

## **Abstract for Job Talk, History**

IISER, Mohali

Dr. Sharmita Ray

The field of social history of health and medicine offers unique opportunities to probe into diverse dimensions of women's histories. This talk would be exploring women's engagement with scientific learning in the field of medicine and the consequent impact this had upon the personal and professional lives of the earliest women doctors from the region of Bengal. The objective would be to assess the "becoming" of doctors not only in the context of securing training but also to acquire due recognition and respect as doctors in the eyes of the peers and the society at large. Some questions to be addressed would include: How did women negotiate their place as students and professionals in a field that was an exclusively male domain until the final quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century? What made Western medicine a suitable field for a steadily rising number of Indian women to carve out opportunities? What did these women infuse into the practice and administration of Western medicine to adapt it to their and to society's aspirations? How did the landscape of medicine in South Asia transform from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards wherein larger numbers of women were serving as doctors as well as patients seeking professional medical care?

In addition, the talk would discuss the challenges facing the researcher in this field in terms of the availability, variety and reliability of the sources. I would weigh in the significance of juxtaposing writings in Bengali with those available in English as an important trope for methodological and analytical purposes. I would like to conclude by outlining the possibilities of further research in this field of study and present my tentative plans for further research.