



Celebrating Diversity: Plural Epistemologies and Lifeworlds

As part of the centenary year celebrations at Jamia Millia Islamia, the Department of Sociology is organizing lecture series that explores the academic/ aesthetic/ artistic/ literary/ scientific/ personal interpretations of the idea of diversity and its entwinement with our selves. We seek to reclaim the sense of celebration, exuberance and vibrance as we engage with diversity around us and as we do so, we look to the ordinary, the mundane and the everyday as our muse. The endeavour might be articulated as a form of resistance to an alternative imaginary that flattens our world's innate richness into a monochromatic landscape. To this end, we seek to situate diversity at the heart of our inquiry, by understanding it to be the very condition of life itself.

Teeming with diversity, from the microscopic level to the interstellar, our world itself offers the best archetype for the indispensability of diversity for life. The same diversity marks our experience of the everyday as we go about our lives, constantly switching codes – linguistic, sartorial, aesthetic, pietistic, expressive – without conscious reflection. And then, as we orient ourselves towards this world intellectually, we respond to this multiplicity through critical engagement with a range of epistemologies that emerge in our engagement with the social. Thus, mirrored and refracted through our unceasing attempts to live meaningfully, diversity reveals itself to be embedded in all possible ways of relating to the world.

Even as we celebrate the richness of the emergent social, there arises an equally urgent need to be attentive to diversity manifested as disparity, marked by an unequal relationship to the world and life. In that sense, the attempt to reclaim the sense of celebration simultaneously reveals the awareness of loss that has come to mark our orientation towards the world, making it impossible to evade the obvious question – where has the sense of celebration gone? And further, what are the ways to retrieve it? This lecture series is a tentative step towards figuring out the possibilities of doing so, in conversation and argument, embodying the spirit of the exercise itself.