

REPORT  
Fifth Critical Studies Conference  
“**Accumulation under Post-Colonial Capitalism**”  
(Organized by the CRG and the RLS)  
August 21-23, 2014; Swabhumi, Kolkata

The Fifth Critical Studies Conference was organized by the Calcutta Research Group (CRG) in association with the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, Berlin (RLS), from August 21 to 23, 2014, in Kolkata. The programme of critical studies conference (usually held biennially) is designed to promote critical thinking and investigations into significant themes of our time, particularly in countries like India, and develop a community of critical thinkers and activists trans-nationally. The idea has always been to promote critical thinking and exchange of arguments, rationales and experiences. This year, too, the Conference, organized on the theme “Accumulation under Post-Colonial Capitalism”, seems to have served its rationale faithfully and attained its goals.

The Conference was inaugurated on August 21 with the welcome address by **Paula Banerjee**, President, CRG. She welcomed all the participants and the distinguished audience with the promise of vibrant academic discussions and the famous Kolkata hospitality for the next two days. The theme of the conference was introduced by **Ranabir Samaddar**, Director, CRG. Samaddar started by recounting the themes of the earlier Critical Studies Conferences, namely “What is Autonomy?” (First Critical Studies Conference), “Spheres of Justice” (Second Critical Studies Conference), “Empire, States and Migration” (Third Critical Studies Conference), and “Development, Logistics and Governance” (Fourth Critical Studies Conference). He explained the logical connection between them and this year’s theme. In his view, accumulation under postcolonial capitalism tends to blur various geopolitical boundaries of space, institutions, forms, financial regimes, labour processes, and economic segments, on one hand, and creates zones and corridors on the other. Hence, to address this contradiction, any study on postcolonial capitalism must take “border” as the most important institution which needs to be transgressed for its actualization – political and natural borders, borders of markets, sites of production and circulation, and most importantly the border between necessary labour and surplus labour. Only a border-centric study, Samaddar elaborated, could unravel the dialectics of postcolonial capitalism. He also drew our attention on the peculiar but structurally necessary coexistence of both primitive and virtual modes of accumulation in the postcolony. With increasing inflow of virtual capital in the form of offshore funds, venture business, hedge funds, internet based investment and banking, and forward trading, more people are forced to accept precarious work conditions in the unorganized sectors resulting in massive de-peasantization and creation of immaterial labour.

Samaddar’s introduction was followed by the lectures of the three speakers of the day. The first lecture was delivered by **Paranjoy Guha Thakurta**, eminent journalist and educator. He laid before us a picture of a changing world when the Left is at their weakest in India with the closing down of the planning commission, the last vestige of the Nehruvian mixed economy, and disinvestment in the public sector. At a time when the BRICS countries are planning to open a global bank to cater to the needs of the rapidly developing countries, the poverty gap due to food inflation seems to widen every day. Guha Thakurta spoke about the problems of categorization – in which compartment of political economic order one should locate China or the Scandinavian countries? He was in the opinion of naming the regime of postcolonial

accumulation as “accumulation by theft or loot,” since a major form of capitalist accumulation in India after liberalization was the extraction of natural resources like iron ore, natural gas and coal along the “red corridor” in the Maoist-influenced areas through a liaison between the state and big corporations. He also pointed to the innumerable instances of corruption that besmirched these deals.

The next speaker, **Parimal Ghosh**, Professor, Department of South and South-East Asian Studies, University of Calcutta, asked for a rereading of Marx and Rosa Luxemburg to find the linkages between their theories and economic and political conditions in the Indian subcontinent. He insisted that, although Marx considered that the time and processes of primitive accumulation were over, it still continues in many parts of the world. He went back to the old debates on the colonial mode of production and argued for its centrality even in today’s conditions, where traces of the coexistence of feudalism and capitalism are still evident. Capital, in his opinion, always needs an outside to survive and get realized.

**Samita Sen**, Vice-Chancellor, Diamond Harbour Women’s University, West Bengal, was the last speaker of the day. Reminding us that Luxemburg was one of the early feminist Marxists, she called our attention to the case of family household as a site of non-economic production which is also projected as a non-capitalist outside. She also spoke on the feminist scholarship on reproductive labour that constitutes the outside domain of exchange. Commodification of household labour and reproduction has been a topic in feminist discourses for a long time. It is also gaining importance in today’s contexts of immaterial and affective labours. Affective labour actualized in the forms of care work and reproductive labour leads to the conceptualization of affective value by focusing on the labouring body and subjectivity. Affective value is often taken to be a cultural category, and not an economic category, in spite of its vulnerability to exploitation. These new forms of accumulation, however, result in new discursive and political terrains of struggle, leading to relational transitions like the one from “prostitutes” to “sex workers”. They also make us re-conceptualize the female body as *reproductive commons*. In this sense, accumulation of reproductive labour in the case of extreme capitalization of the sector negates the idea of the outside to capital and paves the way for a more incisive theorization of the relation between capitalism and reproduction.

Between them, Samaddar, Guha Thakurta, Ghosh and Sen, then, flagged intercalated issues of footloose labour and crony capitalism, classical doctrine and critical revision, gender and violence, commons and commodification that crosshatch to produce the complex contours of contemporary capitalism and concomitant accumulation. The blueprint they adumbrated efficiently encompassed in anticipation the various thought-provoking presentations and stimulating discussions that were to follow in the next two days.

### **Finance Capital, Extraction, Resource Crisis- 1**

The opening session of August 22 was chaired by **Paula Banerjee**, President, CRG. The discussant for this session was **Mouleshri Vyas**, Professor, Centre for Community Organization and Development Practice, School of Social Work, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. The first speaker was **Pinku Muktiar**, research scholar, Sociology Department, Tezpur University. The title of his paper was ‘Rural Out-migration of Nepali People in Assam: A Case Study in the Sonitpur District’ Muktiar’s paper was based on a study of rural out-migration among the Nepali community of Assam to the big cities of the Indian mainland. He connected the experiences of migration with the contemporary paradigms of development and expansion

of the global capitalist order. The Nepali people migrated to Assam in the colonial period as herdsmen, porters, soldiers, marginal farmers, etc. Muktiar's paper, however, focussed on the recent trends of out-migration of the Nepalese-speaking people in Assam in search of livelihood. His fieldwork was based on an area called Telia Gaon, an area located about 35 kilometres west of the Tezpur town. Muktiar observed that all those who migrated from this area had lost their livelihood due to erosion, flood, sand deposition or wearing-off of grazing fields. They had separated from primary means of production mostly due to natural calamity or due to unviable agriculture. This is another form of primitive accumulation often facilitated by the erroneous policies of the government and indifference towards environmental degradation.

The second paper at this session was presented by **Seema Ahmed**, scholar, Institute of Development Studies, Kolkata, and **Murshed Alam**, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Gour Mahavidyalaya, Malda. The title of their paper was 'Postcolonial Capital Accumulation and Unorganised Labour Migration: Resituating Subaltern Theory and the Neo-Subaltern.' The paper proposed to make a four-fold argument: First, it addressed the question of accumulation – both the existing capitalist accumulation by expansion and primitive accumulation in this neo-liberal conjuncture. Secondly, it dealt with the new subaltern domains created by capital accumulation in contemporary India. It took up one such subaltern group – the question of unorganized labour migration as a domain of exclusion and exploitation in the triumphant march of capital. Ahmed and Alam substantiated their argument with an ethnographic study of labour migration from select villages of Malda district of West Bengal. Thirdly, while dealing with capital accumulation and newer areas of subjugation in neoliberal times, the paper engaged with the theoretical formulations of Kalyan Sanyal and Partha Chatterjee on the 'reversal of primitive accumulation' or its 'effects' through welfarist governmentality. Finally, the paper dealt with the new areas of engagement these domains of subordination by capital have offered to the Subaltern Studies.

The next speaker, **Haimanti Pakrashi**, who did her Masters from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, read a paper titled 'Transformation from being peasants to Climate Refugees: A case study of five Indian Sunderbans Villages.' She wanted to look into problems of livelihood and the factors associated with outmigration in relation to the vulnerability of the region in terms of both economic and physical environment. The phenomenon of outmigration has increased since the devastating cyclone, *Aila*. Climate has significantly played a role in making life difficult for the people living here. The paper looked into the prevalent development pattern in the unique region and enquired into the measures adopted by the local government bodies.

The discussant of all the papers was **Mouleshri Vyas**, Professor, Centre for Community Organization and Development Practice, School of Social Work, Tata Institute of Social Sciences. In her discussion of Muktiar's paper, Vyas pointed out that a strong connection existed between the geographical context of the region and the dynamics of migration. She also enquired about the instances of de-skilling due to outmigration. The issue of violence against women also featured in the discussion. In the discussion of Ahmed and Alam's paper, Vyas asked about the role of the contractors and middlemen in the context of the relations between labour and capital. Also it is of some importance to explore what impressions the migrants have of the urban space. Do they consider it as an enclave of village space within the city? Speaking on Pakrashi's paper, Vyas drew attention to a situation where people are pushed to the margins because of lack of alternatives and have to get into struggle with their own physical environment. Vyas' general remarks for all the speakers picked up the points of precarious

labour, insecurity of identity along with that of the jobs, and formation of communities as an expression of agency, although decked with new hierarchies. Often, she told, old strategies of mobilization gave way to new organizational norms. The responses from the audience were quite diverse in range, although the central problematic featuring in almost all the questions was about the relationship between accumulation and migration, and also the differences in perception by different parties involved in these processes. Whereas the local people at the Sunderbans find the procedures of collecting forest produce risky, it is translated by the government as hazardous, and hence, provides the logic of displacement. There were also questions about research methodologies and how far they could be extended to accommodate new concerns and ideas.

### **Finance Capital, Extraction, Resource Crisis-2**

The second session of the day had three speakers: **Ahilan Kadirgamar**, Doctoral Candidate, Graduate Centre, City University of New York, **Suhit K. Sen**, Senior Academic Fellow, Indian Council of Historical Research, and **Madhuresh Kumar**, Independent Researcher and National Organiser, National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM). **Sabyasachi Basu Roy Chaudhury**, Vice Chancellor, Rabindra Bharati University, discussed all three presentations. This session was chaired by **Manabi Mazumdar**, Professor, Political Science, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta.

