

# Seminar: Conversations on Social Reproduction

**TITLE:** Vengeance and Vulnerability: Gendered Embodiment and Indian Men's Rights Activists

**SPEAKER:** Srimati Basu, Professor of Gender and Women's Studies and Anthropology at the University of Kentucky.

**WHEN:** Friday June 10th, 12-1pm BST/4:30-5:30pm IST

**WHERE:** Teams; [Follow the link to register](#)



**BIO:** Srimati Basu, Professor of Gender and Women's Studies and Anthropology at the University of Kentucky, is an interdisciplinary scholar of gender and law, social movements, marriage, violence, and South Asia. She is the author of the monographs *The Trouble with Marriage: Feminists Confront Law and Violence in India* (University of California Press, 2015) and *She Comes to Take Her Rights: Indian Women, Property and Propriety* (SUNY Press, 1999), editor of *Dowry and Inheritance* (Women Unlimited, 2005), and co-editor (with Lucinda Ramberg) of *Conjugality Unbound: Sexual Economy and the Marital Form in India* (Women Unlimited, 2014).

Some recent articles on masculinity, law, marriage and violence appear in anthologies including 50th Anniversary Commemorative Volume of Contributions to Indian Sociology (2019) and *Men and Feminism in India* (2018), and the journals *Feminist Anthropology* and *QED*. She is presently working on a monograph about the antifeminist men's rights movement in India, following fieldwork funded by a Fulbright-Nehru Senior Fellowship, and during this summer, is a visiting researcher at the Max Planck Institute of Social Anthropology at Halle (Saale). In 2022, she also started a new fieldwork project on private detectives in India, funded by the National Endowment for Humanities and the American Institute for Indian Studies. She is the President of the Association for Feminist Anthropology for 2021-23.

**ABSTRACT:** One of the primary strategies through which the Men's Rights Movement in India seeks to challenge the reform of laws of marriage and gender-based violence established through feminist mobilization, and to claim recognition within global discourses of human rights and gender equity, is the frequent use of images of feminist power and masculine vulnerability. This paper traces how the affective strategies through which they make such claims, including through visual genealogies linking these contemporary images to histories of representations of feminism as modernity and menace, and normative masculinity as bewilderment, abandonment and alienation. I draw upon my ethnographic fieldwork with men's rights activists across Indian cities to identify some of the contradictions about gendered and intersectional power within such representations of embodiment between these images, discourse and policy. I argue that men's rights activists' practices of projecting vengeance on feminists and claiming vulnerability on their own behalf are premised upon inversions of discourses of power, instrumental understandings of gendered rights and caste and class, and conflation of feminism and the State.

**LAWS OF SOCIAL REPRODUCTION:** For more information about the project or to join the network, please email [Prabha.kotiswaran@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:Prabha.kotiswaran@kcl.ac.uk). The Laws of Social Reproduction project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (under grant agreement No. 772946)



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