

Sub: Extension of last date of submission of abstracts from 5th March 2020 to 8th March 2020

Please note that the last date of submission of abstracts for RUSA 2.0 sponsored National Level Conference “Narratives of Faith: Devotional Songs and Poetry of Multicultural Societies of Bengal” to be held on 19-20 March, 2020, organized by Department of English, Jadavpur University has been **extended from 5th March 2020 to 8th March 2020**.

Dr. Rafat Ali Prof. Sonia Sahoo
Conference Coordinators

CALL FOR PAPERS

Narratives of Faith: Devotional Songs and Poetry of Multicultural Societies of Bengal

19-20 March, 2020

Organized under Rusa 2.0

Department of English, Jadavpur University

In the age of post-liberalism, some of the inevitable consequences of what the geographer Neil Smith has called ‘uneven development’ are the various identity politics emerging out of the discontent of the ethnic and linguistically marginalized communities and the even more threatening waves of ‘religious resurgence’ and ‘religious fundamentalisms’ that desecrates the basic bonds of human life and its survival. However, what has stood resilient in the face of decades of abrasive change has been the rich heritage of a pluralist and harmonious existence that has fostered its unique variety of cosmopolitanism in multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and multi-faith societies. In Bengal it is this spirit and its spirituality, immersed in the ethics, beliefs, traditions and above all faiths of the various religious societies, which has found its poetic expressions in the devotional – in various narrative forms – that now, more than ever, needs preservation through research, discussion and dissemination.

The northern regions of Bengal, especially those comprising the hills and foothills of the Eastern Himalayan region is already known as a biodiversity hotspot and has attracted a great deal of research in that capacity. The wide range of ecosystem services that the biodiversity of the region provides, its gradual erosion and its sustenance has been the cause of major concern. What this conference focuses on are the cultural aspects of this diversity: comprising of multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and multi-faith societies – focusing mainly on the non-material benefits that the inhabitants obtain from their habitat that enriches them spiritually with a common human bond that withstands any form of erosion. Their liminal location between the foothills of the Himalayan region in the plains of Bengal, between the pristine natural environment and regions which have witnessed rapid waves of urban development and modernization, subjects them to not only subtle forms of colonization by hegemonic groups but also exploitation in the hands of insurrectionary movements posing as agents of emancipation and empowerment.

This sociocultural phenomenon is not only typical to the northern regions but also experienced in various other urban and semi-urban areas of Bengal and its adjoining areas which also have a rich spiritual tradition. Much has been written about folk traditions but not much on the diverse millennial faith narratives voicing the aspirations of the downtrodden and largely unrepresented segments within established religious orders that have emerged and flourished in more recent times. The spiritual dimension which forms the basis of the political assertion of these groups, and its complex interplay with cultural-religious practices in the larger context of changing economy and its discontents, can become a fascinating area of research which can be undertaken through an exploration of its narratives and becomes the key theme of this conference. This innovative approach, we believe will be a pioneering effort and will go a long way in not only preserving but fostering interfaith dialogue and religious harmony.

The conference thus invites papers from scholars of both the humanities and social sciences to explore the forms and aspects of what constitutes devotional sensibility and faith, belief, spirituality and the cultures and customs emerging out of these relationships and the ways in which they shape the narratives of the faithful across a wide spectrum of religious groups of Bengal and the Eastern Himalayan Region.

We invite papers that address any of the following (or related) sub themes of the conference:

- Millenarian Revivalist Movements
- New Religious Movements

- Religion and the Politics of Identity
- Self-Religions
- New Age Spirituality
- Post-secularism
- Religious Fundamentalisms
- Religious Pluralisms
- Secularism and Tolerance
- Traditional Healing Systems and Beliefs
- Sacred Spaces
- Migration and Religion

Please send in your abstracts (not exceeding 250 words) with a short bio-note (within 50 words) to: faithconference2020@gmail.com by 8th March, 2020. Selected abstracts will be notified by 9th March, 2020.