



Talk: Caste and Higher Education

Speaker:

Anoop Kumar, Founder Member, Insight Foundation

Date / Time:

April 19, 2012 - 2:00pm

Venue:

Room 307, Third Floor, Pixel B, APU

Abstract:

Despite much publicised claims to the contrary, India remains a largely poor and rural country, and this means that the vast majority of young Indians never reach college. According to the official statistics, India's Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) for higher education is currently about 12.4%, which implies that the hypothetical 'average Indian' has a roughly 12% chance of enrolling in college or university.

These are not good prospects by any standard, but the odds change dramatically if we drop the fiction of the 'average' Indian and take into account the caste and tribe distinctions that divide our society. The 'average Dalit or Adivasi youth' – also a hypothetical category, but far more real than just the 'average Indian' – faces a GER of about 6.3% compared to 8.5% for OBCs and 16.6% for the upper castes, also known by the misleading term 'Others'.

The Dalit and Adivasi students who make it to higher education struggle against immense odds, and they succeed through self-belief, determined struggle and above all with very hard work to make up for their many disadvantages. But they discover – and this is the subject of this talk – that their toughest battles have to be fought *inside higher education*, the very place they have struggled so hard to reach, the place of hope and promise.

A Note on the Speaker:

Anoop Kumar is the founder member of a Dalit and Adivasi students' group 'Insight Foundation' that is working with students from more than 50 Universities across the country, trying to create various support systems for the students. Starting with a students' magazine in 2004 from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, the group now runs a number of programmes like a national telephone helpline, mentorship, building national network of students, faculty and scholars, apart from fighting cases of caste discrimination in higher education. Anoop Kumar is the National Co-ordinator of Insight Foundation and is based in New Delhi.