

Report of the International Seminar

On

Negotiations Between The “Local” and The “Global” in “Cultural Bengal” :Community, Society and Politics

by

Seminar Organizing Committee, Arts and Humanities, 2018-19

Acharya Brojendra Nath Seal College, a leading academic institution of West Bengal organized Two-Days International Seminar held in 13th and 14 th February,2019 on Negotiations Between The “Local” and The “Global” in “Cultural Bengal” :Community, Society and Politics.

Introduction:

Since the emergence of postcolonial discourse, the idea of ‘space’, ‘territory’, ‘habitus’ or ‘cultural landscape’ has been facing myriad paradigm-shifts, which found a new turn after the recognition of globalisation as a determining factor in the critical understanding of society, politics and culture. However, within the neoliberal economy, which continuously and expediently obscures the relationship of commodity with culture, community with identity, popular with the traditional, power with the structure, ownership with the corporation and the nature with the beings; the notions of ‘global’ and ‘local’ have become intertwined and often problematic. The critical understanding of history has shown us that the structures are failing the people. The nuanced enforcing of state apparatuses to manufacture a docile homogeneity within the ‘imagined nation’ has also depredated them. Similarly, vehement stigmatisation of the ‘other’ in both political and social sphere has culminated in rapid marginalisation, leaving certain communities vulnerable and certain identities fragile. Manufacturing of truth and consent, production of knowledge through power and thus marketing that knowledge commodity, the postmodern ‘incredulity towards meta-narratives’ and the emergence of a post-truth politics: all of these has been effective in incessantly renegotiating the economic, social and political relations between the ‘global’ and the ‘local’. In this conference, we shall try to understand how such factors have redefined our epistemic and pragmatic, i.e. overall perceptual quest towards the Cultural Bengal, which is more than a geopolitical territory. We shall try to redefine the ‘local’ with its myriad social, historical, economic, and cultural elements and analyse how the ‘global’ structurally resurfaces within it. To that end, the conference will be essentially

multidisciplinary, incorporating social, political and economical sciences, humanities, arts and contemporary systems of critical social thought.

Objective of the Seminar:

The initial objective of the seminar is to understand the relationship between the 'Global' and the 'Local' in the contemporary social science research focused on cultural Bengal. Being a multidisciplinary conference, we shall have a chance to explore the topic through different methodological approaches and manifold theoretical frameworks.

Being situated in the North Eastern corner of Bengal, as well as near the border of Bangladesh, we observe a diverse settlement of communities, assaying to survive within the political economy of the structural destruction of indigenous niches and different aspects of diasporic identity formation along with 'reterritorialisation'. The conflict between the autochthonous and the popular needs to be understood in a broader context. It is evident that the true spirit of contemporary South-Asian studies lies at the 'fringe', away from the capital/mega cities (e.g., Kolkata or Dhaka), which function as the pre-established epicentre of academic matrix. It is essential that a discursive dynamics of ideas should start flowing between the 'global' and 'local'/'central' and 'marginal' of the academia.

The conference would also provide a platform to social scientists and anthropologists working on North Eastern India to present their unique findings within this diverse social landscape. In a nutshell, the conference would propose newer dimensions of social science research based in Cultural Bengal.

Research Questions:

1. How the local and global traits of knowledge are negotiating in the study of social science?
2. Is there a hegemonic relationship evident, or is it a complementary one?
3. What is the role of power in this dynamics of knowledge?
4. In this neo-liberal economy, how are the notions of identity, community and society are being redefined, and broadly politicized? How are the issues of growth, development and sustainably are changing their significance from the regional to national to global level?

5. What is the nature of the representation of the society, culture and politics of 'Cultural Bengal' in the oeuvre of South Asian Studies in Social Science and Humanities? Can the 'Cultural Bengal' really speak?

To find out new dimensions of social science research in Cultural Bengal, to find out unaddressed aspects of Religion, Language, Society and Environment visible in the periphery.

This report aims to provide the conference guests and other interested readers with a short overview of the main issues which were discussed during the conference.

Description of the Seminar:

On the first day of the conference the inaugural session was started with welcoming the revered guests who came from different parts of India and world by traditional ceremonial way by our Officer-in-charge, Dr. Bimal Kumar Saha and our IQAC Co-ordinator, Debabrata Lahiri. After that a welcome address was given by our Officer-in-Charge. An excellent Keynote Address was given by the Prof. Rahul Peter Das, Professor of Language and Culture of Post-Classical South Asia in South Asian Seminar of Oriental Institute of Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg, Germany. This keynote session was chaired by Prof. Debabrata Lahiri, director, IQAC.

