

16 APRIL 2019

South Asia - Citywide

A MSASG – La Trobe Asia – Australia India
Institute Conference 2019

Introduction and Welcome



I am very pleased that you have chosen to take part in the Melbourne South Asian Studies Group - La Trobe Asia – Australia India Institute Conference, *South Asia – Citywide*.

The aim of this day is to bring together graduate students, academics and others who share an interest in the region to present research to a knowledgeable audience of peers. It also provides you with the chance to meet others who share your interests in South Asia and to develop your academic skills professional networks.

I hope you enjoy the conference we have prepared for you this year, and I encourage you to take an active part in today's discussions and enjoy the opportunity to interact with colleagues working in this sphere.

Euan Graham

Executive Director, La Trobe Asia

Session 1

Economic modernisation, traditional values and democracy in India since 1990

Medha Majumdar, Australian National University

State Power, Place and Identity in Chinese Himalayan Borders: A fieldwork note of “Tamang” people in Kyirong County, Tibet Autonomous Region of China

Gezang Cairang, La Trobe University

Contemporary cinnamon peelers in Sri Lanka

Dilhani Iresha Dissanayake, La Trobe University

What is a slave?

Mark Jones, Australian National University

Session 2

Influence of prior knowledge and classroom learning environment on students' self-efficacy and achievement in mathematics

Venkata Lakshmi Narayana Aluri, Curtin University

Cultural competency in the primary caring of domestic violence: Ethnography

Bijaya Pokharel, La Trobe University

Startup States: Techniques and Technics of Bio-Power in India and Australia

Laura McLean, Monash University

Fieldwork without fluency in an isolated Sri Lanka village

Emily Graham, Swinburne University of Technology

Workshop

Writing a book proposal

Robin Jeffrey and Assa Doron

Closing remarks

La Trobe Asia

Euan Graham, La Trobe University

Session 3

Language and Nationalism: Use of Non-standard Language Varieties in Contemporary Nepali Literature

Prakash Subedi, Monash University

Right to Technological Self-determination: An evolving principle of Transformative Constitutionalism

Pritam Dey, Deakin University

Affirmative Action and Quality of Governance: Evidence from utilisation of funds in village councils of India

Anwasha Bandyopadhyay, Monash University

Playing the climate game: climate change impacts and responses at major Australian sport stadia, and contrasts with South Asian sport

Greg Dingle, La Trobe University

La Trobe Asia

La Trobe Asia is an all of University entity which aims to strengthen and deepen the University's academic engagement by building strong partnerships, supporting research and shaping public debate.

La Trobe Asia was created in 2014 and:

- Provides strategic advice and support for Asia related activities and collaborations across the University
- Increases student engagement and knowledge of diverse cultures, languages and histories of Asia
- Provides a focal point to showcase the work of scholars who are researching and teaching on or in the region
- Provides some financial support to academics at La Trobe through its grant programs
- Expands networks in Asia including universities, government, think tanks and NGOs
- Promotes La Trobe Asia related news and research through publications and podcasts
- Leads public debate in Asia and Australia through public events, policy engagement and media activity

Program

TIME	ACTIVITY
9.30 am – 10.00 am	Registration (coffee/tea on arrival)
10.00 am – 10.15 am	Welcome – from the conference hosts (<i>Dr Surjeet Dhanji, Post-Doctoral Fellow and seminar coordinator for Melbourne South Asian Studies Group and Diana Heatherich, Senior Project Officer, La Trobe Asia</i>)
10.15 am – 11.10 am	Session 1
11.10 am – 11.30 am	Morning tea
11.30 am – 12.20 pm	Session 2
12.20 pm – 1.00 pm	Lunch and networking
1.00 pm – 1.30 pm	Workshop – <i>Professor Robin Jeffrey, Professor Assa Doron</i>
1.30 pm – 2.20 pm	Session 3
2.20 pm – 2.30 pm	Closing remarks – <i>Dr Euan Graham, La Trobe Asia</i>

HOUSEKEEPING

The conference is being held in the **Viz Lab, Research Commons, Level 2, Library**
Toilets are located on the ground floor
Catering will be provided in outside the Viz Lab to allow opportunities for networking

MSASG

Melbourne South Asian Studies Group (MSASG) is a network linking academics and researchers working on South Asia in Australia on topical issues. It originated about 1988 and has always been extremely informal. Over the years people have done a number of activities under its umbrella – run seminars, drafted reports, conducted postgraduate workshops and briefed businesses among other things.

