

“THE PARTITION OF BENGAL: THE TRAUMA OF REFUGEES”

Friday, 14 August, 2026



REMEMBERING A HISTORY THAT STILL LIVES

The Department of History, School of Social Sciences, Netaji Subhas Open University, organised a significant student seminar titled “The Partition of Bengal: The Trauma of Refugees” in observance of **14th August**. The seminar created an academic space to remember the human consequences of the **Partition of Bengal** and to **critically examine displacement, trauma, memory, gender, caste, literature and refugee life**.

The event brought together university officials, faculty members, researchers, scholars and students in an engaging academic discussion. The seminar highlighted how the Partition was not merely a political event but a profound social and human rupture that continues to influence the collective memory and identities of people across Bengal and the wider Indian subcontinent.

REMEMBERING A HISTORY THAT STILL LIVES

The session was hosted by Debajit Goswami. The programme commenced with a soulful rendition of “**Vande Mataram**,” composed by the renowned Bengali novelist and poet **Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay**. All the dignitaries and participants stood in unison and joined in the rendition, paying their heartfelt tribute and respect to the Motherland.



This was followed by the Welcome Address delivered by Smt. Ananya Mitra, Officiating Registrar, Netaji Subhas Open University (NSOU). She warmly welcomed the dignitaries, faculty members, and participants and set the tone for the programme.



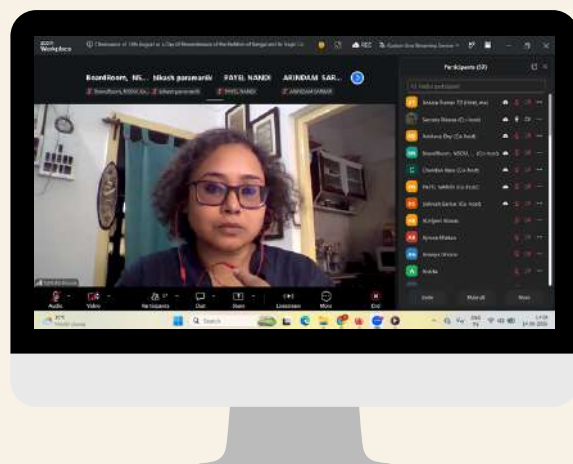
The Inaugural Address was delivered by Professor Barnana Guha Thakurta (Banerjee), Director, School of Sciences, Netaji Subhas Open University. Her address highlighted the significance of the occasion and emphasised the importance of fostering academic engagement, holistic development, and a spirit of collective participation.



FORMAT: HYBRID ACADEMIC STUDENT SEMINAR

The Chairperson, **Dr. Samata Biswas**, contextualised the continuing relevance of Partition Studies in contemporary academic discourse. She highlighted the growing importance of Partition literature and history in undergraduate and postgraduate education, particularly through discussions of borders, oral history, women's experiences, trauma, triumph, Dalit experiences and the long-term consequences of displacement.

An important dimension of her address was the idea of material memory. Everyday objects, shops, place names, literature and oral narratives can preserve traces of Partition and demonstrate how historical memory remains embedded in the cultural landscape of contemporary Bengal.

