

Relocating Bengal Partition Milieu: Survival, Resilience and Belongings

Relocating Bengal Partition Milieu: Survival, Resilience and Belongings

Edited by
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Centre for Language, Translation & Cultural Studies (CLTCS)
School of Humanities
Netaji Subhas Open University
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Relocating Bengal Partition Milieu: Survival, Resilience and Belongings

A collection of papers

Edited by Dr Md Intaj Ali & Manan Kumar Mandal

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Dedication

To the millions of people who have lost their homes and families during Partition.

Message from the Hon'ble Vice Chancellor

I am delighted to note that another new title is ready for publication from the Centre created under the aegis School of Humanities of Netaji Subhas Open University (NSOU). Since 2017, the “Centre for Language, Translation & Cultural Studies” (CLTCS) has developed a praxis of collaborative research in the field of humanities, which is marked by enthusiasm. The Centre has taken up an optimistic project of creating a digital repository of the Bengal Partition by collecting memories from the people using the colossal network of LSC's that this Open University has across the state of West Bengal. The present volume titled *Relocating Bengal Partition Milieu: Survival, Resilience & Belongings* is an outcome of the International seminar held on February 29th and March 1st, 2020, in sequel to the project activity on Bengal Partition of which Professor Manan Kumar Mandal is assigned as the P.I.

It is a great pleasure for me to mention that the CLTCS, NSOU has recently signed a MoU with Bangladesh Open University, Gazipur, Bangladesh, to continue such collaborative research activity. I extend my thanks to the editors of this title, Dr Md Intaj Ali, Assistant Professor of English, and Director, School of Humanities and all enthusiastic member of the CLTCS, NSOU for their initiatives to publish this volume. This publication is a mark of appreciation for the effort put forward by CLTCS and their members.

I wish all success to the publication.



August 2022

S. S. Sarkar
Vice Chancellor
Netaji Subhas Open University

Foreword

The present volume is an outcome of the International Seminar titled *Bengal Partition 'Katha' Refugee, Border, Citizenship, and Memories in Literature* held on February 29th and March 1st, 2020. At its outset Bengal Partition Repository of NSOU was inaugurated by the honourable Vice Chancellor of NSOU while eminent Bengali writer Debes Ray was the chief guest of the session. The publication of the volume got delayed due to the pandemic. This was the third consecutive international seminar in connection with the people's research project on Bengal Partition funded by UGC-DEB & NSOU under the aegis of School of Humanities of Netaji Subhas Open University since 2016. Prior to this volume, we have published two other titles namely *Partition Literature: Open Praxis* (2015) & *Revisiting Partition & the Liberation war of Bangladesh: Contemporary Perspectives* (2018). However, the main objective of this people's project is to develop a modest digital repository based on people's memory, memento's, personal writings etc. Lectures, colloquiums and workshops have been organized on regular basis since 2016 to expand the gamut of repository.

Unlike other conferences and seminars, it has something to be recollected. Along with usual paper presentation as per CFP, the round table talks, meeting the authors and editors deserve special mention. Activists, social workers, and researchers have joined, like Sri Manoj Ray Bhounick, (*Noakhali Sammelani, Kolkata*), Sri Amulya Ratan Biswas (Hili, West Bengal), Sri Jiban Bhattacharya (UCRC, Kolkata), Sanjukta Sinha (*Anil Sinha Memorial Centenary Committee*), Anil Krishna Haldar, (*Bagerhat Samity, Hridaypur, 24Png(N)*), Dr Saktinath Jha, (*Baul Fakir Sangha, Murshidabad*). The session was moderated by the BPR Project Coordinator, NSOU. It discussed region-specific issues on the aftermath of Bengal Partition and critically addressed many trivial issues related to Bengal borderland. There were sessions like 'Roundtable 1 & 2', 'Meet the Author', 'Partition Lecture Series 10th & 11th' etc. Amar Mitra & Sadhan Chattopadhyay (Bengali fiction writer), Sasim Kumar Barai (Bengali writer), Jatin Bala (Bengali Dalit writer), Jharna Basu (Feminist writer) participated and discussed several issues on 'porus' borderland and personal anecdotes, the role of Dalit and minority groups, and so on. The most interesting part of this event was the release of the BPR Interview Catalogue which consists of 400 voices from

the margin. Mr. Mahfuz Anam, Editor, *The Daily Star*, Dhaka, Bangladesh, Professor Tapadhir Bhattacharya, Former Vice Chancellor, Assam University, Professor Fakrul Alam of Dhaka University, Professor Nandini Bhattacharya from the University of Burdwan, contributed as invited resource persons to this seminar.

We have received abstracts in Bengali & English as per the call for papers notified prior to the seminar and subsequently received some interesting full-length paper for this edited volume from the diverse areas on Bengal Partition. This is a modest attempt to compile those articles in book form a translation of a Bengali short story at the end as appendix. Dr Md. Intaj Ali, Assistant Professor of English of NSOU has done a commendable job in this regard. I express my sincere thanks to him and to all my colleagues of School of Humanities of NSOU.

The narratives of Bengal Partition are a saga of complex Bengali livelihood that has continued to remain present in the contemporary rubrics of Bengali psyche. Fictional anecdotes and write-ups are coming out of this historical event till date. Any attempt in this regard is partial and cannot be claimed as complete; gazing the circle of Partition riddle is complex and therefore any argument seems to be questioned at any point of time. History creates fiction here and the spatial domain of fictional representation becomes perforated narrative of livelihood. So, the critical process of historicizing and the narrativizing of Partition aftermath is interwind with contemporary reading of Partition texts.

In the last few decades Partition studies has created enormous enthusiasm among the reader and scholars across the country. On the eve of seventy fifth year of Indian independence, the thrice Partitioned nation and the trajectory it took, needs re-reading in the present context. Plethora of Urdu and Hindi writings available in the domain of partition literature. On the contrary, the presence of Bengali writings about Partition are little grey in the prevailing discourse of Partition studies due to lack of translation into Hindi or in English. Enthusiasm has been noted in this field in recent years to explore new narratives of Partition literature in English through translation. Consequently, the focus is seen to have shifted to ordinary lives along the border with different layers of livelihood. Therefore, it is worthy to take initiative to pick up and search for each incisive human dimensions of the aftermath. Seminars, symposium, deliberations involving the third-generation verdant lives and people working in the margin is necessary to relocate the Partition milieu. Our Partition studies has taken a

sharp bent negotiating with the authoritarian nation-state in recent years. The dialogue cannot be monolithic, it should accommodate voices from each sphere of the rubrics, cross-generational scribbles can also create meaningful dialogue.

In this volume young and enthusiastic contributors have shown apt interest to make it happen. I hope this volume will contribute to the narratives of Bengal Partition and our journey will continue with the people's research project undertaken by a people's university of West Bengal.

Professor Manan Kumar Mandal

Director, School of Humanities, NSOU
P.I Bengal Partition Repository

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