

Digitized Collections of India's Memory Institutions: A Socio-Historical Perspective

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SASNET Online Conference: Rethinking the Politics of Memory in South Asia

December 9-10, 2020

Introduction

- A **memory institution** is an organization maintaining a repository of public knowledge, and enables transition of knowledge and memory to the respective communities, such as libraries, archives, heritage sites like memorials and monuments, aquaria and arboreta, zoological and botanical gardens et al
- Memory institutions serve the purpose of documentation, preserving and indexing elements of human culture and collective memory.
- Archive is to society, what memory is to human beings
- These institutions allow and enable society to better understand themselves, their past, and how the past impacts their future.
- The repositories are ultimately preservers of communities, languages, cultures, customs, tribes, and individuality. These institutions eventually remain some form of collective memory.

Research Questions

- What is the role of some stipulated digitized collections to portray the rich cultural heritage of India?
- How the social impact of digital collection of India's memory institutions can be ascertained?
- How and to what extent the said collection of the memory institutions maintained pace in learning and research process, particularly in the context of Covid19 pandemic situation?

Objectives

- To enumerate the list of digitized collections of selective memory institutions of India
- To investigate the role of said digitized collections as the national heritage and to highlight respective salient features
- To investigate the socio-historical perspective of said digitized collections



A

Immersion of Mahatma Gandhi's Ashes in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh

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Abhilekh Patal of National Archives of India (NAI) www.abhilekh-patal.in

Immersion of Mahatma Gandhi's Ashes in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh

In this silent film, we can see the immersion of Mahatma Gandhi's ashes in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh and a tribute to the Father of the Nation. He worked unceasingly and gave his life so that men and creeds and races might dwell together under God in security and prosperity in India. In this film, you can see his followers in the form of freedom fighters who are seen giving tributes to the Mahatma, followed by a snippet in which we can see parade of military and paramilitary forces. Photography: Mr. James E. Mordant, Leonard Theological College Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh.

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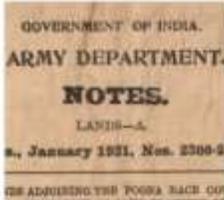
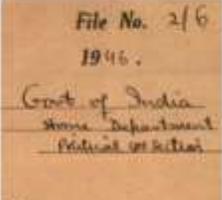
Online records of National Archives of India (NAI)

- National Archives of India (NAI) was established on 11 March 1891 as the Imperial Record Department, in Calcutta, India.
- In 1911 NAI was transferred to the new capital, New Delhi, and in 1926 NAI was shifted into its new building.
- Online records of National Archives of India:
 - Abhilekh Patal (Abhilekh-patal.in)
 - Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Papers (Netajipapers.gov.in)
- A searchable web portal of the NAI, "Abhilekh Patal" was launched on 11 March 2015 on the occasion of 125th Foundation Day Celebration.
- This searchable portal was launched with the intention of making the rich archival treasure accessible to scholars and users.
- Approximately 2.523 million records of reference media have already been uploaded.
- Collection Size: 71,028 digitized documents on Abhilekh Patal

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Papers (Netajipapers.gov.in)

- Digital copies of first 100 files relating to Netaji were released on 23rd January 2016 by the Prime Minister of India.
- Collection Size: Presently 303 digitized documents available on NetajiPapers.gov.in
- Holding departments:
 - Prime Minister's Office
 - Ministry of External Affairs
 - Ministry of Home Affairs

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Type Of Document	Digitized Document
From Year / Date (YYYY-MM-DD)	1956-10-12
To Year / Date (YYYY-MM-DD)	1956-10-12
Date Uploaded (YYYY-MM-DD)	2018-01-06
Organization	National Archives of India
Identifier	PP_000002286680
File No.	F.No.20
File Size	10.6
Pages	200
Collection	Digitized Private Papers Dr. Rajendra Prasad

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The Government of India had decided to declassify the files relating to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and make them accessible to public. This was announced by Shri Narendra Modi the Prime Minister of India on 14 October 2015 when he met a delegation of members of Netaji family at his residence in New Delhi. The first lot of 33 files which were declassified were handed over by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) to National Archives of India on 4 December 2015.

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Widow and daughter of Shri Subhash Chandra Bose -



N.S.C Bose (Annexure)



N.S.C Bose



Parliament Question No. 5218 in Lok Sabha Request



Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose: Proposal of the Embas



The Government of India had decided to declassify the files relating to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and make them accessible to public. This was announced by Shri Narendra Modi the Prime Minister of India on 14 October 2015 when he met a delegation of members of Netaji family at his residence in New Delhi. The first lot of 33 files which were declassified were handed over by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) to National Archives of India on 4 December 2015.

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Ministry/Department : Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)
Branch : N/A
Year : 1993
File No. : C/551/12/93-JP VOl- II
Volume/Part : Volume II
Location : NAI Repository

Subject

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose.

