



Gender Relations Revisited

Cross-Cultural Approaches to Violence and Agency in India and Germany

International Workshop
8 - 9 June 2017

This workshop will focus on the manifestations of gender-related violence, which include both direct and indirect forms of violence. Different forms of gender-related violence include rape, sexual assault, violence against female children, domestic violence, humiliation, economic deprivation or limited access to education and employment. Gender-related violence reflects power inequalities between women and men and serves to maintain structural gender inequalities. Inequalities are intersectional: they are the result of an interplay between multiple power structures that produce and reproduce hierarchical distinctions regarding race, age, social class, religion, and gender.

To adequately address the different manifestations of gender-related violence, we will have to investigate cultural, political and economic issues that encourage violence. A cross-cultural approach will consider gender norms against the backdrop of different cultures, lifestyles and social conditions and it will critically examine structures, mechanisms and causes of, but also discourses on gender-related violence.

Venue

Akademie Frankenwarte

Gesellschaft für Politische Bildung e.V.

Leutfresserweg 81-83, 97082 Würzburg

Bus No. 35 between Sanderring and Frankenwarte takes 10 min.,

leaves Sanderring at 08:40, 09:42, 10:42, 11:42, 12:42, 13:35, 14:28, 15:14, 15:50, 16:28,

leaves Frankenwarte at 10:06, 11:06, 12:14, 13:14, 13:59, 15:00, 15:36, 16:14, 17:00, 17:36, 18:36, 19:22

Programme

Sexual Violence: Cross-cultural Approaches

Thursday 8 June 2017

14.00 *Welcome*

14.15 *Keynote*

Postcolonial Governmentality and the Politics of Rape: Gendered Vulnerability, Sexual Violence and the State

Nikita Dhawan, Department of Political Science, University of Innsbruck

Drawing on Angela Davis' important work on colonial rape politics and prison abolition as well as revisiting Foucault's controversial proposal to treat rape like a "punch in the face", my talk will investigate the role of civil society and the state in promoting and obstructing gender justice by addressing the following questions: How is the problem of rape constituted in post/colonial societies? What knowledge is produced towards handling and solving the problem? How are specific forms of interventions rationalized? How does the tactical deployment of vulnerability of women simultaneously make them "governmentalizable"? I will argue that while new modes of collective agency can emerge by drawing on gendered vulnerability as a site of political agency, the production of the female vulnerable subject also functions as a technology of postcolonial governmentality. At the same time, against pursuing *for* or *against* positions vis-à-vis the state as a facilitator of gender justice, the talk will engage with the Derridian/Spivakian idea of the postcolonial state as *Pharmakon* – poison as well as medicine.

15.15 **Rape Revisited**

Mithu M. Sanyal, Cultural Scientist, Journalist and Writer, Düsseldorf

New Year's Eve 2015/16 in Cologne, Germany. The young woman raped to death in Delhi, India. Jimmi Saville, Roman Polanski, Julian Assange, Dominique Strauss-Kahn – there is no shortage of media coverage and fierce social debate about rape. But why do we speak and think about it the way we do? First of all, rape is the most gendered of all crimes. And as if this isn't enough, it's also the crime that genders us the most. The way we think about rape is intricately and disturbingly related to the way we think about sex – and that encompasses, in this case, sex in the meaning of sexuality and in the meaning of gender, in equal measure. But it doesn't stop there, the discourse about rape is also linked to attitudes towards race, right and wrong bodies and vulnerability. While working on the subject the assaults in Cologne happened. Germany changed its rape laws to include *No means no*, Britain implemented *Yes means yes*. We are witnessing history in the making and we are part of that change. High time for a new and informed debate about rape, sexual boundaries and consent. What exactly is a rape culture?

