

The Caste Question and the Historian's Craft



Centre for the Study of Developing Societies

Delhi

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The Thematic

Much of theorizing on caste is premised on the sociological and anthropological postulation of the structural opposition between the pure and the impure, embodied in the persona of the Brahman and the untouchable. Historians have critiqued such theoretical constructions in the quest for historicism. Cautioning against uncritical acceptance of essentializing formulations historians have shaped the imagination of caste in recent decades. Any reinvention or imagination of caste entails an exegesis; to critically reflect on the past, to explore the varying if also contradictory ideas, pause to think ways of uncovering modes of re-linking the relation between ritual and non-ritual identities that appear seemingly impossible.

However, historicism is not unconnected to dominant ideological and cultural influences and thus it is necessary to critically re-examine discursive practices, conceptual categories and historiographical frameworks that orient academic histories while rethinking on issues of caste. The persistence of vibrant non-modern and customary practices of memorializing the past calls for reflection within the discipline of history to critically rethink the colonial archive itself, and the ways in which the premise of the ideal is not uncontested as it traverses the local, customary and arrives at the historic when a specific moment gains a critical momentum and marks the definitive shift in temporality suggesting the challenges in reconstructing past. While social/cultural history writing was not a very prominent genre in the Indian historiographical tradition, until recently, caste has been engaged with in the broader historical analysis of social formations, economic relations and activities, religious traditions and political and identity movements. Earlier historical exegesis intermittently sought to understand and provide explanation for the evolution of caste, growth and consolidation during the ancient and medieval periods and the later complex interventions of the colonial state in transforming the nature



of caste along with the social and national movements, all indicating the transmutation of caste as an ideology and system. The earlier historiographical trends and discourses on castes were formulated within and addressed both the formal academic traditions while were deeply implicated in the fundamental processes affecting cultural identity, tradition, and anti-colonialism. The racial origin of caste that was strongly pronounced in colonial ethnography impacted both the nationalist historians as also the reconstruction of past by the reformist and outcaste movements. Caste was simply resolved, in nationalist historiography as a social evil, an aberration of the pristine Vedic past. And in envisaging the birth of a new nation such “divisive, parochial remnants” were not crucial as that of “a recovery of India’s self.” Caste is increasingly articulated as a product of the imagination of the Indologists and Orientalists who represented it as the very essence of Indic civilization. Recent studies have made a major departure by postulating that caste as we know it is a colonial invention, underscoring colonialism’s various technologies of power due to which caste has assumed a “persuasive, totalizing and uniform” nature. On the other hand, the Cambridge historians argue that caste is a historically identifiable response to the changes that occurred both preceding and after the colonial conquest. The earlier Marxists who were impatient with caste as “false consciousness” and conflated it with class in their analysis were followed by those disenchanted with the post-colonial developments and influenced by both the radical left practitioners of history and the ways they wrote social histories. Critiquing the dominant historiographical streams as elitist the subaltern studies made a definitive shift in colonial and post-colonial history writing. There was a deeper recognition of the value of “primordial” categories of caste, religion, tribe that could not be evaded both in politics and the everyday and ruptured the unilinear narratives of nationhood. This had important implications on the conception of the nature of the subaltern consciousness, reflected in the way such assumptions influenced the interpretation of the nature of evidence with regard to the subaltern. However, it might be useful to reflect the implications of such frame largely overlaid by theory and the danger of subsuming diverse



sites into a dichotomous frame, where all history writing becomes a mere repetitive exercise, the categories frozen and in turn leaning to essentializing Indian history. One of the recent trends in historiography is the emergence of the genre of dalit history, which has critiqued the invisibility of outcastes in general and has reconstructed the complex interplay of caste, class and anti colonial movements during the colonial period deconstructing many monolithic frames of discourse.

More challenging are the problems in historicizing the pasts of the "history less", both in terms of historical frameworks and interpretative techniques. Some such concerns become important in understanding the communities who have relatively survived the impact of modernity. Historians seem to be treading on a hazy terrain when it comes to understanding caste system, especially about those who are designated as "historyless", the multitude of artisanal, lower caste occupational touchable and untouchable communities along with the tribal and nomadic communities. The rare works on untouchables and lower castes offering exceptional insights have not had a significant impact on understanding of caste and untouchability. Barring exceptions, a fallout of this in the Indian academia is the continuing primacy of sociology and anthropology in studies on cultural symbols and practices concerning untouchability. This brings us to historicism in understanding untouchability, knowledge of which is currently fraught with many forms of essentialism's as theorizing thrives on lack of adequate historical data. It is essential to excavate facts and create a corpus so as to facilitate the historian critically unfold the cultural processes in the *longue duree* to fill in the huge gaps that have continued to proliferate discrete and uncritical narratives. These sites open up vistas of the past luring the historian from the very early to the contemporary period for analyzing history that became the dominant way of creating counter histories to challenge the many varieties of meta frames and meta narratives. However, it would be useful to reflect on the state of historical knowledge to rethink if these constructions offer critical information in ways that enable historians charter the historical context within which the caste



system developed from proto caste to a recognizable and consolidated caste order, and the various models that evolved across the different cultural, political and ecological zones. Available studies indicate the prevalence of several social networks, the currency of other cultural referents of identity and community like the clans, religious orders, local and regional networks, village community and guilds. These competing and intersecting identities and processes offer a possibility of exploring through epigraphical and textual sources, how caste affiliation and membership was transvalued through the many contending and conjuncting affiliations and alliances. That the constant political flux and cultural dynamism that characterized the early medieval and pre-colonial periods witnessed the alliances between communities across the axis of purity and impurity is indicated. Similarly, the tribal kingdoms and the marked distinctiveness between caste and tribal communities suggest that caste system cannot be uncritically reckoned as offering an overarching social imagination *sui generis*. The cultural distinctiveness of tribal societies both in opposition to and deep intimacy with caste societies calls for a exploration of the ways in which caste system was consolidated historically and constructed as a dominant cultural system. While the focus has been largely on processes, it would be useful to explore the role of historical personages who played a crucial role in interpreting caste and shaped the very nature of politics and discursivity on caste and nationhood during the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. The vibrant regional and national anti-caste and class movements that emerged within this historical context were informed by distinctive notions of coloniality and discursivity. It would be pertinent to explore these diverse intersecting trends to critically reflect on the crucial historical phases which witnessed the transformation of nature of caste system.

The dominant construction of caste in a way precludes historians from a robust civilizational comparison of the caste system. However recent initiatives and global political discourses have challenged the basic premise underlying studies foregrounded on the assumption that caste



is a cultural system unique to Indic civilization and Hinduism, at most stretching it to the larger Asiatic cultural zone. Given the possibilities available currently and ever increasing criticism of earlier accepted frameworks it would be timely to rethink critically the historical contingent processes shaping variant manifestations of the caste system. Similarly to reconsider the models that facilitated such comparative frameworks suggesting the significance of historical analysis. In this context it would be apt to reflect on frameworks that offer a broader cultural comparison of caste across civilizations, in pursuit of “comparative evidence”. Comparative analysis offers the the historians the possibilities to explore and analyze the varying religious traditions and dimensions that underlie distinctive caste symbolisms and practices while also aid in neither essentializing nor freezing caste into a unique cultural zone, lending to possible misconceptions that this distinctive cultural ordering has no value in unraveling meanings, processes and structures across civilizations.

The conference seeks to address some of these primary issues, to critically reflect on the challenges in reconstructing the past and treading the many genres of perspectives that continue to beleaguer History writing, accentuated especially in the historical imagination of caste.



Themes

1. Mapping the various historiographical approaches to the caste system
2. Modes of social classificatory paradigms across regions and periods; the emergence of pan Indian caste system; comparison of caste like systems across civilizations
3. Exploring caste identity and traditions in reference to the many intersections of competing and contending political, cultural, economic and religious institutions and processes.
4. Anti-caste traditions and the alternative social imagination in texts and traditions.
5. Nature of power, gendered practices, and conceptions of masculinity and femininity in caste society during the pre-colonial period.
6. The economic and ecological processes especially migrations, disease, famines, shaping and unfolding caste practices.
7. Capitalism and caste society, conception of caste and labour in economic histories.
8. Cultural continuums across caste and tribal communities with the emergence of regional kingdoms
9. The colonial avatar of caste: Racial theory in historical approach to caste, Orientalism and caste, post colonial historicism, revisiting the narratives of "reinvention", "consolidation", "reforming" caste during the colonial period.
10. Caste and anti-colonial movements, caste census, beyond caste; the imagination of a caste less society through the defining moments of history.

Priyadarshini Vijaisri



Abstracts



Y.S. Alone

Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi

Interrogating Power of Discourse in Historicisms: Caste, Histories and Mind Consciousness

Evidence is an important key to construct historical conditions. The very evidence is often treated as a body of inference. But do inferences always provide what they want to say and can it be universal in nature because not every inference would be universal, as some will always have some particulars. How then such unique particulars can provide us the mind-consciousness of the historians who are engaged in producing the historical narratives? Historian's mental formations are not solely based on the inference of the evidence. Hegemonic power of interpretation often shape mental formations irrespective of what the inferences are. If one observes the way caste-histories are produced, it becomes more a social project to defend the dogmas and the power to interpret the inferences. Trajectory of development in the institution of caste has been in many ways are read with normative and therefore, any interpretation that deviates from normative is received as problematic. In the modern paradigms, the notion of vernacular modern in the cultural mapping is being advocated whereas narratives produced in the vernaculars are treated outside the domain of the English academia. How inferences are drawn and what are resultant formulations while constructing the historical narrative would be an appropriate text to read self-awareness of the interpreters. The aspects of integrated/embedded experiences are called-in to construct the mental constructions that are characterized by the universal particulars and produce authoritative source of knowledge. However, how prejudices become integral part of the historical narratives would be marked by the perceptually distinct unit of the inferences itself. The paper aims to analyze this peculiar universals of the mental constructions through the readings of historical narratives that have produced the caste-histories in the last century.



