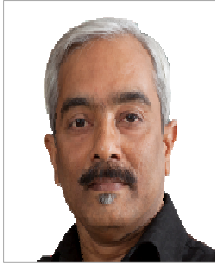


**Who are the People?
Populism and the Populist Movements
August 31-September 1, 2018**

Panel Discussion I

Populism as a Global Phenomenon: Ideology, Dialogue, Political Approach



Bishnu Mohapatra is a social theorist and poet, an educator and a commentator on society, governance, policy and culture. He was born in Odisha and spent his early years in its rural hinterland. He was educated in Odisha, Delhi and Oxford. Bishnu taught politics for more than twenty-five years in University of Delhi, Jawaharlal Nehru University and Azim Premji University. He has held visiting appointments at Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Paris, National University of Singapore, University of Kyoto, Japan, and National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore. He has lectured at several universities in Asia, Africa, Europe and North America. From 2002 to 2010, he headed the governance portfolio of the Ford Foundation's South Asia office in Delhi. He does his social science in English and his poetry in Odia. Bishnu has published in the areas of identity politics, democracy, minority rights, urban politics, civil society and social capital. He is currently researching on cities and its multiple imaginings in history. He is also in the process of initiating a collective research project that seeks to understand the conceptual universe embedded in India's Bhasa literature. Bishnu is a well-known Indian poet. He has authored four books of poetry and has translated two volumes of Pablo Neruda's poetry into Odia. A volume of his poetry in the English translation – a fragile world- was published in 2005. Professor Bishnu Mohapatra has a Master's degree in Political Science from University of Delhi, an M.Phil in Politics from Jawaharlal Nehru University and a D. Phil. in Politics from University of Oxford.

Representing “My People”: Ethnicity and Populist Leadership

Samir Kumar Das

While much has been written about the populist nature of a nation and how it incorporates different ethnicities/nationalities within its fold, correspondingly much less – if at all – is written on how ethnicities/nationalities come into being and their populist articulations at the time of globalization. It will be interesting to see how such articulations at one level negotiate with a wide variety of differences (say along the lines of class, gender, sub-tribe or so forth) internal to each one of them but at another make their members equivalent to each other through these negotiations.

Such articulations defy any ‘social logic’ while representing the institution of the political. Because they defy any such logic, they need to be described as populist, and not popular. Ethnic articulations are populist only in the sense that they represent the institution of what may be called *purely* political.

This brief intervention aims at reflecting on this pure political moment that is not ‘determinable a priori’ and therefore calls for ‘a radical investment’. More often than not, the articulation is made to depend on the same liberal-representative institutions or even the same social logic that brings the ethnic leadership into existence in the first place. The political is also instituted by way of doing away with the mediations. Besides, ethnic unity often comes through violence with the risk that it might turn against itself.

Does popularity of a leader depend on her ability to grasp and comprehend history and/or to elicit her representativeness through the existing institutions? The two do not necessarily go hand in hand. Are ethnic leaders then destined to be populist and not popular?



Samir Kumar Das is Professor of Political Science at the University of Calcutta, Kolkata. Previously the Vice-Chancellor of the University of North Bengal, and a Post-Doctoral Fellow (2005) of the Social Science Research Council (South Asia Program), he is the Coordinator of the University Grants Commission-Departmental Research Support (UGC-DRS) Programme (Phase II) on ‘Democratic Governance: Comparative Perspectives’. He served as a Visiting Fellow at the European Academy, Bolzano, Italy (2008), an Adjunct Professor of Government at the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University (2014) and a Visiting Professor of the North East India Studies Programme at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi in 2015 and at the Universite 13 Sorbonne-Paris-Cite in 2016 among many of his assignments. He specializes in and writes on issues of ethnicity, identity, security, migration, rights and justice and has contributed over 190 research papers to highly esteemed national and international journals and edited volumes. Besides, he has been a regular reviewer of some of the top journals, publishing houses and research bodies including Minority Rights International (London) and European Research Council (Brussels) etc. Some of his recent publications include *Migrations, Identities and Democratic Practices* (Routledge 2018, authored), *India: Democracy and Violence* (OUP, 2015, edited), *Governing India’s Northeast: Essays on Insurgency, Development and the Culture of Peace* (Springer 2013), *ICSSR Surveys and Explorations: Political Science: Volume I: Indian State* (OUP 2013 edited), *Conflict and Peace in India’s Northeast: The Role of Civil Society* (East- West Center, 2006), *Blisters on Their Feet: Tales of Internally Displaced Persons in India’s North East* (Sage 2008 edited), *Terror, Terrorism, Histories and Societies: A Historical and Philosophical Perspective* (Women Unlimited 2010 co-edited) among others.

