

Departmental Colloquium - History Department Summer Semester 2024

A Stream of Pure Sanskrit Curses: Caste, Fantasy, and Genre in Nehruvian India

Gregory Goulding
(University of Pennsylvania)



This talk examines Gajanan Madhav Muktibodh's 1957 poem "Brahmarakshas" [The Brahman Demon] to understand Hindi literature's engagement with problems of genre and literary form in post-independence India. This long poem, which depicts a demonic ghost of a Brahman who has failed to pass on his teachings, is read as a pivotal satire of the Nehruvian intellectual. In my talk, I argue that contextualizing this poem in the larger

canvas of Muktibodh's writing reveals its deep concern with questions of caste and education. This concern draws attention to the experiments with genre and literary form that shape this work and bring it into conversation with global debates on modernism and realism. This talk will argue that Muktibodh's long poems, of which "Brahmarakshas" is a key example, are a response to key tensions in the relation of South Asian literary cultures to fundamental problems of twentieth-century literature.



More
information

Wednesday 05.06.2024
Room CATS 010.01.05 - Hörsaal
16:15 CEST

Image: Photograph of a stepwell in Ujjain, India. Courtesy of the author.