

The Lecture Contains:

- ☰ Prejudice in socio-cultural context
- ☰ Development of religious identity among the children: A study at Daryganj, Delhi
- ☰ Methodology for the study
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Prejudice in socio-cultural context

- Social psychologists and social scientists have made attempts to understand the reasons of prejudice and we have observed in the previous lectures on inter-group relations that there are several theories to explain prejudice. However, in the recent past, researchers have used new paradigm of inquiry to understand the process of prejudice that takes into account the context of development of prejudice from the perspective of the individuals living in a socio-cultural setting. Such a paradigm requires that rather than fitting data into the theory-based hypotheses, a bottom-up approach is taken up to understand the worldview of the people first and then generate the meanings they associate with prejudice and its origin. Let us take up one such study conducted by Latika Gupta (2008) who tried to explore how the religious identities develop among Hindu and Muslim children living in a part of Delhi.

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Development of religious identity among the children: A study at Daryaganj, Delhi

- Latika Gupta (2008), in order to initiate her study of the development of religious identity among Hindu and Muslim children living in Daryaganj, a multi-ethnic locality of Delhi, taught at a tuition centre where these children got help in doing their school-related homework. This helped her build a relationship based on trust with the children. She recounts,

“To familiarize myself with the children and interact with them for the study, I taught in a tuition centre for four months where children of both religious groups came. The familiarity with the children grew in less than a month. . . . I developed my familiarity with children by playing with them after their tuition class or walking with them to their homes. These interactions led to a comfort zone between them and me.” (pp. 36-37)

Methodology for the study

- Latika Gupta (2008), who adopted an ethnographic approach to conduct her study among the children at Delhi, utilized a collection of pictures, material and symbols found in the places of worship of Hindus and Muslims. Children of both the religions were shown these material to initiate in interaction on their views about their own and the other religion. Furthermore, they were also shown some material or objects commonly used in the religious practices or rituals of both the religions. For example, 'kalava' (red thread used for various religious purposes) incense, 'diya' (small earthen pot commonly lit up during the prayers) and sweet offerings.
- The narratives of children revealed after analysis how children's prejudice about other religion were socially learnt and were shaped by stereotypes. Let us try to understand this with the help of two examples extracted from the Latika Gupta's article.

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Excerpts from interview with Hindu Child 1 (HC1)

A Ye masjid hai (This is a mosque).

Q Aapne kaise pehchaanee? (How did you recognise it?)

A Mere school ke paas masjid hai (There is a mosque close to my school).

Q To aap andar jaoge? (So, will you go inside the mosque?)

A Ham andar nahin jaa sakte kyonki ham Hindu hain. Vo baahar nikaal denge (We cannot go inside, we are Hindus. They will shoo us out).

Q Aap kabhee gae ho? (Have you ever been inside?)

A Nahin kabhee nahin gae (No, never).

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Excerpts from interview with Hindu Child 1 (continued...)

Q Man karta hai? (Do you feel like?)

A Man nahin karta hai (No, I do not feel like).

Q Kyon? (Why?)

A Saare Musalmaan hote hain. Badboo-badboo hotee hai. Vo namaz padhte hain to hamara kaam sahee se nahin hota (All Muslims are there. There is lot of foul smell. When they offer their prayer our things cannot be done properly).

Q Matlab? (What does it mean?)

A Jaise vo paper ke samay namaz padhein to paper bigad jata hai (For example, if they offer prayer during my exam, my performance becomes bad).

Q Aapko kaise pata? (How do you know that?)

A Hamein pata tha (I knew it).

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Recategorization: common in-group identity model

Q Mandir mein andar sab kya karte hain? (What do people do inside a temple?)

A Mandir mein sab prasad dete hain. Ghantee bajate hain. Haath jod ke jo mangna ho vo mangte hain. (People distribute sweet offerings. They ring bells. They fold their hands and ask for their wishes).

Q Kisse maangte hain? (Whom do they ask?)

A Bhagwan se (God. The child used Hindu word for god).

Q Bhagwan kaun hota hai? (Who is bhagwan?)

A Jaise hamaare allah hote hain unke bhagwan hote hain (The way we have our allah they have their bhagwan).

Q Aapko kaise pata (How do you know?)

A Mujhe pata hai. Maine dekha hai mandir mein. Picture ki kahanee main dekha thaa. Daadee batatee hai. (I know it. I have seen it in the temple. I also saw in a movie story. My grandmother tells me).

Prejudice in its socio-cultural context

- From the narratives of two children quoted above, it becomes clearer that stereotypes and prejudices may be prevalent from a young age as children are socialized within the discourses about inter-group relationships right since their childhood. Children did mention how storybooks and stories from elders shaped their understanding of the other religion.
- It is interesting to note the role of stereotypes in shaping prejudice. Religious places of the other religion may not be visited by the child but they did carry negative attitudes about the other religion and their places of prayers.
- Narratives of children also depict the ultimate attribution error in terms of having a feeling of 'us' and them with negative evaluations and strong negative feelings towards the people and places associated with the other religion.

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