

Abstracts for the Plenary Sessions

Plenary Session: 1

Partition Experiences in South Asia: Memory, Literature, Media

The partition of British India and the politics of border making was a violent chapter in the history of this region that killed thousands of people and displaced millions from their homes and hearths in the name of religion. Partition reshaped the cartography of South Asia: turned millions into minorities and more into refugees. The bitter memories of partition were invoked every time there was a communal riot or a pogrom in South Asia and shaped the national imaginations in this part of the world in more than one ways. The politics of remembering partition differed in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. If in the dominant nationalist narrative in India, partition stood for bitter separation, in Pakistan it was the moment of creation of the country. For Bangladesh, the Language Movement and the Liberation War had further complicated the picture. This panel addresses these issues. It also explores the way partition was reflected in the contemporary media and literature. How does the present day media tackle the complexities that arose from partition is also a subject of enquiry here.

Plenary Session 2

Development, Conflict & Displacement

The developing countries in the world have witnessed massive displacement of people in the name of development in recent years. The economically poor, the tribal population, the lower castes and the women have been the worst sufferers of the development induced displacement. But to consider them as hapless victims is to de-recognise their ways of negotiations with this mode of development – their ways of resisting it. This panel brings together the human rights activists and civil society activists who have, for long, campaigned for a more inclusive model of development in South Asia, participated in the peoples' movements and championed their rights. In this face to face session, the participants will share their experiences of being a part of such movements, their anxieties and hopes about the future of such movements and the lessons learnt from these struggles.

Plenary Session 3

Gender, Conflict and Displacement: The Case of India's North East and Nepal

The northeastern part of India comprising the seven states and Sikkim, which is still euphemistically called the *seven sisters*, has been a cauldron of unrest from the time of Indian independence. Critically located and sharing a border with Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, Bhutan and China, this region portrays that processes of democratic state formation may not lead to social justice automatically. This is the theatre of the longest state vs. community conflict in South Asia and hence a region of rampant displacements. The region has witnessed an escalation of violence to an unprecedented scale in the decades between 1990 and 2010. With increasing state sponsored violence there was also a tremendous increase in sub-national militancy. The Northeast presents a situation of virtual civil strife and rapid demographic changes with concomitant increase in violence against the vulnerable sections, and large scale displacement of population, of whom a large number are women. This plenary discussion will address the issues of increasing conflict and displacement in Northeast and the role played by women's groups to arrest such violence and control forced migration.

Nepal too has witnessed a period of intense conflict that has had notable gender dimensions. Women were the worst victims of the armed struggle and their voices were least heard during the peace negotiation process. This plenary will address the issues of gender, conflict and displacement in the context of Nepal also.