



Individual, Collectivity and Systemic Challenges

International Webinar Series

Organised by
Prajña Foundation, Kochi
Department of English, Sacred Heart College
Department of English, St Teresa's College



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Concept Note

As a representation of a diverse assembly of living species precariously surviving through an apocalypse, the figure of Noah's Ark gains renewed significance as a metaphor for the current state of the natural world. It could also be the quintessential image typifying modern multicultural society. The concept of the individual as an autonomous being was inaugurated by Descartes and expanded on by Rousseau and Voltaire who inspired the French Revolution. In the 19th century, Freud emphasized the significance of the individual while Marx underlined the primacy of social collectives called classes. The French Revolution was perhaps the first event that witnessed collective resistance to systemic hegemony. The success of this epoch-making event influenced the leaders of the Russian Revolution, to political consequences of a different kind. Anticolonial struggles across the world during the first half of the 20th century also witnessed spontaneous surges of collective, political resistance.

The autonomy of the individual has been challenged by systems operating at societal, national and global levels. Systems embedded in society, nation and the world differentiate individuals based on constructs like race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, nationality, and religion. All

dominant systems operate through social and national hegemonic structures reinforced by corporate hegemony, throwing up the confinement of individuals into identity groups. The concept of the individual has changed over the centuries from an autonomous being to a system of interests. The individual self is being synthesized by the mirage of public opinions manufactured by the social media. Social collectives organized in terms of skills and endowments have often confronted common enemies/disasters and discriminations based on race, class, gender. The interests of the dominant groups carry the decision making processes of society, leading to diverse kinds of marginalization and subordination.

Institutions and systems regulate individuals. The modern nation state is a tyrannical system of systems. Nations have metamorphosed into surveillance states that keep individuals and groups under a ubiquitous lens. Even in democracies, overbearing Executives relegate the Parliament and the Judiciary to subservience. Corporate giants enslave individuals, groups and nations. Individuals and groups lose their agency for resistance, and face insurmountable systemic challenges from global corporates and systemic hegemony.





Prajñā Foundation



Prajñā Foundation was conceived by the research students and friends of Prof. N. Prasantha Kumar to explore the domains of cultural and literary theories and to carry out research of the finest quality, as exemplified by his contribution to teaching and research. The foundation will work towards nurturing a community of committed teachers, researchers and students interested in engaging with cultural and literary theories, and directing this effort to resolving the problems of human life. Prajñā will cultivate scholarly conversation by publishing research, launching an international journal, and by conducting Annual Endowment Lectures by internationally reputed scholars in cultural and literary theories. Endowments/Awards will be instituted in honour of Prof. N Prasantha Kumar. An Academic Centre with a library and archive will be established to facilitate study and research in literature, theory, translation, films and other cultural productions. Prajñā will offer consultancy, resources, and experts for translation, curriculum design, seminars, workshops, orientation programmes, teaching, and other academic activities.





Department of English, Sacred Heart College, Kochi

The Department of English, Sacred Heart College, Kochi was established in 1944. It is one among the prestigious centres of literary and cultural studies in the state, attracting meritorious students from all over Kerala. The department offers an innovative undergraduate programme, B.A. English (Copy Editor), being a vocational degree programme for students who aspire toward a career in publishing and journalism. The Department's PG programme, M.A. English Language and Literature stands apart from similar programmes by offering a basket of research oriented elective papers. The Department takes pride in diligently promoting research and exploration in frontier areas through annual events such as Dan Memorial National Seminar and the Subhi Tresa Sebastian Memorial National Seminar. The academic calendar of the Department includes several national level seminars and workshops each year. The department edits the Lakeview International Journal of Literature and Arts (online). The Department became a Centre for Research in 2019 and hosts Ph. D scholars under Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam.









Department of English, St. Teresa's College, Kochi

The English Department has been one of the prominent departments of the St. Teresa's College since its inception as an independent department in 1957, beginning with an Undergraduate programme in English Language and Literature. Innovation has always been the hallmark of the Department and it now hosts Postgraduate, M Phil and PhD programmes in an ideal matrix for young scholars. In addition to curricular programmes, extension and literary activities are regularly conducted by the Department such as internships, gender sensitization programmes, Alumni Lecture Series, faculty exchange programmes, visits to libraries of national repute, publication of manuscript magazines, the publication of an international peer reviewed journal, the observance of student-author day, a Shakespeare Theatre Club and “Panache”, a literary fest. Being a Research Centre, the Department engages in research work, and conducts workshops, conferences and seminars at regular intervals throughout the academic year. Major and Minor projects and frequent visits of literary luminaries and experts ensure the students' engagement in academics.





Programme Schedule

Date & Time	Title	Resource Person	Hosted by
 5.30 PM (IST)	Individual, Collectivity and Systemic Challenges	Prof. David Livingstone Smith Professor, Dept. of Philosophy, University of New England, USA	Department of English, Sacred Heart College, Kochi
 10 AM (IST)	The Sovereign and the Post human	Prof. R Radhakrishnan Chancellor's Professor of Humanities and Distinguished Professor of English and Comparative Literature, UC, Irvine, USA	Department of English, Sacred Heart College, Kochi
 6 PM (IST)	Nations within Nation: The Geopolitics of Identity	Prof. Lewis R Gordon Professor and Head, Dept of Philosophy, University of Connecticut, USA	Department of English, Sacred Heart College, Kochi
 7 PM (IST)	Digital Imperialism and Cyber Sovereignty	Dr. Michael Kwet Visiting Fellow, Yale Information Society Project, Yale University, USA	Department of English, St Teresa's College, Kochi





Speakers



Prof. David Livingstone Smith



Prof. R Radhakrishnan



Prof. Lewis R Gordon



Dr. Michael Kwet

*Free Registration
E-Certificates will be issued to the participants.*

Patron

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Former Professor and Head of
the Department of English,
SSUS, Kalady

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