

One-Day National Seminar

On

Sociology of Subaltern Communities: Revisiting Dalits, Minorities and Tribal Studies in South India

Organised by

Department of Sociology

School of Arts & Social Sciences, MANUU, Hyderabad-500032

February 17, 2025

Venue: Committee Room SA&SS & Library Auditorium, MANUU, Hyderabad

About University

Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU) is a central university established at the national level in 1998 by an act of the Parliament of India to promote women's education, develop the Urdu language, and impart vocational and technical education in the Urdu medium through conventional and distance modes, as per Section 4 of its Act 1996 (No. 2 of 1997). The headquarters campus is over 200 acres and is located in the heart of Hitech City at Gachibowli, Hyderabad. It has fifteen off-campus colleges (CTEs, Polytechnics, and Satellite Colleges).

About the Department

The Department of Sociology started at Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU) in 2015 and has been offering an M.A. and PhD in Sociology, including courses under NEP 2020 (FYUG) at the undergraduate level. The department has students from across the various states of India, representing it at the national level, with six teaching faculty members and two support staff members.

Prologue: Sociology of South Indian Societies

Subaltern studies is a sociological approach that examines the lives of people who are socially, economically, or politically marginalized and how they interact with the ruling classes. As studied and popularly agreed, Subaltern studies focus on the agency of the underclass in the context of colonialism, capitalism, and nationalism. It aims to recover the histories of groups that were marginalised or undocumented in colonial and nationalist archives. Still, there is also a need to study the marginalisation of communities exclusively in this context.

The sociology of subaltern communities, particularly Dalits, minorities, and tribal groups in South India, has been pivotal in understanding the intersections of caste, class, ethnicity, and gender in a historically stratified society. With its unique socio-political history, South India presents a complex tapestry of marginalization and resistance shaped by centuries of caste hierarchies and colonial legacies. Historically

marginalized, these communities have been subjected to multiple forms of exclusion, including caste-based oppression, economic deprivation, and cultural marginalization, which intersect with gender, religion, and regional disparities.

Dalit studies in this region often focus on the lived experiences of caste-based discrimination, the assertion of identity through movements like the Dalit Panthers, and the role of education and affirmative action in social mobility. Studies have shown how Dalit studies have illuminated how caste hierarchies are maintained through ritual, spatial segregation, and structural violence while also highlighting the resilience and political mobilisation among Dalit groups, especially in states like Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

Similarly, tribal studies examine the intersection of indigeneity with land rights, displacement due to development projects, studies about questions of their education and health, everyday struggles and vulnerabilities due to economic deprivations, and so on.

Minorities, particularly religious groups such as Muslims and Christians, face challenges like communalism and socio-economic exclusion, which are compounded by the intersection of religion and caste within these communities. Theoretical frameworks such as subaltern studies and Ambedkarite philosophy have been instrumental in analysing these communities' agency and resistance. Moreover, contemporary scholarship emphasises the importance of intersectionality, recognizing that the oppression faced by these groups cannot be understood in isolation but must be viewed as a confluence of caste, class, gender, and geography. Revisiting these studies in the current era necessitates an exploration of globalization, digital activism, and the rise of identity politics, which have reshaped traditional forms of resistance and advocacy. This academic inquiry contributes to a deeper understanding of social inequalities in South India and provides a lens for envisioning inclusive development and justice in a pluralistic society.

The sociology of South Indian societies examines the unique social structures, cultural practices, and historical contexts of the southern states of India, primarily Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana. This region, rich in linguistic, cultural, and religious diversity, showcases distinct societal patterns shaped by its geography, history, and interactions with external influences. Some of the key features to describe the societies in southern states can be seen through the following points;

- 1. Caste System:**

The caste system plays a significant role in shaping the social hierarchy in South Indian societies. While the Vedic varna system influences the region, localised caste structures, such as jati, have evolved uniquely across states, significantly impacting occupations, social mobility, and rituals.

- 2. Linguistic and Cultural Identity:**

South India is known for its Dravidian languages (Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and Malayalam), which form a cornerstone of regional identity. Language

movements like the Tamil Nadu Dravidian movement have shaped politics and social reform.

3. **Religious Diversity:**

The region has historically been a melting pot of religious traditions, including Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and Jainism, alongside tribal and folk practices. Temples, festivals, and rituals are central to public life and social cohesion.

4. **Kinship and Family Structures:**

South Indian societies traditionally emphasize extended and joint family systems, though nuclear families have become more common in urban areas. Matrilineal systems, particularly among Nairs in Kerala, provide an exception to the largely patrilineal orientation in other states.