Description

Ministry of Home Affairs' note for Committee of Secretaries on "Controversy about Netaji's death and allegations that he was an MI-6 agent.



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File Type : PDF
File Size : 17230.98KB
Language : English
No. of Pages : 324

INDIAN MEMORY PROJECT

TRACING THE HISTORY AND IDENTITY OF THE INDIA SUBCONTINENT VIA IMAGES FOUND IN PERSONAL ARCHIVES



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- <https://www.indianmemoryproject.com>
- Initiated in February 2010, by Smt. Anusha Yadav in Mumbai, India
- The archive reveals valuable information about the Subcontinent's people, visitors, families & ancestors, cultures, lifestyles, traditions, choices, circumstances and thereby consequences.



*"No matter what he or she does, or how long or short they live,
everyone on this planet plays a central role in forming the history of the world"*

Indian Memory Project is a visual and narrative based online archive that traces the histories and identities of the Indian Subcontinent, via photographs (and sometimes letters) found in personal archives. Contextualised with narratives, the photographs are contributed to the archive from all over the world. The micro-stories reveal a macro narrative, and thus a powerful and historical palimpsest of a largely undocumented society and subcontinent.

With personal images serving as evidence, each post on the archive reveals valuable information about the Subcontinent's people, visitors, families & ancestors, cultures, lifestyles, traditions, choices, circumstances and thereby consequences. Indian Memory Project is an empathetic and personal memory of the world – a sociological and photographic history,

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- www.indianmemoryproject.com/archivedirectory/
- Includes 50 Digital Archives (India + Worldwide)
- About 35 Indian Archives
- Exemplary Ones:
 - People's Archive of Rural India
 - National Archives of India
 - 1947 Partition Archive
 - Tamil Nadu Archives
 - Tata Central Archives
 - Aditya Arya Archive
 - Godrej Archives
 - Manipur State Archives
 - National Film Archive of India
 - Archive of Indian Music
 - Khuda Baksh Oriental Public Library



DIRECTORY OF ARCHIVES - WORLDWIDE

The Directory of Archives is an update-able list of archives and institutions in care and custody of historical and references from the Subcontinent. If you'd like to recommend more that we should add, please ensure that the links indeed work and the archive site/catalogue exists online, and send us an email.

All links open new windows to external sites.

LIST COLLATED BY THE MEMORY COMPANY



PEOPLE'S ARCHIVE OF RURAL INDIA
A journalism website reporting



NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF INDIA
Custodian of the 2.7 million references and records of enduring



ASIA ART ARCHIVE
Independent non-profit documents and provides accessible to histories



BRITISH LIBRARY ARCHIVES
19th and early 20th centuries collections include texts of Jatra,



IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM (IWM)
Coverage of conflicts involving Britain and the Commonwealth,



Rural India: a living journal, a breathing archive

Can a project's success be judged on the basis of its never being completed? Yes, if it's a living archive of the world's most complex countryside. Rural India is in many ways the most diverse part of the planet. Its 833 million people include distinct societies speaking well over 700 languages, some of them thousands of years old. The People's Linguistic Survey of India tells us the country as a whole speaks some 780 languages and uses 86 different scripts. But in terms of provision for schooling up to Class 7, just 4 per cent of those 780 are covered. Most Indian languages are mainly spoken by people in rural India.

The Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India lists 22 languages whose development the country's government is obliged to promote. Yet, there are states whose official languages fall outside those 22, like Khasi and Garo of Meghalaya. Each of six Indian languages is spoken by 50 million people or more. Three are spoken by 80 million or more. One, by close to 500 million. At the other end of the spectrum, numerous tribal languages are spoken by less than 1,000 people.

- <https://ruralindiaonline.org>
- Initiated in December 2014, by CounterMedia Trust in Mumbai, India
- People's Archive of Rural India (PARI) showcases the occupational, linguistic and cultural diversity of India and covers a countryside that the dominant media usually ignore.
- Provides oral histories and narratives on India's vast rural society.

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Archives of Indian Labour

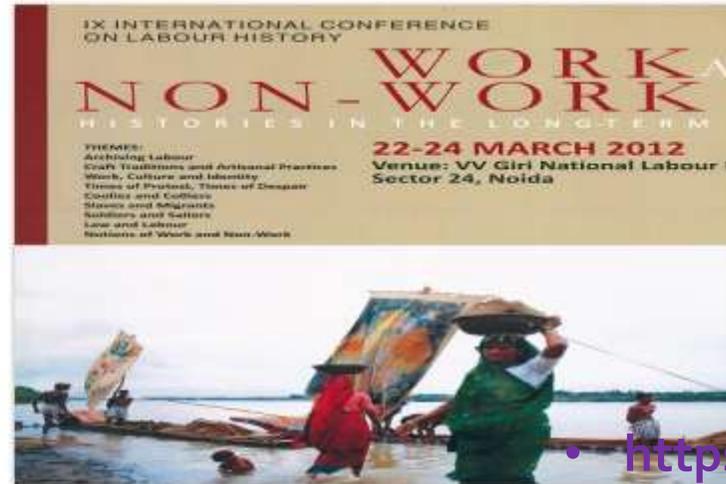
(A joint initiative of VVGNI and AILH)

