



SWAMI VIVEKANANDA UNIVERSITY

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**Completion Report of Two-Day International Conference on
Interstices, Relationality and Sense-making: Navigating Peace, Ethics and AI in the 21st
Century**



Organised by: Department of English, Swami Vivekananda University

Mode: Online

Conference Dates: 19–20 January, 2026

Conference Time: 10:00 AM to 06:00 PM

Venue: Swami Vivekananda University, Barrackpore, West Bengal

Mission

The mission of the two-day international conference "Interstices, Relationality and Sense-Making: Navigating Peace, Ethics and AI in the 21st Century" was to create a sustained and meaningful platform for interdisciplinary scholarly dialogue on the ethical, philosophical, and socio-political implications of artificial intelligence in contemporary society. Organised by the Centre for Peace and Ethics in the Age of AI under the aegis of Swami Vivekananda University, the conference sought to bring together academics, researchers, and practitioners from diverse disciplinary backgrounds to deliberate on the intersections between emerging AI technologies, human relationality, and the imperatives of peace and ethical responsibility. By situating technological discourse within broader humanistic, cultural, and philosophical frameworks, the conference aimed to challenge purely technocentric narratives and foreground the enduring importance of critical thinking, ethical governance, and interdisciplinary collaboration in shaping responsible and humane technological futures for the twenty-first century.

Vision

The vision of the Centre for Peace and Ethics in the Age of AI is to create an interdisciplinary academic space that brings together scholars, academicians, artistes, journalists, activists, and experts to reflect on the profound issues related to Peace and Ethics in the developing world. The Centre aims to delve into the socio-cultural, literary, and philosophical dimensions of peace and ethics in the age of artificial intelligence, offering insights into how these principles can guide humanity towards a more harmonious and ethically grounded future. Through certificate programs, lecture series, symposia, and international conferences, the Centre fosters critical and reflective discourse on the intersections between technology, culture, and human values.

Concept Note:

“One is never afraid of the unknown; one is afraid of the known coming to an end.”- *J. Krishnamurti*

“No computer has ever been designed that is ever aware of what it’s doing; but most of the time, we aren't either.” - *Marvin Minsky*

The unprecedented rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and networked digital ecologies in the twenty-first century has initiated a profound re-configuration of the ethical and epistemic

foundations of human existence. As algorithmic systems increasingly mediate cognition, emotion, and decision-making, the very categories through which peace and ethics have historically been understood i.e. via agency, intentionality, justice, and moral responsibility—are undergoing radical conceptual revisions. The conference seeks to inhabit and inquire into the interstices of technological, philosophical, and cultural thought, where relationality and sense-making become critical sites for rearticulating the meaning of peace in a computational age. Engaging with Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), Eastern and Western philosophical traditions, the philosophy of mind, and the politics of AI, the conference foregrounds a transdisciplinary dialogue that situates peace and ethics not as static ideals but as dynamic, evolving processes of negotiation between human and non-human entities. From the Advaita Vedantic conception of the unity of consciousness and the Buddhist emphasis on dependent origination to the cognitive-phenomenological and neuropsychological explorations of mind; the world's philosophical inheritances offer plural yet convergent accounts of relational being. In light of AI's capacity to simulate cognition and to reorganize social and affective infrastructures, these ontological and epistemological frameworks acquire renewed significance. The ethical project today demands more than regulatory or instrumental responses. It requires a rethinking of what it means to know, to act, and to coexist in assemblages of distributed intelligence. Ancient Indian philosophy's understanding of dharma as situated in ethical action and its non-dual ontology of the self as intersubjective resonance find unexpected affinities with contemporary posthuman and process philosophies that destabilize anthropocentrism and propose relational models of agency.

Bringing these discourses into conversation allows us to envision a peace ethic that transcends juridical or utilitarian paradigms, manifesting an ethic attuned to interdependence, cognitive diversity, and ecological awareness. In an era where information architectures shape perception and algorithmic governance redefine the boundaries of freedom and accountability, the need for a plural, integrative ethical imagination is urgent. The conference aims to bring together philosophers, mediators, social scientists and workers, thinkers and scholars of Philosophy, Psychology, Philosophy of Mind and Technology, Literature, Computer Science, Theology and Theosophy, Social Sciences, Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning, Linguistics and Humanities in general, in order to address collective notions of care, conduct and co-existence. By bridging IKS with contemporary debates in the philosophy of technology and mind, we aim to reorient peace studies toward an epistemology of relational sense-making— where knowledge is both embodied and entangled, where ethics arises from the ongoing negotiation of difference.

The Centre for Peace and Ethics in the age of AI thus envisions the conference as a site for cultivating a new language of peace, one that is capable of responding to the ontological fluidity, political asymmetries, and ethical ambiguities of the digital condition. Through this conversation between the ancient and the emergent, between metaphysics and machine learning; the conference aspires to chart un- and under-explored territories toward a more reflective, humane and relationally just future.

