

Bureau of Police Research & Development
(Research & Correctional Administration Division)

Interactive Session with Professor Boike Rehbein, Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany, held on 3rd January, 2018, from 11:00 AM to 12:30 PM at the BPR&D HQs, New Delhi.

The BPR&D had organised an Interactive Session with Professor Boike Rehbein, Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany, held on 3rd January, 2018, from 11:00 AM to 12:30 PM at the BPR&D HQs, New Delhi. The session was attended by delegates from various CPOs/CAPFs, Universities, Institutes and Think Tanks.

Professor Boike Rehbein explained how exclusion is rooted in social structure. In India, all contemporary inequalities is shaped by earlier structures, by earlier hierarchies and by earlier socio-cultural sub-sets. In India, traditional social structures of kinship, jajmani, jati, varna and religion have played a significant role even in the formation of contemporary social structures. Although India has a capitalist society, but the social structures are still partially shaped by these traditional structures like jati, jajmani, kinship and religion. After independence, due to capitalist system of economy and due to affirmative actions by Government of India, social reorganization has been possible, however to a limited extent as the earlier hierarchies continue to persist and are being transformed into new hierarchies. That means, if one is at the lower level in earlier social structure, it is likely that one will remain at lower level, even in the new social structure.

Traditional lines are so intrinsic that general judgements about the entire communities and its members are made accordingly. Throughout the world where there have been major social changes brought about by transformation from traditional to modern capitalist society, emergence of social classes have taken place. The social class here implies not class merely in economic terms, but in terms of common cultures, common ideas, common habits, common mentality. The traditional structures and the type of social change determines how far these new classes have resemblance with traditional structures.

India has experienced two major social changes over the past couple of years. One major change was brought about with the Indian Independence, and the other was with liberalisation during the 1990s. There has also been affirmative programmes and policies by the Government of India for upgradation of SC/ST communities. The two major social changes along with the Government's affirmative action has brought about a certain degree of mobility in the Indian society.

In India, the social stratification is highly complex and multiple. Individuals interact with each other not only in terms of newly created social hierarchies but also in terms of traditional social hierarchies. Social classes are more invisible in nature, however the caste hierarchies are more visible in the Indian context. The inequalities of pre capitalist societies are carried forward to the capitalist societies wherein certain groups and communities who were excluded in pre capitalist societies remains to be excluded even in the capitalist societies. This exclusion is found in all aspects of an individual's life whether in economic, social or political sphere.

In Germany and other western countries, the police appears to largely deal with the excluded groups, which usually means the lower class and the immigrants. If we study the police records of Germany and US, 90% of prison inmates who conduct any type of serious crime, belong to the excluded groups. So there is definitely a social dimension to crime. The exclusion is more complex in India than in Germany or US, because in Germany or in the US, the exclusion is basically about class and about immigrants. The solution to the problem of exclusion is inclusion of these groups and communities and mainstreaming them. This can be brought about majorly by political and social interventions. The police may not have direct influence on this but the police being the executive machinery of the State does have an important role to play. In Germany, there are training programmes to create awareness among the police especially in dealing with these excluded groups i.e. how to deal with people who are from excluded class or immigrants. Even in the Indian context, it is important that the police are given training on the complex and multiple exclusions, which have a social dimension to crime. Training is required to tackle the excluded groups in a manner which may help in avoiding further criminalisation of such groups.

The lecture was followed by a vibrant interactive session with the audience.