



PUBLIC LECTURE

MORALITIES OF LAND 'RECLAMATION'

CHURCH, AGRARIAN EXPANSION AND MIGRATION TO MALABAR

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**VENUE: IUCSSRE Conference Hall, Convergence Academia Complex,
Mahatma Gandhi University Campus, Kottayam**

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ABSTRACT

This presentation will make an attempt to engage with the seeming anachronism of deploying spiritual renderings in the service of the material gain and attaching sacralty to modern secular-material transformations. It would demonstrate how religious and theological dispositions worked – in both explicit and implicit ways – in shoring up enterprises of land reclamation and agrarian expansion in modern Kerala, South India. Couched in a religious vocabulary reclamation became a godly sanctioned mission in the Christian narratives of this modern enterprise. Also, normative truths of migration and agrarian expansion were produced in a wider moral economy of salvaging wilderness to a new cosmos of development and prosperity, with its own sense of virtue/sin, morality/immorality and benediction/punishment. At the same time, the Christian world had its own estrangements along this mission, driving two Catholic denominations into conflict for authority and identity. It complicates the material/spiritual binary in order to explicate the adaptive functions they perform in constituting interstices and demonstrate that the secular-material is not always deprived of a sense of the sacred and its distinctive moralities.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER



Dr. V. J. Varghese teaches at the Department of History in the School of Social Sciences, University of Hyderabad. He works on the transformation of the Syrian Christian community in Kerala, under the weight of modernity through the routes of migrations, land reclamation and agrarian expansion. He looks at the apparently conflicting orientations - local and the imperial/global, religious and the secular, traditional and the modern & pre-political and political- involved in the production of modern subjectivities in the erstwhile colonies of the global South. He has co-authored *Dreaming Mobility and Buying Vulnerability: Overseas Recruitment Practices in India* (Routledge) and co-edited *Anjuru Varshathe Keralam: Chila Arivadayalanga* in Malayalam (Tapasam/SPCS), *Migration, Mobility and Multiple Affiliations: Punjabis in a Transnational World* (Cambridge University Press). He was Charles Wallace India Trust Fellow at the University of Edinburgh (2018); Research Excellence Visiting Fellow at CEU, Budapest (2017-18); Visiting Senior Research Fellow at ARI, National University of Singapore (2014) and an ESRC Visiting Fellow at the University of Sussex (2010-11).