



**Canada India Research  
Centre for Learning  
and Engagement**

**CIRCLE Graduate South Asia Conference**  
September 29, 30, and October 1, 2022 (virtual)  
<https://uoguel.ph/CIRCLE-grad-conference-2022>

***Organizer and Host***

Canada India Research Centre for Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE)  
University of Guelph

**Day 1: Thursday, September 29 | 8:30 a.m. – 1:45 p.m. EDT/ 6:00 p.m. – 11:15 p.m. IST**

**Opening Session | 8:30 a.m. – 8:45 a.m. EDT**

- Welcome: Dilshan Fernando, PhD Candidate in Sociology and International Development, University of Guelph; Conference Facilitator
- Opening Remarks: Gwen Chapman, Provost and Vice-President (Academic), University of Guelph

**Keynote | 8:45 a.m. – 9:20 a.m. EDT**

**Moderator:** Dilshan Fernando, PhD Candidate in Sociology and International Development, University of Guelph  
Research Priorities for South Asia and Opportunities for Canada South Asia Collaboration | **Dominique Charron**, Vice-President, Programs and Partnerships, International Development Research Centre, Canada

**Session 1 | Gender Inequity | 9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. EDT**

**Moderator:** Ashna Jassi, Senior EDI Data Analyst, SickKids Hospital, Toronto

1. Pink Tax: Reappraise and Revisit India's Taxes on Female Centric Goods | Prathyusha Samvedam, Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology
2. Shades of Prejudice: To Be Fair or Not To Be? | Sristi Mondal, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi
3. Gendered Dimensions of Indian International Student Migration to Canada | Neil Amber Judge, Wilfrid Laurier University
4. Negotiating Paid Domesticity: Migrant Women Claiming Space in Urban India | Nargis Vasundhara, Delhi University
5. Gendered Space of Labour: Domesticity, Work, and Desire in Small Town Hindi Films | Sayanty Chatterjee, Indian Institute of Technology Madras

**Special Session 1 | Thinking About Doing a PhD? Insights, Tips, and Resources | 11:15 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. EDT**

**Moderator:** Sharada Srinivasan, Associate Professor, Sociology & Anthropology; Director, CIRCLE, University of Guelph

- Akshay Chadha, PhD Candidate in Computer Science; President, Graduate Students' Association, University of Guelph
- Dilshan Fernando, PhD Candidate in Sociology and International Development, University of Guelph
- Glen Pyle, Professor, Biomedical Sciences, Ontario Veterinary College, University of Guelph
- Ben Bradshaw, Assistant Vice-President (Graduate Studies); Associate Professor, Geography, Environment, and Geomatics, University of Guelph

**Session 2 | Health | 12:15 p.m. – 1:45 p.m. EDT**

**Moderator:** Elizabeth Finnis, Associate Professor, Sociology & Anthropology, University of Guelph

1. Exploring Dementia Dastan: Exploring the Experiences of South Asian Canadians Living with Dementia and their Care Partners | Navjot Gill, University of Waterloo
2. Factors Affecting Out-of-Pocket and Catastrophic Health Expenditure: Evidence from a Case Study of Haryana, India | Vishal, Panjab University

3. Christian Medical Missionaries Role in Colonial India: A Case Study of American Baptist Missions in Assam Province, 1886–1946 | Jagriti, Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar
4. Deriving Normative Data on 24-Hour Ambulatory Blood Pressure Monitoring for South Asian Children (ASHA) | Shanzey Ali, McMaster University
5. Experiences of Disability in Urban and Peripheral Areas and the Limitations of ICT Solutions: A Qualitative Study Based in Myanmar | Dilshan Fernando, University of Guelph

**Day 2: Friday, September 30, 2022 | 8:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. EDT/ 6:00 p.m. – 10:30 p.m. IST**

**Session 3 | Performances, Identities, and Emancipation | 8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. EDT**

**Moderator:** Ataharul Chowdhury, Associate Professor, Capacity Development and Extension, School of Environmental Design and Rural Development, University of Guelph

1. Examining Borders and Affect: A Study of Select Literary Texts from Assam and Bengal | Udit Banerjee, Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar
2. Begum Hazrat Mahal and the Revolt of 1857: Some Reflections on Women's 'Self-representation' in Politics | Tanya Burman, Ambedkar University
3. The Birangona-Mother's Embodied Trauma and Fragmented Memories of the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War | Shamika Shabnam, McMaster University
4. Life History of Dalit Women in India: Negotiations and Revisitation | Meena Sawariya, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University

**Keynote | 10:15 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. EDT**

**Moderator:** Naresh Thevathasan, Associate Professor (Retired), School of Environmental Sciences, University of Guelph  
Research to Policy in the Global South | **Rohan Samarajiva**, Founding Chair, LIRNEasia, Sri Lanka

**Session 4 | Governance and Political Processes | 11:15 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. EDT**

**Moderator:** Bharat Punjabi, Research Fellow, Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy, University of Toronto

1. Increasing Public Trust in the Government through Guaranteed Delivery of Public Services | Akhil Bhardwaj, Panjab University
2. Women Political Empowerment in Canada and Pakistan: A Case Study of FAAVM | Saima Noor, Quaid-e-Azam University
3. Indigeneity and Adivasis Quest for Self-Governance in India: Need to include a Debrahmanical Approach with Decolonial Approach | Arvind Kumar, University of Victoria
4. Can Democracy be a Threat to Minority Rights? The Case of Nepal | Hari Har Jnawali, University of Waterloo
5. Making of the Muslim 'Other': Identity and Politics in South India | Mohammed K. Shafi, University of Hyderabad
6. Impacts of British Colonialism on Northeast India's Landscapes and Ethnic Identity | Prerana Das, Queen's University

**Day 3: Saturday, October 1, 2022 | 8:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. EDT/ 6:00 p.m. – 11:00 p.m. IST**

**Session 5 | Sustainability, Environment, and Climate Change | 8:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. EDT**

