Programme Schedule

DAY 1: JANUARY 20

9:00-9:30 a.m. Registration

9:30-9:45 a.m. Inauguration and Welcome Address: S. Parasuraman, Director and Professor, TISS

9:45-10:00 a.m. Opening Remarks: S. Siva Raju, Professor and Dean, School of Development Studies, TISS

10:00-10:40 a.m. Keynote Address: Gopal Guru, Professor, JNU

*What is Prejudice? Can we buy it?*

10:40-11:10 a.m. First Plenary Address:

P. Sanal Mohan, Associate Professor and Hon. Director IUCSSRE, Mahatma Gandhi University Kottayam

*Caste, Social Movements and the Question of Progress: Towards an Understanding of Dalit Movements*

11:10-11:25 a.m. Tea

First Session

11:25-1:30 p.m. *Reason, the Political and Caste*

Chair: Professor Ramesh Kamble, University of Mumbai

Speakers:

1. Sanjeeb Mukherjee, Associate Professor, University of Calcutta
   *The Conceit of Reason vs. the Cunning of History: Modernity and Caste in India*

2. Saumyabrata Choudhury, Associate Professor, CSSS Kolkata
   *Ambedkar contra Aristotle: On a Possible Contention about who is Capable of Politics*

3. Ananya Vajpeyi, Assistant Professor, CSDS Delhi
   *Towards a Poetics of Contempt*

1:30-2:30 p.m. Lunch
Second Session

2:30-5:00 p.m.  Marxism, Ethnicity and Caste

Chair: Professor Sharit Bhowmik, ICSSR National Fellow at TISS

Speakers:

1. K. Srinivasulu, Professor, Osmania University Hyderabad
   *Transference of Class: Marxism in India and Caste Question*

2. Samir Das, Vice-Chancellor and Professor, University of North Bengal Siliguri
   *Constituting the Absence: The Rajbanshis of North Bengal*

3. Sarbani Bandyopadhyay, Assistant Professor, St. Xavier’s College Calcutta
   *Experiencing Caste in the Field: Studying Bengali Middle Class Lives*

5:00-5:15 p.m.  Tea

Third Session

5:15-6:45 p.m.  Hierarchy and Human Rights

Chair: Dr. Mohammed Isrshad, TISS

Speakers:

1. S. Anand, Navayana
   *The Fiction of Caste, the Fact of Hierarchy*

2. A. Ramaiah, Professor, TISS
   *Caste System: An Institution of Human Rights Violation*

8:00 p.m.  Dinner
DAY 2: JANUARY 21

9:00-9:30 a.m. Second Plenary Address:
Sundar Sarukkai, Professor and Director, Manipal Centre for Philosophy and Humanities, Manipal University

Reason and the Ontology of Caste

Fourth Session

9:30-11:30 a.m. The Idea of Justice
Chair: Dr. Anil Sutar, TISS
Speakers:

1. Garimella Subramaniam, Deputy Editor, The Hindu
   Reckoning with Caste Inequality: Perspective from John Rawls' Notion of a Well-Ordered Society

2. Sthabir Khora, Associate Professor, TISS
   Amartya Sen, Capability Approach and Caste

3. Suryakant Waghmore, Associate Professor, TISS
   Caste Violence and Peace Schemes: On the Erasure of Caste and Institutionalization of Caste Violence in Rural Maharashtra

11:30-11:45 a.m. Tea

Fifth Session

11:45-1:30 p.m. Transcendence and Extremity
Chair: Professor Ilina Sen, TISS
Speakers:

1. Ananta Giri, Associate Professor, MIDS Chennai
   Caste Domination and the Challenge of Structural Transformation and Transformation of Consciousness: Shankara, Ambedkar and Beyond

2. Manoranjan Byapari, Bangla Akademi Awardee, Kolkata
   Radical Movements and Caste in Context

3. Mallarika Sinha Roy, Assistant Professor, JNU
   Sexual Economies of Caste and Gender: The Case of Naxalbari (1967-1975)
1:30-2:30 p.m. Lunch

**Sixth Session**

2:30-5:30 p.m. *Difference, Gender, and Dalit Critique*

Chair: Professor Vibhuti Patel, SNDT University

Speakers:

1. **George Verghese K., Associate Professor, Manipal University**
   *Viswakarma Goldsmith Caste and their Economic Marginalization in Kerala: A Deleuzian Reflection*

2. **Anirban Das, Fellow in Cultural Studies, CSSS Kolkata**
   *Caste and Gender: Ideologies of Embodiment*

3. **Ritu Sen Chaudhuri, Assistant Professor, West Bengal State University**
   *The Caste Gender System: A Necessary Analytic of Experience?*

4. **Milind Wakankar, Associate Professor, Ambedkar University Delhi**
   *Law and Bhava: Notes towards a Treatise on Freedom*

5. **K. Satyanarayana, Associate Professor, EFL University Hyderabad**
   *Dalit Reconfiguration of Caste: Representation, Identity and Politics*

5:30-5:45 p.m. Tea

5:45-6:15 p.m. Valedictory and Vote of Thanks: Dr. Varsha Ayyar, TISS

8:00 p.m. Dinner
Abstracts

1. Gopal Guru
   
   **Keynote Address**

   **Title:** What is Prejudice? Can we buy it?

   **Bio:** Professor Gopal Guru is on the faculty of the Centre for Political Studies, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Winner of the Malcolm Adisesiah Award 2013, he is the author of numerous research papers and books, the most recent books being the edited anthology *Humiliation: Claims and Context* and the jointly authored one with Sundar Sarukkai *The Cracked Mirror: An Indian Debate on Experience and Theory* from Oxford University Press.

