

Social History of Early India (M21420)

Four credits

Course instructor: Kumkum Roy

The course introduces students to some of the major themes that have been explored in early and early medieval social history. Each theme is discussed in the course of three to four lectures, and in each lecture, space is created for an interactive discussion based on a small excerpt from a primary source in translation, to familiarize students with the bases on which historical generalizations are made. These excerpts are made available prior to each semester when the course is offered.

Fifty percent of the evaluation for the course is on the basis of tutorials (approximately 2000 words each) and active participation in discussion on the tutorials. The remaining fifty percent of the evaluation is on the basis of the end semester examination. Separate readings are suggested for the tutorials, and these are notified at the beginning of the semester.

Themes discussed in the course include varna-jati formations and their significance within a broader framework of social stratification and a focus on attempts to reconstruct histories of marginalized groups; kinship structures and rites of passage including the asrama system; issues of gender and sexuality. These themes are presented as intersecting and overlapping rather than as watertight compartments.

Recommended readings

General/ background

Jeannine Auboyer, *Daily Life in Ancient India*, New Delhi, Munshiram Manoharlal, 1994.

Brajadulal Chattopadhyaya, *The Making of Early Medieval India*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1994.

Brajadulal Chattopadhyaya, *Studying Early India: Archaeology, Texts and Historical Issues*, New Delhi, Permanent Black, 2004.

R.S. Sharma, *Material Culture and Social Formation in Ancient India*, New Delhi, Macmillan, 1983.

Upinder Singh, *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India*, Delhi, Pearson, 2008.

Romila Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations*, New Delhi, Orient Longman, 2003.

Social stratification and identities

B.R.Ambedkar, *Who Were the Shudras?* Delhi, Gautam Book Centre, 2008.

Uma Chakravarti, *The Social Dimensions of Buddhism*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1987.

Uma Chakravarti, *Everyday Lives, Everyday Histories: Beyond the Kings and Brahmanas of 'Ancient' India*, New Delhi, Tulika, 2006.

Brajadulal Chattopadhyaya, *Representing the Other? Sanskrit Sources and the Muslims (Eighth to Fourteenth Centuries)*, New Delhi, Manohar, 1998.

Suvira Jaiswal, *Caste: Origins, Function and Dimensions of Change*, New Delhi, Manohar, 1998.

B.R. Mani, *Debrahmanising History*, New Delhi, Manohar, 2008.

Aloka Parasher, *Mlecchas in Early India: A Study in Attitudes towards Outsiders up to AD 600*, New Delhi, Munshiram Manoharlal, 1990.

Aloka Parasher-Sen (ed.), *Subordinate and Marginal Groups in Early India*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2004.

Shereen Ratnagar, *The Other Indians: Essays on Pastoralists and Prehistoric Tribal People*, New Delhi, Three Essays Collective, 2004.

R.S. Sharma, *Sudras in Ancient India: A Social History of the Lower Order Down to c. A.D. 600*, New Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 2002.

R.S. Sharma, *Perspectives in the Social and Economic History of Early India*, New Delhi, Munshiram Manoharlal, 2003.

N. Wagle, *Society at the time of the Buddha*, Bombay, Popular Prakashan, 1966.

Kinship Structures and Rites of Passage

Patrick Olivelle, *The Asrama System: The History and Hermeneutics of a Religious Institution*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993.

Rajbali Pandey, *Hindu Samskaras: Socio-religious study of the Hindu Sacraments*, New Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1987.

T.R. Trautmann, *Dravidian Kinship*, New Delhi, Vistaar, 1995.

Gender and Sexuality

Sukumari Bhattacharji, *Women and Society in Ancient India*, Calcutta, Basumati, 1994.

Kathryn Blackstone, *Women in the Footsteps of the Buddha: The Struggle for Liberation in the Therigatha*, Surrey, Curzon, 1998.

Padmanabh S. Jaini, *Gender and Salvation: Jaina Debates on the Spiritual Liberation of Women*, Delhi, Munshiram Manoharlal, 1992.

Stephanie Jamison, *Sacrificed Wife, Sacrificer's Wife: Women, Ritual and Hospitality in Ancient India*, New Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1996.

Julia L Leslie (ed.), *Roles and Rituals for Hindu Women*, New Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1996.

Julia l. Leslie and Mary McGee (eds.), *Invented Identities: The Interplay of Gender, Ritual and Politics in India*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2006

Laurie Patton (ed.), *Jewels of Authority: Women and Textual Tradition in Hindu India*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2002.

Devika Rangachari, *Invisible Women, Visible Histories; Gender, Society and Polity in North India*, New Delhi, Manohar, 2009.

Kumkum Roy (ed.), *Women in Early Indian Societies*, New Delhi, Manohar, 1999.

Kumkum Roy, *The Power of Gender and the Gender of Power*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2010.

Shalini Shah, *Love, Eroticism and Female Sexuality in Classical Sanskrit Literature*, New Delhi, Manohar, 2009.

Jaya Tyagi, *Engendering the Early Household: Brahmanical Precepts in the Early Grhyasutras*, New Delhi, Orient Longman, 2008.

Jaya Tyagi, *Contestation and Compliance: Retrieving Women's 'Agency' from the Puranic Traditions*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2014.

Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai (eds.), *Same Sex Love in India: Readings from Literature and History*, New York, St. Martin's, 2000.

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