



NETAJI SUBHAS OPEN UNIVERSITY School of Humanities

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The Department of English School of Humanities

in collaboration with

Centre for Language, Translation and Cultural
Studies (www.cltcnsou.in), NSOU
Kolkata, India

organizes a Three-Day International Web-Conference
ON

“The Agonies of Nationhood: Cultural Reflections from the Indian Subcontinent”

Dates: 31 July – 2 August, 2020

Concept Note

The nomenclature ‘Indian Subcontinent’ encompasses an inherently contested geopolitical space in terms of cartography, with historians, anthropologists and political scientists having different viewpoints regarding the inclusion/exclusion of countries of the Global South under the rubric. However, it can be inferred that the idea of the subcontinent lies between the brackets of shared geospatial, political and cultural identities; its locus being somewhere between the postcolonial and the global. In focusing upon the agonies of nationhood, this Conference pragmatically limits its understanding of the Indian Subcontinent on parameters that hold multiple sociological and cultural implications for post-national societies in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan which once constituted British India. The single largest historical event in South Asia in the 20th century is undoubtedly the several partitions that have impacted citizen lives in ways that are too diverse and long-standing for any specific discipline to adequately encompass. More than seven decades after the evolution of India and Pakistan as nation states, and nearly five decades after the birth of Bangladesh, the political and cultural histories of our respective countries have remained a lingering impact of partition(s). Beyond the clutter of high politics and international diplomacy, it is mind-boggling to see how ‘internal’ developments within geographical borders of any one of these countries create ripples in others. This makes the situation in the subcontinent clearly different from partitions witnessed elsewhere on the globe; the inordinately “long” nature of the Indian partition, to use Zamindar’s coinage, being essentially embedded both in hopes and agonies of nationhood underlying continuing citizen histories. Conceived in the wake of much debate following legislations on citizenship in India

which have serious ramifications for the subcontinent notwithstanding the temporary lull caused by the present pandemic, this Conference will address issues concerning nation states and their subjects from the broad purview of Cultural Studies.

It is therefore important to underscore that Partitions(s) (the Liberation War of Bangladesh technically though not spiritually being one as well) are only a spatial-temporal signifier of the ambits of this Conference, and not the foci per se of its deliberations. The organisers hold that despite recurrent majoritarian efforts to evolve as nations in the exclusivist Eurocentric sense of the term, a plethora of shared roots in common ancestry, demography, cultural practices, and even religious customs have ordained a virtual post-national frame for people of the subcontinent long before globalisation made it a perceived reality. In that sense, the deliberations are intended to contextualise and take forward the sustained research on undocumented narratives and micro-histories that the Centre for Language Translation and Cultural Studies (CLTCS) which is under the aegis of the School of Humanities of this University, has been doing through its Bengal Partition Repository (BPR) for quite some time now. The details of this highly acclaimed project on oral histories may be accessed on www.cltcsnsou.in. By adopting the broadly discursive channel of Cultural Studies at a time of manifold crises of existence that challenge citizen lives in overt and covert ways, the Conference will probe into the complicated nature of negotiations between the state and its subjects from multiple points of perception. The objective is to deliberate with open minds on such shared destinies between peoples irrespective of borders, and to interrogate the politics of nation formation.

The problematic inherent in ascribing a Eurocentric nationalism among peoples of the Indian subcontinent is not new, its first succinct expression having come from Tagore in the early decades of the previous century. In 'Nationalism in India' (1917) he decried the Western ideal which deflects attention from the root of the challenge that is social, not political, adding that in approaching the condition of the social, our solution to the world will be a sterling contribution to humanity. Our collective failure at comprehending the ideal and basking in a skewed notion of the *vishwaguru* is sadly oracular in its negativity, which Arjun Appadurai perceives in *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger* (2006) as a compulsive journey 'From Ethnocide to Ideocide'. Between Tagore and Appadurai therefore lie the agonies of nationhood, manifest yet again in traumatising scenes of dehumanisation amidst ecological calamities that have urgently provoked this Conference. As an Open University, our practice of dismantling elitist utopias often associated with liberal humanistic studies, and our stated mission of democratised education as the only sustainable means of empowerment underlie the philosophical conception of this Conference. We therefore look forward to initiate meaningful dialogue on a wide range of citizenship issues with peers in a spirit of empathic understanding of the commonalities that reinforce the interstitial nature of our citizen identities.

We believe in the seamless potential of Cultural Studies in probing and building bridges across these interstices of statist intervention, and in addressing prospects/ challenges dotting the pulse of nation states as also the aspirations of citizens across nationalities. The discursive spirit embedded in faithful forms of cultural representation is in our understanding an authentic channel of comprehending this missed pulse. The debate on authenticity itself needs to be recognised in the first place as reflecting the essentially polyphonic nature of our lived

realities, unified as they are within diversities of the assimilative understanding of nationhood as inclusive humanity. Both the right to disagree and the nature of dissent will therefore figure in cultural reflections at this Conference.