2. P. Sanal Mohan

   **First Plenary Address**

   **Title:** Caste, Social Movements and the Question of Progress: Towards an Understanding of Dalit Movements.

   **Abstract:** Colonial modernity was instrumental in introducing a host of concepts and categories that redrew the social world of castes and communities in India. In the proposed paper I wish to examine the manner in which caste was conceived in 19th century Kerala drawing on a variety of primary sources. From this general picture I move on to the problem of caste as confronted by various Dalit communities particularly with the arrival of Protestant missionaries in Kerala. This situation required a new critical understanding of caste as an institution that denied equality to them. The critique of caste developed by the missionaries were fundamental to the later Dalit critique of caste even as we find Dalit movements developing their own agenda. One of the concerns of the paper is to consider the ideas that the Dalit movements themselves developed. In the early twentieth century we come across people talking about the need to acquire ‘civilizational qualities’. Moreover they felt themselves lacking in ‘civilizational qualities’. They included, among others, lack of property, and education. The colonial project of enlightenment had multiple effects that varied across the colonized. The notion of enlightenment provided certain foundational categories of thought for the elites when they began to think of nation and nationalism. What was the specific manner in which such ideas were taken over by the oppressed castes? I wish to develop such issues in conversation with different traditions in social science writings in India.

   **Bio:** Dr. P. Sanal Mohan is currently an Associate Professor in the School of Social Sciences of Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, India. In April 2013 he has been a Post Doc Fellow at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity. In September 2012 he has been awarded a Research Grant by SSRC, New York to work on ‘From the Lord’s Prayer To Invoking Slavery through
Prayers: Religious Practices and Dalits in Kerala, India’. He was a Graduate School Postdoctoral Fellow in Colonial and Postcolonial Studies at the Department of History and ICIS/RDI Research Fellow, Emory University, Atlanta in 2008. During 2002-2005 he was a Fellow in History at CSSS Calcutta and was Charles Wallace India Fellow in History, SOAS, and University of London. He also worked as Honorary Research Associate, Social Anthropology Programme, and Massey University, New Zealand in 2004. His thesis, ‘Imagining Equality: Modernity and Social Transformation of Lower Castes in Colonial Kerala’ analyses history of agrestic-slavery and one of the powerful religious and social movements of Dalits in early twentieth century, Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha. He has published research articles on the discourses and practices of the movement. He combines history and ethnography in his research. His areas of research interest include colonial modernity, social movements and questions of identity, Dalit Movements and Christianity in India. Currently he is engaged in completing a monograph on the history of Dalit movements in Kerala, India.

3. Sanjeeb Mukherjee

**Title:** The Conceit of Reason vs. the Cunning of History: Modernity and Caste in India.

**Abstract:** Caste is almost uniformly seen as the most serious disease and curse, which plagues India. It is held responsible for holding back national unity, progress, modernity and a healthy democratic politics. Yet, for millennia caste has persisted. It has survived Buddhism, Islam, colonial modernity and more than half a century of a modern democracy and nation-state. Caste, of course has never remained the same; it has continuously changed and adapted to new circumstances. This paper will try to offer an interpretation of the relationship between caste and modernity in contemporary India.

Modernity rests on the reign of reason. Reason produces a philosophy, which makes a claim to truth. Human history too is subjected to the canons of reason, which unearths a pattern and a goal in history. We progress towards reason, individualism and modernity. Marxists gave this logic a new spin and believed communism to the end of history. The west at one time seemed to reflect this reason and nearly half of the world was moving towards the first phase of communism. But the west could not displace nationalism and the wars and colonialism which were central to the making of this modernity – a factor which could in no way be reconciled with the rational individual. The near end of the socialist world is the display of real history being made, of which, we are all witnesses. Modernity in India has taken the national and democratic route and yet we are unable to destroy caste.

This resilience of the pasts and the making of real history have continuously resisted the power and will of reason to make history in its image. This could be seen as a conflict between the *conceit of reason* and the *cunning of history*.

The philosophical presuppositions underlying the modern idea of the nation and democracy in India have no room for caste to exist or operate. So it is seen as a relic of the past and as a disease, which has to be eradicated. However, what
happened in real history is that modernity had to face the real engagement with caste and came to terms with it; but it was accepted on purely practical reasons and in the long run we would all become modern Indian national citizens. This was the conceit of reason to imagine and create a nation and a democracy on premises at odds with the premises on which caste existed and engaged.

The standard imaginary of the nation in India was to describe it as a unity in diversity, i.e. inspite of all diversities and differences there is some Indian essence, which since all time has united us. This imaginary has been the cause of a whole lot of serious problems. Secondly, democracy always presupposes a political community composed of independent individual citizens and ideally it coincides with the nation. In actuality Indian democracy did not operate along these philosophical assumptions. Rather, these failed in the face of a more successful handling of democracy by forces, which have been seen as a major stumbling block for modernity and democracy, namely, caste. How have the two engaged with each other and how do we revise our modernist premises of equality, civil society and the nation? The Constitution too philosophically failed to handle this conflict on the question of social justice, but in practice made peace with these issues. The time has come to theoretically reconcile ourselves with this real history and give up the conceits of modernity, for pursuing the received modernist project could seriously imperil our democracy.

Bio: Dr. Sanjeeb Mukherjee is Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calcutta. He was Fellow in Political Science, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Kolkata, 1980-84. His PhD from Jadavpur University has been on ‘The Liberal State and the Limits of Liberalism’. His research interests lie in liberal political theory, Foucault, nationalism and modernity, theory of justice, democracy and contemporary India and West Bengal. He has published widely in refereed journals and anthologies on political theory and the politics of West Bengal.

4. Soumyabrata Choudhury

Title: Ambedkar contra Aristotle: On a Possible Contention about who is Capable of Politics

Abstract: In Book VIII of his Politics, Aristotle uses the word “katharsis” to describe the effect of music on laboring classes, including women and slaves in the city. Women and slaves, according to Aristotle, are only capable of being cathartically purified and ‘pleased’ – for them music can have no higher, ethical or political utilization. The diagnosis can be generalized : women and slaves – and other such ‘out-castes’ – have no subjective capability for the “becoming” or transformation that politics is supposed to effectuate or induce in the so-called subject through a sequence of social, cultural, aesthetics materials and contexts. The becoming-political is the capacity that defines the human animal beyond the mere cathartic threshold – below which fall women, slaves, ‘out-castes’...