Themes and Sub-themes (but not limited to):

- Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) in the contemporary age
- Eastern Philosophies promoting Ethical Conduct
- Shanti and Dharma Studies
- Theosophy and Peace Studies
- Philosophy of Mind and AI
- Philosophy of Information and Technology
- Peace and Contemporary Geopolitics
- Digital and Data Ethics
- Algorithmic Subjectivization and Subversion
- AI and Humanities
- Posthumanist and Transhumanist Inquiries on Peace and Ethics
- AI Governance and Policy Design
- Literary Composition, Analysis and Reception with AI
- SciFi Literature and Depictions of AI and Androids
- Speculative Realism and AI
- Creation and Maintenance of Ethical AI Frameworks
- Chalmers' Technophilosophy and the Hard Problem of Consciousness
- Neurodivergence and Ethics

Conference Speaker Details:

Dr. Nick Pozek



Dr. Nick Pozek is an educator, mediator, and strategist with extensive experience leading ambitious projects and cross-disciplinary teams. In his role as Assistant Director of the Parker School of Foreign & Comparative Law at Columbia University, Nick conceptualizes and organizes conferences, symposia, lecture series, research projects, and events about geopolitics, international law, and globalization. He also holds a joint appointment in the Hong Yen Chang Center on Chinese Legal Studies and the Center for Japanese Legal Studies. Nick is president-elect for the greater New York chapter of the Association for Conflict Resolution (ACR-GNY), a member of the Committee for Intellectual Property of the College Art Association, and vice chair of the Board of Trustees of Global Community Charter School—an International Baccalaureate school in New York’s Harlem neighbourhood. Nick received his doctorate in educational leadership from Wilkes University after earning his BFA and MAM degrees from Carnegie Mellon University. In addition to these responsibilities, Nick Pozek has contributed scholarly and professional writings on conflict resolution, higher education leadership, cultural policy, and the institutional dimensions of globalization. His publications—appearing in academic journals, edited volumes, and professional forums—often foreground mediation practices, transnational legal education, and the role of cultural institutions in shaping public ethics. He has also served as a speaker and facilitator at international conferences and workshops on negotiation, governance, and educational strategy. At Columbia University, his leadership extends to mentoring early-career scholars and

coordinating collaborative research initiatives across regional and disciplinary boundaries. Collectively, these roles position Pozek as a key interlocutor between academia, civil society, and global policy-oriented conversations.

Prof. Pramod K. Nayar



Pramod K. Nayar is a prominent Indian literary critic, cultural theorist, and academic known for his interdisciplinary work in postcolonial studies, environmental humanities, and cultural studies. He serves as Senior Professor in the Department of English at the University of Hyderabad and has also been associated as Distinguished Professor at the Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad. Over the years, he has emerged as one of the most influential scholars in contemporary literary and cultural theory in India. Prof. Nayar's research interests include postcolonial literature, ecocriticism, human rights narratives, vulnerability studies, digital culture, and posthumanism. His scholarship frequently explores themes of ecological crisis, marginality, trauma, and the representation of vulnerable lives in literature and culture. He holds the UNESCO Chair in Vulnerability Studies at the University of Hyderabad, reflecting his pioneering contributions to this emerging field. A prolific author and editor, he has published numerous influential books such as *Postcolonialism: A Guide for the Perplexed*, *The Human Rights Graphic Novel*, *Ecoprecarity: Vulnerable Lives in Literature and Culture*, and *Bhopal's Ecological Gothic*. His essays have appeared in several leading international journals in literary and cultural studies. Prof. Nayar has received several prestigious recognitions, including the Visitor's Award for Best Research in Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences presented by the President of India. Widely cited internationally, he is regarded as one of the leading voices in contemporary humanities research. Nayar's academic contributions are

especially notable for their theoretical rigor and ethical engagement. His major monographs demonstrate both thematic range and sustained critical depth. *Postcolonial Literature: An Introduction* (Pearson Longman, 2008; revised editions later) has become a widely prescribed foundational text, mapping key debates, writers, and theoretical frameworks in postcolonial studies. *Frantz Fanon* (Routledge, 2013), part of the Routledge Critical Thinkers series, offers a lucid yet rigorous engagement with Fanon's political philosophy, psychology, and anti-colonial thought. In *Human Rights and Literature* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), Nayar develops his influential argument on "postcolonial human rights," examining how literary and cultural texts narrate suffering, testimony, and ethical responsibility. *Brand India* (Routledge, 2011) critiques the cultural politics of neoliberal nationalism and global consumerism, while *The Culture of Perversion* (Routledge, 2010) explores visual culture, deviance, and power. His engagement with environmental humanities is evident in *Ecocriticism* (Routledge, 2010) and *Bhopal's Ecologies* (Routledge India, 2017), which foreground ecological disaster, slow violence, and environmental justice. Collectively, these works address colonial violence, nationalism, visual culture, environmental catastrophe, and the politics of representation. His concept of "postcolonial human rights" is widely cited for foregrounding how literary and cultural texts narrate trauma, vulnerability, and moral responsibility. In addition to his books, Nayar has published extensively in national and international journals and has edited several influential collections on postcolonialism, media, and environmental criticism. His ongoing research explores nonhuman studies, ecological justice, and the intersections of literature, ethics, and global modernity. Widely taught and cited, Nayar's scholarship continues to inform critical debates across literary studies, cultural theory, and the humanities.

Prof. Simi Malhotra



Simi Malhotra is a distinguished Indian academic, literary critic, and Professor of English at the Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. She is widely recognized for her contributions to

