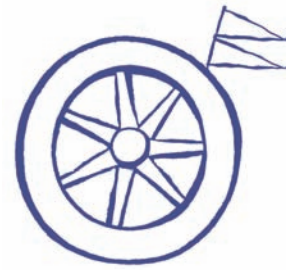




**LUND**  
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SASNET

# SASNET Seminar

- in collaboration with the  
Dept. of Economic History, Lund University

## Prof. Ravinder Kaur

Dept of Humanities and Social Sciences  
Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi

holds a lecture about:

## Strangers as Spouses: Marriage Implications of India's Scewed Sex Ratio

In her presentation, Professor Ravinder Kaur focuses on the continuing gender imbalance and the recent steep declines in the child sex ratio in India. The results are based on extensive fieldwork consisting of interviews with cross-region couples in the state of Haryana with additional evidence from Uttar Pradesh. Some fieldwork-based evidence has also been obtained from the bride-sending states of West Bengal and Kerala. An interesting finding and a hopeful sign is the positive sex ratio of the offspring of such marriages.

**Wednesday 11 March 2009, 14.15–16.00**

**Venue: Conference room, Dept. of Economic History,  
Scheelevägen 15 B, 1st floor, Lund**

All are welcome!

## **Strangers as Spouses: Marriage Implications of India's Skewed sex Ratio**

**Ravinder Kaur**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology**

The continuing gender imbalance and the recent steep declines in the child sex ratio raise questions about current development models, which emphasize economic growth but have had little effect on gender inequalities. Improvements such as higher literacy, lowered fertility and greater workforce participation of women do not seem to be translating into a higher value for girl children. Indeed, it is the more prosperous North and North-Western states in the country that continue to show dismal and declining child sex ratios.

One significant social consequence of the prevailing skewed sex ratios in some regions is a shortage of marriageable women. My research shows that there is a new turn to resolving bridal shortages, i.e., the 'import' of brides from poorer regions of India. In the Northern state of Haryana, which has one of the lowest female to male sex ratios, substantial numbers of men have acquired poor women as brides from Southern and Eastern regions of India. Given the regionally diverse culture of India, the couples uniting in such marriages are *real* strangers – with different languages, food habits, kinship, and marriage norms. In these arranged marriages the couples and especially the women face formidable challenges of adjustment and acceptance in the host society. They further raise concerns about the treatment and autonomy of women who end up far away from home with non-existent support structures. Yet, as the research points out, women often independently make the choice to migrate in full awareness of the difficulties they will face. The kinds of marital bargains they are able to negotiate vary depending on their educational and work status or their family and personal characteristics. On the flip side, men in the female-deficit areas who are left out of the local marriage market and are then forced to seek 'strangers' as brides, are seen as rejecting the involuntary bachelorhood thrust upon them by the structural conditions of adverse sex ratios. My work explores how seeking one's own spouse is impacting intra and intergenerational family equations and contracts.

This presentation is based on extensive fieldwork consisting of interviews with cross-region couples in the state of Haryana with additional evidence from Uttar Pradesh. Some fieldwork-based evidence has been obtained from the bride-sending states of West Bengal and Kerala. An interesting finding and a hopeful sign is the positive sex ratio of the offspring of such marriages.

## *Resume*

**Name:** Prof. (Ms.) Ravinder Kaur

**Date of Birth:** March 24, 1958

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Residence: S 160, Panchshila Park, New Delhi, 110017

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### Education

Ph.D., Delhi University, Department of Sociology, Delhi School of Economics, 1985  
Thesis topic: *The Theory of Praxis in the Study of Material Culture: A Case Study in the Punjab*. Supervisor: Prof. Andre Béteille

M. Phil., Delhi University, Department of Sociology, Delhi School of Economics, 1980  
Grade A.

M.A. Delhi University, Department of Sociology, Delhi School of Economics, 1979; First  
Class, First rank in University

B.A. (Hons.) Delhi University, Department of Sociology, Miranda House, 1977; First Class,  
First rank in University

Languages: English, Hindi, Punjabi

### Scholastic Awards

Awarded South Asia Regional Fellowship by Social Science Research Council, New York  
(June-Nov. 2004)

Delhi University, Junior Research Fellowship - Centre for the Advanced Study of Sociology,  
1979-1983.