**Moderator:** Asim Biswas, Associate Professor, School of Environmental Sciences, University of Guelph

1. Waste Valorization for a Sustainable Future (special panel) | Malik Hassan, Debarshi Nath and Aarsha Surendram, University of Guelph
2. Infrared Spectra of Recalcitrant Soil Organic Matter (rSOM) from Different Ecosystems | Jeewan Gamage, University of Guelph
3. Full Electric Vehicles: History, Concept, Operation, and Potential Impact on the Economy, Environment, and Daily Life in Pakistan | Muhammad Ali Baig, Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), and Quaid-i-Azam University
4. Climate Change Mitigation Potential of Perennial Biomass Crops Grown in Southern Ontario, Canada | Sowthini Vijayakumar, University of Guelph

**Session 6 | Inequality | 10:45 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. EDT**

**Moderator:** Karine Gagné, Assistant Professor, Sociology & Anthropology, University of Guelph

1. Anticipation of Block Chain Technology's Future in Public Service Delivery | Maneesh Thakkar, Panjab University
2. Rise of the Digital Financial Ecosystem in India: The Political Economy of Platforms, Gaps, and Trends for Development | Aditi Bhatia-Kalluri, University of Toronto
3. Maneuvering through Priority: Resilience Among Casual Workers in Kanpur Leather Industry, India | Abhishek Dwivedi, South Asian University
4. Negotiating Postsecular Spaces: IUML and the Politics of Non-State Welfare in Kerala, India | Ibrahim Badusha C., University of Hyderabad

**Special Session 2 | Publishing, Research Communication, and Engagement | 12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. EDT**

**Moderator:** Dilshan Fernando, PhD Candidate in Sociology and International Development, University of Guelph

- Haroon Akram-Lodhi, Professor, Economics and International Development Studies, Trent University; former Editor-in-Chief, *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*
- Owen Roberts, Instructor and Faculty Member, Communications, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; former Director, Research Communications, University of Guelph
- Raghunathan Rengaswamy, Dean, Global Engagement; Professor, Chemical Engineering, Indian Institute of Technology Madras

## Speakers

[Rohan Samarajiva](#), Founding Chair, LIRNEasia, Sri Lanka. He is a member of the United Nations' Global Pulse Advisory Group on the Governance of Data and Artificial Intelligence. He served as Chair of the apex Information and Communication Technology Agency within the government of Sri Lanka (2018–19). He was Director General of Telecommunications in Sri Lanka (1998–99) and Associate Professor of Communication and Public Policy at Ohio State University (1987–2000).

[Raghunathan Rengaswamy](#), Dean, Global Engagement; Professor, Chemical Engineering, Indian Institute of Technology Madras. His research focuses on Fault Detection and Diagnosis (FDD), the development of Sensor Placement (SP) algorithms for FDD, and fuel cells.

[Owen Roberts](#), Instructor and Faculty Member, Communications, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; former Director, Research Communications, University of Guelph. He is a journalist and a columnist with daily, weekly, and monthly print and online media that includes RealAgriculture.com, *Guelph Today* as well as his blog Urban Cowboy.

[Haroon Akram-Lodhi](#), Professor, Economics and International Development Studies, Trent University; former Editor-in-Chief, *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*. His research focuses on agrarian political economy, feminist development economics, peasant economics, political ecology and sustainable rural livelihoods, and food systems analysis.

[Dominique Charron](#), Vice-President, Programs and Partnerships, International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada. She was previously the Director of IDRC's Agriculture and Environment program. She supervised research focused on increasing agricultural productivity and food security, reducing vulnerability to climate change, and protecting the public against infectious diseases and non-communicable diseases. Before joining IDRC, she managed research programs at the Public Health Agency of Canada.

[Akshay Chadha](#), PhD Candidate in Computer Science; President, Graduate Students Association, University of Guelph. His research focuses on data analytics, time series forecasting, optimization algorithms, and machine learning algorithms for predictive models using tools such as python, scikit-learn, TensorFlow, and karas.

[Dilshan Fernando](#), PhD Candidate in Sociology and International Development, University of Guelph. His research focuses on political economic analysis of disability and its impact on development. He is the Student Engagement Facilitator for CIRCLE and the Facilitator for this conference. He is a Research Fellow of LIRNEasia, Sri Lanka.

[Glen Pyle](#), Professor, Biomedical Sciences, Ontario Veterinary College, University of Guelph. His research focuses on causes, molecular mechanisms, and treatments of heart disease related to

molecular basis of heart failure and the development of novel therapies for the treatment of heart attacks and chronic heart failure.

[Ben Bradshaw](#), Assistant Vice-President (Graduate Studies); Associate Professor, Geography, Environment, and Geomatics, University of Guelph. His research focuses on environmental governance with special emphasis on mining and Indigenous communities in Canada, environmental stewardship in conventional agricultural systems, and Canada's emergent sustainable seafood governance network.

[Gwen Chapman](#), Provost and Vice-President (Academic), University of Guelph. A distinguished researcher and innovative educator, she joined the University of Guelph in 2016 as Dean of the College of Social and Applied Human Sciences (CSAHS). As Dean, she directed development of a transformative strategic plan that led to significant growth in Indigenization and internationalization as well as research and pedagogical innovation.

## Moderators

[Ashna Jassi](#), Senior EDI Data Analyst, SickKids Hospital, Toronto. She recently completed her PhD in Applied Social Psychology at the University of Guelph. Her research focuses on the Punjabi diaspora in Canada, particularly in the areas of family and gender. Her current work focuses on equity-focused data initiatives across SickKids Hospital.

[Elizabeth Finnis](#), Associate Professor, Sociology & Anthropology, University of Guelph. Her research addresses the politics, economics, and cultures of smaller-scale farming and local food systems, using a political ecology lens to examine food, diet, agricultural transitions, and food sovereignty.

