

**Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi: Cultural Studies Seminar and
Writers' Meet, March 2006**

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The School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies (SLLCS) of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi held, between 9 and 11 March 2006, a major seminar/workshop of national and international scope, centred on the proposed creation of a programme in Intercultural Studies, of an interdisciplinary nature, within the School. The SLLCS already teaches courses in 17 different language areas: the new programme is intended to complement and not in any way replace the existing programmes. The broad subject areas discussed were: Theoretical issues; Translation studies; Comparative literature; Classical cultural forms; Theatre and performance studies; Folklore; Film Studies; New media and popular culture studies; Photography, video and visual culture studies; and curriculum and modalities for the new programme. The seminar was attended by prominent academics, researchers, artists and others from all over India.

Looked at in detail, the notion of 'cultural studies' or 'culture studies' reveals itself as rather slippery and elusive. In some hands, it can become an alibi for media or even audiovisual studies alone, and a pretext for elbowing literature out of languages and humanities courses on the grounds of what-came-out-yesterday notions of 'relevance'. Such, however, was not the case at this seminar, where the concept of (inter)cultural studies that prevailed was, rather, that of conceiving, understanding and comparing cultures as a whole, seeing them as the multifaceted expressions of an entire way of life.

The seminar was opened by Amar K. Basu, Dean of the SLLCS, and a welcome address was delivered by B.B. Bhattacharya, JNU's Vice-Chancellor. Among the distinguished speakers were, from JNU, Professor Makarand Paranjape, Chair of the SLLCS's Centre of English Studies, and Professor Shyama Prasad Ganguly, Chair of its Centre of Spanish, Portuguese, Italian and Latin American Studies; and, from outside, Roma Chatterji, Reader in Sociology at Delhi University, Professor Amiya Dev, formerly Vice-Chancellor of Vidyasagar University, Midnapore, Kavita Panjabi, Reader in Comparative Literature at Jadavpur University, Kolkata, and many more. Most speakers expressed themselves in English and some in Hindi; for the latter option, no interpretation facilities, alas, were provided - an omission which could usefully be made good at future such events.

The participants also included two who had come for the purpose from outside India. Dr Antonia Navarro Tejero, of the University of Córdoba, Spain - who has taught in the past at JNU - offered, under the heading 'Culture Studies Today - Theoretical Issues', a paper on 'Education and Globalisation: Reflections on Intercultural Studies'.

Being invited that week to JNU as Visiting Professor, I spoke myself, under the rubric 'Translation Studies as Contributive to Intercultural Studies', on 'Beyond the Domestic and the Foreign: Translation as Dialogue'.

Antonia Navarro and myself also took part in the event 'Writers' Meet', organised by Professors Ganguly and Paranjape and held at the SLACS on 7 and 8 March. On the 7th, I gave a lecture on 'Problems of translating Indian Writing in English into Spanish, with reference to *A Married Woman* by Manju Kapur', basing myself on the (excellent) Spanish translation, *Una mujer casada*, by Dora Sales Salvador of the Universidad Jaime I de Castellón, Spain. The round table of which my paper was a part was honoured by the presence of Manju Kapur herself, who kindly answered questions on her work and its translation. The next day, I delivered a talk on 'Indian Writing in English: Some Language Issues and Translation Problems'. Both days also included the participation of the writer Kiran Nagarkar, who read with great force and eloquence from several of his novels.

Both the big seminar and the 'Writers' Meet' can be considered successful: these events made a valuable contribution to a closer approximation between the intellectual milieux of India and Europe, at this crucial moment of economic take-off and enhanced cultural promotion of the host country. On a more personal level and having greatly enjoyed all aspects of my stay at JNU, I extend my grateful thanks to Professor Ganguly and Antonia Navarro for having jointly made my presence there possible. May such encounters and opportunities occur often in India's intellectual world.