Populist Policies in Contemporary India: Some Reflections on the Aam Aadmi Party and Implications for Democratic Governance

Sumona DasGupta

There appears to be little definitional clarity around the term populism. Though the use of this term has proliferated in the last decade, in common parlance there appears to be a pejorative connotation associated with it and mixed views about how populism is connected with democracy and democratic institutions. In this paper we move away from a value laden understanding of populism as an ideology and stay with an understanding that resonates the most easily with an Indian context - namely any policy that is redistributive in nature and as such favours the common person particularly those in subordinate positions over the elite typically represented by large business and financial interests. The contrast between the people and elite in terms of strategies, movements, policies, organization is perhaps the only way the term populism can retain its analytical usefulness without getting bogged down in polemical discussions as to whether populist movements/policies represent the ideological right or the left, whether it is authoritarian or democratic in its origin, whether it represents a movement or simply a discursive style. This presentation will examine selected populist policies launched in contemporary India by a party that grew out of a popular movement against corruption namely the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) which by its very name creates a implicit contrast between the 'people' and the elite. By focusing on some of its key populist policies we seek to gain a deeper understanding of how a movement "for the people" transitioned into a political party which then had to make policies that were seen to be pro "aam aadmi" and what this populism implies in terms of democratic decision making and longer term impacts on the economic and political front.



***Sumona DasGupta** is a Political Scientist by training is an independent researcher based in New Delhi. She is also Senior Visiting Fellow with Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) and Research Advisor to Women in Security, Conflict management and Peace. Sumona's research interests are in the area of peace and conflict studies, gender, democracy and governance and the use of participatory research practices. She is the author of *Citizen Initiatives and Democratic Engagements: Perspectives from India* (Routledge) and her latest publication is on *Environmental Security* in Sumit Ganguly et al edited *Oxford Handbook on India's National Security* (2018). She has also published extensively on issues around gender and armed conflict.*

Political Populism in India: An Impediment in the Growth of Democratic Institutions?

Ambar Kumar Ghosh

India is often hailed as the land of “Bhakti Cult” due to its innate proclivity towards hero-worship. The greatest manifestation of this culture can be vividly traced in the realm of Indian politics. Over the years, the over-arching presence of powerful populist leaders, enjoying unquestionable authority and hysteric mass adulation, has been the modus operandi of the Indian political narrative. The deeply entrenched stranglehold of the culture of personality cult and centralization of personalized power looms large over the political party structure and inner-party democracy in India. The proliferation of the populist leadership and the habitual obedience that they command, have inevitably injected the doctrine of “infallible” leaders that is inimical to the growth of accountability in democracy. The all-pervasive prominence and towering stature of the charismatic individual leadership runs the risk of systematically superseding the structural and institutional bulwarks of democracy which is critical for its sustenance. The domineering culture of complete genuflection before the whims of the powerful leadership throttles the scope of democratic debate, dialogue and dissent. Such a culture has the propensity of sowing the seeds of rampant nepotism, favouritism and sycophancy in the system which might have an adversarial impact on the growth of responsible and democratic leadership. The perpetual nurturing and consolidation of personality cult by uncritical mass approbation that facilitates concentration of unbridled power in the leadership might create conditions for authoritarian tendencies and impetuous decision-making. This ever-increasing trajectory of political idolatry can severely obfuscate the growth of political consciousness, informed opinion and democratic dialogue among the Indian citizenry. Despite basking in the glory of successfully practicing electoral democracy since its inception, India’s conduct in the realm of participatory and substantive democracy is not much flattering. India’s discouraging world ranking in the arena of democratic participation and political consciousness is symptomatic of the deep institutional impediments that have historically enfeebled the dynamic growth of democratic spirit and robust democratic institutions. This paper intends to delve into the emergence and consolidation of the culture of personality cult in politics and how it has augmented the rise and growth of populist leaders in Indian political firmament. The paper would further examine how the shackles of personality-centric populist politics and hero worship impact the growth and developments of democratic institutions, decentralized leadership, politically-conscious citizenry and accountable governance.



Ambar Kumar Ghosh is presently working as Guest Lecturer at the Department of Political Science, Siliguri College, West Bengal. He has completed his Masters in Political Science with International Relations from the Department of International Relations, Jadavpur University, Kolkata (2015-17). He has done his Bachelor's in Political Science from Scottish Church College, Kolkata (2012-15) Ambar has been an alumni of Public Policy Boot camp conducted by Vision India Foundation, New Delhi. He is a member of the Jadavpur Association of International Relations (JAIR). His research interest broadly includes Indian constitutional developments, democratic institutional structures and processes.