contemporary literary studies, particularly in the areas of disability studies, partition studies, memory studies, and modern Indian writing in English. With an interdisciplinary approach to literature and culture, Prof. Malhotra has played an important role in expanding critical conversations on marginality, trauma, identity, and the politics of representation. Her research focuses on themes such as disability narratives, gender and body politics, trauma and memory, and the literary representation of historical events such as the Partition of India. Through her scholarly work, she has emphasized the importance of inclusive literary frameworks that foreground marginalized voices and experiences. Prof. Malhotra has authored and edited several influential academic works, including *Disability Studies in India: Global Discourses, Local Realities* and *Partition in Indian Literature and Films: History, Politics, and Aesthetics*. Simi Malhotra, Professor of English at Jamia Millia Islamia, has an extensive body of scholarly work spanning literary theory, globalization studies, trauma and memory studies, and planetary thought. Her major monographs and edited volumes include *Literary Theory: An Introductory Reader* (Anthem Press, 2010), which has been widely used as a pedagogical text, and *Terrains of Consciousness: Multilogical Perspectives on Globalization* (Würzburg University Press, 2021). Her more recent work reflects a strong engagement with phenomenology, ethics, and planetary humanities, notably *Ocean as Method: Thinking with the Maritime* (Routledge, 2022), *Globalization and Sense-Making Practices: Phenomenologies of the Global, Local and Glocal* (Routledge India, 2023), *Globalization and Planetary Ethics: New Terrains of Consciousness* (Routledge India, 2023), and *Affective World-Making: Routing Planetary Thought* (Routledge India, 2024). She has also edited volumes such as *Inhabiting Cyberspace in India* (Springer Singapore, 2021), *Food Culture Studies in India* (Springer Singapore, 2021), and *Trauma and Memory Studies: Responses from India and Beyond* (Springer Nature, 2025). In addition to these books, Malhotra has published widely cited journal articles and book chapters on globalization, trauma, digital cultures, and contemporary theory, contributing significantly to interdisciplinary humanities scholarship. In addition to her books, Malhotra has published extensively in reputed national and international journals, with essays focusing on writers such as Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, and Amitav Ghosh. Her research projects often foreground interdisciplinary approaches, drawing from philosophy, cultural theory, and postcolonial thought. Through her publications, conference engagements, and editorial work, Simi Malhotra has played a crucial role in advancing literary scholarship in India and fostering critical dialogue across disciplines.

Prof. Amy Lee



Amy Lee Waisum is a Hong Kong-based academic, educator, and scholar of humanities and cultural studies. She has been serving for over two decades at the Hong Kong Baptist University, where she joined in 2001 as a core academic member of the Humanities Programme and later held several senior academic leadership positions. Over the course of her career at the university, she progressed from a teaching faculty member to Associate Head of the Department of Humanities and Creative Writing and subsequently Associate Dean (Undergraduate Studies) of the Faculty of Arts. Prof. Lee is trained in comparative literature and cultural studies, and her research interests include feminist literary studies, young adult fiction, autobiographical writing, and popular fiction. Her scholarship often explores literary narratives, cultural representation, and the role of humanities education in shaping critical thinking and personal development. She has also contributed creative nonfiction and scholarly essays to academic publications. Beyond her research, she is widely recognized for her dedication to teaching and curriculum innovation. Her pedagogical work emphasizes the integration of literature, film, and popular culture in humanities education in order to foster reflective learning and holistic student development. Professor Amy Lee Wai Sum's scholarship spans emotional literacy education, cultural studies, feminist and autobiographical writing, life education, and pedagogy in higher education. Her work has appeared in peer-reviewed journals, international conference proceedings, and edited volumes. Among her notable publications are the journal article "Telling the Story of the (Female) Body: Metaphorical Narratives of the Thyroid Gland" published in *Literature* (Volume 2, Issue 3) in July 2023, which explores alternative narrative frameworks from traditional Chinese medicine and embodiment. Another key article, (E-)Learning to Understand and Love Yourself: An Attempt to Teach Healthy Lifestyle in the Midst of Social Unrest, appeared in *Frontiers in*

Education (Volume 6) on 4 August 2021, where she reflects on teaching healthy lifestyle courses during social unrest. Professor Lee has also contributed extensively to international conference proceedings. Her chapter “Emotional Literacy Education in a Hong Kong University: Reflection and Proposal” was published in *Education Applications & Developments* (InScience Press, 2015). She presented “Emotional Literacy Education in Hong Kong Universities: Reflection and Proposal” at the END 2014 International Conference on Education and New Developments (World Institute for Advanced Research and Science, 2014). Earlier work includes “How to Be a Chinese Woman? Reflections from Chinese Self-Help Literature” in *The Asian Conference on Asian Studies 2013 Official Conference Proceedings* (The International Academic Forum, 2013). In 2019 her paper “Hall Life Education: A Reflection on Cultivating Independence in Hong Kong University Students” was published in *The Asian Conference on Education 2019 Official Conference Proceedings* (IAFOR, 2019). Additionally, “Using Literature for Emotional Literacy Education: A Review and Proposal for Hong Kong Universities” appeared in *The Asian Conference on Literature and Librarianship 2015 proceedings*, again with IAFOR. Collectively, these publications reflect Lee’s interdisciplinary engagement with education theory, emotional and life education, cultural narratives, and literature as pedagogical resource, marking her as a significant voice in humanities and educational research in Hong Kong.

Dr. Vinod Kumar Singh



Vinod Kumar Singh is an Associate Professor in the Department of English at the University of Delhi, where he has taught and researched extensively in the areas of Shakespeare studies,