Kadirgamar, whose paper was titled "Rural Income, Rural Debt and the Dynamic of Accumulation in Post-war Jaffna", started by locating the region of Jaffna in Sri Lanka within its history and the war, as a small area used for cash crop, which registered a massive economic boom in the 1970s. The majority here comprised landholding castes; as such, the area witnessed major caste struggle – but such struggles were displaced with the rise of Tamil nationalism. Sri Lanka opened up its economy in 1977. Interestingly that was also the time when the ethnic conflict started. The conflict gave birth to massive displacement, with the upper castes migrating and forming Tamil diaspora – as a result the Jaffna region saw little capital accumulation, and practically no investment. The predominant strategy of the state has been to integrate economy through market, and an expansion of credit. Post war, major initiatives of the government have endeavoured to restart agriculture. But this initiative begs the question: what is the economic future of the Jaffna people? Is the earlier cash crop boom and small-holding agriculture still possible? The fact of people going back to similar professions as before has raised questions about rural income; further, rural debt (to the formal sector, banks, etc.) has become the dominant concern. The specific site of this paper is a village in the region where between 1980 and 1982 a research project on agrarian change was carried out. The period was marked by a scissors crisis, so to speak; cash-crop prices falling due to trade liberalisation and input costs going up. Higher input of strongholders may have got rid of the crisis, but the period was immediately followed by the war that changed the existing society and economy drastically. Coming to the present day, it was found that agricultural output is high; but agri-income is in a very bad state. Household expenditure has gone up in the process of monetization. Expansion of credit networks entailed the government encouraging the banks to expand their branches in rural villages, and the workers were expected to figure out their own livelihood with the help of the banks. The new northern spring loan was given out individually to farmers – people were supposed to find employment using credit. Tractors or irrigation pumps could be purchased; auto rickshaws, etc., could also be purchased; but the failure to pay instalment would entail

pawning of gold jewellery. Instead of the credit system enabling the agri-labourers to find more secure and sustainable livelihood, what was witnessed was the fact of one loan cascading into another, making livelihood doubly difficult. The biggest financial banks started floating global bonds to prove that their assets are the loans that people have taken out. At the same time, diaspora remittance has been going down – men and women have been migrating to the Middle East. But such migration also requires capital. Hence, what is witnessed in the present day is the abysmal situation of the bottom rung of the population being left with no way out, forever trapped in cycles of poverty.

This presentation was followed by a series of questions and opinions. Mithilesh Kumar raised concerns about the methodology of studying villages in the present era. With the influx of certain kinds of capital, does agriculture not change? How can agriculture become viable and for whom? Parivelan enquired about the modes in which people managed to survive the war but post-war fell into debt traps. What is the scope for refugees from outside to get back in? With the Chief Minister of the Northern Provincial Council not getting funds from the centre, what scope is there for people to revive? Iman Mitra enquired about micro-credit networks in Sri Lanka?

In his paper titled “The Politics of Bank Nationalization 1969- 76”, Suhit K. Sen began with a caveat: the present study of the politics of bank nationalisation is a part of a larger study about political change in post-Nehru era. Indira Gandhi announced nationalisation of 14 banks in 1969. This decision was challenged in the court that struck down the nationalisation ordinance. Prolonged judicial proceedings were carried out about compensation and fundamental right to property. What was the politics surrounding the nationalisation project? At the same time, there was also another radical social policy: abolition of the privy purses. Between 1967 and 1969, there were prolonged battles about nationalisation. Morarji Desai, the then finance minister, opposed it. The radical socialist wing in congress pushed for it. In 1968, the Congress enclave decided that social control of banks not amounting to nationalisation would ensue. In 1969, the Reserve Bank of India could take steps to direct credit and mobilise deposits. In the mean time, there was a measure of problem in Congress. Ex-communist elements in Congress, the CPI people had embarked upon an infiltrationist policy. The entire political situation was coming to a critical mass. On the one hand there was Indira Gandhi who had the help of the younger crowd, and, on the other, there was the old guard, the syndicate, who after Nehru’s regime established control over the party organisation, supervising the transition from Nehru to Lal Bahadur Shastri, and Shastri to Indira Gandhi. The 1967 elections were a debacle for the Congress. There was a power tussle in the Congress with the old guard trying to clip Indira’s wings, and Indira, with the help of the kitchen cabinet trying to resist this. Against this background, bank nationalisation of 1969 became a focus of attention. The Indira Gandhi camp pushed for it. What did bank nationalisation achieve? There was inaction from 1969 to 1976; nothing happened. There was marginal increase in lending to the priority sectors, small scale industry, agriculture, export, and marginal decrease in lending to large-scale and medium-scale industry. After nationalisation, the government and the Reserve Bank (the department of banking was created) failed to stop unmitigated lending to the private sector. Misuse of credit was also not stopped.

In response to this paper, Rajat Roy urged Sen to also inquire into coal nationalisation, taking place simultaneously with bank nationalisation. He intoned that the effort of the state to control resource and capital has also to be seen in conjunction with other processes as well.

The third paper of this session by Madhuresh Kumar was titled “Development in the age of Resource Accumulation, Dispossession and Resistance”. Indian government, he offered, has experimented with different industrial development policies since independence. An earlier policy involved setting up bodies at the State level such as Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC), etc. These agencies acquired and developed land, and then handed it over to private companies and corporations under various schemes. However, the process did not achieve the desired results: in most cases half of the land acquired remains unutilized; many of the industries today are either sick or defunct or have been converted to other purposes. With the reforms a renewed effort to attract investments and industrialization began by the successive governments since 90s. The Special Economic Zone (SEZ) Act was a step in that direction of attracting investment. However, SEZs became a symbol of large-scale resource transfer from peasantry to corporations: the resulting stiff resistance from people and financial crisis made sure that many SEZs did not take off. Consequently, Industrial Corridors are now proposed as the new model of industrial development by the government and Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC) is the first among many such. The basic idea behind these corridors is the need to create infrastructure so that existing industrial areas can be more accessible and it is easy for new ones to develop. This kind of development projects undermines democratic institutions, since there is a clear exclusion of the role of the local self government institutions. For instance, the gram panchayat does not have a role in SEZs and a similar pattern seems to be followed here. Similarly there are concerns with regard to land and water grab, serious environmental impacts, the larger question of people’s sovereignty and so on. Along with the Industrial corridors, a large number of electricity generation projects in coming decades with an emphasis on high economic growth are leading to unplanned infrastructure development, an urban centric growth model at the cost of rural India and wanton appropriation of natural resources by public and private corporations through various privatisation and reforms measures. The construction of large numbers of thermal power plants and dams for meeting the projected electricity targets will have multiple impacts on the environment and livelihood and cause massive social unrest and conflict in India. Many parts of the country are already facing severe shortages of water for drinking and agricultural uses. With a hugely growing population and a penchant for additional large industries there will be unmanageable demand for water in the years to come: this, coupled with a huge addition to coal power capacity, will result in a national crisis. Large number of thermal power plants, nuclear plants, chemical hubs, ports, airports, industrial corridors and so on developed by private corporations mean resource accumulation at an unprecedented scale. In postcolonial India, resource accumulation has shifted from the exclusive domain of government to few corporations. No wonder then that the spectrum allocation scam, coal scam and others have been unearthed recently and they show complicity of various corporate houses. The development process in India today has earned the dubious distinction of being crony capitalism. The process of accumulation has nearly displaced 100 million people from their land and livelihood sources since 1947, a huge social cost. These people have resisted these accumulation processes and worked to develop an alternative discourse of development over the years. Kumar’s paper aimed at looking at these process of resource accumulation in the name of development and resistance to it.

In response to Kumar’s paper, R. Srivatsan asked: When the SEZ act was passed, many people opposed Kamal Nath claiming that it would distort the market price of property. SEZ act also says that the price paid to the seller of land must take into account the increase in value due to industrialization. What changes does the new Prime Minister Narendra Modi propose and what

does that mean for the new capitalist forces? The Narmada movement was fought alone commented Rajat Roy, and in isolation by an organisation. Popular movements are usually disconnected from mainstream politics. Similarly when BALCO workers tried to resist, popular movements did not join them. Iman Mitra asked the speaker if there is a possibility of a link between the short-lived careers of mass movements, from the leaderships to its sustenance. What scope of leadership of the masses was there without questioning the changing nature of these masses, he asked.

*During the post-lunch deliberations, there were two successive sets of parallel sessions: Race, Caste, Gender & Indigenous Peoples as the Multiple Axes of Postcolonial Capitalism-1 & 2 (from 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.) and Cities and Migrants-1 & 2 (from 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.)*

### **Race, Caste, Gender & Indigenous Peoples as the Multiple Axes of Postcolonial Capitalism-1**

The four speakers of this session were: **Ranabir Samaddar**, Director, CRG, & **Ritajyoti Bandyopadhyay**, Faculty Member, History, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Kolkata, who presented a paper jointly; **Ishita Dey**, Doctoral Candidate, Department of Sociology, Delhi School of Economics; and **Sanam Roohi**, Doctoral Candidate, National Institute of Advanced Studies/ AISSR. **Samata Biswas**, Assistant Professor, English, Haldia Government College, West Bengal, served as the discussant for all three papers. The session was chaired by **Subhas Ranjan Chakraborty**, eminent historian and member, CRG. In their paper (titled “Caste and the Frontiers of Post Colonial Accumulation”), Ranabir Samaddar and Ritajyoti Bandyopadhyay, undertake, what they call, drawing on Charles Tilly, “organizational analysis”, and here they do so by enquiring into the processes in which “some castes stream into some occupations and some in other”. Both the papers on the Mahishya caste in Bengal and the Kammas in Guntur district (in Sanam Roohi’s paper titled “Caste Politics, Developmentalist State and Transnational Giving: A Study of Guntur NRI Philanthropic Circuit”) work with this paradigm in mind, even though they do not share the vocabulary. Both of these papers look into the organisation and control of capital, either through means of entrepreneurship, or philanthropy with the assistance of the state. In one, the flow is from the districts to the city (if Howrah and its dark, narrow, dingy lanes crowded with lathe machines can be called so); in the other, it is a transnational flow from the USA to the villages of origin. Ishita Dey’s paper (titled “Sweet Biographies of the Moiras”) is also about the accumulation of capital, of the artisan figure transforming itself into the artisan-entrepreneur, by means of his now elevated position as one who can control the labour of other artisans, here called *karigars*.

“Sweet biographies” are biographies of sweets, tales of their origins which invariably attribute their moment of genesis to a *moira*. Here, the *moira* identity works to ensure that the owner of the sweetshop can lay claim to a knowledge, a ‘tacit’ understanding of the craft of sweet-making. But while earlier the *moira* would be the one in charge of both the production and the sales, now, with increased control over labour power, he can completely dissociate himself from the production process, while others, the *karigars*, have no control over the sales. This control over the means of production is mediated by his affiliation with the *jati/ sampraday* (caste?) that allows him to at the same time occupy the status of the artisan and be an entrepreneur. The question, to be asked here, then, is what happens to the small sweet-shop owner? Does he continue in his artisan cum entrepreneur avatar? And second, who are the *karigars*? If *karigars* were employed beyond the familiar network, then who were employed, and how? The caste gazette that she

refers to, when was it? Do they lay claim to the status or identity of the *moira*, or is that reserved only for those whose names are borne by the shop? The analysis only hinted at, but did not flesh out questions about how the present day big *moiras* came to be the way they are now. What role did their caste identity play in their becoming so big? What role does technology play in the entrenchment of their identities as *moiras*? Would other castes now have access to the job of a *moira*? Is the job of a *karigar* at all lucrative?

