

Economics Seminar, Indian Statistical Institute, New Delhi.

SPEAKER: **Sourabh Bikas Paul**, University of British Columbia

TITLE: **Breaking the Caste Barrier: Intergenerational Mobility in India**

TIME: 11:30 AM.

DAY & DATE: Friday, 24th February, 2012

PLACE: Seminar Room 2

Abstract:

Amongst the various inequities typically associated with the caste system in India, probably one of the most debilitating is the perception that one is doomed by birth, i.e., social and economic mobility across generations is difficult. We study the extent and evolution of this lack of mobility by contrasting the intergenerational mobility rates of the historically disadvantaged scheduled castes and tribes (SC/ST) in India with the rest of the workforce in terms of their education attainment, occupation choices and wages. Using household survey data from successive rounds of the National Sample Survey between 1983 and 2005, we find that inter-generational education and income mobility rates of SC/STs have converged to non-SC/ST levels during this period. Moreover, SC/STs have been switching occupations relative to their parents at increasing rates, matching the corresponding switch rates of non-SC/STs in the process. Interestingly, we have found that a common feature for both SC/STs and non-SC/STs is that the sharpest change in intergenerational income mobility has been for middle income households. This is consistent with the effects of easing credit constraints, a phenomenon that did characterize this period. We conclude that the last twenty years of major structural changes in India have also coincided with a breaking down of caste-based historical barriers to socio-economic mobility.

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