

Yashpal: Gender, Nation, Revolution

January 8th and 9th 2019.

IRD Conference Room, Main Building, IIT Delhi

Tentative Schedule. Please check this site for updates and registration:
<http://hss.iitd.ac.in/event/yashpal-gender-nation-revolution-symposium-work-hindi-writer-yashpal-1903-1976>

DAY 1: TUESDAY, JANUARY 8

9:00 AM: Tea/Coffee and refreshments

9:30 AM: Welcome and Opening Remarks (Simona Sawhney, Kama Maclean).

Panel I: 10:00-11:45 AM

Madhuresh: Yashpal in our Time (Hindi)

Pradeep Saxena: Yashpal and Indian Marxism: A Historic Presence (Hindi)

Anand: Yashpal and the Philosophy of the Bomb (English)

11:45-12:00 Tea break

Panel II: 12:00-1:30 PM

Vasudha Dalmia: Whose Truth? Cold War Journeys (English)

Gautam Choubey: Viplavi Bharat: A Journalist and his Discontents (English)

Kama Maclean: Coercive Institutions and the Crisis of Collaboration in late Colonial India (English)

1:30-3:00 PM Lunch

Panel III: 3:00-4:15 PM

Mrityunjay Tripathi: Utopia Matters: Sexuality and Society in Yashpal's stories (Hindi)

Sanjeev Kumar: What did Lenin say to Clara Zetkin? The Women's Question and Yashpal's short stories (Hindi)

DAY 2: WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 9

9:00 AM: Tea/Coffee and Refreshments

Panel I: 9:30-11:00 AM

Virendra Yadav: *Jhootha Sach*: Partition, Nationalism, and the Women's Question (Hindi/English)

Ritu Madan: Punjabi Refugee Women in Urban Spaces in *Jhootha Sach* (English)

Shabnam Syed Khan: Yashpal's Lahore and Mine (English)

11:00-11:15 Tea

Panel II: 11:15-12:15

Ania Loomba: Yashpal, Communism, and Women (English)

Sevali Hukku: Rivals and Allies: A Study of Masculinities in *Deshdrohi* (English)

Panel III: 12:30-1:30

Daniel Elam: Revolutionary Form (English)

Nikhil Govind: Realism in Mid-Twentieth Century Fiction (English)

1:30-3:00 Lunch

Panel III: 3:00-4:00

Simona Sawhney: Concluding Remarks, followed by discussion

YASHPAL: GENDER, NATION, REVOLUTION

January 8th and 9th, 2019

Abstracts and Bio Notes (In alphabetical order by first name of speaker)

1. Anand

Title: Yashpal and the Philosophy of the Bomb

Abstract: The bomb explosion under the Viceroy of India's train on December 23, 1929, by Yashpal and Bhagwati Charan Vohra had spurred Mahatma Gandhi to denounce the action in his article *The Cult of the Bomb*. *The Philosophy of the Bomb* was the HSRA's reply to Gandhi as well as its mission statement. Although it was drafted by Chandrasekhar Azad, Vohra and Yashpal working together, there are several - often conflicting - accounts of its writing. This is an examination of which account is most credible, and why?

About the Speaker: Anand is a translator, collator and editor of works by Yashpal.

2. Ania Loomba

Title: Yashpal, Communism and Women

Abstract: In my paper I will discuss Yashpal's interest in gender relations within the communist movement. Drawing upon his *Manushya Ke Roop* and *Geeta, Party Comrade* it will suggest how in these works he extends his earlier analysis of gender and revolution in *Dada Kamred*.

About the Speaker: Ania Loomba researches and teaches early modern literature, histories of race and colonialism, postcolonial studies, feminist theory, and contemporary Indian literature and culture. She currently holds the Catherine Bryson Chair in the English department at the University of Pennsylvania. She is also faculty in Comparative Literature, South Asian Studies, and Women's Studies. Her latest book is *Revolutionary Desires: Women, Communism, and Feminism in India*.

3. J. Daniel Elam

Title: Revolutionary Form

Abstract: This talk will ask what literary and aesthetic forms 'revolutionary' anticolonial thought requires, takes, and demands. As such, it will consider major anticolonial writers -- Bhagat Singh, Yashpal, and others -- as theorists of literary form and literary critique. How do anticolonial writers theorise their relationship to 'the literary', and what modes of writing are made possible under the rubrics of 'revolutionary' politics?

