

Netaji Subhas Open University

School of Humanities



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3 day-long online Workshop on Decolonizing Research Methodology in English Studies September 21, 2022 to September 23, 2022 Workshop Report

Introduction



The School of Humanities, Netaji Subhas Open University, organised a 3 day-long online workshop on Decolonizing Research Methodology in English Studies that began on September 21st, 2022, and concluded on September 23rd, 2022. The workshop was conducted as part of the project on Decolonizing Research Methodology in English Studies, funded by Netaji Subhas Open University. The participants included research scholars, Ph.D. candidates, and faculty members from across different streams and disciplines all over India. The participants included the students and scholars of IIT Madras, Visva Bharati University, Aligarh Muslim University, St. Xavier's University, Adamas University, Central University of Haryana, IIT Roorkee, Rani Channamma University, Banaras Hindu University, Vidyasagar University, Burdwan University, University of Calcutta, Sidho-Kanho Birsa University, etc. Over all, fifty-nine participants joined the workshop.

The primary goal of this workshop was to decolonize English literary studies in India. Due to its colonial past, English literary studies in India have been highly Eurocentric, thereby neglecting the overarching term 'literary' altogether. Thus, the workshop emphasised on looking beyond Eurocentric dogmatism and understanding the idea of 'literary' as a pervasive concept beyond its territorial affiliations. The resource persons for the workshop were Prof. T.S. Satyanath, Retired Professor, Dept. of MIL & Literary Studies, University of Delhi, Dr. Mosarrap Hosain Khan, Assistant Professor of English, Jindal Global Law School, O.P. Jindal Global University, Sonapat, Haryana, India, and Prof. Sowmya Dechamma, Professor and Head, Centre for Comparative Literature, University of Hyderabad. The course was

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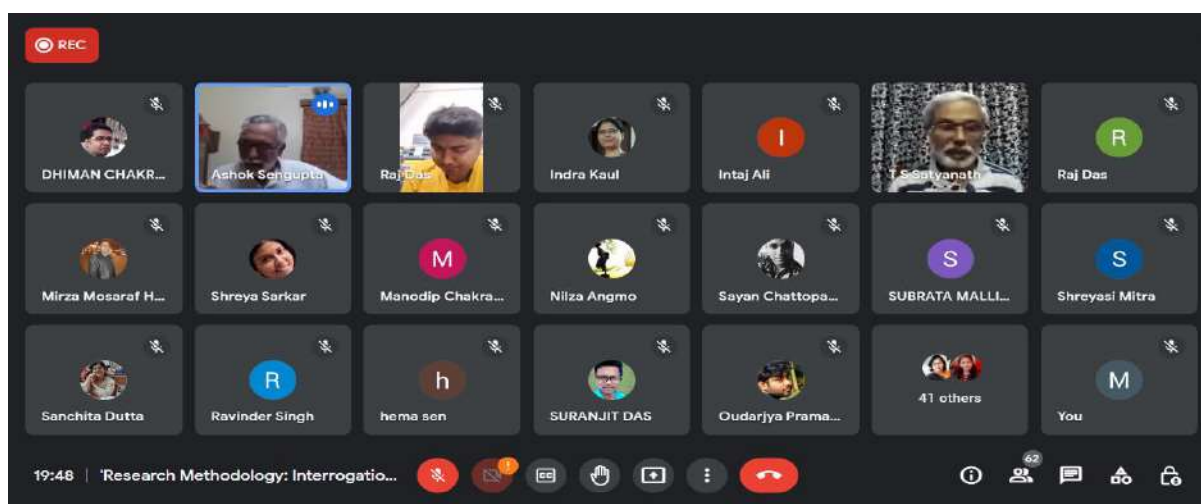
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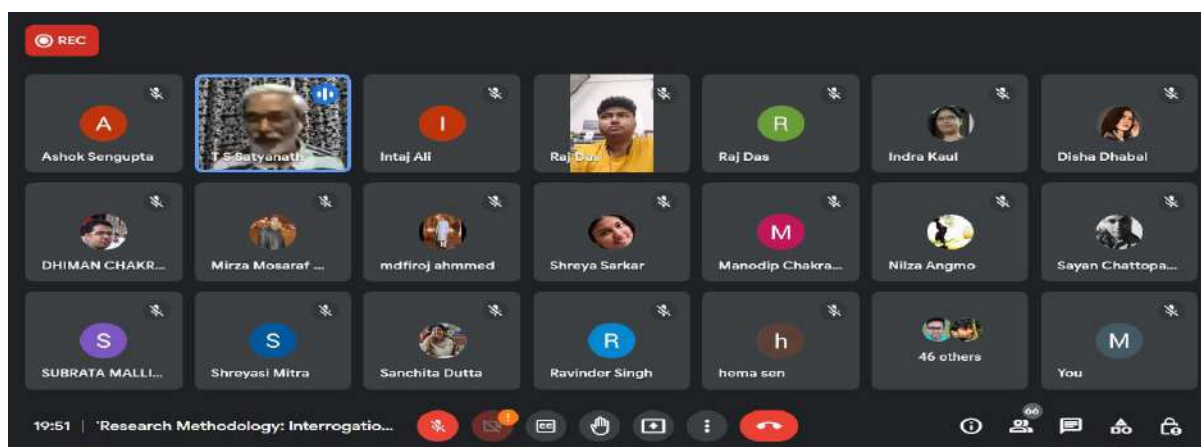
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coordinated by Dr. Md. Intaj Ali, Assistant Professor of English at Netaji Subhas Open University and Assistant Coordinator of the Centre for Language Translation and Cultural Studies (CLTCS), NSOU. An inaugural session was conducted on September 21, 2022. Dr. Md. Intaj Ali introduced to the participants the timeline of the workshop and the various dimensions that were expected to be covered during the 3 day-long workshop, and it was followed by Professor Ashok Sengupta's speech, who briefly explains the purpose of this workshop on 'Decolonizing Research Methodology in English Studies' as well as about the outcome that the participants might be expecting or looking forward to from this workshop.