"Archives is to society what memory is to human beings." from VVGNI and AILH Memorandum of Understanding 1998



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Major Document Collections
Gandhi and Labour
Commissions on Labour (1929-2002)
International Labour Organisation [India Office] (1929-1969)
Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS)
Bharatiya Khet Mazdoor Union (BKMU)
Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA)
Labour in the Indian Textile and Apparel Industry
All India Railwaymen's Federation (AIRF)



Upcoming Collections
All India Trade Union Congress 1928-1996
Oral History of Coal Workers with Special Emphasis on Impact of Outsourcing
Oral History of Labour Movement in India
Textile Labour in Ahmadabad
Bombay Textile Strike 1982
National Campaign for Construction Workers Legislation
Caste and Class Movement in Maharashtra 1929-1945

Communities in DSpace

Choose a community to browse its collections.

- ALL INDIA RAILWAYMEN'S FEDERATION**
 Archived Documents
- BHARATIYA KHET MAZDOOR UNION**

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Author

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- Commission on Labour

Subject

- National 227
- Commission on Labour (NCL)

Date issued

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- 1800 - 1899 1

- <https://indianlabourarchives.org>
- Initiated in July 1998, jointly the V.V. Giri National Labour Institute (VVGNI), NOIDA, India and the Association of Indian Labour Historians (AILH)
- "Archives is to society what memory is to human beings."

Archives of Indian Labour (Indianlabourarchives.org)

- Archives of Indian Labour preserves any kind of resources on issues related to labour, including:
 - Personal correspondence and biographical material of labour leaders
 - Documents of trade unions
 - Journals and newspapers addressing the labouring poor
 - Pamphlets, leaflets and posters issued by trade unions
 - Relevant papers of employees organisations
 - Relevant documents of business corporations
 - Oral testimonies, personal narratives of participants in labour struggles
 - Photographs, video tapes and films on labour
 - Work songs and other similar material of workers' culture
 - Trial proceedings in courts of law
 - Records of individual and collective labour disputes
 - Papers on international working class bodies
 - Records of the Ministry of Labour, National Commissions on Labour and other Government Agencies.

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- 
BHARATIYA MAZDOOR SANGH (BMS)
 Reports and Documents related to Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh
- BHOJPURI PRAVASI SHRAMIKON KI SANSKRITI AUR BHIKARI THAKUR KA SAHITYA**
 bhojpuri
- COMMISSIONS ON LABOUR**
 Reports and Documents related to National Commission on Labour (NCL)
- 
GANDHI AND LABOUR
- ILO INDIA MONTHLY REPORTS (1929-1969)**
 Monthly Reports related to International Labour Organization

Discover

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- National 74
- Commission on Labour
- Aggarwal, Archana 43
- ILO 42
- The High Court of Madhya Pradesh,... 24
- All India Railwaymen's Federation... 23
- Singh, Satbeer 21
- Shah, Manali 19
- Thengadi, Dattopant 18
- Neidunia Library 16

Subject

- National 227
- Commission on Labour (NCL)
- Construction Workers 163
- CMM 140
- BMS 118
- Trade Unions 110
- SEWA 104
- Niyogi Case 88
- Textile Industry 86
- Bidi Workers 85
- Mahatma Gandhi 75

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- Gandhi and Labour
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- International Labour Organisation [India Office] (1929-1969)
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- Bharatiya Khet Mazdoor Union (BKMU)
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- Oral History of Labour Movement in India
- Textile Labour in Ahmadabad
- Bombay Textile Strike 1982
- National Campaign for Construction Workers Legislation
- Caste and Class Movement in Maharashtra 1929-1945