Yashadatta Somaji Alone studied at the Chitrakala Mahavidyalaya Nagpur, M. S. University, Baroda and Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. His doctoral dissertation was on 'Forms and Patronage in Early Buddhist Art and Architecture: A Study of Early Western Indian Buddhist Caves', under the supervision of Prof. R. Champakalakshmi. Presently he teaches at the School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University. He was visiting professor ICCR Chair, Shenzhen University, Shenzhen. He has published several research papers in journals and chapters in edited volumes on Ancient Indian Art and critic of Walter Spink, Ajanta caves and Buddhist caves in western India, critic of modern Indian art, popular neo-Buddhist visual culture, in addition to the above, research papers on the interpretative frame-work of Dr. Ambedkar and social sciences has been published. He has involved himself in writing some art exhibition catalogues as a point of departure to critique the idea of meta-narratives modernity as tracing the difference. His research interests include ancient Indian art, Buddhist art, modern Indian art, caste histories and popular visual culture, Neo-Buddhist visual culture as well general social sciences. Y. S. Alone presented research papers at national and international art-history and social sciences seminars, conferences at many places in India and abroad. He has lectured widely at many places in the country including Ambedkar memorial lecture at Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University Aurangabad as well outside India mainly Sweden and Germany and China mainly at Shenzhen University, Dunhaung Research Academy, Buddhist Research Institute Hangzhou China. He happened to be the first Indian to deliver lectures at Buddhist research Institute Hangzhou in China. He visited several museums in India and in Holland, Germany and Sweden. He was nominated as ICCR chair visiting Professor in Shenzhen University China. He has been engaged in popular lectures as part of social movements. Y S. Alone also served as members of various committees such as the Education Sub-committees of Govt. of Madhya Pradesh, University Grant Commission, All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE), Indian Council of Historical Research, Board of post-graduate and under-graduate Studies of Fine Arts, K.U. Kurukshetra, 1998-2006, Society of South Asian Archaeology, Pune, Academic Council, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, Member, Research Committee of MFA by research, BAMU, Aurangabad, Member, international Advisory Committee of Korean Association of Asian Studies, Member, Board of Study, Department of Art-history, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. He is also a member of editorial board for the journal - The Journal of South Asian Archaeology.- Ancient Asia. He has been advisor of NCERT textbook on History of Art for class XI.



Timothy Amos

National University of Singapore

‘Sanskritization’, ‘Samuraization’, and Beyond: Exploring the Common Ground in 19th Century Outcaste Experience

A succession of outcaste leaders in early modern Japan (1600-1868) who assumed the title Danzaemon engaged in a deliberate process of “samurai mimicry”: a practice that went well beyond the simple practice of emulating an idealized fashion and architectural aesthetic of Tokugawa shogunate officials. An examination of Danzaemon ruling practices throughout the 18th and 19th centuries reveals an intriguing tendency for successive heads to borrow or imitate the various institutional and policy conventions of samurai authorities in Edo. Successive Danzaemons, as well as their supporting officials, consistently applied “military regimentation” principles in their dealings with the Edo City Magistrate, other city residents, and within their own status group. This paper first demonstrates the way various leaders who assumed the title Danzaemon envisioned their place in the Edo social order during the latter half of the Tokugawa period, consistently subscribing to a warrior model based on constantly evolving images of what constituted the samurai ideal both in relation to outward form and internal political and social practices.

While observations about the practice of emulating the outward appearance of warriors in terms of dress and architecture may be interesting, they are also insufficient, for as the countless sumptuary laws of the Tokugawa period demonstrate, copying fashion and practices was part and parcel of early modern society and never a one way street. Yet an examination of Danzaemon ruling practices does reveal an intriguing tendency to borrow or imitate the various conventions of samurai authorities in Edo. How then is the historian to explain this process? When trying to think about the meaning of historical convergence between different status groupings, there are clearly insights to be found in the theoretical work of Jacques Lacan and Homi Bhaba. This paper, however, seeks to reexamine these 19th century Japanese movements in light of what the anthropologist





Harumi Befu long ago identified as the process of ‘samuraization’ (Befu, 1971:50), a process with intriguing parallels to “Sanskritization” in the Indian context (Srinivas). This paper further explores the possible common ground that exists between these two concepts, suggesting ways in which they may help historians to recognize and better understand 19th century outcaste experience.

Timothy Amos is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Japanese Studies, National University of Singapore. His research primarily focuses on questions of human rights, marginality, and social stratification. His most recent publication *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan* (University of Hawaii Press, 2011) explored the problem of outcaste identity in Japan from the early modern period through to the present.

S. Victor Babu

B.R. Ambedkar University Lucknow

Varna and Caste in Medieval Andhra Pradesh: Practices and Perceptions

The *varna* system described in classical Sanskrit literature with four-fold division, namely *Brahman*, *Kshtriya*, *Vaisya* and *Shudra* – bears little resemblance to the complex realities of modern society. Whether the theory of four varnas was ever an accurate description of social divisions is a debatable point and identification of specific groups has been ambiguous for over a millennium. South India in general and Andhra in particular had different social formations in the sense that *Kshtriya* and *Vaisya* varna categories are largely absent. In contrast, the subcaste (*jati*) is seen as the true operative unit of the Hindu social system in more recent time. In Andhra society many leading warrior families made no pretensions to *kshatriya* status but instead proudly proclaimed their descent from *Shudra varna*. This is really significant and also crucial to gain an understanding of medieval Andhra society.

In addition to the theoretical concept of chatur varna, there also emerged a fifth which is called panchama consisting largely of former untouchable



castes. Using a social constructivist approach, this paper tries to understand the dynamics of the fluidity of caste and changing perceptions of caste as a consequence of socio-economic and religious conditions which were prevalent in medieval Andhra society.

S. Victor Babu is working presently as professor and Head in the department of History, B.R. Ambedkar Central University, Lucknow. He has been teaching for the last 18 years, published two books and written 18 articles in research journals and few articles on environmental history of Nagaland. His area of research is in medieval cultural history, history of Christianity.

Umesh Bagade

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Fighting Caste and Untouchability: Changing Textures of Dalit Historical Consciousness from Pre-colonial to Colonial Maharashtra

Dalits incessantly tried to unburden themselves from the inflicted social condition, status and inferiority of untouchability. They redefined their own interests, social status and identities. Through articulating own caste Puranas they celebrated their active indulgences in redefining caste existence, status and identity. Brahmanical conception of caste was not all the time accepted by all down-trodden Dalit castes. Counter conceptions of castes were articulated and practiced to resist caste hierarchy. Down-trodden castes possessed their own myths of caste origins which prevailed in their autonomous domain. The caste origin myths carried historical consciousness of caste, shaping subject positions of respective castes. These myths provided an alternative ground to negotiate caste relations where subaltern caste contested the designation of their status as natural and asserted historicity of their being.

As the case study of Dalit's attempts of counter self-conception prevailing in pre-colonial period I am taking up the study of Matang caste Puraṇ. Matang, an untouchable caste of Maharashtra possessed its own caste



Puran handed down through oral tradition by marginal Dakkalwar caste. It traces genealogy of Matang caste to sage Jambha, who believed to have played pivotal role in the cosmic creation and in the emergence of the settled agricultural metamorphosis of society. This myth dislodges Bramanical myths of untouchability by taking recourse to world of fantasy comprised under everyday existence of Matang caste. It manifests counter cultural or counter hegemonic contestations drawing inspirations from anti-caste traditions like Nath and Virshaiv/Lingayat traditions where positive articulation of untouchability offers agency to untouchable Matang. This marks an attempt to renegotiate the relations with Brahmins, Maratha (dominant peasant caste) and Mahar (untouchable caste) in inverted caste order. It reveals historical consciousness ranging from tribal phase to subjugation as untouchable caste and their ongoing struggle of Matang caste against caste order. This paper will approach historical trajectory of evolution of untouchability through closer examination of Matang Puran and will take up a broad historical/ethnological inquiry of Matang caste Purana. It will probe counter hegemonic endeavors of Matang caste Purana and will graph episodic and contradictory nature of Dalit consciousness where elements of hegemonic Brahmanical tradition and resilient anti-caste traditions were deployed to fight against social bondage of caste and untouchability.

Varieties of such caste struggles manifest different dimensions of Dalit caste consciousness. Dalit consciousness is a complex mix of several components. It is on one hand gripped by the social condition, ideology and socio-cultural practices inflicted by system of caste and untouchability and other hand inhabited by the tradition of fighting against it. Dalit consciousness is simultaneously inhabited by caste hegemonic ideology and counter hegemonic legacy fighting caste and untouchability. Dalit caste consciousness is largely build on social condition within which each particular caste exist by marking socio-cultural difference with other castes around them. In caste society, the ongoing legacy of social struggles and social transformations from time immemorial had been retained as residual depository. All the residual elements of society, social conflicts from Stone Age and the ideologies, institutions modern age together comprised Dalit consciousness. Therefore like all subalterns, Dalit consciousness also acquired fragmentary, episodic and contradictory nature. Dalit



consciousness always channelized through the mechanics of duality of hegemony and its contestation.

Though 19th century colonial Maharashtra was defined by the emerging forces of class and colonial capitalism the institution of caste continued to hold its sway. Caste impacted the processes of class formation, while emerging forces of class moulded the social relations of caste. This interface of caste with class initiated new plane of social dynamics where class elevation was achieved through caste mobility. Representations of class culture were manifested through caste allowing display of gender markers as indications of class mobility. The phenomenon of class thus succumbed to caste-gender hierarchy by triggering the process of caste reforms.

Against this background of caste class dynamics, Dalit resistance acquired its new insurgent character which indeed was marked by the fragmentary and episodic consciousness. Dalits adopted traditional form of resistance like struggles of inversion, subversion, cultural sublimation and also cherished the path of caste reforms for upward class and caste mobility. The mediations of colonial modernity and particularly ideology of Mahatma Phule gave radical turn to Dalit resistance displaying rationalistic mood. The Dalit uprising challenged hegemonic construct of caste and offered material, religious and social analysis of exploitation of caste and untouchability and engaged with history and or historicized/ inverted mythology for deriving insurgent subject position of Dalits. This phase of Dalit movement represented complex trajectory of anti-caste consciousness traversing from caste-traditionality to caste-modernity.

Umesh Bagade is Professor, in the Department of History and Ancient Indian Culture, Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University Aurangabad. His research interests are Modern Maharashtra, social and intellectual history, historiography. He is the author of numerous research papers and books; the most recent book is *Dalit Consciousness: Hegemony and Contestation* (Marathi).



Sekhar Bandyopadhyay

Victoria University, Wellington

Situating Dalit in the Long History of Partition in Bengal, 1950-64

Sekhar Bandyopadhyay and Anasua Basu Ray Chaudhuri [to be presented by Sekhar Bandyopadhyay]

It is now widely recognised that the Partition of India was not just an event that happened in August 1947 – it had a long afterlife. And in exploring that aftermath of Partition, many voices have been recovered, yet many still remain silent. As Partition historiography focuses almost exclusively on the Hindus and Sikhs on the one hand and the Muslims on the other, it renders all other voices inaudible. One such voice is that of the Scheduled Castes or the Dalits. This paper is a work-in-progress report on a project that seeks to restore the Dalit into their proper place in the long history of Partition in Bengal.

Since organised Scheduled Caste movements in colonial Bengal were largely located in the eastern and northern districts, which later became parts of East Pakistan, Partition was of crucial significance to the post-colonial history of the Bengali Dalit communities. This project looks at how Partition politics affected their movement, why they did not leave Pakistan in 1947-48, but decided to do so after 1950, how their migration experience and subsequent life in the refugee camps impacted on their sense of identity, how the Indian state dealt with these Dalit peasant refugees and how these refugees and their leaders got embroiled in the politics of refugee rehabilitation. It is in this forgotten history of the Dalit Partition refugees, we argue, lies a partial answer to the wider question of what happened to the organised Scheduled Caste movements in post-Partition West Bengal.

