

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

GENERAL SEMINAR

Dr. Runa Das Chaudhuri

Affiliated Scholar at CSSSC

will give a talk titled:

**“Enchantingly Modern: Whispers of the Occult in Popular Psychic Healing Practices of Early
Twentieth Century Bengal”**

Abstract

Early twentieth century Bengal witnessed the budding of a constituency of spiritually inclined psychic healers who provided miraculous treatment to ailing patients through practices widely referred as *sammohan*. Practicing healers seemed to recklessly borrow from Western healing therapies of mesmerism and hypnotism on one hand and simultaneously appear on the other to vigorously harp, albeit covertly on the mystical kernel of indigenous occult tantric knowledge. This I argue, had the marks of an unsure modernity which was producing its own enchantment ironically in the public discourse by retaining the mystical essence of occultism under the shell of popular healing. This paper explores whether practices of *sammohan* placed between the medically sober and the erotically intoxicating provide a way to unravel the complexities of the ‘Bengali modern’. It also investigates whether the occult turn of psychic healing constituted an enormous, complex and internally complicated phenomenon yet posited simultaneously a coherent response to the dilemmas of modernism.

Date: Wednesday, 13 March, 2019; Time: 3 – 5 pm

Venue: CSSSC Seminar Room 2, Patuli Campus

Debdatta Chowdhury

(Convener, Seminar Committee)

All are welcome to attend.