



**UNIVERSITY OF ALLAHABAD**  
(A Central University)  
ALLAHABAD- 211002  
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

**Call for Papers for National Seminar on 'History of Leather Working Castes in India: Social Transformation and Challenges' (28-29 October, 2017)**

We extend our warm greetings and the best wishes. We are pleased to invite you to participate in the academic deliberations of the **National Seminar on 'History of Leather Working Castes in India: Social Transformation and Challenges'** which is being organized by the Department of History, University of Allahabad on 28-29 October, 2017. This seminar is sponsored by ICHR & ICSSR, New Delhi.

**Host Institution and Department**

Allahabad University, the fourth oldest university of India, was established on 23rd September 1887. Its origins lie in Muir Central College, named after William Muir, the Lt. Governor of United Provinces, founded on 9 December, 1873. Central University status was conferred on the University of Allahabad on 24 June, 2005. Efforts are on to make it as an 'internationally acclaimed institution of higher learning' to serve India in the 'special context of the challenges and imperatives of globalization' under the guidance of the present Vice-Chancellor Prof R.L. Hangloo who is an internationally acclaimed eminent historian.

The Department of History was started in the year 1912. The scholars who gave a distinct flavor to the Department included Rushbrook Williams, R.P. Tripathi, Sahafat Ahamad Khan, Iswari Prasad, Banarshi Das Saxena, B.N.S. Yadav, Tarachand and so on. Together these eminent scholars engendered a distinct school of historiography which is known as the 'Allahabad School of History'. The History Department is continuing the legacy to impart quality education to produce a host of history professionals by offering Post-Graduation and Research Degrees.

**Theme of the Seminar**

Leather was used in different ways by the people of India from time immemorial. The pre historic people used leather to cover and protect themselves from the changing climatic conditions. In fact, the human representation of Constructed so called Lord Siva is enrobed with leather garments of animals like tiger and elephant. The sages of Hindu tradition were often represented seating on the skin of tiger or deer for their penance.

Further, the occupations of tanning and leather work seem to be specialized and recognized as a significant crafts in ancient India. The terms 'tanners' and 'leather' find mention in the Vedic literature.

# Two Days National Seminar on

# 'History of Leather Working Castes in India: Social Transformation and Challenges'

## 28-29 October 2017

### In collaboration with G. B. Pant Institute of Social Sciences Jhunsi, Allahabad

The Mahabharata referred to the use of leather variously as the hand guard for the bow, shields (ox-hide/ bear-skin), cuirass and breast-plates and the sword sheaths. It further attest that the war chariot was protected with shields of leather, the box of the chariot was fixed to the axle with thongs of leather, the horses were yoked to the pole of the chariot with leather straps and the reins were of leather and the drums, especially the great kettle-drums, were fashioned with leather heads. Leather bags were used to carry water in India up to the pre colonial period. Likewise leather goods are extensively used in peasant economy to lift and hold water and strings to tie animals.

The tanners of leather, the manufacturers of leather articles and the makers of shoes belong to a well defined class in the Indian social order. The widespread leather working community of India is variously known with their regional jati names as evident in the ethnographical records of the colonial period such as Chamara, Jaiswara, Madigas, Chakkiliyans, Vettiyan, Mochi and Samagara, Tolkollans in different parts of India. These leather workers had a crucial role in the agrarian economy and had ties with the touchable communities as suppliers of leather products. They took away the carcasses of the village cattle, removed the skins and tanned the hides in the traditional fashion using lime and barks of certain trees. They supplied the village community with agricultural implements like leather buckets for lifting water, leather ropes and thongs. They also manufacture native shoes, sheaths of swords and knives, harness for the cattle including leather collars from which numerous bells are frequently suspended, ornamental fringes for the bull's forehead, drum-heads, tom-toms, bellows for the smith and small boxes for the barber to carry his razors. Moreover They beat drums during the festivals of village deities. They also sacrifice the male buffalo/ ram/ goat during the festivals of village goddesses as attested by both colonial ethnography and missionary sources. This is a Hindu hegemony which need to be challenged.

However, in the Hindu social order, these leather workers were assigned a lower social status and were deemed to be unclean and untouchable on account of their beef eating habit, working on the forbidden leather working and their unhygienic life style at a later date. As such they were forced to live in the hamlets outside the village at a distance from the clean caste people in the peasant agrarian economy.

Successive social reform movements like Buddhism, Virasaivism and the saints of Bhakti movement tried to alleviate the miseries and social status of the people of leather working communities but of no avail.

The Christian missionaries with their proselytizing mission criticized the social evils in the Hindu society such as caste system, untouchability etc.

