



Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta
R-1 Baishnabghata-Patuli Township
Calcutta 700 094, India

CULTURAL STUDIES WORKSHOP 2010

The Sacred in Contemporary Culture

Fifteenth Annual Cultural Studies Workshop organized by the
Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta
To be held at Santiniketan, West Bengal,
January 30 – February 4, 2010

The Centre for Studies in Social Sciences (CSSSC) in collaboration with Ford Foundation and the South-South Exchange Programme for the History of Development (SEPHIS, Netherlands) will hold its **15th Annual Cultural Studies Workshop from January 30 – February 4, 2010 at Santiniketan, West Bengal, India**. The broad theme for this year's workshop is **The Sacred in Contemporary Culture**.

Far from “phenomena born of religious conceptions” being everywhere in decline, fulfilling the prediction of its retreat from the spheres of art, education, or politics, the realm of the sacred has been historically reconstituted within contemporary life in a number of unanticipated ways. Instances of such reconstitution include: the renewed enchantment with, rather than repression of, the magical, even within industry and science; an increasing political focus on the consecration or desecration of icons, heroes, or histories; a secularism of the state matched by the supplemental sacrality of modern institutional spaces and processes; the adaptation of new technologies to the service of the sacred; modern states and their use of political theology. Indeed, we might say that the sacred and the secular have forged a new dependence in contemporary cultures, calling for a fresh assessment of the status of the sacred in contemporary life.

Within this broad focus, the Cultural Studies Workshop 2010 will discuss the following themes:

1. ***The Sacredness of Science***: What are the disenchantments and new enchantments that have proliferated alongside scientific discourses and cultures, and with what consequences for the future of the secular?

2. **Objects, Images, Icons:** The emergence of cult values within an increasingly commodified society; new economies of sacrality that attach to a wide range of objects; the return of the sacred to the worlds of literature, art and museums.
3. **Consecrations and Desecrations:** The politics of reverence and offence, the impact on lives, histories, spaces, and objects and the capacity for mobilization of communities and identities.
4. **Institutions and Rituals:** Has the sacred been “disembedded” from the social, and confined to specific sites and processes? Has it been kept at bay by the institutions of the state, or assumed only a relatively shrunken role within the realms of the personal and the private?
5. **Political Theology:** Have modern states and political ideologies refashioned for their use concepts that are innately theological? Do ideas of sovereignty, human rights, democracy or justice make their claims largely on the basis of faith?

The workshop is intended to give young researchers an opportunity to share their work with senior scholars in the field, including some of the faculty of the CSSSC. It is aimed at doctoral or post doctoral students (below the age of 35) whose ongoing or just completed work focuses on one or more of the themes listed above.

CSSSC will bear the expenses of rail travel (AC two-tier) and accommodation at Santiniketan for all selected candidates from India. Priority will be given to students currently affiliated to Indian educational institutions.

International participants who have studied, or have been working long term, in countries of the global South are also invited to apply. Their airfare and local hospitality will be covered by the CSSSC in collaboration with SEPHIS. **All readings and discussions, will be in English, and applicants are required to be proficient in that language.**

Those wishing to participate in the workshop may apply with their current c.v. clearly indicating date of birth; current academic affiliation and current postal addresses and email IDs. Applications must include a brief description (no more than one typed page) of the paper they intend to present which draws on their dissertation research.

Applications are to be sent to: Ranjana Dasgupta, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, R-I Baishnabghata Patuli Township, Kolkata 700 094. [email: csw@cssscal.org; cssscal@vsnl.net] by September 17, 2009.



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**The South-South Exchange
Programme for Research on
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