



Warwick and Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS Mumbai) 2021 Conference

Funded by the Fair Chance Foundation

A Fair Chance for Education: Problematizing Access and Mapping Gendered Pathways to Higher Education in India

15th and 16th July 2021



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Introduction to 2021 Conference

‘A Fair Chance for Education: Problematizing Access and Mapping Gendered Pathways to Higher Education in India’ Conference on 15th July 2021 (Thursday) and 16th July 2021 (Friday) is organised by the ‘Fair Chance for Education: Gendered Pathways to Educational Success in Haryana’ research project led by the University of Warwick. The two-day online conference is co-hosted by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) Mumbai.

Through this conference we are aiming to bring together practitioners, academics and researchers from across India and internationally to discuss the various facets of HE in India, with a focus on gender, access and choice in HE, HE policy and methodologies to research access to HE. We hope this conference is an opportunity to build a virtual network of academics and practitioners in this field.

We want to thank all involved for your interest and participation in this conference!

Regards,
The Organising Committee
The Fair Chance for Education Project
University of Warwick, UK

Themes, Organising Committee, and Project Contact

2021 Conference Themes

Problematising Access, choice, affirmative action, widening participation and outreach activities within HE

Gender, social class, Dalit communities, religious minorities and access to HE

Families and communities and educational pathways to HE

Policy on Higher education and gender

Methodologies for researching gender and HE

Organising Committee:

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Conference Programme Overview

Using this Programme: This program includes the links to the different conference sessions. All general sessions (introduction, conclusion, plenary etc.) will take place in ROOM 1 of the online conference. Parallel Sessions will be divided between ROOM 1 and ROOM 2. **You can click on any of the ROOM mentions in the programme to join that session.**

If you run into any issues or have any questions on the day of the event, please feel free to email FCFHaryana@warwick.ac.uk and we will do our best to assist you.

Please note that you cannot record this event for data protection purposes. Please also note that we will however record the plenary session and share this recording on social media.

Day 1: 15th July 2021 (Thursday)

Session	Duration	BST	IST	Activity outline	
Introduction	30mins	09:00-09:30	13:30-14:00	Welcome Address (Prof Shalini Bharat) and Introduction to the FCF project and sessions today (Ann Stewart). ROOM 1	
FCF Presentation	1h	09:30-10:30	14:00-15:00	Emily Henderson, Anjali Thomas, Nikita Samanta, Ann Stewart, Nidhi S. Sabharwal – <i>Presentation of Fair Chance for Education project Phases</i> . Stay in ROOM 1	
Break	15mins	10:30-10:45	15:00-15:15	Break	
Session 1	1h	10:45-11:45	15:15-16:15	3 Presenters with 15 minutes each and a final 15 minutes for discussion	
		Theme		<p style="text-align: center;">Gender and Intersectionalities ROOM 1</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Rurality ROOM 2</p>
		1	Shikha Diwakar – <i>Caste, Gender, and Class in Higher Education in India- Dalit Women Standpoint</i>	Jaya Kritika Ojha and Tatsama Motilal – <i>Perceptions of Rural Girls on Higher Education in Thar Desert of Western Rajasthan, India</i>	
		2	Madhuparna Karmakar – <i>Gender Inequality and Caste Discrimination in Indian Public Universities: Lived Experiences of Dalit Female Students</i>	Nabanita Samanta – <i>Multi-layered Marginalities of Rural Women in India and Navigating Access to Higher Education: An Autoethnographic Exploration</i>	

		3		Karan – <i>Experiences of Dalit-Bahujan Students in Higher Education: Aspirations, Negotiations and Access to (English medium) Education in India</i>	Sailu Karre – <i>Pathways, Networks of Rural Students to Urban: Experience of Marginalised Students in Urban Educational Institutions</i>
Break	30mins	11:45-12:15	16:15-16:45	Break – For optional networking session in breakout rooms, join ROOM 1 during this slot.	
Session 2	1h15	12:15-13:30	16:45-18:00	4 Presenters with 15 minutes each and a final 15 minutes for discussion	
		Theme		Gender and Access ROOM 1	HE Policy (Affirmative Action/ Widening Participation) ROOM 2
		1	Anagha Tambe, Gunjan Wadhwa, Swati Dyahadroy, Sneha Gole, Maria Tsouroufli, and Ourania Filippakou – <i>Demystifying the Success of Gender Parity in Higher Education in India</i>	Rounak Bose and Akmal Ahmed – <i>Reservation as an Affirmative Action: Contesting the Economic Reservation of Upper Caste students in Indian Universities</i>	
		2	Manisha – <i>A Bourdieuan Analysis of Access and Participation of Dalit Women in Higher Education</i>	Akhila Padmanabhan – <i>Higher Education in Kerala: An Analysis of different developmental phases and Role of Non-State Actors</i>	
		3	Sonal Raghuvanshi and Shireen Yachu – <i>Public but Elite - Problematizing Access in Higher Education Institutions in India Through an Intersectional Lens</i>	Deepak Kumar Swain and Rajesh Kumar Karna – <i>Inclusive Higher Education and Scholarship as a Means of Affirmative Action: An Indian Experience through a Gender Lens</i>	
		4	Chand Mahal Ruby and Ruhail Andrabi – <i>Marginalization and Inequality: How do Muslim Women Navigate Access to Higher Education in Contemporary India</i>	Nandita Banerjee Dhawan, Dina Zoe Belluigi, and Grace Ese-Osa Idahosa – <i>Higher Education Policies on 'Gender Equality': Standpoint of Women's Studies in India</i>	
Conclusion Day 1	15mins	13:30-13:45	18:00-18:15	Announcements for Day 2 and thank you note. ROOM 1	

Day 2: 16th July 2021 (Friday)

Session	Duration	BST	IST	Activity outline	
Welcome Back	15mins	09:00-09:15	13:30-13:45	Introduction to Day 2 (Emily). ROOM 1	
Session 1	1h15	09:15-10:15	13:45-14:45	4 Presenters with 15 minutes each and a final 15 minutes for discussion	
		Theme		<p style="text-align: center;">Gender and Intersectionalities ROOM 1</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Online HE and Covid 19 ROOM 2</p>
		1	Zinat Aboli – <i>Negotiating Mobility: Muslim Women and Higher Education in Mumbai</i>	Juhi Sidharth and Chaitanya Ravi – <i>Remaking Higher Education?: The Socio-political Implications of Online Education and the Indispensability of the Physical Campus in India</i>	
		2	Mridula Kaintura – <i>Trans* Inclusive Education: Role of Higher Educational Institutions in Shaping the Personhood of Trans and Gender Non-Conforming Individuals</i>	Mounica Sreesai, Rebecca Rose Varghese, and Trishita Shandilya – <i>Stuck at Home: Navigating the Academic Lives of Female Students during COVID-19</i>	
		3	Preeti Koli – <i>Dalit Girls as Speaking Subjects and their position in Higher Education</i>	Gargi Gayan and Sukmaya Lama – <i>Examining the Idea of Choice and Access in ODL</i>	
Break	15mins	10:15-10:30	14:45-15:00	Break	
Session 2	1h	10:30-11:30	15:00-16:00	3 Presenters with 15 minutes each and a final 15 minutes for discussion	
		Theme		<p style="text-align: center;">Choices ROOM 1</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Family and Community Involvement ROOM 2</p>
		1	Dhriti Dhaundiyal and Shruti Dhaundiyal – <i>Colouring Outside the Lines: Analysis of Gender and Socio-economic Background in Design Education</i>	Seema Marmath – <i>Exploring Complexities of Women's Access to Higher Education: A Study in Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan</i>	
		2	Lalramdini Sailo and Nithiya Amirtham S. – <i>Gender Parity Index in STEM Disciplines in Higher Education in Mizoram</i>	Yashashwani Srinivas – <i>Community Initiatives in Dalits Colonies: Pathways to Higher Education</i>	

