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Bruce E. Johansen, Isaacson Professor in Communication at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, recently returned home from India after he was received as one of a dozen special guests from the United States, Canada, and Australia at a conference on the history and literature of indigenous peoples and dalits (untouchables). The conference convened December 14-16 at Acharya Nagarjuna University in Gunter, Andhra Pradesh state, India, about 250 miles north of Chennai (formerly known as Madras) on the Bay of Bengal.

The university is named after Acharya Nagarjuna, the principal founder of the Madhyamaka path of Mahayana Buddhism. Acharya Nagarjuna University is known for its endorsement of human-rights activism, especially for indigenous and dalit peoples at the bottom of India's caste system. The conference had the attributes of a cultural festival and a political rally as well as an academic meeting. The campaign for improvement of dalit status (they comprise one-sixth of India's 1.2 billion people) has similarities to the United States' civil-rights struggle.

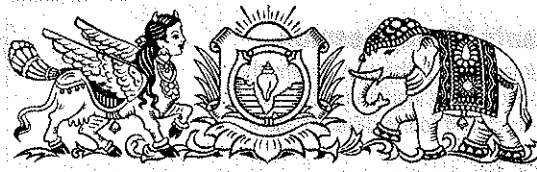
Johansen presented brief opening remarks at opening ceremonies December 14, attended by roughly 600 people. He also presented a plenary paper, "What Has Been Will Be: Native American Contributions to Democracy, Feminism, Gender Fluidity, and Environmentalism," December 16. The conference, including a brief description of Johansen's paper, was reported in *The Hindu*, a nation-wide newspaper, December 16 and 17. The conference, which was attended by several hundred scholars from several nations, with 250 presented papers, was widely covered in the press, in Hindi as well as English. The special guests were accorded celebrity status, and asked for several hundred selfies and "snaps" (photos). Johansen's paper also was published in an Indian journal, *The Cultural and Literary Nationalism of Fourth World*.

Johansen, who has heretofore maintained that he has two left feet and dances like a duck, was asked to "grace the base" (e.g. come to the stage) with other special guests, during a performance Monday evening by Kaladashini, an AGU dance troupe. He was then engaged in a solo by one of the principal dancers. He followed the dancer's moves at an accelerating pace, then began to lead. At the end of the performance, Johansen's dancing partner hoisted him into the air, and kissed him on the cheek, as the performers and an audience of several hundred cheered. Next, Raja Sekhar, lead coordinator of the conference (an English professor and administrative officer at AGU), hoisted him into the air, to grand applause.

Aside from aiding in discovery of his formerly dormant dancing talents, Johansen welcomed the opportunity to eat curry and chutney for breakfast (and all other meals).

Johansen also was collecting research for publication on air pollution in Delhi, which, according to the World Health Organization, is the worst in the world. While he was

there, the Delhi airport closed briefly for smog, and the city's Supreme Court outlawed the registration of large SUVs and cars with large diesel engines, maintaining that living in Delhi is like living "in an open gas chamber."



# THE HINDU

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PAGE 2.

## GLOBAL SEMINAR

Cultural wisdom of the ancient ethnic tribes can control the instinct to destruct, says Ravela

# Fourth World Literature finds a voice

STAFF REPORTER

**T**he declaration of Native/Aboriginal/Dalit literary, cultural and intellectual independence was reinstated at the UGC sponsored global seminar on 'Celebration of Ancient and Contemporary Wisdom of Fourth World,' which began at Acharya Nagarjuna University here on Monday.

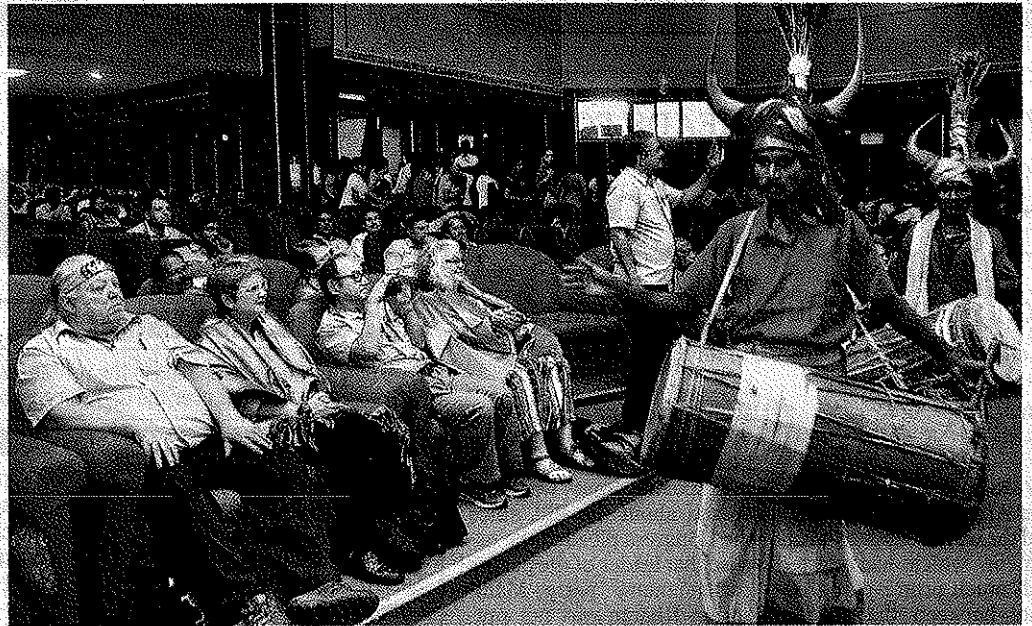
Global voices of Fourth World literature, Jay Hansford C. Vest (USA), Bruce V. Johansen, Ellesa Clay High, Scott Manning Stevens and many others made it to the ANU proclaiming the glorious wisdom in the culture of Fourth World.