[Ataharul Chowdhury](#), Associate Professor, Capacity Development and Extension, School of Environmental Design and Rural Development, University of Guelph. His research focuses on improving communities in remote and resource-poor settings where there may be insufficient capacity to solve societal, economic, political, and environmental challenges.

[Bharat Punjabi](#), Research Fellow, Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy, University of Toronto. His research focuses on Indian urbanization and water policy, the role of institutions in economic development, and metropolitan governance in India. He is a Visiting Fellow at the Indian Council for Research in International Economic Relations (ICRIER) in New Delhi.

[Asim Biswas](#), Associate Professor, School of Environmental Sciences, University of Guelph. His research focuses on sustainable soil management, providing answers to increase the productivity and resilience of land-based agri-food production systems towards developing a more sustainable agri-food system to meet the challenges of a changing climate.

[Karine Gagné](#), Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Guelph. Her research focuses on bringing a multidisciplinary perspective to issues related to the convoluted notions of nature and culture. Her research is based primarily in the regions of Ladakh and Zaskar in the Indian Himalayas where she examines the political and cultural dimensions of human interactions with the environment.

[Naresh Thevathasan](#), Associate Professor (Retired), School of Environmental Sciences, University of Guelph. His research focuses on carbon sequestration and nutrient cycling dynamics in temperate agroforestry systems and purpose-grown biomass crops research and development.

[Sharada Srinivasan](#), Associate Professor, Sociology & Anthropology; Canada Research Chair in Gender, Justice and Development, University of Guelph. Her research focuses on gender and development, exploring gender discrimination, violence, generational dynamics, well-being and empowerment through research on sex ratio imbalance, daughter discrimination and related gendered practices, domestic violence, and youth and farming. She is the inaugural director of the Canada India Research Centre for Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE).

## Abstracts

**Day 1: Thursday, September 29, 2022**

### **Session 1 | Gender Inequity | 09:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. EDT**

#### **1. Pink Tax: Reappraise and Revisit India's Taxes on Female Centric Goods**

Prathyusha Samvedam, Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology, India

It is difficult to think of any area of public policy that is “gender neutral” in India because of the many gender-based challenges that women face. Over the past decade, a lot of attention has been paid to the government's expenditure policies from a gender perspective in the context of gender responsive budgeting in India. However, there have only been a few attempts to examine revenue-generating policies from a gender perspective. To that end, this paper aims to examine the gender implications of policies aimed at increasing revenue generation in India. This has been a challenge because there is a lack of research on the impact of taxation on women's lives. The lack of sex-disaggregated data on tax incidence has also prevented empirical studies in this area, particularly those focusing on India. An important consideration is how tax policies affect women, as there are a variety of issues that disproportionately affect women in countries like India and others. Disproportionate unpaid family labour, gender wage gaps, and the resulting imbalance of power in households are all factors that should be considered when formulating tax policies in the country.

#### **2. Shades of Prejudice: To be Fair or Not To be?**

Sristi Mondal, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, India

The fascination with fair skin brides has been a dominant preference in arranged marriages in India. This study draws from an ethnographic analysis including intensive case studies and in-depth interviews with Bengali, middle-class, working professionals in West Bengal, India who use/have used matrimonial websites to seek spouses to explore how gendered colourism is perpetuated through select matrimonial websites that often transcends the digital space into the physical realm. It also emphasizes the role of photographs in impression management, comparative judgements, and in curating a desirable image of the marriageable self. Such colourism creates a sense of inequality based on one's skin colour or perception of one's skin colour as well as underscores how the perception of one's body through photographs or profile descriptors construct one's identity, that is, it explores how bodies play a decisive role in marriage-related choices. Finally, it discusses the affectivity associated with gendered colourism and its implications for women's agency in matrimonial matchmaking in India.



### **3. Gendered Dimensions of Indian International Student Migration to Canada**

Neil Amber Judge, Wilfrid Laurier University, Canada

Canada has emerged as one of the most important study destinations for international students. Canadian immigration policies began to attract international students with an aim to fulfill its skilled labour shortages and provide potential better integrated immigrants (Keung, Teotonio & Lafleche 2019; Geddie 2015). Recent findings reveal considerable growth in the number of international student graduates obtaining a post-graduation work permit and then transitioning to permanent residence within five years (Crossman et al. 2022). India has become the largest source of international students to Canada, surpassing those from China (Keung, Teotonio & Lafleche 2019). A large majority of international students from India go to colleges for their studies and represent a growing number of those transitioning to permanent residence in Canada every year (Crossman et al. 2022; Quadeer 2022). This paper explores the gendered dimensions of international student pathways from India, considering the role and experience of student migrants in terms of processes of marriage, work, and migration plans. By examining such processes, the paper hopes to better understand the changing conditions in India regarding migration and gender roles.

### **4. Negotiating Paid Domesticity: Migrant Women Claiming Space in Urban India**

Nargis Vasundhara, Delhi University, India

Over the last few decades, the evolution of paid domestic work and the idea of servitude has become increasingly attached with the modern Indian elite. In metropolitan centres of India, female domestic workers are largely impoverished migrants from rural areas who have migrated with their families or alone as cities become spaces for lucrative employment. For the women workers, the process of migration is not a seamless transition: from her village to the city slums, and finally into the urban home for employment. They all form breaks in her biography. This paper derives its focus from the dislocated rural lives of the migrant by her shift into the urban diaspora, which leads not just to her physical relocation, but a mental and emotional readjustment to her new environments. Ethnographic data from New Delhi, which I shall present, is drawn from a working-class neighbourhood/*basti* located within an affluent colony in south Delhi. The focus lies in an attempt to make meaning out of places, and to situate the lives of women within a gendered occupation. I engage with oral histories and visual ethnographies as qualitative research methods to interpret subjective experiences and local histories of women workers.