THE IDEA:

The focus is primarily to provide a friendly forum where work on South Asia can be presented and discussed in a robust but respectful manner, drawing on each other's experience and expertise.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership is free and open to academics, researchers, students, professionals and business people and others interested in South Asia. The group has a mailing list of over 180 members from diverse backgrounds and interest areas.

INDEPENDENT

MSASG is an independent organization currently hosted by the University of Melbourne and Australia India Institute, Melbourne, Australia.

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VENKATA LAKSHMI NARAYANA ALURI

Science and Maths Education, Curtin University

This study investigated the influence of prior knowledge and classroom learning environment on self-efficacy and achievement in mathematics using a mixed-method approach. A 56-item 7-dimensional survey instrument (MCOLES) was validated by factor analysis considering item responses from 511 Year-10 mathematics students from India and Australia for measuring the latent construct of mathematics classroom learning environment. Its joint influence on achievement, mediated through self-efficacy was quantified by structural equations modelling. Results indicated that direct mediated effects were significant for all students, but the joint influence was significant for high-ability students only. A teacher's tool was developed for counselling low-achievers with high-efficacy.

ANWESHA BANDYOPADHYAY

Department of Economics, Monash University

To increase the number of individuals from disadvantaged sections of the population (women, individuals of specific groups and ethnicities) in leadership positions, several countries have introduced affirmative action policies through quotas. How do these affirmative action policies affect development outcomes? We examine this question in the context of the implementation of the national public works program in India. Village councils were randomly allocated to be headed by women. Using a number of variables, we find that male heads are consistently more effective compared to female heads. Our results pose serious questions about the efficacy of affirmative action policies in the context of program implementation.

GEZANG CAIRANG

School of Humanities and Social Sciences, La Trobe University

"Tamang" people are Nepali in terms of their race, but they live on the Chinese side of Himalayan border for forty years. Before 1950s they were allowed to freely cross the border between China and Nepal. However, as Chinese state power extended to Himalayan regions, they were ensconced on the border and identified officially as 'Tibetan.' Though they speak Tibetan, culturally they can be distinguished from local Tibetans who have racialized them as "impure". Tamang people often struggle with their identity between the state discourse and regional culture. I analyze how ethnic identity is naturalized politically, economically and culturally through place-making in the Himalayas.

PRITAM DEY

Deakin Law School, Deakin University

India's transformative Constitutionalism has been the guiding philosophy behind the framer's intention to transform the people from subjects to citizens with equal rights and dignity. However, this transformative constitutionalism is at grave risk in 21st century, because of technological systems. As relationships today – individual, corporate and the State – are mediated and defined by technological systems, the response should be to find the linkage between constitutional trinity of liberty, equality and fraternity and technological systems. I intend to explore this intersection between technological systems and the Constitutional right of individuals on the broader principle of "right to technological self-determination".

GREG DINGLE

Department of Management, Sport and Tourism, La Trobe Business School, La Trobe University

Climate change is a complex, global phenomenon that is the subject of a vast body of multi-disciplinary research attracting increasing attention from management scholars. However, little is known about what climate change means for sport, a multi-billion dollar global industry. One study investigated the various physical, regulatory and commercial impacts of climate change for major Australian sport stadia, and the organisational responses. Results indicate water, energy, waste and cost management are the key climate change issues, and that these prompt divergent climate change risk management responses by stadia organisations. The potential for research in South Asian sport is highlighted.

