ABSTRACT

Based on multi-sited fieldwork in India, Britain, USA and Singapore, I examine TripleS, a Jain faith-based organisation’s engagement in eradicating rural poverty in India. I argue that its growth as an organisation, its geographic reach and its heightened moral authority within a span of 42 years can be attributed to the appeal of its reformist Jain approach and focus on education that has attracted high levels of philanthropy from Jains and non-Jains in India and among diasporic Jains. Operating in transnational social fields, the organisation connects to the circulation of economic, social, cultural and symbolic flows resulting from globalisation. At the national level, India’s adoption of a neoliberal project introduces not only market driven forces but also an emphasis on self-enterprising and educated subjects. Ong (2006) has argued that such pro-talent strategies are necessarily selective and target certain populations and places. TripleS’ provision of education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels does not challenge such exceptions generated by the neoliberal logic. However, the organisation’s adoption of a reformist Jain approach, emphasizing compassion, sanskara and selfless service without regard to caste, creed, religion, and more recently gender, perhaps softens the impact of the neoliberal logic. This widening of access to value-based education and opportunity for the rural poor in India makes possible the mainstreaming of aspirations among both donors and receivers.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Bindi Shah is Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Southampton, UK and Visiting Senior Research Fellow in the Religion and Globalisation Cluster at the Asia Research Institute of the National University of Singapore. Her research has addressed the ways in which ethnicity, religion and gender construct identity, belonging and citizenship among the children of Asian immigrants in the UK and USA. Her first book ‘Laotian Daughters: Working toward Community, Belonging and Environmental Justice’, which has received two prizes, focuses on experiences of adaptation and acculturation among second-generation Laotian young women, and their engagement with community politics and Asian American activism. She has begun work on a new book on the role and significance of Jainism and Jain organisations in the lives of second-generation Jains in the UK and USA, titled Religion, Identity & Belonging in the Diaspora: Young Jains in Britain and USA’. While at ARI, she has been working on a new pilot project addressing the impact of diasporic and Indian Jain philanthropy and social remittances flowing through a Jain NGO in Gujarat, India.

DATE
Thursday, 17 September 2015
TIME
3.00pm to 4.30pm
VENUE
Sociology Seminar Room, AS1 #02-12, Kent Ridge Campus, NUS
CHAIRPERSON
Dr Indira Arumugam