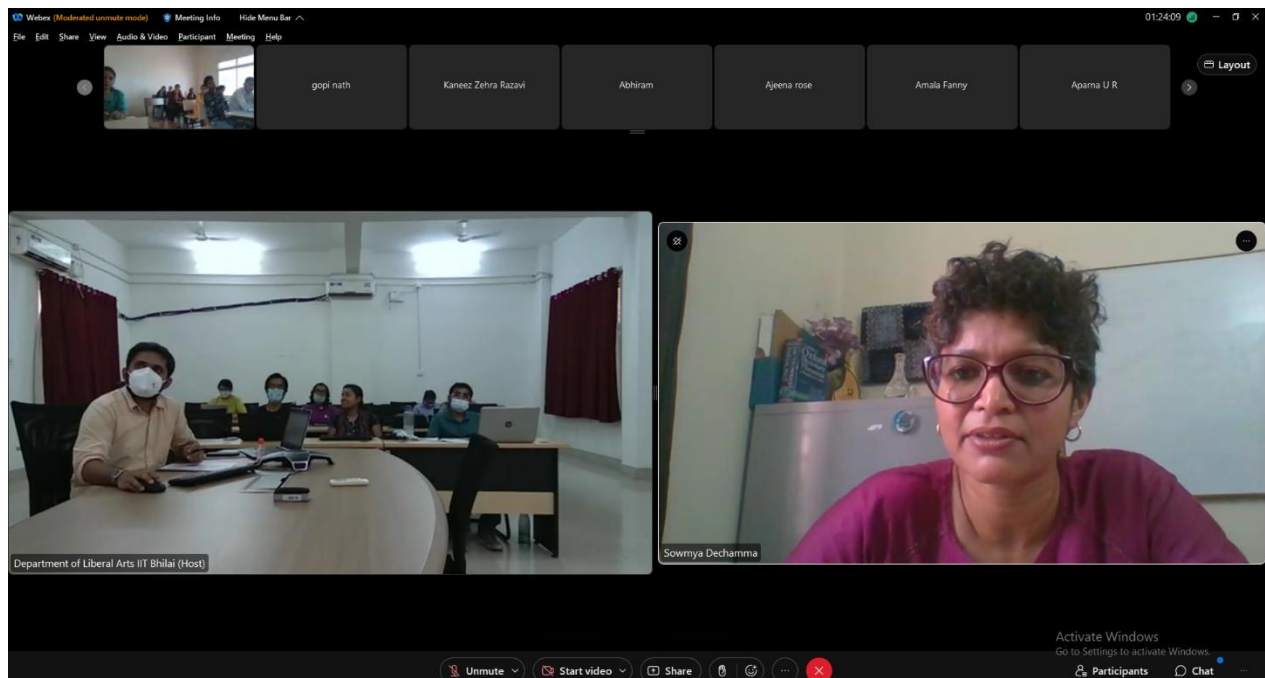


A talk on “Languages of Inequality: Some Thoughts on Practices of Disciplines”

As part of Intersections, a monthly lecture series, the Department of Liberal Arts at IIT Bhilai hosted Prof Sowmya Dechamma C C (Head, Centre for Comparative Literature, University of Hyderabad) to present a lecture on “Languages of Inequality: Some Thoughts on Practices of Disciplines”.

In order to examine inequalities amongst languages in terms of power structures, Prof Sowmya Dechamma discussed Comparative Literature as a discipline which unpacks the relationship between literature on one hand and other areas of knowledge and belief - such as the arts, philosophy, ethnography, and history - on the other. She commented on the interdependence of translation and Comparative Literature, observing that translation cannot exist without comparison and vice versa. She also suggested that the association between culture/knowledge and power between translation and imperialism can be illuminated through a renewed awareness of the link between transfer of learning and transfer of power.

National cultures at large have been consolidated through this process, and the making of Comparative Literature in postcolonial nation-states and its relationship with numerous ‘minor’ languages and ‘minoritized’ people that are made visible within nationalised cultures needs a self-representation and a self-translation that is yet to be done. Prof Dechamma also problematized translation itself and underlined the importance of questioning our everyday use of language by asserting that no text is entirely original because language itself, in its essence, is already a translation.



Octavio Paz

Every text is unique and, at the same time, it is the translation of another text. No text is entirely original because language itself, in its essence, is already a translation: firstly, of the non-verbal world and secondly, since every sign and every phrase is the translation of another sign and another phrase. However, this argument can be turned around without losing any of its validity: all texts are original because every translation is distinctive. Every translation, up to a certain point, is an invention and as such it constitutes a unique text (qtd in Bassnett 1998: 46).