An Ambedkarian Movement in South Asia: A Critical Appraisal

Rajesh Kharat

In the contemporary world Dr B. R. Ambedkar did not remain merely as an ideology but it has played significant role as an instrument of socio-economic and political emancipation of those who were not counted even as human beings.

Ambedkar criticized the *Chaturvarna* system of Hinduism which has led to discrimination and social exclusion of former untouchables or popularly known as *Shudras* as well as *Ati-shudras*. His thoughts and ideology gaining recognition only in 1930s as a social movement which is basically for to attain social justice against the caste hierarchy exists in India and when he expressed his desire of conversion from Hinduism. In the process, to remove the stigma of untouchability, 'caste identity' has provided a base for the political mobilization to his followers and added political dynamics to Ambedkarian movement.

When, political mobilization of Ambedkarites led to religious conversion from Hinduism to Buddhism in 1956, it had culminated impact on eradication of untouchability. As a result, followers of Ambedkar disassociated themselves from the caste related occupation and increased their caliber with the help of higher education. Moreover with increasing literacy and greater individual mobility Ambedkarites used conversion as a ladder of incremental upward mobility in every sphere of the social economic and political life. Predominantly their political awareness and political participation cannot be overlooked by the statesmen.

In other words, Ambedkar ideology which is based on social justice and social democracy has become inherent part of the Constitution of most of the states of South Asia. In this context the proposed paper intends to find out to what extent an Ambedkarian movement has been successful in emerging as an alternative political philosophy to most of the radical ideologies existent in these countries.



***Rajesh Kharat** is former Chairperson of Centre for South Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He also served as Chief Advisor, to the Equal Opportunity office of JNU, New Delhi. He has authored Five Books and more than Thirty Research Articles on the contemporary issues of South Asian region, particularly, Himalayan region. Before joining JNU he served at Dept. of Civics and Politics, University of Mumbai, Mumbai for more than 17 years.*

**Who are the People?
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**Panel Discussion II
Institutions, Immigrants and Populist Politics**



Ranabir Samaddar belongs to the critical school of thinking and is considered as one of the foremost theorists in the field of forced migration studies. He has worked extensively on issues of forced migration, the theory and practices of dialogue, nationalism and post-colonial statehood in South Asia, and new regimes of technological restructuring and labour control. The much-acclaimed *The Politics of Dialogue* was a culmination of his long work on justice, rights, and peace. His political writings have been published in the form of a two-volume account, *The Materiality of Politics* (2007), and *The Emergence of the Political Subject* (2009) have challenged some of the prevailing accounts of the birth of nationalism and the nation-state, and have signaled a new turn in critical postcolonial thinking. His co-authored work on new town and new forms of accumulation *Beyond Kolkata: Rajarhat and the Dystopia of Urban Imagination* (Routledge, 2013) takes forward urban studies in the context of post-colonial capitalism. He is currently the Distinguished Chair in Migration and Forced Migration Studies, Calcutta Research Group.

Institutions, Immigrants and Populism: A Reflection

Sudeep Basu

How can the 'Other' be included to become active citizens when subjected to historically inflicted upon indignities and other exclusionary practices of the state and society? The other could be internal migrants, immigrants and their descendants, ethnic minorities, women, backward castes and indigenous inhabitants of a region. What are the limits of popular forms of justice in the time of rampant populism and majoritarian politics which seeks to keep the marginalized other at bay? This paper seeks to probe these questions and concerns, mindful of sociology's misadventures with concepts, which have touch upon collective life, since the time of Ferdinand Tonnies's formulation of 'Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft' and Durkheim's 'conscience collective'. How sociology or social science in its quest to establish itself as a general science of society, barely touched upon concepts such as people or masses, treating them as an excess or anathema. This neglect has had profound consequences for the politics of our times rendering the ground on which politics is enacted incomprehensible. In this conjuncture, immigrant lives and the institutions through which their lives are scripted have to be laid bare. It requires shifting our analytical focus away from structure and agency dichotomy to that of the people and masses, as a 'paramount reality', which in Laclauian terms are 'empty signifiers'. In dealing with exclusions, xenophobia, communalizations, racism, the marginals of our society and populist debates have to brought at the centre of any discussions on the political management of society the conscience of society, while resisting the allure of mainstreaming or assimilating marginal or residual identities for the sake of unity or utopia.



Sudeep Basu teaches at the Centre for Studies in Social Management, School of Social Sciences, Central University of Gujarat, Gandhinagar, India. A sociologist by training, he received his graduate degrees in Sociology from the Delhi School of Economics. His doctoral dissertation was obtained from Jadavpur University, Kolkata. He was the C.R Parekh Post-Doctoral Fellow 2012-13 at the London School of Economics (LSE), Asia Research Centre. He has taught and researched at various academic institutes in India, such as Gujarat Institute of Development Research, Ahmedabad; National Law School of India University, Bangalore; Institute of Development Studies Kolkata. His research interests are in the areas of refugee and diaspora studies, and the anthropology of displacement, marginalities and exclusion, law and society, critical theory and the sociology of knowledge. He is author of the recently published book, *In Diasporic Lands: Tibetan Refugees and their Transformation since the Exodus, 2018, Hyderabad: Orient Black Swan.*

The Idea of Protection and India's Refugee Conundrum: A Conversation...

