

# "Amarnath Yatra: A Militarised Pilgrimage"

Talk by Swathi Seshadri  
Bhupesh Bhaban Auditorium, Kolkata

5th August 2017

"Amarnath Yatra: A Militarised Pilgrimage" (a detailed report jointly researched and released in April 2017 by the Jammu Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society and EQUATIONS, Bangalore) is based on a study on the Amarnath Yatra, an annual pilgrimage in Jammu and Kashmir, between 2014-2016. The report is based on data collected from RTIs filed on multiple departments, interviews with government officials in Kashmir, all concerned authorities and organisation, and people in Kashmir, Jammu, Delhi and Ludhiana and secondary sources. The report seeks to begin a critical enquiry into religious tourism and challenges the role of a constitutionally secular state in its promotion and sustenance. The Yatra underlines the undemocratic functioning of Indian rule in Kashmir and draws attention to issues of militarization, communal conflicts, resource monopolisation, and ecological devastation.

The report is a documentation of all facets of the Amarnath Yatra. It studies the history of the Yatra and stages of its evolution while examining its different motivations. State institutions involved and their role – especially the administration – armed forces nexus has been explored. Other groups of people and organisations providing services in the Yatra including unorganised labour and the formal sector are assessed to understand the emergent power dynamics including the relationship between the socio-religious institutions and the State. The Yatra being conducted in high altitudes has serious environmental impacts, which is also studied in detail. The Yatra is fraught with controversies and conflicts and some of the more critical instances have been documented in this report. The Amarnath Yatra is one among several others which are receiving State patronage. The other upcoming Yatras and their implications has also been documented. The report concludes that the Yatra is really being conducted on the might of the Indian armed forces along with socio-religious and langar organisations mobilising people to participate. We believe that each of these aspects may be further studied for nuances which will also throw light on how religious tourism / pilgrimages are being used by the State to exercise control in areas that are in conflict with the State.

The speaker, Swathi Seshadri, who was part of the research team that worked on this report, will be giving a talk based on their findings, followed by an interaction session

**Talk by:** Swathi Seshadri

**Date:** 5th August 2017

**Time:** Saturday at 6 pm

**Venue:** Bhupesh Bhaban Auditorium

**Address:** 162-B AJC Bose Road Kol-14, next to Entally Market

**Entry Free**

**facebook event:** [www.facebook.com/events/712135](http://www.facebook.com/events/712135)