Sekhar Bandyopadhyay is Professor of Asian History and Director of the New Zealand India Research Institute at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand. His primary research interest is in the history of nationalism and caste system in colonial and postcolonial India. He has written seven books, edited or co-edited eight books, and published more than forty book chapters and journal articles. Some of his recent



books are *Caste, Protest and Identity in Colonial India: The Nama sudras of Bengal, 1872-1947* (Second edition, OUP, 2011), *Decolonization in South Asia: Meanings of freedom in post-independence West Bengal, 1947-52* (Routledge, 2009), *Caste, Culture and Hegemony: Social Dominance in Colonial Bengal* (Sage, 2004) and *From Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India* (Orient Longman, 2004). He is currently engaged in a research project on 'Dalit in the history of Partition in eastern India'. He is a Fellow of the New Zealand Academy of Humanities and the Royal Society of New Zealand.

Rajsekhar Basu

ICCR Visiting Professor Mykolo Romeris University

Caste, Class and Consciousness: Some Observations on the Movements of the Pulayas in the Princely States of Travancore and Cochin in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

Writing about the history of social transformations in Kerala, especially in the last two centuries is like sitting on a double edged sword. While on one side, there is an increasing assertion that the votaries of the Kerala model of growth and development have prioritised their ideas on god's own land as the desirable and republican model of social democracy in the third world, the real picture is often deliberately blurred. Much of the credit for this has been given to the communist politics and the public policies initiated by them. Kerala is constructed in these writings as J Devika has pointed reflects the conceptual shifts within the social democratic discourse in the West, since the 1970s. Indeed, there is an increasing proclivity towards liberal positions and this is often visualised in terms of the shift of the social from the community. Though, this sort of social democratic construction of Kerala as a near egalitarian paradise may have a certain utility in anti capitalist political polemics in the West, it observes the exclusion of the lower castes(Dalits) and coastal and tribal communities and works against their struggle for resources and citizenship, heightened in the present. It is being argued that Kerala's developmentalism is of a different character, influenced by the strong early anti caste movements and the communist



appropriation of these egalitarian political thrusts seemed to have led to social democratisation, finally harnessing developmentalism to egalitarian political goods, creating wide ranging welfare measures guaranteed by the state. Nonetheless, this much lauded egalitarian developmentalism, which is much hailed in the academic circles as the success of the progressive policies of the communists, proves to be a much hallowed one, when one see the multitude of people excluded from the range of such official policies .Recent struggles over land by tribal and dalit people reveal that caste inequalities continue to be rampant. The rise in welfare policies did not mean the extinction of caste inequalities in Kerala nor the recognition of the specificity of subaltern interests. The post millennium subaltern struggles in Kerala reveal both the intolerance of the dominant left to the subaltern assertion of group interests and their insistence on treating the latter as passive welfare receiving categories. The apparent paradoxes in the present scenario need to be analysed in terms of how the communists tried to incorporate the logic of caste oppression as part of their own organisational and political strategies. What essentially came to the forefront through the communist integration of the elements of anti caste protests was something which seemed to be ludicrous to many in the state. The communists talked of ending the caste oppression through the agency of the upper caste communist leaders, the result being that all publicity relating to the abolition of caste based oppression failed to include the land tillers claim to land, similar to the peasants.Indeed, this was in sharp contrast with early twentieth century Dalit leaders such as Ayyankali in Travancore, who demanded both agricultural land and modern education and the anti-caste reformer Sree Narayana Guru who advised Dalit people to engage in the acquisition of both knowledge and wealth to escape their plight.

However, this sort of analysis strongly differs from some other recent intellectual interventions, which decry this cultural turn in academics to exclude class from any discussion on social transformations taking place in India. Nissim Mannathukkaren has argued that the much hyped emphasis on caste, since the days of the Orientalist focus and the overshadowing of class to comprehend the complexities of the Indian society needs a revision. He locates the substantial caste-class correlation in India in which the lower castes tended to occupy the lowest strata of the caste



hierarchy. Thus, he is very critical in his observation that obfuscation of class in favour of caste and other identities needs to be reexamined. In the context of Kerala, it has been stated that the crucial aspect of communist intervention in society was the bridging of the material-symbolic division of social existence, which had characterised the bourgeoisie nationalist imagination and also the caste reform movements before it.

Subaltern Studies and post colonial theory through their culturalist reading accentuated the split between the material and cultural. The developing rifts in social theory between society and culture on one side and state institutions and political economy on the other, as Marxist scholars stated was dramatised by the Subaltern Studies. The enormous support that the Communist Party got from peasant and agricultural labourers and the intense struggles that followed for land reforms and labour legislations, have belied the culturalist analysis of the Subaltern Studies. In other words, the Communist negotiation of the transition to modernity recognised the empowerment of lower peasantry, agricultural labourers and lower castes and their enjoyment of citizenship rights required the amelioration of their material condition. The Marxist scholarship has proposed that there should be a thorough introspection of the antinomies and binaries set up by Subaltern Studies and post colonial theory. Thus, there needs to be a new understanding of class/caste binary, individual/community, state/community, all stemming from the fundamental binary of modernity/tradition with the privileging of the second half of the binary.

In my presentation, I seek to bring back caste in the narratives of the social movements waged by the Pulayas, between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the two princely states of Travancore and Cochin. I would be interested in dealing with the issues of agrestic servitude and the missionary involvement with slavery and caste oppression in the last decades of the nineteenth century. I would try to unravel the emergence of Pulaya consciousness through the activities of associations like the Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangha and the leadership of Pulaya leaders like Ayyankali in the early part of the twentieth century. However, this consciousness was by no means an uniform one, since it had links with the powerful social reform movement, which had been initiated much earlier by the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam to elevate the Izhavas



from their low economic and social status. The connections between these two caste movements resulted in multiple overlappings, contestations and streams of separation, which were revealed in legislative politics, politics of associations and later in the peasant and working class movements. The growing radicalisation of Izhava politics in terms of conversion to Buddhism and Sikhism, alongside the spread of Communist tenets also had an impact on Pulaya consciousness and communitarian identity. In fact, these trajectories were revealed in the participation of the Pulayas in the communist led trade union movements in Alleppey and Shertallai. I would argue that though these trends might be seen in the context of the bigger debate on the caste-class continuum, it was certainly by no means a fixed phenomenon, since the Pulaya identity was evolving through a range of encounters with different social entities. The movement of the Pulayas, resembles in some cases the movement of the Izhavas, because the participants of such caste based movements were not a unified subject, rather they were constantly shifting their ideological preferences vis-a vis their roles and statuses, meanings of consciousness and the differences within the imagined social space of a community. In other words, there would be a return to caste, without entering into the bigger debate of colonial construction, since the brahmanical institution of social categorisation should be for a historian a legitimate subject of analysis, specially because it would be worthwhile in knowing what is a social group and how it is perceived by others as a caste. Filippo Osella and Caroline Osella have very provocatively influenced us to think that identity is always multiple and is woven around threads of caste, class, religion, political preferences, gender, age and locality.

Raj Sekhar Basu is presently the ICCR Visiting Professor in Contemporary Indian Studies at the Mykolo Romeris University and also a visiting faculty at the Center for Oriental Studies, Vilnius University. He has two monographs, *Dalit Experiences in Colonial and Post Colonial India*, Rajat, Delhi, 2011 and *Nandanar's Children: The Paraiyars Tryst With Destiny*, Tamilnadu, 1850-1956, Sage, Delhi, 2011. He has coedited, *Narratives of the Excluded: Caste issues in Colonial India*, KP Bagchi, Kolkata, 2008 and *Voices from the Margin: Aspects of Adivasi History in India*, Primus, Delhi, 2013 and *Medical Encounters in British India*, OUP, Delhi, 2013. He has also contributed to leading international journals and has contributed chapters to edited publications, published by the leading international publishing houses. He has held several international fellowships in the United Kingdom and Canada. He has also held visiting professorships in the Universities of Heidelberg, Lund, Prague, Marseilles, Paris and Tartu.



Uma Chakravarti

Miranda House, Delhi University

Engaging with Caste: A Personal Journey

In this presentation I will track my own journey of thinking about caste beginning with my first piece of research work on the social history of Buddhism circa 6th century B.C.E to circa 300 BCE based on the Pali sources dated to that time. My research work threw up important questions about the way many scholars had written about social history always using a brahmanical textual frame and therefore forcing the analysis of the Pali textual sources into the Brahmanical framework of classification which did not do justice to the debates on varna between the brahmanas and the Buddha within the Pali texts. Later, as my interest in the relationship between caste and gender began to grow I gave up on 'specialisation' concerns and wrote on the 19th century in order to have other kinds of sources to work with. This interest/concern with caste has led me to also understand caste through the dynamics unfolding today as we witness the violence that surrounds caste in contemporary times mainly through investigations with other members in fact finding teams.

Uma Chakravarti is a feminist historian who taught at Miranda House, University College for Women, Delhi from 1966 to 1998. She writes on Buddhism, early Indian history, the 19th century and on contemporary issues. She is the author of *Social Dimensions of Early Buddhism* (1987); *Rewriting history: The Life and Times of Pandita Ramabai* (1998); *Gendering Caste Through a Feminist Lens* (2002); and *Everyday Lives, Everyday Histories: Beyond the Kings and Brahmanas of Ancient India* (2006). She has also co-authored *Delhi Riots: Three Days in the Life of a Nation* (1987); *Shadow Lives: Writings on Widowhood* (2006); and *From Myths to Markets: Essays on Gender* (1999). Since the 1970s Uma Chakravarti has been associated with the women's movement and the movement for democratic rights and in this capacity she has participated in many fact finding teams to investigate human rights violations, communal riots, and state repression. She was a member of the 'International Tribunal on Justice for Gujarat' in 2002 which reported on the experiences of survivors of the Gujarat riots. In the past as part of women's civil society initiative she has also visited and reported on Kashmir. Her essay 'A Kashmir Diary: Seven Days in an Armed Paradise' was published in Urvashi Butalia's edited volume, *Speaking Peace: Women's Voices from Kashmir* (2003).



Demetrius Eudell

Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut

Caste, Race and Kinship: Grounds for a Theory

Although the phenomena of caste, race and kinship each have distinct intellectual and political histories, they can also be situated in a context that raise fundamental issues about the being of Being human. This presentation attempts to show that despite having different origins, an understanding of caste -historically and contemporarily can nevertheless be a useful heuristic devise to explicate aspects of the racial belief system that has defined the Americas, and indeed of the modern world system brought into being by an expanding western culture.