About the Speaker: J. Daniel Elam is an assistant professor in comparative literature at the University of Hong Kong and a Fellow in the Society for the Humanities at Cornell University. He has published essays on South Asian anticolonial thought in *Postcolonial Studies*,

Interventions, and PMLA. His forthcoming monograph is *World Literature for the Wretched of the Earth: Anticolonial Aesthetics, Postcolonial Democracy*.

4. Gautam Choubey

Title: *Vipalavi Bharat: A Journalist and His Discontents*

Abstract: Throughout the nationalist movement, Congress used its dailies and journals to control the progressively diversifying discourses around nationalist politics, its direction and its methods. For a few years, Gandhi's *Young India* (1919) represented the official position of Congress and given his centrality to the movement, it was completely desirable. Till *Chauri Chaura* happened, it was Allahabad based *Swaraj*, and after Gandhi-Irwin pact of 1932 brought Civil disobedience movement to a grinding halt, *National Herald* and *Samgharsha* were launched from Lucknow in 1935. By the time the eighteen months old Congress government resigned, the Left leaning forces had gained near-total control over the political space. The World War II negotiations with England complicated the setting further. It was against this background that *Viplav*, a leftist critique of the Congress and Gandhi led movement, was started in October 1938.

This paper focuses on the philosophical and empirical premises of the differences that emerge between Gandhi and Yashpal: a methodological difference on the questions of internationalism, WWII and political literacy of the masses, and an ideological difference on the meanings of Ramrajya (the Gandhian Utopia). For Yashpal, criticizing Gandhi was not an end in itself. He also intended to recover a place in the national imaginary, which, he alleged, was usurped by the Congress. This paper proposed to examine the tension between state/official histories of revolutionary movement and autobiographies of former revolutionaries by focussing on the recurring trope of misrepresentation/betrayal and examining *Viplav's* intervention thereof. In other words, what are the discursive and journalistic strategies through which Yashpal seeks to reclaim the revolutionaries rightful position in the public imagination?

I shall briefly examine the changing vocations of Yashpal vis-à-vis the career of the nationalist movement. This allows me to contextualise the editorial persona in *Viplav* who critiques Gandhi and seeks justice for the revolutionaries who were purportedly misrepresented in the dominant discourses. This is an attempt to understand “krantikari samsmara” [revolutionaries’ account] as a literary genre and the challenges of producing an authentic account of the armed rebellion.

About the Speaker: Gautam Choubey teaches English at Delhi University. His doctoral thesis explores the impact of Gandhi on Hindi print culture during the nationalist movement. He specialises in print studies, Hindi literature, classical literature, 19th century novel and translation. He has recently finished a Hindi translation of Andre Beteille's *Democracy and its Institutions* and a screenplay for a period drama on Gandhi. He has also translated satires of Shrilal Shukla, Vasant Satpathy and awadhi couplets of 18th Century Odia poet Brajnath Badjena.

5. Kama Maclean

Title: Coercive Institutions and the Crisis of Collaboration in late Colonial India

Abstract: In South Asian Studies, the term ‘collaborator’, first introduced by scholars of the Cambridge School, has long been set aside as too one-dimensional, in favour of models of resistance to colonial rule. The work of James C. Scott in particular has highlighted the ways in which those who seem on the surface to be complicit with colonial regimes frequently nurture complex transcripts of resistance. In this paper, I wish to highlight the ways in which Indian employees of British coercive institutions – the police and prisons – covertly directed their labours towards ways that undermined formal procedures to ameliorate the experiences of revolutionaries under arrest and in prison. I am interested in highlighting some of the ways in which the administration of British India was being actively subverted by employees of the Raj who were collaborating not with the British, but the revolutionaries. This narrative will throw some light on the ways in which revolutionaries of the HSRA experienced their prison sentences.

