

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDIES

Indian Institute of Science Campus, Bengaluru 560 012, India

(As part of the NIAS-DST Training Programme on “Science for Progress in India: Focus on Sustainability”)

invites you to the

SEVENTEENTH M. N. SRINIVAS MEMORIAL LECTURE (SPONSORED BY SYNDICATE BANK)

to be delivered by

Prof. Ravinder Kaur

Head, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences,
Indian Institute of Technology Delhi

On

“Strangers as Spouses: Sex ratio imbalances and cross-region marriage”

On

Tuesday, January 23, 2018

at 6.00 p.m. (Coffee/Tea : 5.30 p.m.)

at J.R.D. Tata Auditorium, NIAS, IISc Campus, Bengaluru 560 012

Chairperson: Prof. Carol Upadhy, School of Social Sciences, NIAS

Abstract: In this lecture, I will discuss certain cross-region marriage patterns that are largely a result of demographic imbalances (skewed sex ratios) in the northern region of India. As many sociologists, including M.N. Srinivas, have noted, marriage is highly valued in Indian society and most Indians tend to marry within their caste, language, religious and regional communities. So when Indians marry at a large distance and transgress the above norms and these are not self-choice marriages, such a pattern demands an explanation. One such pattern that I discuss in this lecture is of men from Haryana (and a few other northern states) marrying women from West Bengal, Assam, Kerala and other distant states. These unusual marriages raise numerous questions, ranging from the reasons for their occurrence to their organization and the consequences for brides and grooms and implications for their respective societies. A culture of son preference in the north, sharp fertility declines and new sex determination technologies have reduced the number of girls being born, resulting in a “marriage squeeze” against men. Thus in 2011, Haryana had 834 girls to a 1000 boys between the ages of 0-6, Punjab had 846, Rajasthan, 888 and Uttar Pradesh 902. Fewer girls mean fewer marriageable women. This story is about how long-distance, cross-region marriage seeks to plug the shortage in these states. Such marriages entangle individuals and communities in intimate yet fraught relationships, compelling us to reread marriage within concerns of gender, patriarchy and unequal economies and geographies.

About the speaker: Ravinder Kaur is Professor of Sociology and Head, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi. She has previously taught at Delhi University and New York University. She is the recipient of various fellowships and awards and most recently taught at Bielefeld University in Germany. Her current research interests are in the areas of gender, family, marriage, kinship, middle class and technology. She has worked extensively on the issue of skewed sex ratios and their consequences for society. She has published widely on the subject and has co-authored a book “Planning families, Planning Gender” as well as edited two books recently “Marrying in South Asia: Shifting Concepts, Changing Practices in a Globalized World” (with Rajni Palriwala) and “Too Many Men, Too Few Women: Social Consequences of the Gender Imbalance in India and China”. She is currently working on a monograph entitled “Strangers as Spouses: Skewed Sex Ratios and Marriage Migration in India”. In 2011-2012 she received IIT Delhi’s Teaching Excellence Award. She has worked closely with the UNFPA on research and advocacy on gender biased sex selection and has served on the Government of India’s Central Supervisory Board of the PC-PNDT (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act. She was also one of the five members of the Justice Srikrishna Committee on Andhra Pradesh.

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