

Introduction

This volume is the result of an international workshop aimed to enhance our understanding of the nature of social transformation and cultural change in South Asia in recent years. South Asia has become a growing centre in the developing world after economic liberalisation and globalisation. Accordingly, the area has undergone various changes resulting in expanding disparities among regions, religions, social groups, income groups, and rural/urban divisions. This social transformation has also brought about cultural changes in the mode and function of various social organisations such as family, caste, and local community, and has changed codes of conduct and the sense of values.

Accordingly, we focused on the following two questions; (1) What influence has this rapid social change had on the lives of people who belong to the periphery of society such as minorities, weaker sections, subalterns, Dalits, Adivasis, and other backward classes? (2) How have those who belong to the periphery tried to explore their new codes of conduct and identities through their political, social, and religious movements?

In the workshop, we enjoyed stimulating papers that included theoretical perspectives and empirical data on social transformation and cultural change from the perspectives of the socio-economic periphery. These papers were revised according to the comments and criticisms of discussants and other participants.

About the Present Volume

This volume comprises three parts. Part 1 deals with issues related to social change in South Asia and consists of three papers.

The first, 'Food and Identity among Students of Gujarat Vidyapith' by

Takashi Shinoda aims to analyse food and identity among post-graduate (PG) students at Gujarat Vidyapith, which was founded by M.K. Gandhi in 1920. In recent years, most students belong to the backward classes from across Gujarat. The author conducted a survey from 2012 to 2014 on the food habits of PG students through questionnaires and group interviews. This paper intends to reveal changes in food and identity as follows. Ten years ago, consumption of diversified types of grain was common; however, more recently in Gujarat, various types of miscellaneous millet are losing popularity and being substituted by wheat.

Moreover, deployment of a sales network and outlets made it possible for consumers even in remote villages to buy fast food and soft drinks, resulting in the unification of food culture across regions.

The disparity between food items and food culture among social groups has decreased over the past ten years. Sanskritisation has been an important factor in reorganising food culture. This is revealed in the survey results regarding the shifting food culture from non-vegetarianism to vegetarianism among the backward classes. The Hindutva movement and religious movements such as the Swaminarayan and Swadhyaya have promoted Sanskritisation in Gujarat.

In this paper, the author emphasises the necessity of regarding fasting as an important aspect of food culture. Although individual differences mostly concern the motives and reasons for fasting, the practice is also strongly influenced by social political change and religious movements.

To conclude, changing food culture is closely related to the reorganisation of identities in terms of region, social group, and economic class. Concerning food culture, this reorganisation of identities has been strongly affected by globalisation, Sanskritisation, and various political and religious movements.

The second paper, 'Constructing Communities of Affection and Devotion: The Role of Churches in India' by Takako Inoue, addresses the construction of Christian communities with a focus on churches in metropolitan cities. It also examines the role of churches by focusing on the various activities carried out by both the clergy and congregation. The author pays particular attention to

the importance of mental aspects that inspire a sense of belonging and unity, as well as the feeling of security provided by those who share the same feelings of devotion and affection—a typically virtuous mentality prevalent among Christians.

Over the past two decades, Christians living in metropolitan cities in India have faced serious problems. They belong to the religious minority in India, constituting only 2.3% of the total population according to the 2011 census. Recently, anti-Christian violence has been increasing as communal tension between Christians and Hindus mount. In addition, as this religious exclusiveness spreads across India, city dwellers, who are primarily migrants who left their native villages, usually face many difficulties in their daily lives including a lack of help, cooperation, collaboration, and communication as well as an inaccessible secure safety net that the government should provide.

To understand how Christians enhance their sense of devotion and affection and how their communities consolidate their mutual relations, based on fieldwork conducted in Bangalore and Chennai, the author explains church festivals as important gatherings that attract large congregations, how church choirs allow the congregation to express themselves through song, and the benefit of charitable activities for disabled children. The author also refers to the diversity of Indian Christians based on caste, language, and ethnicity, as well as diverse sects that disperse small groups and sects that are hardly able to collaborate.

