



Colloquium: Silenced and Marginalised: Voices from an ordinary sarkari school of Delhi

Speaker:
Farah Farooqi

Date / Time:
September 5, 2013 - 4:00pm - 5:30pm

Venue:
10th Floor, Pixel A, APU

Abstract:

I am the Manager of a government-aided school, situated in the walled city of Delhi, for more than four years now. This has provided me with a unique opportunity to study in some depth the socio-cultural, political and economic factors underlying school and classroom practices. Since in many other government and aided schools in the area, the children enrolled are from a more or less similar socio-economic background, the issues raised in this presentation can be extended to cover many schools and thousands of children in urban pockets of similar kinds. A thick description about the living and working conditions of these children is necessary for understanding processes of silent exclusion of the kids in school. It is important to look at the interplay between factory, residence, school, the vicissitudes of the market, the nature of the family and the support system in order to gauge the social reality of these children. Through glimpses of school and classroom engagements, I try to elaborate how inadequate these are in raising the consciousness of these children towards their multiple identities and their status vis-a-vis larger society. It goes without saying that discrimination and its perception exclude people and children from better living and working conditions and lead to their marginalisation.

A Note on the Speaker:

Having completed my Master's in Chemistry from Aligarh Muslim University, I did a B.Ed., as per my father's wishes ("obediently"!) to secure entry into a "safe" world of work. I later went on to do M.Ed. without much clarity about why I was doing it. Since I diligently followed the system without much questioning, I was able to earn a gold medal in the University (as I had done in my M.Sc.), got selected for scholarships in B. Ed. and M. Ed., cracked the NET, the JRF exam and somehow managed to do "routine work" for my Ph.D. in Education from Jamia Millia Islamia. This, however, secured for me a position in the Elementary Education Department of the prestigious Lady Shri Ram College where I got the opportunity to co-nurture the nascent Elementary Education Department. During this journey of eight years, which began in 1998, I found myself immersed in a culture which encouraged thinking and questioning.

In this period, many of my personal experiences also compelled me to reflect on structures of society that influenced my identity as a Muslim woman (this included my marginalization in the family and the larger biradari, paradoxically, a marginalization resulting from the perceived “high caste and class status” of the family). Thus began an exploratory journey into the world of Sociology though, I am afraid, it remains as only a speck in the ocean. Joining Jamia Millia Islamia in 2006 and later Shafiq Memorial School as Manager can be best described in the words of the poet Iqbal:

Khuda tujhe toofaan se aashna kar dey, Ke teri bahar ki maujon mein izteraab nahin!

My experiences with Shafiq Memorial School have enriched me both as a person and as a student of Education. The worker children of the school have taught me to struggle and strive, never to give up hope. I can never pay back what I have received from the school. My diary which covers different aspects of life at the School is being published by Shiksha Vimarsha and seven articles have appeared till date.

Apart from it I have had opportunity of contributing, both as author and chief advisor to School EVS textbooks developed by the NCERT after NCF-2005. I have also contributed to books prepared by NCERT for teachers and teacher trainees.