Nasreen Chowdhory

The international refugee regime defines a *refugee* as “one who is outside the country of nationality (or even habitual residence) due to one of five situations as stipulated in the definition of the ‘well-founded fear of persecution’ on the basis of religion, race, nationality or membership of a political or social group.” In India, the categories of aliens, illegal migrants, and refugees are conflated and refugee determination is not based on either an individual or a group; rather, it is viewed as a bilateral issue between the country of origin and of asylum. The paper endeavours to unravel some of these ethical considerations from the standpoint of people attempting to seek refuge and argues in line with ethics of admission.



Nasreen Chowdhory is currently Assistant Professor, at the Department of Political Science, University of Delhi. She has done her PhD in political Science from McGill University, and Masters and MPhil from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. She has published several research papers in national and international peer-reviewed journals such as *Refugee Watch* *A South Asia Journal on Forced Migration*, *Journal for the Centre of South Asian Strategic Studies* among others. Presently she is guest editor of a special issue on “Displacement – a ‘state of exception’ and beyond: Issues and Perspectives in Forced Migration in South Asia” under review with the *International Journal of Migration and Border Studies*. She was awarded Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship during 1999-2003 and also a recipient of JRD Tata Award in 1998-99. She is also a member of International Studies Association, Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata, International Studies Association, Canadian Association of Forced Migration Studies, American Political Science Association and an Executive Board Member of International Association for the Study of Forced Migration. In the past, she worked as Assistant Professor in the Asian University for Women and Concordia University and McMaster University.

Documenting a Genocide for a Decade: My Life with the Rohingyas

Saiful Huq Omi

It all began very casually in the summer of 2008. I had no particular story in mind and no real plan. And of course, I had no idea that I was just about to open the chapter to the next ten years of my life.

I remember my first encounter with the Rohingya very clearly. It was a terribly hot Summer's day in early March. I got off the local bus, met the Officer-In-Charge of the refugee camp, showed him my official permission and walked into the camp. I felt like I was walking onto a film set. It was unreal. It was surreal. It was oppressively hot.

My first visit didn't last more than ten days. I hardly took any photographs, but I conducted hundreds of interviews. I needed to learn the story and meet the people. I had to get to the heart of the matter.

I was not prepared for what I saw or heard. My findings were shocking. The stories of persecution, rape, abduction, abuse, forced labour, displacement and killing were horrible. But perhaps no less horrible was how lonely the Rohingyas appeared to be. Other communities and nations who have faced similar deprivations and denials have had friends who stood with them. It felt however, that in the wide-open world of Allah, there were no true friends of the Rohingya. Nobody cared... or at least, not enough.

I started to work only to find out a decade almost has passed. I have witnessed the unfolding horror and genocide, travelled the world photographing them, lobbied for them in countless international forums, worked as a TV reporter, researcher, filmmaker, taught young Rohingyas around the world how to become their own storytellers by using photography and film, provided fellowships and mentored 30 journalists from Bangladesh, Thailand, Myanmar and Malaysia on the Rohingya issues.

My presentation will be about my life that I shared with the Rohingyas.



Saiful Huq Omi is a photographer, filmmaker, educator and an activist. Founder of the photography school Counter Foto, he was born in Bangladeshi in 1980. Omi has worked and exhibited his works in more than 20 countries. Known for his long-term projects, he has been featured in Newsweek, Foto File USA, The New York Times, New Internationalist, Time Magazine, The Guardian, The Economist and in many more publications around the world. Omi started to document the lives of the Rohingya almost a decade ago and has followed their stories in different parts of the world. The recipient of multiple awards and grants, Omi's work on the Rohingya has brought him a global reputation as a tireless campaigner for their rights.

Climate Change, Women and Planned Relocation: Some Explorations in the Context of Satbhaya, Odisha

Amrita Patel

Coastal erosion is a reality in the context of changing climate scenario. The human impact of such coastal erosion is on life, livelihood and the overall existence. The area of the Satbhaya gram panchayat of the Rajnagar block of the Kendrapada district of Odisha is one such area which is subjected to coastal erosion. The area has a long history of being under the impact of coastal erosion, ingression of sea water and salination. The cyclone of 1971 washed away 4 villages. The super cyclone of 1999 was another major disaster. A planned relocation by the Government of Odisha, of the affected families of the Satbhaya Gram Panchayat district to Bagapatia under Gupti Panchayat, 9 kms away is underway. This paper looks at the impact of the coastal erosion on women, the experiences of women in the relocation process and the situation in the relocated through the lens of gender and development. The paper is based on secondary sources and the qualitative narratives of women.



