



Azim Premji
University

Colloquium: Towards a Social History of Conflict: Saivas and Vaisnavas in Sixteenth-Century Vijayanagara

Speaker:

Ajay Rao, Assistant Professor, Department for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto

Date / Time:

November 29, 2012 - 3:45pm - 5:30pm

Venue:

10th Floor, Seminar Hall, Pixel A, APU

Abstract:

What did it mean to be a Saiva or a Vaisnava in early modern history? The Vaisnava writings of the sixteenth-century Saiva intellectual, Appayya Diksita, and his complex relationship - his fascination -with his Vaisnava predecessor, Vedanta Desika, are curious: why was this paradigmatic Saiva so obsessed with the discourse and practice of those who ought to have been his natural adversaries? Appayya's Vaishnava writings provide a site for exploring the crystallization of identity during the last decades of Vijaynagara and its aftermath. During this period, boundaries between Saivas and Vaisnavas appear to have been intensifying, as is evident from a number of documented cases of institutional conflict, perhaps resulting from the ebbing away of royal patronage from Saiva institutions. Many cases occurred in the near vicinity to where AD lived and wrote. The objective of the talk is to use Sanskrit philosophical and literary sources alongside epigraphy and archaeological evidence to construct a social history, however speculative, of conflict in sixteenth-century South India.

A Note on the Speaker:

Ajay Rao is Assistant Professor in the Department of Historical Studies and the Department for the Study of Religion at the University of Toronto. His areas of research include South Asian religions and Sanskrit literature and intellectual history. He obtained his doctoral degree from the Divinity School, University of Chicago. He is the author of *Re-figuring the Ramayana as Theology: A History of Reception in Premodern India*, forthcoming from Routledge in 2013.