<https://in.1947partitionarchive.org>

1947 ARCHIVE

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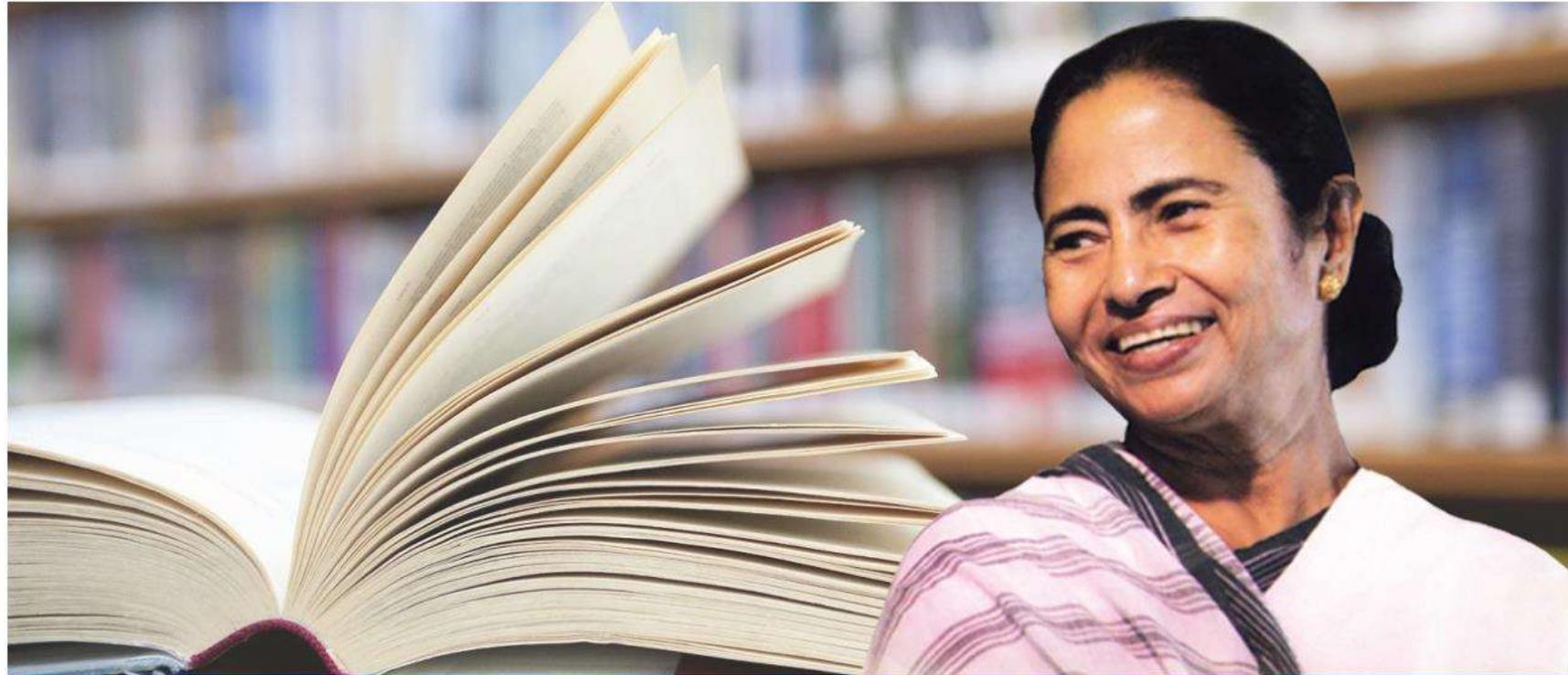
Click to explore Partition witness accounts and migration routes.

<https://in.1947partitionarchive.org>

- Over 9,140 interviews have been collected from more than 450 cities and villages in 14 countries including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh
- Searchable by City: Migrated From, Migrated To, Current City
- Portal launched in 2014.

Directorate of State Archive: Govt. of West Bengal





Digital Library of the West Bengal Secretariat

The West Bengal Secretariat Library at Writers' Building, Kolkata, is one of the oldest and largest library under Government of West Bengal. It has a traditional and historical significance. The library has a rich collection of books dating back from the British era till date. Some of them are very rare.

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Digital Library of the West Bengal Secretariat

Website: <http://wbsl.gov.in>

The West Bengal Secretariat Library, previously known as "Bengal Secretariat Library", was established in 1867.

WBSL at Writers' Building, Kolkata, is one of the oldest and largest library under Government of West Bengal. It has a traditional and historical significance. The library has a rich collection of books dating back from the British era till date.

Some of them are very rare.



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A Comprehensive, Alphabetical And Analytical Index To All The Acts Of The Legislative Councils Of The Governor General Of India, The Governors Of Bombay And Madras, And The Lieutenant-Governor Of Bengal To 1873 Repealed And Unrepealed

Author: Manuel, R. A.
Publisher: British Indian Press, Calcutta
Subject: Law
Publication Year: 1874
Head No.: XIV-354

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A Further Note On Some Casuarina Insect Pests Of Madras No. 11 (1912) Forest Bulletin No. 11

Author: Iyer, V. Subramania
Publisher: Superintendent Government Printing, Calcutta
Subject: Agriculture
Publication Year: 1912
Head No.: X-116

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A Manual Of The District Of Cuddapah In The Presidency Of Madras (1875)

Author: Gribble, J. D. B. Comp. And Ed.
Publisher: The Government Press, Madras
Subject: Public Administration
Publication Year: 1875
Head No.: XI-61

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A Manual Of The District Of Vizagapatam In The Presidency Of Madras (1869)

Author: Carmichael, D. F. Comp. And Ed.
Publisher: The Asylum Press, Madras

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A Comprehensive, Alphabetical And Analytical Index To All The Acts Of The Legislative Councils Of The Governor General Of India, The Governors Of Bombay And Madras, And The Lieutenant-Governor Of Bengal To 1873 Repealed And Unrepealed

