

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

GENERAL SEMINAR

Arnab Banerji
Assistant Professor of Theatre History, Literature, and Dramaturgy,
Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles,

will give a talk titled:

**“The White Inspiration: Lebedeff, his Bengali theatre and its Modern-day
Successors”**

Credits for the first Bengali-language proscenium play in the European manner are given to Herasim Lebedeff. Lebedeff, a band master and a Russian adventurer came to Calcutta in 1787. He employed a Bengali language teacher Babu Golak Nath Dass and under his tutelage translated two European plays: *The Disguise* by a certain M. Jodrell and Molière’s *L’Amour Médecin*. The two plays were presented as a double bill on November 27, 1795 and March 21, 1796 in a playhouse decorated in the “Bengallee style.” In this paper, I will investigate the inspiration behind Lebedeff’s effort at staging European plays in the “Bengallee style.” Lebedeff and his productions continue to be celebrated in Bengali theatre scholarship as the pioneering work in inaugurating the modern Bengali-language theatre. Lebedeff’s approach: staging lesser known as well as a more celebrated work of European/Western theatre in colonial Calcutta is still echoed in contemporary Kolkata. Theatre groups in the city draw inspiration from Western theatre conventions, texts, and styles reproducing them in a distinctly Bengali way. In my paper, I locate the genesis of this tendency in Lebedeff and the circumstances behind his inspiration to create theatre with locals.

Date: Friday, 8th January, 2016 Time: 3 – 5 pm.
Venue: CSSSC’s Seminar Room, Patuli Campus.

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