



NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDIES

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE CAMPUS, BENGALURU-560012

## WORKSHOP ON LANGUAGES OF CASTE: ASSERTION, DENIAL, RESISTANCE

**CHANGING  
INDIA:  
A SERIES OF  
EVENTS AT  
NIAS**

### SPEAKERS

K. Satyanarayana  
Gogu Shyamala  
A. Manasa  
M. Hemanth Kumar  
Asim Siddiqui  
S. Anandhi  
Shraddha Chickerur  
Sowmya Dechamma  
Malavika Priyadarshini  
Shilpa Mudbi Kothakota  
Sanal Mohan  
Du. Saraswati  
Gowri  
Hulikunte Murthy

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2019**

**9:30 AM TO 5:30 PM**

**NIAS LECTURE HALL**

For more information, contact:

NIAS Changing India Team

[nias.changingindia@gmail.com](mailto:nias.changingindia@gmail.com)

<http://www.nias.res.in/events/changing-india-series>

<https://www.facebook.com/Changing-India-251846182193547/>

Posts ad for a Deshshtha Rigvedi  
Brahmin fair Marathi girl!

Image credits: Just Savarna Things, Dalit Women Fight, Dalit Camera, The New York Times

Changing India is a series of events hosted by NIAS and supported by the Pratiksha Trust. It is a joint initiative of a few faculty members and research scholars from different disciplines. The series builds on the legacy of M N Srinivas, a major sociologist of modern India and a key figure in the history of NIAS. He was deeply invested in understanding how the Indian social and political landscape developed after Independence, sometimes taking unexpected turns. Building on the social thought of Prof. Srinivas, the 'Changing India' series of lectures, events and workshops will host key academics, writers, public intellectuals, artists and social justice activists to reflect on some of the pertinent questions of our time.

Team:

Carol Upadhyaya, Savitha Suresh Babu, Krupa Rajangam, Priya Gupta, Sumitra Sunder, Shivali Tukdeo, Smriti Haricharan, Hemangini Gupta

[nias.changingindia@gmail.com](mailto:nias.changingindia@gmail.com)

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## ***PROGRAMME***

9:00 - 9:30 am Registration and Coffee/Tea

9:30 - 9:45 am Introduction to the Workshop

9:45 - 11:15 am *Session 1: Talking with and against caste*

*Chair:* Carol Upadhyia

### **Freedom of expression vs. casteist language**

K. Satyanarayana, English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad

### **Evolving and emerging terms, perceptions, standpoint and language, in contemporary anti caste movements in the Telugu states**

Gogu Shyamala, Researcher and Writer, Telangana

### **Talking caste in the everyday: An Ambedkarite perspective**

A. Manasa, M. Hemanth Kumar, Asim Siddiqui, Azim Premji University, Bengaluru

11:15 - 11:30 am Coffee/Tea

11:30 am - 1:00 pm *Session 2: Expressing identities: Caste, gender, and community*

*Chair:* Shivali Tukdeo

### **Gendered negotiation of caste honour: The political economy of marriage and masculinity in Tamil Nadu**

S. Anandhi, Madras Institute of Development Studies, Chennai

### **Exploring privilege: A study of Chitpavan Brahman women in Pune city**

Shraddha Chickerur, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad

### **Anthropological texts on Kodavas: Implications for caste and language debates**

Sowmya Dechamma, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad

1:00 - 1:45 pm Lunch

1:45 - 3:00 pm            *Session 3: Performing and resisting caste*  
*Chair: Sumitra Sunder*

**Aesthetics of Dalit protest songs**

Malavika Priyadarshini, NIAS-Exeter PhD Fellow

**Inserting folk into one's urban identity**

Shilpa Mudbi Kothakota, Urban Folk Project, Bengaluru

3:00 - 3:15 pm            Coffee/Tea

3:15 - 4:00 pm            *Session 3 contd.*  
*Chair: M. Rashmi*

**Santhimmi Ramayana**

Du. Saraswati, Kannada literary figure and Akka Mahadevi Karnataka State Women's University, Vijayapura

4:00 - 5:00 pm            *Session 4: Annihilating caste in the contemporary*  
*Chair: Savitha Suresh Babu*