Author: Manuel, R. A.
 Publisher: British Indian Press, Calcutta
 Subject: Law
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 Head No.: XIV-354

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Metadata Details

Head Number:	XI-61
Title:	A Manual Of The District Of Cuddapah In The Presidency Of Madras (1875)
Author(s):	Gribble, J. D. B. Comp. And Ed.
Description:	This book provides information about the trade and commerce, Irrigation, rituals, dress, animals and birds, rural wages, co-operatives etc.
Subject:	Social Sciences - Public Administration
Publisher:	The Government Press, Madras
Total Pages:	381
Publication Year:	1875
Digital Publication Date:	2017-03-20
Format:	Tagged Image File Format
Document Type:	Print - Paper
Document Category:	Manual
Disk Name:	WBSL-CDAC-1686

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A Manual Of The Kistna District, In The Presidency Of Madras (1883)

Author: Mackenzie, Gordon Comp
 Publisher: The Lawrence Asylum Press, Madras
 Subject: Public Administration
 Publication Year: 1883
 Head No.: XI-63

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MANUAL

OF

THE DISTRICT OF CUDDAPAH

IN THE

PRESIDENCY OF MADRAS.

COMPILED AND EDITED
BY J. D. B. GRIBBLE, M.C.S.,
ACTING SUB-COLLECTOR OF THE CUDDAPAH DISTRICT.

These papers are printed for convenience of reference, and do not acquire any authority from being printed in this form.

MADRAS:
PRINTED BY E. KEYS, AT THE GOVERNMENT PRESS.
1875.

Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Kolkata, India

5:21 Centre for Studies in S... cssscal.org

SOCIAL SCIENCES CALCUTTA

CENTRE FOR STUDIES IN SOCIAL SCIENCES, CALCUTTA
Annual Buddhadeva Bose Lecture

Prof. Swapan Chakravorty
Chairman, CSSSC
will give a talk titled:

“কবি কবিতা ও পরতন্ত্র”
“Kabi Kabita O Paratantra”

Please find the link for the event in the invitation email.
Date: 01 December 2020
Time: 7-9 pm IST
All are welcome to attend.

Rositika Choudhuri
Rositika Choudhuri
(Director, CSSSC)

Welcome to CSSSC

The Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, was founded in February 1973. Financed primarily by matching grants from the ICSSR and the Government of West Bengal, the Centre has full academic autonomy, is designed to function democratically and is proud of its impeccable record of public accountability.

Academic and administrative matters at the Centre are under the control of a Board of Governors consisting of representatives of the Central and State governments, the ICSSR, the UGC, the universities of West Bengal and the Centre's faculty.

5:14 Centre for Studies in S... cssscal.org

SOCIAL SCIENCES CALCUTTA

In the year 1993 the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences initiated a programme to preserve primary source documents on the social and cultural history of modern Bengal. This was part of a collaborative project on between Roskilde University Centre, Denmark, Centre for Basic Research, Uganda and the CSSSC with financial assistance through the ENRECA programme of DANIDA. The task of preservation began with microfilming rare Bangla periodicals of the 19th and early 20th centuries from the holdings of the library of the Bangiya Sahitya Parishat, the hundred-year-old public institution of letters. This priceless collection of old periodicals and books was fast becoming unusable through the lack of preservation. From 1994 the Centre collaborated with the Parishat in archiving a selection of periodicals in microform. This was the core of the collection of non-conventional historical sources that is named after Hitesranjan Sanyal, who, until his sudden death in 1988, was at the forefront of the Centre's researchers on the social and cultural history of Bengal.

Moving on from the preservation programme of 1993, the archive has become the focus of many major academic activities at the Centre including research, publications and exhibitions. The archive is mainly dependent on grants from different projects. Besides DANIDA the archive has received financial support from the Asia Centre of the Japan Foundation, and two consecutive small grants from the India Foundation for the Arts of Bangalore to develop the visual archive and to carry on research and documentation on the history of advertisements in Bengal. The collection now contains, in addition to 19th and early 20th century periodicals and books in microform, images from early popular culture to the paintings of the modern Bengal school, family, studio, amateur and...

