



The Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology
and the South Asia Research Group

cordially invite you to

Political Theologies of Land Reclamation: Moralities of the Syrian Christian Agrarian Migrations in South India

a public lecture by
Vekkal John Varghese

Date and Time: Tuesday, May 22nd at 15:30

Venue: Monument Building, Gellner room

This talk would engage with the seeming anachronism of deploying spiritual renderings in the service of the immanent/material gain and attaching sacrality to modern secular-material transformations. It would demonstrate how religious and theological dispositions worked – in both explicit and implicit ways – in shoring up enterprises of land reclamation and agrarian expansion in modern Kerala, South India. Couched in a religious vocabulary reclamation became a godly sanctioned mission in the Christian narratives of this modern enterprise. Also, normative truths of migration and agrarian expansion were produced in a wider moral economy of salvaging wilderness to a new cosmos of development and prosperity, with its own sense of virtue/sin, morality/immorality and benediction/punishment. At the same time, the Christian world had its own estrangements along this mission, driving two Catholic denominations into conflict for authority and identity. The talk thus complicates the material/spiritual binary in order to explicate the adaptive functions they perform in constituting interstices and to demonstrate that the secular-material is not always deprived of a sense of the sacred and its distinctive moralities.

Vekkal John Varghese teaches at the Department of History in the School of Social Sciences University of Hyderabad, India. His areas of interest include modern South Asian history, transnational migrations from South Asia and the making of regional modernities in South Asia, with a focus on Kerala in South India and Punjab in North India. He has co-authored *Dreaming Mobility and Buying Vulnerability: Overseas Recruitment Practices in India* (Routledge) and co-edited *Anjuru Varshathe Keralam: Chila Arivadayalangal* in Malayalam (Tapasam/DC Books), *Migration, Mobility and Multiple Affiliations: Punjabis in a Transnational World* (Cambridge University Press) apart from writing in reputed journals and contributing chapters to edited volumes.