

# PMRN

Postgraduate Migration  
Research Network

# ICMiC

Identity, Citizenship  
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Presents

**Dr Radhika Govinda**

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India***

**'Politicisation of Ex-Untouchables in a  
Northern Indian Village: Exploring  
Narratives of Democracy from the Margins'**



**Room B18  
School of Sociology & Social Policy  
Law & Social Sciences Building  
University of Nottingham**

This paper traces the politicization of ex-untouchables in a northern Indian village in an attempt to explore the new and multiple ways in which democracy is imagined, experienced and negotiated at the grassroots by those at the margins of contemporary village society. The trajectory of politicization of ex-untouchables has been neither linear nor uncomplicated. While scholars have sought to understand this politicization in the context of the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, their focus has tended to be on the power and prominence that the 'ex-untouchable party' BSP has garnered for itself in the state and the increasing assertion by the ex-untouchables in local electoral politics. Few have attempted a political ethnography to capture the dynamics of this change as it unravels in the life of a village and its ex-untouchables. This paper is based on such an ethnography, with a distinct focus on the perspectives of ex-untouchable women. I argue that one needs to look beyond the power and prominence of the BSP at local developments such as the formation of a NGO-supported ex-untouchable women's self-help group and the murder of a BSP supporting political fixer too in understanding the process of politicization of the ex-untouchables of the village. These developments demonstrate how the language and idiom of democracy are being simultaneously challenged and reconfigured in and beyond state - and village-level elections.

**Monday  
30th April 2012**

**3.00pm-5.00pm**

**Organiser: Dr Srila Roy**

All Welcome. Refreshments served. <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/icmic/index.aspx>