

# HOW TO LIVE TOGETHER?

*Circulations, Practices and Spaces in Indian Contexts*

**INTERNATIONAL DIGITAL CONFERENCE  
28.-30. SEP. 2021**



A conference organised in the framework of the Berlin University Alliance funded project  
Beyond Social Cohesion - Global Repertoires of Living Together ([www.replito.de](http://www.replito.de))

Cooperation partner

Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung - International Research Group on Authoritarianism and Counter-Strategies  
([www.irgac.org](http://www.irgac.org))





**Organisation: Nadja-Christina Schneider (HU Berlin), Fathima Nizaruddin (Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi) and Fritzi-Marie Titzmann (HU Berlin)**

The manner in which diverse circulations including that of bodies, objects, ideas and cultural material have historically shaped social spaces in South Asia has been a topic of scholarly discussion. Is it possible to use this understanding of circulation to make sense of the situation in contemporary India where under a competitive authoritarian regime specific networks create proliferations around divisive notions of identity that mark certain sections of the population as outgroups? If so, what circulatory possibilities exist in terms of repertoires of living together that can create different kinds of proliferations to provide frameworks for peaceful coexistence?

The conference will focus on these questions and will engage with existing formations, movements and networks in India whose work contains such possibilities. Discussions will link the work of such initiatives with the academic debates around circulation, practices and emerging spaces in India.

**Free conference registration opens 8th August 2021 and closes 18th September 2021.**

**If you wish to register for this conference, please send a message to [fritzi.titzmann@hu-berlin.de](mailto:fritzi.titzmann@hu-berlin.de). The zoom invitation link will be shared with all participants shortly before the conference.**

# Time Schedule

## TUESDAY (SEP 28)

**PANEL I** P. 3-7 **12-2:30PM (CET)**

PLURALITY AND DIFFERENCE

**SPECIAL LECTURE** P. 8 **4-5:30pm (CET)**

AJAY GUDAVARTHY

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## WEDNESDAY (SEP 29)

**SPECIAL LECTURE** P. 10 **2-3:30PM (CET)**

RAVI SUNDARAM

**PANEL II** P. 11-14 **4-6:30pm (CET)**

GENDER ROLES AND RELATIONS

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## THURSDAY (SEP 30)

**SPECIAL LECTURE** P. 16 **10-11:30AM (CET)**

SHWETA KISHORE

**PANEL III** P. 17-20 **12:30-2:30PM (CET)**

RURAL-URBAN CONTINUUM

**CONCLUDING REMARKS** **3-3:30PM (CET)**

# PRE-RECORDED CONVERSATIONS

Pre-conference release via <https://replito.de/>



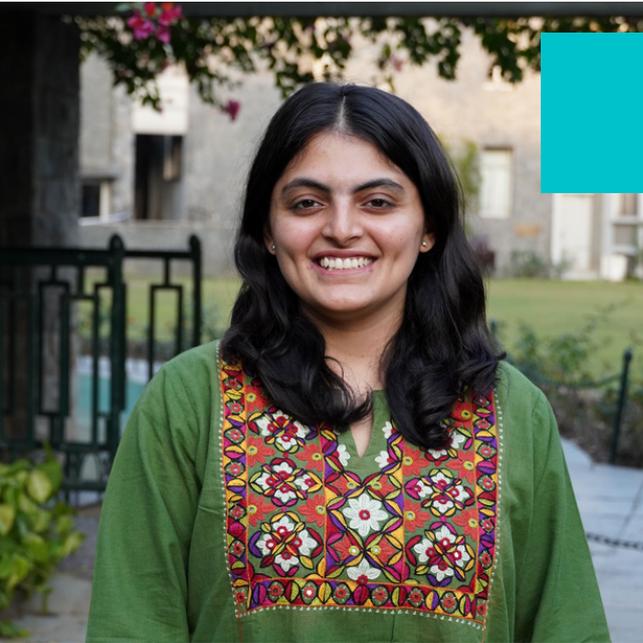
## SHILPA PHADKE (RESEARCHER, CO-AUTHOR OF "WHY LOITER?")

Shilpa Phadke is a Professor at the School of Media and Cultural Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. She is co-author of the critically acclaimed book *Why Loiter? Women and Risk on Mumbai Streets* (2011) and co-director of the documentary film *Under the Open Sky* (2016). She has published both academically and in mainstream media in the areas of gender and public space, ethnographies of feminism, feminist pedagogy, risk and the city, middle class sexualities, middle classes and the new spaces of consumption, feminist pedagogies, and feminist parenting. She is currently researching the feminist internet; and writing about single women's relationships with their families in relation to 'Marriage Talk'; and editing an anthology on friendship and its possibilities in South Asia.

## SHABNAM VIRMANI (FILMMAKER, KABIR PROJECT)

Shabnam Virmani has been exploring the philosophy of Kabir, Shah Latif and other mystic poets through a deep engagement with their oral folk traditions for close to two decades, ever since the riots of Gujarat in 2002 propelled her on this quest. Her inspiration in this poetry has taken the shape of 4 documentary films on Kabir, a digital archive called Ajab Shahar, writing books, organising urban festivals and rural yatras, singing and performing herself and infecting students with the challenge of mystic poetry. Her film *Kabira Khada Bazaar Mein* won the Special Jury Prize at the National Film Awards, 2011. She has worked on two books *I Saw Myself: Journeys with Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai* (Penguin, 2019) and *Burn Down Your House: Life Lessons from Kabir* (upcoming, Aleph). The work of the Kabir Project, housed at Srishti, Bangalore, was given the Sadbhavana Award for contributing to inter-faith understanding by Shri Morari Bapu and Vishwagram Trust in Gujarat in 2016. Currently she is working on a new idea to bring the power of mystic poetry and folk singers into school classrooms.





