

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

**GENERAL SEMINAR**

Professor Francesca Orsini  
Professor of Hindi and South Asian Literature  
Chair, Centre for Literary, Cultural and Postcolonial Studies (CCLPS), SOAS

will give a talk titled:

**Reading Together: village pasts and futures in Hindi, Urdu, and English novels**

What does it mean to take multilingualism seriously when studying literature? One way, this paper suggests, is to consider works on a similar topic or milieu written in the different languages and compare *both* their literary sensibilities and their social imaginings. Rural Awadh offers an excellent example, as the site of many intersecting processes and discourses—of shared Hindu-Muslim sociality and culture *and* Muslim separatism, of nostalgia for a sophisticated culture *and* critique of zamindari exploitation and socio-economic backwardness, as the home of Urdu *and* of rustic Awadhi. This talk analyses three novels written at different times about rural Awadh—one set before 1947 and the others in the wake of the Zamindari Abolition Act of 1950 and the migration of so many Muslim zamindars from Awadh, either to Pakistan or to Indian cities. The first is Shivaprasad Singh's *Alag alag vaitarṇī* (1967), the other two are Qazi Abdul Sattar's Urdu novel *Shab-gazīda* (1962) and the Awadh subplot in Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* (1993). Without making them representatives of their respective languages, by "reading together" these three novels I am interested in exploring how they frame and what they select of Awadh culture, how much ground and sensibility do they share, and how they fit within and contribute to broader traditions of "village writing" in Hindi, Urdu and Indian English.

Date: Wednesday, 31<sup>st</sup> August, 2016

Time: 3 – 5 pm

Venue: CSSSC's Seminar Room, Patuli Campus

Trina Nileena Banerjee  
(Convener, Seminar Committee)

All are welcome to attend.