We are privileged to have with us some of the finest minds from the Subcontinent whose sustained perceptions of the agonies of nationhood in their representations across cultural forms have guided our thought and action. We look forward to them to share their thoughts and give meaningful direction to universal concerns at a time when the very fact of survival makes it imperative to bring out the positivity latent in our collective unconscious. The Conference will also proffer space for a limited number of participant presentations with a view to engaging in dialogue across the spectrum. The Dept. of English with CLTCS, NSOU will publish an edited volume of Proceedings at a later date in collaboration with a reputed publisher.

Call for Presentations:

Abstracts are invited in **not more than 200** words along with a maximum of **5 keywords** from participants willing to present at the Web-Conference. **Abstracts are to be sent along with the registration form (Google Form Link) as specified in this CFP.** It is to be noted that in the online mode, **we do not encourage the reading out of papers**, since the aim is to engage in meaningful deliberations. While the details of the web platform will be notified at a later date, the organisers confirm the facilitation of presentations using PPT, Audio-Visual clips, and other multimedia modes. **The allotted time for each presenter will strictly be 15 minutes, to be followed by discussions.** Scholars interested in partaking of the deliberations (without presenting) are also invited to register.

Subthemes for Presentation:

Abstracts are invited from willing participants on the following subthemes that are however indicative in nature:

- Nation and State in Culturalist Perception
- Contestations of nationhood in contemporary literature, film and other performing arts
- Dissent in Culturalist performativity
- Subcontinental assemblages in culturalist forms: Beyond national identities
- Civil or Political Societies: Cultural dynamics in new narratives of Nationalism(s)
- Polarised media or National Interests: The Dialectic of Nations
- Are distances social or physical: New psychologies of othering
- Environmentalism, Activism and the State

All abstracts received will be blind peer reviewed for selection.

Registration:

With the intention of making the Conference a paper-less one, all registrations including the submission of abstracts for review, will be conducted **only** through the following link:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSea3O851D40Q2p-fz>

[52tbiPoVBGy4QiEzOZxZ85KqnHXxb3Jg/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSea3O851D40Q2p-fz/52tbiPoVBGy4QiEzOZxZ85KqnHXxb3Jg/viewform)

The Registration Fees are as follows:

Category	Registration Fees	Registration Procedure for Presenters	Registration Procedure for Participants (without presentation)	Entitlement
Presenters from India	Rupees Five hundred INR only (Rs 500/-)	Registration fees to be paid after confirmation of acceptance of abstract, by going back to the same link (Google form) to complete payment.	Participants pay the registration fees at the time of online registration via Google form link as provided in the CFP.	Access to e-brochure Entry to all sessions of the Conference Duly signed e-Certificate according to the relevant category, on attending all sessions of the Conference Publication of accepted full length paper with ISBN after review.
Participants (without presentation) from India	Rupees One hundred only (Rs 100/-)			
Presenters from outside India	\$10 (Ten dollars only)			
Participants (without presentation) from outside India	\$ 5 (Five dollars only)			

It may please be noted that Registration Fees, once paid, cannot be refunded. There is no scope of attending the Conference without registering.

Bank details for payment of Registration Fees (**Online mode of transfers only**):

Account Name: CLTCS-NSOU

Bank & Branch: Allahabad Bank, Salt Lake City Branch, Kolkata, India

Account No: 50375446309

IFSC: ALLA0211829

Conference Email ID: nsouwebcon@gmail.com **Website:** www.cltcnsou.in

Dates to remember:

Last date for submission of abstracts: **July 10, 2020**

Confirmation of Acceptance: **July 15, 2020**

Last date for payment of Registration Fees: **July 22, 2020**

Publication of Conference Schedule: **July 28, 2020**

Receiving of Meeting Link on registered Email ID: **By July 30, 2020**

Web-Conference date: **31 July – 2 August, 2020**

Organizing Committee:

Chief Patron: Professor Subha Sankar Sarkar, Vice Chancellor, Netaji Subhas Open University

Advisors: Professor Manan Kumar Mandal, Director, School of Humanities

Sachindra Kar, CA, Finance Officer, NSOU

Organising Secretary:

Dr Srideep Mukherjee, Associate Professor & Head, Dept. of English,

Members: Dr Md Intaj Ali, Assistant Professor of English, School of Humanities

Dr Himadri Lahiri, Professor of English, School of Humanities

Dr Sumana Bandopadhyay, Assistant Professor of ELT, School of Humanities

Dr Joysankar Basu, Associate Professor of ELT, School of Humanities

Dr Tapan Datta, Associate Professor of Bengali, School of Humanities

Dr Anamika Das, Assistant Professor of Bengali, School of Humanities

Dr Pratul Kumar Pandit, Associate Professor of Bengali, School of Humanities

Sri Arijit Ghosh, Assistant Professor of Journalism &
Mass Communication, School of Humanities

Dr Baidyanath Bhattacharya, Associate Professor of Journalism
& Mass Communication, School of Humanities

Manan Kumar Mandal

Professor of Bengali.

Director, School of Humanities &

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