Hiteshranjan Sanyal Memorial Collection (<https://www.cssscal.org/archive.php>)



5:12 Archive | Centre for Stu...
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SOCIAL SCIENCES

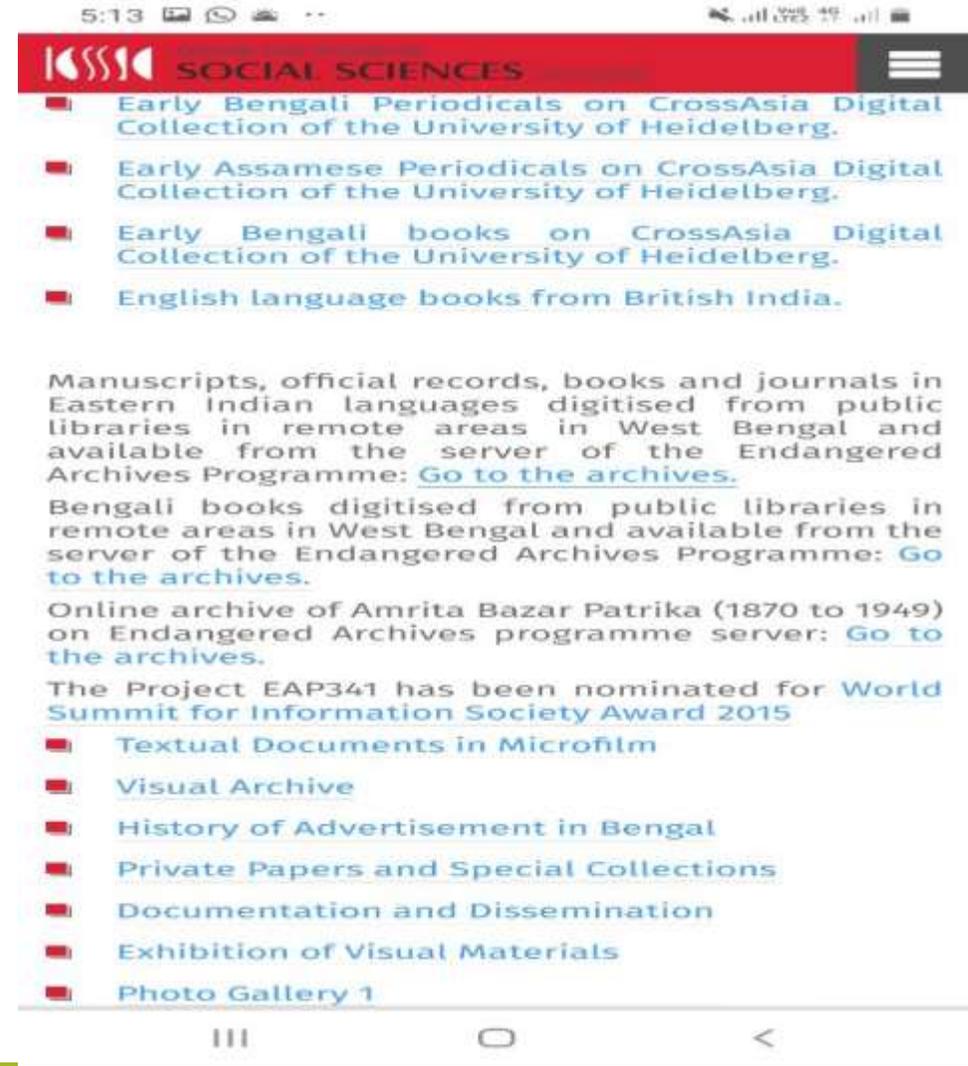
Archive

Hiteshranjan Sanyal Memorial Collection:

Centre's Urban History Documentation Archive



The digital archives of the Urban History Documentation Archives of the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences available for open access: Most of the printed documents archived by the CSSSC are available online for unrestricted access in collaboration with University of Heidelberg, The Endangered Archives Programme of the British Library and the Center for Research Libraries. The process of uploading of rest of the content is moving ahead and they will be available either on [CrossAsia](#) or on [Endangered Archives Programme server](#) soon.



5:13

SOCIAL SCIENCES

- [Early Bengali Periodicals on CrossAsia Digital Collection of the University of Heidelberg.](#)
- [Early Assamese Periodicals on CrossAsia Digital Collection of the University of Heidelberg.](#)
- [Early Bengali books on CrossAsia Digital Collection of the University of Heidelberg.](#)
- [English language books from British India.](#)

Manuscripts, official records, books and journals in Eastern Indian languages digitised from public libraries in remote areas in West Bengal and available from the server of the Endangered Archives Programme: [Go to the archives.](#)

Bengali books digitised from public libraries in remote areas in West Bengal and available from the server of the Endangered Archives Programme: [Go to the archives.](#)

Online archive of Amrita Bazar Patrika (1870 to 1949) on Endangered Archives programme server: [Go to the archives.](#)

The Project EAP341 has been nominated for [World Summit for Information Society Award 2015](#)

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Other Distinguished Collections

4:56 VoD 4G+ LTE2

Radha Prasad Gupta (R.P. Gupta)

R.P. Gupta (1921 – 2000), bibliophile, raconteur and collector showed how passion and curiosity drove his interest in collecting rare books, paintings, prints and popular ephemera. The CSSSC archive has been fortunate to document his large collection.

