

International Seminar on
Performative Communication: Culture and Politics in South Asia
Organized by Jamia Millia Islamia in collaboration with South Asian University
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The category of performance has an inherent looseness, anchoring a search on the webpages to a wanton mix of destinations: research papers related to economic performance, psychological performance, political performance and counseling on sexual performance. In the midst of the manifest polyphony of the term there exists a systematic disciplinary usage giving rise to sophisticated debates. These are various disciplinary approaches, such as anthropology of performance, performance studies overlapping with cultural studies, literary studies, theater studies, etc., social psychology of performance, and so on so forth. The multidisciplinary approach leads to comprehend contemporary instances of performance, along with its cognate such as performative and performativity popular in the performance studies. It is no longer performance restricted to a predetermined script and executed within the confines of Proscenium Theater alone.

The instances of performances are located in variety of social spheres- in the conventional market place where a local seller employs performative tools to capture the attention of the passers-by or in a shopping mall where the visuals, signs, and surroundings have performative bearings to allure the visitors. Performances are also explicitly present in the speeches of political leadership, the canvassing for elections, and swearing-in ceremonies. We encounter them in the works of art and aesthetics as well as in the artifices of the megapolis. Needless to say, performance characterizes ordinary and extraordinary domains of the social. In this wake it is imperative to explore the socio-cultural landscape of India, pinpointing the communicative impacts, of the instances of performance. It is primarily to comprehend the politics of communication and culture accomplished through the acts of performances.

The traditional and recent approaches to performance in various disciplines have yielded manifold understandings. They unfold the instances of performances, traditional as well as modern. Anthropological tradition subsumes a vast corpus of studies on ritual performances. They aid in understanding the folk worldview, primitive art and craft, and underpinning mythological structure.

On the other hand, in the disciplinary domain of performance studies, the scholars have insisted on the necessity to read politics in the instances of performance. This is politics at the level of nation, revealing the national subjectivities in a historical epoch. Furthermore, this also leads to understand politics at the scale of global, in terms of the misappropriation of the local for reinventing the exotica for the urban consumptions. The performance studies, in consonance with culture studies, also offers a sense of emancipatory politics through performances in modern India. But then, there have been a generic allegation that performance studies do not look into the social structural underpinnings of performances. The totality of socio-cultural context, a hobbyhorse of the social anthropologists, is not adequately understood in the performance studies.

Amidst posterity and contemporaneity about the notions of performance there emerges an imperative to further the quest for an interdisciplinary understanding of the performance driven social, cultural and political lives in contemporary India. The goals of the conference are to understand the politics of communication and culture in contemporary south Asia, understanding the performativity in various institutions, political, cultural, economic, in contemporary India, understanding languages, signs, symbols reflective of modern mythologies underpinning the instances of performances in contemporary India, engendering a theoretical framework conducive to understand the performative landscape of the region of South Asia, engendering an interdisciplinary understanding of the phenomenon of performance in contemporary India, engendering a questions and rationale for researches in social science researches in future.