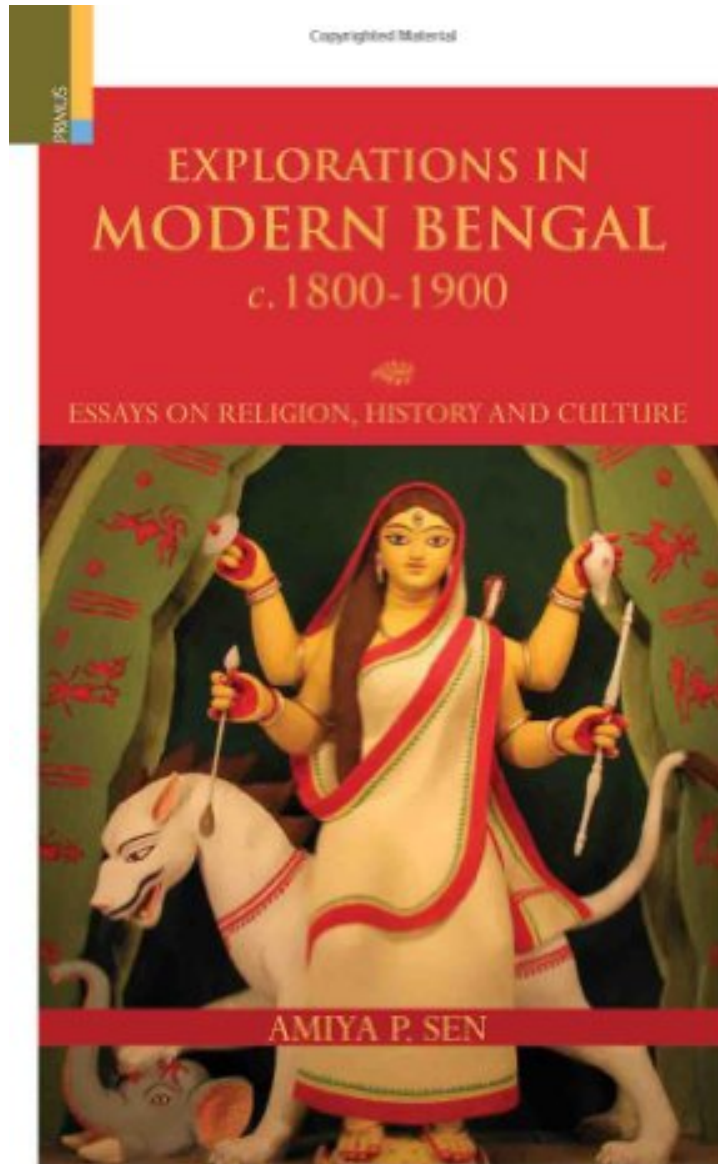


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Amiya P. Sen

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Bengal (c. 1800-1900): Essays on Religion, History and Culture:

Historically, nineteenth-century Bengal was the site where the first crop of a Western educated Hindu intelligentsia creatively and actively engaged in a two-pronged intellectual enterprise. On the one hand, there was deep introspection that encouraged the overturning of traditional categories of thought and ways of life, and on the other, a growing cultural pride that preferred suitably defending these even under perceptibly changed intellectual and material conditions. Many claimed that while the preceding centuries of Indo-Muslim rule had made no difference to the Hindu mind, the Christian West had critically challenged it in intellectual and moral ways. In the course of time, this was also intimately tied to the growing desire to confront colonial modernity on one's own terms. This work examines in some detail, a regional culture as it was subjected to acute interpretative stress for much of the nineteenth century. This is done through an original study of three key facets of contemporary Hindu thought: new perspectives on the possible interplay between the divinely ordained and humanly enacted history, innovative extensions in the meaning of older terms like Dharma and attempts at evolving new moral and cultural theories around select mythical figures and traditionally revered texts. Copious writings on the figure of Krishna-in a historical vein-and the hermeneutical, as also the unprecedented popularity of the Bhagavat Gita are cases in point. In essence, this is a pioneering contribution to the intellectual history of modern Bengal as distinct from the more conventionally political or social.

About the AuthorDr Amiya P. Sen is currently with the Department of History Culture, Jamia Millia Islamia. He has been Agatha Harrison Fellow to the University of Oxford and Visiting Fellow at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, and the Centre for Contemporary Studies, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi. During 2007-8, he was Tagore Professor at Visva Bharati, Santiniketan. Dr Sen is the author of six books and three more are due for publication soon.