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Siddhartha Ghosh (1948 – 2002)

Siddhartha Ghosh's photographic collection in our archive ranges along three broad categories such as products from different studios, from family albums and the works of individual collections. Early Indian photography comes from the collection.

more →

4:56 VoD 4G+ LTE2

Archives - Jadunath Bh...
jbmrc.cssscal.org

temple photographs of rinesranjan sanyal - at housed in the strong-rooms at JBMRC, the digital collection is located in both the archives room in the main campus at Patuli and on the top floor of the JBMRC. All public use of the archives is at Jadunath Bhavan.

Introducing a selection of collections from the visual archives:



Radha Prasad Gupta (R.P. Gupta)

R.P. Gupta (1921 – 2000), bibliophile, raconteur and collector showed how passion and curiosity drove his interest in collecting rare books, paintings, prints and popular ephemera. The CSSSC archive has been fortunate to document his large collection.

more →

More Collections...

4:56

Archives - Jadunath Bh...
jbmrc.cssscal.org

Debaleena Majumdar (1919 – 2012)

Debaleena Majumdar made her reputation in the realm of salon and exhibition photography. The archive has benefitted immensely from the generosity of Ms. Majumdar and her family to allow us to document her wide range of works.

[more](#)



Parimal Ray (b.1936)

Parimal Ray is a rare collector who scoured the streets of Calcutta, fairs, markets and even junkyards in order to collect rare objects and popular ephemera. Parimal Ray has given our archives generous and unlimited access to his large collection.

[more](#)

4:56

Archives - Jadunath Bh...
jbmrc.cssscal.org

Parimal Ray is a rare collector who scoured the streets of Calcutta, fairs, markets and even junkyards in order to collect rare objects and popular ephemera. Parimal Ray has given our archives generous and unlimited access to his large collection.

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The Chitrabani Photographs

The Chitrabani series takes a look at the everyday life of Calcutta as a city and the activities and occupations of the city's poor and downtrodden. This collection is a socially conscientious documentary photography founded by the visionary Jesuit priest, Father Gaston Roberge.

[more](#)

Jadunath Bhawan Museum and Resource Centre- A Unit of CSSS (<https://jbmrc.cssscal.org/>)



- Sir Jadunath Sarkar (10 December 1870 – 19 May 1958)
- The renowned Indian historian
- The CSSS, Calcutta was initially established in his house, which was donated to the state government by Sarkar's wife.
- CSSS houses the Jadunath Bhawan Museum and Resource Centre, a museum-cum-archive of primary sources.

Jadunath Bhawan Museum: Collections

4:55

Archives - Jadunath Bh...
jbmrc.cssscal.org



Jadunath Bhawan Museum and Resource Centre

A unit of the **Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta**
Set up with assistance of the **Ministry of Culture, Government of India**

Archives

Named the



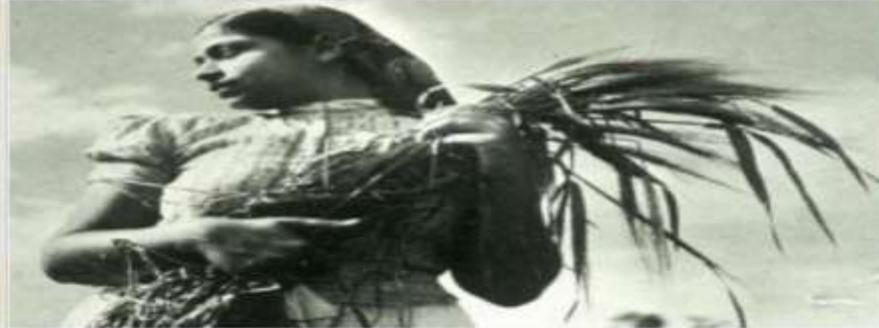
Hiteshranjan Sanyal Memorial Collection after the social and cultural historian who was a member of the CSSSC faculty from 1973 till his untimely death in 1988, the institution's archive began in 1993 with the project of microfilming

4:56

Siddhartha Ghosh (1948 – 2002)

Siddhartha Ghosh's photographic collection in our archive ranges along three broad categories such as products from different studios, from family albums and the works of individual collections. Early Indian photography comes from the collection.

more →



Debaleena Majumdar (1919 – 2012)

Debaleena Majumdar made her reputation in the realm of salon and exhibition photography. The archive has benefitted immensely from the generosity of Ms. Majumdar and her family to allow us to document her wide range of works.

more →

Conclusion

- Need to improve indexing and visibility of our national-level, state-level and community-driven digital archives on Wikipedia, and other international directories, search engines, and metadata harvesting services.
- Our research scholars should undertake a comparative analysis of the lesser-known archives, and publicize their digitized collections through scholarly forums.
- Their metadata and navigational features should be well-documented and presented in journal articles, conference papers, theses, and dissertations.
- There is a need to integrate available digital archives from India in a single platform to help the researchers and historians in finding out digital artefacts and reuse them in their scholarship.
- Interoperable digital collections with Open Licenses should be encouraged to develop.

