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CHARU GUPTA

The Gender of Caste

REPRESENTING DALITS IN PRINT



Guest lecture

June 2, 2017, 15:15

Seminar room 1,
Department of South Asian,
Tibetan and Buddhist Studies,
Spitalgasse 2, Hof 2.7
1090 Vienna

Guest lecture

The Gender of Caste

Representing Dalits in Print

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Abstract:

Based on a recently published book, this talk rethinks the history of caste from a gendered perspective in colonial North India, specifically Uttar Pradesh. It foregrounds “representations in print” as its critical tool, addressing print as a significant if ambivalent site for the reproduction, transformation, and contestation of caste and gender ideologies. Juxtaposing a series of historical narratives, it tries to “unread” dominant inscriptions on gendered caste bodies while highlighting emancipatory possibilities through counter-voices and agencies. The aim of the talk is twofold: first, to examine practices of distinction and hierarchy within the Hindu community, and posit how social difference was an enduring aspect of caste gendering. The second aim is to approach the regulation of caste and gender at the level of the quotidian while unveiling the hidden archives of Dalit resistance. Towards this end the talk mobilizes a rich and understudied vernacular archive of popular and didactic writings in Hindi newspapers and journals, cartoons, and missionary publications to highlight how social practices and relations left their mark on print and the literary: the two drew from, and fed into, each other. Simultaneously, it looks at ideas of intimacy and body history to understand the terribly material, embodied character of caste–gender dynamics, its representational density, and its divergent receptions in public life. Alongside, by teasing out Dalit women’s individual needs and desires the talk attempts to disrupt the neat folding of the self into the collective.



About Charu Gupta:

Charu Gupta teaches in the Department of History, University of Delhi. She is She has been a Visiting Faculty at Yale University, Washington University and the University of Hawaii. She has also been a Fellow at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Delhi, the Social Science Research Council, New York, the Asian Scholarship Foundation, Thailand, the Wellcome Institute, London, and the University of Oxford. Her publications include *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community: Women, Muslims and the Hindu Public in Colonial India* (Permanent Black, Delhi & Palgrave, New York, 2002), *Contested Coastlines: Fisherfolk, Nations and Borders in South Asia* (Routledge, Delhi and London, 2008) and *The Gender of Caste: Representing Dalits in Print* (Permanent Black & University of Washington Press, 2016) . She is also the editor of *Gendering*

Colonial India: Reforms, Print, Caste and Communalism (Orient Blackswan, Delhi, 2012). Alongside, she has published several papers in leading journals like *Modern Asian Studies*, *Journal of Asian Studies*, *Economic and Political Weekly*, *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, *Journal of Women’s History* and *South Asia* on gender, sexuality, caste, religious identities and medicine. Her current research is on life narratives and popular non-fictional Hindi writings.