Demetrius L. Eudell, Professor of History at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, is the author of *The Political Languages of Emancipation in the British Caribbean and the U.S. South*, co-editor with Carolyn Allen of *Sylvia Wynter: A Transculturalist Rethinking Modernity* (special issue of the *Journal of West Indian Literature*), as well as a number of essays and articles on the history of Blacks in the Americas and the intellectual history of the discourse on Race.

Vikram Harijan

University of Allahabad

Caste Dispute, Riots and the English Company: A Study of the Right and Left Hand Caste in Madras During 17th and 18th Centuries

Historians have ignored for too long a crucial dimension of cultural and political life in South India, the Left and Right hand Caste of South India. While studying some of the caste groups, they have primarily focused on the Commercial aspects of the caste, ignoring the sociological aspects of the caste. The historians did not document the caste riots, Caste-conflict and caste-dispute at the Madras which was existed roughly from 1000-



1900 A.D. These Caste tensions resulting in several caste riots at Madras paralysed the English Company trade. The English Company called it as factiousness madness. If this is true, then, why English company had failed to annihilate the Caste system from the country and not only that these caste groups have been vanished after 18th centuries but not the Caste based structure. The nature of the social order is intriguing and poses challenges in understanding the nature of hierarchy. Very interesting some of the so called low caste like pariah was included into the Right Hand Caste, who was, of course a violent caste. Why was this? Why not in the left hand caste? Not only, those women of the Chakiliyan groups were in the Right hand Caste while men were in the Left hand Caste groups, why? In the same way, Madiga women and palli women are in the Right hand Caste groups while female were in the Left hand Caste groups. What does such classification suggest? This was such a hegemonic structure which itself are not able to give satisfactory answer. My paper tried to discuss some of the above questions: Origin, Numerical strength, Caste-dispute, Caste-based structure and so on. In my analysis I will draw from the Records of Fort. St. George particularly Diary and consultation books, Letters to the England and from England, The English Factories in India edited by William foster and Charles Fawcett (old and New Series), Travels accounts, Gazetteer and personal diaries.

Vikram Harijan was awarded PhD in History at JawaharLal Nehru University, New Delhi. His main themes of research are Occupational Castes groups, Caste questions, Gender and Role of the English Company. He was a fellow At the Indian Institute of Advances Study, Shimla. He also taught at Desh Bandhu College, University of Delhi; Assam Central University, Assam. Some of his publications are *Mapping social History of South Medieval India*, *Itihaas*, *Satay aur Sawal*, *Dalit Mahilayee*, *web Patrika* and *Media avam Sambaad* and one poem collection entitled “*ShiSha Jhoth Nahi Bolta*”.



Vinay Lal

University of California, Los Angeles

The Caste Census in India: Some Historical and Ethical Considerations

In the nearly 150-year history of the Indian census, the question of whether caste data should be recorded has often come up for discussion. The censuses of 1865, 1872, and 1881 deployed the classical notion of *varna*, with its four-fold division, though, as some colonial ethnographers realized before too long, such categorization served little administrative purpose and certainly did not correspond with caste distinctions as they were, so to speak, played out on the ground. Among the critics the voice of Denzil Ibbetson, who arrived in the Punjab in 1870 in his early twenties and was to spend his entire adult life in various administrative posts in India, has often been recounted in the scholarship. Ibbetson observed at first hand the shortcomings of the census of 1881, none in his judgment as important as the error of construing caste as a purely Hindu construct. His critical assessment of that exercise, published in 1883, pointed to the importance of enumerating occupations, and as head of the 1891 Census Ibbetson decisively influenced the manner in which caste would be cast in administrative and ethnological accounts.

The role of W. R. Cornish, who oversaw the 1871 Census in the Madras Presidency, Ibbetson, and H. H. Risley, the most influential and vocal of the colonial officials to preside over the Indian census, in the discussions about the place of caste in the census has been ably recounted by a number of scholars. The politicization of caste—facilitated, for example, by Risley's attempts to establish precedence among castes, and, on the other hand, by caste associations which jockeyed for power—is often cited as the reason why the British decided to abandon the collection of caste data for the Census of 1931. The supposition has been that, in the aftermath of independence, the collection of caste data was considered entirely inimical to India's commitment, as enshrined in the deliberations of the Constituent Assembly and eventually the principles of the Indian Constitution, to the eradication of caste as the precondition for, and instantiation of, radical equality.



It is against this backdrop, then, that we can come to a fuller consideration of some of the ethical implications of the Indian Cabinet's decision in 2010 to authorize a caste census. There are apparently compelling arguments on either side of the divide. Those who advocate the collection of caste data take the view that caste consciousness is an overwhelming reality of life in India, resonating as strongly if in different ways in urban clusters as in the countryside; the 'realists', if we may call them that, are certain that caste will neither disappear nor even be diminished merely by embracing the view that caste identity is deplorable. Moreover, if the state collects data on sex, education, religion, occupation, and other vectors of identity, why should the objective reality of caste not similarly be captured by the census? Proponents of the caste census argue that the upper castes have a hugely disproportionate claim over the country's resources and a caste census would be critical in bringing awareness of their monopoly over the political, economic and social life of the country.

Opponents of the caste census recognize that we live in an enumerative world. If we learn to count in school, we also have learnt to be counted as part of collectivities. But here's the rub: does the census merely capture 'objective reality', as many suppose, or does it create its own reality? If members of a certain caste group are entitled to privileges, is it not obvious that this serves as an incentive to others to demand similar entitlements and even alter their membership in a caste group? Is there any other country besides India where, rather perversely, some people are endeavoring to have themselves demoted to membership in a group with lower social standing so that they might be able to avail of state-sanctioned privileges denied to groups deemed to have higher caste standing? Opponents marshal many other arguments, in some cases taking a leaf out of the book of the realists. They argue that surrender to a caste consensus is tantamount to an admission that different castes form vote blocks that are altogether indispensable in an electoral democracy. Those opposed to the collection of caste data strongly dispute the suggestion that a caste census will enable new and useful remedial measures to those laboring under caste disabilities. A caste census, moreover, forces mobilization along caste lines, thus obscuring the mobility that might take place along other axes of stratification.



There is much more that can be said in support of both the advocates and opponents of the caste census. In this paper, I shall first attempt to understand in what respects some of the contemporary debates are anticipated in discussions from the late 19th century to the mid-20th century. Secondly, I shall suggest some of the implications of what it means for Indians to have come into the 'enumerative world'. Thirdly, I shall seek to explore some of the implications of caste as a census category in modern India—in particular, this would entail an assessment of the particular ways in which caste as a census category may be simultaneously inimical to democratic sentiments and yet facilitate the impulse towards democracy.

Vinay Lal teaches in the Departments of History and Asian American Studies at UCLA. He served as Director of the University of California Education Abroad Program in India, 2007-09, and was the inaugural holder of the Manohar Shyam Joshi Chair in Journalism and Media Studies at Lady Shri Ram College, Delhi University, January 2013. He writes widely on, among other subjects, Indian history, Gandhi, Indian cinema and public culture, American politics, the Indian diaspora, and the politics of knowledge systems. His dozen books include *Empire of Knowledge: Culture and Plurality in the Global Economy* (Pluto Press, 2002); *The History of History: Politics and Scholarship in Modern India* (Oxford, 2003); *Of Cricket, Guinness and Gandhi: Essays on Indian History and Culture* (Penguin, 2005); (co-edited with Ashis Nandy) *The Future of Knowledge and Culture: A Dictionary for the 21st Century* (Viking Penguin, 2006); (edited) *Political Hinduism: The Religious Imagination in Public Spheres* (Oxford, 2009); *The Other Indians: A Political and Cultural History of South Asians in America* (UCLA and HarperCollins, 2008); *Deewaar: The Footpath, the City, and the Angry Young Man* (HarperCollins, 2010); and the two-volume *Oxford Anthology of the Modern Indian City* (Oxford, 2013). He blogs occasionally at vinaylal.wordpress.com and his courses on Indian history are available at his YouTube channel.

Axel Michaels

University of Heidelberg

The Caste System in the Nepalese Muluki Ain of 1856

The most important Nepalese legal text of the 19th century is the bulky Legal Code of Nepal called Mulukī Ain (MA), or Ain (as it was called until 1952). It was enacted during the reign of king Surendra Vikrama Śāha



(r. 1847-81) and promulgated on the 6th of January 1854. The still widely untranslated text was prepared at the initiative of Prime Minister Jāṅga Bahādura Rānā.

The significance of the MA of 1854 may be seen in the fact that it was the first book ever printed in Nepal. It was printed (not before 1870 CE) allegedly because Janga Bahādur Rānā, during his trip to London and Paris (1850/51), came to esteem printed books with an almost magical sense as the expression of Western superiority. It is said that he took the Code Napoleon as model for the MA. Within a month after his return from Europe he appointed a Law Council (*ain kausal*) to bring the already existing various legal documents (*sanad, rukkā, savāl*, etc.) into a homogenous form. His goal was to establish a national caste hierarchy for the multiplicity of Nepal's ethno-cultural units, to bring about a homogeneous legislation as well as a uniform system of administration and, through such legal measures to exercise control remote areas and separate ethnic groups. He intentionally also wanted to reinforce Hindu Law in contrast to the British influence in India and to point out that Nepal is "the only Hindu kingdom left in the Kali age" (MA 1854/1965: 8f.).

The paper will concentrate on the hierarchy of caste system of the Muluk *Ain* and its dharmashastric and other sources.

Axel Michaels, is both a scholar of Indology and Religious Studies. Since 1996 he is Professor of Classical Indology, South Asia Institute, University of Heidelberg. In 2001 he was elected as the Spokesman of the Collaborative Research Centre SFB 619 "Ritual Dynamics". Since November 2007 he is one of the Directors of the Cluster of Excellence "Asia and Europe in a Global Context – Shifting Asymmetries in Cultural Flows". Since 2006, he is member of the Heidelberg Academy of Science and head of the project "Religious and Legal Documents of Pre-modern Nepal"

Current fields of interest are social history and history of Hinduism, theory of rituals, life cycle rites of passage in Nepal as well as the cultural and legal history of Nepal.

Major book publications include:

Hinduism: Past and Present (Princeton University Press 2004);

(with Niels Gutschow) *Handling Death: The dynamics of Death and Ancestor Rituals among the Newars of Bhaktapur, Nepal* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Publ., 2005);

The Price of Purity: The Religious Judge in 19th Century Nepal (Torino: CESMEO, 2005);
(with Niels Gutschow): *Growing up: Hindu and Buddhist Initiation Rituals among Newar Children in Bhaktapur, Nepal* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Publ., 2008)



Śiva in Trouble – Festivals and Rituals at the Paśupatiṇātha Temple of Deopatan (Nepal) (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008),

Manus Gesetzbuch transl., (Berlin: Verlag der Weltreligionen/Insel Verlag, 2010)

Grammars and Morphologies of Ritual Practices in Asia (co-ed., Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Publ., 2010)

Co-ed. (with Christoph Wulf): *South Asian and European Perspectives on Rituals and Performances*. 3 vols.: *Images of the Body in India* (2011); *Emotions in Rituals and Performance* (2012); and *Exploring the Senses: Emotions, Performativity, and Rituals* (2013) (all London & New Delhi: Routledge).

