

SAYANDEB CHOWDHURY, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, SLS/SUS

EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

Mr Chowdhury was trained in Literature with BA, MA and M.Phil from St Xavier's College (Calcutta University), Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi and Jadavpur University, Calcutta. While doing his M.Phil he joined academics and taught Literature for three years first as guest and then as full time faculty at various degree colleges. On being offered a stint in the media, he took up the challenge six years ago and worked for ABP Group, *Times of India*, *DNA*, *Hindustan Times* and *The Bengal Post*. His various roles in the media included editing, writing and commissioning articles as well as supervising Sunday Supplement of features, editorial and books. He has also contributed editorials, comments, features and reviews for the publications that he has worked for as well as for other prestigious publications in India and abroad. His interests are in the History of Ideas in the 20th century, especially Communism and post-Communism, The Culture of Cinema, Continental Literature, Public Literature and Media, Literary Theory and The City as Memory. His M.Phil dissertation investigated into the *subjectivities/ subject positions* under Communism that came under heavy critique in post-Communist literature/fiction. He is working on his PhD proposal that broadly concerns the *Politics and Representation of Cultural Memory*.

PAST EMPLOYMENT

MEDIA

Most recently, Mr Chowdhury was a senior member of the Features Team, with independent charge of Sunday culture supplement *The Sunday Post* at *The Bengal Post*, Calcutta. In a similar capacity, but as part of the Edi/Op-ed pages, he has worked for the *Hindustan Times (HT)* in Delhi, *Daily News and Analysis (DNA)* in Mumbai and shortly for *Times of India* and ABP Group in Calcutta.

ACADEMICS

Mr Chowdhury was a full-time Lecturer in English at Charuchandra College, Calcutta University, from November 2002-June 2003; a Full-time Lecturer in English at Haldia Government College, Haldia under Public Service Commission Government of West Bengal, from Nov 2001-Nov 2002. He also lectured as Guest faculty under Teaching Assistant scheme (as dept fellow) in Department of English at Jadavpur University, Calcutta and as a Guest Faculty at Presidency College, Calcutta, from Nov 2000-Feb 2001

Mr Chowdhury was also invited to present a series of Lectures on *New Theories of Literature* at Department of English, Presidency College, Calcutta, between Sept-Oct 2004.

BOOKS AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Books

Bringing together his long interest in popular culture, cinema and how cultural memory is shaped and preserved, Mr Chowdhury is currently writing a book titled *The Heroic Laughter of Modernity: The Life, Cinema and Afterlife of Bengali Matinee Idol Uttam Kumar*. The book explores politics of Matinee Idolatry, the cultural tropes of reception and trade in popular cinema and how middle class life, culture and aspiration was shaped and influenced by the name, person and phenomenal popularity of one man and his cinema.

ARTICLES

As part of the core editorial team of some of India's prestigious dailies, Mr Chowdhury regularly contributed editorial commentary on Left politics in India (specifically Bengal), the reception of cinema and popular culture, art and most commonly on the cultural and intellectual life of Calcutta, the production of cultural memory and its postcolonial/ contemporary influence. He has also done book reviews of the fiction and non-fiction of Orhan Pamuk, Milan Kundera, Dominique Lapierre, Salman Rushdie, Chidananda Dasgupta, Chitra Banerjee, for major publications like *HT*, *DNA*, *The Bengal Post* and *Biblio*.

Some of Mr Chowdhury's longer articles include *Screened Out: Why an Appreciation of Bengali auteur Tapan Sinha is much over due (Caravan)*, *Red Requiems: Three movies that examine Communism in a revisionist light (Caravan)*, *Postal-Failure: Why Indian indie favourite Aparna Sen's The Japanese Wife Disappoints, (Moving Arts Journal, USA)*.

Mr Chowdhury also wrote an influential editorial in wake of the Iraq War titled '*America Shotabdi? Notun Marxhader Kboje*' (The American Century? In search of Neo-Marxism) in the editorial pages of *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 8th April 2003.

SEMINAR

International seminars outside India

- Presented a paper as a fully sponsored participant in International Society for Intellectual History seminar titled, *Use and abuse of Reason* at University of Helsinki, Finland from 27-31st July 2004. The paper concerned the political culture in Bengal and the ontological status of the intellectual. The paper was titled: *Reasons of the State: Communist Politics and Open Society in Bengal*

International Seminars in India

- Presented a paper titled *The cultural Politics of Battala and the Re-interrogation of Postcolonial Peripheries* at the Cultural Studies Workshop organized by The Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, jointly funded by ENRECA programme of Danida and by SEPHIS, at Shantiniketan, Bengal from 25–31 January 2002.
- Another aspect of *Battala or the Chabook Culture in 19th century Bengal*, namely its trading policies and textual dimensions formed the subject of my paper that I read for International Book History Seminar organized by the English Department, Jadavpur University in collaboration with Seagull Foundation. It was titled *Battala Literature and the History of its Production*.
- Presented a paper titled *The disparate signifiers of the Body in Coleridge's Divine Comedy* in the Department of English International seminar on *Rethinking Romanticism* of February 8th and 9th 2001 at Jadavpur University.

- Presented the paper *Why Aren't there no Women in Feluda*, on Satyajit Ray's popular detective series in the International Seminar on *Children's Literature* at Jadavpur University from 11-13th December 2003.
- Produced an original research paper as part of a seminar course in the centre for historical studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University under Professor Neeladri Bhattacharya. The paper concerned the cultural politics of 19th century Bengali underground literature called *Battala*. It was titled: *To be and not to be: The Colonial Desire of the Baboo and the Representation of Sycophancy in 19th Century Battala Literature*.
- Presented a paper at the annual M. Phil colloquium at Calcutta University on 5th May 2001. It was titled, *Battala Cultural Politics and the Limits of Colonial Resistance*.

CURRENT RESEARCH INTERESTS

Mr Chowdhury's current research has two parts. Part one looks at cultures of modernity, especially the complex areas of negotiation between cinema and literature and how they perform within the broader paradigm of reception and cultural memory. Part two looks at City, in his case Calcutta, as a cultural and architectural site of memory making and cultural production as it finds itself negotiating colonial, post-colonial and other contemporary cultural tropes and identities.