Sanam Roohi looked at transnational Kamma philanthropy, in itself quite a contentious idea, how can one attach a caste to something as noble as philanthropy? In an extremely detailed and in-depth analysis she shows how the dominant community of the Kammas in the coastal Andhra region, having historically benefitted from being part of the anti-Brahmin movement, their identity as the foremost landowners, a concerted effort on the part of the caste towards higher education and already established networks enabling them to pursue careers in the USA. This, and a belief in giving back to the village and caste that has enabled their migration and hence success in life, has encouraged philanthropy in the region, in terms of NRI contribution to the NRI cell of Zilla Parishad and the Janmabhoomi project of the then TDP government and also in the absence of a Kamma Zilla Parishad chairperson, directly to the village head. This is crucial because, with the term “governmentalization” she shows how caste interests influence government policy, shape the direction philanthropy will take, who will be the recipient of the philanthropic measures, how will the philanthropic projects be spatially located and how the existing structures of hegemony will continue in this curious coming together of public and private capital. This is an almost complete description of the historical reasons behind Kamma dominance, their continuing dominance and how caste, capital and transnationality continue to keep the caste’s dominance entrenched. She shows how “Kamma giving is strengthening caste back home”, what are the scopes of thinking through how the act of giving consolidates and maintains caste in the US as well?

To this paper, R. Srivatsan urged the author to enquire into the politics of philanthropy? It is, he intoned, essentially an unquestionable act that is not a matter of rights. So what the Kammas in Guntur do is just undercut the mediated nature of philanthropy as undertaken by government agencies. Hence, he urged her to problematize the concept of philanthropy itself. The respondent inquired about the role that reservation may play in the breaking up of older networks and the establishment of new networks. With reservations, the SCs and the STs, especially the Malas have now found an increased access to higher education, enabling a significant number of migrations, especially to the East Asia, and till some time ago, to places like Libya. Technical or linguistic skills have increasingly enabled dalit students to migrate, at least for a period of time, and make unprecedented inroads into capital. What would a study of their philanthropic practices show us about the state and the continuation of caste in transnational contexts?

Ranabir Samaddar and Ritajyoti Bandyopadhyay introduce something crucial into the newly emerging debate regarding caste in West Bengal, to which Samaddar himself has contributed. Most of that recent debate has been centred on the possibility, or the lack of political mobilization and/ or articulation around caste. This paper draws our attention to the fact of caste being sublimated in the political economy of postcolonial capitalist accumulation, acting actively to produce durable inequalities. The speakers inquired into the processes of how one caste goes into one occupation or another and the answer, according to them, lies in opportunity hoarding. In studying the high concentration of Mahishya owned businesses in Howrah, they trace the historical rise in the number of landless labourers in Howrah, the wage differential



between them, and the Mahishya caste's already-existing experience of being an erstwhile working class. But, given a deficit of data regarding banking, money lending etc., the authors propose to come at it through data relating to land, study of supply chains, property transfers etc. So what they indicate, as the method to go ahead, is both ethnographic work, and organizational analysis. The near-absolute homogeneity of the entrepreneurs and the workers of the metal workshops in Howrah speaks both to Dey's and Roohi's papers. A lot of the analysis and data is based on Raymond L. Owens and Ashis Nandy's study; but what is remarkable in this paper is that the analysis has been buttressed by other data, not simply taken at face value. Given the central question of how does a certain caste dominate in a certain field, how does a community dominant in one field become dominant in another field, what light does this paper throw on it? Again, there is similarity with Roohi's paper; the kammās as major landholding castes have successfully translated that dominance into other spheres; actively using the forces of higher education and transnational migration. So, in this instance, what are the other means that the Mahishyas, as a case in point, employ to accumulate their capital? Is there any change in the symbolic or cultural capital? Also, when one talks of a situation like this, or the one that maybe Dey was pointing towards, when the workers and the owners are part of the same caste and have in fact probably been brought to the city by the owners themselves, how does the formation of a working class come about? Does it come about? What role does caste play in the interaction between the owner and the worker? What happens to the women? In Roohi's field, are the women also migrating as professionals to the US? If yes, do they also participate in the philanthropic projects? If yes, how? What happens to the women who go as wives of successful migrants? What role do they play in the philanthropic projects? The gender question has critical traction in the two other papers as well, for both sweet manufacturing and metal work, especially the latter, are in the cultural imaginary undeniably masculine occupations.

### **Race, Caste, Gender & Indigenous Peoples as the Multiple Axes of Postcolonial Capitalism-2**

The session was chaired by **Nasreen Chowdhory**, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Delhi University, and **Dipankar Sinha**, Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calcutta, served as the discussant for all the papers.

**Madhurilata Basu**, Doctoral Candidate, Department of Political Science, Presidency University, & Research Assistant, CRG, was the first speaker who presented the paper titled "Care Economy in Kolkata." In her sensitive rendition, Basu told us that through ages women have been identified with the word "care", a word that stands for a host of work – child rearing, cooking, cleaning, keeping the household in order, or to use a blanket American term, "homemaking". It also includes in its semantic purchase looking after the old and the infirm. Hailing from different socio-economic backgrounds, women have undertaken the work of "caring" for their families or families for which they were paid to care for. The terms "care givers" refer to a huge number of people working or "caring" on a paid or unpaid basis at a "private household" or at an institution. In view of the falling rupee against foreign currencies, the number of medical tourists coming to India has jumped by 40 per cent in the past six months, according to an Assocham study. Consequently, the inflow of patients has also gone up by 40 per cent during the last six months, the study showed. The surge in medical tourism has prompted a host of private players in healthcare, including global brands like Gleneagles, Columbia Asia, and Wockhardt, to set up hospitals and "medicities" spread over acres of land with add-on facilities like caregiver accommodation, pharmacies, and restaurants. To compete,

regional facilities like Hinduja Hospital or Beach Candy Hospital in Mumbai, and Peerless Hospital and RN Tagore Institute for Cardiac Treatment in Kolkata, all have international business divisions. Travel industry players are partnering with corporate hospitals to woo overseas patients, as well. Private information agencies, too, have grabbed the opportunity to design travel and treatment itineraries for international patients. Among those flying in for medical care are non-resident Indians (NRIs), who combine homecoming with treatment. Basu's paper explored this complex skein of care interaction and its commodification in the age of global capital.

The paper "Migration, Labour Force and Work Situation in Postcolonial India: A Study of Adivasi Tea Workers in Terai and Dooars of North Bengal" by **Saikat Roy**, Research Scholar, Department of Political Science, University of North Bengal, took us to a different terrain than that of Basu. Yet, incongruent geographies of accumulation, when juxtaposed in the same panel, revealed surprising similitude in functions, forms and features. At the outset, through a careful lection of Marx, Lenin, Gramsci, Althusser, Habermas and Foucault, Saikat Roy placed the state-market relationship in India in perspective. Power or governance in India, he argued, is fast taking the shape of biopower and it is essential to understand this in order to explore the integrationist mechanics of the liberal-democratic Indian state. The liberal-democratic order in India has made an elaborate arrangement for the integration of its otherwise "excluded" and marginalized sections through schemes like democratic decentralization, land reforms, capacity-building programmes, forest rights act, tribal sub-plan, etc. This is clearly in line with the liberal model of development where (a) the state makes arrangements for the protection of the victims of the market forces; (b) reproduces and prepares the labour force for the market; and (c) ensures peace and stability to facilitate smooth sailing of the manufacturing and business activities. But the growing market has a negative effect on state welfarism. The state ultimately fails to arrest the exclusion and marginalization of adivasis in particular who have very little control over material resources and skills. When the market reigns supreme, the adivasis, who have not experienced much capacity building, stand in risk of total exclusion. The adivasi population in North Bengal, Roy argues in his paper, is a case in point. Four factors are primarily responsible for the economic plights of the adivasis in the region: a) meagre control over material and human resources, b) their incapacity to take advantages of the market opportunities, c) inadequate state support, and d) exploitative presence of the market players in their midst. Further, the presence of "outsiders" in the tribal belt with the spread of communication and the simultaneous market crisis created by the tea garden owners, which includes a strategy of casualization and the threat of closing the tea garden to deprive the tea workers and weaken the trade union movement, have made the adivasis miserable. As such, the adivasis in the region have lost confidence in the state and in the conventional organs of the civil society (trade union and mass organizations) which they had trusted for long as the protectors of their rights. The immigration of more resourceful non-adivasis (Nepalis, Bengali refugees and rajbanshis) into "their territory" has additionally created a sense of insecurity in the collective psyche. The adivasis now fear the loss of livelihood and of being reduced to an insignificant minority. It is in this context that the adivasi movement in Dooars and Terai has gained prominence, said Roy. His paper located the adivasis of North Bengal against the backdrop of their migration history, their struggle for livelihood, their control over resources, material and human, the history of their solidarity movement – and all of this in the wider context of the liberal market economy and the state which is now subservient to it.

In his paper, “Postcolony and the Racy Histories of Capital Accumulation”, **Atig Ghosh**, member, CRG, looked at the recent spate of wilful violence against people from the Northeast in Delhi, the national capital. There is only one way of describing these barbaric, sometimes mortal, assaults on the people of the Northeast, and the grassroots reaction they elicit: they are racist, Ghosh asseverated. And, this description applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to similar attacks on Dalits across the country. Going a step further he suggested that it is important to look at the reactions these incidents elicit from the so-called “enlightened” circles. In left/ *marxisant* tertulias, the reaction inevitably is one of horror provoked by an incident that is quickly labelled atavistic. These are crimes committed by Neanderthals; these are ugly social coelacanth that have somehow mysteriously survived in this age of development, globalization and “progress”. In arriving at such a conclusion, Ghosh points out, the well-meaning advocates of “progress” have missed the wood for the trees. It is crucial to note that capitalist development is not necessarily antithetical to cultural racism. This, of course, is evident from the feverish xenophobia that the western democracies have been exhibiting over the last many decades. But the argument can be further extended to indicate that it is in the very nature of capitalist development, be it of the colonial vintage or its finance avatar, to produce its well-demarcated racial categories first, that is before primitive accumulation can begin. In other words, as Ghosh had tried to show in the case of colonial Jalpaiguri, primitive accumulation necessarily presupposes an accumulation of the primitive. Having said this, it is important to point out that with the emergence of global finance capital the modes of reconstituting and redeploying races/ ethnicities before accumulation takes place (and during accumulation) have morphed in significant new ways. If we understand this, then we will realize that racism in India is not an atavistic survival but the pith and marrow of the economic exigencies of the time. But, in what ways does global capital reconstitute and redeploy races/ ethnicities? To demonstrate this, Ghosh gave a detailed study of the Indian Northeast in his paper where the emergence of the neoliberal market-state complex has given rise a rash of autonomy movements. Most of these movements make political and economic claims in the name of race or ethnic identities (say, the Bodos in Assam). The very mark of their newly-imagined minority identity or subject position is actively utilized to make claims for integration into the majoritarian logic, be it global-economic or national-statist. It is this Janus-like positioning of race identity that signals the “newness” of these new subjectivities, Ghosh contended. While the deployment of these “new” race identities gives groups in the Northeast extra teeth in terms of claims-making, it also opens up these groups to racist attacks elsewhere in the country through economic and cultural revisibilization. In the discussion that followed, the key question that was broached by Ingo Schmidt was whether there is any limit to accumulation. The panel seemed to concur that there was none; Schmidt chose to disagree. For him, resistance of some form must mark the limit of accumulation; for, without a conceptual horizon of cessation, it was agreed, it would indeed be very difficult to think of sustained movement against exploitation, casteism, sexism and racism.