Sanal Mohan

Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam

Histories of Experience: Writing Dalit Histories in Kerala

History has become a contested terrain with the entry of Dalit writers who began to write histories of Dalit castes and Dalit family histories. A significant number of such writings has been engaging with the early twentieth century notions of history that found expression in the official histories of Travancore /Cochin and British Malabar. But of late, scholars have been writing the biographies of Dalit leaders and short historical accounts of Dalit movements including the movements led by Dalit Christians. There are individuals and groups who have made book length contributions in these areas. In addition to this, there are activists who have established printing press for printing and publishing Dalit histories. Alongside this, in the course of my research I have come across Dalit Christian family histories, which are a genre in itself. The family histories that I have come across begin with the days of caste slavery, slave transactions and the 'separation of families'. The proposed paper will analyze caste histories as well as family histories and bring forth issues that would engage with the writing of academic histories.



Today when I re-visit the field I am taken to the sites of memory where the experiences of caste slavery and oppression come alive not just as history but as haunting memories. Thus we reach places named 'killing fields', huge trees bearing memories of oppression; trees to which the slaves were chained and beaten up, fields where the slaves were buried alive to propitiate the malevolent gods who wreck havoc to the paddy fields by breaching the bunds. There are histories in which spirits of the ancestors become alive and intervene in the everyday life of slaves. My intention is to write such histories where the histories of the humans and spirits desire liberation and salvation and a period in which slaves were treated with the dictum, "kill as you may kill, sell as you may sell".

P. Sanal Mohan is currently an Associate Professor in the School of Social Sciences of Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, India. In April 2013 he has been a Post Doc Fellow at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity. In September 2012 he has been awarded a Research Grant by SSRC, New York to work on 'From the Lord's Prayer to Invoking Slavery through Prayers: Religious Practices and Dalits in Kerala, India'. In 2011 he was a Visiting Faculty Associate, Centre for the Advances Study of India, UPenn. He was a Graduate School Postdoctoral Fellow in Colonial and Postcolonial Studies at the Department of History and ICIS/RDI Research Fellow, Emory University, Atlanta in 2008. During 2002-2005 he was a Fellow in History at CSSS Calcutta and was Charles Wallace India Fellow in History, SOAS, and University of London. He also worked as Honorary Research Associate, Social Anthropology Programme, and Massey University, New Zealand in 2004. His thesis, 'Imagining Equality: Modernity and Social Transformation of Lower Castes in Colonial Kerala' analyses history of agrestic-slavery and one of the powerful religious and social movements of Dalits in early twentieth century, Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha. He has published research articles on the discourses and practices of the movement. He combines history and ethnography in his research. His areas of research interest include colonial modernity, social movements and questions of identity, Dalit Movements and Christianity in India. Currently he is engaged in completing a monograph on the history of Dalit movements in Kerala, India.





Biswamoy Pati

University of Delhi, Delhi

The Diverse Implications of Legitimacy: Rituals, State and the Common People in Colonial Orissa, 1800-1940s

While examining the theme of 'Rituals and the State', this paper explores the diversities involved with the process of legitimacy and highlights its interactive and dynamic characteristics. What is rather well-known is the way the colonial state and the internal ruling classes (viz. princes and zamindars) devised rituals to legitimise their rule. Thus, these ranged from the associations that were sought to be established with belief systems (viz. Jagannatha, Mahima movement, etc.), myths (viz. invention of genealogies, lineage, etc. by the princes and zamindars) and caste to practices involving complex, ritualised negotiations with the adibasi/outcaste population. In fact, viewed from this angle, the entire process of the agrarian interventions that was drawn up with the collaboration of the internal propertied sections and the varna order, and which had the footprints of private property was perhaps the single most important ritual in colonial Orissa. One needs to highlight here that the basic idea was to 'order' society and its hierarchies – viz. caste/class/gender – in order to control the productive process and tap resources.

However, what is normally not taken into account by historians is the way the common people re-worked some of these practices to not only undermine the ruling classes but even challenge and attempt to subvert their dominance. Besides being intimately associated with the day-to-day survival strategies of the poor, some of these had long term implications being distinctly associated with the anti-colonial/feudal aspirations.

Biswamoy Pati is a 'modern' Indian historian and is with the Dep. of History, University of Delhi. His research interests include diversities of popular mentalities/culture/protest; the anti-imperialist struggle/national movement and decolonisation to the social history of health and medicine; identity formation; gender and environment.



Vijaya Ramaswamy

Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi

Casting the Viswakarma in Medieval Peninsular India

The metal smiths among the Vishwakarma group of craftsmen are famous for their casting of images. This paper turns this professional skill on its head to explore the caste dimensions of the Vishwakarma community. Historically this community across geographical space and time (barring possibly some exceptions) encompassed: goldsmith, bronze smith, black smith, carpenter and mason.

Although the Vishwakarma are seen as Sudra in terms of their craft occupation, they are also mentioned in early medieval inscriptions as '*anuloma*' and at times even '*pratiloma castes*'. This essay will explore the canonical injunctions regarding their caste location and status. These evidences will be juxtaposed against oral traditions in which the Vishwakarma cast themselves into the Brahminical mold, describing themselves as 'Vishwa Brahmanas' or 'Gow-Brahmanas'. The paper also hopes to bring in the presence of caste – caste privileges, disputes and confrontations in the everyday life of Viswakarma craftsmen in early India.

The essay will use inscriptions, literary texts and oral traditions in framing the arguments. These sources will be supplemented by medieval travelers' accounts and East India Company records to bolster surmises and provide cross-references.

Vijaya Ramaswamy is professor at the Centre for Historical Studies in the School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. She is currently Senior Fellow at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library in Delhi. She teaches and researches on economic history, textile traditions, women's history, religion and society as well as folk traditions.

Ramaswamy's most recent book is *The Song of the Loom* published in 1913. Her *A to Z of the Tamils* was published by Scarecrow Press in 2010. This is the paper-back version of *The Historical Dictionary of the Tamils* published by the Scarecrow Press Inc, Lanham, Maryland in 2007. The second revised edition of this book is due to be out soon. Her first book, *Textiles and Weavers in Medieval South India*, was published by the Oxford University Press in 1985, (second revised edition 2006). Oxford University





Press published her second book, *Divinity and Deviance: Women in Virasaivism*, in 1996. In 1997, the Indian Institute of Advanced Study of Shimla published her book, *Walking Naked: Women, Society, Spirituality in South India* (second edition 2007). In 2003, she published her edited book, *Re-searching Indian Women*, (Manohar, New Delhi). In 2003 she was also elected president of the medieval India section of the Indian History Congress held in Mysore. Ramaswamy's co-edited book, *Biography as History: Indian Perspectives* was brought out by Orient Blackswan in 2009. Her book *Devotion and Dissent in Indian History* is due to come out from CUP this year.



Challapalli Swaroopa Rani

Acharya Nagarjuna University

Dalit Historiography: Issues and Challenges

The issue of caste system was studied by the scholars from Anthropology and Sociology disciplines. Caste system was not a subject of academic research in history till recent past. Our historical writings have been moving around the stories, biographies, wars, diplomacies and royal palaces. Dalits, Adivasis and other marginalized sections found no place in these works of elite history. Though the Marxist historiography questioned the so called traditional and Nationalist historiography and stressed upon socio-economic history, they were failed in focusing the life of the marginalized sections of the society.

Subaltern historiography was initiated by questioning the gaps of Marxist history and declared its orientation of de- elitizing history. Subaltern historians denied the paradigms of previous historians and recorded the heroic struggles of peasants and tribals in their works. But those peasants in fact are the landed gentry, who are responsible for the brutal attacks on landless poor Dalits in rural society. Subaltern scholars neglected specific identity of Dalits and other oppressed social groups, who were suppressed and pushed into the corner by the caste Hindus through the ages.

Dalit historiography emerged as an important area of academic research in recent past, questioning the absence of Dalits and their struggles for identity in previous historical writings. Historians on Dalit question are mainly focusing on Dalit's self respect movements of colonial and post-colonial periods and contribution of some important personalities for the movement and so on. Dalit historiography is encountering a major challenge regarding its source material.

The so called historical sources such as epigraphs and literature produced by court poets do not contain information regarding marginalized sections of the society. Most of the literature produced by the elite poets and writers are limited to romanticize the facts where ordinary folk found no space. In these circumstances, folklore and literature produced by the Dalits found place in reconstructing the history of Dalits and their culture.



The Present paper aimed at discussing major challenge of source material for Dalit historiography and focus on the importance of alternative sources such as oral traditions, folk lore and Dalit literature produced by the Dalits.

Challapalli Swaroopa Rani obtained her doctorate at the University of Hyderabad and is currently a Professor in Centre for Mahayana Buddhist Studies, Acharya Nagarjuna University. A popular literary critic and writer she has recieved several awards for her literary contribution. Several short stories and poems, essays on experiences of dalit women, child labour and village life have been translated and published in Hindi, English and Malayalam. The anthology of poems *Mankenapuvvu* has been awarded the Vimala Santhi Sahiti Puraskaram in 2006. Some of the main books include an edited volume titled *Padunekkinapata*, an anthology of poetry by different Dalit poets published in 1995, *Mankenapuvvu* an anthology of poetry in 2005, collection of essays entitled *Asthithvagaanam* in 2012. Was the founder editor to the refereed Journal of Historical research by name *Charitraka Parishodhana* (bi-monthly) and a member in the advisory board to the monthly journal *Mana Charitra- Samkruti*. She is the chief editor to the monthly journal on Dalit issues called *Bahujana Keratalu* and a member of the editorial board of the monthly journal called *Samanthara Voice*. She is presently working on a project on *Revival of Buddhism Dalit Identity* (UGC).

Parimala V. Rao

Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi

Caste, Class and the Nation: Revisiting the Nationalist Ideology

Nationalism attempts to homogenise the apparent internal contradictions and presents a unified force to build the Nation. However, during the anti colonial struggle serious attempts were made to justify the caste inequality as the basis of India's unique character, her distinctiveness, and therefore the basis of nationality.

The anti colonial nationalism that emerged in the late nineteenth century had two distinct streams. The nationalism espoused by the Indian National Congress had its mooring in secular liberal tradition while the militant Hindu nationalism aimed to defend and protect caste system. Bal Gangadhar Tilak's opposition to the liberal tradition of Maharashtra, his attack on Jotirao Phule and the Satya Shodhak Samaj, the entry of non-



Brahmin children into schools, and the debates surrounding the Inter-caste Marriage Bill demonstrate the underlying ideology of Indian nationalism.