### **5. Gendered Space of Labour: Domesticity, Work, and Desire in Small Town Hindi Films**

Sayanty Chatterjee, Indian Institute of Technology Madras, India

The inclusion of women in the new set of workforce redefined the distinct public and private polarization. This paper, through the reading of three films—*Masaan* (Ghaywan 2015), *Lipstick under my Burkha* (Shrivastava 2016), and *Anaarkali of Aarah* (Das 2017)—argues that the relationship between the precarity of workspaces for women and the desire for sexual autonomy is contested and nuanced. Set against the shifting nature of north Indian small towns

in a post-liberalized economy, the paper is interested in the cinematic representation of various spaces of work and the issues that women encounter in their quotidian existence through the lens of labour and sexuality studies. Though women challenge the power structure steeped in the patriarchal world order and assert their sexualities, the question is how the trident of domestic-economic-sexual variables influence their experiences of life in the gendered spaces of small towns.

## **Session 2 | Health | 12:15 a.m. – 1:45 p.m. EDT**

### **1. Dementia Dastan: Exploring the Experiences of South Asian Canadians Living with Dementia and their Care Partners**

Navjot Gill, University of Waterloo, Canada

As of 2016, 5.6% of the Canadian population was South Asian, making them the largest visible minority. South Asians are an ethnically diverse group with socio-cultural norms that influence their living experience with dementia. However, the knowledge regarding the experience of living with dementia and accessing services in South Asian communities is not extensive. It is essential to unpack their experiences from their perspectives to achieve a comprehensive understanding of their journey from symptom recognition to health service access. The paper's objective is to explore the experiences of people living with dementia and their care partners in the South Asian community to understand the barriers and facilitators to awareness, seeking and receiving diagnosis, and post-diagnosis services. Methods: Semi-structured interviews with people living with dementia and their care partners will be conducted. Interviews will be offered in English, Hindi, Punjabi, and Urdu. Thematic analysis will be used to analyze the interviews. Future Implications: The project will provide information regarding the experience of living with dementia and the challenges faced by the care partners, which may help guide policies to deliver culturally sensitive services, including methods to improve awareness of the condition, diagnostic services, and accessing healthcare services.

### **2. Factors Affecting Out-of-Pocket and Catastrophic Health Expenditure: Evidence from a Case Study of Haryana, India**

Vishal, Panjab University, India

In India, out-of-pocket health expenses (OOPHE) constitute more than 70% of health spending, putting households at risk. In most circumstances, such high OOPHE are disastrous, especially given the country's high poverty rate. People may become impoverished as a result of high OOPHE and Catastrophic Health Expenditures (CHE). This study tried to understand the variables affecting the occurrence of OOPHE and CHE using data collected during a field survey of 316 households covering 1,276 individuals from eight districts of Haryana, India in 2020–21. The study showed that the larger the family size, the higher the OOPHE. It was found to be higher for male members as compared to female counterparts. Persons belonging to OBC and SC households tended to incur significantly less OOPHE. A history of chronic ailment was found to have a strong link to OOPHE. Young respondents had much lower OOPHE than people who were older, implying that as people age, their OOPHE rise,

and indicating increased health-care demands in their later years. It is consequently critical to establish the predictors of OOPHE and CHE in order to develop fair and efficient financial safeguards against healthcare costs.

**3. Christian Medical Missionaries Role in Colonial India: A Case Study of American Baptist Missions in the Assam Province, 1886–1946**

Jagriti, Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar, India

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw some major changes and encounters within the field of medicine and in the lives of non-European people, it created contact, conflict, and convergence between western rulers and indigenous people by illustrating contradictions and rivalries while also identifying the importance of medicine and disease within the political framework of the colonial setup. It is in this context the American Baptist Missions medical work in the North-East Frontier Province created new avenues for the introduction of medico-evangelist endeavours. With only a few government dispensaries and hospitals, Mission Medicine gained centre stage, offering up a world of possibilities in a place like Assam. While attempting to assess the areas where the most urgent need for medical work existed, the missionaries offered treatment in both the plains and hills, opened hospitals and dispensaries, and offered medical tours to remote villages. The paper attempts to highlight the extent of the work carried out by the missionaries, medical initiatives, expansion of hospitals and dispensaries, and lastly the role of Baptist medical missionaries for women.

**4. Deriving Normative Data on 24-Hour Ambulatory Blood Pressure Monitoring for South Asian Children**

Shanze Ali, McMaster University, Canada

South Asians have greater prevalence of hypertension, diabetes, and obesity, which contributes to their increased cardiovascular disease burden. Some of these risk factors begin in childhood. Therefore, accurate and early identification of hypertension in South Asian children is necessary for future cardiovascular disease prevention. 24-hour Ambulatory blood pressure monitoring (ABPM) is considered the gold-standard for pediatric blood pressure (BP) measurement. However, its utilization is limited due to the lack of validated normative reference data in diverse, multiethnic pediatric populations. This study aims to establish normative height- and age-sex-specific reference values for ABPM among 2,700 Canadian South Asian children (aged 5–17 years). This study will also evaluate differences in ABPM measurements by body mass index and understand the association between BP, physical activity, and diet quality. The Spacelabs 90217 and accelerometer devices will be used to monitor ABPM and movement behaviour data, respectively. Recruitment is currently ongoing, and 50 participants have been recruited through places of worship, schools, and word of mouth. The development of normative ABPM data specific to South Asian children will increase the accuracy of BP measurement and hypertension identification in this high-risk population, providing an additional strategy for primary prevention of cardiovascular disease.