**Thinking through the annihilation of caste: Possibilities today**

Gowri, Mahila Munnade, Bengaluru

**Caste in the classroom**

Hulikunte Murthy, Bayalu Balaga, Bengaluru and Government PU College, Malleshwaram

5:00 - 5:30 pm            *Concluding session: Reflections on the workshop*

## **ABSTRACTS** (arranged as per the schedule)

*K. Satyanarayana, Professor, English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad*

### **Freedom of Expression vs. Casteist Language**

Human Rights Watch (HRW), in its recent report, recommended to the Indian Parliament to amend section 3 (1) x and certain provisions of the SC, ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act as these provisions are likely to curb free speech. The recommendation and observations of HRW's report are very damaging to the cause of the SCs and STs in the context of demands for scrapping of the Act by some political parties and groups in India. How does one critically examine the opposition set up between the protection of human dignity (by banning caste speech) and the unprotected speech? What constitutes casteist speech? What would a Dalit critique of 'free speech.' in India?

*Gogu Shyamala, Researcher and Writer, Telangana*

### **Evolving and emerging terms, perceptions, standpoint and language, in contemporary anti caste movements in the Telugu states**

In this paper I attempt to show how terms in language are evolving and emerging in perceptions and standpoint, in contemporary anti caste movements and related issues. Decoding the terms and selecting the terms with the experience of such movements, I put the names and identities of some kind of claiming and rejecting terms, such as Harijan vs Dalit, and Dalit vs Madiga, Mala. These are all not mere terms but also represent and stand for the ideologies of culture and politics. I would like to try illustrating the terms and politicizing them, with knowledge, through view of Karamchedu (1986) and Chundururu (1991) Movements and also the struggles of Telangana State. Specific terms like Sub caste, community, honor killings, Back word classes, depressed classes, Sudras, Athi Sudras, Upper caste, Savarna, Anagarina kulalu, margins and Bahujana. The other part includes categorization of terms which the state has been using in revenue documents and legal documents. These terms are used by various religions with different names. Another important aspect is how did these terms emerge in social movements.

*A. Manasa, M. Hemant Kumar, Asim Siddiqui, Scholars and Faculty, Azim Premji University, Bengaluru*

### **Talking caste in the everyday: An Ambedkarite perspective**

What we are proposing to present is a conceptual exploration of How to talk about caste that follows the Ambedkarite spirit of Annihilating Caste rather than perpetuating it. Even in the well-intentioned discussions on Caste, there is a possibility of perpetuating not just caste hierarchies but also humiliate the very same people for whom it should be emancipatory. Our paper would problematize conversations on Caste from this specific lens and then make a claim for speaking about Caste in a way that annihilates it, not just in public discourse and educational spaces, but also in our everyday conversations.

*S. Anandhi, Professor, Madras Institute of Development Studies, Chennai*

### **Gendered Negotiation of Caste Honour: The Political Economy of Marriage and Masculinity in Tamil Nadu**

Over the last few years, Tamil Nadu, one of the most developed state in India has witnessed an unprecedented scale of violence against young married couples who had made a choice of inter-caste marriage. The widely reported cases of violence against inter-caste marriages like the murder of Illavarasan, a dalit youth who married a girl from the Most backward caste, (Vanniars) by the Vanniars did not stop with the murder of the dalit but also led to large scale destructions of dalit possessions. Analysing such violence, scholars and activists have focused mainly on the question of victimisation of dalits and women which have become static signifiers of caste–gender conflicts in Tamil Nadu. Moving away from such framework of analysis, in this presentation. I attempt to understand the changing notions of honour, status among the dalits and other caste groups in the context of declining agriculture and associated social mobility and conflicts. I argue that with the challenge posed to their caste dominance, the intermediate castes find their masculinity in crisis since they are unable to exert power over the subaltern Dalit men and women. In other words, the crisis of intermediate caste masculinity, is the result of the following: a) daughter deficiency due to decades of female infanticide and associated anxieties about breaking of caste endogamy b) the assertion of intermediary caste young girls in making their marriage choices which transcends caste restrictions c)

the economic mobility of the Dalits and their social assertions. All these significantly contribute to the increasing sexual violence against women.