## NAVKIRAN NATT

(CO-EDITOR, TROLLEY TIMES)

Navkiran Natt is a student-youth activist and researcher who works between Punjab and Delhi. She is trained as a dentist and later completed her Masters in Film Studies from Ambedkar University, Delhi. She works on transnational Punjabi migration and its reflections in Punjabi popular culture. She also did a podcast series on the health implications of the Green Revolution in Punjab. Currently, she is an editorial team member of *Trolley Times*, a newsletter that started from within the current farmers' movement in India.

## SANJAY JOSHI

(NATIONAL CONVENOR, CINEMA OF RESISTANCE)

Sanjay Joshi holds an MA in Hindi Literature from JNU and studied Mass Communication at Jamia Millia, New Delhi. He has made several documentaries for government and non-governmental organizations. *The Paal System, Amarkant Ka Katha Sansar, Takae Ser Bhaji, Takae Ser Khaja, Yug Shrashta Vishnu Prabhakar, Sawal Ki Jarurat* are a few documentaries directed by him. He also produced and directed the 5-episode serial *Paharpur Ke Bachche* based on the life of Gond children, for Doordarshan and a video documentary on the Hindi short story writer Amarkant for Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi.

Sanjay Joshi was the key person behind the first film festival titled *Cinema of Resistance* which was successfully held in several Indian cities between 2006 and 2015. Till date he has successfully curated 71 *Cinema of Resistance* film festivals in different Indian cities and numerous small screenings for different groups.

He has successfully conducted film appreciation courses with students of Delhi University, Mohan Lal Sukhari University Udaipur, Lucknow University, Jamia Millia University and Bhartendu Natya Academy, Lucknow. He has also conducted various workshops on film making with different media groups in India.

Presently, Sanjay Joshi is involved in the making of a video documentary on a woman singer from Lucknow. He is also developing the curriculum for *Cinema of Resistance's* new initiative *Cinema in School*.

He also runs a publishing house, *Navarun*.

Sanjay Joshi is the founder and National Convener of the *Cinema of Resistance* initiative.



# Tuesday (Sep 28)

## PANEL I

12-2:30PM (CET)

### Plurality and difference

(Moderation: Nadja-Christina Schneider, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

#### FATHIMA NIZARUDDIN

(Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi):

“Neither a Hindu, nor a Muslim” - responding to right wing digital circulations in India by using the work of Kabir

#### MAX KRAMER

(Freie Universität Berlin):

“A bird at my window”: Hindu-Muslim neighbourliness in Kashmir through the lens of independent documentary films

Coffee break

#### SAROJ KUMAR

(Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi):

New media and Dalit vision for an egalitarian society

#### DHANYA FEE KIRCHHOF

(Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin):

Circulating notions of belonging and respectful coexistence through Ravidassia music videos

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## SPECIAL LECTURE

4-5:30pm (CET)

#### AJAY GUDAVARTHY

(Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi):

Secular sectarianism and the art of living together

(Moderation: Nadja-Christina Schneider, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

## "Neither a Hindu, nor a Muslim" - responding to right wing digital circulations in India by using the work of Kabir

### FATHIMA NIZARUDDIN

(JAMIA MILLIA ISLAMIA, DELHI)

Dr. Fathima Nizaruddin is an academic and documentary filmmaker from India. She is currently a post-doctoral fellow with the International Research Group on Authoritarianism and Counter Strategies of the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung. During her fellowship period, she will be affiliated with Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), New Delhi and Department of Gender and Media Studies for the South Asian Region, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. She has been working as an Assistant Professor at the AJK Mass Communication Research Centre, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi since 2007. Fathima has a keen interest in practice-based artistic research. Her current postdoctoral research project "Bura Na Milya Koi" (I Didn't Find Anyone Evil) uses artistic research methodology and it explores the possibility of using the iconoclastic work of the fifteenth century South Asian poet Kabir to create transmedia interventions to respond to right-wing WhatsApp circulations in contemporary India. She is a recipient of a Centre for Research and Education in Arts and Media (CREAM) studentship for doctoral research from the University of Westminster (UK), a Film Fellowship from Public Service Broadcasting Trust (India) and a National Geographic's All Roads Seed Grant (USA).



The consolidation of Hindu majoritarianism in present day India is made possible through mobilisations that constantly reaffirm the boundaries between Hindus and Muslims (Nizaruddin, 2020). Digital circulations play a crucial role within the networks of such mobilisations. In such a context, is it possible to respond to these circulations from a framework that does not reiterate the categories of the Hindu and the Muslim? The paper will examine this question through insights that emerge from my artistic research project that aims to use the work of the fifteenth century saint poet Kabir to intervene within WhatsApp circulations that are part of the distribution engine of Hindu majoritarianism (Sundaram, 2020). The project *Bura na milya koi (I didn't find anyone evil)* draws from the repertoire of works attributed to Kabir that question essentialised conceptions of identity including that of the Hindu and the Muslim. Within the existing communication landscape in India, notable initiatives like the *Kabir Project* employ digital platforms as well as embodied interactions to form articulations that use Kabir's work to challenge sectarian identity frameworks. The relevance of such articulations and the circulatory spaces created by them will be analysed in the paper. The manner in which certain iterations around the work of Kabir create sites of engagements that question violent configurations of sectarian identities will be examined. Writings from the South Asian context that focus on the role of circulation in bringing about conceptual change historically (Bruijn & Busch, 2014) will inform this examination. The paper will place specific digital circulations in contemporary India as part of a larger continuum to map the practices that contribute to the widening of their networks.

