

Lecture Series on Governance and Politics in South Asia

Department of Political Science

From Bondage to Citizenship

Dalit and African-American Mobilization in Two Southern Deltas

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The talk compares mobilization to reduce the deepest inequalities in the two largest democracies, those along racial lines in the United States and along caste lines in India. These inequalities have proven durable although the subordinate groups, African-Americans and India's former untouchable castes (Dalits), have had political rights for over half a century. We examine subordinate group mobilization for full citizenship (the franchise, civil rights such as freedom from agrarian bondage, and social rights such as to higher incomes and education), and its effects on representation and policy benefits. Experiences in two regions of high ethnic and class inequality (the Mississippi and Kaveri deltas) are compared and situated within national trends. Given certain similarities in demographic patterns, group boundaries, socio-economic relations, regime type, and enfranchisement timing, we see that important differences in nationalist and civic discourse, social classification, and group identification influenced the two groups' mobilization, alliances, relationship to parties, representation, and social rights. These factors helped Dalits build more favorable interethnic alliances, and made polity insiders and dominant elites resist inclusion more in the US and especially the Deep South. Thus, subordinate group representation and democracy were enhanced sooner in India and specifically in the Kaveri delta.



Narendra Subramanian is Professor of Political Science at McGill University. He studies the politics of nationalism, ethnicity, religion, gender, and race in a comparative global perspective, focusing primarily on India. His books include *Nation and Family: Personal Law, Cultural Pluralism, and Gendered Citizenship in India* (Stanford University Press, 2014) and *Ethnicity and Populist Mobilization: Political Parties, Citizens and Democracy in South India* (Oxford University Press, 1999).

Date: Monday, November 27, 2017

Time: 16:00 – 18:00

Venue: SAI, Room 317

All are cordially invited!