

National Conference on "Folklore as Discourse"

We are inviting faculty, scholars, and students to participate in the conference to address the various issues of folklore. The formal description of sets of words beyond the level of the sentence is known by the word 'discourse' in modern linguistics. Although it has been a subject of traditional rhetoric also it is difficult to give a single definition of discourse analysis as a research method. Indeed, numerous "types" of analyses ranging from Derrida's deconstruction to Foucault's genealogy are grouped under the rubric of 'discourse analysis'. However the contribution of the post-modern discourse analysis is the application of critical thought to social situations and the unveiling of hidden politics within the socially dominant as well as all other discourses. Given such contribution, discourse analysis is meant to provide a higher awareness of the hidden motivations in others and ourselves by making us ask ontological and epistemological questions.

With this background on discourse analysis when folklore (both the material and the discipline) is seen as a discourse it immediately brings to focus the general frame of understanding of the material on the one hand and the intellectual foundations of the discipline on the other. By focusing on folklore as discourse the conference seeks to address the following questions:

- What is the status of folklore as discourse in the changing world?
- What are all the epistemological breaks that have occurred in India in understanding the discourses of folklore?
- How exactly the relationship between orality and literacy gets defined through the uses of folklore discourses?
- How do the underlying concepts of tradition, ethnicity, authenticity, individuality, creativity and folk determine the course of folklore discourse?
- How do genre specific qualities, say the qualities of verbal arts contribute to the understanding of folklore as discourse?
- What are the processes by which folklore becomes the enveloping phenomena of other forms, say, Indian cinema?
- How does the understanding of performances, legends, spaces and specific societal and historical phenomena as discourses contribute towards the development of general theory of Indian culture?

While the above list exemplifies the directions the conference can help to define, it no way constrains the emergence of new thinking in the discipline.

Hopefully this conference will become a pace setter in defining or changing the course of the discipline of folklore.

In addition to the stated objectives the conference, the gathering of the scholars for three days would greatly facilitate to do the preliminary work towards the preparation of a directory of Indian folklore scholars. This may be treated as one of the supplementary goals of the conference.

The National Folklore Support Centre will stand committed to the publication of the papers presented in the conference in collaboration with the participating institutions.