About the Speaker: Kama Maclean is the author of *Pilgrimage and Power* (OUP, 2008), and *A Revolutionary History of Interwar India* (OUP 2015), which demonstrated that the oft-averted dominance of Gandhian nonviolence in the historiography of the nationalist movement was not supported by a close examination of a range of oral, material and visual culture sources. Her third book, *British India, White Australia: Overseas Indians, Intercolonial Relations and the Empire, 1901-1947* (UNSW Press, 2019), shows how imperial dynamics impacted on British Indian settlers in Australia in the early twentieth century. She is the author of several other articles, and is the editor of *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*.

6. Madhuresh

Title: Yashpal in our Time

About the Speaker: A close associate and friend of Yashpal; the author of several books on Yashpal.

7. Mrityunjay

Title: Utopia Matters: Sexuality and Society in Yashpal’s stories

About the Speaker: Mrityunjay is an Assistant Professor in the Hindi programme, School of Letters/School of Undergraduate Studies at Ambedkar University, Delhi. His monographs include, *The Hindi Canon: Processes, Intellectuals, Criticism* and *Hindi Alochana Men Canon-Nirman Ki Prakriya* [The Process of Canonization in Hindi Criticism]. He has edited *Pratirodh: Fascism Ke Khilaf Jari Sanskritik Vidroh Ke Dastavez* [Resistance: Documents from the Ongoing Cultural Opposition Against Fascism] and translated the autobiography of Mallikarjun Mansur from Kannada to Hindi, which is titled *Rasa Yatra: Meri Sangeet Yatra*.

8. Nikhil Govind

Title: Realism in mid Twentieth Century Fiction

Abstract: This presentation will compare a sample Yashpal novel, *Divya* (1945), with two novels (*Shekhar* and *Crooked Line*, both published in 1944) and written by Agyeya and Chughtai respectively. Both these novels were contemporaries to *Divya*, and yet seem to be very different in affective tone. The aim of the presentation will be to query the idea of realism of the time. Yashpal is considered the heir of the great social realist tradition of Premchand. Many writers however, while inheriting and learning from this tradition, also sought to transform it by the nineteen forties—the well-known letters between Premchand and Jainendra (which discuss Agyeya) attest to the insufficiencies of (social) realism for both Jainendra and Agyeya, especially with regard to the requirement of a moral male protagonist/sentiment. Aware of some of the limitations of Premchand's imagination of women, Yashpal sought to substantially broaden the horizon of female subjectivity in *Divya*, with its bold treatment of the protagonist's sexual agency as well as her non-conformist struggles in the world. But Yashpal imagines this within a mode that can still be called, for better and worse, conventional realism. This presentation would like to compare *Divya's* effort with both 1) *Shekhar* (where masculinity and self-hood seem to constantly undermine its own sovereignty), and with 2) *Crooked Line*, wherefrom a female subjectivity is assembled that looks very different from the imaginations of freedom that either *Divya* or *Shekhar* envisage. All this attest to a rich historical moment (the eve of national freedom/Partition, 1947) where realism may be understood less as monolith, and more as open to very different types of ethical commitment.

About the Speaker: Nikhil Govind is Associate Professor and Head of the Manipal Centre for Humanities, Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE). His research interests include modern Indian literature and film. Among other writings, he has published *Between Love and Freedom: The Revolutionary in Hindi Literature* (Routledge, 2014).

9. Pradeep Saxena

Title: Yashpal and Indian Marxism: A Historic Presence

About the Speaker: *The former head of the Hindi Department at AMU, and the author of twenty books and several articles.*

10. Ritu Madan

Title: Punjabi Refugee Women in Urban Spaces in *Jhootha Sach*

Abstract: This paper will examine Yashpal's representation of Punjabi refugee women in urban spaces in the second part of *Jhootha Sach*, titled *Desh ka Bhavishya*, or *Future of the Nation*. The

novel describes the transformation of Jalandhar and Delhi during and about ten years after partition, as refugees enter and gradually settle in these cities. The cityscape changes with the movement and settlement of refugees in camps, evacuee houses, on streets and open spaces, in markets and historical monuments. Along with their urgent need for food, housing and other basic amenities, their languages, dialects, dresses, and mannerisms erupt upon the spatial and visual economy of the urban landscape. In this moment of nation formation, the re-ordering of urban space, as well as ordering and disciplining of bodies in space, is coterminous with the process of extending citizenship qualified by gender, age, class, caste and religion.