		3	Meenakshi Gautam – <i>Gender, Medical Education, and Specialization in India: Preference and Choice</i>	Vandana – <i>Kinship Network and Access to Higher Education: Exploring Dalit Students’ Journey to Pursue Science Stream in Delhi University</i>
Break	30mins	11:30- 12:00	16:00- 16:30	Break – For optional networking session in breakout rooms, join ROOM 1 during this slot.
Plenary Session	1h15	12:00- 13:15	16:30- 17:45	Keynote panel: Rekha Pappu (TISS Hyderabad), Chayanika Shah, Nidhi Sabharwal (NIEPA), Nandini Manjrekar (TISS Mumbai) – 15 minutes each addressing gender and access to HE. Chair: Disha Nawani. ROOM 1
Conclusion	15mins	13:15- 13:30	17:45- 18:00	Vote of thanks. Stay in ROOM 1 .

Day 1

Introduction (30mins)

09:00-09:30 (BST)

13:30-14:00 (IST)

Inauguration (Prof Shalini Bharat) and Introduction to the FCF project and sessions today (Ann Stewart)

FCF Presentation (1h)

09:30-10:30 (BST)

14:00-15:00 (IST)

Emily Henderson, Anjali Thomas, Nikita Samanta, Ann Stewart, Nidhi S. Sabharwal

Presentation of A Fair Chance for Education: Gendered Pathways to Educational Success in Haryana Project Phases and Findings.

The first phase of the project explored the gendered social, economic and educational backgrounds of students accessing state funded co-educational colleges in Haryana. Two key findings emerged: that families are heavily involved in educational decisions and that there is very limited institutional outreach available to students from first-generation and marginalised communities. The second and third phases focused on the role of family members in the educational trajectories of young people and explored the ways in which institutional outreach activities can influence the way in which young people access higher education. Based on this, we are in the process of drafting a policy brief and toolkit.

Break (15mins)

10:30-10:45 (BST)

15:00-15:15 (IST)

Session 1 (1h)

10:45-11:45 (BST)

15:15-16:15 (IST)

3 Presenters with 15 minutes each and a final 15 minutes for discussion.

Theme 1: Gender and Intersectionalities

1) Shikha Diwakar (McGill University)

Caste, Gender, and Class in Higher Education in India - Dalit Women Standpoint

This study aims to explore first-generation Dalit women students' experiences in HE institutions in India and how their identities impact their success, wellbeing, and persistence in their studies. Students' identities have important implications for HE persistence and wellbeing (Carr-Chellman & Levitan, 2016). Students have multiple identities – based on gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity and more. The ways in which the identities of FG Dalit women students affect their experiences in a patriarchal and caste-based society poses a serious challenge to achieving equitable HE practices. Moreover, analysing each identity separately does not show the severity of the challenges faced by these students. Instead, it is important to understand the layers of oppression students' multiple identities are subject to — what is known as intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991). This study will adopt a qualitative approach, as I am principally concerned with understanding participants' experiences in higher education. The study will be situated within a narrative inquiry framework. I will use the personal experience narrative approach (Denzin, 1997), in which participants narrate their personal experiences related to their identities. In reviewing the studies on caste, gender and first-generation in HE, I found that most studies fail to cater for the interlocking of these identities in Dalit women discourses. Paik (2014) also reveals that even the non-brahman and Dalit leaders' educational philosophies and practices have been overlooked by the upper caste; as a result, Dalit women's agency and consciousness remain unvoiced. Hence, it is important to look at their experiences to understand those overlooked aspects to make educational policies more informed and inclusive. The debate of caste, gender, and first-generation remains incomplete if we continue to overlook the experiences of Dalit women. Therefore, my study aims to understand the experiences of Dalit women through the lens of intersectionality in the higher education system in India.

References

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2) Madhuparna Karmakar (School of Women's Studies, Jadavpur University)

Gender Inequality and Caste Discrimination in Indian Public Universities: Lived Experiences of Dalit Female Students

On its way to becoming a truly democratic space, the public university in India has followed the constitutional policies of reservation thereby giving access to students from marginalized sections of the society. This has enabled young women from the SC/ST/OBC communities to pursue higher education resulting in the improved Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for these communities. In order to understand the complexities and nuances of gender and caste differentials better in university spaces, the paper focuses on the casteist and exclusionary experiences faced by young dalit women who fight poverty and migrate from rural areas to gain admission into higher education institutions.

I use findings from my PhD research where I have conducted qualitative interviews with female students from marginalized communities (SC/OBC) studying in two public universities in West Bengal. The presentation aims to unveil their unheard voices, stories of immense struggle and grim realizations in their bid to overcome challenges to attain empowered identities in university campus. I

will narrate how a 'look down' gaze from the 'privileged' in the university chases them as they find themselves as 'misfit' in the academic space with endless conceptual deficiencies and lack of cultural capital. These young women struggle to overcome language and accent limitations while they push themselves to build a 'good' appearance and 'comfortable' body language to 'fit' in the elite university campus. As they simultaneously face non-cooperation, lack of support and violence from their respective families, the multiple pressures affect their academic performances, confidence and self-esteem resulting in their suffering from mental health issues. The paper thus discusses whether the access to higher education enables these young women to overcome the above challenges in their attempts to pursue their dreams by fighting against power hierarchies, intersectional inequalities, patriarchal and casteist norms, both within and outside the university.

3) Karan

Experiences of Dalit-Bahujan Students in Higher Education: Aspirations, Negotiations and Access to (English medium) Education in India

English education is seen as an instrument which will help Dalit-Bahujans to emancipate, empower them linguistically and help them fight against injustices and oppression borne out of the caste system. Thus, it is a way to achieve equity and social justice, however the lack of institutional support often confronts Dalit-Bahujan students and pushes them to become non-being in the classroom. The lack of facilitative pedagogical structures in higher education not only excludes the disadvantaged communities, but also impinges upon democratization of knowledge and process of knowledge production. While English education is considered as a tool for social mobility and emancipation on the one hand (Faust & Nagar, 2001; Ilaiah, 2013; Ilame, 2020), on the other it is used to maintain the social structures of caste, class and gender (Mohanty, 2017; Manjrekar, 2003; Paik, 2016; Ramanathan, 1999). In this context, the present study attempts to understand the everyday experiences of Dalit-Bahujan students in higher education.

This study explores the following questions: How do students from Dalit-Bahujan backgrounds experience English medium education? How does socio-economic background of Dalit-Bahujan students influence their access to/participation in higher education with respect to English medium education? How does gender and caste intersect with this experience? How does university facilitate the inclusion of Dalit-Bahujan students in providing quality English education? How was the consideration of prior schooling and socio-economic conditions of students, particularly Dalit-Bahujan students taken into account by the university while instituting English as a medium of instruction?

This study has been conducted in an English-medium higher education institution based in Delhi, India. It is a qualitative study based on an in-depth interaction with Dalit-Bahujan students to understand their everyday experiences and in-depth interaction with university bodies to understand the institutional mechanism, especially for the inclusion of Dalit-Bahujan students. The findings of this study reveal the experiences of marginalization in higher education and considerable gap between the socio-economic backgrounds of the students and institutional knowledge and pedagogical structures. Further, the findings on intersection of gender and caste reveals the unequal access to English medium education in society where boys from upper caste-class backgrounds get easily into English medium education institutions and their education is favoured as compared to girls. While on the other hand, boys and girls from lower caste backgrounds either get into state run government schools or low fee charging private schools. Given the unequal access to education situated in the schooling context of Dalit-Bahujan students and the marginality of caste, class and gender, the linguistic challenges become more visible when they reach higher education, however, at the same time Dalit-Bahujan students experience English medium education as a way to achieve equity and social justice in society.

