



### LECTURE 3:

## SAVING BODIES, SAVING SOULS


RESOURCE PERSON:

**DR. DIVYA KANNAN**

Assistant Professor,  
School of Humanities and  
Social Sciences,  
Shiv Nadar University,  
Delhi NCR

 **Date: 18th October, 2024**

 **Time: 10.00 am- 11.00 am**

 **Venue: 305, Samgatha  
Nila Campus  
IIT Palakkad**

Click [here](#) to register  
Please note that registration and  
participation is free.

### Abstract

*This talk will critically examine the intricate dynamics of missionary education for poor, 'untouchable caste' girls in colonial Kerala. The analysis sheds light on how British Protestant missionaries shaped educational experiences that reinforced existing caste and gender hierarchies. Far from being a straightforward narrative of upliftment, missionary education often confined these marginalised girls to roles centered around domestic labour, moral discipline, and religious conformity, while simultaneously exploiting their labour to sustain the missionary enterprise. The discussion will also highlight the contradictions within this educational framework, revealing how the evangelical missionary rhetoric of benevolence and upliftment was frequently undermined by practices that maintained the subordination of poor, 'untouchable caste' girls within colonial and caste-based structures. Moreover, moments of resistance and negotiation will also be explored, where young girls navigated the limitations of missionary control to assert agency within constrained circumstances. This examination of missionary education will engage broader scholarly debates about the intersections of caste, gender, and imperial power, and their role in shaping the educational and social trajectories of marginalised populations in colonial south India.*



### About the speaker

*Dr Divya Kannan is currently Assistant Professor, Department of History and Archaeology, Shiv Nadar University, Delhi-NCR. *Contested Childhoods: Caste and Education in Colonial Kerala* (Cambridge University Press 2024) is her first book which draws upon her doctoral research at the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University. Her research interests include histories of empire, childhood, education, gender, and public history. She is also the co-founder and co-convenor of the online Critical Childhoods and Youth Studies Collective (CCYSC).*

## ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT

The Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology Palakkad, established in the year 2015 is committed to active engagement in teaching, research and outreach programs. With a focus on interdisciplinary dialogues, the faculties of the department presently carry out teaching and research in emerging fields of enquiries in the varied disciplines of HSS ranging from Economics, English, History, Linguistics, Philosophy, Psychology, Political Science and Sociology. The department offers a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate courses for the Science and Engineering students with an aim to shape them into intellectually responsible and socially conscious global citizens. The department also offers PhD programmes in the aforementioned disciplines.

## ABOUT THE SERIES

The Thematic Exploration series is an endeavour that has sprung from the interest of the Humanities and Social Sciences dept. at IIT Palakkad in exploring research in certain focused areas. The department wishes to focus on a theme each year and instigate dialogues in that area by facilitating a series of events namely lectures, panel discussions, performances and so on. Bringing together people of different standing like academicians, independent researchers and scholars, artists, writers, activists and many others, the department envisages it as a platform to nurture and keep alive discussions and interactions.

## THE LIST OF EVENTS PLANNED IN THE "THEMATIC EXPLORATION SERIES" FOR THIS SEMESTER:

- 1) **Dr. Anagha Ingole**, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Political Science at the University of Hyderabad, “**Non- Brahmin Perspectives on Dharma and Sociality**”, 27 September 2024, 2.30pm-4.30pm.
- 2) **Prof. G. Arunima**, Professor, Centre for Women's Studies, School of Social Sciences, JNU, “**Working with Traces: Towards a Gendered History of Writing in Kerala**”, 1 October 2024, 2.30pm-4.30pm.
- 3) **Dr. Divya Kannan**, Assistant Professor, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Shiv Nadar University, Delhi NCR, “**Saving Bodies, Saving Souls**”, 18 Oct, 2024, 10.00 am- 11.00 am.
- 4) **Dr. V. Geetha**, Independent Scholar and Researcher, “**Gender, Caste and the Languages of Sexual Politics**”, 8 November 2024, 2.30pm-4.30pm.
- 5) **Prof. Nivedita Menon**, Centre for Comparative Politics & Political Theory, School of International Studies, JNU, “**Self, Labour, Technology: Three Voices from Early 20th Century India**”, 14 Nov, 2024, 2.30pm-4.30pm.