In the Constituent Assembly Debates after 1947, Members in support of the continuation of extant minority safeguards including Dr B.R Ambedkar, argued
that the question was not simply to represent the marginalized and excluded sections/castes in the republic. It was as much a question of the habit of participating in those very debates that create newer and greater representations. Thus someone like Ambedkar emphasizes the crossing of earlier rigid thresholds such that the excluded castes enter into the zone of a ‘becoming-political’ whose subjective infrastructure consists of a kind of ‘habit’ of politics. The contention with the dominant (Aristotelian?) paradigm of a limited republican politics is that such an absolute widening of the subject of politics is possible. Along this widening of the very constitutive possibility of the subject of politics, at least three questions arise: What sort of ‘habit’ might correspond to a mode of political participation which must come in the wake of a revocation of and absolute break with all past socio-political habits? How to maintain the revocation even while inducing and inventing new political habits and reflexes? Thirdly, how to ground the subject of politics, which is unconditionally republican, when the paradigm of the paradoxical ‘political animal’ which must either prescriptively overcome its animal status (as with Aristotle’s prescription against women and slaves as cathartic ‘animals’) or politicize that very status (as with modern ‘bio-politics’ of the liberal, western type), must necessarily be rejected?

**Bio:** Soumyabrata Choudhury is currently an Associate Professor at Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Kolkata. He taught at the School of Arts and Aesthetics, JNU for several years. He was Fellow at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla till 2012 and a Visiting Fellow at CSDS, Delhi in 2012-2013. He has authored the book *Theatre, Number, Event: Three Studies on the Relationship of Sovereignty, Power and Truth* which came out in March 2013.

**5. Ananya Vajpeyi**

**Title:** Towards a Poetics of Contempt

**Abstract:** On Friday December 06, 2013, as Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's 57th death anniversary was observed by over 6 lakh people, many of them Neo-Buddhists, in the Shivaji Park neighborhood of Dadar West, Mumbai, most shops and businesses in the area were closed, and residents locked their homes and left for the weekend. About 80-85 years prior to this date, in the course of a long satyagraha led by Ambedkar between 1927 and 1931, after Untouchables had drunk water en masse from the Chowdar Tank in Mahad, Brahmin priests performed special rituals to purify the tank and reclaim its water for the exclusive consumption of upper caste Hindus.

The stubborn refusal to recognize the equality, dignity and humanity of Dalits, the unwillingness to share public space and community goods with them, and expressions of contempt, in word and deed, all have a long history in Maharashtra as in other parts of India that fall in the catchment area of caste society. But the knowledge that this contempt, while it may be viscerally felt and insistently expressed, is at the same time ethically problematic, also has an equally long history. It is difficult to find a point in time when the assertion of inequality between caste Hindus and outcastes is not immediately undercut by
the suspicion of that such a claim is morally indefensible.

This paper examines the extreme anxiety that inevitably accompanies contemptuous language and rituals, even in the very texts that seek to establish and entrench contempt for the low caste and the outcaste as a core component of caste ideology.

**Bio:** Ananya Vajpeyi works at the intersection of intellectual history, political theory and critical philology. She is currently writing a life of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. Vajpeyi was educated at the Jawaharlal Nehru University (MA), at the University of Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar (MPhil), and at the University of Chicago (PhD). She has taught at the School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University, in the history department at the University of Massachusetts Boston, and at the National Law School of India University, Bangalore. Vajpeyi has held post-doctoral fellowships at the Centre for the Study of Law and Governance, JNU and the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. She has been an IDRC visiting fellow at CSIDS, a senior fellow with the American Institute of Indian Studies, and a Kluge Fellow at the John W. Kluge Center of the Library of Congress, Washington DC. Vajpeyi writes a monthly column for The Telegraph, Calcutta and contributes regularly to The Caravan magazine. Her book *Righteous Republic: The Political Foundations of Modern India* was named book of the year 2012 by The Guardian and The New Republic. It received the Thomas J. Wilson Memorial Prize from Harvard University Press, the Tata First Book Award for Non-Fiction (2013), and the Crossword Award for Non-Fiction (2013).

6. K. Srinivasulu

**Title:** Transference of Class: Marxism in India and Caste Question

**Abstract:** Caste is the historical specificity of India. The dominant form of Marxist thinking and practice in India has faced serious challenges in grappling with this historical specificity. The classical Marxist theory, developed with the critique of capitalism as its problematic, has class as the central analytical category in its theoretical explanatory universe. Marxism in India has sought to understand India by positing the concept of class with an almost exclusive centrality in theory and thus facing challenges and consequences, unexpected and unprepared for, in practice often finding its practice in fact going against its theory and/ or theory becoming a fetter on its practice. This necessitates us to ask questions both pertaining to the significance and status of the concept of class within Marxism in general and the problematic of its uncritical transference on to pre-capitalist and transitional societies with an implicit assumption that it is a universal category both in temporal and spatial sense.

What is the analytical significance of class in the Marxist theoretical category? Can the category of class which acquires its clarity and centrality as an analytical concept in the context of capitalism be used with the same analytical value to understand the pre-capitalist social formations? Can the category of class be used to characterize the non European social formations of both pre-colonial and colonial period? Can class be considered as a trans-historical and supra socio-
These questions which ought to be the point of departure for any serious attempt to develop Marxism as the political theory and practice of social transformation in India have not been asked and not in the manner that could be described as appropriate. The history of Marxism in India stands as a case of non-attention to the above issue. For the present purpose the following high points could be identified as illustrative of it.

The dominant form of Marxism in India has been one of ‘application’ rather than reflection and rethinking. One very well known early attempt at the application of Marxism to India was Dange’s attempt to find all the stages in the Marxist periodisation of history in India. As a corollary to this we find the application of class to different phases of Indian history and that too following the binary model of class with an enthusiasm to project a sanitized picture of class struggle throughout Indian history. The dominant Marxist view has blurred the analytical distinction between Marxism as a method of analysis of concrete situations and as a substantive analysis of specific historical processes.

This attempt at the transference of Marxist theory, as it is understood, has its imprint on and implication for both the theory and practice of Marxism in India. The implicit mechanical economistic, reductionist application has had serious implications for both the historical understanding of caste and for political practice. This is evident in the class vs. caste debate and view of class and caste in the base-superstructural format. Thus caste is viewed as epiphenomenal. Related to this is the view that caste is a pre-modern and pre-capitalist phenomenon that would lose its potency with the development of capitalism and thereby ultimately yielding place to class.

