



WORLD ANTHROPOLOGY CONGRESS

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WORLD ANTHROPOLOGY CONGRESS-2023

BHUBANESWAR, INDIA | 9-14 AUGUST 2023

oIGT - GENERAL THEMATIC DOMAIN

oIGT - 1. INDIGENEITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

SYMPOSIUMS: INDIGENEITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

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ABSTRACT

The nuanced structural invisibility in the social phenomenon is suggestive of it being inclined towards the normatively accepted standards of ‘normality’. The failure to fit into the accepted standards and definition of normality often results in being ‘othered’. Progressive legislation, policies, and guidelines have been enacted both pre-dated and during the Covid-19 pandemic only to delimitate categories between the ‘abled’ and the ‘differently-abled’ based on pathological conditions. Human behaviour and inclusivity, a basic expectation from the social phenomenon, that is the mainstream idea behind such policies is still a dream far from reality only to make it utopian for the differently-abled. The academic gap between the normatively accepted definition of ‘abled’ and those being ‘othered that is the differently-abled existed long before Covid-19 Pandemic, however, post-pandemic, the gap has only exacerbated. The present symposium seeks to examine how the pandemic has induced exacerbation of ‘othering’ of the children, who deviate from the normative standards of ‘normality’ in the social phenomenon. The nuanced accessibility through infrastructural and policy mechanisms presented for the differently-abled during the Covid-19 pandemic will be discussed here. It further examines how socio-economic status of the individuals increases their vulnerability. It would look through the lens of ‘normate’ and ‘grip’ perspectives of a social phenomenon, wherein, neo-liberalization of academia and pandemic has induced exacerbation of the gap between the determined categories that is the ‘abled’ and the ‘differently-abled’. We will further examine how the rights of the differently-abled interrelate with their expectations of human behaviour to be accepted in the normative standards of ‘normality’. The social structure exhibits a form of structural and infrastructural invisibility which is inclined towards certain categories of people who normatively fits into the hegemonic discourse of what is defined as ‘normal’. The ‘structural invisibility’ is about those categories of people who do not fall within the purview of the normative definition of ‘normality’. This socio-cultural apartheid prevalent in the society across the nation is sustained merely by the existence of an environment that lacks basic amenities for the differently-abled.

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Most of the existing infrastructure caters to those who fall within the purview of the ‘abled’ persons. Additionally, the existent enactments concerning the disabled or the differently-abled and their rights, rests on the idea that all human beings are equal. The goal of most of the enactments is to create a pedestal that enables the persons with disability to be able to live life like other members of the society. The legislation and the policies enacted for the differently-abled follow a medical approach rather than a social one thus accentuating the dichotomy of the abled and the differently-abled.

Inclusivity and acceptance continue to remain elusive for most physically and intellectually challenged individuals. The basic expectation from the social phenomenon of incorporation of protective legislation is to mainstream idea of equality and inclusivity. Unfortunately, these enactments remain a utopian dream for the differently-abled. The conventional discourse prevalent in the nation makes it difficult for the differently-abled to be treated on an equitable pedestal when compared to their abled counterparts. This equitability was further undermined and denied to the differently-abled during the Covid-19 pandemic period, thus exacerbating “othering”. “othering” and stigmatization either in normal times or under the influence of a pandemic against a certain category certainly does not promote a healthy and robust democracy.

The symposium will discuss about the normative culture prevalent in the context of ‘othering’ the differently-abled from mainstream society. It will analyse how with the recent emergence of the pandemic, ‘othering’ has only exacerbated making it worse for the differently-abled. This is examined through the analysis of the policies, legislations, and guidelines enacted both before the pandemic and during the pandemic. The symposium follows a doctrinal method of research to make an analysis between the pre-dated and the post-dated pandemic era concerning the ‘othering’ of the differently-abled and also examine if the pandemic has exacerbated the ‘othering’ of the differently-abled.

Keywords: Abled, Academia, Differently-abled, Education, “othering”, Covid-19 Pandemic

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