

DESCRIPTION FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC

The knowledge about India and its multifaceted diversity is extremely narrow in Poland, just as it is in other so-called “Western” countries. Essentialist and orientalist views on India repeatedly present in public discourse, and unfortunately often in scientific works as well are the proof of that. If India appears in the media, usually it is in the context of sexual harassment, poverty and limited education. Those representations of Orient are followed by images of inhabitants as people in some way worse and savage.

What characterizes India is the landscape full of diversity. The subject I have chosen, that is the strategies of creating identity by Konkani people in multicultural Indian city, is an example of how complicated in socio-cultural terms is India in Kerala state. The main objective of the project is understanding phenomenon of Konkani identity, and their strategies of creating and sustaining identity by castes coming from Konkani Region in Goa, and who nowadays are living in Kerala. Currently they live in the multilingual and multicultural neighbourhood in Kochi, with at least thirty different groups diverse by their place of origin, mother tongue, customs and their history, and moreover diverse in terms of religion or caste.

The example of Konkani shows how deeply complicated is the issue of identity in Indian urban spaces. Quality research and analysis of this phenomenon will help to understand this problem, and the anthropological theory which will be created on the basis of the research, could be a valuable inspiration for the research works which will be taking place in similar cities. In this context, the project is supposed to contribute to the understanding of India and its diversity not only to Poles, but also on wider, international forum. I want to express my faith that the project and its effects will help to minimize false and orientalist stereotypes about India, which were born in colonial period, and for which Indians suffer till today. The proposed study will fill the gap in Polish and international literature of the subject, pertaining to the knowledge about the Konkani group in Kochi – there has not been any thorough ethnographic research of the community carried out yet. It ensures the originality of the project's results and positions the project as fulfilling the criteria of the basic research. In a wider spectrum the research aims to answer the question in what way the social groups are drawing their boundaries, how are they differentiating themselves, and what strategies they introduce into their lives to sustain their identity. The planned research will present the model of analysing the multidimensional reality, where different constructs influence the multi-layered identity. While working on collected materials, I am going to characterize and inquire into the subject of intentionality in creating the belonging to particular group in the globalised world, where identity became something fluid and possible to be reformulated, and make an attempt to understand what does it mean for the social actors.