#### References

- Bruijn, T. D., & Busch, A. (2014). Introduction. In T. de Bruijn & A. Busch (Eds.), *Culture and circulation: Literature in motion in early modern India* (pp. 1–20). Brill.
- Nizaruddin, F. (2020). Resisting the Configurations for a Hindu Nation. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 10(3).
- Sundaram, R. (2020). Hindu nationalism's crisis machine. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 10(3), 734–741.

**"A bird at my window": Hindu-Muslim neighbourliness in Kashmir through the lens of independent documentary films**



**MAX KRAMER**

(FREIE UNIVERSITÄT BERLIN)

Max Kramer is a postdoctoral researcher in the project *Populism of the Precarious* (Freigeist, funded by Volkswagen Foundation). In his research, he looks at the mediation of religious minorities in India. He published one monograph on documentary film and conflict zones with a focus on Kashmir that resulted from his PhD at Humboldt-Universität Berlin called *Mobilität und Zeugenschaft* (2019, Transcript). He also co-published and co-translated a collection of poems by modern Hindi authors called *Hilflose Himmel* (2020, Draupadi). His research interests include Hindi language and literature, political anthropology (religious minorities in India), media anthropology (Islamic online ethics) as well as social and cultural theory (dramatization, ontogenetics).

In this presentation, I will explore the ethics of neighbourliness in four independently produced documentary films on Kashmir: *Jashn-e-Azadi* (2007, Sanjay Kak), *Khoon Diy Baarav* (2017, Iffat Fatima), *Tell Them the Tree They Have Planted Has Now Grown* (2001, Ajay Raina), and *Paradise on a River of Hell* (2002, Abir Bazaz and Meenu Gaur). Particular scenes of the films that refer to the exile of the Kashmiri Pandit community from the Valley of Kashmir will be analysed in detail. I will show how the form of the documentary can go beyond representations of a Hindu-Muslim conflict to imagine a common space and time of living together. The focus will be directed to the way these films point towards an ethics of coexistence that may still exist through shared experience beyond the identitarian divide.

## ***New media and Dalit vision for an egalitarian society***

**SAROJ KUMAR**

(JAMIA MILLIA ISLAMIA, DELHI)



Saroj Kumar is a senior research fellow and PhD student at AJK Mass Communication Research Centre, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. His research focuses on the new media usage of Dalits, one of the most marginalized groups in Indian society. He has done his Master of Philosophy (M.Phil.) from Jamia Millia Islamia on the topic *New Media and Dalits - Possibilities for Diverse Articulations*. He has done his previous education from Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi; Indian Institute of Mass Communication, New Delhi; and Guru Jambheshwar University of Science & Technology, Hisar. He has also worked with some of the prominent media organizations in India such as the India Today Group. His most recent peer reviewed publication is “#ShoesfortheDM campaign: An Expression of Dalit Identity through Social Media”.

This paper analyzes the emerging new media practices by Dalits in contemporary India and the ways in which their vision of an egalitarian society is manifested through these practices. Dalits are one of the most marginalized communities in India and they have been considered ‘untouchables’ in the Brahminical social order. They also lack visible presence in the Indian media landscape (Jeffrey, 2000; OXFAM, 2019). However, Dalits have a long tradition of expressing themselves through folk songs, poetry, autobiography, pamphlets and small magazines (Ram, 2008; Narayan, 2006; Brueck, 2014). Such articulations often envisioned an egalitarian society and imaginations about such a society exists in works ranging from the poetry of Ravidass (Ram, 2011) to the writings of Ambedkar. With the advent of new media, Dalits have started using websites, YouTube and social media platforms to express themselves and to demand an egalitarian society. The emergence of YouTube channels like ‘*the Activist*’ (formerly ‘*Activist Ved*’) and ‘*National Dastak*’ indicate the emergence of a new kind of mobilization of Dalits through the use of online communication. This paper argues that this mobilization of Dalits is filled with a new kind of pride and intensity. The paper will examine how such mobilizations and new media practices they try to carve a space for themselves in the media landscape and the way in which they attempt to propagate their vision of an egalitarian society.

### References

- Brueck, L. R. (2014). *Writing Resistance: The Rhetorical Imagination of Hindi Dalit Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Jeffrey, R. (2000). *India's Newspaper Revolution*. London: Hurst & Company.
- Narayan, B. (2006). *Women Heros and Dalit assertion in North India: Culture, Identity and Politics*. New Delhi: SAGE Publication.
- OXFAM. (2019). *Who Tells Our Stories Matters: Representation of Marginalised Caste Groups in Indian Newsrooms*. New Delhi: OXFAM India.
- Ram, R. (2008). Ravidass Deras and Social Protest: Making Sense of Dalit Consciousness in Punjab (India). *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 1-34.
- Ram, R. (2011). Guru Ravidass Prophet of Dalit Liberation. *Voice of Dalit*, 29-47.

