



## Azim Premji University Colloquium Series

presents a lecture on

### “Poverty and the Quest for Life: Spiritual and Material Striving in Rural India”

Speaker

**Bhrigupati Singh**

Assistant Professor of Anthropology, Brown University, USA

**Date: August 13 2015 (Thursday)**

**Time: 2.30 pm to 4.00 pm**

**Venue: 10<sup>th</sup> Floor Auditorium, Pixel A , Azim Premji University**

Watch the live broadcast of the talk by clicking <http://lectures.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/>. It can be accessed from Android and iOS devices too.

#### About the Lecture

In this talk the author discusses his recent book *Poverty and the Quest for Life* (Oxford University Press, 2015). Set in Shahabad, an area of extreme poverty in rural Rajasthan, and focusing on the Sahariyas, a community of former bonded laborers, this book asks what the terms “aspiration” and “quality of life” might mean within such a milieu. The book answers this question by taking the reader through a range of themes including ways of conceptualizing state power and everyday encounters with the state (beyond a fixation on corruption and sovereign authority), the decline of forests and the water table, the contestations but also the intimacies of inter-caste sociality, the rise and fall of gods, and the place of religious practice in everyday life. This book offers new ways of thinking beyond the religion-secularism and nature-culture dichotomies, juxtaposing questions about quality of life with political theologies of sovereignty, neighborliness, and ethics, in the process painting a rich portrait of perseverance and fragility in contemporary rural India.

#### About the Speaker

**Bhrigupati Singh** studied at Delhi University, SOAS (UK) and completed his PhD in anthropology at Johns Hopkins University in 2010. He is currently an Assistant Professor of cultural anthropology at Brown University. His recent book titled *Poverty and the Quest for Life: Spiritual and Material Striving in Rural India* (Oxford University Press, South Asia; University of Chicago Press, US & UK, 2015) was awarded the Joseph W. Elder Prize in the Indian Social Sciences. He is the co-editor of *The Ground Between: Anthropological Engagements with Philosophy* (Duke University Press, 2014) and serves as an Associate Editor of *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, widely regarded as one of the most successful instances of copyleft academic publishing. Previously, he worked at Sarai-CSDS (Delhi). He is currently conducting research on religious and secular forms of healing for “common mental health disorders” including depression and anxiety, as a window into contemporary India.