

**CENTRE FOR STUDIES IN SOCIAL SCIENCES, CALCUTTA,
R-1 BAISHNABGHATA PATULI,
KOLKATA 700094**

GENERAL SEMINAR

Arnab Chatterjee
Former Fellow, Indian Institute of Advanced Study
Shimla

will give a talk titled:

**“Castes and Cities as Corporations:
Sister Nivedita, Ambedkar and the forgotten debates on ‘Group personality’”**

Abstract:

Contemporary, now familiar, debates that base themselves on Ambedkar –Gandhi, or Gandhi-Tagore’ differences on caste or religion, nation or law--remain oblivious to the fact that the dominant registers of the debates lay way back in the early 19th century—since the days of Rammohun Roy and Keshab Chandra Sen. In such an exciting era Hiralal Haldar –a neo-Hegelian philosopher of 19th century Bengal had challenged a Cambridge philosopher on the group-personality of the football club. Sister Nivedita had rejected the ‘transitory’ post office and the railway station, advocating home as *the* proper dwelling and civic building under ‘civic ownership’ to institute a ‘civic mind’. She was worthily succeeded by B.R. Ambedkar who defined the caste as a corporation. All of them commented profusely on group or communal personality and were invisibly involved in a rich debate-- universal in its scope-- that had plagued medieval and modern political and legal theory, and though not much rehearsed -- is throbbing in relevance even today. In my presentation, after recovering this neglected chapter from the annals of (Indian) historical sociology-- and as a meek advocate of the ‘personalistic’ approach (personal as not private and beyond private/public binary), I shall contend- that these icons did not participate in these debates in passively derivative, insular ways, but radically, and actively revised the terms of the debate and contributed to modifying its contours- so much -that extending their theses, it is possible today to meditate on the current conundrums--- in the contexts of collective crimes like gang rapes or communal pogroms and caste wars---which are—and ought to be reflexive of our own positions and anxieties.

Date: Friday, 25th November, 2016, Time: 3 – 5 pm.
Venue: CSSSC’s Seminar Room, Patuli Campus.

Trina Nileena Banerjee
(Convener, Seminar Committee)
All are welcome to attend.