The novel has numerous refugee women of different ages, from different social classes and from various regions--urban and rural--of Punjab. Some of these women are developed as individual characters, often in relationship to the protagonist Tara Puri, while others are described as part of groups, or undifferentiated masses. Many refugee women are either alone, or with other women and children, separated from male family members. This paper seeks to analyze the ways in which the novel engages in disciplining the Punjabi refugee woman's body in urban spaces in Delhi. Refugee women characters new to Delhi traverse the crowded lanes of Chandni Chowk, the elite shopping arcade and restaurants of Connaught Place, the housing colonies of New and Old Delhi, clubs and public meetings, Birla House, and the hallowed Secretariat buildings. They travel on foot, in buses, on tongas, and in cars. There is sudden and visible mobility of women in the city, as they seek opportunities for livelihood and recreation. The paper will examine the ways in which the novel works towards imagining the transformation of the threatening figure of the unattached refugee woman into the ideal of a respectable middle class citizen, armed with education and purpose, and bearer of modernity as well as moral and cultural values. Yashpal dwells in detail on the form and colour of dress, idiom of speech, and restraint of sexual desire, that contributes to sanitizing the woman's body and makes it fit for specific kind of mobility and visibility within the city. This sanctioned mobility is often presented in opposition to loitering and flanerier.

About the Speaker: Ritu Madan teaches at Shivaji College, University of Delhi. She is currently working on her PhD.

11. Sanjeev Kumar

Title: What did Lenin say to Clara Zetkin? The Women's Question and Yashpal's Short Stories

Abstract: A good number of Yashpal's short stories are focused on issues related to women. Their overall subservience, and especially in the matter of sexuality, are central theme of his many short stories. Amla of 'Bhagy ka Chakra', Kamla of 'Kamla', Damti of 'Ek cigarette' are some of his female protagonists who, after being distressed, come out of the walls of their homes and what they go through in the outside world reveals a lot of hidden cruelties of the patriarchal, casteist and communal Indian society. Women question in these stories are entangled with many other questions. In a sense, showing women's destiny becomes a device of showing the overall decadence of the society. I am going to elaborate how this device works in some of Yashpal's short stories.

Issues pertaining to women's sexuality have also got prominence in these short stories. Many critics have talked about Yashpal being influenced by Freud on this ground. On the question of sexuality, Yashpal got in a debate with other Marxists including Ramvilas Sharma, and Lenin's conversation with Clara Zetkin was referred in this debate by both sides in support of their position. My presentation will also focus on this question through Yashpal's short stories and try to put it in the context of ideological construction of woman and its subversion. My submission is that Yashpal was ahead of his times and 'pragatiwaadi'/progressive Hindi criticism was less equipped to appreciate his position on women's question.

About the Speaker: Sanjeev Kumar is Associate Professor in the Department of Hindi, Deshbandhu College, University of Delhi. He has published more than 60 articles in different Hindi literary journals like *Hans*, *Kathadesh*, *Alochna*, *Bahuvachan*, *Naya Path*, *Pakshdhar*, *Banas Jan*, *Akaar*, *Aajkal*, *lamahee*, etc. His Book *Jainendra aur Agyey: Srijan ka Saiddhantik Nepathy'* was published in 2009 from Sawraj Prakashan, New delhi and got Devishankar Awasthi Samman for young critics in 2011. He has edited (1) *Teen Sau Ramaynen aur Any Nibandh* (A book containing hindi translation of A K Ramanujan's article 'Three hundred Ramaynaas...' done by me, along with some articles on a debate related to Ramanujan's article). (2) *Baalbodhini* (with Vasudhaa Dalmia) He has been on the editorial board of the quarterly journal *Naya Path* since 2009.