The paper attempts to analyse how the caste system was viewed by the nationalist discourse and how it was made an important component of nation building in the nineteenth and early twentieth century India.

Parimala V. Rao teaches at Jawaharlal Nehru University. Her area of specialisation is political and cultural history of colonial Deccan and on history of education. Her doctoral dissertation was on the Emergence of 'the Concept of *Hindu Rashtra* in the Nineteenth Century Maharashtra'. Some of her works include (Ed) *New Perspectives in the History of Indian Education*, Orient BlackSwan, New Delhi, 2014, *Foundations of Tilak's Nationalism: Discrimination, Education, and Hindutva*, Orient BlackSwan, New Delhi, 2010, paperback 2011, (Ed) *Religion, State and Civil Society*, Vikas Adhyayan Kendra, Mumbai, 2005. 'Promiscuous crowd of English Smatterers': 'Poor' in the Colonial and Nationalist Discourse on Education in India 1835-1935, *Contemporary Education Dialogue*, No 10, No 2, 2013, 'New insights into the debates on rural indebtedness in the nineteenth century Deccan,' *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol 44 No. 04 January 24 - January 30, 2009, 'Nationalism and the visibility of women in public space: Tilak's criticism of Rakhmabai and Ramabai,' *The Indian Historical Review* XXXV, No II, July 2008 and 'Educating Women and Non-Brahmins as loss of Nationality: Bal Gangadhar Tilak and the Nationalist Agenda in Maharashtra,' *Occasional Paper*-, New Delhi, Centre for Women's Development Studies -2007 among others.

B. Rama Chandra Reddy

K.M.C.P.G. Studies, Puducherry

Exploring Hierarchy in the Tribal Areas of Northern Andhra

Traditional Hindu Indian society was divided into four hierarchically graded status groups to be added by another untouchable social group at a later date. In reality, there are a number of regional social groups which were knitted in the all India framework. Though known as 'caste' groups in the colonial parlance, due to the ambiguity of the term sociologists prefer to substitute it with the native terms *Varna* and *Jati*. Occupational functions and food habits were the major determinants of the ritual and hierarchical status of these social groups. Such a graded hierarchy is also noticeable





in the multi-tribal villages of Northern Andhra region. Those social groups who enjoyed and monopolized the religious power and political authority occupied a higher social ranking followed by those who were involved in agriculture and craft production. Certain groups, who were assigned the occupations of menial nature were ascribed the lowest position and were regarded as untouchables. The expressions of social hierarchy can be observed at different socio-political and religious contexts in the multi-tribal villages of the studied region. Interestingly, food habits and the concept of purity and pollution were not seen to be the basis of hierarchy. However these traditional relations underwent a drastic and dramatic change during the colonial period. Acting initially as middle men between the tribals and plains traders, the so-called untouchable social groups gradually evolved as petty traders and money lenders. With the betterment in their economic status, they shunned the despised nomenclature of their community to adopt a more respectable name. Some of them were educationally, socially and economically benefited through conversion to Christianity.



Identifying their own community heroes was also noticed in field work. In this context, the present paper tries to explore the graded hierarchy and its changing patterns among various social groups in the tribal areas of Northern Andhra using a variety of sources like the colonial records, ethnographical reports and participant observation during field trips.

Baddela Rama Chandra Reddy got his Masters Degree in History and was awarded Doctoral degree for his thesis “Tribal Revolts in Godavari and Vizagapatam Districts, 1857-1917” from Andhra University, Visakhapatnam. Presently, he is working as Associate Professor of History in Kanchi Mamunivar Centre for Post-Graduate Studies (Autonomous), Puducherry. He is interested in Tribal Studies and Social History of South India. He published 25 articles and co-edited a book.

Padmanabh Samarendra

Jamia Millia Islamia

Census, Anthropology and the Birth of Caste Colonial India

Caste, as conceived in contemporary academic writings, is a new idea. The social form that is imagined through this term never existed in the Indian society. The idea of caste is premised on two assumptions: that it exists in society and its existence can be observed and verified, and that it has a fixed and uniform boundary. These two assumptions together are applicable neither to *varna* nor to *jati*, the indigenous forms of which caste is taken as an equivalent. The present notion of caste was produced during the second half of the nineteenth century in the course of and because of the census operations. The procedures of counting and classification in census required that the entity to be counted should actually exist and should be discrete and homogenous. The features of neither *varna* nor *jati* fulfilled these requirements. The colonial officials, in order to identify and classify castes, took recourse to anthropological tools. The anthropological knowledge in the context of the statistical requirements of the census eventually produced the idea of caste: an empirical and uniform system that apparently has existed in India since earliest times.



Padmanabh Samarendra teaches at the Dr KR Narayanan Centre for Dalit and Minorities Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. His areas of interest include the concept of caste, colonial ethnography and caste movements in Bihar. His recent publications include: 'Census in colonial India and the birth of caste', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. xlvi, No. 33, August 13, 2011, 'Anthropological Knowledge and Statistical Frame: Caste in the Census in Colonial India', in Sumit Sarkar and Tanika Sarkar, eds., *Caste in Modern India: A Reader*, Vol. 1, Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2013.

Adapa Satyanarayana

Osmania University, Hyderabad

Caste as Social Capital: Conciousness and Identity Among the Kammas of Andhra Pradesh

In my paper, I propose to explore the dynamics of formation of social capital, caste and class articulation with reference to a “dominant caste”, viz., the Kammas in Andhra Pradesh. This paper also addresses the caste/class question by analyzing how the construction of caste identity has been intertwined with class formation. Social capital signifies network of relations — as distinct from contracts — that creates kinship solidarity among caste people. For the purpose of this paper social capital is defined as “social networks, horizontal and voluntary local associations. It is understood as resources that people have by virtue of their social relationships.” In this paper an attempt is made to examine the process of the formation and crystallization of caste consciousness and solidarity within the dominant Kamma caste since the beginning of twentieth century. It focuses mainly on the activities of the caste associations amongst the Kammas to demonstrate how self-images and caste identities are being constructed. It also seeks to explain how caste solidarity as an important instrument, ensured and sustained the Kamma caste dominance in the socio-cultural, economic and political fields in modern Andhra. Further, it proposes to explain how caste unity was sought to be achieved amongst the Kammas by using caste sentiment and reminding the fellow caste men of their shared common culture, heritage, tradition and historical past. My paper also seeks to analyze the meanings of certain symbols,



institutions, and idioms employed by the caste associations in fostering caste prestige, loyalty, dignity, caste patriotism etc. It will also explore the role of caste organizations and networks in promoting caste interests, cohesiveness, unity and patronage which tended to sustain and reinforce caste dominance.

Adapa Satyanarayana, is a Professor (Retd.) and former Head, Department of History, Osmania University, Hyderabad. He was a DAAD Visiting Professor at Jacobs University, Bremen, Germany, 2009-11 and held UGC Chair in Diaspora Studies at Goa University, 2012-13. Prof. Satyanarayana obtained M.Phil. from JNU, New Delhi and D.Phil. from Heidelberg University, Germany and taught at Osmania University for about 30 years. His area of specialization is socio-economic history of modern India, with a focus on Dalit studies, migration and diaspora. He has authored three books and edited eight volumes on Modern Andhra History. Currently he is doing postdoctoral research on the Telugu Labor Diaspora. He has extensively published on the social history of lower castes and Telugu migrations in India and abroad. His publications on Dalitbahujan history, migration and Diaspora are published in reputed journals and edited books.

Iqtidar Husain Siddiqui

Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh

Emergence of New Social formations in Medieval India

In the 8th C AD the province of Sindh and Punjab were conquered by Arabs and a new system of governance was introduced. It was a bureaucratic system of governance in which a uniform law was introduced. Discrimination between man and man on the basis of caste or birth was prohibited. The caste ridden towns and cities were open to all for settlement. The interaction between Arabs and Indians led to social changes in society during this period. The Jats who belonged to low caste and were discriminated against as Chandalas witnessed an improvement in their position and made progress. By the time of Sultan Mahmud the Jats had already emerged as a new social formation in the region of Sindh. They revolted against the Sultan and fought courageously incurring a great loss to the former both in men and materially. The Jats emerged



as landlords and chieftains. Similarly on other regions of Delhi low castes made progress which witnessed marked upward mobility under the new system of governance. In this paper an effort will be made to present an analysis of the historical data related to social mobility.

Iqtidar Husain Siddiqui, Aligarh Muslim University, area of specialization is cultural history of medieval northern India. His major works include *Composite culture Under the Sultanate of Delhi* (2013), *Authority and Kingship Under the Sultans of Delhi: Thirteenth-fourteenth Centuries* (2006), *An Eighteenth Century History of North India: An Account of the Rise and Fall of the Rohilla Chiefs in Janbhasha* by Ali Bijnori (2005) *Islamic Heritage in South Asia*, vol. I (2001) and vol. II (2003), *Medieval India: Essays in Intellectual Thought and Cultures* (2003), *Some Aspects of Afghan Despotism in India* (1969), *Sher Shah Suri and His Dynasty* (1995) and others.

Konda Srinivasulu

CSR. Sarma College Ongole, Andhra Pradesh

Caste and Hierarchy in Buddhism with Special Reference to Early Andhradesa

Caste in India is an interesting institution. The social status in ancient India was all apparently based upon occupations and they might be taken to denote *varna*, classes (*srenis*), or even trade guilds (*Pugas*), rather than castes and races. It is well known that Buddha rejected the caste system and opened the door of his doctrine to the members of all castes. He himself said, “As in the ocean all the great rivers lose name and being, so in my doctrine all the castes merge”. However, the available data clearly reveals that caste and social hierarchy did exist even in Buddhism. It is evident from a study of the contents of the commentary on Theravagatha known as Paramatthadipani that the *theras* belonged to different castes from highest aristocracy to the lowest scavenger, but they looked to one another with fraternal affection and equanimity. However, the Vinaya states that there are two *jatis*: the low *jati* (*hina jati*) and the excellent *jati* (*ukkatta jati*). The available inscriptions also reveal that both male and female devotees belonging to different class and professions had participated in donating liberal grants to the *bhikku Sangha* and monasteries. Even some



of the sub castes were mentioned in the Buddhist inscriptions. In the wake of these facts, the present paper tries to argue that despite Buddhism rejecting caste distinctions among its followers, caste and hierarchy did exist in Buddhism using literary and epigraphical sources.