## ***Circulating notions of belonging and respectful coexistence through Ravidassia music videos***



**DHANYA FEE KIRCHHOF**

(HUMBOLDT-UNIVERSITÄT ZU BERLIN)

Dhanya Fee Kirchhof is a doctoral candidate at the Department of Gender and Media Studies for the South Asian Region at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Her research explores the interrelatedness of media communicative change, mobilities and subjectification in the context of the globally dispersed socio-religious Ravidassia community of North Indian origin. Her broader research interests concern non-media-centric media studies, mobility studies, discourses on digital inclusion, anti-caste movements, intersectionality approaches, multilocal media ethnography and postcolonial theory.

This presentation focuses on YouTube music videos produced by translocally and globally connected media producers who identify themselves as followers (and often as descendants) of Bhakti saint Guru Ravidass and are of Punjabi origin. It explores the potential of these videos and their circulations for creating solidarity and respectful coexistence across caste-lines within and beyond India.

Supposedly more than 500 years ago, Guru Ravidass experienced caste-based stigmatization as a leather worker and is said to have created and spread the imagination of an egalitarian utopia, named Begumpura – the city without sorrow. This vision and also other teachings of Guru Ravidass reveal ethics of respectful and peaceful coexistence. Guru Ravidass is said to have been able to convince larger sections of society of the principle of universal equality by articulating his critique of caste-based oppression in a peaceful, respectful and devotional way and by stressing the oneness of all human beings in God (cf. Ram 2009, 9-11). Influenced by Guru Ravidass' hagiography, anti-caste movements and the experience of caste-based discrimination, Ravidassias strive for the realization of Begumpura in which everyone is recognized and treated equally. Concurrently, they witnessed that divisive identity politics and promises of inclusion in the name of vote-bank politics failed to realize this vision. Ravidassia music videos are mainly known as tools for developing caste-based pride and self-respect and for countering caste-pride articulations of dominant social groups. In contrast, this presentation illustrates themes, ways of speaking and circulations which seem to revive the spirit of Guru Ravidass' teachings and go beyond political identity categories and polarization, but also beyond (Hindu-)nationalist notions of inclusion. Ravidassia artists create (self-)images linked to personal success through hard work, education and physical mobility, while emphasizing the benefits of human rights, dignity, universal equality and Guru Ravidass' and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's related thoughts and legacies for all human beings. In doing so, they do not only raise the self-respect of audiences experiencing caste-based discrimination, but also create dialogue and solidarities across caste-lines through connecting to broader social discourses, principles and shared aspirations and identifications.

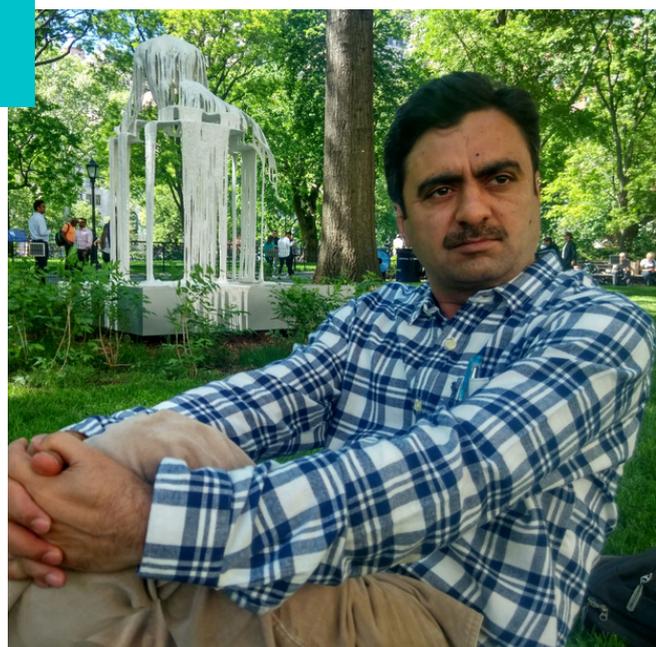
### Reference

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# ***Secular sectarianism and the art of living together***

## ***AJAY GUDAVARTHY***

***(JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY, DELHI)***



Ajay Gudavarty is currently Associate Professor, Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India. His published work includes, *Politics of Post-Civil Society: Contemporary History of Political Movements in India* (Sage, Delhi, 2013); *Maoism, Democracy and Globalisation: Cross-Currents in Indian Politics* (Sage, Delhi, 2014); *India after Modi: Populism and the Right* (Bloomsbury, Delhi, 2018). He was a Visiting Professor, Centre for Modern Indian Studies, Göttingen University, Germany; Visiting Fellow, Centre for Citizenship, Civil Society and Rule of Law, University of Aberdeen; Visiting Fellow, Goldsmiths College, University of London; Associate Member, Institute for Humanities, Simon Fraser University, Canada. His forthcoming book is titled as *Ethics and Emotions in 'New India'*.

Liberals and other progressives in India have often been accused of 'pseudo-secularism', meaning 'appeasement' of the minorities and 'victimization' of the majority when law demands that everyone be treated equally. However, it is now a well-known fact that religious minorities, especially the Muslims have been steadily slipping in the socio-economic indicators and there never was any appeasement. One can be sure that Social Democrats and Liberals did not practice the kind of 'appeasement' they are accused of but what they did practice was secular sectarianism that contributed to the appeal of 'pseudo-secularism' in the popular consciousness.