*Sbraddha Chickerur, PhD Scholar, Centre for Women's Studies, University of Hyderabad*

### **Exploring Privilege- A study of Chitpavan Brahman women in Pune city**

The paper is part of on-going doctoral work which looks at narratives of Chitpavan Brahman women who spent a large part of their lives in the city of Pune. A Chitpavan stronghold which was home to the Peshwas; Pune is known as a cultural and educational capital of Maharashtra. Women from across age groups and occupations were interviewed to understand their experiences, views and the materiality of their lives, in a bid to unravel the complexities of caste, gender in a privileged setting. Notions of language, embodiment, domesticity and work which the narratives throw up will be examined in the paper to present how lives across generations of Brahman women are changing.

*Sonmya Dechamma, Associate Professor, Centre for Comparative Literature, University of Hyderabad*

### **Anthropological texts on Kodavas: implications for caste and language debates**

How do languages that are deemed oral / private negotiate with the languages of the public domain? What are the values associated with languages and how do we understand the nature of orality in relation to script, print and modernity? How does English intervene in a space already structured by a hierarchy that is linguistic, casteist and gendered? How are certain languages and people associated with them made less (or more) modern than others – is the question this paper would like to ask. The paper will address these questions based on anthropological texts written on Kodavas in the mid-twentieth century and attempt to understand its implications for contemporary understanding / practices of language and caste.

*Shilpa M K, Urban Folk Project, Bengaluru*

### **Inserting folk into one's urban identity**

The talk will be about my journey as an artist into research of lesser known folk forms. How does one redefine one's artistic identity and adapt older knowledge system for urban sensibilities? How does one make this inclusion beneficial for the communities that the contemporary draws from?

*Malavika Priyadarshini, NIAS-Exeter PhD Fellow*

### **“Chikatlo Vennavali”: Moonlight in darkness**

This paper will specifically analyse the song ‘Chikatlo Vennalavai’ which roughly translates as ‘Moonlight in the darkness’ written as protest at Hyderabad Central University (HCU) after the death of Dalit research scholar Rohith Vemula. It will attempt to analyse the complex networks of evolution of the aesthetics of contemporary Dalit student protests. Rohith’s suicide led to the shutdown of the University for more than a month and the movement, ‘Justice for Rohith’, continued for about a year. This song was written by Devayya, a Dalit research scholar from the Telugu Department at HCU. It locates itself in the regional context of contemporary Dalit culture but is not devoid of the national and global political culture at large and protest culture in particular. This paper will argue that the aesthetic is always and inextricably intertwined with the social, cultural and the political of not just the immediate context but also with the regional, national and global contexts.

*Du Saraswati, Kannada literary figure and Akka Mahadevi Karnataka State Women’s University, Vijayapura*

### **Santhimmi Ramayana, performance and discussion**

Sanntimmi’s Ramayana was created by Dalit writer and activist Du. Saraswati. ‘No two performances by her are the same, the number of stories she narrates depends on the time given to her. Sanntimmi is a Kannadiga Dalit woman. Her name might mean ‘small girl’, but she is larger than life, and the Ramayana she is about to tell us is not the popular Valmiki Ramayana or ‘Tulsi Das’ Shri Ramcharitamanas but a narrative that weaves stories told by Dalit women in the villages of Karnataka. It becomes a political weapon, a satirical attack on the caste and gender based discrimination in Indian society’ (extract from Siddarth Ganesh’s ‘It is Sita’s story, not Rama’s, that is told by women in Karnataka’s villages, The NEWS Minute, 07 Oct 2015).

*Gowri, Mahila Munnade, Bengaluru*

### **Thinking through the annihilation of caste: Possibilities today**

Based on experiences of conducting the Ambedkar Abhiyana in different colleges last year and over two decades of working as a social activist I reflect upon how young people relate to questions of caste. I have been told that caste no longer exists and that in raising the issue, we activists are creating 'caste'. This talk explores ways to meaningfully engage with such misrecognition, specifically, by drawing attention to young people's' daily practices and life choices.

*Hulikunte Murthy, Bayalu Balaga, Bengaluru and Government PU College, Malleshwaram*

### **Caste in the classroom**

In this discussion I reflect on the different ways in which caste is being spoken about, or not, in college corridors, at a time when dominant discourses have denied the continued relevance of caste in the contemporary. I then talk about the nature of language available for teachers with anti-caste sensibilities to discuss issues of caste in the classroom.

**Notes:**