### **Cities & Migrants-1**

This session was chaired by **Sanjeeb Mukherjee**, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calcutta. The discussant for this session was **Sanjay Chaturvedi**, Professor, Department of Political Science, & Honorary Director, Centre for the Study of Mid-West and Central Asia, Panjab University, Chandigarh. The three speakers were: **Illia Antenucci**, Doctoral Candidate, Institute for Culture and Society, University of Western

Sydney, who presented the paper “Postcolonial Accumulation and the Private Security Industry”; **Iman K. Mitra**, Research Associate, CRG, whose paper was titled “Urban Planning, Settlement Practices and the Question of Labour in Contemporary Kolkata”; and **Shruti Dubey**, Doctoral Candidate, Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, who presented the paper “Accumulation at the Margins: A Case of Khora colony, National Capital Region”.

Antenucci’s paper focussed on the connections between the expansion of the private security industry (PSI) and accumulation processes – considered in a broad sense, including various forms and sites, from the establishment of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) to the privatization of infrastructures and gentrification and beautification of urban areas – in the postcolonial context. The existing literature about postcolonial capitalism and accumulation, and particularly about “accumulation by dispossession”, tends to assume that the state is the exclusive holder of the monopoly of violence, and (mis)uses its prerogative against the people in favour of private profits. Nonetheless, evidences show that in most cases current accumulation processes are materially enforced and maintained by public/private partnerships and “assemblages of authority” in which the State, with its police and military forces, regularly and closely cooperate with Private Security Companies. More in general, the role of the latter in global governance has hugely increased in recent years, as a consequence of neoliberal policies. The phenomenon commonly named as “privatization of security” displays a twofold character. On the one hand, PSI is increasingly involved in operations that were once under the exclusive control of the state – such as border and city patrol. On the other hand, state police and military are being ever more often employed for the sake of private interest and profit. The example of how land grabbing is managed in order to establish SEZs in many countries unquestionably demonstrate the latter. Studies about postcolonial capitalism and, more specifically, about accumulation by dispossession, always mention the violence and extra-economic coercive means that, as Marx firstly noticed, invariably occur when resources are seized for capitalistic purposes. Yet, the very aspect of violence, while considered embedded in the processes, is typically assumed in a broad, generic sense, and almost never explored specifically among the studies whose focus is on capitalistic and labour processes. On the other hand, among specific studies about PSI and global governance, the connection between privatization of security, neoliberal policies and global capitalist practices, is usually considered only from the normative and sociological perspectives, whereas its precise implications within the practices of accumulation remain neglected. An effort to bring together these two perspectives – the one based on security privatization and governance, the other one focusing on accumulation by dispossession – offers a promising means of advancing analysis of present capitalistic organization, Antenucci argued persuasively. The paper suggested that the entanglement of private/public security in the governmental practices addressed to accumulation sites, be them cities, business districts, or SEZs, cannot be dissociated indeed from the dynamics of accumulation, and thus from the related struggles between “dispossessors” and “dispossessed”, that inform and shape these sites continuously. In fact, when processes of accumulation occur, materializing as SEZs, business districts, exclusive commercial and residential precincts, the space is organized through the proliferation of visible and invisible borders. Antenucci proposed that the governance of such sites and borders – which means deciding, from time to time, who is fully, partially, or not entitled at all to stay there, leave or walk through; and thus producing a material hierarchy of the place – then becomes a crucial issue. This confers on the security forces, both private and public – those who enforce the hierarchy of these discrete sites – a crucial role. The huge expansion of

the PSI in recent years is a global phenomenon, which appears highly significant if related to neoliberal policies of accumulation and investment attraction in postcolonial countries. In the case of India, for instance, the PSI has been growing incessantly for the past two decades – reaching the record of 15,000 companies and more than 5 million employees, which makes it the largest in the world – parallel to the intense process of land grabbing, establishment of enclosures and SEZs, the privatization of infrastructures and gentrification in cities, pursued by the Indian government and private investors together. Working with the assumption that these numbers are not a coincidence, the presenter gave an overview of the meaningful connections they display, by exploring the role of PSI, and its link with public, state-run security, in the establishment and governance strategies of the abovementioned accumulation practices. Finally, she (re)turned to the question whether the proliferation of PSI is to be considered only as a side-effect of postcolonial accumulation under neoliberal “regimes”, or whether it constitutes a peculiar form of accumulation, based on the incessant production of poverty and social unrest. The phenomenon typically addressed as “dispossession” is indeed a wide one, involving a number of practices – from the destruction of livelihood, to the demolition of suburbs, from the urban war on poor and homeless, to the repression of organized struggles – which need to be managed and attended specifically. Moreover, under capitalist and neoliberal regime, this range of poverty and conditions of instability seems bound to grow and self-reproduce continuously. She ended with the question: does the phenomenon of dispossession today, then, represent not only a tool and a consequence of accumulation, but also a market itself?

Iman Mitra’s paper sought to deal with two aspects of life, livelihood, and habitation practices in the city – the phenomenon of urbanization and that of rural-to-urban migration. At the same time, it attempted to foreground the question of labour in the moments of juxtaposition of these two practices, materializing in various networks of entangled kinships and plausible connections, supported by different horizontal and vertical hierarchical arrangements. The chief purpose of this exercise was to investigate the location of the category of ‘migrant worker’ in the broader and adjacent discourses of urbanization and to propose a scheme of research which would explore the politics of defining and stabilizing this location find out its implications in the area of social justice for the urban poor. His paper started with a discussion of an earlier study by the noted Gandhian thinker Nirmal Kumar Bose on the zoning practices in Calcutta of the 1960s which demarcated different areas within the city according to concentration of various ethnic groups and their commercial and cultural interests. The next section of Mitra’s paper drew attention to the studies done by the Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA) on the nature and condition of settlement practices of the urban poor in the 1980s and ‘90s and explained the significance of the Thika Tenancy Act of 1981 which brought all the ‘legal’ slums in the city under the ownership of the state government. However, following the neoliberal reforms in the 1990s, the distinction between legal slums or *bustees* and illegal squatter colonies became quite pertinent to the struggles over urban land and its revalorization through a set of labouring practices including construction work and waste management. Mitra chose to call this moment one of ‘recycling of the urban space’ where factories were closed down to allow high-rises and shopping malls to come up, not only reorganizing the spatial dynamics of the area, but also generating various precarious and non-precarious forms of labour. He ended his paper with a well known incident of eviction of a so-called illegal settlement in Nonadanga, at the margin of the city, in 2012. Incidentally, this place was chosen by the government for rehabilitation of some the slum-dwellers who were forced to move because of developmental activities in their original locations. Most of these families had to relocate again as the living conditions in the

quarters built by the government were sparse to say the least and took shelter in these ‘illegal’ colonies. The colonies were consequently demolished by the government pointing to the ‘permanent state of impermanence’ in which the urban poor have to spend their days and nights. However, Mitra argued, the political economy of urban recycling could not afford to push these population groups beyond its jurisdiction. It was revealed in a CMDA document that the rehabilitation of the slum-dwellers was followed by attempts by the government to ‘develop’ Nonadanga into a real-estate hub which would surely incorporate all the evictees into the circuits of capitalist accumulation as part of a huge informal labour force. Mitra concluded by claiming that this constant flux between eviction and rehabilitation, dispossession and investment, settlement and unsettling had become a permanent marker of urbanization in India.

In her paper, Dubey discussed the transformation of a village called Khora at the border of Delhi, Noida and Ghaziabad (both satellite towns of Delhi) to throw light on the peculiar form of capital accumulation happening over there. Khora has rapidly changed from being a sparsely populated village in 1971 with a total population of 656, to a census town in 2011 with a population of 189,410. While these are official census figures, the actual numbers living in Khora seem to be much more with newspaper and other media sources reporting around 1 million in 2013 calling it “Asia’s biggest labour colony”. Since the high-density development of Khora is essentially linked to the development of Noida, Dubey showed how the accumulation in Khora is tied to the new town of Noida. Khora presents an interesting case study because of two reasons. Firstly, because of its location at the border of three cities: the national capital, and two industrial cities. The location at the border is one of the crucial reasons why it became favourable for migrant population that gave access to job opportunities and markets of all the three cities. Secondly, it does not exhibit the features of primitive accumulation or accumulation by dispossession which constitutes the usual theoretical frameworks for understanding transformations that include acquisition of land of farmers by the state for urban development. This is because Noida authority was not able to take possession of the land that it had officially acquired in 1978 and paid compensation for. The land owners in Khora with the mediation of property dealers sold not just their own land but also that belonging to the Gram Sabha to the incoming migrants at a nominal rate. The location of Khora at the border of the capital city and the notification by Noida for development gave rise to enormous speculation with a number of land dealers buying huge swathes of land from the farmers of the Yadav community in Khora and started subdividing them into plots. The population density of Khora started increasing specifically after 1984, when the pace of industrialization started picking up in Noida. The Noida authority went to demolish the houses once in 1987 but could not do that due to a violent incidence leading to a casualty. As the population rose in Noida with growing industries, the migrant workers, not being able to afford the already scarce number of housing constructed by Noida, bought land being sold at extremely cheap prices at Khora and built their own houses or took up on rent over there. Khora now is an intensely dense colony that is home to a labouring population ranging from factory workers, guards, domestic help, auto-rickshaw drivers, rickshaw pullers, rag pickers, scrap dealers and collectors. One way to look at Noida, with the foreign investments and EPZs on one hand and places like Khora on the other, is as a classic case of uneven development, proposed Dubey. But this overlooks the way in which spaces such as Khora themselves become nodes of accumulation for various classes ranging from the erstwhile owners of farm land to migrant workers and the ways in which the two modes of accumulation interact. This interaction is what was at the heart of Dubey’s interesting presentation.