September 21: 'Research Methodology: Interrogation and Looking for Alternatives' by Professor T.S. Satyanath, Retired Professor, Dept. of MIL & Literary Studies, University of Delhi



Professor T.S. Satyanath shows that research methodology is the process by which one may carry out his or her research. It's a logical, systematic "method" to address the research question. A methodology is a process that gives the research its 'credibility'." It's a complete

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and encompassing assessment of data credibility. Critical reading means a syllogistic investigation of the text. Critical reading includes the analysis of a text and reading between the lines. Data interrogation refers to the manual interrogation of the samples collected during field work or even hermeneutic reading. Some of the alternative research methodologies mentioned include longitudinal studies, field experiments, action research, and field studies. Research cycles include three distinct stages: description, explanation, and testing. There is no absolutely unified terminology to signify methodology in master's and doctoral theses. A comparison of the different terms revealed that the authors agreed on some methodologies but disagreed with or were unaware of others. Two or more methodologies can be applied in a single paper at the same time, without disrupting the syllogistic structure.

He stratified the concepts of 'Research Methodology: Interrogation and Looking for Alternatives.' This consisted of the Introduction: Theory and Practice, studying literary culture in India. Hariti's observations from Gandhara and the Ellora site plan, along with margino-centric perspectives, served as the focal point of his discussion. He talked about the Alankara Shashtra, Vyakarana, Chandas, Nightnu, and, most importantly, the Tatva Shashtras. According to him, whether this are considered literary theories or not is a never-ending debate. His emphasis was on the intertextuality of the public sphere. Within a public sphere, folk theatre or open or body-centric aesthetics, recitation, temple or phonocentric, and text and home as scriptocentric bodies of works can overlap. Maps showing silk roads and tables showing the details of the earliest grammar and literary texts in some of the Indian languages have been a prime area of his focus. He goes on to explain how four of the six vedangas came together to form a composite alankar shashtra in Buddhist and Jain literary traditions. The concept of "alternative margino-centricity" was conceived and discussed in a larger fashion. According to him, comparative literature, or dealing with multiple languages and bewildering data, is an important methodology. He also argued that Indian knowledge systems are both theories and practises at the same time, maintaining a constant relationship of mutual borrowing. There is a significant difference between the pre-colonial knowledge systems, and their colonial and post-colonial interpretations. Most of our knowledge structures about India are colonially constructed and have been claimed to have been constructed to serve the interests of colonial administrations. Trautmann attributes this void to "the theory-deadness of antiquity under the ideology of modernism, the theory-deadness of pre-colonial theory coverage to hide the aliveness of the ancient Indian phonological analysis in the present."

September 22: "Beyond 'Western Modernity': Rethinking Research on Anglophone Novels written by Subcontinental Muslim Writers" by Dr. Mosarrap Hossain Khan, Assistant Professor of English, Jindal Global Law School, O.P. Jindal Global University, Sonipat, Haryana, India.

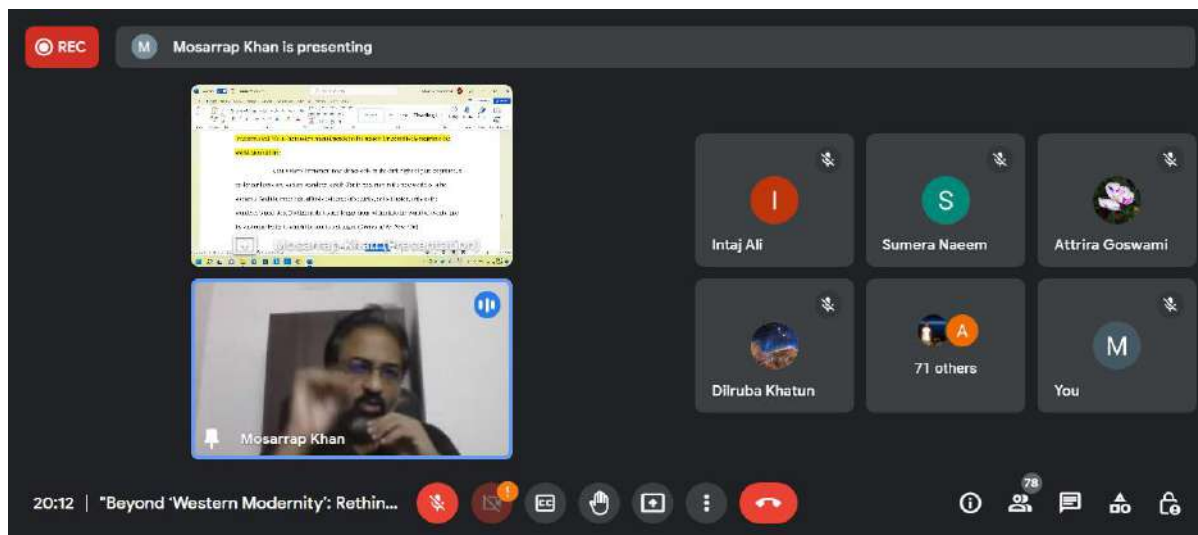
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Indian colonial history and contemporary postcolonial culture are sites for the study of both influence and intertextuality. The rise of "Orientalism" allowed India to exercise a literary influence on the West.

Virginia Woolf depicts a bright young philosopher named Charles Tansley in *To the Lighthouse*. According to another character, Mrs. Ramsay, the young philosopher is writing a dissertation on "the influence of something upon somebody." This gets worse when she confidently recalls his topic later in the novel as "the influence of somebody upon something." In *Small World* by David Lodge, another young researcher, Persse McGarrigle, is writing a thesis on the influence of Shakespeare on T. S. Eliot. He plays a little trick on some crass academics by telling them that the PhD is about the influence of T. S. Eliot on Shakespeare and persists with his trick. He further argues that "we can't avoid reading Shakespeare through the lens of T. S. Eliot's poetry." In both cases, "influence" has become a joke; it has become a time-worn topic that the researcher has no profound knowledge of.

