# CHAPTER 50

# SOCIOLOGY

## Doctoral Theses

01. ABHIVYAKTI VIVEK
**State Intervention in Education System: A Sociological Study of Select Schools of Delhi.**
Supervisor: Prof. Nabanipa Bhattacharjee
Th 29374

*Abstract*

Education is often regarded as an instrument for social mobility, democratic citizenship and national development. However, several sociological studies have highlighted that it frequently also reproduces existing social inequalities. This thesis examines the state intervention in the public education system in Delhi, focussing on the reforms introduced by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Government between 2013 and 2022. The theory is anchored in the New Sociology of Education, uses the political economy approach to conceptualise schools as social institutions, where knowledge, power and inequalities are produced and negotiated, within a broader dynamic of state power and political legitimacy and New Institutional Theory approach. The study adopts a mixed-method research design that integrates both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The research is based on 10 months of fieldwork conduced in the North Delhi government schools representing different institutional categories- a model school, a non-model school, an all-girl's school and an all-boy's school, along with a low-cost private school. The findings showed that the state-led reforms significantly improved the visibility and symbolic legitimacy of public education, particularly through infrastructure transformation, parental involvement and curriculum innovations that project government schools as sites of modernisation and welfare provisions. However, the everyday classroom practices highlight how these practices remain uneven. The Institutional constraints, socio-economic inequalities and organisational dynamics within schools often limit the depth of policy implementation. The study shows how the state intervention in the education system, operates not only as a policy instrument but also as a political strategy through which governments build legitimacy, signal administrative competence and reshape public trust in state institutions. The thesis contributes to the domain of sociology of education and policy studies offering a nuanced understanding about the how state power, institutional structures and everyday schooling practices interact and shape educational reforms in the urban context of Delhi, India.

*Contents*

1. Education, society and the state: An introduction 2. The state, school and society 3. The Delhi education model: Mapping of the schools 4. School as a spectacle: beyond bricks and mortar 5. Schools as sites of social capital: Interpersonal relationships through institutional interventions 6. Curriculum reforms as institutional intervention: The Delhi government's innovation 7. Conclusion: Education, state legitimacy and the institutional reform. References and Annexures.

02. AGARWAL (Anshu)
**Family Memory among Assamese Caste Hindus: Forms and Practices.**
Supervisor: Prof. Anuja Agrawal
Th 29375

*Abstract*

This research study, Family Memory among Assamese Caste Hindus: Forms and Practices, examines the forms and practices of family memory among Assamese caste Hindus, with a particular focus on Brahmin families in Western Assam. It is grounded in scholarship that conceptualises memory as a socially shaped phenomenon. The study investigates the oral, material, and embodied mediators through which memory operates within families to examine how it helps sustain continuity across generations and reconstitutes and reinforces social identities. Consequently, the research uncovers the various manifestations of memory in family life and their role in shaping social identity. The study includes an ethnographic investigation with forty-three Assamese caste Hindu families, primarily selected through snowball sampling, from five districts in Western Assam. The primary data collection method is oral history, featuring in-depth open-ended interviews, complemented by limited digital ethnography. Through thematic analysis, the research examines four mnemonic forms: i) family stories (myths and legends), ii) genealogies (family trees), iii) domestic material culture (ancestral belongings and heirlooms), and iv) ancestral houses (Assam-type houses). The findings offer a comprehensive exploration of 'family memory,' shedding light on its nature, content, and functions by examining it within a specific context. By analysing the mnemonic forms and their functions, the research primarily demonstrates the key role memory plays in the making of kinship. It elucidates that family memory is not just about a fixed familial past but a constitutive agent of relatedness in the present. This finding suggests that memory can serve as a valuable framework for examining practices of doing family. Furthermore, it acknowledges that the familial past is relevant to multiple, interconnected identity works. Thus, the study demonstrates that memory work among Assamese caste Hindu families, in addition to generating kinship affiliation, also helps reconstitute, represent and reinforce caste (Brahmin), religious (Hindu), and ethnic-regional (Assamese) identities.

*Contents*

1. Introduction 2. Family stories: legends, family history books, and intergenerational transmission 3. Genealogical records: representing religious culture, gender hierarchy and caste identity 4. Domestic material culture: ancestral belongings and material memory 5. Ancestral houses: mnemonic value of assam-type houses 6. Conclusion. Bibliography.

03. MATHEW (Remya Ann)
**Digital Childhoods in Urban Indian Scenario, with Reference to Delhi-Ncr.**
Supervisor: Prof. Anuja Agrawal
Th 29376

*Abstract*

Digital technology is heralded as a harbinger of opportunities for children and their communities, while it is also blamed for its negative aspects. However, children's voices are often not heard, even when their digital usage comes to public scrutiny and is a battleground for debates. It is in this context that this thesis explores children's voices regarding their social relationships and activities as they engage with digital media, particularly examining their relationships with parents, friends and their school work

and leisure. The study is based on research with 31 children in the age group of 11 to 16 residing in Delhi-NCR and was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic using a number of different research techniques. The thesis argues that children's digital usage is more complicated than the binaries in public discourse might indicate. It attempts to centre the child in these debates and map out the various changes occurring, especially with the heightened digital usage since the COVID-19 pandemic. There are nine chapters. While the first chapter sets out the introduction to the thesis and the second chapter maps the research methodology followed, the rest of the chapters engage with the main themes discovered in the conversations with children. Thus, the third chapter deals with digital parenting and the fourth with specific ways of 'doing' family online. The fifth and the sixth chapters deal with school work and leisure and how they have changed with digital technology. The seventh and eighth chapters focus upon friendships in a digital context and the various practices, issues of miscommunication and how children navigate these. The final chapter provides some of the implications of my research findings. This thesis will be valuable to those interested in childhood studies, digital technology, families, schooling, leisure and friendship among children.