## Cities & Migrants-2

The three speakers of this session were: **Piu Chatterjee**, Doctoral Scholar, School of Development Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai; **Sushmita Pati**, Doctoral Candidate, Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, and **Chiara Arnavas**, Doctoral Candidate, Anthropology London School of Economics and Political Science, UK. The session was chaired by **Amit Prakash**, Professor and Chairperson, Centre for the Study of Law and Governance, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, and **Debarati Bagchi**, Researcher, CRG, was the discussant.

Chatterjee, in her paper, “Post Colonial Cities and Accumulation through Policies: The Example of Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM)”, at the outset probed as to how in India capitalist accumulation in the postcolonial cities has emerged as an important area of research in social science and is being debated in the academia. Citing Pranab Bardhan’s works, she argued that the process and pattern of accumulation in postcolonial cities in the global south has been extensively related to the path of globalization. Referring to the “tortuous transition of the Indian economy”, her paper focussed on the study of postcolonial urbanism in general, and postcolonial cities in particular. Her paper also tried to probe if there is a relation between the colonial cities and the postcolonial cities, what are the changes one notices in the two kinds of structures etc. She also argued that the importance of the phenomenon of globalization to postcolonial studies came first from its demonstrations of the structure of world power relations which stood firm in the twentieth century as a legacy of western imperialism. Secondly, the ways in which local communities engaged the forces of globalization bore some resemblance to the ways in which colonized societies had historically engaged and appropriated the forces of imperial dominance. While concluding she stated that cities in the Global South that are organizing themselves amidst the changing economy and social structure of the cities, should be treated as a different phenomenon. Chatterjee’s paper, also probed into the strategies in the reform process and subsequently its implementation which lay bare the pro-capitalist tendency of the state.

In “Accumulation by Possession: Political Economy of Urban Villages in South Delhi”, Sushmita Pati tried to show that kinship networks have got extremely entwined with the networks of capital. She also looked into the caste networks that were at play in villages a bit away from the national capital, Delhi. Her paper also highlighted the spatial concentration which almost made the Jat community insider-outsiders in the city. She further pointed out that their evolution from an agrarian pastoral community to an entrepreneurial community is intrinsically linked with the story of the urban development of Delhi. Pati brought out the oxymoronic nature of “urban villages”, as neither have they been able to remain rural, nor have they been able to become urban and it is not merely a case of transformation from one to another. Urban villages of Delhi, she opined, are thus caught in the state of exceptionality, in the state of eternal contradiction almost as a part of their very existence and this peculiarity of its nature itself has lent to the curious modes of accumulation that are operative in these villages today. She stated that these processes of accumulation are largely mediated but not subsumed by the processes of accumulation taking place in the city of Delhi.

Arnavas’s paper, ‘Bangladeshi Labour in Transit: A Case Study of Marghera (Venice), Italy’, was an ethnographic study on Bangladeshi migrants working for the Fincantieri shipyard in Marghera, located on the Laguna coast at 10 km from Venice, Italy. In her paper, Arnavas tried

to look into how migrant labour is crucial to accumulation in postcolonial capitalism. While addressing the situation faced by Bangladeshi migrants working in the industrial hub of Marghera, her paper looked into the everyday forms of exploitation that Bangladeshi migrant workers were subjected to. Her paper also sought to connect the forms of exploitation experienced by Bangladeshi communities with the current forms of accumulation of resources and capital in Marghera. She further highlighted how the migrants experience a whole series of filtering mechanisms and processes of differentiation, detention and transit that crucially shape the labour market in which they are inserted. She observed that these mechanisms were not only operative at the border between Italy and Slovenia, but they are replicated within the different stages of migrants' journey within the Italian territory. Her paper also looked at the "bordering" processes in the Marghera area. She concluded by flagging the point that any analysis of capital accumulation will remain incomplete if we do not take seriously the specific role played by labour in transit today.

Prakash noted that the very idea of urbanization is linked with informality. As more and more emphasis is given to modernize or develop cities, using fixed parameters, informality is on the rise. He also asked the panellists if they could talk of the virtual forms of accumulation. The panellists were also asked to probe into how rent is being invested and whether they thought the state disappeared after the acquisition of land. The panellists were also asked to probe into the "toxic effect", if it is at all there.

Bagchi commented that the three papers have dealt with the question of accumulation in the urban context from three interconnected and yet distinct perspectives. While Pati looked at the relation between rent and accumulation through the prism of community and kinship networks, Chatterji addressed the role of state policies in accumulation and Arnavas tried to understand accumulation through certain labour regimes positing the issue of migration very centrally. All three papers raised crucial questions regarding the relation between capital accumulation and urbanization. She stated that Pati's extremely rich ethnography told us a story of "accumulation through possession", craftily invoking and at the same time departing from Harvey's celebrated concept of "accumulation through dispossession". She looked into the phenomenon of "urban villages" in South Delhi and tried to grasp the apparent contradiction in this particular administrative term through a dense study of the growth of a specific form of rent economy. At the very outset, she declared that her study does not elaborate a text-book case of primitive accumulation as she has looked into a case of land acquisition not being followed by dispossession or displacement. Bagchi found it commendable how Pati tried to capture the internal tensions within a rentier community. But, at the same time, what transpired was an insulated, internal land market – the external players somehow get invisibilized in the process of tracing back the career of the rentier Jat. Bagchi felt that, since this is a paper on accumulation, she needed to pursue the question of expanded reproduction of capital. How is rent being reinvested? How is it getting linked to other circuits of capital? Pati spoke about the influx of migrants in South Delhi. But this part of her story gradually got subsumed into a narrative of cultural distancing and xenophobia. Outside of this very close knit, rather too neat formulation the only outsiders seem to be the "north easterners with low morale". Bagchi also felt that Pati needed to complicate the figure of the tenant in this story a little more. It appeared that the rent economy is necessarily founded on the relation between the rentier landlord and the eternally oppressed tenant. Are there any legal safeguards of the tenants and tenants' rights? What are the specific anxieties of the landholders? About Chatterjee's paper, Bagchi opined that her work began with discourses on world cities, global cities and postcolonial cities. However, when she



entered into the discussion of JNNURM, it seemed a little disjointed with this previous discussion. She further observed that globalisation is about the “decreasing agency of the nation state.” If one studied urban reform agenda and particular policies solely from the perspective of identifying how state acts as a facilitator of corporate capital, it runs the risk of being a monolithic portrayal of the state. She stated that JNNURM was in fact a very good window to study how in the neoliberal moment state starts acting in the principles of the market transforming the city governments to compete with each other to access finances. She concluded with the question if a study of JNNURM pushes us towards the direction of understanding the state’s own undoing of its autobiography?

### **Law, Ethics, Infrastructure**

The first session of the third day (August 23) was titled “Law, Ethics, Infrastructure” which was chaired by **Ruchira Goswami**, Assistant Professor, West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences, Kolkata. **Kalpna Kannabiran**, Director, Council for Social Development, Hyderabad, acted as the discussant of all the papers. The speakers for this session were: **Oishik Sircar**, Teaching Fellow and Doctoral Candidate, Institute for International Law and the Humanities Melbourne Law School, The University of Melbourne; **Ashok Agarwal**, practising lawyer who is interested in the constitutional guarantee of the right to life, which includes the right against torture; and **Mithilesh Kumar**, Doctoral Candidate, University of Western Sydney. Sircar spoke on “The Spectacular Accumulation of Collective Memory: Cinematic Justice and the Juridical Ordering of Excess in ‘New India’”. He was interested in how law and aesthetics worked as a narrative compact that generated the specific memories of the Gujarati community, particularly after the 2002 riots. Sircar cited images as central to how collective memory participates in the process of accumulation (how memory is accumulated); this process mirrors the way capital becomes bundled under the process of accumulation in a neoliberal post-colony. That is, he tried to understand memory as an assemblage. The visual dimensions of memory and affective labour interact with and influence the content of collective memory, according to Sircar. The question of “excess” in this context is related to the mechanization involved in the generation of memory through mediatization; “excess” comes about when the assemblage is the consequence of an overproduction of memory due to mediatization; the “excess” becomes converted into “spectacle,” similar to the way that the accumulation of capital grows to the point of collapse and capital becomes an image of itself – a spectacle. The paper specifically examined the visual, legal, and affective context of memory-making in new India; it took as its theme the nature of “cinematic justice” – that is, how justice is aesthetically enunciated in films and how cinema functions as jurisprudence, as it generates judgement outside the confines of law books and the court rooms. Sircar argued that the memory of mass atrocity in the form of cinematic images has become a spectacle and law is a component in this making of spectacle. Moreover, not only does law/legalism affect the way the image is conceived and the memory generated/assembled, but the ways of remembering an event have accumulated in a manner that affects state-making in India. Sircar’s imperative for analyzing Gujarati memories after the violence of 2002 lay in his analysis of a pogrom as being driven by words and images; according to Sircar, the 2002 pogrom was an enactment of imaginary Hindu scripts of hatred towards the Muslim that were consequently animated in aesthetic forums like print news, photographs, and mainstream media. The law was a major collaborator in the imaginary script that provided a rationale for the enactment of violence. Interestingly, the Indian state has consistently spoken a

language that casts secularism as the preserve of Hinduism. The assimilation of minority religions is seen as integral to its secular identity. Furthermore, films become forums in which this script of the “disgusting body of the demoralised Muslim” come to life and affect the psyche’s imaginations of justice. Sircar discussed his analysis of the film *Dev*: the protagonist’s conviction to stay true to the law and use it to end sectarian violence comes from a belief in constitutionalism and the state’s political framework. Sircar noted that the image of the discussions of conscience being conducted in an elite living room demonstrate the role of class on who gets to pontificate on issues of justice. Sircar proposed that uncritically claiming a secular heritage in the Constitution of India is to play a losing game, due to an inherent Hindu bias: the Constitution cannot act as a panacea for Muslims, but this belief in its secularism constitutes a part of the imaginary, collective memory/script that is perpetuated and sustained by films. According to Sircar, the 2002 Gujarat violence cannot be addressed exclusively within a prosecutorial framework that identifies individual perpetrators of injustice and violence, because this model does not challenge the historical structure and ideological foundations that resulted in the pogrom