Amrita Patel is a Researcher, Teacher, Trainer of Women's Studies and Gender since the last 20 years. She has been involved in Policy making with regard to Girls and Women; Anti Trafficking of Women & Children; Gender Budgeting for the Government. She has research experience on issues related to gender specifically Gender Budgeting, Gender development Index/ Gender indicators, Women and media, Gender and Disaster, Women Self Help Groups, Land rights for women and Gender & governance, Displacement, migration issues, skill building and climate change and gender. Her articles have been published in peer reviewed journals and edited books. Presently she is the State Project Coordinator to Government of Odisha. She is a Board Member of Sansristi, a Gender Research and Advocacy organization based at Bhubaneswar.

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**Panel Discussion III
*Populism and Gender***



Ritu Menon is a publisher and writer who has been active in the South Asian women's movement for over 20 years. She is co-founder of Kali for Women, India's first and oldest feminist press, and founder of Women Unlimited, an associate of Kali for Women. She is co-author of *Borders & Boundaries: Women in India's Partition* (Kali for Women, 1998). Her edited book *No Woman's Land: Women from Pakistan, India & Bangladesh Write about the Partition of India* was published by Women Unlimited in 2004. Also recently published are *Educating Muslim Girls: A Comparison of Five Indian Cities* (Women Unlimited, 2005) and *Unequal Citizens: A Study of Muslim Women in India* (2004), both co-authored with Zoya Hasan, and *In a Minority: Essays on Muslim Women in India*, co-edited with Zoya Hasan (2005). As part of the Core Group of Women's WORLD, India, Ritu has co-edited *Just Between Us: Women Speak About their Writing* (Women Unlimited, 2004) and *Storylines: Conversations with Women Writers* (Women Unlimited, 2003). Her latest book (co-authored with Kalpana Kannabiran) is titled *From Mathura to Manorama: Resisting Violence Against Women in India* (Women Unlimited, 2007).

Women: Victims Turned Agents of Change

Anushaya Collure

In this presentation, I will look at how women in Sri Lanka was victims of populist politics and on how they became agents of change.

In the post war Sri Lanka (2009 May onwards), the political atmosphere has been dominated by populist trends such as the majority identity politics with authoritarian leanings, prominence given to infrastructure development as solution to all socio economic issues, and promises to quick economic success by drastic measure. In such a context, democratic principles such as political equality for all and respect for human rights were drastically challenged. Women were at the receiving end as victims of both the patriarchal structure and populist politics. The regime change occurred with the Presidential elections in 2015 was perceived at that time as a victory towards a more democratic political space.

Even after 2015, Issues regarding the victim families of the disappeared, communities who lost their land to government's land grabbing processes on the basis of military purposes and development projects, and indebtedness with microfinance schemes became severe to the extent that there was a considerable resistance from the affected communities. In activism against these social issues there was a growing tendency of women in these communities taking the lead in these movements. They have been able to draw public attention on their issues as a means to putting pressure on the government authorities to resolve them. This to an extent has worked and they have been able to impact the state decision making process.



***Anushaya Collure** currently is attached to the South Asians for Human Rights since 2014 as the Programme Coordinator. She has been engaged in activism relating to Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCRs) in Sri Lanka for nearly a decade. Through her affiliations to several civil society organisations Anushaya has been engaging in research as well as campaigns relating to ESCRs such as migrant rights, labour rights and land rights and LGBTQ rights in Sri Lanka.*

Migration and Climate Change: Women Forced to Move

Asha Hans

More than a billion people could be forced to migrate because of global warming, according to recent research. This paper will present a perspective of climate change induced migration which is strongly gendered. A study of this migration carried out by the author are against the backdrop of environmental change taking place in the Indian Delta's in Odisha and West Bengal. It will however present the data and see how it fits into the Global Compact for Migration an international agreement which could only be negotiated with the contribution of women's movement globally. The compact will be linked to local communities of women and how it could facilitate their safe and orderly migration and whether the women's movement promotion of the GCM has been on the right track.