References

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Theme 2: Rurality

- 1) Jaya Kritika Ojha (Central University of Rajasthan) and Tatsama Motilal (Desert Resource Centre, Rajasthan)

Perceptions of Rural Girls on Higher Education in Thar Desert of Western Rajasthan, India

Western Rajasthan is a land of sand dunes. The toughest terrain of India is harsh, challenging and unfriendly for its inhabitants. According to the UNDP and the Census of India-2011, Rajasthan suffers from a low sex ratio of 926 females per thousand males. Rural desert community of Rajasthan is feudal and is a very complex social fabric for young girls. Girls are usually confined to their homes and have strict boundaries, restrictions and rules to follow. They are not 'allowed' to move alone freely, decide for themselves, make choices, talk openly, and participate in community functions. The patriarchal system, the gendered socialisation and social relations do not encourage girls to have a sense of agency. The long and continued efforts of development organisations, civil society, government, media, policy arrangements, local institutions, the influence of globalization and digital age have impacted the desert communities as well. Girls are getting education, being sent to schools. The change in desert culture and beliefs are visible but women are still considered as secondary and play subordinate roles in families and communities. The form of subservience has changed but does exist.

A case study approach was followed and data was gathered through focused group discussions and in-depth interviews with the participants. The paper analyses the perceptions of rural desert girls on pursuing higher education, their choices and decision making to select the streams to study, the subjects/ courses of their choices to enhance their capabilities and opportunities in life. It aims to understand the meaning and sense of freedom for them. The study also looks into the factors and obstacles of learning ecosystem that determine, hinder and/or facilitate pursuance of higher education like educational infrastructure, facilities, parental support, incentives, social acceptance, peer pressure etc.

- 2) Nabanita Samanta (University of Hyderabad)

Multi-layered Marginalities of Rural Women in India and Navigating Access to Higher Education: An Autoethnographic Exploration

Despite significant strides for gender-mainstreaming in the education policies of India, the sphere of higher education continues to grapple with substantial gender disparities. Moreover, gender while coalescing with other intersecting forms of inequalities exacerbates the prevailing disparities. For instance, as far as higher education is concerned, there is a striking rural-urban divide which adds a

new layer to the gendered pathways to higher education. This paper through an autoethnographic account will attempt to weave the analysis of gendered pathways to higher education by means of some personal sketches.

The social texture of rural India (with due consideration to the fact that rural India is not a monolithic category and there remains substantial heterogeneities) starting with widespread son preference and/or 'meta-preference', commonplace trend of early marriage, stringent restrictions on women's mobility, gendered division of labour, informal social norms dictating standard expectations etc. pose significant barriers for rural women to venture into the terrain of higher education. Policy perspectives while taking a birds-eye view often fail to account for nuanced particularities of social context that leave significant imprints on the educational trajectories and experiences of (in)accessibility. This paper, drawing reflections from personal anecdotes, will attempt to lay bare some of these less-acknowledged barriers afflicting the rural women in India. While for rural regions lack of adequate educational infrastructure has long imperiled access to education, several social determinants hold much sway, for instance most families in rural areas lack formal experiences of higher education due to which the educational trajectory of first-generation learners remain laden with multi-layered marginalities. Through a critical gaze imbued with self-reflexivity, this autoethnographic exploration will aim at dilating the pinhole of specific and subjective experience of my own into a wide lens on the broad picture of rural India and the prevailing gendered pathways to higher education.

3) Sailu Karre (Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai)

Pathways, Networks of Rural Students to Urban: Experience of Marginalised Students in Urban Educational Institutions.

Studying in urban higher educational institutions and cities become prioritised in contemporary society across the caste, class and gender. In this context, the students from rural marginalised background desire to study in the city has explored in terms of their social networks, pathways and source of motivation that lead to migrate to urban education. To understand this phenomenon, it has used the concept of social and cultural capital which Pierre Bourdieu conceptualised as capital. The study has conducted as part of M.Phil. research in one of the prestigious Under Graduate educational institutions in Hyderabad. The objective of the study is to understand the rural marginalised students (RMS) experience of studying in urban educational setting. It has found that the rural female students experience is different from male in the urban educational setting. The female students experience of being from a rural attaches multiple layers stigma and marginalisation cultural inferiority, isolation which impact on various academic and non- activities in the college.

This study has found rural-language, slangs they speak, dialects, terminology, peer group formation which shapes identity of the rural students in the urban educational space. The challenges of (RMS) male and female with respect to various power dynamics, language, male domination, culture of diverse students have analysed with help of theory that mentioned. The data has analysed with the George Simmel concepts of Metropolis as Mental Life to understand how rural students encounter with urban space within educational settings. It has attempted to understand rural student's educational attainment with help of social and cultural capital concepts to understand their upward mobility. This study has used the qualitative research methodology and narrative approach in which purposive sampling technique has used for selecting the respondents. An in-depth interview guide has used for interviews with sample of 17 students of final year UG courses of male and female, castes and class from rural background.

Break (30mins)

11:45-12:15 (BST)

16:15-16:45 (IST)

Session 2 (1h15)

12:15-13:30 (BST)

16:45-18:00 (IST)

4 Presenters with 15 minutes each and a final 15 minutes for discussion.

Theme 1: Gender and Access

- 1) Anagha Tambe (Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule Women's Studies Centre, Savitribai Phule Pune University), Gunjan Wadhwa (Department of Education, Brunel University London), Swati Dyahadroy (Savitribai Phule Pune University), Sneha Gole (Savitribai Phule Pune University), Maria Tsouroufli (Brunel University London) and Ourania Filippakou (Brunel University London)

Demystifying the Success of Gender Parity in Higher Education in India

The last two decades have witnessed profound transformations in the field of higher education (HE) in India, in terms of expansion, privatization and internationalization. Notwithstanding gender gaps in literacy, the overall participation of women in higher education has shown steady improvement and a tapering gender gap. While gender parity in higher educational access continues to receive increasing emphasis in the dominant international development discourse, it raises questions and necessitates situated understanding about the narrowing gender gaps in HE in India. As such, this new visibility of women in HE seems to be more obfuscating than revealing. An ongoing research study, being undertaken by our team from Brunel University London and Savitribai Phule Pune University, India and funded by the British Council, aims to interrogate this seeming visibility of women which appears to mark not a decline in sexism, but rather its resurfacing in more contentious and elusive forms. We illustrate this by reviewing major policy initiatives that govern the field of HE and drawing on the achievements of the UK HE sector, specifically in terms of gender equality, along with discussing the mixed- methods and participatory action research methodology of our study. We attempt to muddle the celebratory narrative of gender parity by illuminating different dimensions of gender equality and investigating multiple marginalities which exist in the socially differentiated Indian context and impact achievement of gender equality goals. This, we hope, would inform the New Education Policy, 2020. In this presentation, we problematize the question of gender equality by pointing out diverse issues that require attention, namely access and leadership, retention and completion, campus climate and curriculum, and employability and progression. We argue for a more contextualised and nuanced understanding of gender and gender equality to understand the forms of social inequities and exclusions in education and their intersections with gender.