**5. Experiences of Disability in Urban and Peripheral Areas and the Limitations of ICT Solutions: A Qualitative Study Based in Myanmar**

Dilshan Fernando, University of Guelph, Canada

This paper aims to understand the differences in urban and rural experiences of disability in Myanmar. Informed by the social model of disability, I investigated how disabling experiences differ between those who live in Yangon, Myanmar's capital, and selected peripheries (Mandalay, Ayeyarwady region, and Shan state). We also aimed to understand the viability of information and communication technology (ICT) "solutions" for disabling barriers in the context of weaker welfare programs. We collected data from 80 people with disabilities (PWD) to report the results. Key differences in peripheral experiences of disability and development reside in living independently, general perceptions about the day-to-day challenges that PWD face, and access to public space, public infrastructure, and public transport. Two notable findings are: (1) accessibility is not just infrastructural, but also attitudinal, more enabling in Yangon than in the peripheries, and (2) PWD who live in peripheries feel "home-incarcerated" due to infrastructural exclusions experienced in those areas.

**Day 2: Friday, September 30, 2022**

**Session 3 | Performances, Identities, and Emancipation | 8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. EDT**

**1. Examining Borders and Affect: A Study of Select Literary Texts from Assam and Bengal**

Udita Banerjee, Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar, India

The partition of India in 1947 involved the division of the country on religious lines into the two nation-states of India and Pakistan. As borders were drawn, there was large-scale violence and millions of people were uprooted and displaced. The migrations along the eastern borders of India, during and after the partition of the country, have given rise to a number of conflicts over the years. This paper will primarily focus on the border politics of Assam, Bengal, and Bangladesh (erstwhile East Pakistan), and taking recourse to pertinent works (such as those of Sarah Ahmed) navigate how the cultural politics of emotions creates the inclusion-exclusion binary, aggravating and complicating the issues in these regions. Taking into consideration the lens of affect, this paper will attempt to study two literary texts written in Bengali—*Indubalar Bhaater Hotel* (2020) by Kallol Lahiri and *'Wake Up Call'* (2012) by Amitabha Dev Choudhury (translated later into English). These narratives depict the trauma of migration of the two female protagonists from Bangladesh. The paper will also interrogate the questions of intersectional gender violence and affective alienation while negotiating the difference of experiences of the women in the two literary narratives.

**2. Begum Hazrat Mahal and the Revolt of 1857: Some Reflections on Women's 'Self-representation' in Politics**

Tanya Burman, Ambedkar University, Delhi, India

Begum Hazrat Mahal (BHM) entered the royal household of Awadh as a dancing girl. She was married to and divorced by the ruling Nawab, but eventually rose to the position of queen-mother during the revolt of 1857. Her intersectional positioning, however, has been sanitized and decontextualized to fit into the popular imagery of a selfless wife/mother turned freedom fighter. This has limited the scope of scholarly attention on BHM, as the nature of her participation, her subjectivity, consciousness, political acumen, and control are not only undermined but remain unexplored, even when there exist numerous archival sources through which this can be gauged. While the sources considered in this paper may not classify as auto-biographical in the conventional sense of the term, drawing from historians such as D. Fairchild Ruggles (2000, 2014) and Susan Broomhall (2018), I argue that they form a plausible entry-point into an exploration of BHM's self-representation and assertion of power during the Revolt. Through this, the paper hopes to lay bare the discursive continuities of certain pre-conditions to women's credibility in history in contemporary India, and attempts to put forth a study that moves beyond these limitations.

### **3. The Birangona-Mother's Embodied Trauma and Fragmented Memories of the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War**

Shamika Shabnam, McMaster University, Canada

The 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War history is the history of male freedom fighters. This history generates public forgetting of women's wartime stories. My paper examines how Bangladeshi women create alternate historical understandings of the war through their testimonies. I explore how wartime survivors of rape and sexual violence, or *birangonas*, address their intersectional identity of being a mother and a survivor. I use the expression, birangona-mother to refer to this intersectional identity. An in-depth engagement with birangona-mother testimonies seeks to contribute to research that addresses the lives and embodied experiences of disenfranchised women of colour. I examine select accounts of rape survivors from the Bangla testimony collections, *Birangona Noi Muktijoddha* (Freedom Fighter, Not War Heroine, 2017) edited by Sharifa Bulbul, and Surma Zahid-edited *Birangona Somogra* (Stories of the War Heroine, 2018). South Asian theorists like Yasmin Saikia and Nayanika Mookherjee alert us to the multiple ways in which birangonas remember and speak of their traumas. I expand this body of scholarship through developing a sustained conversation on how the birangona-mother's trauma is inscribed through her double act of remembering her sexual abuse while talking about her child's death.

### **4. Life History of Dalit Women in India: Negotiations and Revisitation**

Meena Sawariya, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University, India

Life history is a method that constructs meaning to the experiential moments in the life of an individual. It is a research method to re-create the historical events through silences, narratives, and disavowal of Dalit women's life as a journey from past. The narrative coherence of her whole life provides nuances of vital and dynamic critical events and memories that shaped her contemporary struggles and contested identities. Through life history method, the researcher

will reflect on Yashica Dutt's autobiography (2019) *Coming out as a Dalit* as an attempt to understand her life story through the lens of psychoanalysis. This paper covers the significant yet unattended concerns including witnessing the autobiographer's journey, the researcher's revelations as a co-traveller in life history, explores the inner world of caste and gender as identities play a role in giving meanings to the lives, and also looks at how these identities intersectionally construct meaning in life. Hence, this paper underlines how the generations of Dalit women have processed the meaning of their life to give coherent understanding about the historical actuality within the social realm.

#### **Session 4 | Governance and Political Processes | 11:15 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. EDT**

##### **1. Increasing Public Trust in the Government through Guaranteed Delivery of Public Services**

Akhil Bhardwaj, Punjab University, India

The success of government institutions is closely linked to public trust. The assumption that another person or organization will act in accordance with one's expectations of good behaviour is known as trust. The most effective method to manage common resources is to use collective action tactics based on trust and cooperative norms. Trust has an impact on the quality of life and the development of human capital. People who live in communities with higher levels of trust and cooperation are generally happy. The connection between government institutions and citizens as well as within government, is the focus of systemic or institutional trust. There is a high display of correlations between institutional trust and satisfaction with service delivery in concerned service provider public institutions. Studies show that Institutional trust holds an enormous effect on citizen's behaviour and the functioning of a democratic government. The erosion of trust indicates the crisis of democracy. This paper focuses on how the efficient and effective delivery of public services can impact the level of institutional trust along with some policy prescriptions to diminish the level of institutional distrust.