Indian literary traditions, postcolonial criticism, and comparative literary history. His scholarship is particularly distinguished by its sustained attempt to read canonical English texts through indigenous Indian philosophical, political, and cultural frameworks, thereby opening new avenues for cross-cultural literary interpretation. Professor Singh's most significant academic contributions lie in his well-cited journal articles on Shakespeare, especially his innovative readings of Shakespearean tragedy in the light of Indian concepts of kingship, sovereignty, and ethics. His article "Hamlet: An Interpretation in the Light of Indian Idea of Kingship," published in *Points of View* (Vol. XVI, Issue 2, Winter 2009), examines the moral and political dilemmas of Hamlet by drawing on Indian notions of dharma and righteous rule. This line of inquiry was further developed in "Macbeth: An Interpretation in the Light of Indian Idea of Kingship," published in *The Atlantic Critical Review* (Vol. IX, No. 2, July–September 2010), where he interprets Macbeth's tragic downfall through the prism of Indian political philosophy and ethical governance. Continuing this comparative approach, Professor Singh published "Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra: An Interpretation in the Light of Indian Idea of Kingship" in *The Indian Journal of English Studies* (Vol. XLVIII, 2011). This article offers a nuanced analysis of power, desire, and imperial authority, situating Shakespeare's Roman tragedy within broader debates on rulership and moral responsibility drawn from Indian intellectual traditions. Collectively, these articles have been widely referenced for their methodological originality and for challenging Eurocentric modes of Shakespearean criticism. Beyond Shakespeare, Professor Singh has contributed scholarly essays on Indian mythological narratives and cultural texts, including critical examinations of gender ideology and male chauvinism in Ram-lore. His work in this area, published in peer-reviewed journals such as the *Madhya Pradesh Journal of Social Sciences* and *Kanpur Philosophers*, reflects his broader interest in interrogating classical and popular narratives through a critical, socially engaged lens. His consistent output of peer-reviewed articles and conference papers has made a meaningful contribution to English literary studies in India. As a teacher and scholar at the University of Delhi, he continues to influence students and researchers through his commitment to comparative criticism, culturally grounded literary analysis, and the reinterpretation of canonical texts from Indian epistemological perspectives.

Dr. Priyanka Tripathi



Priyanka Tripathi is an Indian academic, literary critic, and Associate Professor in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology Patna. She is known for her research and teaching in the fields of postcolonial studies, gender studies, environmental humanities, and Indian writing in English. Through her interdisciplinary scholarship, Dr. Tripathi has contributed significantly to contemporary debates on ecology, gender, and cultural representation in literature. Her research interests include ecocriticism, ecofeminism, gender and sexuality studies, Indian literature in English, and the cultural politics of space and environment. Much of her work explores the relationship between literature, ecology, and social justice, examining how literary texts engage with environmental degradation, climate concerns, and gendered experiences of ecological crises. Dr. Tripathi has authored and edited several scholarly works and has published widely in reputed national and international journals. Her academic publications often examine the intersections of environment, gender, and culture within South Asian literary and cultural contexts. She has also contributed chapters to edited volumes and actively participates in international conferences and research collaborations. Professor Priyanka Tripathi, head of the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at Indian Institute of Technology Patna, has published widely in gender studies, South Asian fiction, literary and cultural theory, and intersectional humanities. Her monograph *The Gendered War: Evaluating Feminist Ethnographic Narratives of the 1971 War of Bangladesh* was published by Bloomsbury in 2022, offering an interdisciplinary examination of gendered violence, memory, and nationhood in South Asian historical narratives. A forthcoming monograph with the National Book Trust of India, *Mann Ki Baat & Bharatiya Art, Culture and Heritage*, has been announced, which is expected to explore media, political communication, and cultural politics in contemporary India. Tripathi has also published numerous peer-reviewed journal articles in prominent international outlets, including *Gender, Place & Culture*, *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, *South Asian*

Popular Culture, Minnesota Review, National Identities, Indian Literature, Journal of Gender Studies, Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics, GeoHumanities, and Economic and Political Weekly — addressing topics such as caste-gender intersectionality, visual culture, Bollywood narratives, and representations of violence and marginality. Her co-authored 2021 article “Gendered and Casteist Body: Cast(e)ing and Castigating the Female Body in Select Bollywood Films” was published in the Journal of International Women’s Studies, analysing cinematic portrayals of caste and gender in Indian film. She has also contributed book chapters and conference proceedings, and serves as Co-Executive Editor of the Journal of International Women’s Studies, reflecting her ongoing engagement with feminist scholarship and global gender research. Her work continues to contribute to the growing fields of environmental humanities and gender-oriented literary studies in India.

Dr. Jayjit Sarkar



Jayjit Sarkar is an Indian academic, researcher, and educator currently serving as Assistant Professor in the Department of English at the Raiganj University, West Bengal, India. He is known for his contributions to literary and cultural studies, with particular interest in contemporary critical theory, postcolonial studies, and modern English literature. Dr. Sarkar completed his higher education in English literature and went on to pursue doctoral research focusing on areas related to literary theory, culture, and identity in modern and postcolonial contexts. His academic work reflects an interdisciplinary approach, bringing together literature, cultural discourse, and socio-political concerns in the study of texts and narratives. His research interests include postcolonial literature, cultural studies, modern critical theory, and Indian writing in English. Dr. Sarkar has presented papers at several national and international seminars and conferences and has published research articles in academic journals and edited volumes. His scholarly writings often explore issues of identity, representation, and cultural transformation in contemporary literary studies. Professor Sarkar’s primary monograph is

Illness as Method: Beckett, Kafka, Mann, Woolf and Eliot (Wilmington, DE: Vernon Press, December 2019), in which he explores illness as a critical method in modernist literature across major authors. He has also co-edited and contributed to several edited volumes that have been influential in literary and cultural theory. These include *Border and Bordering: Politics, Poetics, Precariousness* (Stuttgart: ibidem Press, March 2021), which addresses the conceptual and material politics of borders; *The Portrait of an Artist as a Pathographer: On Writing Illnesses and Illnesses in Writing* (Wilmington, DE: Vernon Press, June 2021); *Geographia Literaria: Studies in Earth, Ethics and Literature* (Stuttgart: ibidem Press, Feb 2022), which examines literature's engagement with earth and ethics; and *The Films of Apichatpong Weerasethakul* (Liverpool University Press, 2024), focusing on the films of the acclaimed Thai filmmaker. Most recently, he co-edited *The Routledge Handbook of Indian Indie Cinema* (Routledge India/Taylor & Francis, 2025), a comprehensive reference on independent Indian film. Professor Sarkar's peer-reviewed journal articles appear in notable scholarly journals, including "In Search of a Pathographical Ecopoetics: A Study of Elisabeth Tova Bailey's *The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating*" in *Journal of Ecohumanism* (2023), "Moving Back and Forth of the I': Parasite and Para-site in Beckett's *The Unnamable*" in *Critical Survey* (2022), and contributions to *Journal of Aesthetic Education* and *Journal of Foreign Languages and Cultures*, reflecting his interdisciplinary interests in illness, ecocriticism, modernist narrative, and cultural poetics. Jayjit Sarkar's body of work reflects a sustained and innovative engagement with interdisciplinary humanities, bringing together literary modernism, medical humanities, ecocriticism, border studies, and film theory. Through his monographs, edited volumes, and widely published articles, he has significantly expanded critical conversations on illness narratives and cultural poetics.

