

## A peek into the history of Kayasths

Anthropologist Karen Isaksen Leonard launched her latest book where she brings out Brahmanical ideas and talks about the community in the city

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Renowned anthropologist Karen Isaksen Leonard was in the city recently to engage with the audience. A panel discussion on “Social History of an Indian Caste: The Kayasths of Hyderabad (third edition)” by Karen was recently organised by Orient BlackSwan.

Besides the author, the panel comprised prominent scholars like Dr Oudesh Rani Bawa and Sajjad Shahid. Karen talked about her book and shared her views on the city. The book is a historical study of the Kayasths of Hyderabad, who have adapted their occupation patterns and marriage alliances to changing political and economic conditions over 200 years.

The epilogue to the third edition documents the recent changes and developments in the Mathur sub-caste, tracing its movements from a cosmopolitan post-Mughal world to a cosmopolitan and global English-speaking world in the late 20th and early 21st century.

The extent to which Brahmanical ideas of inheritance and marriage regulations influenced their behaviour is also questioned. Karen has published on the history and culture of India, especially the former Hyderabad State, and on Asian- American and Muslim-American history and culture. She retired in 2014, after chairing the Anthropology Department at the University of California, Irvine.