16.00 **Coffee Break**

16.30 **The Cologne Incident: Sexual Abuses on New Year's Eve 2015/16**

Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi, Department of Anthropology, Rutgers University

Erotic tensions between Germans and refugees are the stuff of elision, denial or disavowal. It is that which is least talked about. An understanding of the conflictual dimensions of such dynamics, however, might play an important role in determining how Germany adjusts from a society of emigration to affirmation of being a preferred site of international immigration. Based on collaborative research with anthropologist John Borneman in Berlin, I provide an account of the impact of the 2015 Cologne sexual assault on what Germans call, ambivalently, *Integration*. What is the significance of erotic conflict (1) in the dynamics of projective identification in everyday encounters between Germans and Syrian refugees, and (2) on the experience of legal certainty (*Rechtssicherheit*) and its role in creating a holding environment? Ultimately, a secure place in legal hierarchies and the adhesion to norms of propriety is insufficient to create mutual trust and sustain an ongoing and unfolding encounter. More essential for *soziale Integration* is the modification of projections that make possible an encounter offering opportunities for refugees to be present without having to deny that they might also be strange, while feeling appreciated and safe in their newfound home.

17:15 **Staging Gender in the "Disrobing of Draupadi": Young Women Performers in an All-male Theatre Tradition**

Hanne de Bruin, International Research Center "Interweaving Performance Cultures", Free University of Berlin

The presentation will explore how a young rural actress embodies Draupadi in a performance of India's classical epic, the *Mahabharata*. S.Tamilarasi was one of the first girl-students of the Kattaikkuttu Gurukulam, a grassroots initiative that has opened-up the all-male Kattaikkuttu theatre tradition to women. Her choice to become a professional Kattaikkuttu actresses and perform on the rural public stage is unusual and courageous. It should be seen against the historical context that has stigmatised such a choice as inappropriate for a young woman and as violating the rules of an ideal, constructed, female identity and sexuality. In addition to being the pièce de résistance in Kattaikkuttu's repertory, the *Disrobing of Draupadi* is a play which stages performed, gendered violence. I will look at how the performance of this play, and the violence enacted, changes when the role of Draupadi is performed by a woman actor instead of a man. Furthermore, I will look at some of the problems we encountered when reworking the play and the dramaturgy to provide Draupadi with a greater voice and agency — both with regard to the physical embodiment of this role and the interpretation of the traditional (narrative) text in a new production by the Kattaikkuttu Young Professionals Company.

18.00 **Concluding Remarks**

Janaki Nair, Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Gender Violence and Empowerment

Friday 9 June 2017

09.15 *Keynote*

Insight and Blindness: Sexual Violence and Feminism in Contemporary India

Mary E John, Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi

This presentation will attempt to place the hypervisibility of issues of sexual violence in India in some critical perspective. It begins by discussing what is new about this visibility of issues of violence against women after the Delhi gang rape of 2012, compared to the prior long history of campaigns on the issue. It accepts that there have been definite insights, which continue to unfold into the present, and in various forms. Critical views of the appropriation of the Delhi gang rape itself as standing in for the typical violence that women in India are exposed to has been gaining ground. Furthermore, new researches have been able to provide a much needed corrective to reveal a much more complex picture, when it comes to interpreting what the official crime data says as well as actual experiences on the ground. However, the presentation goes on to argue that there has also been blindness in the saturation of violence in public discourses on women's issues. The now widely held perception that violence is the single most important issue responsible for women's oppression and lack of freedom is casting a long shadow. The relevant contexts for thinking about sexual harassment and violence today are missing in most discussions – the first of these is the role of education and educational institutions for many women, and the second is that of work and employment. I argue that without these our discussions on women's freedom and autonomy fall way short of their potential for bringing genuine transformation.

10.15 **Child Marriage: Addressing (Mal-) Governance and Gender in India**

Elvira Graner, Max Weber Foundation, Bonn; Samita Sen, School of Women's Studies, Jadavpur University, Kolkata

Marriages of under-aged girls and young women (and men) are still common practices across the world, and India is no exception. In India, it is of high political concern, due to the country's particular demographic profile, hosting by far the largest group of adolescents and youth in the world. While the issue is often considered being a domestic problem, cases once in a while win the attention of international media, particularly when spouses are minors. Above all, when assessments about the Millennium Development Goals were done, this feature was also addressed. For documenting the vibrancy of this topic, five core issues will be identified in this paper. Besides analysing the demographic profiles of youth, the second issue are the alarmingly low annual rates of decline, in spite of major policy reforms. Thirdly, since there are pronounced regional concentrations in a few states, a few case studies about an ongoing project in West Bengal will be showcased. Not surprisingly, these states are also characterised by significant gender disparities, in terms of health, education, or overall gender empowerment. West Bengal has moved to the first position now in terms of incidence of child marriages in India. Fourthly, the paper will provide a brief overview about currently policies and legal reforms and debates, dating back to the first-ever legislation, the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929. Most recently, the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006 has set in place a highly elaborate legal framework, allowing for the annulment of marriages conducted by under-aged partners, both brides and grooms. Along with this analysis, we fifthly aim at providing a wider analysis about the governance framework that guides child marriage.

