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# The 'Spatial' Effect: Shaping and Reshaping Identities in South Asian Communities

**Area of Study:**

South Asia

**Organized Panel Session Title:**

The 'Spatial' Effect: Shaping and Reshaping Identities in South Asian Communities

**Submitter Email:****Time Period:**

Contemporary (post-2000)

**Keywords:**

Gender Studies, Geography/Space

**Discipline(s):**

Geography, Gender & Sexuality, History and Woman Studies

**Session Abstract:**

There are several factors that shape and form diverse identities in South Asia. While exploring the emerging youth or gendered identities, scholars have attempted to understand the intersections of caste, gender, class, religion and region etc. Yet, the engagement of the 'Spatial' as a factor of shaping identities complicates the studies further.

The interdisciplinary panel would look at the concept of Space and its impact in creating, shaping and reshaping of identities in South Asian context. It would also explore how different identities shape the spatiality and rupture the routines of the spaces.

The research papers included in the panel highlight the research done at exploring the spatiality of transgender Identity in India, or analyzing the new emerging identities of a tribal Community in Jharkhand due to the complex impact of urbanization, education and glocalisation. Referring to war memories across the borders and shaping of the identities of marginalized bodies or forming

borderless solidarities through digital spaces, the panel would explore the entanglement of space and identities on the site of South Asia (predominantly India).

Keywords: Spatiality, Identities, Gender, Marginalised Bodies, South Asia

**Innovative Panel Format:**

No

**International Exchange Travel Grant:**

No

**Scheduling Conflicts:**

None.

**Sponsor:**

Yes

**Sponsor Group Name:**

"Cultivating the Humanities and Social Sciences and Supporting Under-represented Scholars of Asia"

**Sponsor Group Contact:**

Professor Rajeshwari Deshpande

**Sponsor Contact Email:**

[REDACTED]

**Abstract ID# 6255: The Gender 'Carnival': Hijra Identity and Mofussil Bengal**

**Organized Panel Session Abstract:**

The central trope of the paper is to position 'mofussil[1]' as a new site of knowledge, especially in domain of Spatiality of Gender in South Asia (specifically in India). On the outset, this paper asks - How do *Hijra* community perceive different geographies and how do different geographies perceive them? Here, I would like to draw from two strands of literatures- a) the scholarship of southern urbanity; how it over looked the nuanced understanding of *mofussil*. By doing so the paper critiques the failure of scholarship on southern urbanity to address the question of gender. b) The existing literature on *Hijra* community in India. Thus, the paper critically engages with the question of spatiality of *Hijra* identity in India while lime lighting the performative episode of *badhai*[2] in two different spatiality- *mofussil* and Metro.

[1] *Mofussil* is a category of smaller towns. These towns were originated to as the process of extending the revenue administration of the Colonial Government. Due to its historical peculiar genesis, it poses a specific kind of socio-spatiality.

[2] This is a blessing ceremony for the new born baby or newly married couple. The *Hijra* persons dance and perform in pursuit of blessing from the God. In South Asian context *Hijra* persons blessings are considered to be pious. On the other hand, their curse is believed to be inauspicious. Such beliefs come from the traditional scriptural understanding as text like The Mahabharat has connotation of queer identities.

**Shubhdeep Mondal**, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India

**Rank:** Other

**Gender Identity:** Man

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**Abstract ID# 6257: From Domestic to the Battlegrounds: Bodies, Spatialities, and the Gendered Production of Subjectivities in Nepal**

**Organized Panel Session Abstract:**

Rules, interdictions, prohibitions on bodies in relation to spaces has been a key site for the production of gendered inequalities and injustices. This, however, also engenders both bodies and spaces with subversive potentials. In the Maoist People's War of Nepal (MPW), women combatants, through the militarisation of their bodies challenged spatial production of gendered norms, meanings and hierarchies in significant ways. The functioning of the female combatant body in spaces, traditionally disallowed of Nepali women, challenged core patriarchal ideas of gender, caste, and class. For these transgressive performances, at the war's end, female ex-combatants of the war are framed as violent and aggressive, incapable of living in non-war situations and participating in non-war politics. This paper, drawing on ethnographic work conducted in Kathmandu and Dang district of Nepal, shall identify subjectivities produced through Maoist women's lived bodily experiences in different times (prewar, war and postwar) and spaces (home, battleground, shelter homes, forests, cantonments). In doing so it shall evaluate the mobilization of wartime ideas, names, emotions and materials in lived everyday spaces of the post-war. This would, as the paper shall argue, enable identifying the multitudes of subjectivities otherwise rendered invisible by postwar (re)marginalisation and devaluation of female ex-combatants' identities, (re)confining them to undesired roles and spaces.