- 2) Manisha (Jawaharlal Nehru University)

A Bourdieuan Analysis of Access and Participation of Dalit Women in Higher Education

Studies on inequality in education usually focus on a single dimension of exclusion like poverty or gender. Focusing on the access and representation of Dalit women in higher education institutions in India, this paper argues that the intersection of caste, class, and gender affects their pathways of education. An analysis of the quantitative data shows us that the dropout rate at the school education level is higher among Dalit girls than other girls and Dalit boys. They are less likely to continue to higher education. The enrollment rate, though increasing for both, is still lower among Dalit girls than Dalit boys. The number of Dalit women in central, private universities and institutes of national importance remains low (AISHE, 2017-18). The paper undertakes a Systematic Literature Review of quantitative and qualitative studies on Dalits and higher education. It also includes online narratives and blog posts to draw from the experience of Dalit women in education (Kumar V., 2018)(Kumar, 2017). Using the theoretical framework of 'capital, habitus and field' by Pierre Bourdieu, this paper understands how social inequalities are reproduced in education (Bourdieu, 1986). It looks at the problem of access and participation from the perspective of Dalit woman. The habitus of the Dalit families does not possess the necessary social, cultural, economic and symbolic capital required to navigate the 'field' of higher education. The lack of cultural capital (inter- generational wealth, education among family members, language, dressing sense, way of talking, skills, tastes, parental guidance, English medium schooling), social capital (lack of contacts and networks in higher education), and the symbolic capital (caste identity), which the institutions of higher education rewards, is a significant factor behind unequal access to higher education (Paik, 2014) (Jagadeeswari, 2014) (Pappu and Satyanarayana, 2018) (Ovichegan, 2013) (Harinath, 2013).

- 3) Sonal Raghuvanshi (Centre for Advanced Studies in Policy Research, India) and Shireen Yachu (Centre for Advanced Studies in Policy Research, India)

Public but Elite - Problematizing Access in Higher Education Institutions in India Through an Intersectional Lens

Inequality has been the story of any analysis in the Indian parlance, and higher education spaces are not an exception to this. A host of privileges associated with individual identity, be it gender, caste, class, etc., and their intersections determine opportunity structures, questions of access, and participation. Thus, an assessment of these factors is vital from both an instrumental point of view (i.e. labor market outcomes) and the lens of social justice. Against this backdrop, we aim to study the three clusters of 'public' but 'elite' institutions in India, namely the coveted Indian Institute of Technology, the Indian Institute of Management, and the National Law Schools. The project would be anchored on the analysis of affirmative action and anti-harassment policies on the parameters of access, diversity, inclusion, representation, and belongingness. The project is conceptualized on a long-term track that would be empirically informed and phenomenologically driven towards redefining access to knowledge production.

Preliminary data suggests that these institutions reproduce the existing inequities and become spaces where privilege is rewarded. The majority of the students in these institutions come from metropolitan, urban and semi-urban spaces, who, due to the force of this social reproduction, remain obtuse and tone- deaf to students from diverse backgrounds, which is against the conceptualization of a public university. Through this study, we would like to understand how social identities are solidified as they become the central point of communication vis-a-vis students from marginalized backgrounds against the flawed logic of merit. And how constitutionally mandated affirmative action policies like the quota system or anti-harassment policies with punitive codes are only one step forward to the actualization of social justice, and further require active attempts at creating a level playing field for students from various marginalities.

- 4) Chand Mahal Ruby (Jamia Millia Islamia) and Ruhail Andrabi (Jamia Millia Islamia)

Marginalization and Inequality: How do Muslim women navigate access to Higher Education in contemporary India

The Muslims constitute 14.2% of India's population with Hindu's forming the majority. This minority is also at the margins in terms of socio-economic and political factors. It is also reflected in the educational attainment levels of the community. Only 3.6% are able to attain graduation (Ranganath Misra Commission, 2007). Various measures have been taken since the colonial era to increase the enrolment of Muslims in higher education which have shown snail paced differences. Scholars have argued that various barriers like institutional pre-requirements, geographical, dispositional and financial cost play as hurdles to participation in higher Education. In this paper, we take a departure from these studies as such findings largely collapse the distinctions between the class, religion, space and political marginalisation. We situate the inaccessibility of women education on its dependence upon the Muslim identity, violence against Muslims and Islamophobia. Especially how the Muslims identity has been perceived since the rise of Hindu fundamentalism and the wave of ethnic nationalism which now dominates the political climate of India (Jaffrelot & Chatterji, 2012; Chatterji et al., 2019).

The paper takes departure from these existing observations by situating the inaccessibility of education in its dependence upon the Muslim identity and Islamophobia. The findings of the paper are drawn from our inferences and observations of our research fieldwork and location of being a Muslims from lower caste and class, respectively. The paper focuses on varied variables which in combination restrict the access and equity of Muslim women in India. We specifically focus on the rise of islamophobia, gendered discourses of religion and the political underrepresentation permeating the gender disparity. The paper finds the a culmination of different factors from the poverty to honour to gender biases to accessibility to Islamophobia play role in curbing the access of Indian Muslim women to attain higher education.

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Theme 2: HE Policy (Affirmative Action/ Widening Participation)

- 1) Rounak Bose (University of Hyderabad) and Akmal Ahmed (University of Hyderabad)

Reservation as an Affirmative Action: Contesting the Economic Reservation of Upper Caste students in Indian Universities

The EWS reservation that was implemented in 2019 reserves 10% quota for economically backward sections from upper-caste unreserved categories stands in direct opposition to the SC/ST/ OBC reservations offered to the Dalit-Bahujan-Adivasi population of the country. The economic criterion in the quota negates the object of affirmative action while invalidating the fundamental factor of social stratification in India, i.e., caste, which we shall investigate and problematise in our paper. While the SC/ST/OBC bodies are severely marked in educational spaces and the classroom becomes a differential space of participation, the EWS students remain unmarked entities while enjoying benefits of reservation in the overwhelmingly upper caste ecosystem of the classroom which evokes pertinent sociological concerns. This differentiation contextualised in the relationship of caste and gender, further adds to the marginalisation of Dalit-Bahujan-Adivasi women who are at the greatest risk of

visibility and (non)symbolic violence in juxtaposition to the rest of the classroom. Using Bourdieu's theoretical framework, we shall interrogate the disjunctive manifestation of symbolic, social and cultural capital which enables the homogenisation of the EWS category students with the larger General candidature populace, in contrast to the hypervisible SC/ST/OBC category students who find it difficult to negotiate academic spaces in similar ways. While situating the upper caste consciousness, especially that of upper-caste women who are historically posed as the gatekeeper of caste endogamy and Brahminic ideology, in the context of reservations in different political epochs of the country (post-Mandal to post-EWS) and problematising the Indian Marxist economic-deterministic interpretation of reservations, we will explore in the paper, how that has evolved with convenience at the onset of EWS reservations. We shall be employing the narratives of EWS, and SC/ST and OBC category students in higher education classrooms in public institutions as our tool to establish congruity in our research.

