



past for a positive future

SENSORY HISTORIES

PUBLIC FORMATIONS OF SEXUALITY IN KERALA

Speaker

DR. NAVANEETHA MOKKIL

Assistant Professor, Centre for Women's Studies, JNU

Chair

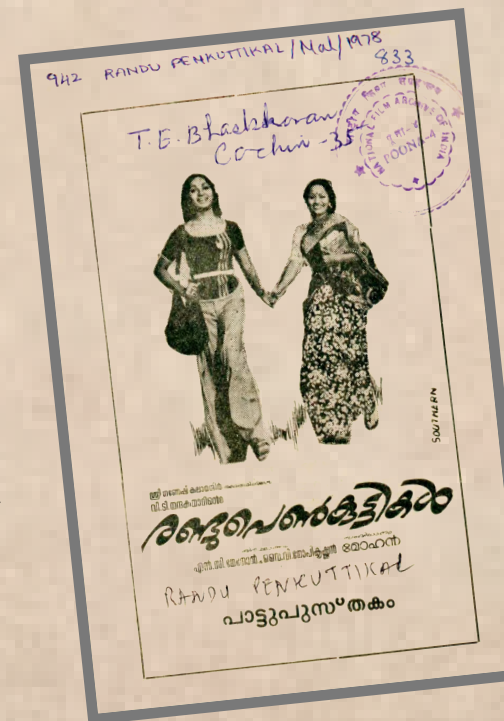
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**SEPTEMBER 24, 2020 THURSDAY
AT 3.00 P.M**

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Sensory Histories

Public Formations of Sexuality in Kerala

I will use this presentation as an opportunity to reflect on my research on sexuality politics in Kerala and how the workings of memory and history inform this study. I will examine how practices of reading and viewing films put forward conceptions of the public sphere in which sensory excesses are on the surface. The afterlives of texts such as *Shabdangal* (Voices 1947) and *Randu Penkuttikal* (Two Girls 1974) are central to my explorations of the sensory histories of Kerala. The contentious circuits of these texts create a dynamic field of representational practices that oscillates between excess and containment.

Recent scholarship on queerness and the history of sexuality in India has argued that rather than models of absence and recovery we should trace the plenitude of sexuality in vernacular archives. In doing so, we can complicate the conceptions of sexuality as private, stabilized and identity-based, and open up unruly networks of sexual imaginations. By focusing on the volatile circuits of cultural practices, in the recent past in Kerala, I will analyze how the disciplining of gender and sexual regimes are constantly disrupted. I will explore how and why the politics of sexuality in regional contexts are crucially tied to embodied practices of remembering in which we also participate in as researchers.



Dr. NAVANEETHA MOKKIL

Navaneetha Mokkil is assistant professor at the Center for Women's Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Her research and teaching focus on print and visual culture and public formations of sexuality in India. She is the author of *Unruly Figures: Queerness, Sex Work and the Politics of Sexuality in Kerala* (2019) and the co-editor of *Thinking Women: A Feminist Reader* (2019).

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