The theoretical complacency in this view has been shaken by the political developments in the post-Independence period in both the dominant political structures and by the subaltern social movements. If the actions of the Indian state and dominant political society has led to the re-cognition, collaboration and cooption of caste as structure and agency of political action then the CPI(ML)-led agrarian movements and Dalit movements have shown the limitations of the above theoretical position to understand the grassroot assertions and resistance. If the radical agrarian political mobilization by the CPI(ML) groups is largely under-theorised then the Dalit assertion has largely taken an anti-Marxist form. The inability to take the Dalit movement as a critical stimulus, instead it is seen in oppositional terms, has proved to be detrimental to the growth of Marxist thought and expansion of its politics. Thus the subaltern question is configured in terms of caste-class binary and in Marx vs Ambedkar debate when in fact the issue is one of urgency of addressing the challenges facing the transformatory project posed by the changing political context.

It is in this impasse, Gramsci assumes importance as a source of methodological critique of the dominant economistic reductionist Marxism and of reflection on emancipatory energies implicit in the subaltern assertions assuming diversity of forms, Dalit, agrarian, gender, anti-mega development, ecological, etc. This presentation seeks to reflect on the above questions by drawing from the Gramscian critique of reductionist tendency in Marxism, the category of common sense and the concept of subaltern as a relation and explore the possibility of an alternative mode of analysis of Caste Question within the Marxist tradition.
Bio: Karli Srinivsulu is Professor of Political Science at Osmania University, Hyderabad, India. He has his Master’s and Doctorate from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He was a Visiting Fellow at the University of Oxford, and a Senior Fellow of the Indian Council of Social Science Research. His research interests include political theory, agrarian and dalit movement, electoral politics, and public policy. His recent work has been on Politics of Special Economic Zones, State Business Relations and Telangana State movement. He has published a monograph on dalit movement in AP (Published by Overseas Development Institute, London). He is a regular contributor to journals like Economic and Political Weekly. E-mail: srinivasulukarli@gmail.com

7. Samir Das

Title: Constituting the Absence: The Rajbanshis of North Bengal

Abstract: Identity and identification serve as a technology of governance in modern times, first, by providing a social template on the basis of which relations amongst (wo)men, animals, nature, things and so forth are conducted and, secondly, by exercising control over the access and distribution of resources. Thanks to the articulation of the social template a group exists not only in itself but for the society and to borrow a phrase from Hegel relationality is stamped on the elements that constitute the society.

While we often describe the modern era - framed by the Post-Enlightenment narrative - as one marked by an unprecedented concern for identity and identification, we often lose sight of the parallel process of dis-identification that runs almost complementary to this concern.

We define dis-identification in a rather unconventional way - as a process whereby an individual or a body of people either finds it impossible to make any claim to identity or even if finds it possible is denied of the identity that it claims for itself. While much has been written about the process of identity and identification, correspondingly not much has been written on dis-identification.

We propose to focus on these two registers of identity politics, namely, caste and ethnicity and make a case study of the Rajbanshis of North Bengal. Numerically they are the third largest Hindu caste in West Bengal. In 1901 when the Rajbanshis were enumerated in the census as ‘the Koch’ – a tribal community - there was protest against the decision by the leaders of the community who claimed Rajbanshi Kshatriya status. One should also recollect that this was also the time when many other communities like the Naths (or Jugis), Shils (the barbers), Namashudras (the most numerous peasant caste of Bengal), etc. also aspired for Kshatriyahood in North Bengal. By all accounts Rajbanshi search for Kshatriyahood met with little success inasmuch as the upper castes hardly ever accorded recognition to their claim while many of their own community were insistent on retaining their tribal identity.

These denials and exclusions make them a ‘displaced’ community - a community that is never a being, but is caught in an endless process of becoming. The presence of the community is perpetually deferred.
Identity politics is viewed predominantly as negative – preceded by what Laclau calls ‘a sense of lack’ that a body of people seeks to make good through its practice. We assume that even ‘lack’ or absence is active and implies an exercise of agency and propose to turn the question around by finding out how their absence gets constituted through their political practice over the years while a good deal of writings on Rajbanshi politics by contrast is devoted to an understanding of how the community seeks to mark its presence.

Bio: Prof. Samir Kumar Das is presently the Vice-Chancellor of the University of North Bengal. A Professor of Political Science at the University of Calcutta, Kolkata (now on lien) he is a member and an Honorary Senior Researcher of the Calcutta Research Group (CRG). Besides being the Coordinator of the UGC-DRS Programme on ‘Democratic Governance: Comparative Perspectives’, he was a Post-Doctoral Fellow (2005) of the Social Science Research Council (South Asia Programme) based in New York. He specializes in and writes on issues of ethnicity, security, migration, rights, justice and democracy and lectured widely in premier academic institutions in the USA, Finland, France, Italy, Sweden, Belgium and many other countries on various assignments.

8. Sarbani Bandyopadhyay

Title: Experiencing Caste in the Field: Studying Bengali Middle Class Lives

Abstract: In Bengal where for all practical purposes there has been no serious engagement with caste, a society which prefers to live in a state of denial about caste being a major fault-line, looking at Bengali society through the lens of caste hardly gets any legitimacy. In such an environment an attempt to study the possible roles of caste in the making and unmaking of Bengali middle class lives was seen as rather misplaced. This is especially because the centre of such a study becomes the middle class here which has very fondly made the claim that caste did not matter in Bengali, particularly their society. Here I would like to examine how as a researcher, a woman and carrying a Brahmin surname, I negotiated caste while doing my fieldwork.

Bio: Sarbani Bandyopadhyay teaches sociology at St. Xavier's College, Kolkata. She is currently pursuing her PhD at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Bombay. She has presented papers on her doctoral work at CSSSC, Kolkata, University of Oslo and has published an article in the EPW Dec 15, 2012.

