

## **New Researches in the History of the Indian Subcontinent**

**Young Researchers' Conference, 7-8 May 2021**

History Society, School of Liberal Studies  
Ambedkar University Delhi (India)

The exploration of new themes, historical remains, spaces and temporalities, and the exposition of new perspectives have immensely enriched, diversified our understanding of the history of the Indian subcontinent, especially in the last four decades. New techniques of data processing, interpretation, explanation, narrativisation and representation have been developed to help open up some of the uncharted territories of historical knowledge, unpack some of the long-held presumptions, and illuminate some of the less-known issues. One of the critical shifts made includes a growing understanding that early modern history could be traced from the latter sixteenth-century in the history of the Indian subcontinent (M. Torri 2014). Another relates to the interrogation of several modernist assumptions and their sense of certitude.

Economic history has now traced the emergence and expansion of property rights, marketisation, monetisation, large commercial firms, putting-out system, and a Smithian growth path from the latter sixteenth-century itself (P. Parthasarathi 2011)). One of the scholarships underscores the thriving business houses, showing their creative and enterprising efforts at taking advantage of the opened and globally integrating economy through the seventeenth and mid-twentieth centuries (T. Roy 2018). The Republic of India's economic performance, especially during its dirigiste period (1951-1980), has drawn sharply contested interpretations and explanations (B. Gupta 2019). One of the enriching aspects of recent economic historiographies relates to the history of living standards in the past (RC Allen 2005; Dreze and Sen 2013). The sources of the existence of deprived and vulnerable people in a vast number continue to be an area of contentious discussion.

The writing of social history has immensely expanded. The examination of differential experiences of and agencies of transformation worked out by the members of varied socio-cultural identities along the lines of caste, ethnicity, gender, region and religion, has become a central research subject. The limits of the modernisation paradigm – known for its emphasis on the shift from status & hierarchy to contract & free will and primordial affiliation to secular/fraternal association – continue to be re-examined (S. Sarkar and T. Sarkar 2014; D. Sen 2018). The study of the potential of social reform campaigns – variously known as caste-upliftment movement, unranked mobilisation and programme of women's empowerment – has contributed to the democratisation of historical studies (A. Lee 2020; C. Jaffrelot 2003). Further, the gendering of developmental processes has brought to the fore differential experiences – capabilities and entitlement – shared by women (U. Chakravarty 2006; B. Agarwal 2007). One of the treatises suggests that the Hindu caste middle class fostered a modern notion of chaste and respectable caste Hindu women by contrasting it with the vamp and seductress

image of the Dalit women. The reformist Hindu middle class also forged the victim image of the Dalit women. By contrast, the Dalits came up with the image of *viranganas* (Jhalkari Bai and others) in the 1990s (C. Gupta 2016).

Cultural history and culturalist explanation of even the economic phenomena have acquired a new height. Explorations into the religious issues have moved beyond the sacred texts to contending interpretations of such texts, and further to popular cosmologies. The function of such cosmologies in shaping social transactions is foregrounded (V. Ramaswamy 2019; Y. Snehi 2020). Besides the history of ideas, studies of print, media, public sphere, cinema, arts, museum, performance, consumption of books, education, leisure practices, drinks, food, clothes, family institution, and consanguinity have impressively broadened terrains of historical studies.

The writing of political history has moved beyond the subjects of nature and function of state, laws, domination and resistance (S. Bhattacharya 2016). It has spanned to cover the political-cultural dimensions of the state-power in everyday life, law enforcement, civil society, political society, governmentality (technologies of governance), the power relations, discipline and control, insurgency, subterranean protest, weapons of the weak, and so forth. The arguments, like the vernacular politics, in place of class politics (S. Bhattacharya 2016), and democracy as the politics of the governed (P. Chatterjee 2004), have come to the fore.

Explorations into environmental history have made us sensitive about the complex relationship between ecology, humankind and other species. It has critically interrogated the anthropocentric approach. From forestry and ecological degradation, environmental history has now also thrown light on conservation, hunting, and climate change (M. Rangrajan 2015). The ecological dynamics – beyond the thesis of resource endowment – has been foregrounded to explain the contradiction of the modernist paradigm of development (N. Bhattacharya 2018).

The above illustrative trajectory of historical studies could only be the starting point of any discussion on recent researches. The proposed conference aims to bring together young researchers in the advanced stages of their research to share their new findings with a broader audience to push forward their line of inquiry and seek persuasive exposition. The abovementioned list of themes for proposals of paper presentation is merely indicative. Studies on the working peoples (peasantry, workers, professionals), migration, science, technology, medicine, health, infrastructure, and the likes are equally exciting areas. The conference will welcome all innovative and engaging proposals.

**Deadlines:** The participant may submit an abstract of up to 500 words by 30<sup>th</sup> April 2021. Selected participants will be informed by 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2021. Selected participants will be required to submit a full paper before 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021. Abstract and paper to be submitted to the following email id: [historysociety@aud.ac.in](mailto:historysociety@aud.ac.in). The conference will be held in an online mode. Only registered MPhil/PhD students from any Indian university or research institute will be permitted to participate.