



CENTRUM FÜR ASIEN-
WISSENSCHAFTEN UND
TRANSKULTURELLE STUDIEN



UNIVERSITÄT
HEIDELBERG
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SEIT 1386

Department of Political Science, South Asia Institute
Lecture Series on Governance and Politics in South Asia

Poisoned from the Roots: Bottom-Up Autocratization in Contemporary India

Pravin Prakash

Recent debates on democratic backsliding recognize that autocratization is not only elite-driven executive aggrandizement but involves broader socio-political changes. However, theories often neglect the role of illiberal social movements in reshaping democratic norms, institutions, and state-society relations from below. This talk fills this gap by proposing a relational, mechanism-based framework for bottom-up autocratization, viewing it as a collective project co-driven by grassroots mobilization, contentious violence, and hate-spin. Using India as a key case, it analyzes the Hindu Nationalist Movement's role in driving iterative interactions among activists, elites, and the public. This state-society perspective highlights how everyday consent, legitimacy, and coercion at the grassroots contribute to democratic erosion, enriching comparative scholarship on autocratization's societal roots.



Pravin Prakash is currently a Doctoral Fellow at the Heidelberg Graduate School for the Humanities and Social Sciences, pursuing a doctoral degree with Prof. Dr. Aurel Croissant at the Institute of Political Science. He is also the Head of Strategic Initiatives at the Centre for the Study of Organized Hate (CSOH), where he plays a critical role in developing and implementing strategies that address and combat hate, extremism and disinformation.



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**CATS, Building 4130, Great Lecture Hall,
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