The third paper, 'Adivasi Search for Self-Identity in Gujarat' by Achyut Yagnik, deals with issues faced by the Adivasis. The Adivasi community, mainly concentrated in the central belt of India extending from Gujarat to Assam, faces multiple challenges, a major one of which is the search for meaningful self-identity. For more than 100 years, various Adivasi groups and subgroups have struggled for upward mobility and adopted different routes to obtain self-identity in India and Gujarat. While most Adivasi opted for the 'assimilation' approach by adopting the religion and language of mainstream Gujarat society, a minority followed the 'assertion' approach by raising their voices for an Adivasi heritage, culture, and worldview.

Focusing on Gujarat, the author traces social change among the Adivasi community and its struggle for a positive identity over the last 100 years. In the previous to the last quarter of the 19th century, the Adivasi's life-pattern was marked by food gathering, hunting, and shifting cultivation. Mainstream society considered them 'uncivilised, uncouth, and primitive'. With increasing access to education and employment, they were exposed to mainstream Gujarati society, and started looking for ways to establish a positive identity. In the early decades of the 20th century, a small segment of the community joined the Bhagat movement or Christian sects in northern and central Gujarat. From the third decade of the 20th century, many groups in south Gujarat became enthralled with Gandhian workers. Such interactions led them towards Hinduism or Christianity. From the third quarter of the 20th century, an increasing number of segments of the Adivasi community joined modern Hindu sects under the influence of Swaminarayan groups and Vishwa Hindu Parishad programmes.

The 2001 census indicates that 97.8% of the Adivasi community claimed affinity with the Hindu religion. Interestingly, a small segment of younger Adivasi people established the 'Adivasi Ekta Parishad' in the last decade of the 20th century and started asserting Adivasi heritage and culture. Throughout the eastern Adivasi belt, the Parishad has acquired greater support from the younger generation. It appears that the 'assertion' approach will garner further support from the Adivasi of Gujarat in the coming years.

Part 2 comprises three papers. Toshihiko Suda deals with 'The Roles of Foreign Remittance and Financial Institutions in Recovery from Nepal's Earthquake Disaster'. A devastating earthquake struck Nepal in April 2015. The death toll totalled more than 8700 people, and numerous houses were damaged. The number of 'fully collapsed or beyond repair' buildings totalled 499,000 and the damage to houses (replacement cost of destroyed houses) was estimated at 13% of the GDP.

The author surveyed the damage wrought by the earthquake and the recovery of damaged houses in an affected village. Results of the field survey revealed that 98% of the total houses (1,429 households) were classified as 'fully

collapsed or damaged beyond repair', although nobody was killed. The government prohibited that anyone live in the damaged houses, and most must be replaced by new structures.

The cost of building new houses is expected to start from between 3–10 lac NPR (Nepalese Rupee) or more depending on size and materials. For many households, this is equivalent to the income earned in five to ten years. The government will provide a subsidy and low-interest long-term housing loans. These loans will be made available to each household through financial institutions such as banks and credit cooperatives.

In conclusion, two factors are essential for effective recovery from damage caused by the earthquake: (1) efficient and sustainable financial institutions that enable the provision of long-term loans to many households including the poor, and (2) high-level, stable income sources for the repayment of large and long-term loans. For the first requirement, the experiences of micro financial institutions (MFIs) should be shared among all financial institutions providing housing loans, as MFIs have experience in lending to and collection from numerous small clients. For the second requirement, foreign employment for the Nepalese—which is already common—such as employment in the Gulf countries should be further encouraged. Collaboration between financial institutions and companies that export manpower will also increase resilience against the damage caused by the earthquake.

H.R. Venkatesha argues the effects of micro financing under the title 'Changing Face of Micro Financing: Unveiling the Human Face'. Micro finance has come a long way. Micro financing is implemented in numerous ways, for example on a *laissez faire* basis, under government regulation, with or without national and international support, with research input, and through professional managers. However, micro finance has not yet passed the human face or interaction phase.

