

50TH ALL INDIA SOCIOLOGY CONFERENCE, 2025

THEME: MOBILITIES AND INEQUALITIES: SHIFTING CONTEXTS AND CHANGING PARADIGMS

PLENARY 3

SOCIOLOGY OF THE REGION

The Government Job and Social Mobility in India

This talk traces the idea of the government job within the history of social mobility and political imagination in modern India and explores the enduring impacts of India's unique experiments in the redistribution of government employment opportunities from experiments in the princely states (e.g. the Mulki/non-Mulki debates in Hyderabad State) to the establishment of targeted opportunities for historically marginalized groups in India & 1950 Constitution, further expanded in the 1990s and 2019. These experiments have sought to redistribute job opportunities, create a new middle class, and offer employment opportunities as a form of social welfare. Using ethnographic research with current and retired government employees in two employees' colonies in the south Indian city of Hyderabad, along with archival records of debates in the 1970s, the talk traces the impacts on social mobility of government employment at all levels—from Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers and engineers in state-funded heavy industry to low-level government clerks, bus conductors, and primary school teachers.



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Chair

SPEAKERS



PROFESSOR PURENDRA PRASAD
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State, Capital, and the Making of Region: Caste–Class Dynamics in Andhra Pradesh

Defining the region not as a fixed territorial entity but as a historically contingent and continuously becoming space shaped through political-economic processes, this paper critically interrogates the post-bifurcation reconstitution of Andhra Pradesh, South India. The project of building the new capital city of Amaravati has become the ideological and material site through which the state reimagines development and regional futures across North Andhra, South Coastal Andhra, and Rayalaseema. This reimagination, however, is embedded within the broader dynamics of capitalist accumulation, neoliberal restructuring, and state-mediated class reconfiguration. The paper identifies three interlinked processes driving this transformation: first, the large-scale pooling and acquisition of agricultural land, signifying the commodification of land and displacement of agrarian classes; second, the accelerated privatisation of key public assets—sea ports, airports, the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, power and health sectors—marking a deepening penetration of capital into erstwhile public domains; and third, the state's techno-futurist developmentalism, manifested in projects such as the proposed Quantum Valley, Green Hydrogen Valley, tech parks, data clusters, and global capability centres. Through these processes, the paper interrogates how the provincial state functions as both facilitator and subject of capital, mediating between national and regional interests while reproducing new forms of uneven development and class domination. It examines how capital and labour flows are reorganised within the regional political economy, and how these dynamics reconstitute caste–class relations, agrarian livelihoods, and political contestations.

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Amaravati and Andhra's Regional Modernity

The ambitious plan to build a brand-new city to serve as the state capital of Andhra Pradesh reflects not only the 'urban turn' in India, which equates development with urbanization, but also points to a refurbished 'regional modernity'. The post-bifurcation identity of the state encompasses the older identity of the Andhra region, based on language, geography and culture, while expanding it spatially—drawing on transnational connections and exchanges—and temporally—by crafting a new imagination of the future. After outlining the vision of development projected in the Amaravati master plan, the presentation will elaborate on several frictions between the anticipated urban future and the agrarian locale in which the city is to be built, framed as a landscape of value struggles. I will explore how the technocratic urban design of the project has been confronted and confounded by the materialities of the rural landscape, deeply embedded agrarian identities and social values attached to land, and the eruption of an unruly real estate market—a denouement that calling into question Amaravati's promise of a new regional modernity.



CAROL UPADHYA
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Indo-Islamic Culture and Syncretic Identities: A Unique Example from Andhra

The Indo-Islamic culture of the Andhra region is traced by historians to the impact of the Deccan Sultanates. The integration of Persian, Telugu and North Indian cultural elements is evident in the region's architecture, literature and arts, especially music. Equally, the powerful presence of Sufism in the Deccan enabled a diversity of social practices and a flexibility of religious identities. What was the role and response of canonical Hindu institutions to this process?

Syncretic processes in identity-making are multi-faceted, and dynamic. They include both cooperation and conflict, and practical and material considerations and power play. They traverse a range— from simple every-day adaptations, to more serious linguistic, philosophical and religious intermingling.

This paper discusses the unique example of contemporary Telugu Muslim Carnatic musicians. It highlights the reciprocal and cooperative role of the major temples and institutions of Carnatic music in engaging with Islamic rule and faith. The Dudekula nagaswaram musicians of Andhra are formally affiliated to Islam, but worship Hindu deities and follow many Telugu Hindu customs at home. They are hereditary players of nagaswaram, integral to classical Carnatic music, attached to the region's major temples as part of traditional liturgy. Their ethnography reveals an acceptance of flexible and oscillating religious identities in the past, in contrast to current preoccupations with firmly demarcated identities.



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