##### **2. Women Political Empowerment in Canada and Pakistan: A Case Study of FAVM**

Saima Noor, Quaid-e-Azam University, Pakistan

The presence of women in politics can be observed in the parliament and national assemblies of their countries, but every country has its own political playing field. Throughout the world, women find themselves under-represented in parliament and far removed from decision-making levels. Their representation in politics had been secured by reserving seats, but women are not welcome in state politics, which has been dominated by men. Women's participation in politics, on equal footing with men, still remains a distant dream. This research paper deals with the political position of women in the Canada and Pakistan, tries to find out the main hurdles behind the low representation of women in politics, which has negatively affected the society as well as development of the state. Moreover, this paper analyzes the role of the Federal Association for the Advancement of Visible Minority Rights

(FAAVM). How can this organization help women to seek their rights under legal framework? Canadian and Pakistani women have been marginalized in politics because male-dominated societies have institutionalized and created structural, ideological, and functional mechanisms in politics, which have strengthened gender inequality.

### **3. Indigeneity and Adivasis Quest for Self-Governance in India: Need to Include a Debrahmanical Approach with Decolonial Approach**

Arvind Kumar, University of Victoria, Canada

To many, the decentralized governance framework conceptualized for Adivasi regions may seem a rational step toward extending self-governance to Adivasis, the Indigenous peoples of India. However, the longstanding socio-political movements for self-governance indicate that everything is not right with the present governance framework. Subsequently, for most proponents, the idea of decolonizing Indian governance and the legal system is limited to replacing the western origin common legal system and governance systems with a legal system and jurisprudence based on Brahmanical texts such as Dharmashastras, etc. In doing so, one ignores the fact that contemporary India is not limited to a Hindu Brahmanical tradition and worldview, instead it is a land of diverse societies, such as the Adivasi society, with their own governance systems based on diverse and unique worldview. In this context, my paper argues that there is a need to include a debrahmanical approach with a decolonial approach while we discuss Adivasis' quest for self-governance and autonomy. My argument is based on the premise that contemporary Adivasi problems have their roots in two historical processes: Brahmanical socio-religious-cultural tradition and British colonial rule in India. This paper is part of my ongoing doctoral research, which is designed as a multi-method legal ethnography.

### **4. Can Democracy be a Threat to Minority Rights: The Case of Nepal**

Hari Har Jnawali, University of Waterloo, Canada

This paper examines the impact of the liberal democratic system on the Madhesi autonomy struggles in Nepal. In the aftermath of the Interim Constitution, the Madhesi parties demanded self-determination through the formation of an autonomous Madhesi province. The mainstream political parties rejected this demand and issued the new Constitution without including self-determination. Against this background, this paper examines whether the liberal democratic system has led to the rejection of the Madhesi demand for self-determination. It argues that the liberal democratic system socialized the mainstream political parties to understand democracy as a system that defends individual rights, merit-based competition, and legal equality, which provides equal opportunities to all citizens to participate in decision-making processes. This system did not, however, prepare the political parties to understand that various social, political, cultural, and ethnic grievances obstruct the marginalized people's abilities to exercise their individual rights and benefit from the equal opportunities. Therefore, the mainstream political parties defended individual rights, characterized self-determination as the undemocratic right, and stood against the ethnic autonomy. The CPN-Maoist and the

Madhesi parties, which intensified the demand for self-determination, succumbed to the liberal politics and failed to build a propitious environment for the success of autonomy struggles.

### **5. Making of the Muslim 'Other': Identity and Politics in South India**

Mohammed K. Shafi, University of Hyderabad

Abstract: This paper problematizes an essentialized understanding of Muslim identity by elucidating the evolvment of the competing multiple intra-religious identities. The Muslims of India cannot be categorized as a unified community because of the regional, linguistic, ethnic, sectarian, and other kinds of divisions. These differences often contribute to forming various exclusive groups within the community. Deliberately ignoring such fragmentations, the Hindutva's discourse on identity locates in the homogeneity of religious identity and construction of a unified 'Muslim other.' While introducing the Muslims as a significant other, the Hindutva discourse intentionally overlooks ethnic and theological differences and various competing sectarian collectivities within the Muslim community. Through an ethnographic case study of the Beary Muslims, an ethno-linguistic Muslim community in coastal south India, the paper shows how ethnic and sectarian differences among the Muslims constitute the formation of various exclusive groups in interpreting and performing religious rituals. Additionally, it examines how sectarian identity assertion of the Muslim groups in the public space contributes to strengthening the making of a unified 'Muslim other.' In doing so, this paper contests the Hindutva project of portraying local Muslims as an abstract threat to the majority community.

### **6. Impacts of British Colonialism on Northeast India's Landscapes and Ethnic Identity**

Prerana Das, Queen's University, Canada

The British processes of taming Darjeeling and Assam's landscapes into economically profitable tea plantations correlated with growing racist perceptions and ethnic classifications of indigenous and migrant labour populations. Darjeeling was established as a tea plantation capital because of its favourable soil characteristics. Concurrently, Darjeeling's hill station was developed as a health getaway for British officials, as its cool climate enabled an escape from the hot plains and its indigenous populations. Comparatively, Assam's forests provided several necessities to its tribal populations pre-colonization, including food, medicine, and timber. The British development of the timber industry is closely connected to its tea industry; the latter required rapid infrastructural growth, which was reliant on the former. The shift from a quasi-feudal to a market economy caused unprecedented ecological damage across the Northeast. Repeated insurgencies before and after the British Raj have turned the region into fertile ground for inter-ethnic conflicts. This paper explores how the aims of British colonialism align in assimilating the fragmented and varied ethnic populations of Assam and Darjeeling. It examines how the British Raj's agrarian development of Northeast India's hill and forest frontiers into tea plantations coincided with arbitrary ethnic classifications to subdue, exploit, and utilize populations for colonial profit.