The second speaker, Ashok Agrwaal, presented a paper titled “On Law and Ethics under Postcolonial Accumulation.” He took issue with the term “postcolonial.” While he understands the difference between capitalist and pre-capitalist accumulation, Agrwaal contended, he disagreed with the distinction between “colonial” and “postcolonial” priorities and approaches to law and ethics. The line between “colonial” and “post-colonial” is increasingly blurred in political terms and even more so when in economic/financial terms, where he believes the lines of continuity are even stronger. In his efforts to identify a meaningful basis upon which to distinguish the colonial from the post-colonial, Agrwaal asked whether the difference is based upon the former colonial subjects’ incapacity to organize themselves and harness their capacities in the manner required by modernity. Early part of the twentieth century marked an increase in the regulation of capital mobility. Today, there is what Agrwaal cited as being in-your-face expropriation of capital by “neutral” institutions and market forces such as the WTO. Thus, Agrwaal argued, the chaos and corruption that characterize the Indian state was produced by a practice of a particular kind of rule that was imposed upon India by its colonial masters. A dichotomy emerges between a locally rooted reality and transnational forms of abstraction: the real state of things is chaotic, but it is contrasted with how things might be in the future. These imaginary representations of modern governance, of a more rational/modern/equitable world that will come about in the future, develop into a reality of their own. Modern states are founded upon this camp of abstraction which creates the impression that the world is ordered by rules produced by the structured, ordered image of itself it has projected into the future. The disposition of these modern impressions of law and order lie in the colonial past, during which the imposition of an alien set of rules was regularized. State convinces itself that the laws it has enacted to correct the irregularities are responsible for the regularity and order that it imagines is its present social reality, but which is truly the abstraction. In other words, rules are put into place to make sense of a world that seems to be completely lacking in significance and are celebrated for instituting order. Agrwaal also discussed the dichotomy between real capitalism (a product of socio-political forces) and what he calls “pure economics”: pure economics substitutes the myth of the self-regulating market. In a landscape that makes no sense, one is prompted to devise a set of rules and theories to impose sense upon a lack of sense (the irregularity of the real market). Economics, thus, becomes a discourse which is no longer engaged with reality, as its function is to legitimize capitalism and to impose upon it intrinsic

characteristics which it does not/cannot have. Pure economics becomes a theory of an imaginary, abstract/theoretical world. Capitalist extraction, whether colonial or post-colonial, is rooted in this set of imaginary rules disconnected from the reality. Today, we do not look at these rules as “alien,” for we have adopted them as our own. These laws are the source of the continuum between “colonial” and “postcolonial”. Before independence, the people of India looked upon the laws that we embrace quite readily today as alien and oppressive, yet India’s present-day economic policies are inspired by neoliberal, post-modern, pure economic theories of financialization and extraction of surplus by the same methods proposed by colonialist rulers. Postcolonial accumulation, which is the phase we are said to be in, is a con, a scheme aimed at generating an illusion of accumulation that is far greater than what it actually is. These piles of imaginary money are used to accumulate real assets

“The King has to Reign and to Govern: The Results of Accumulation Through Infrastructure” was the title of the presentation of the third speaker, Mithilesh Kumar. The objective of the paper was to understand the new form of government that has come into being, and the question being asked is, “What is being governed in the first place –the population or the circuits of capital?” “What is the relationship between the two?” The preponderance of the circuits and the emphasis on governing circuits does not leave the population unscathed, conceptually and politically. The problem of population in contemporary times is undefined. The way population is conceptualized has been dismantled, and leaders find it efficient to govern through violence. Circuits of capital are generated through forms of infrastructure consolidation (the Indira Gandhi Airport in New Delhi, for example). What makes the monopoly of infrastructure distinct is the emergence of public-private partnerships. Objective of the paper is to examine these PPP endeavours, their efficiencies, successes, failures and effects on labour politics and social struggles. Privatization of public enterprises, the basis of the PPP model, emerged from the realization that the unfettered privatization of capital is flawed and greater state involvement is required. Thus, political intervention of the state (for the public benefit) was seemingly valued over the mere question of efficiency and optimization. What appears participatory on the surface is actually a form of renegotiated power that services the state agencies and strips the power of the owners. Defence of PPP is that public institutions and enterprises cannot fail when they have strong private capital ready to bail them out. Contention arises from the way that state intervention has become unstructured, state monopolies being driven by profit maximizing agenda. In this context, Kumar mentioned the Cabinet approved restructuring of the Delhi airport under the Joint Venture Partnership. There has been ambiguity in the making of law and legal contract (Acts – SSA, IRA). There are PPS of the institutional nature and PPPs of the legal nature; this calls for political and legal innovation. Though scholars argue that PPPs are used to break the model of state activity in social sphere and curb its manipulation of social relations, Kumar argued that PPPs allow the state to restructure itself. The “population” is modelled as a composite of consumers of goods in a profit-base. The PPPs are more than the sum of its public and private parts; they give rise to a distinct mode it itself operates and a distinct relationship of space, politics, and people that influences the market. In the postcolonial context, capital seeks to entrench itself in institutions so as to control economic activity in ways that are skewed and closed to significant groups. Kumar concluded by mentioning new emergent discourses of 1) politics based on accountability, displacing the notion of political power where power is monetized and penned as a case of debit and credit and 2) desubjectification. How to govern without producing desubjectification; how do we organize non-subjects? — are questions Kumar left the audience with.

Kannabiran, in discussing the papers, told Sircar that what is important is the connection between “event” and two kinds of representations – 1) in law and 2) in cinema. When we are talking about event and representation in law, we are not only talking about collective memory, but also of arrogance, which is recounting/memory on a very different register. . The cinematic has the space to imagine (justice) in a way that law does not, although law might actually exercise the licence to imagine cinematically. The theatricality of the courtroom and the jurisprudence of the cinema are clearly distinct spaces with clearly distinct outcomes. Questions that remained with Kannabiran may be summarized as follows: How do we understand the pogrom if our effort to understand it is not mediated by an idea of justice? If we must resist from imagining/conflating the law as justice, what is the institutional apparatus with which we need to work?” She flagged a central dilemma by way of a response: What is the position of justice in the aftermath of a pogrom? She further asked, to what extent might we conflate judicial interpretation with the possibility of the law? According to Kannabiran, if one does not actually keep, at least theoretically, the distinction between interpretation and law, then one will lose the space for resistance To Agrawaal, she proposed that it is a meaningful endeavour to examine the connections between the kinds of practices of extraction and accumulation that we are witnessing and those of the colonial period. She urged the speaker to determine whether the connections between the pre-Constitutional and the post-Constitutional are quite as distinct as the colonial and the postcolonial economic structures? The space of the law presents an opportunity to effect a break in colonial law, and the Constitution is an instrument in that regime distinction. Responding to Kumar’s paper, Kannabiran wondered, with regard to the legal regimes that come into place in the PPP era, “What are the ways, if one assumes that there is a certain possibility of potential for a regulatory framework that must apply to all entities, that one can use the law as strategy against itself for the purposes of resistance?” In attempting to resolve resistance, injustice, factionalization, and violence, how do we make the law a conduit for justice?

## **Biocapital**

The session on “Biocapital” was chaired by **Prasanta Ray**, Secretary, Calcutta Research Group, & Emeritus Professor, Department of Sociology, Presidency University, Kolkata, and the discussant for the session was **Anirban Das**, Assistant Professor, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta. It consisted of two speakers. The first speaker, **Rashmi Gopi**, Assistant Professor of Political Science, Vivekananda Institute of Professional Science, read a paper on “Ayurveda Tourism: Issues of Development and Gender and Contemporary Forms of Accumulation and Resistance in Contemporary Kerala.” The paper focussed on the self-projection of Kerala through Ayurveda tourism and its influences on the concepts of masculinity and femininity and the idea of development. This self-projection was part of the Kerala government’s plan to offer a panacea for all the ills of the “Kerala Model of development” which were known for a set of high material quality-of-life indicators coinciding with low per-capita incomes, both distributed across nearly the entire population of Kerala; a set of wealth and resource redistribution programmes that have largely brought about the high material quality-of-life indicators; and high levels of political participation and activism among ordinary people along with substantial numbers of dedicated leaders at all levels. However, Gopi emphasized that, although Ayurveda tourism had contributed to economic growth of the state, it had not addressed the cause of “economic justice” in the state. By interacting with a group of

Ayurveda practitioners in Kerala, the displaced fisher-folks in the Vizhinam beach of Thiruvananthapuram who were evicted for construction of the Ayurveda resorts, students of tourism courses, politicians, and officials in the Department of Tourism, she came to the conclusion that the activities and processes involved in Ayurveda tourism were constructed out of gendered societies, and consequently, the masculine and feminine identities articulated by both host and guest societies came into play in the promotion of tourism. Also Ayurveda tourism involved power relations between groups of people – both within the host society as well as between host and guest societies. These power relations reflect on class, caste, modernity and tradition in the state.

The second paper was presented by **R. Srivatsan**, Senior Fellow, Anveshi Research Centre for Women's Studies. The title of his paper was "The Biopolitics of the Diabetes Epidemic in India: A Search for Perspectives." The objective of the paper was to explore the implicit and explicit assumptions made in scientific, public health and clinical discourse on diabetes about individuals and populations who were seen as either at risk or as actual bearers of the disease, the mismatch between these assumptions and actuality of the disease, the life circumstances, limitations and capabilities in the context of clinical care and public health programmes, and the politics and economics of medical care in India from an examination of the mismatch between the assumptions and the reality of the lives of individuals either at risk or afflicted by the disease. The other objective was to fashion a methodology by which this research could be carried on. As Srivatsan explained, this method would involve finding contradictions between the expectations about the patient implicitly assumed in the medical discourse and what actual patients were able to do with respect to controlling the disease. The onus of the paper was on seeing diabetes as a "sociological problem" involving matters of food and culture, family difficulties and social stigma.

The discussant, Anirban Das, started with the observation that there were a couple of notions of the "biological" which bound these two papers together – (1) biomedical (the epistemic structure of modern medicine working through institutions of modern and traditional medical practices) and (2) biopolitical (modern formal knowledge which contributes to the surveillance system and identifies individuals as part of a population group). The links between surveillance and aspects of production emanated from the tension between individual bodies and universal knowledge systems. Das observed that the most important feature of Biocapital was how it assumed an identity between the molecular notion of body and financialization of capital. In this context, the shift from the earlier studies on Ayurveda to the contemporary concept of the same as a modern yet "pure" practice seemed instructive. The responses from the audience were once again quite varied. A larger question about the relation between neoliberalism and emphasis on the tourism industry was raised. Also the irrelevance of the notion of a docile body against its subjection to biocapital became an issue of contention. The issue of postcolonial "difference" in this context emerged as a vital concern. The management of risk by the government in the case of treatment of epidemics also seemed crucial, as they could be tackled with the strategies of disaster management, turning treatment into an infrastructural problem.

- ❖ This session was followed by a talk by **Subhoranjan Dasgupta** who spoke on "**The Dialectical Core in Rosa Luxemburg's Vision of Democracy**". In a thought-provoking engagement with Luxemburgian ideas of democracy and dialectics, Dasgupta adroitly reconstellated her ideas in the context of present-day democracy, as it has evolved and unfolded in contexts unanticipated by the revolutionary

thinker, and sought to suggest novel pathways to rethink democratic life. Dasgupta received his Ph.D. in Literature from the University of Heidelberg, Germany. In his doctoral thesis “Dialectics and Dream”, he evaluated the poetry of Bishnu De, renowned Bengali poet, in the light of Marxian aesthetics. Dasgupta’s area of specialization is the social basis of culture and creativity. Among his numerous publications are *Elegy and Dream: Akhtaruzzaman Elias’ Creative Commitment* and (with Jashodhara Bagchi) *The Trauma and The Triumph: Gender and Partition in Eastern India*.

