

Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group (CRG) is happy to invite you to the 8th public lecture of 'City Lights', scheduled on 31 May 2025, 5 to 8 pm, at Paschimbanga Bangla Akademi, Kolkata. Please join us in this closing lecture of the 'City Lights' public series for a dynamic evening discussion at Bangla Akademi Sabhagriha Hall, 1/1, Acharya Jagdish Chandra Bose Rd, Maidan, Kolkata, West Bengal 700020.

**'One great graveyard of memories': Forging the City in Twentieth-century Calcutta**

**By Dr. Kaustubh Mani Sengupta**

The presentation looks at the process of memorialization and narrativization of an urban space through different textual and material strategies. It shows how diverse strands of political and cultural thought came together in the early decades of the twentieth century to create a sense of belonging to the city. Claiming Calcutta became crucial to define the past as well as to organize the future. In this regard, the planning initiatives of the Calcutta Improvement Trust played a pivotal role. The old gave way to the new, and people churned up nostalgic paeans for the by-gone. New ideas about history and heritage helped produce the urban space. Engaging with the idea of representation and reconstruction of an urban past—through a study of literary depictions, journal articles, planning visions—this presentation looks at the wider notion of urbanity and urban consciousness. On one hand, the tussle was between colonial appropriation and nationalist claims. On the other, the urban space was represented very differently by different sets of planners. All of these groups had their own vision of the city. Conflicts between remembering an idealized past, preserving a vanishing present, and ordering a perfect future produced the colonial urban space of Calcutta during the first half of the twentieth century.

**Kaustubh Mani Sengupta** teaches in the Department of History and Archaeology at Shiv Nadar University, Delhi NCR. He is the co-editor of *Rethinking the Local in Indian History: Perspectives from Southern Bengal* (Routledge, 2021), *Itihaser Bitarka, Bitarker Itihas: Oteeter Bharat O Bartaman Gabeshona* (Ananda Publishers, 2021), and *The Long 2020: Reflections of Epidemiological Times* (Springer, 2024).

**The lecture will end with a Closing Discussion by Professor Ranabir Samaddar from Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group.**