9. S. Anand

Title: The Fiction of Caste, the Fact of Hierarchy

Abstract: From the time of the Buddha to Ambedkar, the caste system has survived many contestations and challenges. While its origins and effects vary across regions—the system manifests itself differently in Tamil Nadu and Pakistan,
in Madhya Pradesh and Nepal—there is a certain overarching commonality when it comes to two key features: the brahmin and the dalit-untouchable. When there is no brahmin available, the brahmin is invented. Where there are no ‘untouchables’, they have to be invented when such a society makes contact with the virus of caste. According to one commentator, caste reproduces and regenerates itself like an amoeba. But in most cases the construction of caste identity is an elaborate and fantastic fiction, quite like the mythic story about the origin of castes—the four broad categories (varnas) emanating from the Primeval Man’s body. Materialistic, historical and rationalist approaches may help us understand the function and origins of caste, but they quickly and easily cede ground to fiction in everyday life. Ever once more, what Ambedkar termed a system ‘forming an ascending scale of reverence and a descending scale of contempt’—an omnipresent hierarchy—is put in place. Can the fiction of caste and the fact of hierarchy both be annihilated? This talk shall explore some answers.

Bio: S. Anand is the publisher of Navayana, an independent press that focuses on issues of caste from an anti-caste perspective. He is the co-author of Bhimayana, a graphic biography of Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, which has been published in ten languages so far. He has just completed work on the annotated, critical edition of Dr Ambedkar's 1936 classic, Annihilation of Caste, which is to be published in March 2014. Earlier, Anand was a journalist with the print media for ten years.

10. Avatthi Ramaiah

Title: Caste System: An Institution of Human Rights Violation

Abstract: The institution of caste has been one of the most researched and critiqued subjects in social science since long. Since it has survived till date despite formidable attacks from all possible ends, there are leaders eulogizing it as a national pride. While some scholars argue that there is a true or single caste hierarchy, homo hierarchy, others have argued of multiple hierarchies and discrete castes. Some have even argued that in the current context it is not the Brahmins who are most powerful and oppressive, but the 'dominant castes' who are otherwise considered the Backward Castes. All these arguments in a way go in defense of the caste system. There is, however, hardly anyone looking at the caste system in a human rights framework. The present paper attempts to unravel how caste system go against the very roots of what have been recognized as human rights.

Bio: Dr. Avatthi Ramaiah has been a faculty member at TISS since 1991. Currently he is a Professor at the TISS' Centre for Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policies. He obtained his MA (Social Work) in 1984 from Loyola College, University of Madras, M.Phil. (Population Studies) in 1987 and Ph.D. (Sociology) in 1999 from JNU, New Delhi. He has over 20 articles and a book on Laws for Dalit Rights and Dignity (2007, Rawat). He was a Visiting Fellow at the Department of Anthropology, Columbia University under the Fulbright Senior Scholar Fellowship during September 5, 2009 - January 5, 2010. He was a Visiting Fellow at the Asia
Research Centre (ARC), London School of Economics under the TISS-LSE academic exchange programme during March 29th - June 29th 2013. He was a Visiting Fellow also at the Wilberforce Institute for the Study of Slavery and Emancipation (WISE), University of Hull, UK during March 30 -April 21, 2010.

11. Sundar Sarukkai

Second Plenary Address

Title: Reason and the Ontology of Caste

Abstract: In this talk, I want to explore the relation between reason and caste. I want to begin with Kant's regressive views on women, blacks and other 'races', and use this to understand how these views were reconciled in the greatest exponent of reason in European thought. This reconciliation is important for it shows how the idea of reason continues to be used in imagining a metaphysics of race, caste, gender and so on. One of the ways this happens is through naturalising certain proclivities and through the invocation of biological 'essences'. I will argue here that the idea of reproduction (as described by Gopal Guru in a similar context) plays a fundamental role in creating an ontology of caste. Thus, the philosophical challenge is to make sense of the notion of reproduction in all its complexity and to discover its metaphysical relation to caste.

Bio: Sundar Sarukkai is the Director of the Manipal Centre for Philosophy & Humanities, Manipal University, India. He is the author of the following books: Translating the World: Science and Language; Philosophy of Symmetry; Indian Philosophy and Philosophy of Science; What is Science? and The Cracked Mirror: An Indian Debate on Experience and Theory (co-authored with Gopal Guru). He is an Editorial Advisory Board member of the Leonardo Book Series published by MIT Press and the Series Editor for Science and Society, Routledge.

12. Garimella Subramaniam

Title: Reckoning with Caste Inequality: Perspective from John Rawls' Notion of a Well-Ordered Society.

Abstract: This paper attempts to address the inequalities and discrimination rooted in India’s hierarchically-based caste society through the conceptual framework in John Rawls’ A Theory of Justice. Rawls propounds a theory of justice for the fundamental social institutions, what he terms the basic structure of society. Such a theory is not meant to address the justice or fairness of customs and conventions of everyday life. Indeed, the two principles of justice he propounds would apply only in the so-called well-ordered society. The discussion first presents an analysis of the main features of a well-ordered society. Against this backdrop, it would proceed to examine the extent to which the legal guarantees provided under the Indian Constitution for the Dalits, Adivasis and Other Backward Communities approximate to the institutional arrangements in a
Rawlsian well-ordered society. The final section would explore the degree to which judicial pronouncements of the Supreme Court reflect the actual working out of political institutions.

**Bio:** Dr. Garimella Subramaniam is Deputy Editor, *The Hindu*. He has been a journalist for the past nearly two decades. A Ph.D. From the London School of Economics and Political Science, he wrote his dissertation entitled ‘Impartiality as Neutrality: A Defense with an Illustration’, under the supervision of late Professor Brian Barry.