Nowadays, MFIs must think and act differently, and it is time they look beyond merely providing loans. The human face of MFIs can be unveiled in three ways: (1) By researching and introducing pre- and post-disbursement financial literacy. Most beneficiaries of MFIs are neither educated nor taught

about the utilisation of borrowed funds, resulting in them squandering the money. (2) There is a need to develop and organise social and political mechanisms to fulfil the unproductive but necessary requirements of beneficiaries such as food, housing, medical expenses, education for children, and rituals and ceremonies. Can MFIs develop and work alongside NGOs/Government/Philanthropic institutions to guarantee beneficiaries' social security requirements? (3) The development of entrepreneurship skills is another yeoman service MFIs can provide. Accompanying beneficiaries on their entrepreneurship journey not only benefits them, but also facilitates proper debt recovery. This paper attempts to decipher the ways in which MFIs can unveil the human face in micro financing.

A. Veena and Sandeep K. Rao explore socio-economic conditions and migration patterns in their paper entitled 'Analysis of Socio-Economic Conditions and Migration Patterns of Migrant Settlements in Bengaluru'. Rural-to-urban and rural-to-rural migration has become both a boon and bane. It is positive to the extent that it provides livelihoods and creates new opportunities for migrated labourers. According to the 2011 census, more than two-thirds (69%) of 1.21 billion people live in India's rural areas. Most are dependent on the rural economy (agriculture), despite that agriculture contributes less than 18% to the country's GDP. It is necessary to reduce dependency on agriculture. The excess labour in the agricultural industry must be absorbed into industry and service sectors. Of the 100 fastest-growing cities worldwide, 25 are in India. Rural-to-urban migration is a significant contributor in the growth of these cities. Population migration from rural to urban areas occurs mainly because of the lack of sufficient economic opportunities in rural areas. In this way, rural to urban migration is a boon.

From the social perspective, migration has become a bane. This is mostly due to the apathy of the government. As there is no planned migration, those areas sending and receiving migrants both lose. Migrated labourers end up in slums, and education for their children as well as social security measures such as the public distribution system and health facilities are concerns. Displaced labourers often depend on middlemen to avail jobs, and often, these jobs are

seasonal. Voting and opportunities to voice concerns have become difficult. Consequently, migrated labourers face political exclusion in a democratic system. The worst impact of migration is on women and children.

For migrant labourers, social problems such as prostitution, the spread of contagious diseases, and cultural shock are other important concerns. This paper attempts to study and clarify the gravity of the situation by collecting data through a survey conducted in Bangalore, which hosts the highest number of migrated labourers in India.

In Part 3, three papers deal with issues related to gender. Indrani Mazumdar discusses labour and women in 'Gender, Labour, and Women's Work: Issues, Experiences, and Debates in India'.

Terms such as 'women's empowerment' and 'gender and development' have become part of the routine language of international bodies, government institutions in developing countries, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), especially in South Asia. Parallel discourse on the 'informal sector/economy' and the 'feminisation of labour' also has much currency in the academic literature. The former originated in the 1970s, while the latter is a slightly newer concept linked to the policies and practices of globalisation and related trends toward increasing the flexibility of labour.

This paper argues that these routinely used, 'important' terms are methodologically and empirically inadequate for framing an analysis of the actual trends in work, employment, and labour for women in India. The paper plots the course of theoretical debates from 'Women in Development (WID)' to 'Gender and Development (GAD)' against experiences and trends in the forms of women's labour in India. Furthermore, it posits the need for a more structural approach grounded in the historical experiences of the contemporary phase of capitalist development, and foregrounds the centrality of an agrarian question in framing an appropriate approach to the forms of gendered labour in India.

Drawing on empirical trends in women's employment, the paper demonstrates that far from the feminisation of labour, the rate of women's work participation in India has decreased. There was even a drastic decrease in the

number of women workers during India's accelerated GDP growth phase. Furthermore, despite the high prevalence of informal work characterising women's employment, the persistently low share of women employed in the informal sector suggests less of an intrinsic relationship between informality, gender, and labour than is often assumed.

Seika Sato deals with issues related to women in the public spaces in the paper entitled 'Still out of Place? Women in Public Space in Contemporary Nepal'. In the state-restructuring process after the Maoist insurgency, hitherto marginalised social groups in Nepal have been actively demanding full and equal participation or 'inclusion' in every public sphere of society. Thus far, the demand appears to have revolved around proportional representation across various arenas — political, administrative, educational, professional, and other — of Nepali society. Clear here is that merely crunching the numbers is not enough to realise a fully 'inclusive' society. While the balanced participation and representation of various groups in every sphere of society is important, it should not be mistaken for the achievement of inclusion, especially when realised through reservation. Equally important to consider are the conditions that enable or hinder people from diverse walks of life to participate in every sphere in substantial and meaningful ways.

