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REGULAR SESSION INFORMATION

Session: Social Change as the Story of Contemporary Indian Society, and Social Scientists as the Story Tellers II

Session Convener(s): Sailaja Nandigama, Wageningen University; Kasi Eswarappa, National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD), Rajendranagar, Hyderabad

Chair: Sailaja Nandigama, Wageningen University; Kasi Eswarappa, National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD), Rajendranagar, Hyderabad

Comments: -

I) *Construction of Social Capital among Sugalis of South India*

Kasi Eswarappa, National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD), Rajendranagar, Hyderabad

II) *Polluting Occupations and Illness Experiences: Illustrations from Dalit Communities of Chas, Jharkhand*

K.M. Ziyauddin, Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad

III) *'Not Ladies, WE are Lady Officers': Exploration into the Gender Identity of Women in Army*

Anshu Singh, University of Delhi

IV) *The Dynamics of Gender Intersectionality and the Changing Political Representation in Constitutional Democratic Structure in India*

Govind Dhaske, Indiana University, Indianapolis

V) *Intergenerational Mobility between Mothers and Daughters: Narratives of Women Software Professionals in Kolkata*

Asmita Bhattacharyya, Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata

ABSTRACTS

Session description

21st Century India mirrors changing society and public consciousness. Change may be occurring in myriad forms but it is in the contextualization of caste, class, gender, social, political, power, policy, governance, participation, representation, development, innovation, and livelihoods of people among other concerns that we, the social scientists articulate this changing society. Last century resulted in phenomenal achievements in the field of scientific enterprise on the one hand, as well as, in the pursuit of science and technology studies (STS) on the other. Simultaneously, how we understand and represent the 'social' and the 'political' also underwent phenomenal changes at the local, national and international levels. Social scientists have become 'the story tellers' of and for their publics- interpreting, giving meaning and articulating this changing world. This session opens up space for critical reflections on the progression of these stories in the Indian context; and for investigating how the social scientific enterprise in India has been articulating its publics.

With few exceptions, caste, class and gender based power dynamics thoroughly influenced both society and polity of the Indian state during the post western hegemony. This panel invites scholars and academicians with interdisciplinary research background to share their stories and explore the different experiences related to the Social Science's representation of the Publics and the related caste, class and gender based identities in the Indian context.

Papers

I) Construction of Social Capital among Sugalis of South India

Kasi Eswarappa, National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD), Rajendranagar, Hyderabad

Role of Third Sector in the development of marginal groups is increasing vehemently after the post liberalisation and globalisation in India and also some of the Asian countries. Liberalisation and globalisation paved the way for the emergence of Third Sector as an agency where earlier State used to play this role. Hence, there is a need to study the role of Third Sector in the Construction of social capital among the Sugalis of Andhra Pradesh South India. The present paper is basically a qualitative micro-level study, of Sugalis, aimed at understanding the livelihood systems of the marginal communities and within which inter-play of political processes among Sugalis in understanding the social capital.

The paper tries to deal how the Sugalis construct their social capital in the changing nature of developmental sphere. The paper also tries to see the response of the third sector in changing the lives and providing basic minimum facilities to the Sugalis. There is an NGO intervention in the village looking after their livelihoods. Other side there are political parties which are trying to mould youth to their party fold and by offering them to take up local level party positions. Within the community, there is division on party lines and kinship networks are being disturbed due to this party politics. However, paper concludes that inspite of the efforts made by the Third Sector and also partially by the State, and parties, still there is unhappiness among the marginal groups in the village. Thus, paper ends with a positive feeling, how far the construction of social capital helps them to come up socially, economically, politically and other wise in the village/society.

Key Words: Social Capital, Marginal groups, Sugalis, South India and Third Sector

II) Polluting Occupations and Illness Experiences: Illustrations from Dalit Communities of Chas, Jharkhand

K.M. Ziyauddin, Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad

Illness is much more complex term which carries the societal context to be explained. Jones (1994) rightly observes that the perception of peoples about illness and morbidity are connected to wider social cultural and material factors. The paper will bring some illustrations from dalits communities engaged in polluted occupations based on an intensive fieldwork and try to debate the issues of biomedicine as dominant phenomenon in the contemporary worlds as well how illness experiences are seen as an alternative way to look into the issue. This is required because Illness in the biomedical model is viewed as an autonomous entity, defined by standard universal criteria, isolated from the lives and experiences of patients and physicians. Mishler (1981) argues in his study that exclusive use of the biomedical model results in an approach to problems of illness and health care that abstracts them from social, cultural and institutional contexts within which they occur. Thus, although symptoms and illnesses occur in people who live within socio-cultural frameworks of belief and action, these questions tend to be ignored in biomedical approach.

