

Omar Kasmani: Trans Identities in Pakistan



Omar Kasmani's seminar 'Neither. Nor. Trans* - Dispensable Masculinities and the Uneasy Promise of Trans* in Pakistan' encapsulated a discussion

of the messy landscape of gender identity and related terms and concepts. His focus was on language, and the inherent tensions of the old versus the new, especially in a country like Pakistan with its particular history with queer categories like the *khwajah sirah* predating newer 'Western' concepts. He discussed the tendency of moving between categorizations and terminologies in invoking gender identities that lie outside the male/female binary, and reflected on the inadequacy of the term Trans* in the context of Pakistan. His paper discussed how categories like Trans* "expand and contract" in such situated contexts – bringing the notion of temporality and evolution of language and grammar to the forefront of

the discussion. Dr. Kasmani spoke largely through his experiences while conducting research in a *khwajah sirah* community in Sehwan. He touched on local mythologies surrounding the transgender community and the changes in how they have been perceived over time. There was also a detailed discussion on the problems with the gender categories on Pakistani ID cards and ways in which non-binary persons navigate these complexities in the country. Dr. Kasmani graciously answered the audience's questions about his ethnographic work in Sehwan, the challenges he faced as an outsider and researcher, and the ways in which his relationship with his interlocutors developed over time.

