

Latitudes of Marginality in India

Laurence Simon¹

This issue, *Latitudes of Marginality in India*, presents new research that challenge mainstream doctrines and beliefs that buttress and stiffen attitudes limiting social and economic equity. The term ‘latitudinarian’ was used in theology to describe churchmen who relied upon reason to verify moral certainty rather than the orthodoxy of tradition. Used more broadly, latitudes allow for ideas from outside, new approaches to research, inclusivity, and forgotten voices.

With this issue, *J-Caste* embarks on our fourth year of heterodox research with readers across countries in Asia, Europe, North America and elsewhere. We maintain the rigor of our peer-review process as well as our original open-access policy which eliminates all financial barriers to publish, subscribe, read, download, or forward articles. We take pride in publishing promising young academics alongside celebrated and established scholars.

The lead article in this issue, ***Caste Identities and Structures of Threats: Stigma, Prejudice, and Social Representation in Indian Universities***, breaks new ground into why universities in India are turning into places of social defeat for Dalit and Other Backward Classes (OBC) students. Based largely on qualitative data gathered by the authors, the article argues that the basis of caste discrimination and humiliation in universities is not the same as it exists in other social institutions. The authors offer insights as to how students evolve strategies for coping and ideas for how higher education can heal “the wounded (caste) psyche.” Two other articles in the issue address learning in Indian education. ***The Exclusion of Bahujan Schoolchildren: An Anti-Caste Critique of the National Education Policy 2020, India*** explores the nature of educational inequality with direct reference to the social reproduction of caste. ***Un‘casting’ Universities: Examining the Intersections of Inclusive Curriculum and Dalit Pedagogies in a Private University in Bangalore, India***, in our Forum section, addresses the disconnect between curriculum and pedagogy which results in the “erasure of the discourse on caste,” and a deep and tragic alienation among some.

¹Joint Editor-in-Chief

Other articles seek to further understanding through utilizing better data availability and analysis. *Caste and Religion Matters in Access to Housing, Drinking Water, and Toilets: Empirical Evidence from National Sample Surveys, India* provides evidence of social identity-based discrimination and discusses the socio-economic determinants of accessing quality dwellings and basic water and sanitation. *Importance of Caste-Based Headcounts: An Analysis of Caste-Specific Demographics Transition in India* analyses four rounds of the National Family Health Surveys in the last 25 years and surfaces important trends and deficits when seen through distinct inter and intra-caste (including sub-caste) analysis.

Several articles view caste realities through varied lenses including the camera. *A Critical Lens to Understand Gender and Caste Politics of Rural Maharashtra, India* considers the real world impact of ‘*Sairat*’, a Marathi romantic drama film, portraying dominant masculinity and brutal killing due to transgression of caste (in the form of intercaste marriage). *The Human Dignity Argument against Manual Scavenging in India* confronts the notion of “safe” sanitation work and argues for the complete abolition of all forms of scavenging. *Sanitising India or Cementing Injustice? Scrutinising the Swachh Bharat Mission in India* cites the history of linking sanitation and waste disposal to the most backward castes and argues that policy for a sanitized India must remove the “shackles of caste that have chained few marginal communities to such occupations.”

Hariprasad Tamta: Father of Shilpkar Revolution in India seeks to revive and analyse the leadership of Hariprasad Tamta, the “father” of the Shilpkar (Dalit) Revolution, during the British and post-Independence era. *Politics of Recognition and Caste among Muslims: A Study of Shekhra Biradari of Bihar, India* advances *J-Caste*’s mission to expand caste analysis into other prominent religions of South Asia and beyond. The article’s author presents research into the Arzal (Shekhra) caste (bone picking occupation) and argues that their “struggle for social recognition harmed their demand for redistributive justice.”