

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON IDENTITY, HISTORY, AND NARRATIVE IN CONTEMPORARY AFGHAN LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

6-8 February 2019

Department of English, Gauhati University

The Department of English, Gauhati University, has been organizing a series of international seminars on literatures emerging from India and its neighbours, with two seminars already held on Sri Lanka and Pakistan. This year, we shift our focus to Afghanistan.

In terms of language and culture, Afghanistan retains a rich heritage that not merely dates back to thousands of years but also charts a transnational trajectory in the form of a Persian literary culture that includes countries like Turkey, Iran and India in its ambit. However, modern Afghanistan is often regarded as an isolated, troubled, violence-ridden territory in the global imaginary, in the light of its occupation by the Soviets in the Cold War era and by the US in the aftermath of 9/11. However, this representation, as with any representation, comes with its own political and ideological baggage.

Poetry and fiction have been the dominant forms through which Afghan writers have articulated the trauma of violence, terror, displacement and loss of identity and home. Afghan writers have consciously undertaken to provide alternative versions of reading and representing Afghanistan rather than the politically dominant Western view of the nation. The central focus of the seminar is to understand the specific ways in which contemporary Afghan literature has responded to and addressed the drastic political and cultural changes in Afghanistan since the second half of the twentieth century as well as certain repressive aspects of tradition that perpetuate from the past well into the present.

~THEMES~

- ✓ Gender and the nation
- ✓ The body
- ✓ Ethnicity
- ✓ Home, exile, migration and displacement
- ✓ Identity, nation and literature
- ✓ Religion and violence Narrative and history
- ✓ Orality and culture
- ✓ The Soviet Occupation
- ✓ The Taliban occupation
- ✓ 9/11 and the US presence
- ✓ Politics and literature
- ✓ The folk and the popular
- ✓ Terrorism and children
- ✓ Everyday life
- ✓ Tradition and modernity
- ✓ Afghanistan and the West

Plenary Speakers:

- Afrasiab Khattak
- Raghav Sharma

Panel:

- Nandana Dutta
- Rakhee Kalita Moral
- Pradipta Borgohain