**Day 3: Saturday, October 1, 2022**

**Session 5 | Sustainability, Environment, and Climate Change | 8.30 a.m. – 10.30 a.m. EDT**

**1. Waste Valorization for a Sustainable Future** (special panel: presentations, 1, 2, and 3)  
Malik Hassan, University of Guelph, Canada

Abstract: The marine ecology has been adversely affected by the upsurge of plastic leakage into the maritime environment. Creating a circular flow of material that enables material to stay in the value chain and complete several lifecycles would be a great step forward in a society dealing with a plastic waste management crisis with serious health, environmental, social, and economic impacts. Several plastic recycling methodologies have been developed, one of which is Additive Manufacturing (AM). High-density polyethylene (HDPE) and polypropylene (PP) are the two thermoplastics that predominate among plastics surfacing at sea because they have a lower density than ocean water. This study aims to investigate how the mechanical performance of recycled HDPE and PP blends are influenced by printing parameters such as printing temperature, printing speed, and raster angle. Additionally, a comparison between the extrusion-based AM process and injection moulding has been conducted. This study highlights how the mechanical characteristics of a recycled plastic blend may be optimized for specific applications using parameter selection in AM, which enables the creation of sustainable products via waste recycling.

Debarshi Nath, University of Guelph, Canada

Abstract: The valorization of agricultural waste materials for the synthesis of cellulose material using a low-cost, ecologically friendly method is outlined in this study. The waste material is subjected to various pre-treatments followed by alkali and bleaching to extract the cellulose fiber. The nanocellulose is then derived by the chemical treatment of cellulose fibers. FTIR, SEM, and TEM were used to identify the presence of nano cellulose while the crystallinity of the nanocellulose was measured by XRD. The nanocellulose is then incorporated into BioPBSA films to reinforce the mechanical and barrier properties. It is expected that the tensile strength and Young's modulus will improve as compared to the neat BioPBSA films without negatively affecting its toughness. The moisture and oxygen barrier properties of the nanocomposite films are also expected to increase due to the presence of nanocellulose in the polymer matrix. Crystallinity studies and the effect of crystallinity on the film properties will also be evaluated. Therefore, nanocellulose obtained from waste valorization could show promise in synthesizing high performance biobased films for flexible packaging.

Aarsha Surendram, University of Guelph, Canada

Abstract: The tremendous hike in global plastic production may have alarming consequences for the environment as it has resulted in massive waste disposal of conventional polymers.

Development of bioplastics is an innovative solution to replace or minimize the use of conventional polymers, however, the cost of production was estimated to be about 10 times higher than that of conventional polymers. One of the cost-effective options was waste valorization by incorporating industrial or agri-food waste and by-products in bioplastics development. In this work, biocomposite for packaging applications has been developed by reinforcing surface treated DDGS (Distillers Dried Grains with Solubles) (green method) with PBAT/plasticized postindustrial wheat starch blend. In addition to this, the utilization of chain extender/compatibilizer has improved the adhesion of fillers with matrix materials and has been analyzed at two different processing temperatures of 160oC and 180oC. The increase in processing temperature to 180oC in presence of compatibilizer has improved the MFI of the material. Overall, the developed biodegradable composite in the presence of compatibilizer has displayed enhanced mechanical and thermal properties for bioplastic production.

## **2. Infrared Spectra of Recalcitrant Soil Organic Matter (rSOM) from Different Ecosystems** Jeewan Gamage, University of Guelph, Canada

Though it is well known that there is a significant component of soil organic matter (SOM) resistant to microbial decay, the mechanisms leading to its formation and persistence are not well understood. We applied Diffuse Reflectance Infrared Fourier Transform (DRIFT) spectroscopy to elucidate the molecular-level differences in recalcitrant soil organic matter (rSOM) extracted from organic soil, cultivated and forested Luvisolic soil, forested Podzolic, and organic sediment soil from muck river with the alkaline extraction procedure. Trace mineral analysis was carried out with inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry (ICP-MS). Carboxylic acids and carbohydrates were higher in the surface soils. In the deeper soils of the organic soil and the river sediment soil, 1660–1580 cm<sup>-1</sup> (aromatic group stretching) and 1400–1380 cm<sup>-1</sup> (aliphatic C-H stretch) were significantly different from other soils. Fe, Mn, and Cu concentrations are higher in the soil collected from deeper layers and sediment soil than in surface soils. This reflects that poorly soluble and nonpolar organic materials are formed and preserved with the association of Fe, Mn, and Cu in these soils. We conclude that the DRIFT spectroscopy and ICP-MS can be used to study the nature of rSOM in soils from different ecosystems at a molecular level.

## **3. Full Electric Vehicles: History, Concept, Operation, and Potential Impact on the Economy, Environment, and Daily Life in Pakistan** Muhammad Ali Baig, Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), and Quaid-i-Azam University

Abstract: Full electric vehicles (FEVs) are among one of the three kinds of hybrid electric vehicles. FEVS are such motorized vehicles that utilize onboard electric motors or a couple of motors driven solely by batteries that use the stored charge on them as fuel. FEVs do not drink up any petrochemical fuel and consequently do not emit greenhouse gases, decreasing harmful emissions. The concept and use of FEVs dates back to the 1890s when LohnerPorsche produced the first fully electric vehicle known as P1. FEVs provide with such a framework to lower the greenhouse gases to contribute to lessening

climate change and global warming. The paper essentially contends and elucidates why FEVs can replace conventional internal combustion vehicles in a developing country like Pakistan while contributing positively to reducing the burden on the economy and environment and making daily life comfortable while preventing global warming and climate change.