***Asha Hans** is Co-chair, Pakistan India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy. She is former Professor of Political Science and Founder Director, School of Women's Studies, Utkal University, India. A leading campaigner of women's rights, she has participated in the formulation of many conventions in the United Nations. She is the President of Sansristi—a gender resource centre. Her recently published books include *Disability, Gender and the Trajectories of Power* (2015) and *The Gender Imperative: Human Security vs. State Security* (with Betty Reardon, 2010).*

Populism: Gender-based Violence and Judicial Response

Ruchira Goswami

The December 2012 Delhi rape of Jyoti Singh, popularly known as the 'Nirbhaya' case was a watershed in feminist and women's rights activism. In many ways, this case reminds us of the Mathura rape case in 1978. The open letter to the Chief Justice of India, the birth of the autonomous women's movements and a host of 'pro-women' legislative reforms propelled violence against women squarely within the public, political sphere in India. After three decades, the Delhi rape had similar impact on civil society and legal system. Nationwide protests, continuous media attention, debates and discussions in the legislative and judicial circles led to another round of significant legal reforms. The Verma commission gave its report in record time recommending significant changes in sexual assault laws. However, when the Criminal Law Amendment Act 2013, was passed, many of the recommendations made by the Verma Commission that reflected human rights concerns brought in by the testimonies of several civil society and human rights organizations were summarily ignored, both in the ordinance and in the final Act. The Commission recommended time bound investigation and trial of sexual violence cases, the setting up and proper functioning of fast track courts and suggested that capital punishment or death penalty was not the solution to sexual violence. This was precisely ignored and it seemed that death penalty remains as the panacea for combating sexual violence. This is reiterated in the Kathua case, this time more vociferously since the victim is a minor girl and with sexual violence against children increasing with alarming proportions. In July 2018, amendments were introduced in the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2013 with harsher penalties including death. Sustained opposition made by child rights groups clearly stating why death penalty does not deter were ignored. This paper argues that the populist legal reforms on sexual violence, focusing only on death penalty marginalizing other reasonable and effective recommendations are doing more harm than good. Gender based violence and sexual violence has become a political tool and the judiciary is not immune from playing to the galleries. The issue of sexual violence has been appropriated from feminist politics and human rights arguments are rejected for being mere rhetoric. Retributive and not reformative justice has gained ground and populist laws and policies have ensured that 'saner' voices are drowned. The current legal trend is in consonance with current populist politics on national and global levels.



Ruchira Goswami teaches at the National University of Juridical Sciences, Calcutta, where she offers courses in Sociology, Human Rights, Gender and Law, Child Rights and Film and Law. She was the Head of the Centre for Child Rights, NUJS, a multidisciplinary centre set up in partnership with UNICEF with the mandate of research, documentation and advocacy on child rights issues. A British Chevening Scholar in Human Rights from the London School of Economics, her areas of interests include social movements, women's rights and legal reforms and child rights. Her publications are in *International Human Rights Law and Women's Rights; Intellectual Property and Women's Rights, Right to Food* etc. She has taught in a number of institutions including Presidency University, Calcutta; Jadavpur University, Calcutta and in *International Development Studies, University of Oslo, Norway*. She is closely associated with several human rights organizations in the city and outside and conducts workshops and capacity building programmes on human rights issues with various stakeholders.

Enforced Victimhood: Women in Refugee Movement

Paula Banerjee

The presentation focuses on the issue of gender and power structures in refugee movements wherein the leadership remains exclusive to men. Women, be it single women travelling alone or with children, expecting women, adolescent girls, unaccompanied children or early-married girl children, at times themselves with new-born babies, do in fact constitute the most vulnerable category among refugees, susceptible to gender based violence that is, in turn, intensified by the uneven gender relations within the community of origin and continues unabated through the course of the displacement experience. Separated and without the support of families, a sense of isolation and consequent lack of visibility characterises women in refugee movements.

The author on the basis of her fieldwork among women refugees in New York City contends that while women as refugees often emerge as passive objects awaiting assistance, there is another equally important facet to the complex issue of women in refugee movements where they are often compelled to act as victims to seek asylum. Vulnerability and lack of agency are perceived as qualities that facilitate and expedite the provision of asylum. The presentation will attempt to throw light on this aspect of women as refugees.



Paula Banerjee, Vice Chancellor of the Sanskrit College & University and the former Honorary Director of the Calcutta Research Group is an expert on Indo-American relations and studied in Cincinnati, Ohio. As part of her current work on borders and women, she has authored numerous papers on women in conflict situations in northeast India. She has published extensively on issues of gender, forced migration and peace politics. She is Professor and former Head at the Department of South and South East Asian Studies, University of Calcutta. She has authored a book on Indo-US relations, titled *When Ambitions Clash* (2003), and has co-authored a book, *Women in Society and Politics in France*. Her other notable publications include *Internal Displacement in South Asia: The Relevance of UN's Guiding Principles* (co-edited 2004), *Women in Peace Politics* (2008), *Borders, Histories, Existences: Gender and Beyond* (2009), *Autonomy beyond Kant and Hermeneutics* (co-edited, 2007) *Marginalities and Justice* (co-edited, 2009), *Women in Indian Borderlands* (co-edited, 2011) and *The State of Being Stateless* (co-edited, 2015). Professor Banerjee is the recipient of a number of international fellowships including the Advanced Taft Fellowship (1991-1993) and has been the recipient of the WISCOMP Fellow of Peace Award (2001). She is the editor of *Refugee Watch*.