*Contents*

1. Introduction 2. Research methodology 3. Redefining parent-child relationships through digital media 4. 'Doing' family online 5. School work in digital contexts among children 6. Children and digital leisure 7. Digital friendships among children 8. Practices and challenges in digital friendships 9. Digital childhoods: implications and conclusions. Appendices and References.

04. RAJAT KUMAR
**Political Ecology of Urban Agriculture on the Yamuna Floodplains in Delhi.**
Supervisor: Prof. Sudha Vasan
Th 29377

*Abstract*

This thesis is an ethnographic study of urban agriculture on the Yamuna floodplains (Khadar) in Delhi. The central question guiding this study is how urbanisation shapes the social ecology of agriculture in the city and what kind of social ecology is produced by conditions where a society is constantly anticipating displacement. I argue that urbanisation has reorganised agriculture in Khadar rather than displacing it, wherein the agrarian is itself the result of urbanisation and not a relic of the past. Existing studies on the co-constitution of the urban and the agrarian tend to focus on how land is converted to non-agrarian uses and turned into an asset. Departing from this view, I show how the floodplain's legal-ecological character intersects with urbanisation to produce a distinctly urban agrarian ecology. I show that it is not the landed property of the agrarian castes that gets absorbed into urban capital; instead, the landowners now earn rent by renting out their fields to migrant cultivators who switch to vegetable cultivation to pay the high rents. Accordingly, I argue that urban capital therefore draws on the agrarian labour of the migrants and on the ecology of the Khadar itself. This mutual constitution of the 'agrarian' and the 'urban' in Khadar is shaped by a processual condition of constant anticipation of displacement which reorganises the agrarian and ecological life in the present, anticipating a future that has not yet arrived. The chapters trace this anticipation of displacement through Delhi`s master plans and other processes of urbanisation that promote a non-agrarian vision of people-river relations in the city, thereby threatening cultivators with displacement and compelling them to engage in extractive vegetable cultivation, further polluting the river. This allows the dominant scientific discourse invoked by state agencies and experts to label them as

polluters, which delegitimises them, resulting in frequent demolitions. It is in these conditions that a new figure emerges in the Khadar: the land entrepreneur, popularly known as zameeni keeda, who becomes instrumental to how cultivation continues. To reiterate, agriculture in Khadar takes new forms, shaping urbanisation even as it continues to be shaped by it.

*Contents*

1. Introduction: Urban Agriculture on the Yamuna Floodplains in Delhi 2. Master Plans for the River in the City 3. Anticipating Displacement: Demolition, Displacement and Changing Nature of Agriculture 4. Ganda Paani, Garam Paani: Pollution, Livelihood, and Contested Agrarian Ecology on the Yamuna Floodplains 5. From Collective Negotiations to Individualised Negotiations: The Rise of a Land Entrepreneur in the Yamuna Khadar. Conclusion: Urban Agriculture under Anticipatory States and Bibliography.

05. SAHA (Debadrita)
**Sociological Analysis of Political Humour through Memes on Social Media.**
Supervisors: Prof. Reema Bhatia and Prof. Roma Chatterji
Th 29275

*Abstract*

This research A Sociological Analysis of Political Humour through Memes on Social Media investigates political humorous memes as dynamic cultural texts within India's digital public sphere. Grounded in frameworks from meme studies, metacultural analysis and participatory media, the study examines how meme production and circulation enable political commentary, identity performance and collective meaning-making across India's linguistic, regional and caste divides. Focusing on three pivotal contexts—the annual Budget announcements (2020-2024), the 2021 Assembly Elections in West Bengal, and satirical meme pages. Employing a multimodal approach, the research combines digital ethnography of meme communities with content-mapping across multiple Indian languages and regions, thereby tracing circulation patterns of memes in multilingual settings. A snowball sampling method is used to identify anti-caste memes, highlighting how marginalised voices use humour and vernacular visuality to build solidarity and challenge dominant narratives. Semiotic and thematic analyses of visual-textual content uncover cultural codes, rhetorical strategies and ideological underpinnings embedded in memes. In-depth interviews with meme-creators provide insight into motivations and the role of humour in political engagement. Findings indicate that memes operate as symbolic tools for critique and community-building: by filtering complex political ideas into accessible viral vernacular, they contribute to identity formation, discourse circulation and collective mobilization within India's digital ecology. At the same time, meme circulation both reinforces and contests social hierarchies, showing that humour is deeply entwined with social structures, cultural norms and power relations. The study concludes that memes transcend mere jokes, serving as a new communicative mode capable of shaping public opinion and political discourse in India's diverse digital landscape.

*Contents*

1. Introduction 2. Understanding memes 3. Circulation on social media-the meme edition 4. Political humourous memes as political commentaries 5. Identity and memes- the 'other' laughs back: a case study on anti caste memes 6. Censorship and memes 7. Conclusion. Bibliography.