

**MAHARAJA AGRASEN COLLEGE**  
University of Delhi



**Indian Popular Fiction: Redefining the Canon**

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



Two-day Interdisciplinary National Conference  
**January 16 & 17, 2019 (Wednesday & Thursday)**

### Call for Papers

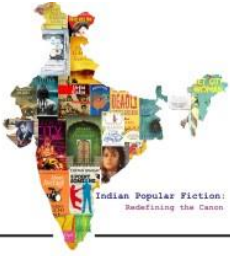
Flourishing in non-academic registers and trashed as low brow literature unworthy of literary attention and critical gaze, Indian Popular Commercial Fiction seemingly should suffer from a huge identity crisis. Instead, it stands tall amidst market forces, laughing its way to the bank. Dismissive of the criticism, unfettered by pretentious launches and awards; and indifferent to meritorious reviews that matter to literary pundits, it dominates the publishing industry by vetting the voracious appetite of its readership constituencies albeit in cheap pulp on which it is printed.

Both domains - Canonised Literary Writing and Popular Commercial Fiction - though not mutually exclusive have been categorised and segregated by the academia. The foster child, Popular Commercial Fiction is governed by market forces wherein the publisher/editor is supreme. Here, as Suman Gupta demarcates, "...publishing professionals increasingly partake of a sort of greater authorship: they seem to speak as authors of a commercial field of literary production and reception in which the immediate authors - the functional writers of commercial fiction - contribute in a subsidiary way". The erstwhile predominance of localised formulaic fiction the likes of Om Prakash Sharma, Ved Prakash Kamboj, Surender Mohan Pathak, Raj Bharti, Anil Mohan etc found prolifically at Wheeler's stands at Railway Stations, Book shops at Bus Stops, Traffic-Light vendors, Pavement Bazaars and the like, picked for the instant gratification they offered, paved way for a more 'respectable' glocal platform. Reprinted and translated in several languages, the assembly line production though mass produced and consumed was given a short shrift by academics and literary critics. Such popular writings were as Pathak comments "harlots who are looked down upon by the high-nosed English-speaking crowd". Fortunately, this is no longer the case.

The immense popularity of Indian Commercial Fiction both as literary enterprise and as commercial venture has attracted global publishers: Penguin, Harper Collins, Hachette, Random House etc., vindicating both the merit of the author and the taste of the readers. The incognito writer now has a face and more significantly, a voice. Sisir Kumar Das, Suman Gupta, Buddhadev Bose, Tabish Khair amongst several others are the eloquent participants in the debate that blurs the hiatus between literary merit and commercial success. The former is often associated with the Salman Rushdie, Amitava Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Arundhati Roy bandwagon and the latter with the Chetan Bhagat, Shobha De, Anurag Mathur, Ashwin Sanghi, Ravinder Singh, Durjoy Dutta brigade. Today, the latter are not just names churning pulp at the altar of commerce. They are names to reckon with and are dismantling categories and rebuilding hierarchies. What was dismissed earlier as low brow simply because it was popular can no longer be wished away and the fact that the reading public is just a mindless mass sans aesthetics holds no water in contemporary context. Though not credited as literary crusaders, they are localised, rooted in India and as Claudia Kramatschek succinctly puts it, "...they write about this sense of connection in new and innovative – and at times surprising - ways. A marked turn towards localism is observable, meaning toward the micro cosmos of one's lived world..."

---

Department of English, Maharaja Agrasen College  
(University of Delhi)  
Vasundhara Enclave, Delhi-110096  
macengdept@gmail.com Website: www.mac.du.ac.in



# MAHARAJA AGRASEN COLLEGE

## University of Delhi



**Indian Popular Fiction: Redefining the Canon**

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

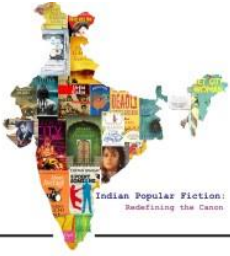


Indian Popular Commercial Fiction has spawned successful genres and formulas. In addition to the popular habitat occupied largely by Detective and Science fiction, today, Mythological Series, Chick Lit, Campus Novels and Fantasy Fiction have invaded book shelves and must-read lists not just in the vernacular and regional spaces but also in Indian English. Erotic Fiction of course continues to remain a safe venture, be it in Tamil Nadu, Kerala or Maharashtra. Furthermore, the emergence of social media and new web spaces such as blogs, Tumblr etc., along with self-publishing facilities, book reading mobile apps and gadgets, democratisation and globalisation of writership and readership is near complete.

