

Merchants of Early Modern and Colonial India: Enterprise, Community, and Politics
Conference at Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research (IGIDR), Goregaon (East),
Mumbai, India

14-15 December 2019

Sponsors:

S K Somaiya College (Department of History), London School of Economics, Georgia State University, Dr. Phiroza J Godrej, the Godrej Archives, Ashwin Bhai Shroff, Excel Industries and British Academy.

The conference aims to bring together scholars who have studied Indian merchants during the 17th and 20th century. During this period, merchants and merchant communities played a vital role in the economic and political change in India, some of these changes left a legacy that shaped enterprise in present-day India. Past scholarship in the field has studied the trading enterprise of individual merchants and merchant families, this conference seeks to explore their trade and businesses in broader socio-cultural and political contexts. We hope that the conversation will lead to a more comprehensive and comparative understanding of the world of Indian merchants in the early modern and colonial periods.

Organizers:

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chhaya.goswami@somaiya.edu; Ghulam A. Nadri (Georgia State University): gnadri@gsu.edu;
Tirthankar Roy (LSE, UK): T.Roy@lse.ac.uk

Programme

Saturday, 14 December		Sunday, 15 December	
8:45-9:30	Registration	9:00-10:30	Session 4
9:30-10:50	Opening session	11:00-12:30	Session 5
11:00-12:30	Session 1	14:00-15:30	Session 6
14:00-15:30	Session 2	15:40-16:30	Closing session
16:00-17:30	Session 3		

14 December

Opening session

9:30-9:40	Professor S Mahendra Dev, Director IGIDR	Welcome
9.40-9.50	Welcome and introduction of keynote speaker	Tirthankar Roy/Ghulam Nadri/Chhaya Goswami
9:50-10:30	Gurcharan Das <i>Author and Public Intellectual, New Delhi</i>	Keynote address- Relevance of Business History
10:30-10:40	Q&A	
10.40-10-50	Samir Somaiya, President Somaiya Vidyavihar	Guest of Honor speech

10. 50– 11.00: *Coffee/tea*

Session 1: Merchant, Community, and Trade in Western India: 17th-19th centuries

Chair & discussant: Douglas Haynes (*Dartmouth College, USA*)

11:00–11:20	Shreya Jain <i>(University of Delhi)</i>	An Individual, a Community and the State: A Case Study of a Seventeenth-Century Gujarati Merchant
11:20-11:40	Chhaya Goswami <i>(S K Somaiya College, Mumbai)</i>	Diwan Devkaran: Politico-entrepreneurship in the Early Eighteenth Century Gulf of Kachchh
11:40-12:00	Ghulam A. Nadri, <i>(Georgia State University)</i>	Community, Enterprise, and Capitalism: The Parsis of Western India in the 18 th and 19 th Centuries
12:00-12:30	Discussion	

12:30-14:00 *Lunch*

Session 2: Merchant networks and trade in western India: 18th-19th centuries

Chair & discussant: Lakshmi Subramanian (BITS Pilani, Goa)

14:00–14:20	Meher Mistry (<i>Jhunjhunwala College, Mumbai</i>)	Parsis in the Trade and Politics of Khambhat in the 18 th -19 th century
14:20-14:40	Meenu Kanojia (<i>Singapore</i>)	The Bullion Trade: Revisiting Commercial Networks of the Merchants of Bombay
14:40-15:00	Shivam Sharma (<i>Ambedkar University</i>)	Trade, Migration and Identity: A Study of the Transformation of the Memon Community.
15:00-15:30	Discussion	

15:30-16:00 *Coffee/tea*

Session 3: Merchant, Trade, and Politics in Bengal

Chair & discussant: Tirthankar Roy (*LSE*)

16:00-16:20	Tilottama Mukherjee <i>Jadavpur University</i>	Merchants and Commercial Enterprise in Early Modern Bengal: Some Observations in Contemporary European Travel Literature
16:20-16:40	Michael Aldous (<i>Queen's University Belfast</i>)	Reassessing the rise and fall of the Bengali Banians
16:40-17:00	Supriya Law (<i>University of Kolkata</i>)	Tracing the interplay of enterprise, community and politics in late nineteenth-early twentieth century Bengal: The case study of the mercantile firm of Prawn Kissen Law & Co. of Calcutta (1839-1919).
17:00-17:30	Discussion	

17:30-18:30 *Social hour (with SK Somaiya College and IGIDR faculty and students)*

Sunday: 15 December 2019

Session 4: Enterprise, capital, and colonialism in Indian history: framing the narrative

Chair & discussant: Medha Kudaisya (*National University of Singapore*)

9:30-9:50	Lakshmi Subramanian (<i>BITS Pilani</i>)	Community, Capital and History Writing: Studying Indian Enterprise from the Eighteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries
9:50-10:10	Tirthankar Roy (<i>LSE</i>)	Colonialism and business history: Exploring the connection
10:10-10:30	Jairus Banaji (<i>SOAS/Mumbai</i>)	The Resilience of Indian Capital: Global Comparisons and Perspectives
10:30-11:00	Discussion	

11:00-11:30 *Coffee/tea*

Session 5: Professional mobility, gender, and caste in Indian business

Chair & discussant: Aparna Kapadia (*Williams College, USA*)

11:30-11:50	Douglas Haynes (<i>Dartmouth College, USA</i>)	From Weaving Communities to Business Communities: Small-Scale Capitalists in Small-Town Western India. 1870-1960
11:50-12:10	Chinmay Tumbe (<i>IIM, Ahmedabad</i>)	Women in Indian Merchant Communities
12:10-12:30	Discussion	

12:30-14:00 *Lunch break*

Session 6: Merchants, communities, and nationalism in the 20th century

Chair & discussant: Chhaya Goswami (S.K. Somaiya College)

14:00-14:20	Medha Kudaisya (NUS, Singapore)	Forging Mercantile Solidarities: Marwari Traders, 1920s to 1950s.
14:20-14:40	Saaz Aggarwal (Pune)	Sindhworkis: Sinbads of the Modern world
14:40-15:00	Discussion	

15:00-15:30 *Coffee/tea*

Session 7: Merchants and cross-cultural trading networks

Chair & discussant: Ghulam Nadri (GSU)

15:30-15:50	Fahad Bishara (University of Virginia, USA)	The Hundred Horizons of Mohammed Salem Al Sudairawi: Rewriting the Arab Merchants of Bombay
15:50-16:10	Bhaswati Bhattacharya (CeMIS, Germany)	Catholic Armenian Merchants of Madras in the Eighteenth Century
16:10-16:30	Discussion	

16:30-17:00 *Closing session*