### Book Discussion:

1. *Beyond Kolkata: Rajarhat and the Dystopia of Urban Imagination* by Suhit K. Sen, Ranabir Samaddar & Ishita Dey
2. *Capital, Interrupted: Agrarian Development and the Politics of Work in India* by Vinay Gidwani

Lunch was followed by a book discussion session. The discussants in this session were **Ritajyoti Bandyopadhyay**, Faculty Member, History, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Kolkata; **Annapurna Shaw**, Professor, Public Policy and Management, Indian Institute of Management Calcutta; and **Samir K. Das**, Professor, Department of Political Science, & Dean of Arts, University of Calcutta. The session was moderated by **Atig Ghosh**, Member, Calcutta Research Group & Assistant Professor, Department of History, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan.

Samir K. Das inaugurated the discussion by stating that urban politics in India follows one of two trajectories, with hardly any overlap between them: 1) formal-legal, where the emphasis is on the rules, institutions, and protocols of urban governance and the associated phenomenon of elite formation (how the urban elite is connected to the rural hinterland and at the same time is tied up with national political processes and the global political/economic processes) and 2) displacement/dispossession. *Beyond Kolkata*, in his opinion, is a departure from both of these narratives. It tries to link the processes of displacement and dispossession with the larger story of capital accumulation. One of the running themes featured in the book, according to Das, is the idea that establishment implies destruction, in this case, of Rajarhat – its economy and politics. Rajarhat functioned as a supply line, providing a supply of fish and vegetables to Kolkata markets. Most importantly, it was a producer of “public good,” as there was some sort of subsistence economy prevalent before its destruction. Rajarhat’s provision for the “public good” is demonstrated by the low-growth equilibrium the locality sustained, keeping out-migration to a minimum. Now, its inhabitants, who were not compensated after their eviction during the creation of the New Town in the area, have resorted to vocations such as domestic workers, vegetable stall owners, and security guards. The burgeoning IT sector occupying the erstwhile Rajarhat has no place for the skills of its former residents. A second thematic component of the book is the materiality of politics – the distribution of loot and power, so that everyone becomes a stakeholder and, consequently, sanctions development schemes. There is also the theme of struggles and resistance. The story of labour has to be articulated independently of the story of capital. The presence of acquisition and the success of capital do not mean that there was never struggle. In fact, struggle under conditions of globalization continue to interrupt capital without announcing itself or registering a victory. Though these struggles are ultimately unsuccessful, it is important for political strategists to find how to recalibrate resistance strategies accordingly so that movements of struggle can become a media

player and secure the public agenda. *Beyond Kolkata* speaks of different kinds of capital and makes a distinction between old and new capital. At one level, you have state and state-making capital (the state behaves as a capitalist – land that was bought has been sold off by the government at rates ranging from 20 to 160 times higher than originally paid. At another level, the state makes room for financiers and owners of tradable services, and state infrastructure helps them in further accumulating capital. Involved in these interactions of old and new capital in the process of accumulation are hoodlums, cronies, *goondas* – the sources of violence. Das remarked on the failure of the book to adequately reflect on the internal contradictions of these components of capital. He talked of industrialists’ refusal to invest out of a fear of syndicates and financial engagement with ruffians/*goondas*. This represents the internal contradictions of capital within capital. In talking of syndicates as an industry, violence is configured as an investment that can contribute to the accumulation of capital. Why do struggles become subsumed under capital? He asked. Or, do they? Massive co-option has made all the looters share in the process while excluding the dispossessed from a share of the benefits; thus, everyone is a beneficiary except for the displaced. Political parties do not take up the cause of resistance – the displaced and dispossessed are rarely, if ever, represented by political powers; this reality has to do with the way representation in a liberal polity is structured. John Stuart Mill argues the proportion of the populace that voted one into power is not the only one deserving of representation. Representation is, rather, a public obligation; the “public” is associated with the common good, which includes the cause of the displaced and the dispossessed. Speaking of resistance in Rajarhat, Das expressed his doubt as to whether these struggles and instances of resistance represent a new form of politics. Rather, he averred, the politics that has emerged today is characterized by a certain formlessness that refuses to be cast into a form and prefers to cut across new types of form.

Annapurna Shaw commented that the appearance of *Beyond Kolkata* and its focus on the building of new towns in India is timely as the new government presented in July 2014 its agenda of building 100 “smart” cities – satellite cities adjunct to already large towns. There is an inherent need to dispossess and destroy other modes of production in order to accumulate and accrue capital. This process of dispossession and destruction targets prevailing ways of life. The new town replacing Rajarhat was conceptualized as a residential, urban centre designed to relieve the population pressure of Kolkata. Initially claiming 2700 hectare of lands, the land requirement increased to make room for IT hubs, educational and cultural institutions, and commercial/residential activities. Land for the project was acquired through a number of means; the government violated its own rules and regulations to secure land, and strong-arm techniques were employed to coerce people into giving up their land. Regarding the imperatives behind the creation of new towns she said, new towns are safe havens for new accumulation away from the old city, its strong labour base and physical problems. Rajarhat was conceptualized to be a logistical city that served new capital and new labour. In the face of the critical and intractable issues that confront policymakers, Rajarhat should be used as a pointer as to what not to do. Could the process of new-town development be different – that is, more equitable and less violent – in any other part of the country? Shaw thought this was a debatable point about present organizational policy. To start with, do we actually need new towns? If yes, are there more equitable and just ways about going about building them?

The third discussant, Ritojyoti Bandyopadhyay, chose to focus on the book by Gidwani. To his mind, Gidwani has made two points: 1) capitalist power to circulate and create subjects functional for its own requirements is never complete and, 2) in order to deliver labour from the

framework of capital, one needs to distinguish between the politics of “work” and the politics of “labour.” These are two separate registers, separate organizing devices, according to Bandyopadhyay. Gidwani further tries to demonstrate the structural relationship between value and waste. According to Gidwani, liberalism in India is driven by a development process that employs illegal state power to discipline the waste (both wasteland and the wasted mind); in this, development in India emerges as a colonial force. It is interesting that Gidwani does not refer to contemporary colonial terminology of improvement and progress. He does, however, engage with a very rich corpus of literature (Hegel, Marx, etc.), but misses some critical literature on Gujarat, such as that by Crispin Bates. By invoking history 1 and history 2 of Dipesh Chakraborty and invoking the limits of knowledge that can form in the time of capital, Gidwani critiques the formulations of Harvey, who produces a totalizing, sweeping picture of capital. Gidwani would like to go beyond the live processes of capital and is trying to bridge the division between the two houses of Marxist literature. Gidwani’s distinction between the politics of “work” and the politics of “labour” serves to suggest that one cannot have a history of labour. That is, in order to use the value of labour for labour itself, one must deliver labour from the framework of capital. Though this is the author’s most significant point, Bandyopadhyay does not think it is adequately fleshed out.

An animated discussion followed the comments of the discussants.

Regarding *Beyond Kolkata*, it was said that one of the most significant marks of intervention is to link the question of multitude to that of property relations: accumulation separates labour from the means of production, but does so through particular property relations that exist in contemporary times. For example, the immediate problem facing the post-independent state was how to give land to peasants without disrupting power relations in the villages. The concept of the service village is significant: one of the arguments levelled against the displacements in Delhi was that women are dependent on the colonies/ villages/slum clusters. Consequently, there was a kind of remaking and reformation of the service villages there. Thus, the service village can be used as a conceptual tool within the context of a changing city and polity. *Beyond Kolkata*, it was said, has astutely pointed out that the contemporary problem is not a question of whether the people of a political society have chosen by whom they are governed, but that they have to overthrow those by whom they are governed. Is the construction of Rajarhat different from the way Salt Lake City was created? Retrospectively speaking, is there something such as the organic growth of the city? Was the growth of Kolkata always pursued in the same ways as it is today? We do not associate the same kind of violence with the growth of the city as we do with the growth of the township. The creation of new townships is reacting to a different kind of demand, but this demand has always existed. Islamabad, for instance, has been created as if there is no space for the normal people; it is a bureaucrats’ town with no public transport to reach far-flung places. Similarly, the reimagining of the capital of Andhra Pradesh was based on a desire to create a slum-free capital. The building of these kinds of cities does not leave the interstices and cracks that allow for the growth of slums. Further it was said that the technological shifts influenced by climate change and the impetus to move to cleaner energy have the potential to change the wider logic surrounding development, to the benefit of resistance campaigns.

Regarding *Capital, Interrupted* various observations were put forward. Gidwani’s book has achieved worldwide acclaim, but certain critical aspects are lacking in it. His book is a product of a bigger movement that puts issues/considerations of culture and affect before economical research. Can one marry the cultural registers with the economic register or is there some synthesis of the two which produces a third register altogether? Annapurna Shaw was requested



to reflect on this question of “bigger economics” as a geographer? What was the role of geography, if any, in the book and how was it placed? What is the economic argument that we are bringing out by these kinds of cultural or geographic analyses? If the question is that capital interrupts in the way that the book presumes, was there an understanding of the logic that explains why capital interrupts and does so in the way the book presumes. Can anthropology substitute political economy in answering this question?

Shaw furnished a number of responses to the questions posed. Regarding *Beyond Kolkata* she observed, development is called a machine and she find this to be an interesting analogy. Further, in the context of the strength of the multitude and why it has failed to produce concrete results, she said it is certainly noteworthy to examine why political parties, particularly of the opposition, have not been interested in representing displacement/dispossession causes. There have been instances in India’s urban past when developed land was given back because of the activism of the opposition and representation of the displaced and dispossessed. Whether cities in the past were created using violence or whether Rajarhat was an exception? To this she expressed her inability to answer citing the paucity of records for the old cities; but she said that we know that when the British came to Kolkata, a lot of dispossession and displacement occurred in the villages to make room for the metropolis. The violence in the creation or growth of cities may not always entail physical force, but coercion occurs through different means; through economic incentives, for example. In her turn, Shaw chose to direct a question at Ranabir Samaddar. Many service villages had grown naturally, she said. Though the land of the villages was requisitioned, the villages were left intact. Over time, most of these villages transformed into little townlets on the periphery of cities and became not all that different from the surrounding urban areas. Shaw’s question to Professor Samaddar, then, was: Have these townships/erstwhile villages merged with the surrounding area under the force of urbanization or do they remain separate entities? What is their experience with the provision of municipal services (i.e. basic infrastructure and solid waste management)? Regarding *Capital, Interrupted*, Shaw opined that Gidwani’s book espouses a diversity of content, from Marx to Foucault. The methodology does not lend itself to traditional geography, and the diversity of his interests is such that it is confounding. His dramatic presentation of text is attractive to people who want to interact with this subject matter in a new, exciting way, she observed.