Conference Committee:

The committee was formed three months prior to this conference. The committee members included Prof. Deb Narayan Bandyopadhyay, Chief Executive Director (Academics), Prof. Rajnath Bhat, Dean, Department of Language, Literature and Cultural Studies Swami Vivekananda University, as the Mentor and Dr. Rituparna Chakraborty, Head, Department of English, as the Convener. Other members involved:

- Mr. Debarshi Arathdar (Asst. Prof. Department of English, SVU)
- Dr. Hindol Chakraborty (Asst. Prof. Department of English, SVU)

- Mr. Sudipta Dutta (Asst. Prof. Department of English, SVU)
- Dr. Subham Bhattacharjee (Asst. Prof. Department of English, SVU)
- Mr. Agnidepto Datta (Asst. Prof. Department of English, SVU)
- Dr. Shreyoshi Dhar (Asst. Prof. Department of English, SVU)
- Mr. Soumyarup Bhattacharjee (Asst. Prof. Department of English, SVU)
- Ms. Natasha Verma Chatterjee (Asst. Prof. Department of English, SVU)
- Dr. Tirna Sadhu (Asst. Prof. Department of English, SVU)
- Mr. Soumya Goswami (Asst. Prof. Department of English, SVU)
- Dr. Madhumita Roy (Associate Prof. Prof. Department of English, SVU)
- Mr. Sumit Saha (Asst. Prof. Department of English, SVU)
- Ms. Sharshina Swastyaneek (Asst. Prof. Department of English, SVU)
- Dr. Sutadripa Dutta Chowdhury (Asst. Prof. Department of English, SVU)

Seminar Report on *Interstices, Relationality and Sense-making: Navigating Peace, Ethics and AI in the 21st Century*

The Two-day International Conference- Interstices, Relationality and Sense-making: Navigating Peace, Ethics and AI in the 21st Century was organised by the Department of English at Swami Vivekananda University with the objective of critically engaging with the ethical, philosophical, and cultural challenges posed by emerging technologies. Bringing together scholars, educators, and thinkers from diverse disciplinary backgrounds, the conference aimed to foster sustained interdisciplinary dialogue on questions of peace, human agency, and responsibility in an increasingly AI-mediated world. It explored how concepts such as relationality, interstitial thinking, and sense-making can offer alternative frameworks for understanding technology beyond purely instrumental or deterministic models. The discussions examined the role of philosophy, humanities, and education in shaping ethical

responses to artificial intelligence, globalization, and social transformation. Through keynote lectures, special addresses, and scholarly exchanges, the department sought to encourage new critical perspectives, collaborative inquiry, and a deeper appreciation of the humanities as vital to navigating the moral and cultural complexities of the twenty-first century.

Inaugural Session and Keynote Highlights



Fig. 1. Prof. Rajnath Bhat delivers the introductory address

The first day of the conference unfolded as a sustained and carefully structured intellectual journey that brought together philosophy, education, literary studies, and the humanities to reflect on the ethical, cultural, and human implications of rapidly advancing technologies. The session was inaugurated by Prof. Rajnath Bhat, Dean, Department of Language, Literature and Cultural Studies Swami Vivekananda University as he embarked upon the need to bring together such diverse topics into discourse such as peace studies and AI, by articulating the need for a new formal addressal of the same.



Fig. 2. Dr. Vinod Kumar Singh delivering the Keynote Address

The keynote address by Dr. Vinod Kumar Singh of the University of Delhi established the conceptual foundation for the day by offering a wide-ranging meditation on technology, human agency, and peace. Drawing on contemporary global thought, he engaged with the ideas of Yuval Noah Harari, particularly the arguments developed in *Sapiens* and *Homo Deus*, to examine a twenty-first-century future in which human beings are increasingly understood as data-processing organisms and life itself is conceptualized in algorithmic terms. This critical engagement with techno-determinism was complemented by an ethical and philosophical grounding in Indian intellectual traditions, including reflections drawn from the *Kena Upanishad*, the *Bhagavad Gita*, and the *Manusmriti*. Through these texts, the lecture foregrounded ideas of ethical conduct, restraint, duty, and the plurality of yogic paths as resources for thinking peace and moral responsibility in an age dominated by technological acceleration.

