

GENERIC ELECTIVES (GE-3): Indian Society: A Historical Perspective

Credit distribution, Eligibility and Pre-requisites of the Course

Course title & Code	Credits	Credit distribution of the course			Eligibility criteria	Pre-requisite of the course
		Lecture	Tutorial	Practical/Practice		
Indian Society: A Historical Perspective	4	3	1	0	12 th Pass	NIL

Learning Objectives

Indian society has witnessed the evolution of a composite culture with coming together of multiple traditions after negotiating existing differences in the society, which persist even today. This course uses a socio-historical perspective to trace the processes of continuity and change through which various social categories have emerged and got entrenched, even while the society itself evolved and remained fluid. The first unit uses a variety of primary and secondary texts intends to explore key issues in ancient Indian social history such as varna, jati, class, caste, gender, marriage relations, different types of social and religious thinking and varied cultural experiences. During the medieval period, with the expansion of agrarian societies there was formation and proliferation of castes which had sub-regional specificities and variations. There is a need to take cognizance of the fact that there was considerable economic, social and occupational mobility at both individual and group level. The medieval period also saw conforming and conflicting trends in the religious sphere which manifested itself through the various branches and schools, like the Bhakti cults. After the advent of colonial rule, the national movement witnessed various alternative tendencies which many a times ran counter to the nationalist agenda which gave the national movement its own distinctive identity. The persisting search for uniformity is problematised in the face of existing differences that existed at various levels of the society and also highlight the contestation between forces of exclusion and inclusion. This course makes a conscious attempt to convey historical processes through which various ‘categories’ have emerged and thereby emphasize the fluid character of categorization. The goal is to focus on moments of convergence and divergences in society and how a composite, multi-layered, complex society emerged after negotiating differences in the society, some of which even persists today.

Learning outcomes

The Learning Outcomes of this course are as follows:

- Develop a critical understanding of the historical context of institutions like varna, jati, caste, kinship and marriage relations and early religious thought.
- Examine the complex relations between different social groups beginning from the hunter gatherers to the medieval trading and artisan communities.
- Understand the inherent politics and contradictions in the religious milieu of the medieval period.
- Outline various alternative currents in subaltern voices.
- Have a better understanding of the contemporary issues and challenges in the society

SYLLABUS OF GE-3

Unit I: Varna and jati; kinship and marriage; socio-religious ideologies in Early Traditions: (12 Hours)

1. Varna and jati in Vedic and Brahmanical traditions.

2. Forms of Kinship and regional variations; Marriage, family and households in early traditions,
3. Buddhism and Jainism.

Unit II: Social and occupational categories (some case studies from earliest times to 1700 CE): (16 Hours)

1. Early Hunter gatherers and Pastoral communities,
2. Tribal and Peasant communities,
3. Traders, Crafts persons and artisan communities.

Unit III: Social and Religious Movements (Case studies from 1000 -1800 CE): (16 Hours)

1. Devotional movements and social change

Unit IV: Contemporary society and its challenges: (some case studies) (16 Hours)

1. Subaltern voices and Social movements,
2. Environmental and Urban movement,
3. Gender and social imbalance
4. Plurality and Cultural diversities.

Practical component (if any) - NIL

Essential/recommended readings

Unit I: The unit traces the historical context of social institutions like varna, jati, caste, kinship and marriage relations and explores the social context of Vedic, Brahmanical, Buddhist, Jain and Shramanic thought in early India.