Keywords: Spatialities, Identities, Postwar impact, gendered bodies

**Amrita Pritam Gogoi**, Dibrugarh University, India

**Rank:** Assistant Professor

**Gender Identity:** Woman

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**Abstract ID# 6259:** Urbanization and Mainstreaming: Mapping the Changes in Gendered Spaces of Adivasi World

**Organized Panel Session Abstract:**

Adivasi societies, traditionally, have been gendered spaces – female-only taboos, gender-unequal customary rights and in egalitarian access to religion and politics, define the everyday lives of most Adivasi women. Santals, the largest Adivasi community in Jharkhand, are no different. A Santal woman resides in a patrilineal, patrilocal and patriarchal society. Her everyday spatial experiences with cultural, economic and political spaces are mediated by myriad patriarchal controls. She is forbidden from touching plough or thatching roof and is virtually denied religious participation. Village assemblies are all-male in composition and functioning. And while she shoulders the burden of entire domestic work and substantial livelihood labour, the customary laws refuse to grant her property rights. This male hegemonic traditional space which she inhabits has, in recent decades, been increasingly entangled with new forces of urbanization and mainstreaming. As market and corporate elements make deep inroads into Santal socio-economic space along with the growing reach of State administrative and legal apparatus, the everyday of Santal lives is getting profoundly mainstreamed. This mainstreaming, however, brings in its train disintegration, dislocation and proletarianisation for Santals as a community. Communitarianism, the essence of Adivasi way of life, stands threatened and cultural identities ravaged. Amidst this, the one who emerges most vulnerable is the Santal woman. This paper weaves together Santal folklores, life narratives and field work data, endeavours to underline the increased vulnerability of Santal woman where her spatial experiences with the outside and her own world have become more profoundly gendered and hegemonised, than ever before.

**Amita Kumari**, Sido Kanhu Murmu University, India

**Rank:** Assistant Professor

**Gender Identity: Woman**

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**Abstract ID# 6253:** Transnational Youth Identity: Multilevel Global Interactions through Digital Spaces Shaping Contemporary Cultural Identities of Youth in India

**Organized Panel Session Abstract:**

Globalisation led to the emergence of cultural universalisation and simultaneously leading towards cultural hybridisation. The impact of globalisation on today's youth has led to debates on their 'identity' formation and reformation (Bourne, 2008). They are experiencing the impact of globalisation prominently through peers and various digital spaces & social media platforms. They are trying to adapt themselves to the widened cross-cultural influence and trying to develop their own personal identities.

This paper tries to investigate perceptions of young people towards transnational identities in the context of globalisation. In Indian context, European influence is often closely associated with globalisation. Interestingly, during interactions, young people showed greater familiarity with Japanese and Korean cultures. The present paper aims to understand this new trend, especially in a city like Pune which is quite popular for its significant regional culture.

In India, cultural hybridisation is seen through the cultural impact of western culture and the emerging cultural invasion of Korean tradition (Athiko, 2017). The growing identification with the Korean wave extends to the emerging 'Asian identity', as the youth are exploring cultural similarities between India and other Asian countries. The post colonial period witnessed significant influence of European culture; while the globalised, neo-liberal world sees a shift towards Asian Culture and Asian Identity.

This paper mainly seeks to understand: How digital spaces shape the cultural identities of young people in India? And what is their perspective on the complex and diverse nature of their identity?

**Key words:** Globalisation, Identities, Young people, Asian culture, Digital Spaces

**Priya Gohad** and Neha Ghatpande, Savitribai Phule Pune University, India

**Gender Identity:**

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Chair

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Amrita Pritam Gogoi



Dibrugarh University

India

**Rank:** Assistant Professor

**Gender Identity:** Woman

Organizer

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Neha Ghatpande



Savitribai Phule Pune University

India

**Rank:** Other

**Gender Identity:** Woman

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Discussant

Shubhdeep Mondal



Jawaharlal Nehru University

India

**Rank:** Other

**Gender Identity:** Man

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