12. Sevali Hukku

Title: Rivals and Allies: A Study of Masculinities in Yashpal's *Deshdrohi*

Abstract: Yashpal is one of the most stimulating, rich and best-known Hindi novelists of all time. He was politically astute and participated in the struggle for Indian independence. He started writing in prison and by 1960's or by the time India had gained its independence and was struggling to establish a national identity of its own, Yashpal had already produced most of his iconic novels. The first part of the 1900's was also the time when the nation was closer to comprehending the new and global impacts that were brought to it because of colonialism. Under the garb of modernity, Indian women were given the opportunity to acquire education and even seek work. Indian men were trying to grapple with the new reality of women by discussing her in the novels, magazines and cultural social circles of that time. As the figure of the new woman became a site of discussion, she was also put on trial for the freedom she was offered. As opposed to this femininity, a nervous Indian masculinity was also trying to understand itself. The idea of who was masculine enough to lead the nation or rather who was the representative Indian man was also being debated and written about. It means that men were not seen as a homogenous entity that could fit a pattern. Patriarchy has the ability to keep on changing based on who is representing manhood. A few examples are, the philosopher in *Shekhar Ek Jeevni* (1944), the revolutionary in *Dada Comrade* (1941), the modern intellectual in *Gunaho ka Devta* (1949), the scientist in *Nadi ke Dweep* (1952) or even the fallen zamindar in *Saheb, Biwi aur Ghulam* (1953).

In *Deshdrohi* (1943) Yashpal presents the reader with two childhood friends, Khanna and Shivnath. Khanna, an upper caste financially stable doctor who gets abducted by Afghans and Shivnath a poor revolutionary who spends six years in jail only to find out he cannot go back to a salaried life of comfort like Khanna. As we read the novels being published at that time, we see that the male protagonists have been given many roles to fill, just like these two men coming

from different backgrounds represent two different masculinities. My paper would look at the emergence of these new masculinities and their relation to the nation especially since the land was now being imagined as feminine. Masculinities while competing with each other within patriarchy are also allies. Along with Yashpal's *Deshdrohi*, I would also try to draw parallels with Agyeya's *Shekhar ek Jeevni*, part I (1941) and part II (1944). The emerging new man, was caught off guard by the rush of unfamiliar changes, bound by the limitations of the emergent liberation. My paper will look at these very limitations and the confused male protagonist trying to figure out his masculinity and its political associations to the nation.

About the Speaker: Sevali Hukku is a research scholar in IIT Delhi, department of humanities and social science since 2016. The focus of her work is Hindi fiction from 1930 to 1960.

13. Shabnam Syed Khan

Title: Yashpal's Lahore and Mine

Abstract: This essay and the accompanying digital art are the aesthetic response to my feelings of displacement and yearning for my hometown Lahore; which I experienced after reading Yashpal's historic novel, *'Jhoota Sach,'* in Lahore. In this insecurity, I seek to check if the twin activity of writing and art-making would help me to re-identify with Lahore?

Towards this, I use the adult-developmental theory of Robert Kegan, because in its endorsement of breaking one's immunity-to-change (ITC) and "everyone culture," I find it synchronizing beautifully with my bias for Nizamuddin Aulia's philosophy of *'Sulh-e-Kul'* (peace with all).

My smug ownership of the elemental beauty and the gusto at the heart of the popular truism "*Lohr- Lohr ai,*" or Lahore-is-Lahore, was disrupted: *'Jhoota Sach'* led me, a supposedly *Lahori,* up to a parallel panorama of this storied city of Indian Subcontinent. Where I found the *'Jhoota Sach'* characters bringing forth the Lahore I knew not.

Although, when I had first finished reading *'Jhoota Sach,'* my exhilaration had grown immensely. I was thrilled to find myself making a perfect sense--in the present day Lahore--of the Lahore in *'Jhoota Sach.'* I located the pre-1947 maps and photos: *Purani-Anarkali* police station, where Jaidev Puri is interned; *'Uche Gali'* where Ram Jivaya has a three-story house, *Vachowali* and *Bajaj Hatta;* the *'Mache Hatta ka Bazar,'* from where Tara takes a turn to *Bhola Pandhay ke Gali;* Amratdhara Building.

I was told, the *'Shahalmai Darwaza,'* and the network of lanes and the sites ensconced inside were intact. However in that rush of excitement of trooping to Yashpal's Lahore, a sudden insight dulled me: Yes! The *Shahalami Darwaza,* Anarkali, Dyal Singh College are there. But, what about the *Jai Devs,* the *Kanaks,* the *Taras?* Would they be there, the indigenous keepers of Lahore?