#### **4. Climate Change Mitigation Potential of Perennial Biomass Crops Grown in Southern Ontario, Canada**

Sowthini Vijayakumar, University of Guelph, Canada

Switchgrass [*Panicum virgatum*, (SG)] and miscanthus [*Miscanthus* spp., (Mis)] are commonly grown perennial biomass crops (PBCs) in Ontario. Using PBCs to enhance SOC sequestration can contribute to Canada's goal to reach net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. This study compares current SOC stock (Mg C ha<sup>-1</sup>) in PBCs to that of baseline values obtained from three different locations namely, Elora (2008), Guelph (2009), and Burlington (2016). Results show that SOC stocks in all PBCs and woodlots (WLs) were higher compared to respective baseline agriculture fields. SOC stocks in PBCs were significantly higher in Elora (SG- 92.9i, ±3.32, Mis- 96.4i, ±1.43) and Guelph (SG- 88.5i, ±5.72, Mis- 87.9i, ±6.43) over 11 years, whereas SOC stock Burlington (SG- 87.4 i, ± 2.91, Mis- 101.4i, ±10.32), showed no significant difference over four years compared to their respective baseline agriculture fields (74.8i, ±2.98, 59.3i, ±1.17, 84.1i, ±3.39). All WLs had significantly higher SOC stock compared to their respective baseline agriculture fields, showing the potential for future SOC stock gain (Elora- 84.5, Guelph- 95.1, Burlington- 35.7) by PBCs. Increases in SOC stocks suggest that converting marginal lands to PBCs over the long term could create additional terrestrial C sinks and thereby contribute to Ontario's commitment to climate mitigation.

### **Session 6 | Inequality | 10:45 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. EDT**

#### **1. Anticipation of Block Chain Technology's Future in Public Service Delivery**

Maneesh Thakkar, Panjab University, India

Delivery of public services is obsessed by many bureaucratic bad evils, including information manipulation, work delays, nepotism, and redtapism, which are responsible for corrupting the administrative system and affecting the effective and transparent delivery of public services. Government adopted and initiated the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in governance and it has increased the accountability, transparency, and speedy transfer of services. But some lacunas are still present, including data manipulation, cyber security, and problems and threats of integrated storage devices, among others. To overcome such problems, a new ICT tool Block Chain Technology was introduced. It is a decentralized data storage and management system. The decentralization of data among various servers makes it harder to manipulate and delete data, which also reduces the threat of cyberattacks. This paper explores the possibilities of using Block Chain Technology in public service delivery with the help of secondary sources.

**2. Rise of the Digital Financial Ecosystem in India: The Political Economy of Platforms, Gaps, and Trends for Development**

Aditi Bhatia-Kalluri, University of Toronto, Canada

The emergence of digital financial platforms in India has widened the digital divide leading to the financial exclusion of the marginalized and negatively impacting their economic development. This research addresses the United Nations' sustainable development goal of poverty reduction with the advances in information technology. Illiteracy, lack of digital literacy, and fear of digital payment is widely prevalent in India among the marginalized. This research seeks to understand the causes and consequences of financial exclusion of the poverty-ridden user groups and find solutions to foster financial inclusion from community organizations, fintech, and political institutions. The research would comprehend the power dynamics determined by political institutions and conglomerates for private gain versus the public interest for digital financial platforms in India. This would illuminate the gaps that lead to information asymmetries arising due to foreign relations, and economic and information policies. Research would track digital policies to facilitate the adoption of mobile applications for monetary transactions. Research questions include: How has the emergence of digital financial platforms in India impacted social practices around money and economic development for marginalized? What is the role of political institutions in arranging the public and private power dynamics for digital financial platforms?

**3. Maneuvering through Priority: Resilience Among Casual Workers in Kanpur Leather Industry, India**

Abhishek Dwivedi, South Asian University, India

The global economic conditions i.e., long-term unemployment, job insecurity, and non-standard work arrangements, have worsened precarious work conditions and vulnerability among casual workers. For Standing (2011), the precariat is a new class-in-making that is devoid of most other means of subsistence, except their labour power. However, dismissing this reductionist reading, Breman (2013) argues that in the global south, informal workers (which have similar traits as that of the "precariat") can rather be defined as a composite workforce that works through multiple axes of social identity and cannot be merely seen as a class category. My research among casual workers in the Global South viz. the leather industry of Kanpur, India, helps me see through the overlaps in such formulations. The informalization of the labour force in the leather industry cluster has checked the formation of class-consciousness among its workers. Hence, in the absence of collective bargaining, casual workers contested precarity through individual channels of negotiations. These practices entail sneaking their way through interpersonal relations, work skills, and social networks. This compels us to devolve new categories of analysis, which helps us understand why and how work and social life bleed into each other in the current times of global precarity.

**4. Negotiating Postsecular Spaces: IUML and the Politics of Non-State Welfare in Kerala, India**

Ibrahim Badusha C., University of Hyderabad, India

Abstract: Political parties providing non-state social welfare via newly-established charitable organizations emphasize the impact of religion on politics that changed in complex ways. This paper interrogates the blurring of boundaries between religion and politics in contemporary Indian politics with the 1992 Babri Masjid demolition as the moment of postsecular turn and responses that it demands with reference to the welfare activities of Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) in Kerala. IUML, an identity-oriented political party in the Indian state of Kerala, espouses Muslim constitutionalism in India along with the upkeep of minority rights in general. IUML in Kerala only had episodic history of charitable work though it had lately expanded its welfare provisions by inducting various housing and healthcare schemes. By analyzing these initiatives, this paper tries to position IUML's welfare schemes in the post-Babri scenario and evolving forms of political clientelism. These welfare activities enable IUML to reconfirm its commitment to Islamic principles of social justice, thus attempting to answer allegations of representational lethargy posed by local Islamic hardliners. Meanwhile, the secular distribution of these welfare provisions enables IUML to counter the stigma of communalism attached to it in the public sphere that it operates and contests ever since Partition.