

## CALL FOR PAPERS

### DALIT AGENDAS: EMANCIPATION, CITIZENSHIP, AND EMPOWERMENT

The Center for the Advanced Study of India and the Department of South Asia Studies at the University of Pennsylvania will hold a major conference on critical issues relating to Dalit Studies December 4-6, 2008 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (USA). We plan to bring together academics and intellectuals from both within and outside of formal academic institutions, including the many organic intellectuals who have kept alive India's Dalit movement by following Dr. Ambedkar's injunction to "educate, organize, and agitate." The purpose of the conference will be to evaluate strategies for ensuring that Dalit agendas are recognized by and incorporated into mainstream academic dialogue and to assess the various political and social agendas, both contemporary and historical, that have sought to improve the lives of Dalits. These include Dalit political formations; print media and literary movements; colonial and postcolonial governmental practices and policies; initiatives for social and economic empowerment; feminist struggles; critiques of nationalist and radical movements; and diasporic activism. The conference will result in the production of an edited volume that will bring various Dalit agendas into dialogue and examine the conditions and contradictions of Dalit social mobility in contemporary India. We encourage proposals from all disciplinary, methodological, and ideological perspectives. Applications are welcome from independent scholars, postgraduate students, and those working within and outside of formal academic institutions.

The author of each paper proposal accepted for participation in the conference will receive an honorarium of USD 500 that we hope will help to defray the costs of any additional research that will be conducted for the paper. Travel (international or domestic, as needed) to and from Philadelphia, meals, and accommodation will be covered for all conference participants, and each contributor whose paper is accepted for publication in the edited volume will receive an additional honorarium of USD 500 following the final submission of their paper.

**Deadline for Paper Proposals: November 1, 2007 \*\*\*\*SUBMISSION IS NOW CLOSED\*\*\*\***

Applications should include:

- (1) a three-page description of the research to be presented at the conference and its place within your larger work and goals
- (2) a two-page C.V.

**Mailing address for applications:**

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UNIVERSITY *of* PENNSYLVANIA

## **DALIT CONFERENCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA PHILADELPHIA . DECEMBER 4-6, 2008**

The University of Pennsylvania has been at the forefront of area studies since 1942 when Prof. W. Norman Brown pioneered the study of modern India fifteen years before area studies began appearing at other US colleges and universities. This legacy strongly continues at the School of Arts and Sciences through the work of the [Department of South Asian Studies](#), the mission of the [South Asia Center](#), and the [superior holdings of the South Asian Studies Collection](#) at Penn's Van Pelt Library. [The Center for the Advanced Study of India](#), founded in 1992 by political scientist, [Prof. Francine Frankel](#), further expands Penn's scholarly leadership on South Asian studies with its focus on contemporary India. In 2006, [Prof. Devesh Kapur](#) became the new director. Today, the Center for the Advanced Study of India is recognized as a national resource and the sole research institution in the US dedicated to the study of contemporary India, addressing the urgent need for objective knowledge of India's rapidly changing society, politics and economy, and the processes of transformation underway in an ancient civilization emerging as a major power. The Center for the Advanced Study of India and the Department of South Asian Studies will hold a major conference on critical issues relating to [Dalit Studies on the campus of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia](#) from December 4-6, 2008.

Please submit applications to [Dr. Ramnarayan S. Rawat](#).

**\*\*\*\*SUBMISSION IS NOW CLOSED\*\*\*\***

### **Dr. Ramnarayan S. Rawat**

Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow in South Asian History (2006-2009)  
Department of South Asia Studies  
University of Pennsylvania.

Dr Ramnarayan (Ram) Rawat is a historian of Modern South Asia. His areas of research concern social, cultural and economic history of colonial and post-colonial India. He is particularly interested in histories of colonialism and nationalism as they intersect with the many subaltern narratives of the past which seek to contest dominant historiography. In addition, his research and teaching address the following themes: postcolonial studies; subaltern studies; Dalit ("untouchable") and lower caste movements; history of South Asia; race in India, the United States, and Brazil; and South Asian religions.

He is currently working on a book manuscript titled "Untouchable Boundaries of Colonialism and Nationalism: Rethinking histories of Untouchability in North India" for publication. He has been the recipient of a Guggenheim dissertation fellowship (2003-2004) and a four-year SEPHIS Foundation doctoral fellowship from the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam (1999-2003). As a Rockefeller fellow at the Simpson Center for the Humanities at the University of Washington (2004-2005) he explored Dalit histories written in Hindi for popular audiences, bringing these largely ignored accounts into conversation with colonial and nationalist narratives. His writings have made important interventions within Indian historiography, and his work is now taught in colleges and universities in India, the US, England and Japan.

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[Center for the Advanced Study of India](#)

[The Department of South Asia Studies](#)

## PROPOSAL FOR RESEARCH PROJECT & CONFERENCE ON INDIA'S DALITS

1. How can the Brazilian and US experience on race help us better understand the Dalit experience in India?
2. What are the possibilities—and limitations—of a state dependent Dalit bourgeoisie?
3. Beyond reservations. What additional instruments of affirmative action might benefit the many poor (and often landless Dalits) and why has there been so little attention to these alternatives?
4. Revisiting the effects of modernity. The possibilities—and limitations—of urbanization, markets and capitalism to improve Dalit welfare (linked to Question 9.).
5. The changing contours of caste conflict in India. Who are the "new oppressors" (and why)?
6. The representation puzzle. Why has better political representation not improved social services for Dalits? It is often alleged that Dalit voters are more concerned with symbolic goods ("dignity") rather than material goods (education, health). Is this true and why?
7. The Global Dalit: What have been the effects of the overseas Dalit diaspora on the community at home?
8. Social Mobility: Role of military in Dalit communities in nineteenth and twentieth centuries. An ethno-historical study [focusing on Mahar regiment?].
9. Dalit Institutions: Caste associations invested in English education and set up colleges to empower their communities. Recognizing their importance Dalit hostels, schools and colleges were set up from the 1920s onwards. How have they fared and what lessons can we draw?
10. Dalit Entrepreneurs. A case study of the Chamar community and Dalit firms in the leather industry.
11. Absence of Dalit mobilization in north India during colonial and post-colonial period as opposed to south or western India.
12. Study of Affirmative Action: Position and conditions of Dalits who passed out from IIMs and IITs.
13. Cultural Capital: How has the absence of Dalits in the Indian mainstream media circumscribed the community's access to cultural and symbolic capital (to use Bourdieu's term)? An ethno-historical study of the role of dominant discursive practices that have kept Dalits out of our conceptual world.

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