K. Srinivasulu is presently Head of the Department of History, CSR Sarma College, Ongole, AP. He has a teaching experience spanning 32 years. He got his M.A. from Nagarjuna, M.Phil from Sri Venkateswara and Ph.D. from Telugu Universities. He is trained in Archaeology and a specialist in Epigraphy. He has published 2 books and authored more than 30 research papers in reputed books and journals. He is the founder General Secretary of Kadapa District History Association and Epigraphical Research Society. He also acted as the General Secretary of Andhra Pradesh History Congress for 3 years. He is selected as Sectional President for the Cultural History section of South Indian History Congress for the year 2014.

Kesavan Veluthat

University of Delhi

The “Intermediate Castes”: The “Temple Dwellers” in Medieval Kerala

This paper seeks to raise a few questions in relation to the Institution of caste within the disciplinary framework of history. It will seek to examine the processes of the formation and the structure that it took from time to time in the case of Kerala looking at the evidence from medieval Kerala – inscriptions, palm leaf documents and literary texts – in order to see how occupational groups got congealed into castes in Kerala. Taken up for illustration is the case of what are described as the “intermediate castes (*antarāṁjātis*)”, i.e., the “temple-dwelling” castes. They are seen performing varied functions in early inscriptions, sometimes unconnected with what are supposed to be the duties of the “castes” into which they get identified later. They start gradually getting congealed as so many castes with all features defining castes such as rituals, patterns of succession through patriliney or matriliney, commensality and connubiality, allotted positions on the scale of purity and pollution and so on. Hopefully, it will throw light on the general pattern obtaining not only in Kerala but elsewhere in the subcontinent as well.





Kesavan Veluthat (1951) was educated in Calicut and New Delhi. Author of three major books and several important research papers, he has been a visiting professor in different Indian and foreign Universities. He is currently on the teaching faculty of the University of Delhi.

Haruka Yanagisawa

University of Tokyo

Anti-Caste Movements as a Driving Force for Economic Development

In this presentation, mainly based on cases from South India, I highlight how various movements by Dalits and other subaltern people to emancipate themselves have influenced changes in the economic structure since the end of the nineteenth century and have contributed to India's economic growth after the 1980s.

Since the end of the nineteenth century, the opening of new job opportunities, like migration to overseas plantations, stimulated among



Dalit agricultural labourers a sense of independence from the high caste landowners, with the result that landowners in Tamil districts started to experience difficulties in securing obedient low-caste farm workers. After Independence, Tamil villages witnessed a remarkable growth of emancipation movements by lower caste members. As recent surveys report, there is a tendency among emancipated subalterns, empowered by the availability of non-farm job-opportunities, to refuse to work under high-caste landowners, and the resulting shortage of labour and rises in agricultural wage levels has induced the landowning classes to leave the agriculture sector.

The movements towards emancipation by low caste members have been accompanied by a diversification in their consumption patterns. Recent decades have witnessed subalterns expanding their consumption of various new items like fashionable clothes and consumer durables as an expression of their sense of independence, as helped by the above-mentioned subalterns' movements, the real wage level of agricultural labourers has steadily risen since the end of the 1970s. Together with an increasing income from non-farm employment, the subaltern population has expanded remarkably the consumption of non-agrarian goods and services, significantly contributing to the growth of the Indian economy.

Another channel through which anti-caste movements have contributed to Indian economic growth pertains to the formation of new capitalist groups that have led the development of new industries like pharmaceuticals, engineering etc. The new business groups were mainly from non-commercial communities like agricultural castes and Brahmans, growing mainly in areas where the control of markets by traditional commercial communities has been weakened sufficiently to allow non-commercial communities to participate in businesses. Certain scholars argue that the new capitalists emerged mainly in South and Western India because those areas have a long history of anti-caste movements, which led to the decline of market control by traditional merchant communities.

Haruka Yanagisawa, Received MA (1970) and Ph.D. in Economics (1993) from the University of Tokyo. He taught at Yokohama City University (1972-1983), the University of Tokyo (1983-2004) and Chiba University (2004-2010) and is now Professor Emeritus, the University of Tokyo.



The main subject of his research is the economic history of South India in the 19-20th centuries, with a particular focus on changes in the landholding, agricultural labourers, tenants and the caste system. Another sphere of his research is the history of the handweaving and other rural industries. His recent interest is to examine the contemporary Indian economic growth in an historical perspective.

His major works include: *A Century of Change: Caste and Irrigated Lands in Tamilnadu, 1860s to 1970s* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1996); *Socio-economic Changes in a Village in the Paddy Cultivating Area in South India* (Tokyo: ILCCA, 1985); “Mixed Trends in Landholding in Lalgudi Taluk: 1895-1925” (*IESHR* 24-4, 1989); “The Handloom Industry and Its Market Structure” (*IESHR* 30-1, 1993). He has jointly edited *Local Agrarian Societies in Colonial India* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1996) and *Towards a History of Consumption in South Asia* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010) and is editing *Communities, Commons and Natural Resource Management in Asia: Past and Present* (forthcoming).



Chairs: Lecture and Sessions

Ishrat Alam teaches at Aligarh Muslim University. His area of specialisation is economic history during the medieval and early modern period. He has extensively researched on themes of technology, trade, medicine and cultural. His main publications includes (coedited with Syed Ejaz Hussain) *The varied facets of History, Essays in honour of Aniruddha Ray* (2011), his forthcoming book is titled *Textiles, Technology and Trade in Medieval India*.

Saiyid Zahir Jafri teaches at the Delhi University. His main areas of research are medieval Indian History, Indian Sufism, Urban – Rural interface in relation to landed overlords and town based Gentry and intellectual history of Islamic East. Some of his publications include *Studies in the Anatomy of Transformation: Awadh from Mughal to Colonial Rule* (1998); *The Islamic Path: Sufism, Politic and society in India* (2006); *Recording the Progress of Indian History: Symposia Papers of the Indian History Congress 1992-2010 (ed Vol)* (2012).

Ashis Nandy, sociologist and clinical psychologist, has over the years strayed into areas outside formal social sciences and normal academic concerns. His research interests centre on the political psychology of violence, cultures of knowledge, utopias and visions, human potentialities, and futures. Presently he is working on genocide. The running themes in his work have been concern and respect for marginalized categories and systems of knowledge and a robust scepticism towards expert-driven, packaged, professional solutions to human problems.

Some of Nandy's important works include *Alternative Sciences* (1980); *At the Edge of Psychology* (1980); *The Intimate Enemy* (1983); *The Tao of Cricket: On Games of Destiny and the Destiny of Games* (1989); *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism* (1983); *The Savage Freud and Other Essays in Possible and Retrievable Selves* (1995); *An Ambiguous Journey to the City*



(2001); *The Romance of the State and the Fate of Dissent in the Tropics* (2008); *Time Warps* (2002); *Time Treks* (2007); and *Traditions, Tyranny and Utopias* (1987).

D.L. Sheth is Honorary Senior Fellow and former Director of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi and is Editor of the journal *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*. He has edited *Citizens and Parties* (1995) with Ashis Nandy, *Multiverse of Democracy* (1996) and with Gurpreet Mahajan, *Minority Identities and the Nation-State* (1999).

He has contributed chapters in many books and several articles in reputed professional journals. He founded *Lokayan*, a movement for alternatives in politics and development, in 1980 and has served on its governing body for many years after became an independent NGO in 1983. He worked as President of People's Union for Civil Liberties in Delhi (1991-93) and was appointed Member (Social Scientist) to the National Commission for Backward Classes (1993-96).

Shashi B. Upadhyay is with the Faculty of History, Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi. His areas of interest are labour history, Dalit studies and literary studies. His publications include *Existence, Identity and Mobilization: The Cotton Millworkers of Bombay, 1890-1919* (2004), and (co-edited) volumes *Dalit Assertion in Society, Literature and History* (2010) and *School Education, Pluralism and Marginality* (2011).

Chinna Rao Yagati teaches at the PSDE, JNU. His area of research is social and political history during the colonial period. His early work was on outcaste movements in colonial and post colonial Andhra. Recently he has been engaged with research on exploring discrimination and exclusion, violence, media and neo social movements in post colonial context. Some of his main publications include *Dividing Dalits: Writings on Sub-Categorization of Scheduled Castes*, (Edited) (2009); *Writing Dalit History and Other Essays* (2007) and *Dalits' Struggle for Identity: Andhra and Hyderabad, 1900–1950* (2003).





Satyajit & Rajendra Chandra

Chandra



Public Events



Special Lecture

Proliferation of Caste: A Historical Explanation

by **Rajan Gurukul**

Chair: **Vijaya Ramaswamy**



Rajan Gurukul is currently Soundararajan Chair Visiting Professor, Centre for Contemporary Studies, Indian Institute of Science, Malleswaram, Bangalore. His areas of specialisation range from the socio-economics of the Kerala temple and advanced through the study of the land system and socio-political organisation in the Tamil South to 'forms of production and forces of change in ancient Tamil society, the Tamil heroic discourse, and the writing and its uses in early historic society. He has authored several books both in Malayalam and English on Socio-economic and Cultural History, Structural Anthropology, Historical Sociology, Social formations of South India, myth, history and society, Human Ecology of the Southern Western Ghats and political sociology.

Vijaya Ramaswamy is Professor at the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Wednesday, 26 February 2014

5 pm, CSDS Seminar Hall

29 Rajpur Road, Delhi 110054



Lecture by Rajan Gururukal

Indian Institute of Science, Malleswaram, Bangalore

Proliferation of Caste: A Historical Explanation

The lecture focuses on one of the fundamental concerns of history, of the historical process of the formation and proliferation of castes in Kerala region, as part of the formation of the temple-centred agrarian society. It starts with the earliest identifiable social formation in the region, which was a combination of several simple unevenly evolved economies largely incapable of generating division and specialization of labour leading to the divergence of kinship and the formation of castes. The system of service-tenure under the king and the local rulers also gave rise to hereditary offices, generating castes and sub-castes with economy and royalty as determinants of status hierarchy. Its extension into non-brahmana villages, and even to market towns, attested by records, suggests caste appeared as an institutional manifestation in the hierarchically structured agrarian society in which services were paid for in the form of land rights.



Special Lecture

When was Caste?

Some reflections on early modern South Asia

by William R. Pinch

Chair: Ashis Nandy

William R. Pinch is Professor of History at Wesleyan University and associate editor of the journal *History and Theory*. His current research focuses on the emotional world of Company soldiering in mid-nineteenth-century north India, though he is also working on a joint translation of two eighteenth-century Brajbhasha poems that celebrate Himmat Bahadur. His books include *Peasants and Monks in British India* (Berkeley 1996) and *Warrior Ascetics and Indian Empires* (Cambridge 2006).

Ashis Nandy is Honorary Distinguished Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies.