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2) Akhila Padmanabhan (Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum)

Higher Education in Kerala: An Analysis of different developmental phases and Role of Non-State Actors

This paper presents historical trend in the higher education development and exclusions created in terms of access to higher education of Kerala. Contrasting the recent global trend of increased private participation in higher education, private actors play a significant role in the higher education development in Kerala from 1900s. The recent policy initiatives taken by the government emphasize their actions towards a knowledge based economy by restructuring the education system particularly higher education sector. In this context, it is important to understand and address the existing problems in higher education development. Building on the theoretical framework of role of the state and different actors in educational development, the paper addresses two purposes. First, it attempts to understand the process and phases of higher education development in Kerala with special emphasize on the role of state and non-state actors. Second, it aims to address the how higher educational policies impacted the participation of women in higher education sector. The Study make use of historical data sources, All India Census Data and Kerala Economic Review for the analysis. Unlike the existing studies which discuss about the exclusionary trends in Kerala's higher Education after 1990s. The research identified decades of unplanned linear expansion of higher education institutions with decreased quality of education and widened inequality in social and economic opportunity. While analysing the policy discourses of higher education development, it is observed that the nature of private capital and the policies of non-state actors which was philanthropic initially, later became market oriented. This has created widespread inequality in terms of unequal access to educational institutions and disciplinary choices. When analysing gendered implications of state and non-state engagement in HE, it shows that women's access to higher education was initiated and popularised by the non-state actors in the early phase when state was reluctant to start higher educational institutions for women. The low enrolment of women in STEM subjects and their higher enrolment in 'traditional women centred courses' resulted in low employability.

3) Deepak Kumar Swain and Rajesh Kumar Karna

Inclusive Higher Education and Scholarship as a Means of Affirmative Action: An Indian Experience through a Gender Lens

The usefulness and necessity of student aid programs in facilitating access and retention to education, particularly higher education and as affirmative action for mainstreaming students from the backward sections of society is widely recognised but less explored in India. The paper is a reflection of the accessibility and effectiveness of a long implemented merit-cum-means based scholarship scheme in India i.e. Post-Matric (PMSS), This study explores the efficiency of the scheme in light of recent developments such as adoption of ICT in application and disbursement of students' aid and its usefulness to the students of Odisha; a tribal and scheduled caste populated state. Online data has been gathered followed by the pandemic situation of 2020 and total twenty-seven districts student responses has been recorded through questionnaire in Google forms. The major finding of the paper reveals that the scheme has failed to reach out to its target, particularly girls students are laying behind. Backward sections as compare to others are facing various challenges and issues in access to higher education, and girls regardless of common issues are having specific issues too due to existing gendered expectations, which has been failed to address by the scheme under study. The paper further concludes that the adaptation of ICT tools, despite ensuring transparency, is still proving to be a stumbling block for many, especially for the rural disadvantaged section of students. The mismatch between the increasing demands of higher education and the financial status of the beneficiaries is glaringly visible from the responses collected and it is the girls paying the cost more due to pre-existing social stigma and stereotypes. However a growing representation of girls in higher education is definitely a silver line. The study reveals that the scheme is not yet able to cover many

eligible students which lead to engage them in seasonal jobs for finance and debars from mainstreaming. In a concluding remark, it is explained that some kind of policy gaps and bottom-up approach was the major mismatching of the policy needs to be addressed to the excluded special section of students.

- 4) Nandita Banerjee Dhawan (Jadavpur University), Dina Zoe Belluigi (Queens University Belfast), and Grace Ese-Osa Idahosa (University of Johannesburg)

Higher Education Policies on 'Gender Equality': Standpoint of Women's Studies in India

Higher education institutions (HEIs) are positioned as key drivers of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), one of them being SDG5, the global drive to address gender inequality, and another SDG4, ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all.

The University Grants Commission (UGC), responsible for promoting and coordinating university education in India, has long taken steps towards these. These include policy interventions, including the quota system, to enable changes to the composition of students and staff; and the institutionalization of anti-hegemonic scholarship, including Women's Studies Centres (WSCs) in the late 1980s. Objectives of WSCs were (i) to question the dominant systems of knowledge and social formation within the existing educational system and (ii) to make the HEIs accountable to the social concern against injustice, marginalization and oppression of women.

From their inception, these Centres have been awkwardly positioned within universities' intellectual traditions, institutional identities and notions of social justice, with minimal infrastructure and fluctuating financing. However, at national level the role of the 163 WCS was affirmed in the UGC guidelines as "help[ing] India achieve her UN Sustainable Development Goal of Promoting Equality and Empowerment of Women". Misalignment in national policy discourses have been a constant feature of the sector, with the most recent emerging the 2020 National Education Policy, where the role for Women's Studies is omitted entirely.

Set against this backdrop of complex and competing discourses about access and gender justice, was a mixed method study of universities of India and South Africa conducted in 2019. This paper reports on how the implementation and reception of policies of access and gender mainstreaming, intersect with the politics of participation for marginalized academics. We draw particularly from the insider perspectives of the academic staff of WCS in the 4 higher education institutions in India, to point to the ambiguities, messiness and contradictions of endeavors to achieve 'gender equality' at this level of quality education, including policy-implementation gaps, perverse incentives, broken pipelines from student populations, and the production of the 'New Middle Class'.

Conclusion Day 1 (15mins)

13:30-13:45 (BST)

18:00-18:15 (IST)

Announcements for Day 2 and thank you note.

Day 2

Welcome Back (15mins)

09:00-09:15 (BST)

13:30-13:45 (IST)

Emily Henderson

Introduction to Day 2 sessions.

Session 1 (1h15)

09:15-10:15 (BST)

13:45-14:45 (IST)

4 Presenters with 15 minutes each and a final 15 minutes for discussion.

Theme 1: Gender and Intersectionalities

- 1) Zinat Aboli (Mithibai College, University of Mumbai)

Negotiating Mobility: Muslim Women and Higher Education in Mumbai

World over and in India too there has been some enhancement in access to education by women in the last few decades, but disaggregated indicators show that women from certain strata, regions and religions lag behind others. Educationally, Muslims constitute one of the most backward communities in India causing concern. Muslim girls and women lag behind not only their male counterparts but also from women belonging to socially and economically disadvantaged sections such as SC, ST, and OBC. This gap further widens when it comes to higher education.

Muslim women's educational attainment is low and their relative position is deteriorating even in cities like Mumbai. Factors like economic affordability, early marriage, religious orthodoxy, lack of appreciation of modern and higher education in economic mobility, low expectation from investment in education are responsible for the same.

There has been lack of any detailed study of factors that determine the access, choice and mobility of Muslim women in higher education in the country, and specifically in Maharashtra. There have been some of the reports, which have thrown some insight on the educational mobility and access to higher education. However, the detailed investigation of factors, barriers or determinants has not been done. In this context the present study attempts to fill the gap by investigating the gender and community group-wise inequality, access, and mobility of Muslim women in Mumbai. The study, among others, will use discourses and theoretical strands related to Liberal Feminism, Capabilities Approach and Intersectionality theory. This study is based on the structured interview of more than 2000 college going women from different communities and income groups in Mumbai.

- 2) Mridula Kaintura (Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai)

Trans Inclusive Education: Role of Higher Educational Institutions in Shaping the Personhood of Trans and Gender Non-Conforming Individuals*

The recent National Education Policy, 2020 discusses the inclusion of transgender children in the education system and have proposed to constitute the 'Gender-Inclusion Fund'. However, the policy does not discuss any mechanism against the discrimination that trans and gender non-conforming individuals face because of their gender identity and thus, it tends to overlook the structural barriers that impact the access of trans and gender non-conforming individuals to higher education.

The study attempts to understand the role of higher educational institutions in shaping the personhood of trans and gender non-conforming individuals. It explores how the educational institutions and university spaces define/confine the mobility and access of trans and gender non-conforming students. The study has conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with ten research participants and has done empirical data analysis. It focuses on the individuals belonging to the middle-class urban background who are pursuing higher education from different universities based in India.