- Frits Staal, Discovering the Vedas, Origins, Mantras, Rituals, Insights, Part III and IV, Penguin, 2017, pp47-63
- S. Jaiswal, Introduction. Caste, Origin, Function and Dimensions of change, Delhi: Manohar, 2000, Introduction
- Trautmann, Thomas R. Dravidian Kinship, (Cambridge Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology, Series Number 36) Cambridge University Press, 1982 (Ch-1,4)
- Peter Harvey, Buddha in his Indian context in an Introduction to Buddhism, Cambridge University Press, 2017, pp.8-31.
- Paul Dundas, The Jains, Psychology Press, 2002, Introduction

Unit II: In this unit an attempt is made at exploration of the variegated societies that existed in the ancient, the lives of hunter-gatherers, pastoralist, peasants and tribal communities from earliest times. It also tracks the formation of authoritarian regimes and with the emergence of pan-regional market economics, there emerged various occupational categories with their unique identities and culture. The idea is to emphasize fluidity and reflect mobility in caste system which would be the key to understanding processes of change and continuity.

- S. Ratnagar, 2004 The Other Indians, Essays on Pastoralists and Prehistoric Tribal People, New Delhi: Three Essays Collective, 2004. (Ch-1,2)
- Olivelle, P. Showbiz in Ancient India, Data from the Arthashastra, In Osmund Bopearachchi and Ghosh ed, Early Indian History and Beyond, Primus Books, 2019, pp.56-65.
- I.H. Siddiqui, Social Mobility in the Delhi Sultanat in Irfan Habib (ed.) Medieval India 1: Researches in the History of India, 1200-1750, pp. 24-48.
- Carla Sinopoli, The Political Economy of Craft Production Cambridge University Press 2003 (Chapter 6,7).

- Chetan Singh, Forests and Pastoralists and Agrarian Society in Mughal India. In D.Arnold and R.Gujarat (ed.) Nature, Culture, Imperialism, OUP, 1995. pp. 21-48.

Unit III: This unit discusses the role of devotional movement in challenging the Brahmanical superiority which played a catalytic role in social change.

- Ray, Niharjan, “Socio- Religious Movements of Protest in Medieval India: Synoptical View” PIHC 36(1975), pp.LXIII-LXIX.
- David N. Lorenzen, “Dissent in Kabir and the Kabir Panth” in Vijaya Ramaswamy (ed.) Devotion and Dissent in Indian History, Foundation Books, 2014. pp.169-187.
- Richard M.Eaton, The Sufis of Bijapur,1300-1700- Social Roles of Sufis in Medieval Deccan, Princeton University Press, 2015. Chapter-5
- Philip Constable,” Setting on the School Verandah: The Ideology and Practice of Untouchable Educational Protest in Late nineteenth century in Western India, The Indian Economic and Social History Review, Oct-Dec,2000 pp.383- 419.

Unit IV: This unit explores how encounters with the colonial state led to many social and political contestations in the Indian subcontinent. These alternative tendencies came to be represented by various subaltern, environmental and gender related movements. Subaltern voices and Social movement, Environmental and Urban movement, Gender and social imbalance, Plurality and Cultural diversities.

- Susan Bayly, The New Cambridge History of India, Caste, Society and Politics in India from 18th.C to the Modern Age, Cambridge University Press, 1999 ch-5 and 6.
- Somen Chakraborty: A Critique of Social Movements in India: Experiences of Chipko, Uttarakhand, and Fishworkers' Movement, Indian Social Institute, 1999.
- Yogendra Singh, “Social Transformation of the Indian Society in Yogendra Singh (ed.) Social Change in India: Crisis and Resilience; New Delhi, pp.41-61.
- K.S.Singh,” The People of India : Diversities and Affinities”, pp. 88-100 and ”Pluralism, Synthesis, Unity in Diversities,, Diversities in Unity” in K.S.Singh (ed.) Diversity, Identity and Linkages, Explorations in Historical Ethnography.
- Richard Fox, “Varna Schemes and Ideological Integration in Indian Society”, Comparative studies in Society and History, Vol. 11,1969, pp.27-44.