After this inaugural session followed by a short tea break Plenary sessions were started. There were altogether three plenary sessions having 5 lectures each having one hour duration.

Plenary Session I

Lecture 1: The Local and the Global in Rural Bengal: Changing Forms of Agricultural Production | Prof. Abhijit Dasgupta, Head of the Department of Sociology, Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi.

Lecture 2: Commemorating the October Revolution through performances and exhibitions: Internationalism to globalism | Prof. Bishnupriya Dutt, Eminent theatre personality and Professor of Theatre and Performance Studies, School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University

After plenary session we had a break for delicious lunch for everyday. The foreign delegates as well as our Indian delegates enjoyed the lunch very much. Bengali cuisine were served to them specially the different types of fish curry and different types of Bengali sweets and different types of Bengali vegetable curry were served in both the days.

In the post lunch session different participants from different colleges and universities presented their papers.

On the next day of seminar i.e. on the 14th of Feb,2019 the following lectures were delivered in the Plenary sessions.

Plenary Session II

Lecture 3 : Gender and Society in Cultural Bengal |Prof. Dina M. Siddiqi, Professor of Anthropology in the Department of Economics and Social Sciences, BRAC University, Dhaka

Lecture 4: Early Bengali Literature in Kathmandu | Prof. Makato Kitada, Associate Professor of Urdu, Studies in Language and Society, Graduate School of Language and Culture, School of Foreign Studies, Osaka University.

Plenary Session III

Lecture 5: Academic Researches in Bengal Studies in West Bengal and Bangladesh: Understanding the two National Cultures | Prof. Carmen Brandt, Jun-Professor of Contemporary South Asian Studies, Institute for Oriental and Asian Studies, Department of South Asian Studies, University of Bonn.

Following the Plenary lectures, there were also academic sessions comprising of parallel oral presentation on both days. Almost 67 papers were presented by the in-house and outside participants. Even our Officer-in-Charge also presented a research paper. We also published the abstract volume. The participation of the students was satisfactory.

In the “Valedictory Session” the certificate of appreciation and participation were given to the all participants. Our officer- in –Charge had delivered a beautiful speech summarizing the overall aspect of this two days international seminar and its importance. The dignataries shared their wonderful experiences of these two days with us. And finally the Convener, Dr. Prajnaparamita Sarkar, and the Organising Secretary, Ratul Ghosh had delivered “Vote of Thanks” followed by the announcement of the official closing of the International Seminar.



Ratul Ghosh
Organising Secretary



Student Participant



Foreign Delegates



Rahul Petre Das
Key Note Addresser



Dina M Siddiqi



Officer-in-Charge
& IQAC Co-Ordinator



Prof. Makato Kitada



Prof. Carmen Brandt



Bishnupriya Datta



Teacher Participant



Audience



Audience

Balance Sheet of the International Seminar titled “*Negotiations Between the ‘Local’ and the ‘Global’ in Cultural Bengal: Community, Society and Politics*” dated 13-14 February, 2019

Fund		Expenditure	
Source of Funds	Amount of Funds Received	Heads	Amount Spend
College Fund vide Voucher Nos. 117452 dt. 12.09.2018 and 117517 dt. 07.02.19	Rs. 3,00,000/-	Expenses incurred towards Domestic Flights for Delegates	Rs. 44,817/-
Registration for the Seminar	Rs.1,07,100/-	Expenses incurred towards International Flights for delegates	Rs. 1,93,730/-
From Ticket Cancellation and Others	Rs. 3,500/-	Expenses incurred towards Train Tickets for Delegates	Rs.6,089/-
Total	Rs. 4,10,600/-	Expenses towards Car Rent for Delegates	Rs. 27,500/-
		Fooding and Lodging expenses for Delegates	Rs. 47,170/-
		Kit Preparation including Delegate's Kit, Certificate, Poster and Abstract Printing	Rs. 39,433/-
		Decoration and Miscellaneous	Rs. 8,413/-
		Sound System and Electricity	Rs. 8,200/-
		Token of Gratitude towards Prof. Ananda Gopal Ghosh and Mr. Toby Anderson	Rs. 3,000/-
		Pictures and Documentation	Rs. 200/-
		Refreshment	Rs. 60,460/-
		Snacks for High Tea	Rs. 878/-
		Total	Rs. 4,39,890/-

Organizing Secretary

Treasurer

Convener