The way empowerment, justice and equality came to be understood over a period of time in the dominant liberal-secular and left-progressive narratives allowed the consolidation of the Right. The inconsistencies and certain shallowness of secular politics introduced what I refer to as the logic of secular sectarianism. Secular sectarianism, in turn, contributed to the narratives of appeasement gaining larger traction. These groups that introduced and practised a secular sectarian logic included the liberal intellectuals and Constitutionalsists, global postcolonial scholarship and discourse, feminist, Muslim and Dalit-Bahujan mobilisations. Each of them in varied manner contributed over a period time for a cumulative and consolidated practice of secular sectarianism that divided social groups and allowed for narratives and practices that could eventually be appropriated by the Right.

# Wednesday (Sep 29)

## SPECIAL LECTURE

2-3:30 PM (CET)

### RAVI SUNDARAM

(Center for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi):

Performative violence and media circulation: a contemporary archaeology of South Asia

(Moderation: Fathima Nizaruddin, Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi)

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## PANEL II

4-6:30 pm (CET)

### Gender roles and relations

(Moderation: Fritzi-Marie Titzmann, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

#### ULKA ANJARIA

(Brandeis University, Waltham):

Everyday lives on screen: feminism and self-documenting in "Connected Hum Tum"

#### MALLIKA LEUZINGER

(Princeton University/Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin):

Amateurism, or the strange and radical kinship of the camera

Coffee break

#### STEFAN BINDER

(University of Zurich):

"This is the life of Kotis": On queer temporality, class, and kinship in Hyderabad

#### KETAKI CHOWKHANI

(Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Manipal):

A Home of one's own: singlehood and housing in urban India

## ***Performative violence and media circulation: a contemporary archaeology of South Asia***

***RAVI SUNDARAM***

***(CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF DEVELOPING SOCIETIES, DELHI)***

Ravi Sundaram is a Professor at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), Delhi. In 2000 he founded the well-known Sarai programme at the CSDS along with Ravi Vasudevan and the Raqs Media Collective. Since then, Sarai grew to become one of India's best-known experimental and critical research sites on media, spanning local and global sites. Sundaram is the author of *Pirate Modernity: Media Urbanism in Delhi* (2010) and *No Limits: Media Studies from India* (Delhi, 2015). Sundaram has also co-edited the Sarai Reader series, *The Public Domain* (2001), *The Cities of Everyday Life* (2002), *Shaping Technologies* (2003), *Crisis Media* (2004). Sundaram's essays have been translated into various languages in India, Asia, and Europe. He is currently finishing his next book project, *Events and Affections: post-public media circulation*. Sundaram has been a visiting Professor at the universities of Princeton, Johns Hopkins, Michigan, Ann Arbor, and Oxford.



Performative cultures have defined the history of twentieth century media. With the coming the digital infrastructures, performativity has driven circulation across the world, and come to define recent applications like TikTok. On the other hand, performative violence has been central to the framing of the political in South Asia, disrupting normative ideas of democracy. The connection of events to public affect has been defined by user-defined video, as recent tragic events in Afghanistan also demonstrate. This lecture looks specifically at the energising of different forms of the political with the coming together of two performative drives: media and violence. I will look at Hindu nationalist circulation, as well as examples from other parts of South Asia. I am particularly interested in the transformations of the political event by this cognate of performative violence and media circulation that has shaped the public culture of India today.

## ***Everyday lives on screen: feminism and self-documenting in "Connected Hum Tum"***



**ULKA ANJARIA**

(BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY, WALTHAM)

Ulka Anjaria is Professor of English and director of the Mandel Center for the Humanities at Brandeis University. She is the author of *Realism in the Twentieth-Century Indian Novel: Colonial Difference and Literary Form* (2012), *Reading India Now: Contemporary Formations in Literature and Popular Culture* (2019) and *Understanding Bollywood: The Grammar of Hindi Cinema* (2021), and editor of *A History of the Indian Novel in English* (2015) and the forthcoming *Oxford Handbook of Modern Indian Literatures*.

Feminist documentarian Paromita Vohra has had a prolific career, beginning as a documentary filmmaker challenging political truisms, writing a weekly column for two Mumbai newspapers and curating a feminist website, *Agents of Ishq*, that focuses on love and sex in India. This paper focuses on her much less studied television series, *Connected Hum Tum*, which Vohra directed for Zee TV and which aired over three months in 2013. For the show, six Mumbai women were given handheld cameras and trained to use them to record their lives over the course of six months. Although called a reality show, *Connected Hum Tum* is striking for its naturalist aesthetics and its marked refusal of the sensationalism usually associated with reality television. The film questions the distinctions between the important and the mundane and between women's connections with one another and their particularity. By focusing on the mundane realities of women's lives, the show gives us a continual movement, a blurring of subject-object and inside-outside in order to feature everyday life as a rejoinder to normative patriarchy and normative feminism.

## ***Amateurism, or the strange and radical kinship of the camera***

### **MALLIKA LEUZINGER**

**(PRINCETON UNIVERSITY/HUMBOLDT-UNIVERSITÄT ZU BERLIN)**

Mallika Leuzinger completed her PhD in History of Art from University College London in 2020 and has since been a Fung Global Fellow at Princeton University and Visiting Researcher at the Department of Gender and Media Studies for the South Asian Region at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.