National Scholarship, 1977-79.

Kunda Datar Gold Medal, 1st Position, M.A., 1979, Delhi University.

R.D. Sanyal Memorial Prize, 1st Position, M.A., 1979, Delhi University.

University Gold Medal, 1st Position, B.A. (Hons.) 1977, Delhi University.

### Research Interests

Sociology of Development, Gender, Environment, Affirmative Action  
Social and Cultural Anthropology, Sociology of Religion  
Sociology of South and South-West Asia

Research has been on issues of ethnicity, identity, community, environment, gender, sex ratio, marriage and migration, affirmative action and poverty, especially urban poverty.

### Teaching and Research

Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, Professor, August 2008 – present, Associate Professor, 2005- August 2008, Assistant Professor, June 1996 – 2005, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Delhi

New York University, Sept. 1994 - Dec.1995  
Assistant Professor, Teaching Focus: Modern South Asian Civilization

Delhi University, 1986-1990  
Research Associate, Department of Sociology, Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi

Courses Developed: Charismatic Religious Leaders  
Sociology of Religion in India  
Sociology of South-West Asia  
Environment, Development and Society

New courses prepared: “Gender and Society” and “Society, Culture and Meaning” and “Imagining the Urban” to be taught at undergraduate and graduate levels in IIT Delhi

### Professional Positions

Member, Board of Trustees, Seva Mandir, Udaipur (2008-)

*Governing Body Member:* National Institute of Panjab Studies, New Delhi (March 2008 - )

*Editorial Board Member:* Current Sociology, Journal of International Sociology Association (2007- 2010)

*Member:* Joint Advisory Committee of National Research Council Thailand and Indian Council of Social Science Research (2007 onwards)

*Treasurer:* Indian Sociological Society (2008-2010)

*Elected Member:* Managing Committee of the Indian Sociological Society (Dec. 2003 - 2009)

*Member:* Steering Committee, South Asia Sociological Association (2005 -)

*Convener:* Research Committee 03 Economy, Polity and Society of the Indian Sociological Society (2002-2006): Website: [www.geocities.com/rc03\\_web](http://www.geocities.com/rc03_web); e-group: rc03\_yahogroups.com

### Membership of Professional Bodies

Life Member, Indian Sociological Society

Member, North-West India Sociological Association

### Conferences Convened

1. **“Marriage in Globalizing Contexts: Exploring Continuity and Change in South Asia”** ( IIT Delhi, Sept. 25-27, 2008) (with Rajni Palriwala and Shalini Grover)
2. **Convener for South Asia Conference of Sociologists** organized on the theme “Prospects for Collaborative Research in South Asia” (December 23-24, 2005) Surajkund Haryana
3. **Convener for South Asia Conference of Sociologists** organized on the theme “The State of Sociology: Issues of Relevance and Rigour” (February 23-25, 2005) Surajkund, Haryana

### Recent Projects/Consultation

#### February- March 2007

Adviser on Study of Labour and Trafficking Issues in Cross-Region Marriages between Haryana and Assam. Centre for Education and Communication, New Delhi

#### May 2003-December 2008

Adviser on Study of Adverse Sex Ratio in selected districts of five states  
Funding Agency: Action Aid India, IDRC

Co-authored reports on Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan (2006)  
Punjab and Haryana (2007)

Co-authored final report: Planning families, planning gender: The adverse child sex ratio in selected districts of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab (2008)

March-May, 2002

Preparation of a “Social Framework for Technical Education” for World Bank and Government of India Project on Technical Education Quality Improvement

### Publications

#### ***Book under preparation***

“Strangers as Spouses: Skewed Sex Ratios and Marriage Migration”. Contract with Taylor and Francis Books India, Private Limited  
Part of series entitled *Critical Asian Studies*, General Editor: Veena Das

