**Secretary’s Report**

**IACLALS ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

**JAN 27-29, 2011, Thiruvananthapuram**

Our just concluded 2011 Annual Conference, on **“Comparative Cultural Studies: Towards New Postcolonial Paradigms”**, hosted by the Centre for Comparative Literature, University of Kerala, was exceptional in more ways than one. Held in the serene and picturesque green campus of the Maria Rani Centre, finally a venue which could accommodate all our numerous participants in the same place, the conference was a resounding success and showcased the work of seasoned as well as brand-new conferees on the little explored area of Comparative Cultural Studies. The conference had a picnic like atmosphere with participants having to wash their own dishes – something for which the conference will be always known, even better than for the excellent Malayali food or the uniformly high level of papers.

More than fifty outstation participants arrived at the centre for the three day affair, which began without a fuss with a clear enunciation of the theme and its possibilities by both Meena Pillai (the local organizer and Director of the Centre for Comparative Literature) and Harish Trivedi.  The inaugural session saw the launch of three books – the first being a book that came out of the previous annual conference held at Bhubaneswar . Edited by Susmit Pani and Prajna Panigrahi, this was certainly a first for IACLALS – the first book to come out within a year of the conference! The other two books were *Translation and Culture: Indian Perspectives*, edited by GJV Prasad, and *Indian English and Vernacular India* , edited by Makarand Paranjape and GJV Prasad. The range covered by the books was paralleled by the papers at the conference, which dealt with a rich array of topics.

Needless to say, the CD Narasimhaiah IACLALS Prize was a major highlight of the conference. The finalists, out of a record number of 12 entries, were Debaditya Bhattacharya, Torsa Ghosal, Nishat Haider, and Priya V. (Nishat Haider is a past winner of the prize, having won it last year in Bhubaneswar.) The CDN IACLALS Prize went to Priya V. for her paper on “Playing Women: What You Wear and What You Are.” The Prize was judged this year in the preliminary round of blind refereeing by Bala Kothandaraman and GJV Prasad, and in the final round of actual presentation by Vanamala Viswanatha, Meena Pillai, and Subhendu Mund.

Also on the second day, the 28th, Professor P. P. Raveendran (Kottayam) delivered a plenary lecture in the afternoon, after which the General Body met as scheduled. The reports by the Secretary and the Treasurer were read out, highlighting the activities of the Association over the last three years, and were approved by the General Body. The delegates were apprised by the Chairperson of the decision to discontinue the publication of the IACLALS Newsletter (the last issue, just published and circulated to all participants at the conference, is entirely dedicated to the memory of Professor Meenakshi Mukherjee) and the reasons thereof. The General Body approved of the decision. Next, the Chairperson asked the delegates for their opinion on the proposal to publish an annual peer-reviewed academic journal by IACLALS. This too was unanimously approved. The Chairperson then put forward a proposal to institute an annual prize in memory of Professor Meenakshi Mukherjee for the best published paper by any member of the IACLALS during the preceding year. This too, was welcomed and unanimously approved by the General Body.

Next, the office-bearers retired and withdrew from the dais, and the triennial election of office-bearers for the term 2011-2014 was conducted according to the established norms and conventions of the Association. A senior member of the Association, Dr Murari Prasad, acting as the Election Officer, called upon all present for nominations.  Dr B. Mangalam proposed that the present team should continue as office-bearers for another term and, in the lack of any other proposal or nomination, her proposal was carried unanimously. The re-elected Chairperson then proposed that GJV Prasad (currently Secretary) be appointed Vice-Chair along with Subhendu Mund, that Brinda Bose (currently Treasurer) be appointed Secretary, and that Rina Ramdev be appointed Treasurer. This was unanimously approved.

The General Body also unanimously elected the members of the Executive Committee, comprising four Zonal Representatives, one representative from our overseas membership, and three members from Delhi , the headquarters of the Executive, to help actively in the regular and efficient running of the Association. The unanimously elected members of the new Executive Committee are:  Vijaya Guttal (Dharwad) from the South, Sharad Srivastava ( Udaipur ) from the West, Rohini Mokashi-Punekar (Guwahati) from the East, and Rajyashree Khushu-Lahiri (Roorkee) from the North. The Overseas member is Ludmila Volna (Prague/Paris), and the three members from Delhi are Bhumika Meiling ( Ambedkar University ), and Nilanjana Mukherjee and Nishtha Dev (both Delhi University ). The GBM recorded its appreciation of the outgoing members -- Piyas Chakrabarty from the East, Ashutosh Mohan from the West, Ranu Uniyal from the North, Sujata Vijayaraghavan from the South, Evelyne Hanquart-Turner from Paris, and – Angelie Multani, Harpreet Kaur Arora, and Smita Mitra, all from Delhi .

The beaches of Thiruvananthapuram, the estuary, and the city itself with its museums, performance venues (including the annual Nishagandhi music festival at the Palace whose last day coincided with our first) provided just the right amount of supplementary tonic for the intellectual interactions in the conference. An informal conference dinner happened to organize itself at the Kovalam beach on the 29th, and the sound of the waves had stiff competition from the gales of laughter and soulful singing that filled our corner of the open-air sea-side restaurant. Even though so many of our long-standing colleagues attended the conference, it had a distinctly young feel about it since the topic seemed inspirational to the next generation of research scholars who were well represented, especially from Delhi and Kerala itself, a fact highlighted at the valedictory session by Pranav Jani, an Indian-origin academic from Ohio.

Meena Pillai, the Local Secretary, and her wonderful team of student volunteers – headed by Tara Mohan, Raj Sree, and Sharon d’Cunha – did a great job of hosting the conference with their ready smiles and gentle cheerful demeanour, and ensured that it went off without a hiccup. Once again, we had an annual get-together that was just the right mix of academic business and the pleasure of meeting old friends and making new ones.

GJV Prasad

(Former) Secretary IACLALS

(now Vice-Chair)