamil Sangam Poetry’ at the Centre for Comparative Literature on December 1, 2019 as part of the Invited Lecture Series. He first threw some light on the categorisation of classical Tamil Poetry and the technicalities behind the categorisation. He then went on to elaborate on the politics of categorisation in Akam and Puram Poetry, the social circumstances in which the 'Sangam' style was conceived, the challenges which the tradition had to face in order to survive the test of time and how the conventions were later challenged by the Bhakti tradition.

Ongoing Research Work at Centre for Comparative Literature

Presentation by Researcher: Ankana Bag

Ishani Dutta

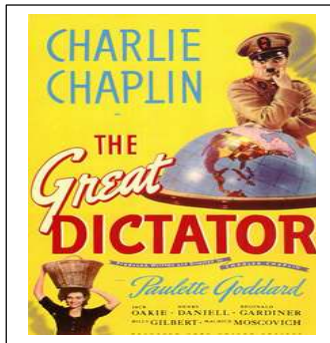


Ankana Bag, a second year M.Phil. student gave a presentation on an aspect of her research topic on December 9, 2019. Her talk was titled “The Emergence of Japan as a Travel Destination and its related Motifs in the late nineteenth century English and early twentieth century Bengali Literary Scenario”. The extremely well-researched and well-formulated presentation began by detailing the various canonical Japanese eras in history – which started with the Edo Era in 1600 to the emergence of the present Reiwa Era in as late as 2019. She also highlighted the importance of the Meiji and the Taisho eras which are

significant for the travel writings that her research focusses on. The Meiji Era as she pointed out, was the official period of contact of Japan with the rest of the world which followed the Meiji Revolution in 1868. In order to explain the primary politics behind selecting the literary texts, Ankana also elucidated on the importance of the Sakoku (or closed country) – something that had been synonymous with Japan from 1639-1854. She also focused on the primary ‘motif’ of Japan both in Bengal and in the rest of the world. While Japan was a very exotic place when seen as a geographic location, when seen as a cultural location, its cultural products were often a matter of intrigue. However, it is important to note that *akkhep* (a word that is very difficult to translate owing to its distinct cultural connotation) was the primary motif associated with Japan in early twentieth century Bengal and the literary works produced therein. As always, the presentation was followed by a discussion which helped students and researchers understand the topic from their own locations.

Cine-Carca (Monthly Film Screening)

From September 2019 to December, 2019



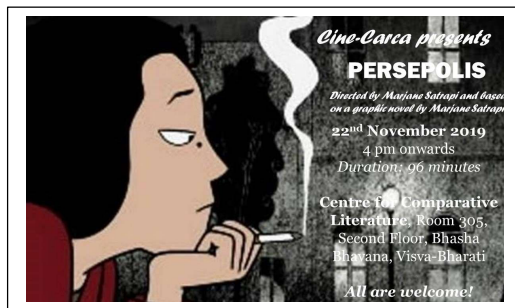
Cine-Carca 6

Subham Bhaumik

The sixth *Cine-Carca* on *The Great Dictator* (1940), written, directed and produced by Charlie Chaplin, was moderated by Samik Ghoshal, a first year MA student at the Centre for Comparative Literature in the first week of September 2019. *The Great Dictator* by Charlie Chaplin tells the story of a Jewish Barber and his loss of memory in a war. Upon returning after recovery, he is faced with the tyranny of a dictator. Simultaneously the film also tells the story of the Dictator, and his quest for absolute supremacy. Interestingly both these characters were played by Charlie Chaplin, indicating in a subtle way the fact that both ‘Good’ and ‘Evil’ are essentially a part of the same self and it's just a matter who we choose to be – either "machine men with machine heart" or real human beings with love and compassion. The film is multi-faceted and till date remains a historically significant film.

Cine-Carca 7

Ankana Bag



Deeya Bandyopadhyay, a second year M.Phil. student moderated the seventh *Cine-Carca* which was held on November 22 and 23, 2019 in which the animated biographical film *Persepolis* (2007) was screened. *Persepolis* directed by Vincent Paronnaud and Marjane Satrapi, is based on a graphic novel by Marjane Satrapi of the same name which was published in 2000. The film narrates the coming of age story of an Iranian girl in the late twentieth century Iran and also provides a record and a perspective to the history and politics of the Iranian civilisation. The animation style combines both Satrapi’s original art-style as well as a fairy tale-like detailing to achieve a humorous and poignant

effect at the same time. The screening was followed by an extremely serious discussion which brought up issues ranging from feminism to the problems of the diaspora and problems related to the society, politics and culture of Iran.

