



Institute for Social and Economic Change

Dr. V K R V Rao Road, Nagarabhavi, Bengaluru 560072



Golden Jubilee Lecture Series

Happiness among Subaltern Groups: Dalits in India and Blacks in South Africa

by

Prof. Vani Kant Borooah

Emeritus Professor of Applied Economics, University of Ulster, Northern Ireland, UK

on Thursday December 22nd 2022, 04.00 pm to 05.30 pm IST

Abstract

This paper has two purposes; the first is to test differences between dominant and subordinate groups in India and South Africa. For India, the comparison is between caste groups: the dominant “forward castes” and the subordinate “non-forward castes”. For South Africa, the comparison is between racial groups: Whites as a dominant group and non-Whites (Blacks, Coloured, and Asians) as a subordinate group. The second purpose of the paper is to compare happiness levels between India and South Africa with a view to rigorously establishing where happiness is greatest and what its drivers are. These issues are examined using data from the World Values Survey (WVS). Covering in excess of 250,000 respondents drawn from 90 countries, and available for the period 1994–2014, WVS remains the most widely accessible database on well-being. This paper establishes that, in general, Indians were happier than South Africans in this period, meaning that the predicted probability of being happy was, on average, higher in India (84.2%) than in South Africa (81.1%). Another important finding was that persons from the dominant groups were more likely to be happy in South Africa than in India but that persons from the subordinate groups were more likely to be happy in India than in South Africa.