#### ***Report published***

*July 2008*

Planning families, planning gender: The adverse child sex ratio in selected districts of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab by Ravinder Kaur, Mary John, Rajni Palriwala, Saraswati Raju and Alpana Sagar (2008) ActionAid and IDRC, Books for Change, Bangalore, India

#### ***Journal volume edited***

Guest Editors: N. Jayaram, Ravinder Kaur, Partha N. Mukherji, No. 3, Sept.-Dec. 2005  
The State of Sociology: Issues of Relevance and Rigour, *Sociological Bulletin*, Special Issue on South Asia

#### ***Recent Articles in Journals and Book Volumes***

“Dispensable Daughters and Bachelor Sons: Sex Discrimination in the North India” in *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. 43 No. 30 July 26 - August 01, 2008

“Ethik und Wertvorstellungen” Forthcoming in ‘*Globalisation face to face: One hundred entries from anthropology for practitioners and professionals*’ eds. Andre Gingrich, Eva-Maria Knoll, Fernand Kreff, 2009, Suhrkamp, Gemany

“Missing women and brides from faraway: Social Consequences of the Sex Ratio in India” Austrian Academy of Sciences Working Papers in Social Anthropology ISSN: 1998-507X Wien 2008, Online edition 28/05/2008, [oeaw.ac.at/socant/index](http://oeaw.ac.at/socant/index)

- “‘Participation’ and ‘empowerment’ in the development discourse: rethinking key concepts”, with Vinod Jairath, forthcoming in Hettige, Siri (ed) *Governance and Development in South*, Sage Publications, 2009
- “Murder most foul” in *Biblio: A Review of Books*, Vol. XII Nos. 5&6, May-June 2007, pp 9-10.
- “Declining Juvenile Sex Ratios: Economy, Society and Technology, Explanations from Field Evidence” *Margin – The Journal of Applied Economic Research* 1:2(2007) 231-245, Sage Publications, Los Angeles/London/New Delhi/Singapore
- “Migrating for work; rewriting gender relations” in *Gender, Poverty and Migration*, Anupama Roy and Sadhana Arya (eds), Sage Publications, 2006
- “Locating the Humanities and the Social Sciences in Institutes of Technology” in *Sociological Bulletin* (Journal of the Indian Sociological Society), Volume 54, No. 3, Sept.- December 2005 pp412-427
- “Empowerment and the City: The case of female migrants in domestic work”. *Harvard Asia Quarterly*, Summer 2004, Volume VIII, No. 2, pp 15-25
- “Across Region Marriages: Poverty, Female Migration and the Sex Ratio” in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 39, No.25, pp2595-2630, June 19-25, 2004
- “Development Sociology and the Poverty Question”, in, *The Practice of Sociology*, M. Chaudhri(ed), Orient Longman, 2003
- “The Eclipse or the Renaissance of ‘Community’? The Career of the Concept”, in *Community and Identities: Contemporary Discourses on Culture and Politics in India*, S.S. Jodhka (ed), Sage Publications, 2001, pp80-94
- “Aspects of Poverty in a Metropolis: A Case Study of an Affluent Slum”, in *Sustainable Human Settlements: The Asian Experience*, Sandhu, R.S., Minhas, S.S. and Sandhu, Jasmeet (ed), Rawat Publications, 2001, pp209-223
- “Poverty in India: Towards New Policies” Ravinder Kaur and Surjit Bhalla, in *Economic Reforms for the Poor*, ed. S. Gangopadhyay and W. Wadhwa, Konark Publishers, New Delhi, 2000, pp78-102.
- “Sikh Identity: Issues and Developments”, in, *Indian Social Science Review*, Vol. 2, No.1, Jan-June, 2000, pp193-202
- “Engineers and the Environment: Environment and Ecology at IIT, Delhi”, in *Integrating Humanistic Values and Social Concerns with Technical Education*, ed. Sabiruddin, D.K. Nauriyal and Asha Kapoor, University of Roorkee, Roorkee, 2000, pp137-143.
- “Looking at the Urban Poor”, in Workshop on From Illegal People to Illegal Settlements: Does the New Millenium Spell Hope for the Poor? National Institute of Urban Affairs at