Inaugurating the seminar organised by the Department of English, Minister for Social Welfare and Tribal Welfare Ravela Kishore said that the 'Fourth World' should be called as the First World, as this world has paved for the modern human civilisation. "The cultural wisdom of the ancient ethnic tribes could control the instinct to destruct," Mr. Kishore Babu said.

Vice-Chancellor V.S.S. Kumar said that a large section of natives still remained disconnected with the modern world and opportunities.

Philanthropist Gadde Mangayya said that harmony and mutual respect should guide the society.

Seminar director and Registrar Raj Sekhar P. said that the Fourth World literature was conceptualised in 2009 creating consciousness in recognising social and cultural necessity for universal solidarity among the Natives/Dalits



Koya tribals perform a dance during the seminar on the Fourth World Literature at the ANU in Guntur on Monday. — PHOTO: T. VIJAYA KUMAR

and Aborigines. The Fourth World literature has claimed its rightful place along with First World (England and other European countries), Second World (Russia and allied countries), Third World (countries colonised by British), Professor Raja Sekhar added.

Further Dalits in India could identify themselves with the natives and aboriginal around the globe as there were no ideological differences among them.

The three-day seminar saw more than 200 plenary presentations with scholars from all over the country taking part.

## 'Climate change takes a toll on native literatures'

STAFF REPORTER

**GUNTUR:** The vagaries of climate change and global warming is directly affecting the native literatures across world as the natives are losing the 'rhythm of life,' said Professor, Department of American Indian Studies, University of North Carolina, Jay Hansford C. Vest.

"A significant interest in Fourth World Literature seen 30

years ago may probably has gone down. Fourth World literature is woven around oral traditions and mythology," Professor Hansford told *The Hindu* on Monday on the sidelines of the global seminar at Acharya Nagarjuna University.

Reflecting on the rapid industrialisation policies of USA, he said that even a big country with relatively lesser population had lost much of native literature.

# 'Fourth World Literature offers hope for oppressed'

PAGE 4

STAFF REPORTER

GUNTUR: The internalisation of social prejudices and value systems in society have affected the progress of marginalised sections and the Fourth World Literature offers a ray of hope for these exploited sections, Inspector General of Police, CID, P.V. Sunil Kumar said here on Wednesday.

"The Dalits/natives/aboriginals grow up with a feeling that they are inferior to others. Those from the upper castes are constantly fed that they are superior to other backward castes and these kind of internalisation of social prejudices and value systems that have prevented the Dalits from realising their aspirations," Mr. Sunil Kumar said at the concluding session of a global seminar on "Celebrating the Ancient/Contemporary Wisdom of Fourth World," held at the Acharya Nagarjuna University.

Further, the Dalits are also

Internalisation of social prejudices and value systems has prevented Dalits from realising their aspirations

**P.V. Sunil Kumar**  
Inspector-General of Police, CID

branded as 'rebels' if they challenge the notion of an elitist society and further alienated in the society. Calling upon the writers of the Fourth World to challenge established notions, Mr. Sunil Kumar, a popular writer himself, said that writers should start by opposing their own ideas. "Many people have questioned the intention of women venturing out after 11 p.m. Why should not they suppose to come on the roads? Is it not the duty of state to ensure that

women are protected?" Mr. Sunil Kumar said. Earlier leading voices of Fourth World literature, Jay Hansford C. Vest (USA), Bruce V Johansen, Ellesa Clay High, Scott Manning Stevens enlivened the proceedings with their papers.

Voicing the challenges of Fourth World Literature, Bruce E Johnson said that native consensual democracy nurtured the ideology of Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, founders of United States of America. The founders of American Feminism extracted lessons from native matrilineal cultures. Professor Lorraine Mayer from Canada said that Canadian Literature has been enriched by indigenous philosophy in her paper, 'Indigenous Literature: A juxtaposition of ancient/modern world views.' Seminar director and Registrar Raj Sekhar P. said that the Fourth World literature was conceptualised in 2009.

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