Cine-Carca 8

Samik Ghosal



Subham Bhaumik, a second year MA student moderated the eighth Cine-Carca which was held on December 2, 2019 in which the war film *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), co-written, directed and produced by Stanley Kubrick was screened. The movie was adapted from a semi-autobiographical novel by Gustav Hasford. It is easily one of the most brutal portrayals of war in movies. A very noticeable thing about this movie is the pace with which the events unfold. It is as if the viewer is not allowed to get away with the uncomfortable scenes and they are designed in such a way that the discomfort lingers for long in one's perception. Even though, this film does not have a neutral standing in its story-telling about the two sides involved, it does blur the concept of the 'other' – should the 'self' view the 'other' as the 'other', or as another 'self'? From time to time the film presents questions about the involvement of the United States of America in Vietnam's internal affairs and whether the war was a manifestation of man's desire to kill? It can be rightfully said that this film is not for viewers who love overwhelming combat choreography. This film challenges the viewers to keep their eyes glued to the screen so that they can slowly witness the horrors of war which are unignorable.

Other Departmental Activities

Departmental Visit – “Pillars of an Artscape: Hundred Years of Kala Bhavana”, Kala Bhavana, Visva-Bharati

Reported by M.A students of Comparative Literature and Ishani Dutta

The MA students of the Centre for Comparative Literature accompanied by the professors went for a departmental visit to the exhibition titled “Pillars of an Artscape: Hundred Years of Kala Bhavana” on September 3, 2019. Such departmental visits primarily aim at supplementing one's understanding of the interface of 'literature' and 'other arts'. As the “Curator's Note” to Exhibition by K. S. Radhakrishnan (whose tendency to collect images and documents brought him to Santiniketan) stated, this was a centenary exhibition which culminated into the curatorial project titled “*Shilpa Bhoomir Stambha*” or what translates into “Pillars of an Artscape”. This “Artscape” according to K. S. Radhakrishnan rests on seven pillars, that is, Rabindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, Benode Behari Mukherjee, Ram Kinkar Baij, K. G. Subramanyan, Somnath Hore and Sarbari Roy Chowdhury – all



art and craft forms”.

of whose lives, times and works were represented through photographs and documents in the Exhibition. The “Curator’s Note” also talked about the way in which K. S. Radhakrishnan collected “materials, curios, images, photographs, coins, stamps, wood carvings, [and] early folios” since his arrival at Santiniketan and about the way in which both the state of West Bengal and Santiniketan in particular “became instrumental in shaping some of the best artists, filmmakers, musicians, writers and [even]



Art Workshop

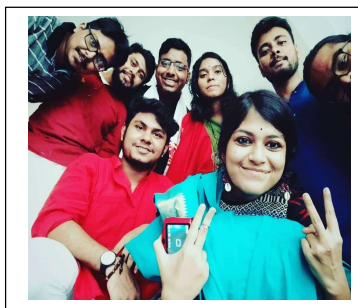
Ishani Dutta



An art workshop was held on September 25, 2019 at the Centre for Comparative Literature as part of the preparations for *Anandabazar* 2019. The students and teachers learnt several t-shirt painting techniques from Robi Biswas, an artist and a PhD student of Kala Bhavana, Visva-Bharati. It was an exciting activity that helped everyone gear up for the fun that was to follow on the day of the *Anandabazar*.

Freshers’ Welcome 2019

Deeya Bandyopadhyay



On September 30, 2019, the Centre for Comparative Literature held its welcome event for the freshers. The informal event included musical performances and recitations by the students. Works of Bob Dylan, Kabir Suman and Harry Belafonte captured the stage along with Bangla folk songs. The newcomers were welcomed with illustrated bookmarks and pens. The event lasted about an hour and ended with simple snacks and cinnamon tea that had been made by Anita Gua Hembrom, a PhD student of Centre for Comparative Literature itself.

Teachers’ Day 2019

Deeya Bandyopadhyay



successfully initiated an interaction of old students of the Centre with the newcomers.

The students of the Centre for Comparative Literature came together to arrange a small event on September 5, 2019 for the teachers. Handmade diaries, pens and little plants were handed to the teachers as gifts. The one-and-a-half-hour programme began with a fresher student narrating his experiences at Visva-Bharati and with our respected teachers. Not only did the students participate in the programme but so did the teachers. Comic poetry, romantic poetry, haikus and music (folk, western and Indian Classical) took over the dais. The event

Anandabazar 2019

Kathakali Ghosh

More than a hundred years old traditional fair of Santiniketan, *Anandabazar* was organised on the day of Mahalaya, that is, September 28, 2019 at Gour Prangan. The students and faculty members of different departments of Visva-Bharati prepared hard to put up their stalls. Among them, one was *Tulonamulok Biponi*, the stall by the Centre for Comparative Literature, Bhasha Bhavana, arranged by its M.A., M.Phil, PhD students and faculty members. There were food items, as well as unique



handcrafted bookmarks, coasters, jewellery, and graphic tees – all made by the students themselves. Apart from these, the annual students' publication of CCL, *Tumulayan*, was released on this day. Every year, *Anandabazar* brings a lot of *ananda* – joy, which eventually leads to the manifestation of innovative energy and development of the imagination of the young minds and adolescents, thus, keeping the tradition of Santiniketan alive. In keeping with the spirit of the festival, the profit was handed over to the Seva Vibhaga.

