

# INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR: DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

## UNIVERSITY OF GOUR BANGA, MALDA

### **‘Walls of a Nation: Peoples, Culture, Memories, and Experiences’**

5 FEBRUARY 2019

#### CONCEPT NOTE

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Ramachandra Guha has rightly noted that generally works on history end on the precise date of 15th August 1947. The domain of ‘History’ ends with India attaining Independence, and where history ends political science, civics and economics begins. Guha argues that this is a wrong assumption—history persists, and hence there should be more works on post-Independence India. Taking this argument further, Sekhar Bandopadhyay writes: ‘We may perhaps further add that while the Historians finished their inquiries on 15th August 1947, the political scientist and sociologists did not quite begin until the 1950’s—that is not until the new institutions had taken proper shape in India and started functioning effectively.’

The trauma of India’s partition in 1947 played out differently in Bengal than in Punjab. The division of Punjab in the west happened at one go and was sudden, cataclysmic and violent. On the other hand, the partition of Bengal was a slower process, the displacement happened in waves and the trauma took a metaphysical and psychological turn, though no less violent than in Punjab.

The representation of the border in the lives of Bengalis can be explained by looking at the line that geographically separates the two nations. In some places, like Murshidabad and Nadia districts in West Bengal or Jessore and Khulna districts in Bangladesh, the border divides the same house into two, putting one side in West Bengal and the other side in Bangladesh. In most of the ordinary human senses, the existence of the border does not signify anything at all, and every day thousands of people cross this wall and enter into each territory quite easily. The urge to make a better living compels many poor Bangladeshis to cross the border in the dawn. From the rail stations of Krishnanagar or Ranaghat, they catch the local train to work as servants in the homes of the vast suburbs of twenty-four Parganas, Hugli and Calcutta (Kolkata) districts in West Bengal. Since the value of the Bangladeshi rupee is lower than the Indian rupee, these poor Bangladeshis are able to buy small lands in Bangladesh to have a better future. Many people simply cross the border by illegal means to gain entrance into India, and the local-level politicians provide them with the necessary official documents to become citizens of India in exchange for their allegiance to that member and their promises to cast their votes to the party that member represents.

The partition of 1947 divided Bengali communities into two sectors; *Bangal*, who were Bengali refugees (Bengali refugees from 1947 or 1971 or even when the military coup took over Bangladesh under the leadership of Hussain Muhammad Ershad in 1981 or 1982), and *Ghoti*, who originally resided in West Bengal. The suburbs of the greater Calcutta (Kolkata) region contain many *paras*, small areas consisting of approximately one hundred houses with

a distinct name to identify them and separate them apart. Some *paras* were sometimes dominated by the *Bangal* and some were dominated by the *Ghoti*. A mild neighborly hostility between *Bangal* and *Ghoti* exists among the inhabitants of these *paras*, and some even refuses to marry someone from the other sectors of Bengalis. The rivalry between *Bangal* and *Ghoti* seems an unending problem that even stretches into how residents support local provincial-level, Kolkata-based football teams; East Bengal and Mohun Bagan. The majority of East Bengal football team supporters are *Bangal*, while the majority of Mohun Bagan football team supporters are *Ghoti*. Those who were refugees still speak with a distinct local accent of Bengali inside their homes in order to maintain their originality as Bengalis from the other side of the border. Surprisingly however, neither party ever used its strength to erase the border, but rather spent its energy reminiscing about the past while maintaining its position as the victim of an unjust cruelty, or feel guilty that they were not. The tension and hostility between these countries so high that Bashabi Fraser expressed her surprise that these countries were ever united. In her poem “This Border,” she describes the border as a wall which “denies centuries of friendship and families,” and “Makes you my friend, my enemy” (Fraser, 2008, p. 594). It seems that the invisible wall has an emotional, political, and social presence in the lives of the Bengalis, and no one knows how to cross over it! The Seminar will look forward to explore the potentialities, possibilities and experiences of negotiating with the border, in the lives of the people in Bengal.

This Seminar will have sessions open for presentation of researched papers on the following themes-

**Sub Themes:**

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Borders: Experiences of the Geo-political existence</li> </ul>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partition Historiography</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defending and Experiencing the Border in Culture and Rituals</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partitioned Lives: Lives in Partition</li> </ul>                                  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crossing the Borders: Experiences and Predicaments</li> </ul>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Living with the Past: Memories, Reminiscences of the Partition in 1947</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partition: International Relations</li> </ul>                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communalism, Secularism, Securities and the Existence of the Border</li> </ul>    |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Violence and Partition</li> </ul>                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problems and Identities of the Refugees and Displaced</li> </ul>                  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Partition in Art, Literature and Cinema</li> </ul>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partition: Women’s lives and Identities</li> </ul>                                |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Love, Lives and Relations across Border</li> </ul>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questions on Inclusion and Exclusion in Partition</li> </ul>                      |

## Registration Details:

This seminar is open for presentation of researched papers. All interested researchers are requested to send their abstracts (complete with name, affiliation, email and contact numbers) for consideration to this email: [sociology.ugb.2011@gmail.com](mailto:sociology.ugb.2011@gmail.com) / [sen\\_sl@yahoo.co.in](mailto:sen_sl@yahoo.co.in) by **25 January 2019**. Selected abstracts will be communicated by 26 January 2019. No TA/DA is permissible.

All participants and paper presenters are requested to **register online for the seminar by 30 January 2019**. **After registration all are requested to upload the completed Registration form and receipt of the fees transaction to the emails stated above.**

|  |                        |
|--|------------------------|
| Last date for sending Abstracts  | <b>25 January 2019</b> |
| Date for communication regarding selection of Abstract   | <b>26 January 2019</b> |
| Last date for registration for the Seminar and sending the<br>1. filled in-forms<br>2. receipt of fees transaction | <b>30 January 2019</b> |

Interested outstation candidates (participants and presenters) may apply for accommodation along with their registration. Payment details shall be communicated later.

### Registration fees for Participants (in Rs.):

200/- (Students of present PG Batches and Scholars of the Department interested to participate need not register)

### Registration fees for Paper Presenters (in Rs.):

Teachers: 800/-

Research Scholars: 500/-

Student/Other Presenters: 300/-

### Bank Details

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**International Seminar**

5<sup>th</sup> February 2019

On

**‘Walls of a Nation: Peoples, Culture, Memories, and Experiences’**

**Organized by**

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF GOUR BANGA, MALDA, WEST BENGAL**

**REGISTRATION FORM**

**Only Participant/Presenter**

(Tick the appropriate category)

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