

MAHARAJA AGRASEN COLLEGE  
(UNIVERSITY OF DELHI)  
VASUNDHARA ENCLAVE, DELHI-110096

**Friday Faculty Research Seminar Series**  
**(A MAC-IQAC Initiative)**

**Welcomes you**

to the

**3<sup>rd</sup> Talk**

(May 20, 2016 at 12.30 PM, Conference Hall, Second Floor)

**TOPIC: Myth, Misogyny and Marginalization:  
Understanding Witch-Hunts through the Lens of Literature**

By

**Anu Jaidev**

Witch-hunts constitute some of the most sinister examples of systemic violence against women in fundamentally misogynistic cultures. In fact, most cultures have documented evidence of some or the other forms of witch-hunts at some stage of their histories. What is peculiar in the context of certain communities in India, is that this almost primeval practice is beginning to increasingly erupt in the social space with alarming regularity. In an article titled "Witch Hunting [sic]: Victims of Superstition", Ashwaq Masoodi states that around 2100 suspected witches, (mostly women), were murdered in India between 2001-2012. The figure of 2100, staggering as it is, is likely to be just the tip of the iceberg. Witch-hunts are becoming increasingly endemic in at least 12 Indian states. Till date there is no national legislation in place to deal with the problem. The states of Jharkhand, Chattisgarh and Rajasthan, have promulgated laws that criminalise the practice; but the rational, legal framework clearly does not have enough deterrence in the face of the upsurge in superstition and the backlash of regressive practices. Mahasweta Devi's play *Bayen* is about the predicament of a Dome woman, Chandidasi Gangadasi, who in a dramatic sequence of events is declared to be a 'Bayen' and thereafter ostracized for life and forced to live alone in a state of utter abjection. The play enacts the becoming of a Bayen, by delineating the anatomy of a witch hunt: an elaborate exercise in collective irrationality, where myth, misogyny, superstition and chance events converge in a single random moment in a hapless woman's life and transform it completely. The arbitrary randomness of the episode is in some ways misleading: it seemingly isolates the moment as a stray instance, and thereby veils the enduring structural insistence of cultural practices like witch hunts. On the other hand, what it does highlight significantly is the fact that in patriarchy, even the seemingly powerful women, in the final analysis, are absolutely dispensable.

---

*Anu Jaidev is Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Maharaja Agrasen College. She has recently submitted her PhD thesis at the Department of English, University of Delhi on the topic "Sovereignty, State and the Individual: The National Emergency in Literature". Her research interests include Cultural Studies, Contemporary Historiography, Tribal Studies and South Asian Literary Studies. Anu Jaidev has presented papers on the mentioned areas in national and international conferences. She translates from Hindi to English and vice versa, and occasionally also writes poetry.*

## **About the Series**

The purpose of **Friday Faculty Research Seminar Series** is to create space for a dialogue between the diverse strands of research endeavours undertaken at individual level by faculty members across disciplines. We hope to create a symbiotic environment of sharing of research practices in the interest of interdisciplinary scholarship. With an objective to provide a platform that encourages exchange and showcasing of inter and multidisciplinary research, each seminar will feature a 45-minute seminar talk/presentation of the research (completed or ongoing) of the speaker. The speaker will primarily be a faculty member or alumni of the college, a visiting fellow/scholar or a special invitee to the college. The seminar talk will be held every **3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> or in some cases 5<sup>th</sup> Friday of every month except for the month of June** every year at 2.30 PM in the College.

### **Call for Presentations**

For those who wish to make a presentation, please send a 200 word abstract of your talk with a 50-75 word bio note to Prem Kumari Srivastava at [pksrivastava@mac.du.ac.in](mailto:pksrivastava@mac.du.ac.in) and Anu Jaidev at [anu\\_jaidev@yahoo.co.in](mailto:anu_jaidev@yahoo.co.in). In addition, for scheduling, cancellations and further queries, write to Vandana Soni at [vandnasoni.vs@gmail.com](mailto:vandnasoni.vs@gmail.com)

### **FFRSS Coordination Team**

Ms Anu Jaidev, Assistant Professor, Dept. of English  
Dr Vandana Soni, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Chemistry  
Dr Pratibha Rai, Associate Professor, Dept. of Business Economics  
Dr Prem Kumari Srivastava, Associate Professor, Dept. of English (Director, IQAC)  
Dr Sunil Sondhi (Principal, MAC & Chairperson, IQAC)