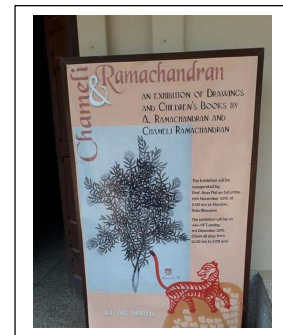
Departmental Visit – Exhibition of Small Format Drawings by Jogen Chowdhury and Drawings and Children's Books by A. Ramachandran and Chameli Ramachandran, Kala Bhavana, Visva-Bharati

Reported by the MA students of Comparative Literature



The MA students of the Centre for Comparative Literature accompanied by the professors went for a visit to the exhibition of Small Format Drawings by Jogen Chowdhury, and Drawings and Children's Books by A. Ramachandran and Chameli Ramachandran on December 3, 2019. Every piece on display was unique in its style and medium. A. Ramachandran

and Chameli Ramachandran's texts are layered, interwoven with their personal experiences of negotiating with multiple sources, influences, impact of textual praxis across cultures and medium. While "The Golden City" is a remarkable experiment in style and diction, the narrative of "Jivya" and the "Tiger God" has been accentuated with the combination of Worliart and Etching. Such excursions hope to open up new avenues in front of the students of Comparative Literature and provide them with new tools to read and explore texts.



Recent Publications of Members of Centre for Comparative Literature

A PhD Student at Centre for Comparative Literature, Ishani Dutta's article titled "Finding a Gorkhā Female Identity in the World of the *Bīryodhyā*: The Anguish of Indian Nepali Women Poets" was published in a peer-reviewed journal of History, Internal Relations, and Diplomacy titled *The Calcutta Journal of Global Affairs: Volume 3:3*. Kolkata: CENERS-K (ISSN: 2582-2241) in September 2019.

Tumulayan 2019

(An Annual Literary Endeavour by the Students of Centre for Comparative Literature, Bhasha Bhavana, Visva-Bharati)

Ishani Dutta and Sounak Dutta



The fifth issue of *Tumulayan*, the students' magazine of the Centre for Comparative Literature, was published on the day of *Anandabazar*. This year's issue of *Tumulayan* titled "*Patropath: On Letter Writing*", edited by Ankana Bag and Purbita Garai, with a cover design by Arnab Das, Md Arif Uddin Mondal, Subham Bhaumik and Souradeep Chanda featured writings in English and Bangla, from students and teachers of Visva-Bharati and other universities as well. According to the 'Editors' Note', 'letter writing' was this year's chosen theme because letter writing has become almost obsolete since the beginning of the twenty-first century. The issue begins with Rabindranath's letter to Lord Chelmsford which was written as a sign of protest in order to renounce the knighthood bestowed upon him, thus making this letter a very significant historical document. This is followed by an unpublished

letter from Kshitis Roy, a scholar who joined Visva-Bharati in 1934, to Victoria Ocampo written in 1958 which concerns issues of translating Rabindranath's *Purabi* with an introduction by Nilanjana Bhattacharya. "Chithir Kotha", a short article written in old Bengali by Wriiniljan Mishra, has a contemplative tone and ponders upon "letters of faraway past". "Oh Hana", a poem by Dheeman Bhattacharyya is composed in the form of fragments – of memories and of stories. War is also a recurring theme in this issue of *Tumulayan* as it appears in compositions such as "Je Deshe Dakghar Nei" by Kathakali Ghosh. Other letters which can be regarded as documents of immense historical importance are the ones sent by the FBI to Martin Luther King and even the ones composed by Anton Chekhov – that has been explored by Deeya Bandopadhyay in her article titled "A Letter for the King", and Sabuj Sarkar in his article titled "Letters of Wisdom: A Study of Select Letters by Anton Chekhov" respectively. The issue is interspersed with photographs and caricatures as well as with short poems and ends with a letter by Mukulika Duttagupta titled "A Letter of Gratitude to the Letter" as a note of thanks, thus bringing the volume to a rightful conclusion.

Editorial Assistance:

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