The key question also arises, what is the gratifying impulse behind this commercial success? Why is the Indian youth, the middle classes and even the alleged elite in academic circles fascinated with this so-called sub/low/cheap/para literature? Todorov while writing on whodunit mysteries said that the fact that popular literature is being referred to as some kind of literature is of course, a way of giving it the currency denied to it. So, in the last few decades, literary criticism has trained its lens on this cultural production with serious theoretical rigour and systematic textual and contextual engagement to examine the osmotic divides, expressive imperatives, urban phenomenon and libidinous urges enshrined in it. This conference seeks to open the debate surrounding the potent, fertile and pulsating site visited by many: Indian Popular Fiction. Drawing on both the key aspects: literary and the commercial, the Conference attempts to explore the legitimacy, literariness and popularity of this terrain. There is no denying that a systematic critical engagement needs to be carried forward: both synchronically and diachronically, replicating and innovating the parameters/tools used to critique serious and meaningful literature. This is not just about giving the devil its due but perhaps acknowledging the vitality and tenacity of a huge terrain in the literary domain that academia can no longer ignore.

The conference will focus on all aspects of Indian Popular Fiction: The forms, authorship, reader base, and the publishing industry which govern most of what is written in postmodern times as well as the alternative routes offered by technology. We welcome critical perspectives, on the above theme or on one of the following tracks which are in no particular order:

1. Literary Popular and Commercially Popular
2. Historicising Popular Fiction in the Indian sub-continent
3. Who is writing for whom: The key connections between authorship and readership
4. The local and the glocal
5. Publishers as key voices
6. Giving the Devil its Due
7. The 'Indian' in Popular Commercial Fiction
8. Moving Beyond: Social Media and the Web space
9. Voices that Matter: Regional Languages and Spaces
10. Genres and Formulas



# MAHARAJA AGRASEN COLLEGE

## University of Delhi



Indian Popular Fiction: Redefining the Canon

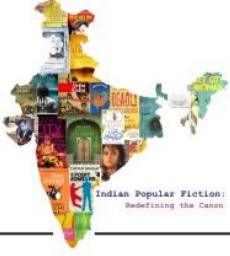
IN ASSOCIATION WITH



- a. Mythological Fiction
- b. History and Pulp
- c. Detective Fiction
- d. Science Fiction
- e. The Fantasy Novel
- f. Thrillers and Suspense
- g. Chick Lit
- h. Romance
- i. Erotic Fiction
- j. Graphic Novel
- k. Serialised Magazine Fiction
- l. Campus Novels
- m. Flash Fiction
- n. Web Fiction

### Details of Abstract submission

- ❖ Please email a 300-word abstract with the requisite information (paper title, name, designation, affiliation, contact information: Address, email ID & phone number along with a 75-word bio-note to [macengdept@gmail.com](mailto:macengdept@gmail.com) latest by **December 15, 2018**. Early submissions are welcome.
- ❖ The subject line of your email should read “Abstract IPF 2019: (YOUR NAME)”
- ❖ All abstracts will be peer reviewed before acceptance.
- ❖ In your proposal, please outline your presentation plan and any audio-visual and space needs. We also seek proposals for panels and workshops that address the central theme of the conference.
- ❖ Accepted abstracts will require a full draft paper, double-spaced, in not less than 3000 words and not exceeding 4000 words referenced according to the 7<sup>th</sup> edition of APA Stylesheet to be submitted electronically in MS-Word by **December 31, 2018**.
- ❖ Select papers presented at the conference will be published as part of a digital or paperback book.
- ❖ Presentation time for the delegates will be of 15–20 minutes.
- ❖ **The Best Paper in the Conference shall be awarded Rs 5000/- by Fortell.** The papers will be judged by a special jury.
- ❖ Delegates are required to pay registration fees of **Rs 1000 (Rupees One thousand only)**, which will entitle them to the conference kit and meals.
- ❖ **Mode of payment** will be via bank transfer latest by **December 31, 2012**



# MAHARAJA AGRASEN COLLEGE

## University of Delhi



Indian Popular Fiction: Redefining the Canon

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



Bank Details for collection of Registration Fees are as given below:

Name of the Account : Principal, Maharaja Agrasen College Student Society A/c  
Bank Account Number : 481606239  
IFSC Code : IDIB000M102 (0 stands for Zero)  
Bank Name : Indian Bank  
Branch : Mayur Vihar

### Key Dates

Last date for submission of abstract	December 15, 2018 (Saturday)
Intimation of acceptance	December 20, 2018 (Thursday)
Last date of Submission of Registration Fee	December 31, 2018 (Monday)
Last date of submission of Full Paper	December 31, 2018 (Monday)
Dates of the Conference	January 16 & 17, 2019 (Wednesday & Thursday)

### Conference Committee:

Patron: Dr Sunil Sondhi  
Convenor: Gitanjali Chawla  
Co Convenor: Prem Kumari Srivastava  
Treasurer: Mona Sinha  
Members: Sangeeta Mittal, Anupama K Jaidev, Vinod Verma, Charu Arya, Shilpa Gupta, Subodh K Upadhyay, Debosmita Paul, Indrani Dasgupta, Guntasha Tulsi, Shashi Tigga, Aditya Premdeep