Modernism in the West paved the way for a new model of western religion. The incorporation of theories into the western conception of religion rendered religion a secular and "disenchanted" experience. The novel was the primary genre in 18th-century Europe that used and explored these secular themes of religion. However, non-western novelists continued to portray religion as a living experience of daily life. In *The Satanic Verses*, Salman Rushdie's description of a spiritual awakening is connected with a physical experience. Characters who believe in traditional religious rituals can also be found in the novels of Laila Aboulela, Mohja kauf Saba Mahmood, and others.

Dr. Mosarrap Hossain Khan discusses the history and future of Pakistani literature in English. He explores interesting aspects such as terrorism, religious extremism, fundamentalism, corruption, and intolerance; matters of love and hate; loss and belongingness; and identity conflicts. He puts forward debates that have not only enriched

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creative writing but also dismantled certain stereotypes in favour of a more multifarious representation of Pakistani Muslim experiences. Since India's independence, the identity of minorities, particularly Muslims, has been called into question. His study delineates the minority identity (by which he especially means the "Muslim") in secularised and Indian canonical English. This lecture examines different aspects of Muslim identity as represented in Indian fiction in English. Secular matrices and minoritarian ideas become the crux of his discussion with regard to English fiction. Put simply, his study aims to present an overview of the two subjects mentioned above.

Rethinking Anglophone novels by subcontinental Muslim writers is an important area of discussion. Max Weber's idea of disenchantment can be very well connected to the idea of a world not consisting of God. Salman Rushdie, for example, became infamous for portraying negative emotions about the Quran in his *Satanic Verses*. Today, novels, poems, autobiographies, memoirs, essays, and research articles are being written based on profit motives. Writers have become *Homo Economicus* rather than actually positing the eventual outcome of a novel based purely upon aesthetics and ethics. This is where reality has been subjugated and subordinated. Profit motivations and secular writings do not mix. A writer must find an alternative and realistic method of writing to retain both economic and secular ideals. The difficulties that religious writers face are numerous. Religious sentiments of the world's citizens are fragile, and writers all over the world must respect that. As a result, contemporary authors should have a secularist sensibility.



September 23: "Towards a World of Equals" by Professor Sowmya Dechamma, Professor and Head, Centre for Comparative Literature, University of Hyderabad.

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Professor Sowmya Dechamma spoke on the individual spirituality of the novels of Ian Watt. Watt explores the fall of philosophical ideas and their implications for human thought. This has given birth to flat plots and characters that, according to Bakhtin, cannot have the poetics and problems of craftsmanship. Watt wrote that the novel's primary criterion was the truth of individual experience. This focus on individual experience characterises Watt's novels. According to the speaker in "*Satanic Verses*," the novel celebrates individual experience. She also talks about Rushdie's imaginative reconstruction. It means a realistic or mimetic account of a character's life joined with the imaginative plot structure of the novel in order to give it a poetic outlook.

According to her, gender permeates every sphere of our lives—personal relations, social formations, psychology, culture, family, education, politics, law, sports, even science. In recent years, government initiatives and laws have been brought out that aim to create gender equality in our society. As a result, the ideas of manhood and womanhood are challenged. Prof. Somya Dechamma, in "*Towards a World of Equals*," shows new areas for conducting research on any topic for the early researchers through her "writing ink shedding loop" method. She sketched out various approaches to looking at any clues to any research from various angles. Prof. Dechamma's lecture was primarily based on social hierarchies and the creation of class, caste, and gender-based divisions not only in society but also in academia.