### 13. Sthabir Khora

**Title:** Amartya Sen, Capability Approach and Caste

**Abstract:** A discussion on caste is inextricably a discussion on social justice. Amartya Sen's various writing has focused on the capability approach and he has specifically used this approach in one of his book (*The Idea of Justice*, 2009, Penguin) to the idea of justice. Besides, his approach to the question of caste can be gathered from his many other writings. This paper will explore Sen's position on caste from his various writings. He prefers a comparative approach to that of a transcendental institutional approach to justice. Justice should be a comprehensive outcome and not just culmination outcome. Therefore mere *niti* (principles, procedures) is not sufficient for justice but what is required is *nyaya* (comprehensive outcome). This can be attained by taking a comparative rather than transcendental approach by 'open, public reasoning' and taking recourse to 'partial ordering' rather than waiting for the 'complete ordering'. Thus capability approach (focusing on individual as well as groups) with its focus on substantive opportunity is better suited than transcendental institutional approach to guide in the matter of justice. The paper will focus on what are Sen's ontological assumptions regarding caste and his contribution towards dealing with injustice called caste.

**Bio:** Sthabir Khora is currently Associate Professor, School of Education, TISS (Mumbai Campus). He did his Ph.D from TISS on Teacher Professionalism: A Study of Teachers and Classroom Processes. He has 15 years of experience of teaching and research. His teaching areas are ‘Introduction to Sociology’, ‘Education and Development’, and ‘Teacher Professional Development’. He was involved in ‘Monitoring of Sarva Siksha Abhiyan in Madhya Pradesh’ (2007-9) funded by the GoI. It involved visiting the schools and seeing the implementation of the SSA and Mid-Day Meal. Currently he is doing Evaluation Study on Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe/Women, funded by Centre for Good Governance, Rajasthan Institute of Public Administration, Jaipur. It involves re-investigating the Final Reports by the police pertaining to the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 and Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code. His publications include: 2005, ‘Continuing Low Literacy: The Case of Orissa’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol XL, No 10:928-930; 2008, ‘Teacher Motivation: An Exploration into The Role of Values and Social Support’, *Indian Journal of Social*
14. Suryakant Waghmore

**Title:** Caste Violence and Peace Schemes: On the Erasure of Caste and Institutionalization of Caste Violence in Rural Maharashtra

**Abstract:** The 'atrocity' act has been a controversial legislation in India with continuous pressures for its abolition from dominant castes. In Maharashtra, the act has been a source of conflict between Dalits and the dominant Marathas. This paper is an analytical reading of two state interventions, one is the SC/ST Atrocity Act, 1989 that recognizes the vulnerability of Dalits to caste exclusion and violence and the other is the Government of Maharashtra scheme – Mahatma Gandhi Tanta Mukta Gaanv Mohim/Yojana (Conflict Free Village Scheme/Movement), which focuses on merging 'peace' and development processes in rural publics. Drawing on ethnography of caste violence and associated politics in Marathwada and a reading of the Atrocity Act and the Peace Scheme respectively, I engage with the idea of state and the working of popular democracy in India. I suggest that the 'idea' of state and popular cultural practices are thickly intertwined in the Marathi democracy, these intersections erase caste and institutionalise caste violence in the rural publics.

**Bio:** Suryakant Waghmore is Associate Professor at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai. He has a PhD in Sociology from the University of Edinburgh (2010). He is author of *Civility against Caste* published by Sage (2013).

15. Ananta Giri

**Title:** Caste Domination and the Challenge of Structural Transformation and Transformation of Consciousness: Shankara, Ambedkar and Beyond

**Abstract:** Caste is a multi-dimensional reality in history and society and it has manifested itself through varieties of structures of domination as it has been also related in complex ways with structures of caste and gender domination. This vertical aspect of caste domination has nullified the significance of caste as a space of community and belonging. Caste as a structure of domination has caused death of soul and society as it has blocked the realization of their full potential. Critics and transformers from Buddha and before and after have striven to transform this system of domination. To this in the last hundred years many movements and socio-religious reformers have also dedicated themselves. This includes Swami Vivekananda, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and B.R. Ambedkar. Constitution of India has also made caste discrimination illegal. In our social imagination today both this Constitutional injunction and Ambedkar’s struggle for annihilation of caste has a special place. But this can be creatively and critically
related to the vision of Adi Shankara. While some look at him as justifying caste system, Shankara also strove for the radical dignity of soul irrespective of caste and gender. In a pregnant formulation of Shankara, the soul is neither body nor caste but chidanandaupa, a manifestation of consciousness and bliss. Advaita Vedanta which draws inspiration from Shankara has manifested itself socially through Brahminical structures as none of the Sankaracharyas so far have come from non-Brahminical caste. Despite this reformers such as Swami Vivekananda and M.K Gandhi drawing inspiration from Advaita have striven to transform the caste system. In my paper, I explore the challenge that Advaita or vision of non-dual poses to caste domination. I would also like to carry out a dialogue between Shankara and Ambedkar. It was often said of Shankara that in his fight against Buddhism, Shankara himself deployed many of the Buddhist strategies leading himself to be called as a crypto Buddhist. Ambedkar himself had converted himself to Buddhism and wrote the deeply significant work The Buddha and His Dhamma. The paper explores the multi-faceted dialogue between Shankar, Ambedkar and Buddhism with a focus on transformation of consciousness. It also brings the question of gender by critically looking into the issue of gender in all these three streams, Shankara, Buddha and Ambedkar.

Bio: Ananta Kumar Giri is currently on the faculty of Madras Institute of Development Studies, Chennai, India and has taught and done research in many universities in India and abroad including University of Kentucky, USA; Aalborg University, Denmark and University of Freiburg, Germany and MSH, Paris. He has an abiding interest in social movements and cultural change, criticism, creativity and contemporary dialectics of transformations, theories of self, culture and society, and creative streams in education, philosophy and literature. Dr. Giri has written and edited around two dozen books in Odia and English, including Global Transformations: Postmodernity and Beyond (1998); Sameekhya o Purodrusti [Criticism and the Vision of the Future, 1999]; Patha Prantara Nrutattwa [Anthropology of the Street Corner, 2000]; Conversations and Transformations: Toward a New Ethics of Self and Society (2002); Self-Development and Social Transformations? The Vision and Practice of Self-Study Mobilization of Swadhyaya (2008); Mochi o Darshanika [The Cobbler and the Philosopher] (2009); Sociology and Beyond: Windows and Horizons (2012), Knowledge and Human Liberation: Towards Planetary Realizations (2013). For his contribution to knowledge and society, Dr. Giri has been awarded the Bharata Jyoti (India Glory) Award in 2012.