5. **Economic Organization:**

Historically agricultural, South Indian economies have seen rapid modernization, with significant contributions from IT, textiles, and fisheries. Land ownership patterns often reflect caste hierarchies, though land reforms have brought changes in recent decades.

6. **Social Movements and Reform:**

South India has been a hub of social reform movements, such as the Self-Respect Movement in Tamil Nadu, which sought to challenge caste and gender inequities. Reformist leaders, such as B.R. Ambedkar and E.V. Ramasamy (Periyar), have had lasting impacts.

7. **Urbanization and Modernity:**

Cities like Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and Kochi have become education, technology, and global integration centres. Urbanisation has brought shifts in traditional values, gender roles, and intergenerational dynamics.

Muslim Communities in South India: South India is home to diverse Muslim communities, with significant populations in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana. These communities have unique socio-cultural characteristics shaped by centuries of historical interactions and contemporary dynamics. Below is an exploration of key aspects related to South Indian Muslim communities.

1. Historical Narratives and Contemporary Challenges

Historical Narratives:

- Muslim presence in South India dates back to the 7th century, with the arrival of Arab traders along the Malabar Coast. Over time, trade relationships fostered the establishment of Muslim settlements, especially in Kerala, where groups like the **Mappila Muslims** emerged.
- The Deccan region, ruled by dynasties like the Bahmanis and later the Nizams of Hyderabad, became a significant Muslim political and cultural hub. These rulers contributed to the educational, health, and idea of pluralism and amalgamated myriad cultural groups in the region. Nuances of newer forms of inclusive spaces in the form of traditional food centres, such as Irani Café

(making Arabian and Iranian food) and Hyderabadi cuisine, have significantly contributed to putting the city of Nizams in the global cities.

- Tamil Nadu witnessed the integration of Muslim communities like the *Rowthers*, *Labbaais*, and *Marakkayars*, who were engaged in trade, agriculture, and religious scholarship.

All in all, migrants from various parts of the country and groups arriving from African nations have constructed heterogeneous and distinct social groups over a few centuries in the Deccani region that continue even in contemporary independent India.

Contemporary Challenges:

- Marginalization in education and employment remains a pressing issue, particularly in non-urban areas.
- Growing communal tensions and the rise of identity politics have made South Indian Muslims more vulnerable to discrimination and social exclusion.
- Efforts toward social reform and representation are ongoing, but structural inequities impede holistic progress.

2. Educational and Economic Mobility

Educational Mobility:

- Educational attainment among South Indian Muslims varies across regions. Kerala stands out with high literacy rates among Muslims, owing to initiatives by religious organizations, like the *Kerala Muslim Educational Association* (KMEA).
- In other states like Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, access to higher education remains challenging, particularly for women. Madrassas and Muslim-run institutions like *Jamia Nizamia* (Hyderabad) have focused on religious education, but efforts are growing to integrate modern curricula.

Economic Mobility:

- Historically, many Muslim communities were involved in trade, small-scale industries, and agriculture. Modern shifts have seen some groups entering fields like IT, banking, and entrepreneurship, particularly in urban centres like Hyderabad and Bengaluru.
- However, a significant portion of the community remains economically disadvantaged, with low representation in formal employment sectors. Government schemes for minority welfare, such as scholarships and skill-development programs, are key to enhancing economic mobility.

3. Intersection of Religion and Caste Among South Indian Muslims

- Unlike the common perception that Islam is a casteless religion, caste-like hierarchies exist among South Indian Muslims, reflecting the influence of local social systems.
- Groups like the *Syeds* (Ashrafs) often claim higher status. In contrast, occupational or converted groups like the *Ansaris* and *Dalit Muslims* (commonly called Pasmada Muslims) face social discrimination within the Muslim community itself.
- Intersections of caste and religion are particularly visible in marriage practices, worship spaces, and leadership roles in religious institutions.
- Movements for caste equality within Islam have emerged in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. These movements advocate for better representation and challenge entrenched hierarchies.

South Indian Muslim communities are vital to the region's socio-cultural fabric. Their historical depth, resilience, and evolving aspirations highlight both the richness and complexity of their societal positioning. Addressing educational, economic, and social disparities will be key to fostering equity and inclusion in these communities.

Objective

The proposed seminar aims to delve into the diverse and dynamic sociological landscape of South Indian societies. It will focus on understanding the social realities, cultural practices, and structural challenges faced by Muslims, Dalits, Adivasis, and gender groups. Through this academic dialogue, we seek to explore the intersections of caste, class, religion, and gender in shaping the lived experiences of these communities.