DILHANI IRESHA DISSANAYAKE

History Department, La Trobe University

Given the lack of historical sources detailing the everyday lives and experiences of cinnamon peelers, contemporary interviews are one of the few ways to gain a sense of the labour process from the point of view of peelers themselves. Moreover, given the continued significance of cinnamon to the Sri Lankan economy, it is appropriate to bring the story of the peelers up to the present day. Peelers remain an important group who have recently been the part of Sri Lankan culture and the target of attempts to modernise the industry. I argue that contemporary peelers are enjoying greater freedom than historical peelers.

EMILY GRAHAM

Swinburne University of Technology

Language plays a significant role in ethnography. This paper examines some of the methodological aspects of remote fieldwork without fluency in the local language, based on research in an Indigenous fishing village in eastern Sri Lanka. The values and limitations of working with a translator will be considered, along with the need for creativity in communication, the value of humour, and the power of finding meaning in silences.

MARK JONES

South Asia Research Institute (SARI) - Australian National University
Affiliated with the Centre for Public Policy - Doon University

The story of slavery and its abolition has a master narrative so firmly grounded in the Atlantic slave trade that the many other slavery systems once found around the world and their complicated paths to abolition have been occluded. My proposed postdoctoral work will bring the pre-colonial slavery system of the Pahar to light, and then trace out the many paths to abolition that this complicated political geography has seen over the 19th and 20th centuries. Before I begin this work, I need to answer the question "What is a slave?"

MEDHA MAJUMDAR

School of Politics and International Relations College of Arts and Social Sciences
Australian National University

Economic modernisation theory argues that economic growth facilitates democracy transitions and consolidation. Although its principles are confirmed in many nations, India is the most challenging deviant case to modernisation theory where strong traditional values and consolidation of democracy were deemed impossible. Since 1990, India has experienced rapid economic growth and offers an opportunity to reassess the applicability of modernisation theory. This paper argues that India has partially confirmed modernisation theory as economic development has facilitated democratic consolidation. The vernacularisation of democracy in India that has enabled this, is not considered in modernisation theory. My thesis offers three critical revisions to modernisation theory.

LAURA MCLEAN

Curatorial Practice MADA, Monash University

I will discuss the early stages of my PhD project, which investigates post-colonial legacies inherent in contemporary forms of bio-power exercised through data-driven governance, using a triangulated study of practices in Australia, India, and the UK. I am examining the significance of these processes for political representation and for the politics of representation in contemporary art through practice-based research, and so will take my curated exhibition Startup States as the basis of my presentation. Presented at Sarai-CSDS, Delhi in January, Startup States used art, artefacts, and archival material to explore the colonial origins of systems of biometric identification, registration, and control, and their relationship to the technics of state governance today.

BIJAYA POKHAREL

La Trobe University

South Asian (SA) immigrant and refugee women are over-represented in research on Domestic Violence (DV) but under-identified in Australian general practice settings. The HARMONY study, a cluster Randomized Controlled Trial, aims to increase identification of DV among SA immigrant and refugee women and to improve culturally competent responses of their clinicians. As a part of the HARMONY trial, this research aims to explore clinician's experiences of care provision and SA women's experiences of care received in the general practice settings. We will explore dimensions of culturally competent care in the primary caring context of DV.

PRAKASH SUBEDI

Monash University

In this presentation, I discuss how the hegemonic mainstream Nepali literature is being questioned and challenged by contemporary writers coming from linguistic, ethnic, and regional margins. For this purpose, I analyse the works of Sirjansheel Arajakata (Creative Anarchy), a vibrant literary movement launched by young, ethnic Kirant writers. I specifically look into their practice of drawing figurative language from sources other than the Khas-Arya, Hindu-Sanskrit repository, and of employing regional/ethnic varieties of the Nepali language which heretofore were/are considered non-standard/substandard/inferior, and hence inappropriate for literary works.