Suggestive readings

- Roy, Kumkum 1994, Marriage as communication: An exploration of norms and narratives in Early India, Studies in History, 10 2, n.s pp 183-19
- Aloka Parashar- Sen, 2004 Introduction in Subordinate and Marginal Groups in Early India, Oxford University Press, p.1-82.
- Brian Smith, Classifying the Universe, The Ancient Indian Varna System and the Origins of Caste, OUP,1994, Introduction
- Suraj Bhan Bhardwaj – Migration, Mobility and Memories Meos in the process of peasantization and Islamisation in the medieval Period. In Vijaya Ramaswamy (ed) Migrations in Medieval and Early Colonial India., Routledge, 2016.
- Eleanor Zelliot and Rohini Mokashi – Punekar – Untouchable Saints -An Indian Phenomenon, Manohar ,2005 Chapter19- Bhakti voices on Untouchability.
- Lindsey Harlan,”Perfection and Devotion: Sati Tradition in Rajasthan” in John Stralton Hawley (ed) Sati- The blessing and the Curse- The Burning of Wives in India,1994.

- Gail Omvedt, Understanding Caste: From Buddha to Ambedkar and Beyond, Orient Blackswan, 2011.
- S.C.Dubey, Indian Society, NBT, 2001.
- Indian Society Historical Probings, In memory of D.D.Kosambi, Indian Council Of Historical Research,1974, pp.175189, 337-349.
- I.H.Siddiqui- Delhi Sultanate : Urbanization and Social change,Viva Books,2009
- Vijaya Ramaswamy (ed.) Devotion and Dissent in Indian History, Foundation Books , 2014
- Chakravarti, Uma- Understanding Caste in Gendering caste Through a Feminist lens, Calcutta: Stree. Pp.6-23 .
- Raj Mohan Gandhi, The Good Boat Man, Penguin Books, 2018.
- Rajiv Bhargava, “Political Responses to Religious Diversity in Ancient and Modern India”, Studies in History, Vol.1,2013, pp. 21-41.
- Thomas Metcalf, “The Ordering of Difference” in Sumit Sarkar (ed.) Caste in Modern India, pp.88-112.
- Das Veena, Dipankar Gupta, Paricia Oberoi(eds.), Tradition, Pluralism and Identity : In Honour of T.N.Madan, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1999.
- Hulas Singh “Social Questioning” in Hulas Singh, Rise of Reason :Intellectual History of 19th C. Maharashtra, Routledge, Delhi, 2015, pp. 88-168.

Hindi Readings:

- G.S Ghurye, दिंती, वगा और व्यवसारःसमाजः-सत्र के प्राणातनका ग्रन्थ, राजिपाल एं ड संस,
- सुतमत सरकार, आधुतनक काल: भारत 1880 से 1950, राजिकमल प्रकाशन, 2020
- Gail Omvedt, Jati ke samajha: महात्मा बुद्ध से बाबासाहेबा अम्बेडकर, ओररएं ट ब्लैकस्वान, 2018.
- Gail Omvedt, भारत में बौद्ध धमा: ब्राह्मणवादि और दिंततवादि को चुनौती, सेंटि, 2018.
- N.R.Farooqi, सूफीवादि कुछ महत्वपूणा लेख, ओररएं ट ब्लैकस्वान,
- Shahabuddin Iraqi , मध्यालीन भारत में भम्भि आंडिलन। चौखम्बा सुरभारती प्रकाशन, 2012
- Pandey, G. C. (1990). बौद्ध धमा के तवकास का इततहास (बौद्ध धमा के तवकास का इततहास)। लखनऊ: उत्तर प्रिंश तहिंी संस्थान। (तीसरा संस्करण)
- त मश्र, एस. सी. (2014.) 'मुग्ल पूवर भारत में सामात दिक तगतशीलता', मध्यकालीन भारत, अंक - (सं.) इरफान हबीब, त लिली: राजिकमल प्रकाशन, पृ.सं. 51-58.
- बहुगुणा, आर.पी. (2009). मध्यकालीन भारत में तभि और सूफी आंडिलन, त लिली: ग्रंथशाल्पी.

Note: Examination scheme and mode shall be as prescribed by the Examination Branch, University of Delhi, from time to time.