Rationale and Academic Significance

South India is a microcosm of diversity, reflecting a rich tapestry of social, cultural, and political histories. However, the complexities of social stratification often leave marginalized communities—such as Muslims, Dalits, and Adivasis—at the periphery of socio-economic and political discourses. Similarly, gender identities in these contexts are often shaped by intersecting forces of tradition, modernity, and patriarchy. This seminar seeks to fill a crucial gap in sociological inquiry by bringing these voices to the centre of academic discussion. This will also bring newer nuances and micro studies to the more significant debates in Indian Sociology.

The sociology of South Indian societies offers insights into how traditional systems adapt to modern influences. It provides a framework for understanding the interplay between caste, religion, language, and economic development in shaping identity and social relations. Through this lens, South India stands as a microcosm of India's diversity and evolving social fabric.

Key Themes

The seminar will focus on the following themes:

Muslim Communities in South India

1. Historical narratives and contemporary challenges

2. Educational and economic mobility
3. Intersection of religion and caste among South Indian Muslims

Dalit Movements and Experiences

1. Resistance and resilience: Historical and contemporary Dalit movements
2. Representation in politics, education, and media
3. Intersectional identities: Dalit women and LGBTQ+ perspectives

Adivasi Communities and Marginalization

1. Traditional knowledge and cultural practices
2. Impact of globalization, urbanization, and displacement
3. Grassroots movements for rights and recognition

Lastly, the seminar paper can also cover the core areas related to Gender and Intersectionality but not limited to the South Indian context.

The seminar will consist of:

- **Keynote Address:** By a leading sociologist or activist specialising in South Indian studies.
- **Panel Discussions/Invited Speakers:** Scholars and practitioners will discuss each theme.
- **Paper Presentations:** Academicians and students will present research papers and make the seminar more interactive

Target Audience

The seminar is intended for academics, researchers, students, activists, and policymakers interested in South Indian sociology and marginalisation issues.

The seminar will be hosted at Democracy Dialogue/Scholars Space, India.

Expected Outcomes

- Enhanced understanding of marginalized communities in South India.
- Cross-disciplinary insights on caste, religion, and gender in sociology.
- A compendium of research papers published as proceedings/Book of the seminar.
- Actionable recommendations for policymakers and community organisations.

The abstract must include the following sequence:

Title of the paper,
author's name and designation,
institutional affiliation,
e-mail address,
and mobile number.

The length of the abstract should be a maximum of 250 words.

Structure of the Full Paper:

Title with author details (Name, designation, Institutional affiliation, email inside the MS Word file), Abstract, Introduction, Main text, Conclusion, Reference

Word limit: 5000–7000 words.

File format: **MS Word**

Front Style: **Times New Roman**

Line Spacing: **1.5**

Font size for text: **12**

Font size of the title of the paper and headings: 14

Font size of sub-headings: 12 **in Italic**

Reference Style: APA 7th Edition

Use in-text citations and detailed references at the end of the text.

Note: Don't use footnotes and endnote.

Important Dates:

Last Date for Abstract Submission:	01 January 2025
Last Date for Abstract Acceptance:	02 January 2025
Last Date for Full Paper Submission:	15 January 2025
Acceptance of the Full Paper:	16 January 2025

Note:

The organising committee will be able to arrange local hospitality and sharing-based accommodations upon request by the confirmed participants. *Due to constraints, all the participants and delegates have to arrange their travel.* The seminar will be held on university premises at the headquarters of MANUU in Gachibowli, Hyderabad.

Chief Patron

Prof. Syed Ainul Hasan
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Patron

Prof. Sk. Ishtiaque Ahmed,
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In Guidance

Prof. Shahida
Dean, SASS

Convener

Dr. K. M. Ziyauddin
Associate Professor, Department of Sociology
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Organizing Committee:

Dr K. M. Ziyauddin, Head, Dept. of Sociology (Convener)

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Dr Md Ehtesham Akhtar, Assistant Professor (Guest), Dept. of Sociology
Dr Imtiyaz Ahmad, Assistant Professor (Sociology-DDE), MANUU
Dr Hilal Ahmad War, Assistant Professor (Guest), Dept. of Sociology
Dr. Md Afroz, Assistant Professor (Guest), Pol. Sc. MANUU
All PhD Students of Sociology, MANUU.

Note:

The organising committee will be able to arrange local hospitality, accommodations during the seminar, and food for the delegates and invitees. Due to constraints, only invited resource persons and delegates will be given TA upon their full paper submission or confirmation by the convener.

The seminar will be held on university premises at the headquarters of MANUU in Gachibowli, Hyderabad.

Please feel free to contact with any queries at the following!

Seminar Convener: ziyakm@manuu.edu.in