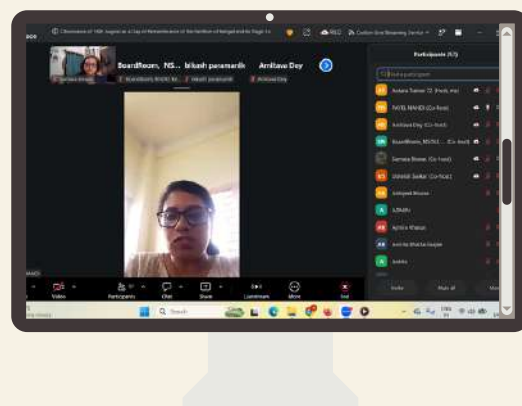


WOMEN, DISPLACEMENT AND TRAUMA

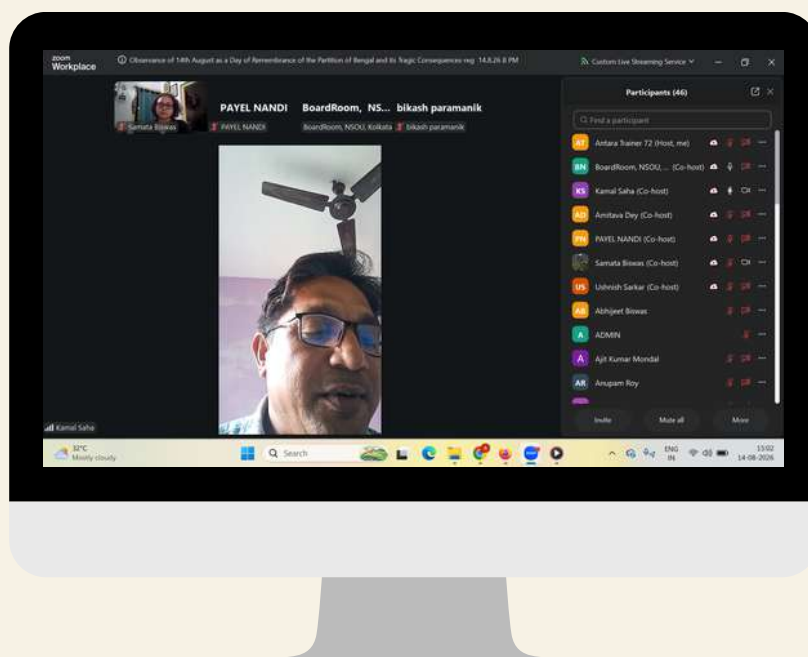
The first academic presentation was delivered by Ms. Payel Nandi, Research Scholar, Department of History, NSOU, on **"Independence, Partition and the Tragedy of Displaced Women: A Revisit."**

Her presentation brought gender into the centre of Partition history. She examined how patriarchal structures often overshadowed the voices and experiences of displaced women. The presentation explored multiple dimensions of women's suffering, including physical and psychological violence, family disintegration, caste-based discrimination, social insecurity and the struggle for identity.

A particularly important argument was that displacement itself was only the beginning of a prolonged process of trauma. Refugee women were subsequently required to negotiate new family structures, economic hardship, social expectations and unfamiliar workplaces. The breakdown of traditional joint-family structures also altered the boundaries between the private and public spheres of women's lives. The presentation also underlined the importance of recovering women's voices through **oral sources**, particularly because many traumatic memories remained unspoken or became blurred over time.



REFUGEE STRUGGLES THROUGH LITERATURE AND REALITY



The second presentation was delivered by Mr. Kamal Saha, Research Scholar, Department of History, NSOU, on “The Struggle of Displaced People: Literature and Reality.” His presentation explored the relationship between historical evidence, literature, interviews, archives, government records and personal memories. He argued that literature and oral testimony can complement conventional historical sources by revealing dimensions of refugee life that statistics and official documents may not adequately capture. The discussion referred to literary works including Prafulla Ray’s Keya Patar Nouka, Atin Bandyopadhyay’s Nilkantha Pakhir Khonje and Manusher Ghorbari, and Manoranjan Byapari’s Itibritte Chandal Jibon, alongside memoirs and recorded interviews. The presentation also highlighted refugee experiences in camps and colonies, the challenges of rehabilitation, social discrimination and the particular experiences of Dalit refugees. It demonstrated how literature and interviews can illuminate everyday realities—such as social exclusion, linguistic differences and discrimination—that may remain invisible in official records.

PARTICIPANTS



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One of the most intellectually engaging aspects of the seminar was the discussion surrounding memory and oral history. The speakers emphasised that memory cannot always be treated as an objective record. Memories are shaped by context, social conditioning and lived experience. At the same time, oral narratives remain essential for recovering voices that may otherwise disappear from historical scholarship.

The seminar therefore encouraged a multi-source approach to Partition research, bringing together oral testimony, literature, archival material, government records, contemporary newspapers and other historical evidence.



The session concluded with a Vote of Thanks delivered by Prof. Ritu Mathur (Mitra), Professor, Department of History. In her address, she expressed her sincere gratitude to the distinguished speakers, dignitaries, faculty members, participants, and everyone involved in making the programme a meaningful and successful occasion. The session came to a dignified conclusion with the rendition of the National Anthem, **“Jana Gana Mana,”** with all participants standing in respect. The anthem brought the proceedings to a solemn and patriotic close, marking the successful culmination of the session.