Bandyopadhyay, in his turn, pointed out that there has been a shift in our academic interest from “crisis” to “interruption”. The field of cultural studies has probably, at least outside India, lost its original traction. One cannot do pure cultural studies in the academic market. The beat of political economy is gaining ground and outrunning the beat of ethnography and history among young scholars in the US Ivy League world. So, there are constraints under which US academia works; the production frontier is such that the first book can be a big ethnographic endeavour while the second is theoretical and involves the ethnography of theory, of knowledge practices. Since the 1980s, there has been a thriving academic market based on difference. Thus, in order to advance in academia, one has to present a different history of capitalism, for example. Also at this time, there was a shift from the British academic tradition of social history (in which archival research was grounded in/served the purpose of social history) to the Americanized cultural history tradition. In India, the dislodging of social history from official historical narratives did not happen in the same way it did elsewhere; rather, social history was studied/produced alongside cultural history. Thus, the tentative answer as to why Gidwani’s type of literature is attractive rests in the fact that a mixed plate of historical inquiry suits the

Indian market. It is helpful to understand how sociology factors into our understanding of science and the world according to science.

Ranabir Samaddar contributed his bit by making the following observations. On one level, Rajarhat is a continuity in the history of cities. Thus, the construction of cities and bypasses brings a restriction that disconnects and disrupts, as the destruction of Rajarhat's subsistence agriculture demonstrates. Yet, Rajarhat has a particular character, because it combines the various deployment of new forms of capital and residential/housing interests. Cities are never built for residential purposes; they either serve production or bureaucratic/administrative purposes. In terms of answering how to have a service village, house the IT industry, and force people to move away, Rajarhat represented a new beginning. There are inherent challenges in writing a history of the contemporary. One must chronicle what is happening in the present with the awareness that history is being created in the process. In this process of generating history, one must be cognizant of the implications for the way the present is understood as history in the future and determine what is (and, consequently, what will be) significant to document. What one may look at as an anomaly in the new type of politics, characterized by formlessness, is actually FORM. There are new things being built in Rajarhat, like eco-parks. Along with political parties, there are different types of organizations and multitudes of people combining to create new politics. New networks, new forms of subject-reckoning, new representations of urban politics are often irrupting into new forms of resistance.

Finally, Das offered his responses. It is important to track the displacement from livelihoods, as well, and not just from residential space, he said. Responding to the questions as to how to make resistance more successful and why political parties were not representing the cause, Das opined that the Rajarhat book gives the impression that they are just not interested in taking up the cause. The way institutional-representational structures are framed in India does not allow one to raise these questions. Political powers are not interested in representation of the "common good" precisely because the democratic architecture of institutions disallows these questions from being posed or critically analyzed. The dichotomy between notions of the deserving body politic/the rightful recipients of democratic governance (the voter base of elected representatives) *versus* ideas about the "public" as encompassing all constituents also influences power-political behaviour in India. The book could have provided more insights into the democratic architecture/philosophy of the country, he averred. In Das's opinion, public good is the most absent of all issues excepting that laws make it the number one priority/subject; though issues related to the public good always enjoy some sort of impunity, one is likely to be branded as anti-national if you raise the aforementioned questions. Such were the thoughts of Das. He snapped off with the following poser: Can one theorize the formlessness, instead of waiting for the unorganized structure of syndicates to organize? So far, no strong organization has come to take up the task of organization, which would facilitate representation. One has to understand the globalization of capital-labour relations, instead of just the process of globalization at large where the alternate managers are investment financiers from the global North.

The book discussion session turned out to be one of the most passionately participatory and stimulating sessions of the conference.

## **Postcolonial Resistance**

The concluding session of the conference was chaired by **Sibaji Pratim Basu**, Treasurer, CRG, & Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Sree Chaitanya College, Habra. Discussant for this session was **Arup K. Sen**, Associate Professor, Department of Commerce, Serampore College, West Bengal. The three speakers were **Paula Banerjee**, President, Calcutta Research Group, & Associate Professor, Department of South & South East Asian Studies, University of Calcutta; **Ingo Schmidt**, Academic Coordinator, Labour Studies, Athabasca University, Canada; and **Immanuel Ness**, Professor of Political Science, Brooklyn College of the City University of New York. Ness spoke on “The New Industrial Proletariat: Imperialism, Mobility and Class Struggles”, while Schmidt’s paper was titled: “Living in a Post-Colonial World; Really? A Luxemburgian Perspective on Capitalist Accumulation and Anti-Colonial Struggles Today”: and Banerjee’s: “Resistance under the Sign of Developmentalism.”

Arup K. Sen initiated the deliberation by pointing out that Rosa Luxemburg had identified that capital accumulation is connected with the activities of capital state-sponsors in non-capitalist communities, whose *modus operandi* is largely based on the patterns set by colonizers of the Global South. Ness elaborated that issue of the geopolitical shift in capitalism. There has been a shift in both capital and the role of labour connected to the role of finance capital. In this age of neoliberalism, both capital and labour are footloose in the sense that finance capital travels (via foreign investment, multinational corporations, etc.) and labour moves from the Global North to the South (has gone from constituting 50 per cent of the industrial employment to 80 per cent during a short period in the Global South). There has also been a major change in the mode of labour protest and organization. Traditional unions have been co-opted by management companies and a hierarchy has been established. These hierarchies parallel those that are inherent to the Global North-Global South relationship, though the latter are slightly different. Caste composition is important in explaining the hierarchy. Finance capital and political power are organically connected. No one can negate the role of finance capital in imperialism as capital flows into the Global South. Trade unions and political power are born in the period of bourgeois democracy, so they have their limitations. He delineated three important categories that inform the legal limits: political parties, trade unions, and finance capital. Paula Banerjee began by stating that her study proceeds with an ethnographic reading of politics in Tripura from a gendered perspective. The paper told the story of displacement of tribal populations by Bengali settlers and the displacement of Bengalis by tribal insurgency. It specifically and saliently focussed on women’s role in peacekeeping and counterinsurgency; it sought to understand the women’s question in Tripura while also examining how the Left ruled through counter-insurgency measures. There are ways to argue that women were empowered during these periods, she argued, but the discourse ought to be more nuanced, more aware of the complexities of women’s experiences.

During the discussion, Ness was quizzed on whether it would be prudent to further examine the question of the union and the shape it has taken in greater depth. Not only is capital coming from the Global North, but unions are coming, as well. There have been several international unions (especially from the US) that in the past 5-10 years have come to unionize the Indian automobile and hotel sectors. One has to be a little critical of these activities and the modified form of imperial interventionism they can beget. The kind of bargaining that is being made and the kind of demands that are being asserted within the labour syndicates that foreign unions are trying to organize are substantially different from what they used to be. Any search for autonomy has to take into account this kind of intervention that is happening. Banerjee was asked to define resistance more concretely. She was further asked: Is development in itself an

inherently violent phenomenon, or is it the way it is managed, the way we are conceiving of it, our experience of it?

As the discussant, Sen raised a valuable insight related to the question of how to insert the “others” into the analytics of labour, an issue that is linked to the question of the peasantry of the Global South. Gramsci comments on how the construction of the national popular (identity?) becomes crucial in understanding the South and its links with the North. The most important question he leaves unresolved is whether it is the destiny of the South to be incorporated into the world of capital. Unless one marries Gramsci’s commentary on passive revolution with the question of the “other,” one of his lifelong concerns, the reference to Gramsci will remain incomplete. Furthermore, Sen asked: how do we situate passive revolution at the global level? If passive revolution is a global phenomenon, then how do we define/locate/interrogate and further theorize the forms of passive revolution pursued by global capital as well as the ways in which the national popular is being made? Does the root that capitalism takes in the Global South still recall the national question or is it over for us?

Responding to the queries and comments, Ness said that the question/point about the involvement of international unions in the Global South is extremely astute. Since about 1997/1998, there has been a resurgence of northern/Western European and North American imperialism with respect to trade unions taking place in India/China/throughout the world. These unions pursue initiatives to engage in trading various types of workers against others. These collaborationist strategies give one set of workers the right to organize while denying others, creating divisions within certain countries and the cynicism that the US is exporting unionization to the rest of the world. Recent initiatives to forge trade unions on an international basis in the image of the American/European model demonstrate the degree to which this is not necessarily a battle over ideology, but a battle over class struggle itself, a way to make class struggle completely inert by establishing unions that are “fake” or serve the interests of US capital. US trade union imperialism, where trade unions are used as an instrument to advance US Foreign Policy and infiltrate a national endowment for democracy, is a fact and has to be combated.

Schmidt in his turn commented that neoliberalism is a political project that espouses a master narrative but also allows for a business-type of language and product differentiations so that different kinds of people can relate to it. It seeks for every person to be subjected to and internalize its logic, creating this dichotomy of unity and diversity. His work, inspired by the writings and life of Rosa Luxembourg, Schmidt asserted, is interested in configuring alternative, socialist versions of unity and diversity, while acknowledging that there is no homogenous working class (though capital likes to create one).

- ❖ As an extension of the Fifth Critical Studies Conference, the CRG further organized **an interactive session** of trade unionists and labour activists from Kolkata with **Immanuel Ness**. The session was titled “**Autonomy of the Trade Union Movements.**” Eminent labour activists, organizers and historians were present at the interaction, which took place on **August 25, 2014, from 04.00 p.m.** at the CRG Seminar Hall.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The Conference had set itself the important task to situate the question of accumulation in the current context of capitalism and the social and political struggles against it globally. This

context, it had been argued, is marked primarily by what can be generally called the “post-colonial condition”, which means among others, the retarded nature of agriculture, the persistence of the unprivileged peasantry, debt-burden, massive immigration, resource crisis, national backwardness of countries, primitive forms of accumulation, unbalanced urbanisation, overwhelming presence of informal sector, continuing nature of global crisis in the food market, etc. At the heart of this condition are contemporary forms of accumulation. The combination of the high, including the most virtual, form of accumulation and the primitive form is a feature of the contemporary dynamics of accumulation. However, till now the discussion on these has not focussed on the links between the two; instead, discussions have gone on along separate lines. The debates on the primitive form have focussed on land grab, resource extraction, extraordinary forms of labour control, new fiscal-political instruments of dispossession, conquest, war, modes of slave labour, etc., and the significance of all these for contemporary capitalism. Alternatively, a different set of studies has focussed on new financial modes of accumulation, trading in money and currencies, sovereign funds, new monetary operations of banks and other institutions, and financial reforms. The unmistakable causal link between the two, and the bearing the so-called “post-colonial condition” has on this relation, had not been adequately interrogated. The aim of the Fifth Critical Studies Conference, at the broadest level, had been to initiate this interrogation. To this end, even a cursory glance at the contents and concerns of the papers presented in this conference would demonstrate the success of our endeavour. All papers, every discussion, have remained engaged with the theme of accumulation under the sign of postcolonial capitalism and in exploring the causal link between the primitive and virtual forms of it.

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