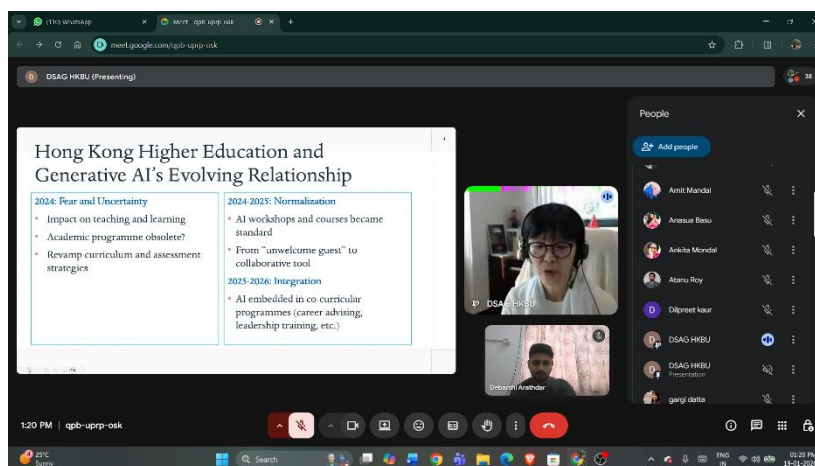


Fig. 3. Prof. Amy Lee delivering the First Special Address of the Day

Building on this ethical groundwork, the second lecture by Amy Lee Wai Sum, Director of Student Affairs at Hong Kong Baptist University, shifted the focus to the everyday institutional and pedagogical implications of generative artificial intelligence. Her address explored how universities can and should function as experimental spaces where students critically engage with AI-driven tools that are already reshaping learning, creativity, and communication. A central concern of her lecture was the changing meaning of “creation” in an era when generative technologies enable anyone to produce texts, images, and ideas through recombination of existing data. Rather than viewing this as a threat, she argued for a rethinking of creativity as an ethical and reflective practice, while simultaneously emphasizing the irreplaceable value of physical presence, embodied interaction, and face-to-face dialogue in sustaining meaningful educational communities within increasingly AI-mediated environments.



Fig. 4. Dr. Jayjit Sarkar delivering the Second Special Address of the day

The third lecture, delivered by Jayjit Sarkar of Raiganj University, brought the discussion back to foundational questions of what it means to be human. His address reflected on the composition and decomposition of the human subject in contemporary thought, revisiting

classical humanistic traditions such as *studia humanitatis* and *paideia*, which emphasize education, cultural formation, and ethical cultivation as the means by which individuals become responsible members of society. Drawing on Martha C. Nussbaum's influential conception of the humanities, the lecture underscored the continued relevance of humanistic inquiry as a space for nurturing empathy, critical thinking, and democratic citizenship at a moment when instrumental and technocratic models of knowledge often dominate.

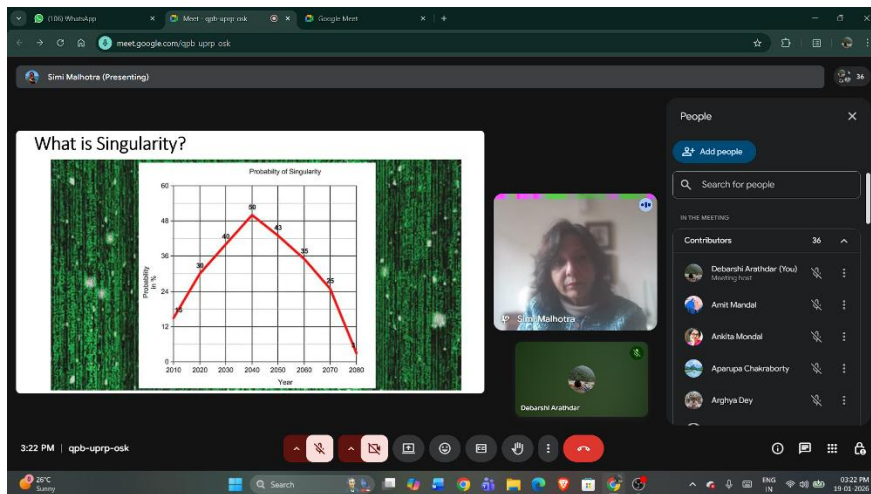


Fig. 5. Prof. Simi Malhotra delivering the closing Special Address of the day

The day concluded with a thought-provoking address by Simi Malhotra of Jamia Millia Islamia, which turned explicitly to the idea of technological singularity and its cultural ramifications. Her lecture asked whether the humanities can offer critical tools to rethink, resist, or redirect dominant narratives surrounding the singularity, and whether such a future would intensify existing social inequalities or potentially unsettle entrenched hierarchies. By offering a concise literature review of representations of singularity across novels, films, and video games, she demonstrated how popular cultural forms actively shape public imagination and ethical expectations about artificial intelligence. Taken together, the four lectures formed a coherent arc, moving from philosophical ethics and peace, through educational practice and creativity, to humanistic self-understanding and cultural critique, thereby presenting a richly layered and interdisciplinary reflection on technology and humanity in the contemporary world.



Fig. 6. Dr. Nick Pozek delivering the First Special Address of the Second Day

The second day of the conference continued the interdisciplinary inquiry into artificial intelligence, ethics, and global futures by bringing together perspectives from law, cultural studies, and the humanities, culminating in a rich and critical reflection on the political, social, and ethical dimensions of emerging technologies. The day opened with a recorded special address by Nick Pozek, President of the Greater New York Chapter of the Association for Conflict Resolution and Assistant Professor at the Parker School of Foreign and Comparative Law, Columbia University. His lecture examined the transformative impact of artificial intelligence on global political and strategic landscapes, emphasizing how AI is increasingly embedded within diplomacy, military strategy, cybersecurity infrastructures, and intelligence analysis. By shaping decision-making processes and altering the balance of power among nations, AI, he argued, has become a critical factor in international relations. Dr. Pozek underscored the urgent need for robust international norms and legal frameworks capable of governing AI development and deployment, warning that the absence of such structures could lead to heightened geopolitical tensions and unintended escalation of conflicts. At the same time, he advocated for sustained cooperation among governments, legal institutions, and transnational organizations, suggesting that only a collaborative, multilateral approach can ensure that AI technologies are harnessed to promote transparency, accountability, and peaceful conflict resolution rather than instability.