This paper attempts to clarify one of these conditions — the organisation of public spaces such as streets, workplaces, or other public facilities — from the viewpoint of a previously marginalised minority group, namely women. Given that participating in public life presupposes physical presence in a public space, the way groups are treated in these spaces matters profoundly. Traditionally in Nepal, the common perception is that women belong at 'home'. Therefore, what happens when they try to leave their homes and venture into the public space to fully participate in public life? The research method was interviews conducted in Kathmandu with working women from various classes and occupational standings on their work and lives. Based on the results of the interviews, the paper explains the physical, social, and cultural barriers women face when they leave their homes, as well as how they react to and negotiate these barriers. Also explored is how to eradicate or overcome these barriers.

N. Usha Devi discusses the child sex ratio in her paper entitled 'A Study on Child Sex Ratio in India'. According to the 2011 census, there is a rapid decline in the child sex ratio in India. Although there are many reasons behind the declining ratio, the most significant is the preference for sons in the family. In this paper, the author highlights the challenges, causes, and emerging issues related to the declining child sex ratio in India. This study provides recommendations for upgrading socio-cultural and socio-economic fundamentals to increase the value of daughters to their parents in this modern era.

Summary

This volume is aimed to highlight the important issues and problems that the weaker sections in South Asia have been facing in recent years. The focus has been on the socio-economic conditions and gender-related discourses among the weaker sections.

In Part 1, the papers related to food and identity among the Backward Classes, the reconstruction of Christian community, and the exploration of self-identity of Adivasi were included. The common issue among these papers was centered around 'identity'. These papers revealed that upward mobility of each class/community/caste has been functional through socio-economic positioning, and religious-political movement, respectively. It was Sanskritisation and globalization for the GV students, while the church festivals have enhanced the sense of affection and devotion among Christians. Adivasi people have preferred to take the 'assertion' approach, which has a historical linkage with the 'Adivasi Ekta Parishad' in the last decade of the 20th century. Thus, these papers collectively emphasise that 'identity' has been the crucial issue among the weaker sections in the recent development of modernization and globalization.

In Part 2, the economic and financial crisis caused by the Earthquake, the problems of Micro Financial Institutions(MFIs), and the nature of rural-urban migration to Bangalore were the themes for discussion. The common issue among these three papers was the 'economic sustainability' of those who had been financially and economically affected either by the natural disaster like the earthquake or by the structured poverty which has prompted rural-urban

migration and effective utilization of MFIs in South Asia. These papers suggest that some kind of entrepreneurial development among migrants, whether domestic or international, and the institutional support systems are indispensable for their economic and financial development.

In Part 3, three papers deal with topics such as labour and women in India, women in the public space in Nepal, and the child sex ratio in India. The central issue of these papers is 'gender' with a special focus on empowerment, feminisation, public space and child sex ratio imbalance. All these papers have depicted a very pessimistic situation of women and female child, which show a keen contrast with the analysis of weaker sections in Parts 1 and 2. Women are reported to have been losing ground in labour market. Their public life has been marginalized and they face the very tough physical, social, and cultural barriers once they leave their homes. Also, the declining child sex ratio represents one of the emerging gender issues in the process of modernisation and globalisation. The authors of these papers have made attempt to explore the ways to mitigate the hardship of these situations.

Overall, we have made a reasonable attempt to understand the current social transformation and cultural change from the perspectives of the socio-economic periphery based on the literature and field surveys. As a result, we could examine various case studies that social transformation has brought about cultural change in the mode and function of various social organisations such as family, caste, and local community. Our findings regarding this aspect may contribute to the current knowledge to the study of socio-economic transformation in South Asia. Of course, we are clearly aware of our shortcomings and limitations. We should have developed our arguments through deliberation at the international workshop to reflect the result of discussion when each paper was revised. Also, we should have been more careful about editing this volume. These shortcomings, we hope, will be overcome in our next challenge for further studies on South Asia.