Illness is never clearly understood rather it is expressed by the categorization of illness into disease framework in biomedicine. Illness is closely linked with the understanding of the broader term health. But the crux of the paper would be to seek an explanation with the help of established research work and my research in the dalit communities that it's not only biomedicine which plays a catalyst role to bring health decorum of a community. Rather if we look into the arguments such as Mckeowns' (1979) who demonstrated very clearly that medicine and its scientific practices contributed very little to the transformation to the health of the population in the nineteenth century. In fact, he estimated that medicine contributed about one per cent to the overall decline in the mortality rates of the nineteenth century. He further argued that the social and political factors played a catalytic role of improved housing, nutrition and sanitation. Hence the paper argues that it is essential to recognize that lay people have their own valid interpretations and accounts of their experiences of health and illness.

III) *Not Ladies, WE are Lady Officers': Exploration into the Gender Identity of Women in Army*
Anshu Singh, University of Delhi

Army is defined by its male chauvinist patriotic character. Hence getting a permanent post for females in army was a long struggle that ceased few years back. There are many debates that kept women out of army regarding their body type, strengths and psychological grittiness. Nonetheless epics and histories inform that women have served the military for a long time. Not as a mass military but few women now and then do appear as the examples of courage and strength. Feminists argue that getting women into army will serve a lot to the feminist claim of equality of men and women.

Outsiders may reckon that women have gained respect by entering in army as permanent commission. However it is interesting to note that being a women have a very different meaning in army. My paper looks into the lives of Army women which are not a monolith but a scattered group having different sense of identity and self worth.

I discuss army women as roughly divided into two categories the officers and the wives. Officers or LOs as they are famously known as, are manly females that do not liked to be referred as 'aurat' rather it is a slang or a bad remark to demean their LO status. LOs are officers not ladies, as they identify ladies as physically weak and psychologically not strong enough. Hence the women in army as officers are not women but a man imprisoned in a female body.

On the other side are the wives that are an extension to their husband's identity. They have many roles to play in army but all are very feminine roles. They can be looked as a contrary to LOs, they are ultra feminine females. Army provides an interesting case to explore women's identity. It is interesting to observe that women, though recruited as officers, have no considerable impact on gender stereotypes. LOs themselves don't consider themselves and are

not identified as women. The women that are identified as women are the wives that are made to fit into the gender stereotype of female. The paper explores the issues in great detail.

IV) *The Dynamics of Gender Intersectionality and the Changing Political Representation in Constitutional Democratic Structure in India*

Govind Dhaske, Indiana University, Indianapolis

Intersectionality has been a strong analytic tool to understand the power dynamics in any context. Intersectionality refers to the multifold (subjective and so on) identities and its variable representational utility merging to define the 'subjectivity' within the larger collectivity. In the patriarchal context of India, the public sphere is largely constituted by the politico religious society and its underlying functionalist structures and belief systems. The mobility of women in such context is subject to the effective outcome of the empowerment practices keeping in mind the prevalent intersectionality dynamics. Obviously, the intersectionality dynamics with gender as a representational category revolves around categories like caste, class, religion, demography and so on. There has been a paucity of literature rooted in intersectionality scholarship on gender in Indian context. In view of the constitutional imperative of women's reservation in politics the intersectionality dynamics has become intensely active and hence the academic and political concern. The intersectionality dynamics of gender makes an interesting case in twofold manner: active political participation in electoral politics, and gender rational voting behavior of women voters.

The proposed paper uses the secondary data and evidence available about the women's reservations debate and voting behaviors and its profound influence on the political architecture of constitutional democracy in India. With a conceptual framework of analysis devised on the basis of the multifold intersectionality of women in India, proposed paper will outline a possible trajectory of social and political representational dynamics. Paper will advocate the theoretical utility of 'intersectionality' in explaining the sociological and political affairs within a pluralist democratic polity.

Keywords: Intersectionality, gender, women's reservation, constitutional democracy, India.

V) *Intergenerational Mobility between Mothers and Daughters: Narratives of Women Software Professionals in Kolkata*

Asmita Bhattacharyya, Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata

The Information Technology (IT) sector has provided immense employment opportunities to the female workforce to get into this organised sector. Women engineers are attracted to this sector as it provides a white-collar job, the recruitment of which is made through campus interview etc. It provides good indoor work environment apart from following an 'in principle' gender neutral employment policy. The sector demands high mobility of the workforce, be it for on-job mobility or career mobility. This paper accounts for the societal shift in terms of mobility aspect from the mothers to their daughters-interrogating two generational perspectives. The paper delves into the qualitative narratives of women software professionals- how they feel the difference between their times to that of their mothers. The observations are recorded during face-to-face interaction with the professionals working in Information Technology sector in Kolkata. The empirical study was carried out between March 2011 to July 2011.

The study analyses the description of events life of women software professionals, their perception of change between the two generations comprising themselves and their mothers. The introspection results in revealing 'What they have gained and what they have lost out' compared to their mothers.