



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON  
“TRIBES IN TRANSITION-III:  
INDIGENOUS CULTURES IN  
THE DIGITAL ERA”

21-22 September 2021

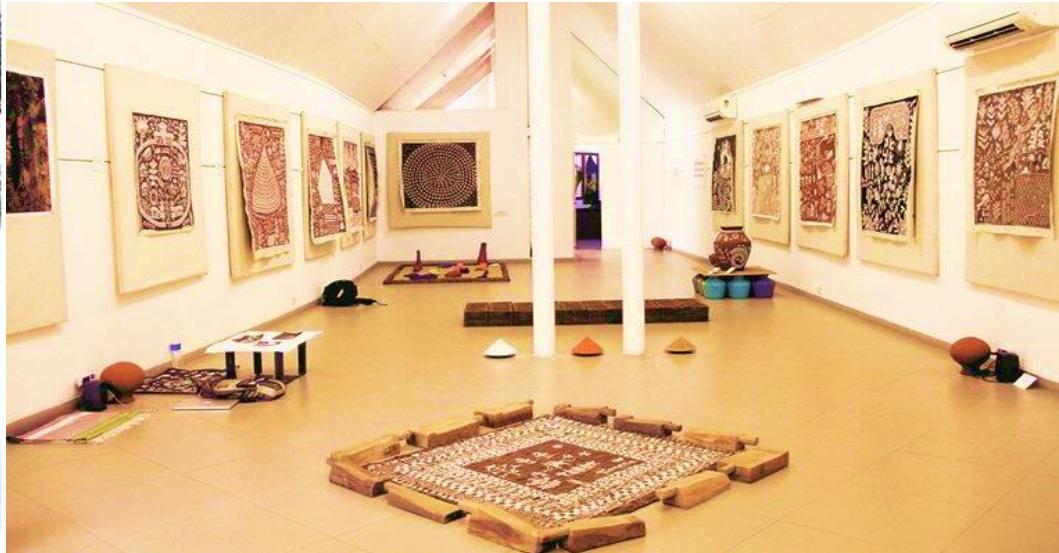
Department of  
English



Jamia Millia Islamia,  
New Delhi



100 years  
Centenary  
Celebrations



## Concept Note

The word “tribe” conjures up in most people’s minds images of primitive societies – societies which represent an earlier stage in the evolution of the human race and often disappear with the advent of civilization. Then there are some modern sociologists like Desmond Morris and Peter Marsh who tell us that “tribalism” persists in modern societies, that man is actually “a tribal animal” (*Tribes*, 6). However, since the colonial period, “tribe” has not been used as an innocuous sociological term but has acquired distinct ideological connotations. Beginning as part of the colonial vocabulary of administration, it later served to perpetuate certain stereotypical images of such tribal communities. Many creative representations of them in literature, art and audio-visual media have also reflected similar concepts, though the motivations behind them might have been different.

In the latter part of the twentieth century, all over the world the concept of tribe came in for a lot of critical attention. While some scholars rejected the term “tribe” because of the difficulty involved in defining it precisely, others, especially African scholars, objected to the negative connotations it acquired in the colonial context. Central to this debate was the western assumption of a clear dichotomy between the ‘primitive’ and the ‘civilized’ which was inherent in colonial anthropology. A similar dichotomy was also present in Indian anthropology during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but a parallel stream is found to have emerged with the growth of the nationalist discourse on minority communities. The nationalist discourse refuted the colonial view of India as a “mélange of communities” by emphasizing the assimilative nature of these minority communities. Another divergent stream is found in Verrier Elwin’s works on the Central Indian tribes, which popularized the romantic view and provoked hostility from the nationalist camp by emphasizing the *essential difference* between tribal culture and mainstream Indian culture – though he later attempted an integration between the two. Also during these years, a similar romanticizing trend was seen in many visual representations of the tribal, particularly in the photographs of Sunil Janah and the paintings of Jamini Roy. This was followed much later by the cinematic representation of Satyajit Ray.

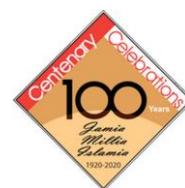
In many of these literary and visual texts in India, the tribal characters were viewed as peripheral beings that lived in a ‘primitive’ world which became an idealized site for an alternative culture. This alternative culture, in each case, was juxtaposed with what was seen as mainstream culture and, consequently, these texts often reflected the author’s ideological stance in relation to the value-system of the mainstream culture. Such representations of the tribal in literature and the visual arts often faced the danger of degenerating into abstractions. While playing the role of the ontological Other, the ‘primitive’ tribal tended to get separated from his immediate socio-economic and political context. This was accentuated by the fact that the novel/film/painting/photograph in which the tribal featured prominently, was not meant for his consumption; it was invariably read/viewed by people who belonged to a different social setting and could not relate to the context in which it was originally produced.

