

Interrogating Caste: Culture and Politics in the Margins

A two-day workshop at the
Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta
 (March 26 and 27, 2014)

Organised by the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta (CSSSC) in collaboration with
 the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR)

The overarching theme of the two-day workshop is the social, economic, and political concerns of SC/ST and other Marginalized Groups and the various cultural forms in which these are manifested. Each of the two days of the workshop has a distinct theme.

The topic of the first day is **Migration, Citizenship, and Livelihood in a Frontier Region**. The Sunderbans and the Char lands in West Bengal constitute two kinds of fragile ecosystems. There the relationship between nature and human beings, questions of citizenship and the extent of the presence of ‘the state’, as well as the potential for livelihoods and the meaning of ‘development’, assume forms that are very different from the ones prevalent in agrarian societies and forest communities (the focus of many studies of the ‘rural’ in India). For instance, groups living in these areas face marginalization on the basis of caste and ethnicity, the changing nature of the landscapes/waterscapes that they inhabit, and the particular forms that state and market intervention assume here. The discussions would bring out some of these issues, drawing both on the lived experiences of people from these regions as well as on scholarship on these regions from different disciplinary perspectives.

The topic of the second day is **Dalit Cultural Representation**. Dalit politics has succeeded in creating an alternative space outside the dominant literary establishment; a space in which the marginal voices can relate their shared stories of oppression and victimhood. Bengali Dalit literary initiatives, however, have been entirely eclipsed by West Bengal’s bhadralok-dominated world of literature. The discussions on this day will delve in this world of writings in Bengali, and listen to the voices from the margins. This session would also be devoted to the study of forms of Dalit resistance from the arena of performance viz., the Asur Utsav of Malda, West Bengal which is held during the time of Durga Puja. The broad questions that would be explored are imaginaries and aesthetics that constitute Dalit writings and performances and the politics behind them.

3.30 - 4.30 pm. : **Session IV**

Performance / a rendering of folk songs

Artists: Gobinda Das, Bhola Das, Sukumar Das, Hari Das, Binod Das

Vote of thanks: Dr. Dwaipayan Bhattacharyya, CSSSC, Kolkata

Day – II

27th March, Thursday

Dalit Cultural Representations

10.30 - 12.15 pm : **Session V**

Bengali Dalit Literary Initiatives

10.30 - 11.00 am. : Introduction (Praskanva Sinharay, CSSSC, Kolkata)

10.45 - 12.15 pm. : Panel Discussion

Chairperson: Dr. Manas Ray, CSSSC, Kolkata

Speakers: Manohar Mouli Biswas, *President, Bangla Dalit Sahitya Sanstha*

[20mins each] Manoranjan Byapari, *Eminent Dalit Writer*

Kalyani Thakur, *Member, Editorial Board, Chaturtha Duniya*

Discussion: 30 mins

12.15 - 12.30 pm **Tea Break**

12.30 - 1.00 pm : **Session VI**

Cultural Programme

12.30 - 1.00 pm. : Presented by *Bangla Dalit Sahitya Sanstha*

(Poetry-reading and performance of Dalit songs in Bengali)

1.00 - 2.00 pm. **Lunch**

2.00 – 3.30 pm. : **Session VII**

Dalit Performance Initiatives

2.00 - 2.15 pm. : Introduction (S. Georgy, Ph.D. scholar, CSSSC, Kolkata)

2.15 - 3.30 pm. : **Dalit Performance Initiatives I**

Chairperson: Dr. Kiran Kesavamurthy, CSSSC, Kolkata

Speakers: K.A. Gunasekaran, Department of Performance Studies,

University of Pondichery on **Tamil Dalit Theatre**

David Thass on **Asur Utsav**

Mohan Murmuru on **Majhi Parghana Gaonta**

3.15 - 3.30 pm.:

Discussion

3.30 - 3.45 pm. :

Tea Break

3.45 - 4.15 pm. :

Session VIII

3.45 - 4.15 pm. :

Dalit Performance Initiatives II

Performance