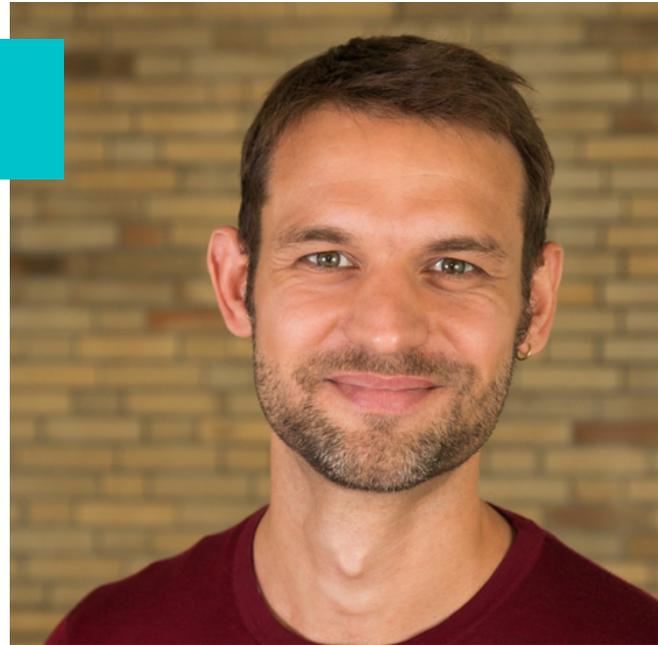
This paper, from my research project on amateur and domestic photography in India, considers the photographic encounters of middle-class women – and citizens of a newly independent and non-aligned nation – in the twentieth century. Debalina Majumdar (1919-2012) and Manobina Roy (1919-2001) were twins who grew up in the town of Ramnagar and learnt photography from their father, who was a tutor in the employ of the Maharaja of Benares and a Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain. Alongside images of their everyday life, relatives, and acquaintances who included Tagore and Nehru, they produced striking street photography and portraiture during travels to the USSR and London in 1959-60. This photography circulated through regional and transnational photographic associations and *The Illustrated Weekly of India*. Posthumously, it has been reconfigured in their children's memories and homes, and institutional and journalistic endeavors to represent women in India's history. Revisiting their photography through the lens of amateurism makes it possible to excavate its intricate negotiations, self-driven tendencies, and open-ended qualities, and to apprehend the intense relationships they forged with their cameras, with themselves and with others.

***"This is the life of Kotis": On queer temporality, class, and kinship in Hyderabad***

**STEFAN BINDER**

*(UNIVERSITY OF ZURICH)*

Stefan Binder is a postdoctoral researcher and lecturer at the Department of Social Anthropology and Cultural Studies (ISEK), University of Zurich. He has published on secular activism and lived atheism in South India as well as the aesthetic production and manipulation of multiple temporalities in the context of Shi'i mourning rituals and media practices in Hyderabad. He is currently developing a research project on moral and temporal economies of queer lives in South Asia and Europe.



For some time, interdisciplinary debates on the nature of “queer” modes of sociality have shifted their primary focus from dynamics of normativity and transgression to questions of temporality. As such, queer relations and life courses have been described as defying the “straight” times of personal development, procreation, or generational succession (and inheritance). Based on an ethnographic case study from Hyderabad, this paper describes how multiple, class-inflected categories of sexual and gendered identity circulate as possible or foreclosed options for people to negotiate the temporal challenges of their social lives. Rather than positing a specific kind of queer temporality in contrast to straight time, I explore how different forms of queerness emerge as distinct ethical resources that configure how people can—or cannot—imagine living together with others in the present and the future.

## ***A home of one's own: singlehood and housing in urban India***



**KETAKI CHOWKHANI**

(MANIPAL ACADEMY OF HIGHER EDUCATION, MANIPAL)

Dr Ketaki Chowkhani is a postdoctoral fellow at the Manipal Centre for Humanities. She researches and teaches singles studies and gender studies. She has a PhD in Women's Studies from Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. Her doctoral work focused on sexuality education and adolescent masculinities in middle-class Mumbai. Her writing has appeared in the Indian Journal of Medical Ethics, Journal of Porn Studies, New York Times, In Plainspeak, Teacher Plus, DNA, Kafila.online, Roundtable India and Ultraviolet. Ketaki also has an MPhil in Cultural Studies from the English and Foreign Languages University (in Hyderabad) and an MA in English from Pondicherry University.

“All single women have come to Mumbai to run brothels” is the sarcastic remark women make in the documentary film *Bachelor Girls* (2016) which chronicles the discrimination single women face in finding housing in Mumbai. This quote exemplifies not simply the hyper-sexualisation of the single woman in the city, but also the fear of female singlehood and the threat she poses to social order. Single men, as I argue, also pose a threat to social order, though of a very different kind. This threat is magnified when single women and men decide to live on their own in urban centres in India. Lahad (2017) notes that singlehood should be a category of analysis and recognises the political potential singlehood has to challenge normativity. In this paper I use singlehood as a category of analysis to examine housing and urban space in India. I ask: what are the experiences of single people renting homes in India? How do single people negotiate the difficulties that arise due to singlism (a term coined by DePaulo which points to the marginalisation and stigmatisation of single people) within urban renting practices? What kinds of urban spaces and circulatory possibilities - of bodies and objects in urban centres - facilitate singlehood? The paper is divided into two sections: the first looks at housing and singlehood in Mumbai while the second examines housing, urban space and singlehood in Pondicherry.