16. Manoranjan Byapari

Title: Radical Movements and Caste in Context

Bio: Manoranjan Byapari was awarded the prestigious Bangla Academy Prize for literature in January 2014 for his book Itibritte Chandal Jeebon (glimses of a Chandal life). This autobiographical work documents his life struggles from the time he landed as a one year old in West Bengal from the erstwhile East Pakistan, roughed out a semi human existence in relief camps, got involved in petty crime, was jailed, and later migrated to Bastar, where he spent some time with the
renowned labour leader Shankar Guha Niyogi, until the pull of Bangla literature brought him back to Kolkata. For someone who learnt to read and write in jail at the age of 24, Manoranjan’s achievements have never looked back since the time he published his first short story at the age of 28. Credited with being the first major Dalit writer in Bangla, Manoranjan Byapari was introduced to the outside world when an essay by him was translated by Meenakshi Mukherjee and published in the prestigious Economic and Political Weekly in 2007. He has authored over 100 short stories in Bangla, and is currently working on a life of the late Shankar Guha Niyogi.

17. Mallarika Sinha Roy

**Title:** Sexual Economies of Caste and Gender: The Case of Naxalbari (1967-1975)

**Abstract:** While periodising the 1960s Frederick Jameson wrote that thinking in terms of historical periods and working with models of historical periodization were ‘theoretically unfashionable to say the least’ (1984, 178). The fear of becoming unfashionable, theoretically or otherwise, is difficult to overcome. My first attempts to look for the Naxalbari movement in its heterogeneous registers of archival documents, academic history, and legends circulated in different adda, however, brought forth a possibly theoretically unfashionable question: in a movement like Naxalbari, where the gaps between rural and urban; peasantry and intelligentsia; party and people were being consciously negotiated, how could ‘half the sky’ remain invisible, inaudible? As the primary question began to spawn a series of queries, the most compelling task became situating Naxalite women within their specific locations. Caste, with all its ramifications and its complex history of relation with gender, loomed large over any attempt to access activists’ diverse experiences of political participation and political violence as women, as Naxalites, and as women Naxalites. Even though caste found rarely any mention in archival, historical, or imagined narratives of Naxalbari, gendered experiences of the movement unerringly pointed at its presence, albeit obliquely at times.

This paper traces how I picked my way through a maze of overlapping categories like region, class, tribe, and social factors like sexual division of labour, cultural representations and access to formal education to understand the framing of Naxalbari through caste and gender. From women’s narratives of their participation in the movement, caste emerges as a set of intricate relations, which, despite its invisibility in the Naxalite ‘literate’ ideology, shaped activists’ ideas of revolution. This intricate set of relations wove in the connections between caste status, women’s sexuality and their participation in wage labour; between social mobility, caste conventions, and notions of domesticity; between the social history of bhadramahila (gentlewoman) and the political history of ‘women comrades’ in radical leftist movements. Periodising Naxalbari in terms of such gendered experiences disrupts the previous academic historiography of this movement. Exploring Naxalbari as it is memorialised and as it is imagined to have happened from the analytical point of view of gender becomes a political intervention because such an attempt opens a space where the phantasm of the
movement meets with historical contingencies.

**Bio:** Mallarika Sinha Roy is an Assistant Professor at the Centre for Women’s Studies in Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. She received her D.Phil. (PhD) from University of Oxford in 2008. Her research monograph is titled *Gender and Radical Politics in India: Magic Moments of Naxalbari (1967-1975)* (London: Routledge, 2011). She has also published articles in peer-reviewed journals like *Feminist Review, Indian Journal of Gender Studies, Contemporary South Asia, Feminism and Psychology, and Journal of South Asian Development*. Her research interests include social movement studies, gender and political violence, history and politics of South Asia.

18. **George Verghese K.**

**Title:** Viswakarma Goldsmith Caste and their Economic Marginalization in Kerala: A Deleuzian Reflection

**Abstract:** This paper tries to engage with certain anthropological issues involved in the pauperization and marginalization of the artisan goldsmiths in the scene of gold trade in Kerala at present. Arguably the second biggest consumer of gold in India after Tamilnadu (with an annual turnover of more than 150 tons of gold), the problems gold has fomented in Kerala, especially in the artisan sector is beyond the comprehension of traditional anthropological analysis or empiricist economic approach. This paper specifically argues for a novel anthropological approach that incorporates certain concepts from Deleuzian philosophy to understand the syndrome gold has created in the socio-cultural scene of Kerala and in the professional and caste identities of Viswakarma goldsmiths. The main Deleuzian concept incorporated is multiplicity which is further elaborated through a set of ancillary concepts like virtual, rhizome, strata, BwO etc.

**Bio:** George Varghese K teaches anthropology and continental philosophy in the Manipal Centre for Philosophy and Humanities, Manipal University. His research mainly focuses on modern English literature, theory of knowledge production, architecture and family histories of the Syrian Christians of Kerala, anthropology of gold in Kerala and the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze. His doctoral work in the University of Melbourne is a theoretical study on the relation between Deleuzian philosophy and the anthropology of objects. He has published a book on gold’s anthropology and quite a few articles on the artisan caste and gold trade in Kerala, east-west issues in knowledge production and the architecture and anthropology of Syrian Christians of Kerala. He is shortly publishing a book on anthropology, Deleuze and objects from a press in Europe.
19. Anirban Das

Title: Caste and Gender: Ideologies of Embodiment

Abstract: Caste and gender are two categories denoting identity, both premised on the body of the person. Certain essentialized notions of the body are at work here. These notions work through the exclusion, in various forms, of certain categories and the dominance, yet also in myriad ways, of others. The dalit and the brahman, the woman and the man, the homosexual and the normative heterosexual, are related to each other in complex, power-laden ways. The politics of caste and the politics of gender have to work against these in nuanced and complicated modes.

