



The Invention of Private Life: Literature and Ideas

Sudipta Kaviraj

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A longtime political analyst and thinker, Sudipta Kaviraj proves in this probing collection that he is also an acute writer on literature and politics. In these works, which lie at the intersection of the study of literature, social theory, and intellectual history, Kaviraj locates serious reflections on modernity's complexities in the vibrant currents of modern Indian literature, particularly in the realms of fiction, poetry, and autobiography.

Kaviraj shows Indian writers did more than adopt new literary trends in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They deployed these innovations to interrogate some of the fundamental philosophical questions of modernity. Issues central to modern European social theory grew into significant themes within Indian literary reflection, such as the influence of modernity on the nature of the self, the character of power under the conditions of modern history, and the experience of power as felt by an individual subject of the modern state. How does modern politics affect the personality of a sensitive individual? Is love possible between intensely self-conscious people, and how do individuals cope with the transience of affections or the fragility of social ties? Kaviraj argues these inquiries inform the heart of modern Indian literary tradition. In the writing of Rabindranath Tagore, Sibnath Sastri, and others, readers get close to the unique predicament of modern times.

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