11.15 Coffee Break

11.45 Access to Finance and Women's Empowerment: What Does the Evidence Show?

M. Suresh Babu, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, Chennai

One of the largest hurdles in combating violence against women is their inability or unwillingness to seek help when they find themselves in abusive situations. In conjunction with fear, one important reason many women don't seek help rests on their degree of financial dependency. That is, they don't have enough money or economic resources necessary to establish themselves independently. Furthermore, women's vulnerability to violence has been shown to increase with their relative level of poverty. If women are given options to easily and discreetly pursue financial options and open bank accounts independently of their husbands and other male family members, it could very well lead to less dependency. Women in developing countries face multiple obstacles accessing basic financial services without at least two male guarantors and are less likely to have a bank account, formal savings, or formal credit – which may further entrench them into a cycle of abuse. Therefore, financial service providers have a responsibility to pursue robust financial inclusion. Financial inclusion initiatives can facilitate women's access to financial services in a safe way, promoting independence. Economic empowerment through money management tools like a bank account can be a quiet intervention against violence and, if done correctly, can help afford distance between women and their abusers. MFIs and governments need to remove barriers to account accessibility to allow women to assert their financial independence. Financial inclusion through bank accounts help build a foundation that can give a woman more control over her own finances. Such control can be a necessary first step she takes to remove herself from abuse. And if a bank account leads to a savings account, and a line of credit, this progression adds safeguard options for emergency funds required to leave an abusive situation.

12.30 Gender-related Violence and Pathways to Protest

Janna Vogl, Max Weber Center for Advanced Cultural and Social Studies, Erfurt University

My talk investigates in which ways women who experience or witness gender-related violence formulate a critique of the respective situation. In a critical discussion of Axel Honneth's theory of recognition, I argue that while it is indisputable that every instance of gender-related violence causes severe pain, sorrow, and other negative emotions, the classification of this violence as form of injustice against women is highly demanding. Analyzing (biographical) narrations of women living in a slum in Chennai, South India, I show that while nearly all of the women are actively participating in programs of women's rights NGOs, they do not primarily refer to a language of rights of an individuated subject to criticize violence they face. Questions are: Which other moral and normative principles do they refer to to render instances of sexual or domestic violence into experiences of unjust female suffering? Does this critique lead to the stabilization of protest and to impulses for change?

13.15 Lunch Break

14.15 **Resistance and Plea in Transgender Autobiographies**

M.D. Muthukumaraswamy, National Folklore Support Centre, Chennai

An autobiography is an active form of subaltern protest, self-assertion, and identity formation in India as evidenced by the proliferation of Dalit, women and transgender autobiographies. It is pertinent to ask and learn how the transgender authors derive their authority from this literary form to build a human rights discourse concerning citizenship, recognition of different orientation and practices of sexuality, and immunity from physical and repressive violence. Revathi's *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story*, Living Smile Vidya's *I am Vidya*, Laxmi Narayan Tripathi's *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi* and the numerous anecdotal narratives collected by the People's Union for Civil Liberties clearly demonstrate I as a referent, the subject of autobiographical works and their 'truths' represent public and social rather than private stories. By converting their selves into public personas, the transgender authors articulate their resistance and plea to be different from the nationalist and the essentialist norms of being human and a citizen. The twin narratives of being the chosen and the condemned simultaneously drive the autobiographies, and they locate the societal agencies of violence in purity, law, and patriarchy while placing their resistance in sexual desire, love, and community. Would the human rights organisations take notice?

15.00 **Round Table**

Gender Violence and Agency

Statements by Janaki Nair and Mary E. John, followed by open discussion

16.15 **Coffee & Concluding Session**

Organisers

ICAS:MP Thematic Module 5

Performing Gender – Negotiating Space in Civil Society

Würzburg Centre for Modern India (WCMI)

University of Würzburg

Chair of Indology

Department of Cultural Studies of East- and South-Asia, University of Würzburg

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