Drawing from the experiences of trans and gender non-conforming individuals in different educational institutions, the findings discuss how families of trans and gender non-conforming individuals is a crucial factor that draws them to the university's spaces. The institutionalized discrimination, the surveillance of gendered behaviour affects the academic performances of the students which in turn affects one's mental health, forces one to discontinue their education and makes these spaces inaccessible and unattainable. On the other hand, the inclusivity of trans and gender non-conforming individuals takes place through gatekeeping of the class, caste and other identities markers. The study concludes that the discourse on inclusion and visibility of transgender students in educational institutions needs to examine the larger structures of caste, cisnormativity and gender binary. Further, the interventions and sensitization need to be at the administrative, infrastructural, and pedagogical levels that will affirm one's transgender identity and personhood.

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3) Preeti Koli (Ambedkar University, Delhi)

Dalit Girls as Speaking Subjects and their position in Higher Education

Women's entry and participation in the higher education institutions continues to be significantly unequal, challenging and a tale of multiple struggles and more so for girls from dalit communities. Based on my own location of self-identified dalit women, this paper interrogates the dominant methodologies to study meaning of access, histories and narratives of dalit girls in higher education institutions from Phule-Ambedkarite feminist perspective. Drawing on Audre Lorde's classic call to develop methodologies by the marginalised, "For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house", this paper aims at presenting preliminary ideas about developing a methodology to research gendered-caste issues in Indian context (Lorde, 1984). Guru (2002) has forcefully argued how the distinction between the 'theoretical west and empirical east' acquired a caste dimension within the Social Sciences in India between 'theoretical brahmins and empirical shudras'. It shapes the research such that it preserves the objective facet, instantiating the research "to be done" on the social beings and hence, presents them as 'data'. This paper attempts to develop a critical paradigm from the perspective of Phule-Ambedkarite Feminist lens by utilizing a specific methodology of social sciences i.e., narrative inquiry. It suggests that such a methodology may be developed with participation of the self-identified dalit women activists located in higher education spaces who are involved, engaged

and contribute to the anti-caste movement by reflecting on their day-to-day experiences. The basic premise of this method will be to create the spaces for them to come together and work in a shared manner in order to make them very much part of the research process. Such a method may challenge the “master’s tools” themselves. In addition, this paper will try to present how reflexivity can be used as an important tool of research in social sciences. Hence, the nature of social sciences that is very much governed by social beings will be thought through in this paper by exploring various ways in trying to research in an anti-caste manner.

Theme 2: Online HE and Covid 19

- 1) Juhi Sidharth (FLAME University) and Chaitanya Ravi (FLAME University)

Remaking Higher Education?: The Socio-political Implications of Online Education and the Indispensability of the Physical Campus in India

Online education has emerged as the preferred form of education in the COVID- 19 milieu. Proponents of online and blended education forecast a reduced reliance on the university’s physical campus while providing comparable learning outcomes at affordable cost. This paper asks if online and blended learning can be effective in educating and equalizing India’s highly stratified and unequal society. Should the comparison between campus-based and online education be restricted to the traditional questions of access, cost and learning outcomes or should it also include broader developmental goals of caste equality, women’s empowerment and social cohesion that are relevant to India?

The paper begins by reviewing the literature on higher education in India and highlights the role of traditional universities with physical campuses as spaces that bring diverse students into close contact, promote constructive campus politics and empower Indian women with a liberal milieu which promotes greater autonomy. Framing theory is used to organize the contemporary discourse on online and blended learning in India, and Contact theory highlights the irreplaceable benefits of the physical campus.

The contemporary media and state discourses on online and blended learning in India are analyzed and consolidated into an ‘access-outcome’ frame. The paper concludes that the locational and interactional benefits of campus life for female students are profound in a patriarchal society such as India with largely fixed gender roles and stringent control over female sexuality. Online learning in higher education could deprive young women of campus life in a country where the college/university campus is one of the few public spaces where they are likely to experience an enhanced freedom of mobility, and opportunity to challenge gendered norms by entering into inter-caste and inter-faith friendships and relationships. Thus, online education could impede progress towards an egalitarian, inclusive society in India.

- 2) Mounica Sreesai (Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad), Rebecca Rose Varghese (Centre for Public Policy Research), and Trishita Shandilya (Tata Institute of Social Sciences)

Stuck at Home: Navigating the Academic Lives of Female Students during COVID-19

Higher educational spaces provide women opportunities to shape their identities, social lives, daily routines and other interests, hence acting as an emancipatory tool. Thus, studying the monumental impacts of the pandemic on these spaces and various aspects of women’s subordination in the present scenario becomes crucial.

The previously public educational space entering home- the familial structure- exposes the gender disparity and inequity behind the seemingly 'neutral' educational structures that are by default disadvantageous to women, especially those from marginalised sections. The confinement of female students in the familial set-up with the incessant closing of university and college spaces due to the pandemic shows a grim picture of the future of female students' access to education. The endorsement of digitalisation of education in New Education Policy (NEP), 2020 and the recent proposal of a blended mode of teaching and learning (seemingly a step towards implementation of NEP) by the University Grants Commission indicate permanency in the online mode of education. While the ground realities of the digital divide are yet to be effectively addressed, female students, especially those from marginalised sections fall victims to double-layered discrimination. Along with issues of connectivity, the divide is vivid in terms of the disproportionate share of time in accessing digital devices (mobile phone, laptop) in comparison to their male siblings and other male members in households. The study, therefore, attempts to understand the lived experiences of female students in various higher educational institutions in India, who are now living or have lived for over two months with their families owing to the pandemic, i.e., challenges in continuing and accessing formal education in this precarious situation.

The quantitative and qualitative data from online surveys (conducted during the first and second waves respectively) and unstructured (virtual) interviews focus on the ascribed gender roles, the burden of household and care-work, and their perceived effects on education and daily routines. As per the findings, the pandemic-induced living conditions have increased their share of household and care-work, negatively impacting female students' routines and academic productivity and performance, further aggravating their physical and mental health (delayed menstrual cycles, increased anxiety, etc.). It was also found that the domestic workload for female students' had increased disproportionately when compared to their male siblings who were able to focus on their academics, while women were left with lesser time and energy to invest in studies and extracurricular activities. Further, the intermittent dispersal of scholarships may force female students, who depend on it, and the lack of opportunity to focus on their future prospects force them to drop out or give into marital pressure from their families. The study thus addresses the problems of an education system that aligns with the needs of a certain gender more than the others and highlights the micro-level consequences of androcentric educational policy frameworks on women in Higher Education. Through this study, we hope to underline the necessity for gender-sensitive policies and inclusive designs of education that are not oblivious to its limitations.

- 3) Gargi Gayan (Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University) and Sukmaya Lama (Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University)

Examining the Idea of Choice and Access in ODL

It is believed that in a democratic society education bridges all the inequalities and higher education is the means to attain upward mobility. But in India, irrespective of the growth in the investment, in the sector of education, a continued disparity in distribution of educational facilities between different social categories like caste, class, ethnicity and gender as well as between the rural and urban areas was evident. Keeping this picture in mind, the first Open University of the country was established through which distance mode of leaning was introduced. In the similar lines, the first State Open University of Assam, Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University (KKHSOU), was established with a vision to reach the unreached and generate an engaged and reflexive citizenship.

Open and Distance learning (ODL) is based on the philosophy of providing learners the choice to decide their place, pace and pattern of learning. But how choice is mediated in a socially segregated society needs to be carefully interrogated. In this paper, we argue that while Open and Distance Learning, characterised by “openness and flexibility” asserts to provide access to higher education to the “unreached” and offers a “choice” to the learners to pursue their dreams, yet the question of “choice” needs to be addressed critically. The study is based on qualitative data and it explores the dropout rates among the learners of KKHSOU, Assam. While the support services provided by ODL Institutions have made it possible for learning to reach the doorstep of the learners, the structural barriers continue to hinder the learning process. Accordingly, the gendered experience in ODL has been explored in this paper through the narratives brought out during the interaction with the learners.

