



Azim Premji University Colloquium Series

presents a lecture

"What Caste is Not: Division in a Village Society"

Speaker

Lee I. Schlesinger

University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, USA

Date: November 25, 2016 (Friday)

Time: 2.00 pm to 3.30 pm

Venue: Seminar Hall, 10th Floor, Pixel A, Azim Premji University

Watch the live broadcast of the talk by clicking <http://lectures.azimprejiuniversity.edu.in/>. It can be accessed from Android and iOS devices too.

About the Lecture

Primarily using ethnographic research conducted in an agrarian village in Satara District, Maharashtra, this paper describes a generally overlooked yet fundamental aspect of the organization of community social life. The enduring division of a village into sides, relating to a structure of clan relations within the dominant Maratha caste, raises questions about more general conceptions of Indian social structure in terms of caste or class as well as some spatial manifestations of such differences. Attending to local groupings and interrelationships reveals the importance of long-standing structural divisions whose mutual opposition seems necessary for the composition of village life. Questioning assumptions about space, hierarchy, or rank exposes a larger, yet also smaller, context in which both the limits and the relevance of a sociology of either caste or class can be better evaluated. Perhaps a focus on the details, the apparent minutiae, of the experience and expression of social structure in a single unremarkable village can help suggest what otherwise fails to appear in the comprehensive abstractions that shape the big theories of Indian society, tradition, development, and change.

About the Speaker

Lee Schlesinger has conducted research in Satara District, Maharashtra, since his doctoral research in the mid-1970s. Trained in social-cultural anthropology at the University of Chicago, he has been a research scholar at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor since the early 1990s. He has published on village-level politics, agriculture, kinship, and the relationship of village and the outside world; and in recent years he has been working on aspects of religious practice and belief and on questions about social change and continuity in village life.