

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

GENERAL SEMINAR

Varuni Bhatia
Assistant Professor, Department of Asian Languages and Cultures
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
will give a talk titled:

**“*Āmāder Apār Atmabismriti*’: Forgetting, Remembering and Recovering
the Self through Bengali Vaishnavism”**

Abstract:

There are some figures from the past that remain ambivalent, straddling memory, myth and histories of both professional and popular kinds. Chaitanya, the fifteenth century Bengali devotee of Krishna, is one such figure—and perhaps the most important one for Bengal. This paper will examine various discursive and material registers of recovering Chaitanya (and, by extension, Bengali Vaishnavism) adopted and activated by middle-class Bengalis in the late nineteenth century. The primary register that I shall discuss will be histories of Bengali language and literature that were beginning to emerge from 1870s onwards, where Vaishnava literature was granted a place of pride as constituting a key stage in the development of Bengali language. I will also discuss the historical/historiographic register in and through which Chaitanya’s recovery was enacted, as well as that of social change and transformation—wherein Chaitanyite Vaishnavism was first understood as “Hindu religious reform” and then later (in the twentieth century) through the contentious framework of the Bengali Renaissance. What were the intellectual thrusts and implications of such endeavors of remembering and thereby recovering an ambivalent figure—at once human and divine, historical and mythical, regional and pan-Indian? And how were these endeavors a part of *bhadralok* attempts to constitute an “authentic” Bengali self, at once thoroughly indigenous and thoroughly modern? This talk will try to raise and address some of these questions.

Date: Friday, 29th July, 2016.

Time: 3 – 5 pm.

Venue: CSSSC’s Seminar Room, Patuli Campus.

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