



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

THE DELHI SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS, UNIVERSITY OF DELHI

SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH COLLOQUIUM

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Caste and Emancipatory Quest: Ethnography of Dalits in an Urban Neighbourhood

Speaker: Rama Devi



Rama Devi is a postdoctoral fellow at Centre De Sciences Humaines, New Delhi. Before joining CSH, she was an adjunct faculty member at KREA University. She completed her doctorate in sociology from the Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati. Her research interests broadly lie in the domains of social stratification, discrimination, exclusion, and inequality, and urban sociology. Her published writings engage with youth aspirations, contemporary labor-market segregation, higher education, and affirmative policy under the neoliberal economy. Her ongoing research focuses on the opportunities and experiences of Dalit women engaged in the contemporary labour-market.

Abstract

The book *Caste and Emancipatory Quest* explores the complex interaction between caste and the city, challenging the conventional view of urban spaces as naturally "modern" sites detached from oppressive rural structures. While cities are often imagined as emancipatory by the marginalized, this study argues they remain key sites for the (re)production of urban stratification.

Based on an ethnographic study of a Dalit neighborhood in Delhi, the book examines how caste continues to shape everyday interactions, politics, and intergenerational mobility. It concludes that while the metropolitan city serves as a liminal space offering opportunities for aspiration, deep-seated structural constraints persist, frequently frustrating Dalit efforts to achieve upward mobility.