



Azim Premji University Colloquium Series

presents a lecture

"The Real "Brain Drain": Schools and the Experience of Democracy in Contemporary India"

Speaker

Janaki Nair

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Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Date: April 28, 2016 (Thursday)

Time: 2.00 pm to 3.30 pm

Venue: 10th Floor Auditorium, Pixel A, Azim Premji University

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About the Lecture

To what extent has the school classroom been witness to, or the site of, some of the most important churning in Indian democracy over the last four decades, a time before elementary education was made compulsory? A wide range of recent writings by Dalits, women and members of other oppressed sections of Indian society have allowed us a glimpse of the systematic and violent ways in which generations of Indians had been denied the most basic of rights. Even more revealing are the ambiguous results of the gradual participation of such marginalized groups in the process of education, which has generated new desires and fears, experiences of liberation and humiliation. Perhaps the longest standing expectation of education, since the colonial period, has been its function as a gateway to a job. Again, a very particular colonial inheritance has been the expectation of not just any job, but a Government job, with all its certainties and securities. While many kinds of hierarchies may get destabilized in the quest for a government job (the active encouragement of women, including married women, to train in Industrial Training Institutes, for example) such a goal may well lead to extreme forms of credentialing that evacuate education of any value and meaning. Drawing on the life stories of those who have passed through government schools, alternative schools, and Industrial Training Institutes, which have recently been collected from different parts of India, and on the rich vein of Dalit autobiographies, now available in translation, I will assess some of the consequences of attempts to address this real "brain drain". The school may well have, unwittingly perhaps, the site for addressing and

visibilising a wide range of deep inequalities of which only one may be the inequalities related to accessing and producing knowledge.

About the Speaker

Janaki Nair teaches at the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Her research interests, which have largely focused on the region of Mysore/Karnataka, range from labour and working class history to legal history, and from histories of the city to histories and theories of feminism in India. Her published works include *Mysore Modern: Rethinking the Region under Princely Rule* (Orient Blackswan, 2012) and *The Promise of the Metropolis: Bangalore's Twentieth Century* (Oxford University Press, 2005, 2006).