

## HSS WEBINAR

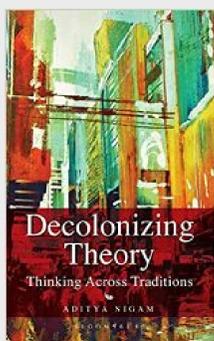
The need to disentangle with the Western intellectual traditions has *almost* become sacrosanct; be it philosophy, literature, sociology, anthropology etc. Doing so the biggest challenge is offering traditions that not only operate as dialectical opposites to the west but also overcoming several *immanent* idiosyncrasies. To give this a definitive debate, the school of HSS, IIT Indore invites Prof. Aditya Nigam to discuss his book *Decolonizing Theory: Thinking across Traditions* (Bloomsbury, 2020). He will speak on

### Why We Need to Decolonize Theory: A View from the Global South

## TALK SUMMARY

*Decolonizing Theory: Thinking Across Traditions* aims at disentangling theory from its exclusively Western provenance, drawing insights and concepts from other thought traditions, connecting to the present, new global moment in the reconstitution of theory. The key argument, which is the point of departure of the book, is that any serious theorizing in the non-West should be fundamentally suspicious of any Theory that only gives you one result: that four-fifths of the world does not and cannot do anything right.

Its modernity remains incomplete, its democracy is perverted, its secularism distorted and its development retarded – in other words, all it tells us is that we do not live up to the standards set by Western modernity. From this point of departure, it seeks to create a conceptual space 'outside' (Western) modernity and capitalism, by insisting on a rethink of the relationship of different times. I take three key themes around which the whole story of modernity can be unravelled, namely the question of 'the political', the question of 'capital and historical time', and 'secularism' for detailed discussion. I do so by 'bracketing' the autobiographical story that Western modernity gives itself. In each case, I try to show that 'past forms' never simply disappear, without residue, to be 'fully' supplanted by the 'modern' and merely 'applying' theory produced in one context to another is therefore very misleading. In doing so, I also reframe the idea of Western knowledge and Western theory itself, arguing that it is not entirely sui generis or endogenous to Europe but built through the great traffic of ideas that the premodern world afforded.



## ABOUT THE SPEAKER



Aditya Nigam is a professor at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi. His recent work has been concerned with the decolonization of social and political theory. In particular, he is interested in theorizing the contemporary experience of politics, populism, democracy and capitalism in the non-West - treating the non-West as the ground for 'doing theory', rather than a field for application or testing of standard frameworks derived from the Western experience. Aditya Nigam also works with the CSDS's Indian Languages Programme and its Hindi journal *Pratiman*. He is one of the founder-editors of *Kafila*, the team blog where he writes regularly on issues of current interest. He is the author of *The Insurrection of Little Selves: The Crisis of Secular Nationalism in India* (2006), *Power and Contestation: India Since 1989* with Nivedita Menon (2007), *After Utopia: Modernity and Socialism and the Postcolony* (2010), and *Desire Named Development* (2011) and *Decolonizing Theory: Thinking Across Traditions* (2020).

## DATE, TIME, LINK

Friday, January 8 2021 – 11 A.M. Onwards

Google Meet Link: [meet.google.com/bqb-rmpp-utb](https://meet.google.com/bqb-rmpp-utb)