Being Women, Becoming Students: Students' Movements and the Question of Gender

Samata Biswas

Can students' movements be called popular movements? In 2014, the culmination of the #hokkolorob movement at Jadavpur University, (against police brutality on protesting students inside the university) saw a massive and unprecedented procession in Kolkata, which brought together people from various walks of life, activists and supposedly 'apolitical' citizens alike. In 2016, the institutional murder of Dalit research scholar Rohith Vemula became a rallying call for anti-caste activists across the country, and many allege, was the impetus between the Delhi police's arrest of 'anti-national' student activists, to take away the glare from casteism in educational institutions. Needless to say, the increasing incidents of caste violence, caste atrocities, and attacks on people on the margins, and their food habits, found resonance in the student-led opposition to continuing practices of casteism in the sphere of higher education, a supposedly democratic space.

It has increasingly become difficult to consider students' movements in isolation from others in the 'civil society', even more so with the advent of social networking sites, where much of the mobilisation is carried out, across student communities, universities and concerned groups. Within the context of students' movement then, I seek to raise the question of gender, one that has been raised many a times, but not always in a sustained manner, in the Indian context, and hardly ever intersectionally, except by individual activists, in memoirs and interviews.

The attempt here, then, is to ask the crucial question of gender: not only in terms of who participates in and leads which protest, but also, which issues are raised in the movement and which gather momentum. Other identities complicate this: religion, caste, access to English or Hindi education before reaching the university, femininity and sexuality. This presentation, in its brief span, seeks to locate these questions and concerns within students' movements of recent times in India.



Samata Biswas teaches English Literature at Bethune College, Kolkata, India. Her doctoral research was about body cultures in contemporary India, analysing fitness, weight loss, and diet discourses as present in popular media as well as through narratives of participants. She is interested in visual culture, gender studies, and literature and migration. At present, she is trying to map Kolkata as a sanitary city, focusing on access to clean sanitation or the lack thereof. She runs the blog 'Refugee Watch Online'. Her latest publication is on "Haldia: Logistics and Its

Other(s)" in Brett Neilson, Ned Rossiter, Ranabir Samaddar (Edited) *Logistical Asia: The Labour of Making a World Region*. (Palgrave Mcmillan, 2018)

**Who are the People?
Populism and the Populist Movements
August 31-September 1, 2018**

**Panel Discussion IV
*Populism and its Attitude to Law***



Sibaji Pratim Basu is member, Calcutta Research Group and Professor of Political Science with Rural Administration, Vidyasagar University, West Bengal, India. A regular contributor to academic journals and popular dailies, periodicals and news channels, he specializes in Modern Indian Political Thought and Political and Socialist Thought. He is also interested in issues related to popular movements, cultural politics, forced migration in contemporary South Asia and 'sustainable rights' of the people in the Indian context. His book, *The Poet and the Mahatma: Engagement with Nationalism and Internationalism* (Progressive Publishers, Kolkata, 2009) has received much critical acclaim. He is also the editor of *The Fleeing People of South Asia: Selections from Refugee Watch and Politics in Hunger Regime* (with Geetisha Dasgupta, Frontpage, 2011). His other notable publications include, "Globalisation and Right to Information" in Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury and Ishita Dey(ed.) *Sustainability Rights after Globalisation* (Sage, 2011) and "The Chronicle of a Forgotten Movement in West Bengal" in Samir Kumar Das (ed.) *Understanding Democracy and Violence in 1959 Revisited* (OUP, 2015)

People's Struggle for Freedom of Information in India

Sabir Ahamed

There has been an incredible boom in big data - data is everywhere - yet there is shortage of relevant and timely information when it comes to determining effective public policy, accountability and governance.

In India, the culture of secrecy originated in with the enactment of the Official Secret Act 1923, a complete prohibition on sharing information about the running of the governance, a powerful tool to perpetuate the colonial control over the subject. The trend continued many years after the Independence in 194. In 2005 the landmark legislation titled the Right to Information Act was enacted, with some ostensible objectives of ensuring citizen's right to information, building accountability and transparency in the governance.

A series of incidences since the very beginning of Independence led a popular movement, demanding the right to information. As the 'asymmetry of information' had curtailed their basic rights and entitlement. The experiences of The Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan, for example, public hearing and social audits, for examples exposing the corruption at different administrative levels spread to a few other states, and the demand grew into a popular movement.

