



MAHARAJA AGRASEN COLLEGE

UNIVERSITY OF DELHI

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

1ST PROF PREM KUMARI SRIVASTAVA MEMORIAL ANNUAL LECTURE



Prof Prem Kumari Srivastava
Professor, Department of English,
Maharaja Agrasen college

'The Critic as Amateur'



Prof Saikat Majumdar

Novelist & Critic

Professor of English & Creative Writing, Ashoka University



Wednesday, 20 September 2023 , 11:30 am



Conference Room – 2nd Floor

For more details, contact

Prof Sanjeev Kumar Tiwari
Principal (Offg.)

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Teacher In Charge

Prof Gitanjali Chawla
Coordinator, Annual Lecture Series

Maharaja Agrasen College
Department of English

1st Prem Kumari Srivastava Annual Memorial lecture

Date: Wednesday, 20 September 2023

Time: 11:30 am

Venue: Conference Room, 2nd Floor, Maharaja Agrasen College

“The Critic as Amateur” by Prof Saikat Majumdar

Abstract

The act of reading thrives in a limbo between amateurism and expertise. Amateurism, in its various guises, has driven the study of literature and the humanities forward in under-credited ways. Unexpected forms of reading, writing, and learning, for instance, historically unfolded on the margins of the global British Empire. There are intriguing accounts of autodidacticism and critical self-making left by writers, thinkers, and activists under repressive or exclusionary systems of education enacted by different phases of colonial rule. But it is the disruptive relation to knowledge and institution that underlay their later success as popular intellectuals. My archive draws on three locations: a group of black thinkers in midcentury South Africa, particularly around the exclusionary Bantu Education Act of 1953, a number of 20th century Caribbean writers who seek to understand the disembodied legacy of the diaspora through accidental encounters with literature and history, and a group of writers from late-colonial and early-postcolonial India whose intellectual amateurism charted departures from the English project of professionalizing a particular kind of colonial subject.

Bio Note

Saikat Majumdar, a novelist and critic, is Professor of English and Creative Writing at Ashoka University. He is the author of *Prose of the World, College: Pathways of Possibility*, the forthcoming *The Amateur: Self-Making and the Humanities in the Postcolony* (2024), and the co-editor of collection, *The Critic as Amateur*. He has published four novels: *Silverfish*, *The Firebird*, *The Scent of God*, and most recently, *The Middle Finger*, a contemporary college campus novel that seeks to retell ancient myths. His new novel, *The Remains of the Body*, will appear in 2024. He has been a Fellow at the Wellesley College Humanities Center, the Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Advanced Study, and the Stellenbosch Institute of Advanced Study in South Africa.

More about him and contact information at <https://saikatmajumdar.com/>