Break (15mins)

10:15-10:30 (BST)

14:45-15:00 (IST)

Session 2 (1h)

10:30-11:30 (BST)

15:00-16:00 (IST)

3 Presenters with 15 minutes each and a final 15 minutes for discussion

Theme 1: Choices

- 1) Dhriti Dhaundiyal (Doon University) and Shruti Dhaundiyal (Cambridge University)

Colouring Outside the Lines: Analysis of Gender and Socio-economic Background in Design Education

Formal design education in India began with the India Report, a manifest to set up indigenous design legacies and institutions that balanced traditional knowledge with modern outlooks and technology to support the aspirations of post-independence industrial India. The first institution of design education was set up in 1961 and in 60 years, the number of colleges and universities offering design courses stands at 1670 today.

Enrolment in higher education institutions in India has seen a shift with higher female enrolment. However, some courses remain strongly gendered. Design education was imagined as a composite field encompassing both technical and contextual social science studies. However, a distinction has emerged within the discipline between ‘industrial’ (for technical) and ‘communication’ (for visual) domains. This distinction is visible in twinning of industrial design with engineering and architecture while communication design is seen closer to fine arts and aesthetics, as not requiring technical expertise. This perception has precipitated a unique trend of gendered preferences in design subjects. While males continue to dominate the domain of industrial design, females prevail in communication design. Enrolment data from students supports the above hypothesis. It has been

theorised that this delineation may be on the basis of conventions of society, faculty, learning styles and even course briefs.

Through this study, we analyse 5 years of admissions data from the design department of a public university in India to examine the current gender access in design education. Differentiating indicators of academic background, parental education and vocation, household income, residence (urban/rural), area of specialisation and class performance have been selected. We found that gender and family background has high correlation with selection of domains within design students, possibly perpetuating the gendered perception and enrolment in different domains. Further, we reflect on gendered pathways to higher education in design and its effect on the gender parity in design professionals practicing in the field.

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2) Lalramdini Sailo (Mizoram University) and Nithiya Amirtham S. (Mizoram University)

Gender Parity Index in STEM Disciplines in Higher Education in Mizoram

Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) occupy a vital ground in each areas of life. Underrepresentation of female is observed across the globe in STEM disciplines (Marginson et al. 2013) and improvements are seen in many countries through affirmative actions (Cronin and Roger, 1999). For conducting a detailed research study on gender and STEM higher education in Mizoram, analyzing the enrolment trend strikes to be one among the initial steps. Mizoram, one of the north-eastern states of India showed 91.33% (Male- 93.35%; Female- 89.27%) literacy rate according to 2011 census of India (the latest) and took third place in terms of ranking of states and union territories. 94.43% of population in the state is under the scheduled tribe category of India (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2011). The society is patriarchal in nature in Mizoram with the prevalence of stereotypical gender role expectations. It is essential to understand socio-cultural perspectives towards gender and higher education in Mizoram with a special focus, as it is observed that socio-cultural factors push women out of STEM pipeline in India (Kumar, 2009). The aim of this paper is to find out the gender parity index in enrolment pattern in STEM disciplines by analyzing the enrolment trend of students in STEM at the post-graduate and Ph.D. level in Mizoram. The yearly published annual report of institutions is used as the data source. The article focuses on five years trend for a clear perspective and comparison on the rise and fall in gender parity index in various STEM disciplines in Mizoram. The results will help us to explore further the inter- linkages with societal factors involved in gender and STEM higher education.

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3) Meenakshi Gautam (Delhi University)

Gender, Medical Education, and Specialization in India: Preference and Choice

The increasing enrolment of women in the discipline of medicine in India is a welcome trend. However, within medicine the maximum number of women are pursuing nursing which is seen as a low status female dominated occupation. A dispersion as well as concentration of women doctors can be seen in various specialities; women are overrepresented in gynaecology, obstetrics, and paediatrics whereas there are relatively very few women as compared to men in specialties like orthopaedics, cardiology, urology, forensic science, neurosurgery, nephrology, gastroenterology and nuclear medicine (AISHE, 2019). What lead postgraduate women students to make specialisation choices is an unexplored area. The study conceptualises choice-making as a multi-faceted and strategic process that includes both 'revealed preferences' and making of actual choice, both of which need to be understood within specific contexts (Moen and Wethington (1992; Sen 1997). The present study of women students in a government medical college in Delhi has highlighted the need to make a distinction between preferences and choices. The study shows that preferences of participants were broad and open and were relatively less gendered. However, choices were constrained and influenced by various structures. Family, educational institutions, and society at large constrained choices of women and forced some to make gendered choices.

Theme 2: Family and Community Involvement

1) Seema Marmath (Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai)

Exploring Complexities of Women's Access to Higher Education: A Study in Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan

The expansion of women's education across various communities in India has been a long-drawn-out process. While education for women gained considerable importance in the post-Independence period, an exploration into the gendered experiences of women's education in communities has received fairly less attention. The current research is located within the Meena community which is one of the largest Scheduled Tribes in Rajasthan. While most research on the community is anthropological in nature, the current study aims to fill this gap by exploring the contemporary dimensions of women's higher education in the Meena community. In the Indian context, women's educational trajectories are shaped by the extent and quality of education that is allowed by the family and concerns around marriage are often central in deciding the 'kind' of education that is considered apt for women. In the present research, I locate women's education within the nexus of family and marriage which dominates the discourse among first-generation learners in the community accessing higher education. The fieldwork was conducted in the first women's college in the district of Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan in 2017. In- depth interviews and participant observation were the key methods to gather data from final year Meena women and teachers at the women's college. As ideas of 'acquiring complete education' have evolved within the community, a positive shift of this trend has been translated into women having higher rates of enrollment to institutions of higher learning. However, the actual participation rates in college remain critically low. One of the key findings has been the elimination of the classroom as a space of learning from the imagination of higher education among families who discourage their daughters to access college regularly. The access to higher education is thus complicated by various practices encouraged by families, the college and the community at large which are in sync with the demands in the marriage market where access to a BA degree is gaining more importance than ever before.

2) Yashashwani Srinivas (Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai)

Community Initiatives in Dalits Colonies: Pathways to Higher Education

Caste entails exclusion from resources, symbolic and otherwise are not merely accidentally, but in its very essence (Viswanath 2014). This exclusion gets intense as we examine down the caste hierarchy. On that note, the Dalits, constituting the lowest strata are structurally excluded from various realms, thereby reinforces caste and caste-based labour on them. Education is one such arena that historically excluded Dalit for centuries. Though the colonial times, social reform movements and constitutional provision have enabled the Dalits the right to education, the accessibility and affordability have remained as hurdles. Nevertheless, the last three decades witnessed an increase in the number of Dalits in the higher education spaces. There exists significant literature on how Dalits have grown in educational spaces, especially, the higher education, giving rise alternative writing in academia and contributing to the larger happenings of Dalit assertion, consciousness and movement. However, the limitation lies in the fact, that there has been barely an insight into the various mechanisms that enabled this.

This research is an attempt to study one such mechanism– the community lead initiatives in Dalit colonies, especially night schools run by local Dalit organizations. Though these initiatives operated with limited resources they have been instrumental in addressing two major aspects – education and employment, especially in the case of Dalit women, who battle a three- level alienation of caste, class and gender. Hence, this research is an attempt to understand the role and relevance of communitarian initiatives as pathway to formal higher education, breaking caste and gender hierarchies, thereby building resistance and undoubtedly challenged marginality. Furthermore, the research makes an attempt to explore the contribution of these initiatives to the growing Dalit consciousness and movement (Omvedt 1994) in Karnataka between 1970 and 1980.