In a country where the average biology lesson on reproduction is received with tense giggling and shifty expressions, the Indian state of Telangana in the south has just unveiled "*Towards a World of Equals*," a textbook that will include "complex subjects like female-centric history and male-female relationships." Academically, "gender" has not been an area of concern outside the disciplines of sociology or women's studies. But growing concern over the last few years about issues of discrimination, harassment, and violence has finally brought critical concerns over toxic masculinity and the concept of "machismo masculinity." Telangana's new textbook serves as a crucial entry point to these themes for young men and women in the

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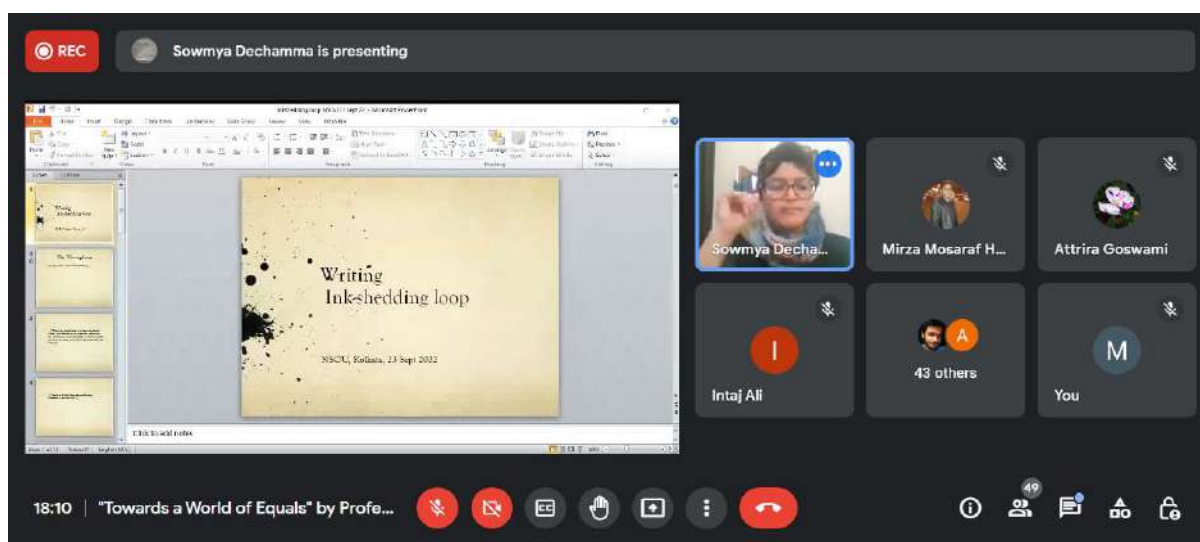
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cultural context of a third-world country. The course is an attempt to provide the students with a non-binarized environment.



Valedictory Session

On September 23, 2022, a valedictory session was held in which Dr. Md. Intaj Ali delivered his valedictory remarks. As the course coordinator, Dr. Md. Intaj Ali extended a vote of thanks. He thanked Prof. Subha Sankar Sarkar, the honourable Vice Chancellor of Netaji Subhas Open University, for his official and earnest support. Special thanks to the Netaji Subhas Open University for funding the project and initiating a minor research project for NSOU faculty members. He also extends his heartfelt thanks and gratitude to Prof. Manan Kumar Mandal, Director, School of Humanities, and Dr. Srideep Mukherjee, Associate Professor and Head of Department, English Department, NSOU, for their valuable and enthusiastic suggestions. He did not forget to thank Pabitra Naskar and Gautam Samanta, the official staff of the school, for their tiresome, continuous support to make the course successful. He thanked Saikat Chakraborty, the project assistant for preparing the report and coordinating the workshop from time to time. Then, he congratulated and thanked the honourable resource persons, without whom the workshop could not have been completed in any way.

Dr Md Intaj Ali, Assistant Professor of English &
Workshop Coordinator,

PI of Decolonizing Research Methodology in English Studies- NSOU Sponsored Project
SoH, Netaji Subhas Open University

Date: 18th January, 2023.