



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

on

ENGLISH and *englishes*: Culture, Power, Politics in a Neo-liberalist Regime

organised by

The Department of English, Bankura University,
Bankura, West Bengal, India.

22 – 23 January 2020

Concept Note:

The destiny of English / *englishes* was perhaps foreshadowed long back in 1975 by George Steiner in his Presidential Address to the English Association in London: "...the linguistic centre of English has shifted". This shifting terrain came to be further reified in terms of expansive movements beyond the borders of traditionally recognised territories.

With the exhaustion of postcolonial models, it is time we tried to break free of conventional straitjackets. In a neo-liberalist world order, that almost runs co-extensive with the free market economy and transnational political diplomacy, cultural disciplinary models are establishing an innovative paradigm shift.

It may be said that "English" seems to stand as a metonymic referent to a new cultural formation. While B. K. Kachru negotiated the problematic of WE (World English) syndrome in 1996 (*Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Summer 1996, University of Illinois Press), he looked upon it as a "pluricentric" principle involving debatable issues of 'cross-cultural intelligibility' as well as contestations of power and ideology.

What Kachru failed to envision is the emerging formation of the neo-liberalist regime in the post-Cold War era. This new modes of consolidation of power in economic and political domains re-defined cultural diplomacy, especially with the gradual rise of competing establishments in South and Southeast Asia. Moreover, despite the apparently contrapuntal relationship or the so-called divide between the Global North and the Global South including the G8 and BRIC countries, diverse forms of cultural transactions began to take place, particularly led by English and *englishes* which came to be the chief vehicle for innovative cultural exchanges.

English texts (poetry, fiction, non-fiction, drama, travelogues etc.) written since the 1990s emerged as strategized responses to this new global order. Inez Baranay's *Neem Dreams* or Ronna Gonsalves' *The Permanent Resident*, Bashabi Fraser's *From Ganga to Tay*, Kunal Basu's *Kalkatta*, Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke*, Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man*, Chandani Lokuge's *If the Moon Smiled*, Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*, Zen Cho's *Spirits Abroad*, Tan Twan Eng's *The Garden of Evening Mists*, Sonny Liew's *The Art of Charlie Chan Hock Chye*, Tahmima Anam's *The Golden Age*, etc. are representations of aesthetic strategies for identifying the varying degrees of cultural reciprocity.

This conference will address, though not strictly limited to, the following issues:

- English / *englishes* and World Literature
- Neo-liberalist regime and Cultural Texts
- Socio-political Negotiations and Cultural Diplomacy
- Text, Representation and the Politics of Power
- Cultural Production: South and Southeast Asia
- Transaction, Exchange: Power and Politics
- SAARC Writers of Global South

Highlights of the Conference:

Key Note Address I:

Prof. Bill Ashcroft, Emeritus Professor, School of English, Media and Performing Arts, University of New South Wales, Sydney.

Key Note Address II:

Prof. Richard Nile, Professor of History, Head of Humanities and Creative Arts, James Cook University, Australia.

Key Note Address III:

Dr Paul Sharrad, Fellow of the University of Wollongong, Australia.

Plenary Speech I:

Dr Jonathan Sweet, Senior Lecturer in Cultural Heritage and Museum Studies, Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia.

Plenary Speech II:

Dr. Cherie McKeich, Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia.

Call for Papers:

Abstracts (not exceeding 250 words) may be emailed to:

englishseminar.bku@gmail.com

Deadline for sending of abstracts: 8th December, 2019

Selection of abstracts would be conveyed by: 20th December, 2019

Registration Fees: 2000 INR (Indian delegates)

50 USD (International delegates)

20 USD (International delegates sending pre-recorded papers)

Publication: Selected papers will be published in an Edited Volume (likely to be published by Routledge).

Though it may not be possible to arrange accommodation, the conference team may provide assistance if contacted beforehand. Please drop a mail here with your requirements: englishseminar.bku@gmail.com

Chief Patron of the Conference:

Professor Deb Narayan Bandyopadhyay, Vice Chancellor, Bankura University

Convenors:

Professor Sandip Ain, Department of English, Bankura University

Professor Sarbojit Biswas, Department of English, Bankura University.

See you at the conference!