



Colloquium: The Poster as the Personal-Political Archive

Speaker:

Uma Chakravarti, Feminist Historian, Teacher and Democratic Rights Activist

Date / Time:

February 20, 2014 - 4:00pm - 5:30pm

Venue:

10th Floor, Pixel A, Azim Premji University

Abstract:

Over the years many feminists and democratic rights activists have designed, created, or circulated posters to carry the messages of campaigns and movements of which they have been a part. At the end of each campaign these visual and written documents have ended up in places as varied as under the mattress of a bed, or in tin trunks, or rolled up like maps and placed in a holder--a basket or a tin. Ultimately they have disintegrated, a sad testimony to the times and the political activities of their reluctant 'archivers'. In the lifetime of the archivers they exist as markers of events, places, people, having meaning for them but only inside their heads. For others that history is lost. My own journey as an activist of sorts is linked to my personal collection of posters which I just archived by 'happenstance': they were with me because I could not bring myself to throw them away or add them to the 'raddi' pile which went to the buyers of old newspapers. I had some sentimental attachment to them and each time I carried them from one house to another as we moved, and were dusted to be rolled up once more they would bring a rush of memories as images scrambled across the mind's eye and the moment of the making of the poster would return, all inside my head. I now believe that they are more than mere memories: they are a testimony of their times and of mine: an inextricably intermeshed archive of the personal and the political. Perhaps I can tell a history through it especially to the next generation of 'activists'/students and teachers who would not find such a history in books or in record rooms, at least not at the moment.

A Note on the Speaker:

Uma Chakravarti is a feminist historian who taught at Miranda House, University of Delhi from 1966 to 1998. She writes on Buddhism, early Indian history, the 19th century and on contemporary issues. She is the author of *Social Dimensions of Early Buddhism* (1987); *Rewriting history: The Life and Times of Pandita Ramabai* (1998); *Gendering Caste Through a Feminist Lens* (2002); and *Everyday Lives, Everyday Histories: Beyond the Kings and Brahmanas of Ancient India* (2006). She has also co-authored *Delhi Riots: Three Days in the Life of a Nation* (1987); *Shadow Lives: Writings on Widowhood* (2006); and *From Myths to*

Markets: Essays on Gender (1999).

Since the 1970s Uma Chakravarti has been associated with the women's movement and the movement for democratic rights and in this capacity she has participated in many fact finding teams to investigate human rights violations, communal riots, and state repression.