In the case of gender, the categories are essentialized through certain organs, and the function that these organs have in society, that of reproduction. Reproductive heteronormativity is the normalizing of heterosexism through its function of reproduction of human beings in society. In the case of caste, the essentialization, whereby the categories are given a permanence, occurs through birth. The central role of endogamy in fixing the structure of caste has been pointed out forcefully by Ambedkar. This control of birth, through endogamy, is again linked intimately to the essentializations acting through processes of gender. The control over women’s bodies remains central in both the processes.

The ways in which the hegemony of the hierarchies of the caste structure are produced and continued are different from the ways in which the hegemony of man over woman is replicated in reproductive heteronormativity. The exclusion of the dalit and the exclusion of the non-normative sexualities work through different structural grids. Yet they intersect at certain spaces. The body of the woman is one very important place where this intersection occurs. Of course, these are logical and phenomenological processes at work at an abstract level. And definitely, these are not the only processes at work. The present paper focuses on, yet one more time, the woman’s body as the site where processes of caste and gender intersect. In the process, it addresses the question of the phenomenology of untouchability.

Bio: Anirban Das, PhD in Philosophy from Jadavpur University, is Fellow in Cultural Studies at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Kolkata. His research interests are in the areas of feminist theory, science studies, postcoloniality and the Indic Space, Marxian Theory, philosophies and cultures of the body, continental philosophy, and sexualities. He teaches, at the CSSSC and Jadavpur University, ‘The Subject and the Body: A Feminist Approach’; ‘Situating Science: Transactions across Disciplines’; ‘Readings in Philosophy: Texts, Concepts, Contexts’; ‘Environmental Theory and Practice’; Feminism and the Social Sciences’; ‘Interrogating Political Economy: An Interdisciplinary Approach’. He has written a foundational text on feminism, viz. Toward a Politics of the (Im) Possible: The Body in Third World Feminisms, Anthem, 2010 and has edited two critically acclaimed anthologies of Bengali writings on deconstruction and feminist theory. He has to his credit several publications on feminism, the body, and science in well-known refereed journals in India. He is also on the editorial collective of the journal ‘From the Margins’. 
20. Ritu Sen Chaudhuri

Title: The Caste Gender System: A Necessary Analytic of Experience?

Abstract: Caste and gender works as/in a system of discrimination. Scholars from various disciplinary and theoretical orientations have identified the necessity of bringing in the dimension of gender in caste. In a specific sense I think of these negotiations in terms of the abstract category of experience. There remain few insightful theorisations on Indian caste experiences. Focusing on Dalit experiences and untouchability there are arguments on the possibility, ethicality and politics of authentic representation. Defying the hegemonies of the ‘Western’ theories there are efforts to imagine ‘other’ modes of theorizing ‘Indian’ experiences. Certain strands of feminist theory, on the other hand, have long been grappling with the problem of using experience as evidence and of naturalizing the discursively produced identities such as woman, gay, lesbian. The problem rests not in the reliance but in the acceptance of experiential knowledge as self-evident and unmediated. This leads to reification of the subject and essentialization of the identities. I see much of these uncertainties as I strive to think of a nuanced position of ‘Indian’ feminism. I think of the possibilities of these two views (Dalit experiences and feminist contentions) talking to each other. Pondering on the feminist politics of caste and gender the current paper remains animated with some unanswered questions and unresolved dilemmas.

Bio: Dr. Ritu Sen Chaudhuri teaches Sociology at the West Bengal State University. She also works as a visiting lecturer for the M.Phil. programmes in Women’s Studies at The Women’s Studies Research Centre, University of Calcutta and the School of Women’s Studies, Jadavpur University. After completing Masters in Sociology from University of Calcutta, she joined The Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta as a PhD Research Fellow. Her areas of interest include feminist theories, sociological theories, post modern thought, gender and sexuality and the interfaces of sociology and literature. She has delivered many lectures at a number of universities and research institutes and presented papers in national and international seminars and conferences. She has published both in Bangla and English on various issues including women’s writing, women’s movement, feminist theory, and Tagorean novels in academic journals and edited books. Currently, she is supervising five PhD dissertations and working on two book projects.

21. Milind Wakankar

Title: Law and Bhava: Notes towards a Treatise on Freedom

Abstract: Taking as its point of departure the landmark text co-authored by Guru and Sarukkai, *The Cracked Mirror*, the paper enters into the specific claims with regard to individuation between subject and ground that are implicit in the dalit critique. In its pull toward an essential negativity, the dalit critique is instrumental in helping renew our account of freedom. Here the paper draws on certain

**Bio**: Milind Wakankar's 2010 book from Routledge, entitled *Subalternity and Religion*, bears the sub-title, 'The Prehistory of Dalit Emancipation.' He teaches at Ambedkar University, Delhi.

### 22. K. Satyanarayana

**Title**: Dalit Reconfiguration of Caste: Representation, Identity and Politics

**Abstract**: Through a critique of the dominant Social scientific academic scholarship (including the Subaltern studies), the paper attempts to track the question of caste in the dalit social and literary movements. The empirical and ethnographic methods employed by the sociological and anthropological studies reified caste as a traditional institution and constructed 'objective reality' of caste as a system. The political sociologists revised this view suggesting that the modern institutions of Indian democracy transformed and modernized caste in post Independent India. They argued that that caste is a traditional system, its central principle is ritual hierarchy and its known structure is vertical. They arrived at the conclusion that the caste system collapsed in the modern institutional context and castes are function as pressure groups in society. In this broad framework of tradition vs. modernity, caste is consigned to the domain of Indian tradition and the social groups that experience caste inequality are invisible. It is in the Dalit upsurge of creative, cultural and theoretical writing from South India, the shift in the concept of caste both as politics and identity is pronounced. It is through the politics of mobilization and self-representation in the 1980s and 1990s; the Dalit writer-intellectuals and activists change the meaning of caste as a remnant of the past and redeploy the notion of caste as a form of representation and contemporary politics.

**Bio**: K. Satyanarayana is an associate professor in the Department of Cultural Studies, English, and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, India. His research interests are in the fields of Dalit studies, literary history, and cultural theory. He is co-editor of *No Alphabet in Sight* (2011) and *From Those Stubs, Steel Nibs Are Sprouting* (2013), two volumes of New Dalit Writing from South India.