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A SASNET Online Conference

Rethinking the Politics of Memory in South Asia

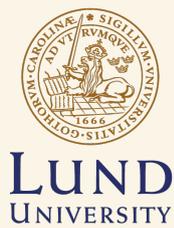
9-10 December 2020



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Introduction

The current debates around the politics of memory and memorialization reinforce that the act of remembrance and forgetting in the present does not exist in isolation from the past that informs them. This mnemohistorical continuity becomes even more apparent in the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic which has highlighted, like never before, the structural and systemic nature of privilege and inequality. The groups and categories of people who have been most adversely affected by the pandemic are also those who have been at the receiving end of historical injustice and oppression and in turn also the most likely to fall through the cracks of the meta-narratives of history and collective memory. Further, what makes the on-going discourse on memory politics immensely relevant is its universality in that it resonates with and speaks to experiences and histories of marginalization, exploitation and exclusion across national borders and cultures. For example, in the US the murder of George Floyd and the world-wide protests in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement that it sparked, has brought questions of race, historical injustice, the institutionalised remembrance of difficult pasts, construction of 'national memories', their silences and how they are contested into sharp focus. It is not as if these are novel concerns that have suddenly erupted as a response to the current tragedy. How and what we choose to remember and forget as collectives and individuals has always been a politically fraught issue as it is intricately connected to notions of power, belonging and exclusion.

Ironically, in India and South Asia in general, the global BLM protests received considerable traction, especially across the various social media with numerous posts expressing solidarity with it, including those from prominent public personalities, celebrities and film stars. And yet, the globally significant discussion on race and prejudice assumes myriad hues and dimensions in the South Asian context and needs to be acknowledged as such. This is so on account of a socio-political fabric deeply enmeshed in and shaped by religion, region, caste and class and their intersectionalities. How, and to what extent, do these play into and inform the processes of crafting and curating national histories and memories in South Asia? What are the silences that exist within it and how are they contested? What are the alternative modes of remembering, marking and accounting for 'difficult pasts' beyond the confines of state regulated memorial projects? Also, what events constitute dominant and rightful entry points into the field of memory studies and what are ignored? These are some of the questions that constitute the focus of this conference that calls for a rethinking of memory studies in South Asia beyond the analytical lens of the Partition that has tended to (and deservedly so) occupy centre stage in scholarship on the politics of memory in the region.

Conference conveners

Isha Dubey (Post-doctoral Fellow, SASNET)

Andreas Johansson (Director, SASNET)

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Schedule

DAY 01 – Wednesday, 09 December 2020

09:30 –
10:00 CET OPENING REMARKS (Dr. Isha Dubey & Dr. Andreas Johansson)

Panel 01 – Cultural production and heritage politics

- 10:00 -
12:00 CET
1. **Shabana Ali**
Evoking public memory and re-writing histories: Memorials within the anti-caste struggles
 2. **Pragnaparamita Biswas**
Politicization of Memory: Transforming the Personal Recollections into the National History in Maati
 3. **Moumita Sen**
The 'Demon' of Vanquished Histories: Memory and Myth in the Mahishasur Movement
 4. **Anna Stirr**
The Politics of Remembering Nepal's Cultural Martyrs: The Anekot Commemorative Gathering as Political Critique
-

Panel 02 – Heritage and the construction and contestation of national memory

- 10:00 -
12:00 CET
1. **Shahul Ameen KT**
The Making of a Heritage City: Conservation as Development and Social Exclusion in Ahmedabad
 2. **Debadrita Chakraborty**
Biopolitics, Necropolitics and Nostalgia in the making of the nation: Race, Citizenship and Gender politics in India in times of Covid-19 (working title)
 3. **Bidyarthi Dutta & Anup Kumar Das**
Digitized Collections of India's Memory Institutions: A Socio-Historical Perspective
 4. **Hamari Jamatia**
North-East India and the Imaginations of Sacred Space
 5. **Mirza Zulfiqur Rahman & Edward Boyle**
Borders of Memory at India's Northeastern Edge
-

Panel 03 – Violence, collective memory and trauma

- 10:00 -
12:00 CET
1. **Runa Chakraborty Paunksins**
Reclaiming Identity: Memory as Mechanism of Protest in The Blood Island and Shikor Chhera Jibon
 2. **Sujeet Karn**
"Grief arising out of Violent Death is like swallowing a hot Chilli" A Nepali Case
 3. **Greeshma Mohan**
Remembering and Responsibility: A study of Dalit life narratives
 4. **Sumit Saurabh Srivastava**
Remembering collective violence: Interplay between caste and gender in a north-Indian rural hinterland
 5. **Marvi Slathia**
Collective violence, state machinery and communities: A study of Hindu and Muslim survivors of Jammu and Kashmir
-

12:00 -
13:00 CET LUNCH BREAK / ZOOM LOUNGE ROOM FOR SPEAKERS