

TWO-DAY NATIONAL CONFERENCE  
on  
"BIOGRAPHY AS HISTORY"  
Department of History, Vidya-Bhavana, Visva-Bharati  
Santiniketan

DATE: March 05-06, 2025

VENUE: Department of History, Vidya-Bhavana, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

Dear All,

This is an invitation to Ph.D. scholars, independent researchers and faculty members of colleges and universities to send abstracts for the two-day national conference on the theme: "Biography as History," to be organised by the Department of History, Vidya-Bhavana, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, West Bengal.

- Deadline for submission of abstracts: **22.02.2025**
- Selection of abstracts and notification by email: **24.02.2025**

**PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING:**

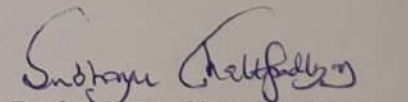
- The abstracts should be no longer than 300 words, typed in Times New Roman, font size 12, 1.5 spacing.
- The abstracts should be properly titled and carry the full name, affiliation (if any), email id and phone number of the applicant.
- The selection of abstracts will be made by an academic committee duly constituted for the purpose.
- On being selected, the applicant will have to pay a **registration fee** on arrival at the venue of the conference.
- On being selected, the participants will be provided a conference kit, dinner on 05.03.2025 and lunch on 06.03.2025.
- On being selected, the participants will have to report at the venue on 05.03.2025 by 2.00 P.M.

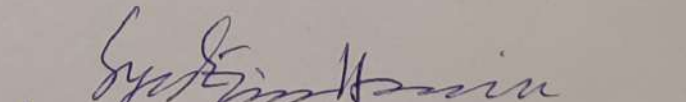
The registration fee structure will be as follows:

Category	Registration Fees (excluding travel to and from the venue and accommodation)
Ph.D. scholars, independent researchers	₹750
Faculty Members	₹1,200



Dr Atig Ghosh  
Convener

  
Dr Subhayu Chattopadhyay  
Convener

  
for Professor & Head 12/02/2025  
Department of History  
Vidya-Bhavana, Visva-Bharati  
प्रोफेसर एवं विभागाध्यक्ष / Professor & Head  
इतिहास विभाग / Deptt. of History  
विद्या भवन / Vidya Bhavana  
विश्वभारती, शान्तिनिकेतन  
Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan

## CONCEPT NOTE

Biography as a genre of history-writing has had a paradoxical career. On the one hand, professional historians—at least up till the emergence of “new biography” in the 1990s—denigrated biography as, at best, second-grade history, limited to an individual’s life and probably lacking the rigour of professional history. On the other hand, it is possible that all along the readership of biographies have been far more extensive than that of so-called “professional histories,” with their concern for impersonal forces, underlying structures and long-term processes. From New Criticism’s deliberate denial of authorial context, through Barthes’s declaration of the death of the author down to Derrida’s insistence on the radical autonomy of the text, the opponents of “biography”—both covert and overt—have clearly not been limited to the discipline of history alone.

Given this context, it is probably relevant now to bring the “person” back in into social sciences. At its best, biography, like history, is based on archival research, interweaves historical categories and methodologies, reflects current political and theoretical concerns, and raises complex issues of truth and proof. It challenges the analyst to move beyond easy platitudes and overwhelming generalisations to engage in what Clifford Geertz famously called “thick description”. Moreover, given the long tradition among biographers of writing accessible prose (possibly keeping in mind their vastly wider readership) biography challenges the historian to produce lucid writing—not always the standard among academic scholars. In other words, the long-reviled belletrism of biography could provide an antidote to obfuscatory jargon.

To this end, this conference seeks to revive the genre of “biography” as history, not to replace social or cultural history but in the endeavour to demonstrate the possible complementarity between them, as indeed to demonstrate the interdisciplinary possibilities contained in biographical writing itself.

12/02/2025

12.02.25