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KCHR PUBLIC TALK

WHAT IS THIS THING WE CALL 'TRADITION'?

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THURSDAY | 27 JUNE 2024 | 3:00 PM (IST)

Venue: Online

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ABSTRACT

This talk is a preliminary attempt to gain a clearer sense of the vexed notion that we name 'tradition' – the things and practices we index as tradition in our everyday life and in the conceptual world. We employ the term tradition in our everyday conversation and also in practices of conceptualization to mean many things. It may simply mean a convention. For example, it is the institutional tradition to honour the visiting guest. It also means in a significant way any customs or practices that have continued for a very long time, something that is believed to have been transmitted from generation to generation. Here there is a lack of clarity about the time of the formation of these practices, it is almost as if there is no requirement of it. Here this practice – tradition – stands apart from other everyday practices that are carried out without following any convention. However, it is in a relational sense that we use the term today – in relation to a set of practices we call modern, which shapes our everyday life in a significant way. It is in this sense that tradition gains its import and at the same time remains somewhat vague, at least when we try to analyze or understand it. Here it operates in the form of a binary – tradition/modern. We may say that the modern condition of non-western society like ours is not inhabiting either of these domains but designating various domains of life into traditional and modern, and navigate them even in locations where they overlap. We may further say that in our society modernity operates itself - or is at work - through this process. This poses a great challenge when we try to attain a critical understanding of this modernity. This paper takes up this challenge by analyzing a few literary writings in Malayalam in the last decades of nineteenth-century Kerala.

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Dr. Ashokan Nambiar C. is Assistant Professor at the Manipal Centre for Humanities, Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE). His areas of research interests include Cultural History of Kerala, Literary History, Print History, Interface between Literary Studies, and other Humanities and Social Science fields of inquiry. He has been a research fellow with Kerala Council for Historical Research.

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Venue : **Online**

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