India Habitat Centre, Feb, 2000. Presentation published in *Habitat Concerns*, No.3, Feb. 2000

“The Better Half” (with Amrit Srinivasan), *Seminar*, Issue No. 476, April 1999, pp26-32

"Women in Forestry in India", *PRE Working Paper #714, World Bank*, July, 1991, 78 pages

"Jat Sikhs: A question of identity" in, *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, Vol. 20, No. 2, July-Dec., 1986, pp 221-240

“Jat Sikhs: A Question of Identity” Reprinted in “*Communal Identity in India: its Construction and Articulation in the Twentieth Century*” ed. B. Chakrabarty, Oxford University Press, 2003, New Delhi (reprinted from *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, Vol. 20, No. 2, July-Dec., 1986, pp221-240)

"Religion, Politics and Society in Contemporary Iran - A Bibliographical Essay" Mimeo, *Indian Council for Social Science Research*, 1979

#### Recent Invited Talks

“Declining Child Sex Ratios in India” Presented at DFID, India on November 7, 2008

“Social Consequences of Masculine Sex Ratios” Presented at the 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Indian Association for the Study of Population” October 17-19, 2008, ISEC, Bangalore

“Addressing the Adverse Child Sex Ratio in India: Findings of an ActionAid/IDRC study Presented to the All Party Group on Population, Development and Reproductive Health

**House of Commons, U.K., 23 June, 2008**

“Unfolding consequences of daughter deficit: Evidence from Haryana and U.P”. Presented at ISS (Hague) /IIPS (Mumbai) Workshop, Mumbai 21-22 January 2008

“Declining female sex ratios in five states of India: findings from a recent ethnographic study” **Presented to the 51<sup>st</sup> Commission on the Status of Women, United Nations, New York, 1-2 March, 2007**

“Social Consequences of Demographic Imbalance: Missing Girls and Women in India”, Institute of Social Sciences, Delhi, Lecture to MA students of Program in South Asia, Lund University, Sweden, 27 August, 2007

“Gender Norms in the Punjabi Community, Institute of Social Sciences”, Delhi, Lecture to MA students of Program in South Asia, Lund University, 12 Sept., 2006

Speaker in Panel on Reservations in Higher Education, Organised by the Delhi Sociological Society, India Habitat Centre August 8, 2006



“Gender and Development” Invited Lecture at Seva Mandir, Udaipur, 22 April, 2005

“Marriage and the Declining Sex Ratio” Refresher course lecture in the Women’s Studies Development Centre, South Campus, University of Delhi on January 11, 2005

### Recent Book Reviews

“Shaking off the Cross of Honour” Review of “In the Name of Honour: A Memoir” by Mukhtar Mai with Marie-Therese Cuny, in Indian Express, 3 December 2006

“The Changing Status of Women in West Bengal, 1970-2000: The Challenge Ahead” (2005) Editor: Jasodhara Bagchi, Sage Publications, New Delhi in The Book Review

“Making Sikh Women Visible” Review of “Relocating Gender in Sikh History: Transformation, Meaning and Identity” Doris R. Jakobsh, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2003, in Economic and Political Weekly, 22 May 2004

Religious Conversion in India (eds.) R. Robinson and Sathianathan Clarke in Sociological Bulletin, Vol. 53, No. 2, May-August 2004

“Belabouring the poor” Review of “The Labouring Poor” by Jan Breman, in “The Book Review, July 2003

The Politics of the Urban Poor in Early Twentieth-Century India, Nandini Gooptu, Cambridge University Press, 2002, in The Book Review, Vol XXVI, No.1, Jan.2002

Methodology in Social Science Research: Dilemmas and Perspectives. Essays in Honour of Ramakrishna Mukherjee, Ed., Partha Mukherji, in Seminar, Vol 501, May 2001.

### Media Contributions

Occasional contributor on sociological issues to national newspapers: e.g. *Times of India*, *Indian Express*, *Business Standard*, *The Economic Times* etc.