For this study, the researcher will deploy an ethnographic research that will include semi- structured interview, archival research and focused group discussions from the members of her colony in Bengaluru. As a Dalit woman who is first generation who graduate from TISS Mumbai, the researcher attributes her education to these initiatives. Through this research she hopes to create a document of the understudied aspect of education in India especially, in the case of Dalits and also contribute to Dalit studies.

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3) Vandana (Centre for Women's Development Studies)

Kinship Network and Access to Higher Education: Exploring Dalit Students' Journey to Pursue Science Stream in Delhi University

Scholars interested in exploring the relationship between Dalit students' access to higher education, have largely restricted their focus upon studying the interpersonal relationship of adolescent, families, peer groups and teachers. They have highlighted that interpersonal relationships have a profound impact on their development. However, little is known around kinship ties and their role in the process. Thus, this article explores the relationship between kinship networks and Dalit students' access to Colleges education in the University of Delhi. It raises questions: along with Dalit students' families, how do the kinship ties help them to negotiate, resist and challenge the blockages created by the nexuses of caste, class and gender? What have been the stories of their own journeys and trajectories of mobility? What kind of networks have they built over a period of time to strengthen their children's access to higher education? The findings of this paper are a part of the Minor research grant received from ICSSR-IMPRESS in 2019-20. In the exploratory study, the data has been collected by conducting in-depth interviews of 20 Dalit students (both girls and boys) pursuing under-graduation degrees in natural science discipline from various colleges of Delhi University. It was found that the relationship and its resulted support have deeper connections with the mobility the extended family members have mutually achieved. Grandparents maintained cordial relationships with their siblings' families and their own family. This later on proved to be crucial in determining the access. Kinship networks mentored the young students by influencing/shaping the choice of subject selection and schooling, nurturing aspirations for higher education and career, facilitating migration to study in cities, providing moral and emotional support, guarding against experiencing caste and gender based discrimination and violence and building self-respect, dignity and confidence.

Break (30mins)

11:30-12:00 (BST)

16:00-16:30 (IST)

Plenary Session: Keynote Panel on Gender and Access to Higher Education (1h15)

12:00-13:15 (BST)

16:30-17:45 (IST)

The speakers will speak for 15 minutes each addressing gender and access to HE. This will be chaired by Disha Nawani.

Rekha Pappu (TISS Hyderabad)

Rekha Pappu is Professor and Chairperson of the Azim Premji School of Education at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Hyderabad, India. As a researcher, teacher and evaluator, she has been working for over two decades with institutions in the academic and the development sectors. She was the Coordinator and Director of Anveshi Research Centre for Women's Studies, Hyderabad (1997 – 2003), and the Convenor of the Andhra Pradesh Social Watch (2004 – 2005) as part of which she edited the first Social Watch Report of Andhra Pradesh titled *Rethinking Priorities: Making Policy*

as if People Mattered. Her more recent publication is the *Handbook of Education Systems in South Asia* for which she, along with Padma Sarangapani, is the Editor-in-Chief. The Handbook published as a Major Reference Work by Springer Nature in 2021 is in two volumes and contributes to an understanding of education systems in the South Asian region.

The research interests of Rekha Pappu are broadly in the areas of education, gender, development and social justice. In particular, she is interested in the areas of education policy, history of education, gender and education, childhood studies, as well as pedagogy and teacher professional development in higher educational institutions. Her publications in these areas have been included in anthologies and academic journals. She has led various research projects and impact assessments for the state and central governments, as well as various national and international organizations.

Rekha Pappu is Professor and Chairperson of the Azim Premji School of Education at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Hyderabad. Her research interests are in the areas of education, development, women's studies and cultural studies. She has published in these areas in academic journals and anthologies as well as in magazines and newspapers. She has also edited the first Social Watch Report of Andhra Pradesh titled *Rethinking Priorities: Making Policy as if People Mattered*. (2005).

Chayanika Shah (Independent Researcher and Activist)

Topic: Understanding gender in education through the margins

Chayanika Shah is an educator, writer, researcher and feminist activist. She has a doctorate in Physics and has taught Physics to graduate students at K. J. Somaiya College of Science and Commerce, Mumbai for two decades. Since then she has designed and co-taught post-graduate courses in Science Education and Feminist Science Studies.

Chayanika has worked and written extensively on feminist studies of science, the politics of population control and reproductive technologies, communalism, and sexuality and sexual rights, besides teaching physics over the last several decades.

Her latest research (2016 - 2019) was a multi-city study "Mapping discrimination based on non-normative gender and sexuality" housed in TISS. As part of this, she and her team examined issues of discrimination and exclusion in higher education. One component of this research has recently been published as a book "*Space, Segregation, Discrimination: The Politics of Space in Institutions of Higher Education*" by Yoda Press.

Her other co-authored books are "*No Outlaws in the Gender Galaxy*" published by Zubaan, "*Bharat ki Chaap*" a companion book for the documentary of the same name and "*We and Our Fertility: The politics of technological intervention*".

Nidhi Sabharwal (NIEPA)

Topic: Intersecting inequalities, gender and access to HE opportunities

Dr Nidhi S. Sabharwal is an Associate Professor at the Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education (CPRHE), National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), New Delhi, India. Dr Sabharwal has previously served as the Director at the Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, New Delhi. Dr Sabharwal's current research projects include a multi-state study on student diversity and social inclusion in higher education institutions; an evaluation study of the coaching programmes for the socially excluded groups such as the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, the

other backward classes and the minorities in Universities and Colleges and is key research partner in a 5-year project on gender and higher education in the state of Haryana, India. She is the co-author of *Caste, Discrimination, And Exclusion in Modern India* (Sage, 2015), co-editor of *Bridging the Social Gap: Perspectives on Dalit Empowerment* (Sage, 2014), and co-editor of *India Higher Education Report 2016: Equity in Higher Education* (Sage, 2018).

Nandini Manjrekar (TISS Mumbai)

Nandini Manjrekar is Professor and former Dean at the School of Education, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. Her teaching and research spans disciplinary and interdisciplinary domains such as sociology and social history of education, curriculum studies, gender studies, and contemporary studies of schooling, marginalisation and education, with a focus on social and political conflict that impact the experiences and aspirations of youth. Her research has largely focused on the micro and macro features of the contemporary political economy of education in the Indian context, with an explicit focus on gender.

Dr Manjrekar has been part of various national policy research and monitoring groups in education and also have had a deep engagement with civil society and non-profit organisations working with women, youth and community. She was a member of the National Focus Group on Gender Issues in Education (2005), and she has been a member of several review missions under the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. She has published widely in journals and edited books and is a joint editor of *Comparative Education Dialogue*. Her edited volume, *Gender and Education in India: A Reader* was published in 2020.

Dr Manjrekar has served on the Executive Committee of the Indian Association of Women's Studies (2012-2014) and is currently President, Comparative Education Society of India. She was at the University of Wisconsin-Madison as a Fulbright Fellow (1997-98) and has taught in the Women and Gender Studies Programme, Massachusetts Institute of Technology(MIT), Cambridge, USA (2005-2006). She has been a visiting fellow at the Georg Eckert Institute of International Textbook Research, Germany, (2018) and the German Historical Institute London (2016 and 2019).

Conclusion (15mins)

13:15-13:30 (BST)

17:45-18:00 (IST)

Vote of thanks.