The voices of the forced exiles, who wanted to stay even in the Pakistani-Lahore, made me realize that though I have been born in Lahore, live in Lahore, have lived in Lahore, but I still have never really belonged here. As soon as I figured out my blind spots, I knew that the *Lahore* Yashpal immortalized in *'Jhoota Sach,'* that made Lahore-Lahore was forever lost when *Jai Dev Puri,* *Kanak,* and *Tara* opted for India.

Caught between my nostalgia and their displacement, I came face-to-face with how the 1947 partition vanquished Lahore and the *Lahoris*, and deprived Lahore of its organic-historic identity.

Yashpal's '*Jhoota Sach*' destabilizes my *Lahori* self. However where it drifts me from my own-home, it unleashes a craving for the Lahore where Jaidev shares the camaraderie of Asad walking back Tara to *Bholay Pandhay ke Gali*; where Zubeida shouts unabashedly, "Hindu-Muslim *Bhai-Bhai*"; where Kanak saunters up to *Purani-Anarkali Thana* to support the man she loves. Where '*Jhoota Sach*' fosters a feeling of fundamental misalignment between me and my Lahore, it stirs a kind of homesickness, a yearning for a new type of *reunion* with Lahore, in a way that the Lahore of Yashpal becomes my own, though I'd never belonged to it.

About the Speaker: Shabnam Syed Khan, Professor of Design at the National College of Arts (NCA), Lahore, was Visiting Professor of Education and Teaching-Fellow at Harvard University; and Visiting Professor of Design at Beaconhouse National University, Lahore. She is presently Member Board of Advanced Studies and Research (BASR) at the Pakistan Institute of Fashion and Design, Lahore. While working on two manuscripts 'Ideal-Type Muslim Womanhoods' and 'Education & Agency: Muslim Women and the Tensions of Traditional & Modern Expectations,' she is creating art installations on her new found passion, 'Yashpal's Lahore.'

14. Vasudha Dalmia

Title: Whose Truth: Cold War Journeys

Abstract: Dwight D. Eisenhower entered the White House in 1953. Soon thereafter he proclaimed: "Our aim in the Cold War is not conquering territory or subjugation by force. Our aim is more subtle, more pervasive, more complete. We are trying to get the world, by peaceful means, to believe the truth ..."

A convinced socialist since at least 1938, but never a card-carrying party member, widely read in literature of the West and East, Yashpal was to travel to Europe, primarily to the Soviet Union, all of six times, from 1952 to 1971. On his last trip, he also visited the United States. An astute observer of the social and political culture of his times, he documented his impressions of travel to both sides of the Iron Curtain in works published shortly thereafter. Whose truth did he record in his remarkable travelogues?

About the Speaker: Vasudha Dalmia is Professor Emerita of Hindi and Modern South Asian Studies at the University of California at Berkeley. Her monograph, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions: Bharatendu Harischandra and Nineteenth Century Banaras* (1997) studies the life and writings of a major Hindi writer of the nineteenth century as the focal point for an examination of the intricate links between politics, language, culture, religion and nationality. She has edited and co-edited several works. Her book on the Hindi novel *Fiction as History: The Novel and the City in Modern North India* appeared in 2017.

15. Virendra Yadav

Title: *Jhoota Sach*: Partition, Nationalism and the Women's question.

Abstract: About six decades after its publication a re-reading of *Jhootha Sach* excites us to unravel the nuances which are submerged in the mega-narrative of partition. Today when the discourse on nationalism and the women's question has acquired a burning perspective, *Jhootha Sach* helps us to understand that the partition was not only a political phenomenon but also social and cultural. Religious patriarchy and dominant social structure had their own share to contribute in it. Yashpal wove his fictional text with such a dexeterity that it is intriguing to delineate whether the fate of the novel's characters was due to political upheaval or whether the political tragedy of partition was a by-product of their personal tragedies. The strength and importance of *Jhootha Sach* lies in the fact that it provides a counter narrative to the known discourse of partition, nationalism and the women's question. As such it provokes us to lay bare the unexplored terrain of partition encompassing the futuristic challenges and inbuilt discourse imbued in the novel's text.

About the Speaker: Virendra Yadav is a renowned Hindi critic and an expert on Premchand's writing. He is much acclaimed for his books, *Novel and Power of Hegemony* and *In Favour of Progressivism*.