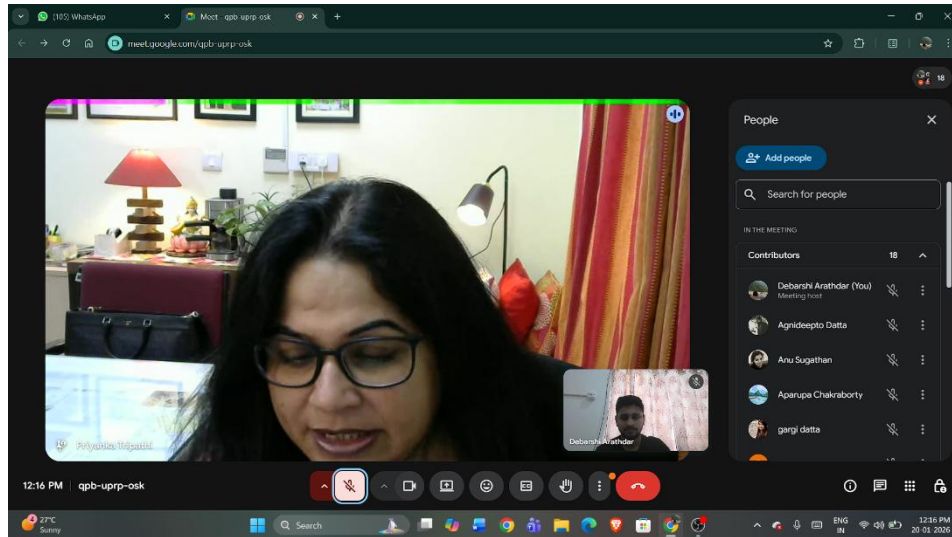


Fig. 7. Dr. Priyanka Tripathi delivering the second Special Address of the Second Day

Building on this global and legal perspective, the second lecture by Priyanka Tripathi, Associate Professor at the Indian Institute of Technology Patna, shifted the focus to the human dimensions of AI through her discussion of “Humans in the Loop” (2024). Her address foregrounded the indispensable role of human intervention in the functioning of AI systems, challenging narratives that position artificial intelligence as fully autonomous or self-sufficient. She argued that AI technologies not only rely on continuous human oversight but also actively reshape human cognitive processes, social relations, and identity formation. A particularly significant aspect of her lecture was the focus on India as a crucial site of digital labour and data production, where large numbers of workers are engaged in data labelling and annotation—forms of often invisible labour that underpin machine learning systems. By highlighting these material conditions, Dr. Tripathi exposed the socio-economic inequalities embedded within AI infrastructures. She also introduced the evocative metaphor of AI as a “child,” proposing that such systems should be guided, trained, and ethically nurtured by humans rather than treated as autonomous authorities. This perspective reframed AI development as a relational and pedagogical process, emphasizing responsibility, care, and accountability.

Valedictory Session and Closing



Fig. 8. Prof. Pramod K. Nayar delivering the Valedictory Address

The day concluded with the valedictory lecture by Pramod K. Nayar, UNESCO Chair of Vulnerability Studies at the University of Hyderabad, who offered a wide-ranging and critical examination of the ethical implications of advanced AI technologies, particularly Brain-Computer Interfaces (BCIs). His lecture explored how such technologies challenge existing frameworks of human rights by potentially enabling unprecedented forms of surveillance, behavioral influence, and cognitive intervention. He drew attention to the capacity of AI systems to shape human actions in subtle, even subliminal ways, raising serious concerns about manipulation, consent, and exploitative commercial practices. The discussion also addressed the growing use of AI in therapeutic contexts, questioning the ethical implications of replacing human care with algorithmic systems. A central tension identified in his lecture was the rapid pace of technological innovation contrasted with the relatively slow development of legal and regulatory mechanisms, creating gaps that may leave individuals and communities vulnerable. As a constructive response, Prof. Nayar proposed the concept of “hybrid intelligence,” envisioning a collaborative model in which human judgment and machine efficiency are integrated in ethically responsible ways. He concluded by advocating a holistic and critically informed approach to AI, one that foregrounds human agency, ethical awareness, and social responsibility. Together, the three lectures of the second day formed a coherent trajectory—from global governance and legal frameworks, through human labor and relational ethics, to philosophical and rights-based critiques—offering a comprehensive and deeply reflective engagement with the challenges and possibilities of artificial intelligence in the contemporary world.

List of Registered Presenters

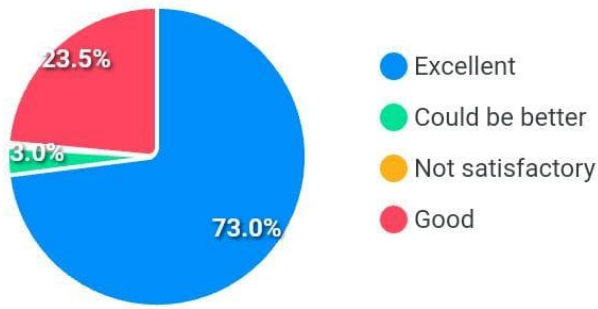
- Dr. Esha, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan College (Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University), New Delhi, India
- Ramesh Chandra Pradhani, Assistant Professor and Head, Department of English, P S D College Deogaon Balangir, Odisha
- Sunil Kumar Agrawal, Research Scholar, Commerce & Management, Dr. C. V. Raman University, Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh, India
- Shreeya Malhotra, Ph.D. (Eng) Research Scholar, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar University Delhi
- Deepalee Rout, HoD, Lecturer, Department of Logic and Philosophy, Kandarpur College, Cuttack, Odisha
- Swaraj Dash, School of Economics, XIM University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India
- Udhav Sureka, Assistant Professor, Hindu Studies, School of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences, Chhatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj University, Kanpur
- Adyasha Mohapatra, Ph.D. Scholar, Department of English, University of Delhi
- Dilpreet Kour, PhD Research Scholar, Department of English, University of Jammu, Jammu and Kashmir, India
- Suchismita Ghoshal, MBA, GD Goenka University
- Vidushi Rai, Research Scholar, Amity University Noida
- Atanu Kumar Roy, MA Student, Swami Vivekananda University
- Shaheli Nag, MA Student, Swami Vivekananda University