#### Reference

Lahad, Kinneret (2017). *A table for one. A critical reading of singlehood, gender and time*. Manchester University Press.

# Thursday (Sep 30)

## SPECIAL LECTURE

10-11:30AM (CET)

### SHWETA KISHORE

(RMIT University, Melbourne):

Reframing participant and audience: a tactics of circulation in Indian documentary

(Moderation: Fathima Nizaruddin, Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi)

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## PANEL III

12:30-2:30PM (CET)

### Rural-urban continuum

(Moderation: Nadja-Christina Schneider, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

#### RUCHIRA GANGULY-SCRASE & TIMOTHY SCRASE

(independent scholar, Australia; University of Melbourne):

Darjeeling, 1980-2020: from rural idyll to congested town

Coffee break

#### SATOSHI MIYAMURA

(SOAS, London):

Labour organising across productive and reproductive relations in India: a comparative labour regime perspective

#### RAHUL MUKHERJEE

(University of Pennsylvania):

Mobile circulations: translocal solidarities and disruptions in India

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## CONCLUDING REMARKS

3-3:30PM (CET)

Fathima Nizaruddin (Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi) &  
Fritzi-Marie Titzmann (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

## ***Reframing participant and audience: a tactics of circulation in Indian documentary***



### **SHWETA KISHORE**

(RMIT UNIVERSITY, MELBOURNE)

Shweta Kishore lectures in Screen and Media at RMIT University. She is a documentary practitioner and author of *Indian Documentary Film and Filmmakers: Independence in Practice* (2018). Shweta's research on Indian documentary, documentary ethics, feminist film and activist film festivals has appeared in *Camera Obscura*, *Feminist Media Studies*, *Third Text*, *Bioscope*, *Studies in Documentary Film* and *Senses of Cinema*. Her current practice-based research project, 'In Art as in Life', examines the interrelation between contemporary art, gender and documentary filmmaking towards the construction of feminist knowledge and research methodologies.

The public circulation of cinema in India must contend with industrial and political rationalities that regulate the gathering of documentary publics in order to restrict the flow of oppositional ideas against a hegemonic definition of "public interest". Central amongst these are state censorship and commodity relations of media that privilege instrumental applications of documentary communication while also dividing the social collective into normative audience groupings. In this chapter I focus on the alternative circulation and exhibition initiatives established by documentary practitioners that provide valuable insights into the relations between documentary cinema, culture and society once the public arena is viewed as a site of historical and symbolic political struggle. Based upon my examination of the circulation practices of filmmaker led initiatives, I will argue that these produce a localised form of "tactical circulation" in the struggle against cultural regulation. While filmmakers continue to struggle frontally against censorship through judicial action, the tactical nature of these initiatives becomes apparent in the filmmaker's diverse approaches, ranging from individual actions that repurpose technologies and norms such as copyright, to citizen associations that generate communities of affective and active publics. I will outline initiatives that take diverse approaches to resistance; the collective Cinema of Resistance and online *Chalchitra Abhiyan* to discuss how both have mobilized citizens, intellectuals and artists in uniting cinema with politics.

## Darjeeling, 1980-2020: from rural idyll to congested town



### **RUCHIRA GANGULY-SCRASE**

*(INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR, AUSTRALIA)*

Ruchira Ganguly-Scrase was the foundation Professor of Anthropology and the National Director for Global and International Development Studies, Australian Catholic University. She obtained her doctorate in Anthropology from the University of Melbourne in 1993 and has over 30 years of research, writing, doctoral supervision, and teaching experience at several Australian universities. She is a past President of the Asia Pacific Sociological Association. Ruchira's research focuses on the consequences of global neoliberal reforms for various communities and classes. She is the author of three books and numerous research papers in leading, international refereed journals. She has been regularly invited to contribute chapters to prestigious monographs. Her current research covers development-induced displacement, migration and refugees in Asia, and social change in Darjeeling. She is a Senior Consultant of Asia Aware, a development consultancy based in Melbourne.

### **TIMOTHY SCRASE**

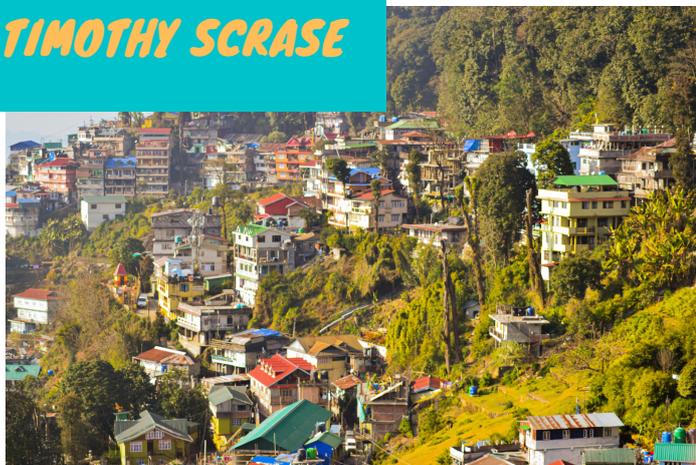
*(UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE)*