The paper traces the milestones in the journey of the Act, and the role of civil society organization and medium used to engage people in the movement. In the conclusion, the paper points to the fact that the RTI Act was one of the most people friendly Acts as it initiated with the people's involvement.



Sabir Ahamed is Research Coordinator and Fellow at Pratichi Institute, Pratichi (India) Trust. His own research interest includes the socio-economic status of minority, especially about the Muslims, child protection, and education. He is one of the contributors for the research project "Living Reality of Muslims in West Bengal". Aside from his research activities, he has utilized and popularizes the Right to Information Act 2005 in West Bengal for building transparency and accountability in governance. Also, he is an active member of 'Know your neighbour', a campaign promotes dialogue among various communities. He has been contributing op- pieces on various development issues for regional and English dailies for last ten years. He has co-edited *Paschimbange Musalman: Ekti Parikrama*, (Prashnabachi and CAMP, Kolkata, 2007) on the Muslim population of West Bengal with the Kumar Rana, and 'Caring Children: Essays on the status of children in West Bengal' (Moulana Azad College, 2016). He conducts training on RTI Acts for the civil society actors and Civil servants at the Administrative Training Institute (ATI).

Popular Movements in Tamil Nadu with Focus on Sterlite Protest and Shoot-out Incident

Parivelan K.M.

In the recent years, Tamil Nadu has been witnessing several people's movement ranging from Koodankulam anti nuclear protest, Jallikattu protest, Enayam port protest, Salem-Chennai Highway protest to the recent anti-sterlite (copper smelting) protest. The anti sterlite protest is significant for culminating in to the Thoothukudi shoot out incident wherein twelve persons were killed and several injured. The people in and around Thoothukudi are in state of shock and trauma. It raises several questions like: was the protest peaceful, if so why this killing, was the killing by police pre-meditated action, is it to suppress popular movements. Is it also a ploy to extend the support to corporates, which are destroying and polluting the environment? Is it a sign of decline of good governance or a complete collapse of democracy where people have no right to participate in peaceful protests?

We need to look on to the environmental and health hazards such plants may be causing. We have to speak to the women of Thoothukudi about their experiences with the Sterlite plant, the health problems that have grown including concerning the health of their children, the polluted water and the increased incidence of health risks.

In the absence of any law and order problem in the area there is no need for continuing an enhanced police presence at Thoothukudi. Its continuation affirms public fears that the police and the administration are motivated in their actions by an intention to break the movement against polluting industries wherein Sterlite is a prime contributor. Finally how do we bring in accountability and transparency for such police actions suppressing the popular social movements will be explored in this paper.



Parivelan K.M., Associate Professor, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Patna, serves as Chairperson & Associate Professor at Nodal Centre of Excellence for Human Rights Education & Centre for Statelessness and Refugee Studies, School of Law, Rights and Constitutional Governance, Tata Institute of social Sciences. Previously he had served at United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for facilitating the post-Tsunami recovery and at United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and facilitated the voluntary repatriation of Sri Lankan refugees as part of peace process. He also briefly served at Pondicherry (Central) University, Puducherry and Jamia Millia Central University, New Delhi, respectively.

Populist Politics Speaking to the Law: the Case of *Assam Sanmilita Mahasangha v Union of India and Ors*

Sahana Basavapatna

The Supreme Court of India has, over the last several years, increasingly stepped into the realm of policy making and governance, notably in the longest heard continuing mandamus case of *Godavarman Thirumalpad v Union of India and ors*, WP(C) No. 202/1995. This presentation considers the case of *Assam Sanmilita Mahasangha v Union of India and ors*, WP(C) No. 562/2012, currently pending before the Supreme Court of India. The case, whose primary concern is with illegal Bangladeshi immigration into India, attempts to resolve India's old disquiet with the problem of the foreigner. If the *Assam Sanmilita Mahasangha* case can be called a third act in the illegal Bangladeshi immigration saga, what we now have is a Court that has assumed jurisdiction under Article 142 and concerned with the social, cultural, religious and economic rights of the citizens of Assam. The attempt in this presentation, is to examine, in the light of the ongoing developments [notably, NRC and the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2015] what it means for the Supreme Court to consider the constitutional validity of Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955, among others, under Article 142 of the Constitution of India. The Supreme Court practice of taking on the role of the executive in matters that reek of populist politics such as this case, requires to be reviewed.



Sahana Basavapatna is a Partner at the law firm, *Factum Law and practices* in trial courts as well as the High Court of Karnataka. Formerly, she worked in Delhi between 2006 and 2015 on, among others, forced migration with diverse refugee communities. In the law few years, she has closely looked at the Rohingya influx into India.

