



Critical Caste Studies Workshop

CeMIS, Göttingen University

July 10, 2015

Caste determines everyday life in India. The presence of the caste problem in Indian society, however, has only been partially and peripherally engaged with in the academy. To be sure, one is daunted by the anthropological, sociological, and historical studies on "caste and tribes", "OBCs", "SCs", "Dalits", "Mandal", reservation policies, and so on: even colonial anthropologist J H Hutton was apologetic about adding yet another volume to the genre, called "Caste in India," in the 1940s. Nevertheless, after all these theories and studies we do not live, yet, in a *post-caste society*. Nor will we be in the near future. Like gender, then, caste, will continue to determine the lived experience of South Asians, locally and globally. The caste condition, therefore, insists that we cannot afford to shy away from this conundrum irrespective of the disciplines we are all busy with. Rather it is an imperative that we keep *caste* as a core lens of our theoretical and empirical studies because one cannot whitewash further and overlook the white elephant anymore, as the recent studies, such as *Blocked by Caste*, remind us. On the other hand, dropping politically correct terms, such as Dalit and Adivasi, or endorsing functionalistic valorizations of caste, has only led to not taking the larger context of caste privileges and caste-based marginality seriously in the world's largest democracy.

Considering the interdisciplinary orientation of the participants we will gather in a day long workshop to rigorously grapple with the following questions:

What could *Critical Caste Studies* be?

How do we critically engage with caste privileges and marginality in analyzing key academic topics including labor, health, gender, education, policies, politics, space, religions, and social movements, studies of which are currently engaged in and will continue to be in the future? What is the state of the art of caste analysis in humanities and social sciences? And why is it so? How do we change it?

Despite the resistance to engage with implications of caste power in the burgeoning field of South Asian Studies in the West and the humanities and social sciences in India today, we still maintain that it is necessary to keep caste at the centre whether one studies anthropology, sociology, philosophy, psychology, literature, history, and so on. That is precisely the reason why we are inaugurating *Critical Caste Studies* at CeMIS, in Germany. Not just as one-day workshop, but as something which will go on annually. And not just in Germany, in the West, but also elsewhere across the Indian, Atlantic, and Pacific oceans wherever caste has assumed power and the marginalized have traversed to assert and live their humanity, against caste.

Friday, July 10, 2015

10.00 – 10.15 Welcome

Gajendran Ayyathurai (CeMIS, University of Göttingen)

10.15 – 13.00 Session I

Jana Tschurenev (CeMIS) Missionaries, caste, and the idea of universal education in 19th century India

Devika Bordia (CeMIS) Military Cultures: Army Employment and the Formation of Political Subjectivities in Rajasthan

Saikat Maitra (CeMIS) The Caste Complaint: Dispossession, Labor and the Re-articulation of Caste in Rajarhat

Nate Roberts (MPI Göttingen) Autonomy and Care

Discussants: Sumeet Mhaskar (CeMIS) and Uday Chandra (MPI Göttingen)

13.00 – 14.00 Lunch

14.00 – 16.45 Session II

Sumeet Mhaskar (CeMIS) Caste Annihilation and the Global City: An Inquiry into Migrant Workers' Attitudes towards the Persistence of Caste in Urban Settings

Uday Chandra (MPI Göttingen) Stitching Selves, Spanning Spaces: Migrants and Mobility in Mumbai

Nikolay Kamenov (ETH Zurich) Colonial and Postcolonial Constructions of Caste and 'Race'

Gajendran Ayyathurai "By his very origin a Brahmin is a deity even for the gods...": Brahminism, violence, and the limits of humanness

T. Dharmaraj (Madurai Kamaraj University, Tamil Nadu, India) Caste in Tamil Nadu

Discussants: Nate Roberts (MPI Göttingen) and Jana Tschurenev (CeMIS)

16.45 – 17.00 Tea

17.00 – 17.30 Closing Remarks

Martin Fuchs (Universität Erfurt)

Rupa Viswanath (CeMIS)

18.00 Dinner: Potis