



NETAJI SUBHAS OPEN UNIVERSITY

School of Social Sciences

DD 26, Sector I, Salt Lake, Kolkata – 700064

Website: www.wbnsou.ac.in

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Memorial Lecture Series

The School of Social Sciences (SoSS) of Netaji Subhas Open University (NSOU) has been organizing this prestigious annual lecture consistently since 2010, the members of the School are also engaged in publishing the lectures regularly at due time. The University authority has decided to organise Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Memorial Lecture every year to pay its tribute to the great living legend dedicated for the freedom of the motherland from the colonial shackles, and entrusted it's largest academic unit at that time, the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, with the responsibility to conduct it in a rightful manner. Subsequently, however, the School was ramified and three Schools of Studies, viz School of Humanities, School of Social Sciences, and School of Professional Studies were formed in the year 2015. As such, the newly constituted School of Social Sciences, emerging from the erstwhile School of Humanities & Social Sciences, is now entrusted to hold the annual Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Memorial Lecture on behalf of the University. Thus, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Memorial Lecture has been initiated at NSOU as mark of respect to the undying spirit of "Netaji ", the great patriotic soul and an indomitable symbol of struggle against all the social oddities. Over the years, it has become one of the most prestigious and befitting annual event in the NSOU.

The Seventh and the last till now was the one delivered by Professor Sudipta Kaviraj, Professor of Indian Politics and Intellectual History, Columbia University, USA on 28.12.2017. The title of his lecture was 'Amra Ki Jati?' Honourable Vice Chancellor, Professor Subha Shankar Sarkar presided over the programme.

Kaviraj expatiated on the peculiarity of Indian nationalism. Interestingly, some of the intellectual and organizational techniques of modern disciplinary power were enthusiastically embraced by the new Indian elites. Traditional elites regarded these techniques with a sullen hostility. Yet the new elite created through modern education started taking an interest in disciplinary techniques almost immediately. There was an interest in instilling discipline into the human body through exercise, daily routine, and school curricula. Similarly, there were efforts to bring more discipline into the family and the lives of children through a science of domesticity. There was an urge to turn everything into discourse.



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Western educated intellectualism produces a written world; it seems particularly important to write the social world down, to pin every practice down on paper, to give it a reliable image, a fixity required for subsequent reflection. A new ontology, based on the distinction between economy, polity, and society as three separate domains that had internally specific laws, appropriate to the intrinsic nature of each sphere, was introduced by the self-limiting impulses of the colonial state, justifying its claim that it could not be responsible for everything in that vast and complex society. The state's proper domain was the sphere of the political. Slowly, emergent nationalists came to appreciate the huge enticement of this distinction, to claim and mark out a sphere from which they could exclude the colonial regime's authority by using its own arguments. The colonial administration applied this ontology of distinct spheres through their distinction between political and social activity, the latter indicating those aspects of social conduct that did not affect the state and were therefore outside its legitimate province. Indians, on their part, viewed this distinction as an extension of a traditional conceptual dichotomy between an "inside" and the "outside"¹² and claimed that religious activity or social reform fell within the internal affairs of Hindu society. The practical consequences of the distinctions were convergent and, for a time, convenient to both sides. The idea that Indian society was irreducibly different from the modern West, intractable to modern incentives and pressures, indeed in some senses incapable of modernity, gradually established the intellectual preconditions of early nationalism by enabling Indians to claim a kind of social autonomy within political colonialism. Such ideas led to a series of catachreses, slowly creating a sphere of subsidiary quasi sovereignty over society within a colonial order in which political sovereignty was still firmly lodged in the British empire. But this only created the space in which nationalism was to emerge; it did not determine the exact form that Indian nationalism would take, or, to put it more exactly, which one out of its several configurations would eventually emerge dominant.

The nationalism that emerged shows that all the clashing hypotheses of imposition, dissemination, emulation, and differentiation have significant points to contribute to its understanding. The first stirrings of nationalism are both emulative and oppositional. The modern elite naturally asked why India had become colonized. Eventually, the explanation of colonization is traced to three complex causes. The first, the most significant but also the most elusive, was



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the evident superiority of Western science, the West's cognitive grasp of the world through science and rationalist thinking. This meant that they could undertake and accomplish socially necessary things with greater deliberation and efficiency. But rationalist cognitive processes in themselves do not explain political mastery over the whole world. It is explained through a set of institutional structures of collective action, mostly associated with the state and its subsidiary organizations, particularly, modern techniques of political "discipline." However, quite distinct from the institutions themselves, Indian writers obsessively emphasized, there was a collective spirit of nationhood that animated Western political life. It is this spirit that helped the British to act with cohesion and come through the worst military and political calamities, while Indians started bickering at the slightest pre text and lacked, to use a common phrase, a "public spirit." Indians must, if they wish to flourish in the modern world in competition with modern European nations, develop these three things in their society: the control of modern knowledge, the techniques of creating and working modern institutions, and a spirit of collective cohesion called nationalism.

- ***This report is prepared by Dr Srabanti Choudhuri, Assistant Professor of Sociology, School of Social Sciences, NSOU.***