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cordially invites you to

Labour and Inequality Lecture Series

on

An Ethnography of a Strike: Egalitarianism and Resistance in Kerala's Plantation Frontier

by



Dr. Jayaseelan Raj

Dr. Jayaseelan Raj is Assistant Professor at the Centre for Development Studies (CDS), Thiruvananthapuram, and Research Associate in the Egalitarianism project in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Bergen, where he received his PhD in Anthropology in 2014. Before joining CDS, he was a postdoctoral research fellow at the London School of Economics and is a co-author of *Ground Down by Growth* (Pluto Press 2017 and Oxford University Press 2018). His main research interests include plantation labour in south Asia, anthropology of development, caste and class, poverty and inequality, and industrial work and social life.

Abstract

The talk examines an extraordinary wildcat strike led by women tea workers against a giant tea plantation company and dominant trade unions in the south Indian tea belt of Munnar. It employs situational analysis to examine the larger processes that led to the strike, implications for the workers and to the wider socioeconomic relations in the tea belt. It will be argued that in addition to the exploitative plantation production and the poor implementation of welfare measures, the strike was largely fuelled by and directed against union corruption and the breach by union leaders of egalitarian relations in the workers' society. At the end, the paper calls for an understanding of local conceptions of inequality, injustice and humiliation as forces that has the potency to initiate and intensify labour resistance under exploitative production relations.

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T-2, Global Conference Room

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