By their social service activities, the Christian Missionaries came close to the Dalit communities with the concept of social equality to its adherents. As such many people belonging to leather working communities enthusiastically converted to Christianity. During colonial period their lot was comparatively bettered by social reform movements and yeomen works of individual social reformers. The educated and enlightened leather workers started their own platforms to better the lot of their brethren. During the freedom movement Ambedkar and others strove hard to alleviate the conditions of the Dalits. However, even in the post Independent India, they are often despised, ill-treated, discriminated and bear the brunt of violence despite of constitutional safeguards. They are continuously oppressed and discriminated in the villages, educational institutes, work places and even in the political front.

Given the predominant role of the leather working communities and their complex and enduring inter relationship with the touchable communities; there is a need to rethink the issues surrounding identity and culture. The leather working community as an ancient one constitutes a vibrant cultural identity embedded in the dynamic and complex Indian culture. While the untouchable has been a very crucial conceptual category encapsulating the structural opposition of the pure and impure, in general, understanding of caste rarely has there been a critical focus on the untouchable epistemology and history. The leather workers have been very central to the development of a heterodox and anti Brahmanical ideology since the early medieval period. The cultural practices, religious roles and narratives provide a concrete set of ideology from which a critical perception of caste society unfolds. It is in this context that there is a need to rethink the social classificatory systems, the historical points of consolidation of the excluded.

As an earnest attempt to disseminate these issues the two day National Seminar on "History of Leather working Caste in India: Social transformation and Challenges" aims to initiate a thorough academic discussion on various aspects relating to Leather working. With an intention to dig their distinct past, the seminar intends to focus on the following broad thematic areas.

**Sub-Themes**

1. Approaches to the study of Leather Working Castes
2. Production of Knowledge of the Leather Working Classes
3. Leather Workers in Early India
4. Leather Working Castes during the Medieval period
5. Social Status, Economic Conditions and Religious Traits of Leather workers
6. Social Reform Movements and the Leather working community
7. Christian Missionaries and the Leather Working Castes
8. European Trading Companies and Leather Workers
9. Leather Working Classes during the Colonial Period
10. Conditions of the Leather Working Castes in the Post Colonial Period
11. Challenges and Prospects of Leather Working Classes

**Call for Papers**

We cordially extend the invitation to you for presenting your research paper on any of the sub-themes listed above or on any other aspect relating to theme of the seminar. We look forward for your participation in the seminar. You are requested to confirm your participation by sending the Title and Abstract in about 250 words (in MS word format) on or before 10 September, 2017 and the full paper on or before September, 20, 2017. You are requested to send your abstract and full paper to the email address [sonmativikram@rediffmail.com](mailto:sonmativikram@rediffmail.com), [sonmantivikram@gmail.com](mailto:sonmantivikram@gmail.com). This will help us in the preparation of academic schedule in advance. We request you to kindly adhere to the theme of the seminar and strictly follow the dates mentioned above. Papers unrelated to the theme may strictly be avoided. It is mandatory to submit two hard copies of your paper in MS Word format (12 Font, 1.5 Space) of 2003/2007 version and a soft copy of the paper as it is obligatory for the convener to submit all the papers presented in the seminar to the funding organizations.

Registration Fee			
For Teachers	For Research Scholar	For UG & PG	For Publication Proceedings
₹ 1200	₹ 1000	₹ 700	₹ 2000

The registration fees cover seminar kit and facility for food, snacks, and tea during the seminar only. The delegates of the seminar who require accommodation will have to arrange it on their own though we will be happy to assist them if they require any guidance. Only the invited guest will be provided the accommodation due to financial constraints.

Sponsored By:



Indian Council of Social Science Research



Indian Council of Historical Research

**Proceedings volume**

The accepted full papers will be published in the form of two separate books in English and Hindi languages and the same will be released in the Inaugural Session on the first day of the Seminar. Therefore, you are requested to send the papers well in advance to avoid inconvenience to the convener.

With warm regards,



**Dr. Vikram Harijan**  
Convener of the Seminar  
Mobile: 8808727824, 9793373355

**Dr. Alok Prasad**  
Organizing Secretary  
9415235342

**Patron**



**Prof. R. L. Hangloo**  
Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor  
University of Allahabad

**Guide**



**Prof. Heramb Chaturvedi**  
Head (Department of History)

**Fee Payments as Follows**

NEFT/IMPS/Bank Transfer/UPI	
A/c Name	VIKRAM HARIJAN
Account No	1001000100698905
IFSC Code	PUNB0100100
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Branch	Colonelganj, Allahabad, UP



Scan the QR code for Quick Payments Through Mobile  
Kindly Mention your Name, Address & Topic etc. in Details/Comments

**Inaugural Venue : North Hall (Senate Campus), University of Allahabad**  
**Seminar Venue : Auditorium, G.B.Pant Institute of Social Sciences**  
Banaras Road, Near Shashtripur Bridge, Jhuni, Colony No. 9, Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh 211019



**Schedule**

**Inaugural on: 28<sup>th</sup> October 2017**  
**Seminar on: 28<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup> October 2017**



For any Assistance, you may contact the following:

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