Thursday, 27 February 2014

6.15 pm, CSDS Seminar Hall
29 Rajpur Road, Delhi 110054



Lecture by William R. Pinch

Wesleyan University

When was Caste? Some Reflections on Early Modern South Asia

Caste purports to be a key component of India's ancient present, a definitive feature of the unchanging quality of Hindu society. Social and cultural historians, who know better, link the construction of caste to modernity-and especially to the rise of the obsessively ethnographic state otherwise known as the British Raj. Philologists, meanwhile, learnedly point out that the word caste comes to us from the Portuguese, who arrived in southwest India the late fifteenth century and used the term to describe the welter of hierarchically inflected social relations that confronted them. World historians tell us, stroking their beards in a sagely fashion, that the Portuguese arrival coincided, more or less, with the beginning of what is now usually referred to as “the early modern period”. So when was caste? Clearly it conjures up multiple time frames. The lecture will reflect on the contradictory temporal signals sent by caste.



Panel Discussion

As part of the conference

Chair: **Romila Thapar**

Professor emeritus at JNU

Speakers

Irfan Habib

Professor Emeritus, Aligarh Muslim University

Kumkum Roy

Jawaharlal Nehru University

Sabyasachi Bhattacharya

Former Chairman ICHR

Suresh Sharma

Former Senior Fellow, CSDS

Shail Mayaram

Senior Fellow, CSDS



Panel Discussion: Chair and Speakers

Sabyasachi Bhattacharya taught at the JNU and was former chairman of the ICHR. He was the vice -chancellor of Vishwa Bharati University (1991-1995). His exploration of economic history and colonialism has greatly contributed to the expansion of the field of study, especially providing an impetus to labour studies. His focus on cultural history has led to exploration of diverse themes from reflections on the nationalist discourse, education and the dispriveleged, the Mahatma and Tagore etc. His major recent works include *Talking Back: The Idea of Civilization in the Indian National Discourse* (2011); *Towards Freedom Documents on the Movement for Independence in India 1940: Part 2* (2010); *Towards Freedom: Documents on the Movement for Independence in India 1940 Part 1* (2009).

Irfan Habib is a professor emeritus Aligarh Muslim University whose work on ancient and medieval India has been influential. Some of his major works include *An Atlas of Ancient Indian History*, (Jointly with Faiz Habib) (2012); *Agrarian System of Mughal India, 1556-1707*; *Essays in Indian History: Towards a Marxist Perception* (1995); Editor (jointly with Tapan Raychaudhuri) with several contributions, *Cambridge Economic History of India, Vol. I* (1982). Within this wide historical cartography his work has explored themes of social tension, slavery, caste and gender.

Shail Mayaram has explored subaltern perspectives on state and sovereignty, the constitution of marginality, and mobilities and identities in relation to peasant, pastoral, and 'tribal' peoples. She has also theorized the question of 'living together' in Asian cities. Her current intellectual engagements include revisiting the 'svaraj in ideas' debate translated as decolonizing knowledge and the question of religious pluralism in India and China.

Mayaram has authored *Resisting Regimes: Myth, Memory and the Shaping of a Muslim Identity* (1997) and *Against History, Against State: Counterperspectives from the Margins* (2003); co-authored *Creating a Nationality: The Ramjanmabhumi Movement and Fear of Self* (1995); co-



edited *Subaltern Studies: Muslims, Dalits, and the Fabrications of History*, volume 12 (2005); and edited *The Other Global City* (2009) and *Philosophy as Samvad and Svaraj: Dialogical Meditations on Daya Krishna and Ramchandra Gandhi* (in press). Her book *Israel as the Gift of the Arabs: A Tel Aviv diary* is forthcoming.

Kumkum Roy teaches at the Center for Historical Studies, JNU. Her work on the emergence of monarchy in north India, mid first millennium BCE was based on a study of later and post Vedic textual sources, explored the complex connections between the emergence of political institutions and domestic relations. One of her main areas of interest is in engendering studies of early Indian social history in particular and gender/womens studies in general. Her current research interests include exploring questions of intertextuality in early and early medieval Sanskrit texts, with a special focus on representations of gender, marginalized peoples, and liminal spaces.

Some of her major publications include *The Power of Gender and the Gender of Power* (2010); *A Historical Dictionary of Ancient India* (2009/2010); *In Search of the Vedic Age, in The Vedas, Hinduism, Hindutva* (co-authored with Kunal Chakrabarti and Tanika Sarkar) (2005) (also in Bengali).

Suresh Sharma a former senior fellow former Director of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi whose research areas are primarily history of ideas and cultural anthropology. Over the years this enduring interest in the deeper connections between the cultural/local and the universal is reflected in his exploration of the thematics of modern universality and its perceptions in the North and the South- Asia, Matrix or historial context, and civilization and word and image. His major publications are *Tribal Identity and the Modern World* (1994) and M.K. Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj: A Critical Edition* (co-authored with Suhrud, Tridip) (2010).

Romila Thapar is a professor emeritus at JNU. One of the notable historians of present times, her work on social and cultural history of early India and historiography is widely acclaimed. Thapar's major recent works include *The Past before Us: Historical Traditions of Early North India* (2013); *The Aryan: Recasting Constructs, Three Essays* (2008); *Somanatha: the Many Voices of a History* (2004); *Early India* (2002); *Cultural Pasts, Essays in Early Indian History* (2000); *History and Beyond* (2000) among others.



Programme



Conference on 'The Caste Question and the Historian's Craft'

Day 1: Wednesday 26 February 2014

9.30 – 10.00 am	Registration
10.00 – 11.15 am	Inaugural Session Chair: Sabyasachi Bhattacharya
Welcome Note:	Director CSDS
Seminar Introduction:	Priyadarshini Vijaisri, Seminar Coordinator, CSDS
Inaugural Address:	Haruka Yanagisawa, University of Tokyo Anti-caste Movements as a Driving Force for Economic Development
11.15 – 11.30 am	Tea
11.30 am – 1:00 pm	Session I Chair: Uma Chakravarti Swaroop Rani, Acharya Nagarjuna University Dalit Historiography: Issues and Challenges Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, Victoria University, Wellington Situating Dalit in the Long History of Partition in Bengal, 1950-64
1:00 – 2:00 pm	Lunch
2:00 pm – 4:00 pm	Session II



Chair: Suresh Sharma

Biswamoy Pati, University of Delhi

The Diverse Implications of Legitimacy:
Rituals, State and the Common People in
Colonial Orissa, 1800-1940s

Uma Chakravarti, Formerly University of Delhi

Engaging with Caste: A Personal Journey

B. Ramachandra Reddy, KMCPG Studies,
Puducherry

Exploring Hierarchy in the Tribal Areas of
Northern Andhra

4:00 – 5 pm

Tea

5:00 pm

Special Lecture

Chair: Vijaya Ramaswamy

Rajan Gurukkal, Indian Institute of Science

Proliferation of Caste: A Historical Explanation

7.00 pm onwards

Dinner

Day 2: Thursday 27 February 2014

9:30am – 11:30 am

Session III

Chair: Vinay Lal

Axel Michaels, University of Heidelberg

The caste system in the Nepalese Muluki Ain of
1856

Timothy Amos, National University of Singapore

'Sanskritization', 'Samuraization', and Beyond:

Exploring the Common Ground in 19th Century

Outcaste Experience

Demetrius Eudell, Wesleyan University

Caste, Race and Kinship: Grounds for a theory



11:30 – 11:45 am	Tea
11:45 am – 1:45 pm	<p>Session IV</p> <p>Chair: Sayyad Z Hussain Jaffri</p> <p>K.Srinivasulu, CSR, Sarma College, Ongole Caste and Hierarchy in Buddhism with Special Reference to Early Andhradesa</p> <p>Vijaya Ramaswamy, Jawaharlal Nehru University Casting the Viswakarma in Medieval Peninsular India</p> <p>Kesavan Veluthat, University of Delhi The “Intermediate Castes”: The “Temple Dwellers” in Medieval Kerala</p>
1:45 pm – 2.30 pm	Lunch
2:30 pm – 3:45 pm	<p>Session V</p> <p>Chair: Ishrat Alam</p> <p>I.H. Siddique, Aligarh Muslim University Emergence of New Social Formations in Medieval India</p> <p>S. Victor Babu, B.R. Ambedkar Central University Varna and Caste in Medieval Andhra Pradesh: Practices and Perceptions</p>
3:45 – 4:00 pm	Tea
4:00 pm – 5:15 pm	<p>Session VI</p> <p>Chair: Sekhar Bandyopadhyay</p> <p>Umesh Bagade, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University Aurangabad Fighting Caste and Untouchability: Changing Textures of Dalit Historical Consciousness from</p>



	<p>Pre-colonial to Colonial Maharashtra Rajsekhar Basu, Mykolo Romeris University Caste, Class and Consciousness: Some Observations on the Movements of the Pulayas in the Princely States of Travancore and Cochin in the 19 and 20th Centuries</p>
5:15 – 6:15 pm	Tea
6:15 pm	<p>Special lecture Chair: Ashis Nandy William Pinch, Wesleyan University, Middletown When was Caste? Some Reflections on Early Modern South Asia”</p>
7:45pm Onwards	Dinner

Day 3: Friday 28 February 2014

9.30 am – 11.30 pm	<p>Session VII Chair: Chinna Rao Yagati Ishrat Alam, Aligarh Muslim University Artisanal Communities in Medieval India Vikram Harijan, Allahabad University Caste Dispute, Riots and the English Company: A Study of the Right and Left Hand Caste in Madras During 17th and 18th Centuries Sanal Mohan, Mahatma Gandhi University Kottayam Histories of Experience: Writing Dalit Histories in Kerala</p>
11.30 – 11.45 am	Tea



11.45 am – 1:00 pm	<p>Session VIII</p> <p>Chair: Shashi Bhushan Upadhyay</p> <p>Parimala Rao, Jawaharlal Nehru University</p> <p>Caste, Class and the Nation: Revisiting the Nationalist Ideology</p> <p>Adapa Satyanarayana, Osmania University</p> <p>Caste as Social Capital: Consciousness and Identity Among the Kammas of Andhra Pradesh</p>
1:00 – 2.00 pm	Lunch
2:00 – 4.30 pm	<p>Session IX Panel Discussion</p> <p>Chair: Romila Thapar</p> <p>Speakers: Irfan Habib, Kumkum Roy, Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, Suresh Sharma and Shail Mayaram</p>
4.30 – 4.45 pm	Tea
4.45 – 6.45 pm	<p>Session X</p> <p>Chair: D. L. Sheth</p> <p>Y.S. Alone, Jawaharlal Nehru University</p> <p>Interrogating Power of Discourse in Historicisms: Caste, Histories and Mind Consciousness</p> <p>Vinay Lal, University of California, Los Angeles</p> <p>The Caste Census in India: Some Historical and Ethical Considerations</p> <p>Padmanabh Samarendra, Jamia Milia Islamia</p> <p>Census, Anthropology and the Birth of Caste in Colonial India</p>
7.00 pm onwards	Dinner



Notes



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