



Marginality and the Politics of Mediation in South Asia

Center for Modern Indian Studies, University of Göttingen

July 3-4, 2015

Marginality in South Asia and beyond has typically been conceptualized in two opposed ways. On the one hand, it has been attributed to people and places taken to be excluded from putative mainstreams. On the other hand, it has been identified as imbricated in processes of modern state-making and their accompanying notions of sovereignty. Whereas both approaches of exclusion and imbrication possess their distinctive strengths, they leave open the question of how marginality is produced. In this workshop, we seek to answer this question by examining practices of mediation that give rise to social hierarchies, e.g., those based on caste, class, gender, and region. In relation to marginality, we focus on relations of power underlying actors, objects, and ideas that naturalize conditions of social, economic, and political subordination. To understand the politics of mediation that produce forms of marginality, we call for close analyses of the sociocultural processes undergirding lived experiences of marginality in particular South Asian contexts

Friday, July 3

10:00 Welcome

Devika Bordia (CeMIS, University of Göttingen) and Uday Chandra (Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity)

10:30 – 13:00 Panel I: The Politics of Mediation in Democratic Life

“Sarkar: Government by Persons and Institutions”
Anastasia Piliavsky (University of Cambridge)

“Between Representation and Marginality: Party, Mediation and the Poor in West Bengal”
Dwaipayan Bhattacharyya (Centre for Studies in Social Sciences Calcutta)

“Rethinking Non-Party Politics: Can It Bring Social Change?”
Lamia Karim (University of Oregon)

Discussants: Srirupa Roy (CeMIS, University of Göttingen) & Uday Chandra (Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity)

13:00 – 14:00 Lunch

14:00 – 16:30 Panel II: Mediation and Marginality in the Postcolonial City

“Between Pipes and Politics: Engineers and the Contradictions of ‘Rights’ Regimes in Mumbai”
Lisa Bjorkman (CeTREN, University of Göttingen)

"Politics as Nostalgia or Death of the Properly Political? Re-framing Student Politics in Contemporary Kolkata"

Saikat Maitra (CeMIS, University of Göttingen)

"Gujars, 'Left-Wing Extremists' and Mall Workers: 'Re-skilling' Marginality and the Making of New Labour in North India"

Sanjay Srivastava (Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi University)

Discussants: Sebastian Schwecke and Lalit Vachani (both CeMIS, University of Göttingen)

16:30 Tea

18:00 Dinner: Ristorante Fellini

Saturday, July 4

10:00 – 12:30 Panel III: The Politics of Mediation in the Economy and Society

"Prior to Erasure: Mediating Marginality in Contemporary Visual Culture in India"

Rashmi Varma (University of Warwick)

"The Politics of Urban Planning and the Production of Marginality in a Public-Sector Company Town in Odisha"

Christian Strümpell (South Asia Institute, University of Heidelberg)

"Caste-out: Marginality and Labor in the Pakistani Informal Economy"

Ali Jan (University of Oxford)

Discussants: Sumeet Mhaskar and Gajendran Ayyathurai (both CeMIS, University of Göttingen)

12:30 – 13:30 Lunch

13:30 – 16:30 Panel IV: Mediation and Marginality in the Countryside

"The Maoist Child Soldiers in India: Discourses of Marginality"

George Kunnath (University Oxford)

"Post-Conflict Statemaking at the Margins: Gendered Mediations in the Jungle Mahals of West Bengal"

Lipika Kamra (University of Oxford)

"The 'Right to Work' and the Contradictions of the Postcolonial State"

Jeffrey Witsoe (Union College)

"Cultures of Policing: Panchayat-Police Practices, Tribal Leadership and the Production of Marginality in Western India"

Devika Bordia (CeMIS, University of Göttingen)

Discussants: Rupa Viswanath (CeMIS, University of Göttingen) and Naveen Thayyil (Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi)

16:30 – 17:00 Tea

17:00 – 17:30 Concluding Remarks and Discussion

18:00 Dinner: Abessina