PUNJAB RESEARCH GROUP

VENUE: De Montfort University, Faculty of Humanities, Clephan Building
Leicester, LE1 9BH. Room CL0.03 (ground floor)

DATE: 31 October 2009

DIRECTIONS: Follow the link for a detailed campus map:
http://www.dmu.ac.uk/aboutdmu/campuses/maps/leic_campus.jsp
There is parking available in the staff car park (no 35 on map) on Saturday
which can be accessed from Gateway Street. This is a short walk from
Clephan Building (no 4).

10:00-10:30 Tea/Coffee and welcome address

10:30-11:30 Kathryn Lum, European University Institute, Florence, Italy
A Community at a Crossroads: A case study of the Ravidassia Sangat
in Barcelona

11:30-11:45 Tea/Coffee

11:45-12:45 Navtej Purewal, University of Manchester
Articulations of Caste through Religion: Codes of Hegemony and
Invisibility in West Punjab

12:45-1:00 Announcements

1:00-2:15 Lunch

2:15-3:15 Meena Dhanda, (University of Wolverhampton), Dave
Morland, (University of Teesside) and Steve Taylor,
(Northumbria University)
Eastern Punjabi Dalits and Religious Conversion: A case study of
Wolverhampton

3:30-4:00 Gurinder Singh Mann, Independent researcher in Sikh and
Punjab Studies, Content Editor-www.sikhnugget.com
Punjabi and Sikh Heritage: collections in the UK

4:00-4:15 Tea/Coffee

4:15-5:30 Ajay Bhardwaj, Independent film/documentary maker
Screening of Kitte Mil Ve Mahi (Where the twain shall meet)

5:30-onwards Social gathering for those who can stay around for a drink
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Abstracts

Kathryn Lum, European University Institute, Florence, Italy
‘A community at a crossroads: a case study of the Ravidassia Sangat in Barcelona’

This paper will discuss how the Ravidassia community in Barcelona has responded both collectively and individually to the attacks on the leaders of Dera Sach Khand Ballan. For many Spanish Ravidassias, their religious identities have changed in the wake of the Vienna attacks, once fluid religious boundaries have become more rigid, and underlying faultlines within the community have become more visible. In taking the momentous decision to remove the GGS from the gurdwara premises, the Ravidassia community in Barcelona is currently embarking on a process of religious innovation and boundary redefinition with Sikhism that has both united and divided various camps within the sangat.

Navtej Purewal, University of Manchester
‘Articulations of Caste through Religion: Codes of Hegemony and Invisibility in West Punjab’

This paper will highlight some of the modes through which caste is articulated and sustained through discourses of religion in contemporary Punjab in Pakistan. While caste is not officially recognised in Pakistan as a system of social categorisation or as a tool for understanding society (i.e. the national census or social policy), it appears in other forms through unofficial, informal and various coded ways of pointing out social hierarchy, belonging and distinctiveness of different communities, biraderis and social groups. Hegemonic and marginalised groups both engage in these codes in different ways in asserting their dominance and in disguising their hierarchically lower status, respectively, in the context of an overarching, public Islamic ideology. The outcome of this is a complex plethora of expressions of caste and community in which religious discourse plays an important role. Drawing upon fieldwork conducted between 2008 and 2009 in and around Lahore, this paper will highlight a number of different illustrative examples, namely from positions of subalternity or marginalised positions, showing the ways in which discourses on religion in contemporary West Punjab can offer a guise for expressing both hegemonic as well as subversive or counter-indicative attempts to exist within an informally-recognised caste-based society.

Meena Dhanda, (University of Wolverhampton), Dave Morland, (University of Teesside) and Steve Taylor, (Northumbria University)

This paper will draw upon a pilot, empirical, qualitative research project examining the experience of Dalit communities in Wolverhampton. We will consider the role of different religious establishments and Dalit organizations within caste relations, with a particular focus upon the experience of those attending establishments and organizations which advocate conversion from Sikhism and Hinduism as a way of combating caste oppression’.
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Gurinder Singh Mann, Independent researcher in Sikh and Punjab Studies, Content Editor-www.sikhnugget.com
‘Punjabi and Sikh Heritage: collections in the UK’

Gurinder Singh Mann who has MA in South Asian Religions from De-Montfort University, Leicester returns to the University to deliver an in-depth presentation on heritage related issues pertaining to the UK and the Punjab. This presentation will focus on the way Sikh artefacts i.e. manuscripts, relics, material heritage have been brought over to the UK from India namely the Punjab. The interrelationship between the British and the Sikhs is brought to the forefront in pictures to show how this development has occurred. How have these artefacts become big business in the world of auction houses? Why does the Sikh mini-parliament, the SGPC, become embroiled in a contest to acquire these artefacts? These are some the questions that will be addressed further.

Ajay Bhardwaj, Independent film/documentary maker
Kitte Mil Ve Mahi (Where the twain shall meet)

Director's Note
This documentary is largely located in the Doaba region of Punjab, a cradle of the revolutionary Gadar movement and the Ad Dharmi movement of Dalits. It attempts to portray a cultural/spiritual universe of Punjab that is little known to the world outside. It may be so, because our understanding of Punjab has largely been conditioned by three benchmarks, the partition, the green revolution and the terrorism in the 80s. We are therefore, oblivious to many other realities that have unfolded and flourished simultaneously. By no yardstick can these realities be seen as some marginal phenomena because they shape the everyday life of lakhs of people in Punjab. Yet, from textbooks to television, they are conspicuous by their absence. What are the implications of this absence, this 'invisibility' to us as a people, as a society. And what are its implications for those who are living these realities. This documentary, I hope, may lead us to contemplate on questions such as these and many more.