

The proposed project intersects two very much understudied areas: romantic love and social class. The goal of this project is to explain how and why people predominantly form relationships within their own social class (homogamy), and under what circumstances they decide to form a relationship with someone who belongs to different class (heterogamy). The following questions will be answered during the research:

1. What are social, political, cultural and economic mechanisms that guide these processes?
2. What does it tell us about the “nature” of love and social class?
3. How social classes are being made?
4. What is the relation between social class, caste, gender, ethnicity, race, etc.?
5. Finally, how people use love to reproduce, downgrade or upgrade their social status?

The study is located among members of middle classes in Delhi and Mumbai, where it is believed that romantic love is gaining significance. Delhi and Mumbai are undoubtedly fast – developing metropolises which provide diversified cultural context for the study. What is important, the crucial context for the proposed study is concerned with both arranged and love marriages, as well as with informal intimate relationships. India, again, provides an interesting context to research on these – various - phenomenon.

The research will be carried with techniques of participant observation (including informal interviews) and discourse analysis. This approach allows to gather data for analysis of both people’s everyday behavior and their narratives about love. The extended case method and multi-sited ethnography enable the research to be compared and extrapolated to socio-cultural contexts other than Indian, as well as to include analysis of wider social, political and economic forces influencing romantic love and social class.

There is a need to fill the gap in our knowledge on the “nature” of love and social class (with relation to caste, gender, etc.), as well as to explain factors that impact people’s bonding and forming the class alliances. It is equally important to try to explain these processes in India, instead of assuming that they are mere reflection of Western cultural phenomenon. What is more, the project has a potential of helping to combat social inequalities by adding to the scholarship on social class.

The results of the project will be disseminated to academic and non-academic audience (project’s website, media appearances, seminars). Additionally, the book proposal for submission in international publishing house will be prepared. The results will be also presented at 6 international conferences and in 6 peer-reviewed articles.