In their essay, “Towards a Theory of Minority Discourse”, Abdul R. Jan Mohamed and David Lloyd have pointed out the damage inflicted on minority (and marginal) communities by the hegemonic discourse through its “interested celebration of differences”. They write:

The pathos of hegemony is frequently marked by its interested celebration of differences, but only of differences in the anesthetized form of recreation. Detached from the site of their production, minority cultures become palatable...Cultural practices are an intrinsic element of the economic and political struggles of Third World and minority peoples... For many minorities, culture is not a mere superstructure; all too often, in an ironic twist of a Sartrean phenomenology, the physical survival of minority groups depends on the recognition of its culture as viable. (The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse, 5-6)

It is in this context that the International Conference on “Indigenous Cultures in the Digital Era” will deal with issues relating to tribal identity and representation. It will begin by looking at the impact of print and digital media in the preservation of oral cultures, and then examine the scope and direction of new courses such as Folklore Studies and Writings from the Margins being offered by some universities; it will examine the use of contemporary media forms including print media and audio-visual media (film, radio and TV shows, and voice-based platforms), and internet-based social media for story-telling, discussion and cultural performance; finally, it will attempt to trace the aesthetics of indigenous/ tribal cultures both as reflected in the dominant hegemonic discourse as well as in the alternative discourses emanating from various media sources and various ideological positions.

Dr. Ivy Imogene Hansdak  
Convener



# PROGRAMME Overview

## Day 1

Keynote Speech: Padmashree Prof. Anvita

Abbi

Formerly Professor of Linguistics, Jawaharlal  
Nehru University, New Delhi

& Author of Voices from the Lost Horizon:  
Stories and Songs of the Great Andamanese

Speakers:

Dr. Peter Birkelund Andersen,  
Faculty member, University of Copenhagen,  
Denmark

Prof. Indranil Acharya,  
Faculty member, Vidyasagar University,  
West Bengal

## Day 2

Speakers:

Ms. Mridula Rashmi Kindo

Faculty member, IGNOU, New Delhi

Mr. Sunder Manoj Hembrom

Adivasi writer & translator

Mr. A.K. Pankaj

writer & editor, Jharkhandi Bhasha Sahitya Sanskriti  
Akhra

Dr. Gomati Bodra Hembrom

Faculty member, JMI, New Delhi

Prof. Nikhila H

Faculty member, EFL University, Hyderabad

Prof. Markus Schleiter

Faculty member, University of Münster, Germany

Valedictory Speech: Prof. Esther Syiem, North East Hill  
University, Shillong, Meghalaya



## PROGRAMME SCHEDULE - DAY ONE (21-09-2021)

SESSION ONE: Inaugural Session: 11.00 - 12.30 AM IST

Welcome Speech by the Head, Dept of English, Prof. Simi Malhotra, JMI

Introduction to the Theme by Dr. Ivy Imogene Hansdak, Convener of the Conference,  
Dept of English, JMI

Presidential Address: Prof. M. Asaduddin, Dean, Faculty of Humanities & Languages, JMI

Keynote Speech: Padmashree Prof. Anvita Abbi

Formerly Professor of Linguistics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

& Author of Voices from the Lost Horizon: Stories and Songs of the Great Andamanese

SESSION TWO: 3.00 – 4.30 PM IST

THEME: “SCOPE OF FOLKLORE STUDIES IN THE DIGITAL ERA”

Chair: Prof. Anand Mahanand (faculty member, EFL University, Hyderabad)

Speakers: Dr. Peter Birkelund Andersen (faculty member, University of Copenhagen,  
Denmark) & Prof. Indranil Acharya (faculty member, Vidyasagar University, WB)

## PROGRAMME SCHEDULE - DAY TWO (22-09-2021)

### SESSION THREE: 11.00 – 12.30 AM IST

Panel Discussion (Bilingual)

THEME: “INDIGENOUS IDENTITY and ITS SURVIVAL IN THE DIGITAL ERA”

Chair: Ms. Vandna Tete (Adivasi poet and cultural activist)

Speakers: Ms. Mridula Rashmi Kindo (faculty member, IGNOU, New Delhi), Mr. Sunder Manoj Hembrom (Adivasi writer & translator) & Mr. A.K. Pankaj (writer & editor, *Jharkhandi Bhasha Sahitya Sanskriti Akhra*)

### SESSION FOUR: 3.00 – 4.45 PM IST

THEME: “PORTRAYAL OF THE INDIGENOUS/ TRIBAL IN INDIAN CINEMA & MASS MEDIA”

Chair: Prof. V.B. Tharakeshwar (faculty member, EFL University, Hyderabad)

Speakers: Dr. Gomati Bodra Hembrom (faculty member, JMI, New Delhi), Prof. Nikhila H (faculty member, EFL University, Hyderabad) & Prof. Markus Schleiter (faculty member, University of Münster, Germany)

### SESSION FIVE: Valedictory Session: 5.00 – 6.00 PM IST

Valedictory Speech: Prof. Esther Syiem, North East Hill University, Shillong, Meghalaya.

Vote of Thanks

Hi there,

You are invited to a Zoom meeting.  
When: Sep 21-22, 2021 11:00 AM India

Register in advance for this meeting:

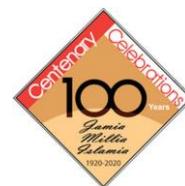
<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZApfu2oqT0pGdaNKI189B-L5vzK5eEKDCCK>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

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