IACLALS  ANNUAL CONFERENCE, 20-22 February 2014

Margins, Globalization and the Postcolonial

If conferences are judged both by the quality of papers presented and also by the food that is served, then the 2014 IACLALS Annual Conference at Panjab University, Chandigarh came out a winner in every possible way. Expansive, generous hospitality steered by the unflappable, tireless Akshaya Kumar, Professor and local Co ordinator of the conference along with his wonderful Department colleagues Deepti Gupta and many others, as also his bright and eager team of students, all of who ensured that delegates were actually loathe for the conference to end. The accommodation both at PU Campus and at Mohali matched every bit of the royal hosting and hospitality that we received all through at Chandigarh.

The conference began with an incisive keynote paper by Dieter Riemenschneider that also set the thematic tone of the conference in critically nuanced ways as he spoke on, "The Postcolonial Agenda: Literary Configurations of Retreiving Human Rights in Animal's People". Dieter Riemenschneider as it turned out, had taught at the Panjab University half a century earlier and so it was a nostalgic homecoming for him as much as it was for Panjab University. From the keynote to an expansive wide-ranging valedictory given by PU’s very own Shelley Walia through intellectually diverse papers on Marginalities, the Conference witnessed some intense and stimulating conversations.

There was as the ever-exciting CDN Prize panel, and the Cultural Evening with some very energetic and entertaining performances by students of the university and by the Riemenschneiders AND Harish Trivedi (all of who were persuaded on to the stage by the dancers), the award of the Meenakshi Mukherjee Memorial Prize, a plenary by Meera Nanda and the GBM.

The closely contested CDN Prize saw a final panel comprising Parvinder and Shivashish Sah from the host university, and Anandita Pan and Somrita Ganguly from IIT Kanpur and JNU respectively. The fact that the betting during the lunch went many ways showed how close the papers were in quality. The CDN Prize after a hair splitting final went to Parvinder for his paper on “Sports Heroes from the Margins and the Politics of Ghostwriting”. Congratulations to the prize winner as well as all the panelists. The guests who had helped short list the final panelists were Vijaya Guttal and Ludmila Volna. The three judges on the spot were ML Raina, Fatima Rizwi, and Rina Ramdev. The announcement of the result and the presentation was followed by the awarding of the MM Memorial Prize for the best published paper to Somdatta Mandal. The three judges for the prize were M. Asaduddin, Subhendu Mund, and Gareth Griffiths and the prize was presented by Dieter Riemenschneider. Somdatta Mandal made a brief presentation from her prize winning paper, "Dismemberment and/or Reconstitution: Visual Representations of the Partition of Bengal", published in the anthology, "Borders and Partitions in South Asia", edited by Jayita Sengupta (Routledge, 2012).

The GBM was held on the evening of the 21st. After the presentation of the Secretary’s Report and the Treasurer’s Report, the members raised a number of pertinent issues. They suggested that the Association should initiate a forum for dissemination of news and views and that the promised annual journal should begin publication at the earliest. It was also suggested that the revamping of the IACLALS website be handed over to a professional since the Association had used the gratis services of the tireless Giri for far too long. After the discussion, Harish Trivedi announced that the term for the outgoing team had come to an end and it was time for a new team to be elected. He then gave the floor to Prof Vijaya Guttal who took charge as the Returning Officer to conduct the election process. When several voices from the floor of the house expressed the wish for the old team to continue for three more years, Harish Trivedi announced that Brinda Bose had expressed her inability to continue in the committee and that he too had made up his mind to leave. He spoke of his immensely fulfilling time with the IACLALS from the time he took over as Secretary in 1993. He also spoke of his illustrious predecessors, CD Narsimaiah and Meenakshi Mukherjee, and of his own experiences as part of the team of office-bearers in various capacities. He then proposed the name of the next Chairperson and asked that it be seconded, which it was. Since there were no other nominations, Vijaya Guttal announced that GJV Prasad had been elected unopposed to the post of Chairperson of IACLALS. The GBM then elected Subhendu Mund and M Asaduddin as Vice Chairpersons, Rina Ramdev as Secretary, and Angelie Multani as Treasurer. Akshaya Kumar (North Zone), Nilak Datta (West Zone), Meena Pillai (South Zone), and Debaditya Bhattacharya  (East Zone) were elected as Zonal Representatives on the Executive Committee. Ludmila Volna was re-elected as the Foreign Representative. The following members were also elected to the EC from Delhi – Swati Pal, Shubhra Ray, and Sandhya  Devesan Nambiar. The new team expressed its sincere appreciation for the work put in by Harish Trivedi and Brinda Bose. GJV Prasad, Subhendu Mund, and Rina Ramdev spoke of the leadership qualities of Harish Trivedi and of the sheer joy of being part of the team with him and Brinda Bose. A number of delegates also thanked Harish Trivedi for his contribution to IACLALS and recorded their appreciation. The meeting ended with a round of applause for Vijaya Guttal, the genial Returning Officer.

And even as Panjab University offered a conference rich in every way, the city of Chandigarh also held us with sunny, balmy days in cold February. The hosts took the delegates on a lovely sightseeing outing to the famed Rock Gardens and the lake, adding to the wonderful days spent in this city for the 2014 annual Conference. We go back now with happy memories and look forward to many more such fulfilling events and conferences at the IACLALS.

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