Paper Submission

Total Number of Abstracts Submitted: 14

Total Number of Papers presented: 13

Feedback



Programme Outcome

The two-day International Conference “*Interstices, Relationality and Sense-making: Navigating Peace, Ethics and AI in the 21st Century*” yielded several impactful outcomes, highlighting its success as a global intellectual platform:

- 1. Enhanced Interdisciplinary Understanding:** Participants developed a nuanced understanding of artificial intelligence through interdisciplinary frameworks, integrating insights from philosophy, humanities, law, and technology to critically examine AI’s role in shaping contemporary society.
- 2. Strengthened Ethical and Critical Engagement**
The conference fostered deeper ethical awareness regarding AI, encouraging participants to interrogate issues of agency, human rights, digital labour, and global inequalities, and to situate technological advancement within broader moral and philosophical contexts.
- 3. Promotion of Collaborative and Dialogic Approaches**
By bringing together scholars, educators, and practitioners, the programme facilitated meaningful dialogue and collaboration, promoting the exchange of ideas across disciplines and geographies to address complex global challenges.
- 4. Application of Humanities-Based Perspectives to AI Discourse**
Participants gained tools to apply concepts such as relationality, interstitial thinking, and sense-making in analysing AI, reinforcing the importance of the humanities in shaping inclusive, responsible, and human-centred technological futures.
- 5. International Academic Collaboration:** The international conference brought together scholars from institutions including the University of Hyderabad, Hong Kong Baptist University, Jamia Millia Islamia, IIT Patna, University of Delhi, Raiganj

University, and Columbia University, fostering meaningful cross-institutional collaboration.

6. **Publication Opportunities:** The discussions and paper presentations provided a robust foundation for future academic publications, ensuring the continuation of dialogues initiated during the lecture series and conference.

Certificate for the Participants



Conclusion

The International Conference *Interstices, Relationality and Sense-making: Navigating Peace, Ethics and AI in the 21st Century* emerged as a significant intellectual platform that brought together diverse disciplinary perspectives to critically engage with the rapidly evolving relationship between artificial intelligence and human society. Over

the course of its deliberations, the conference foregrounded the urgent need to move beyond purely technological or instrumental understandings of AI, instead situating it within broader philosophical, ethical, cultural, and political frameworks. By drawing on insights from the humanities, social sciences, and legal studies, the conference underscored that the challenges posed by AI are not merely technical problems but deeply human concerns involving agency, responsibility, justice, and the future of collective life. A key strength of the conference lay in its emphasis on relationality and interstitial thinking as conceptual tools for navigating complexity. Rather than viewing AI as an isolated or autonomous force, the discussions consistently highlighted the interconnectedness of human and machine systems, demonstrating how technologies are embedded within social, cultural, and geopolitical networks. This approach enabled participants to critically examine the ways in which AI reshapes human cognition, labour, identity, and interaction, while also being shaped by existing inequalities and power structures. The notion of sense-making further provided a productive framework for understanding how individuals and communities interpret, negotiate, and respond to technological change, particularly in contexts marked by uncertainty and rapid transformation.

The conference also made a sustained intervention in the discourse on ethics and peace, emphasizing that technological advancement must be guided by robust ethical principles and a commitment to social responsibility. Discussions on global governance, digital labour, human rights, and algorithmic influence revealed the complex tensions between innovation and regulation, efficiency and equity, and autonomy and control. By engaging with both contemporary global thought and indigenous philosophical traditions, the conference highlighted the importance of plural ethical frameworks in addressing these tensions. In doing so, it opened up possibilities for rethinking peace not merely as the absence of conflict but as an active process of ethical negotiation, cooperation, and care in a technologically mediated world. Another important outcome of the conference was its reaffirmation of the centrality of the humanities in contemporary debates on AI. At a time when technological determinism often dominates public discourse, the conference demonstrated that the humanities offer critical tools for questioning assumptions, interpreting cultural narratives, and imagining alternative futures. Through engagements with literature, philosophy, education, and cultural studies, participants were able to explore how narratives of

artificial intelligence—whether in academic theory or popular media—shape public imagination and influence policy and practice. This interdisciplinary engagement reinforced the idea that meaningful responses to AI require not only technical expertise but also ethical reflection, historical awareness, and cultural sensitivity.

Finally, the conference highlighted the importance of collaboration and dialogue in addressing global challenges. By bringing together scholars and practitioners from different regions and fields, it created a space for the exchange of ideas and the development of shared perspectives on complex issues. The discussions pointed toward the need for sustained engagement across institutions, disciplines, and nations in order to ensure that AI technologies are developed and deployed in ways that promote equity, transparency, and human well-being. In conclusion, the conference succeeded in articulating a comprehensive and forward-looking vision of how humanity might navigate the challenges of artificial intelligence in the twenty-first century. By emphasizing relationality, ethical responsibility, and the enduring relevance of the humanities, it offered a framework for understanding AI not as an external force but as a deeply embedded aspect of human life—one that must be shaped through critical inquiry, collective reflection, and a shared commitment to a just and peaceful future.