Tim Scrase is an Academic Fellow based at the Australia India Institute (University of Melbourne). He was formerly a Professor of Sociology, Global and Asian Studies at various Australian universities. He has also held concomitant positions as Associate Dean Research, Faculty of Arts (Australian Catholic University, 2010-15) and Director of the (former) ARC Key Centre for Asia Pacific Social Transformation Studies (CAPSTRANS) at the University of Wollongong (2007-10). In a 35 year career he has led numerous research projects, workshops, supervision and training dealing with social change and development in Asia. He has previously held a visiting research position at the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS), University of Amsterdam. He has over 80 research publications (including 5 books) and has presented close to 100 seminar and workshop papers in more than 20 countries. He is a former President of the South Asian Studies Association of Australia. He was awarded his PhD in 1989 (LaTrobe University, Melbourne) in the field of comparative and international education, presenting a socio-cultural analysis of Indian school textbooks (later published by SAGE, India in 1993).



## ***Darjeeling, 1980-2020: from rural idyll to congested town***

***RUCHIRA GANGULY-SCRASE & TIMOTHY SCRASE***



If there was ever a town in India that is emblematic of “how to live together” it is Darjeeling. Founded some 180 years ago, principally as a place of leisure then, soon after, as a major producer of high quality tea, Darjeeling became the “Queen of the Hills”. Over the decades, a significant in-migration of workers from neighbouring Nepal came to service the hotels, restaurants and schools, as well as to labour on the tea estates. Local residents from the Darjeeling district, and other Bengalis who previously migrated there, soon became a minority in an overwhelming *gorkha* cultural milieu. More recent times have seen political claims for independent statehood for Gorkhaland which, so far, have been vehemently resisted by the West Bengal and Central governments. Tourism is still a major income source for many who reside in Darjeeling, but high costs of living and lack of opportunities have driven many, especially the youth, away. The pressures to live peacefully together in Darjeeling are mounting and centred around four areas of concern: 1. ongoing ethnic and political tensions; 2. urban expansion, poor planning, population increase and destruction of heritage; 3. environmental degradation, water shortages and air and ground pollution; and 4. lack of secure employment in the tea, hospitality and private sectors. The case of Darjeeling is dire; but undoubtedly its problems and issues resonate with similar processes and pressures facing many regional towns in India which have expanded greatly within a generation.

## ***Labour organising across productive and reproductive relations in India: a comparative labour regime perspective***

**SATOSHI MIYAMURA**

*(SOAS, LONDON)*

Satoshi Miyamura is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Economics, SOAS University of London, UK. He currently works on patterns of industrial restructuring, labour market institutions and class struggles in various regions of India. More generally, his research interests are in the political economy of development in India and Japan; economics of labour and institutions; economic history and history of economic thought.



India is in the midst of a struggle over its future economic and social relations. Over recent years, the Indian state has pursued policies that have further intensified labour exploitation and widened inequality. These policies can be located in prior struggles to reproduce conditions for accumulation and to resolve the crisis of social reproduction. This process is likely to continue even after the economic recovery from the pandemic in India and elsewhere, and these contestations may open potential opportunities for linking struggles across existing boundaries.

## **Mobile circulations: translocal solidarities and disruptions in India**



**RAHUL MUKHERJEE**

(UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA)

Rahul Mukherjee is Dick Wolf Associate Professor of Television and New Media and Director of the Cinema and Media Studies program at University of Pennsylvania. His research on environmental media and mobile phone cultures has been published in his recent monograph *Radiant Infrastructures: Media, Environment, and Cultures of Uncertainty* (Duke University Press, 2020) and in journals such as *Media, Culture & Society* and *Asiascape: Digital Asia*.

The paper discusses representations of translocal connections, and the use of songs in rendering palpable the migration experience in two documentary films. Transplace solidarities reemerge in *Kora Rajee* (2006) as Biju Toppo, the film's Oraon director, embarks on a train journey from Jharkhand to meet his relatives in Assam. Layering songs of displacement over images of depot houses in Hazaribag, bus-stands in Ranchi, and tea-plantations in Assam, *Kora Rajee*, reminds us of the historical translocal ties between Jharkhand and Assam because of the forced migration of Adivasis as laborers. Through stark image-sound juxtapositions, Toppo deftly connects displacements of indigenous populations in India across colonial and postcolonial time coordinates. A key protagonist in Surabhi Sharma's documentary *Bidesia in Bambai* (2013) is Ramanuj Pathak, a migrant from rural Bihar who takes up various jobs in the city of Mumbai to earn enough money to send back home. Pathak has driven taxis, been a construction worker and welder, and a Bhojpuri singer. Pathak's songs are about the experiences of displacement, about the sense of (be)longing Bihari migrants in cities like Mumbai feel for their family members back home. Drawing on scholarship in migration media studies and migrant ecocriticism, I argue that both these documentaries build rural-urban continuums amidst labor displacements.

I shall conclude the presentation with an account of rural-urban disruptions through the case-study of contemporary mobile phishing scams in India. Rural unemployed youth of Jharkhand's Jamtara district impersonate as bank officials and call customers in cities, and ask for their card details, explaining that they require those details to offer the valuable customers particular gifts or affordances. Based on interviews with local journalists and creators of the Netflix TV series *Jamtara: Sabka Number Aayega* (2020), I attempt to discern the cultural politics (and aspirational politics) of such acts of mobile circulations, which blur boundaries of cybercrime and entrepreneurial citizenship.