

NEWSLETTER



KEY HIGH LIGHTS

In December, the MIDS faculty continued to disseminate their research in academic journals and popular press.

Smruthi Bala Kannan, the institute's new seminar coordinator, published a paper on hygiene, sanitation, and childhoods in South Asia in Oxford Bibliographies Online. Prajwal Nagesh co-authored two articles i) exploring walkability challenges of older men in India and Bangladesh, and ii) gender, caste, and agency in a women's dairy cooperative in Karnataka. Monalisha Chakraborty published a study on migrant working women in India.

Kalaiyarasan A. co-authored a paper on Indian federalism under one-party dominance, whilst also producing an interview with Rathin Roy on political economy of federalism. An interview of A R Venkatachalapathy discussing the gaps in documenting history was published in *Dinamani*.

M Suresh Babu, the MIDS Director, penned two articles on GDP growth, and India's industrial development. T Kannan, Affiliate Scholar, contributed a paper to the MIDS Working Paper series in which he covered the legal interventions surrounding Hindu temple and Brahmin priests.

The institute had taken up three new projects namely studies on (1) socio-economic and educational development indicators of SC/ST communities in Tamil Nadu, (2) transport equity through Karnataka's Shakti Scheme, (3) women from the northeast in south Indian cities covering aspects of gender, labour and migration.

The MIDS Scholars Forum had invited papers for the second edition of Annual Development Conclave titled *The Symbiotic Turn: Rewriting Relations between Nature, Knowledge, and Society*.

'NO PLACE FOR US ON FOOTPATHS': EXPLORING WALKABILITY CHALLENGES OF OLDER MEN IN INDIA AND BANGLADESH

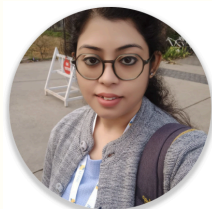
by Ajay Bailey, Selim Jahangir,
and **Prajwal Nagesh**



In India and Bangladesh cities, footpaths play a crucial role in enhancing the mobility of older adults. To age in place, the design and maintenance of footpaths become pivotal for older men to access services, opportunities and goods in neighbourhoods and beyond. The paper combines interviews, observations, visual surveys and GIS methods to present the varied walking experiences of older men in Bengaluru and Dhaka. We take an intersectional perspective to examine how multiple socio-economic inequalities intersect and get amplified by infrastructural inequalities to disadvantage older men. Our findings highlight that walkability is compromised as older men go about fulfilling their expected roles and responsibilities. The risk of falls, crowded spaces, poor pedestrian infrastructure and ageist remarks limit older men from accessing public spaces. Recognising the needs, barriers (physical, socio-economic and infrastructural) and coping mechanisms is imperative to creating age-friendly cities that prioritise the health, social participation and independence of older men.

WOMEN AT WORK, BUT NOT ON THE MOVE: WHAT DO THE DATA SAY?

by Monalisha Chakraborty



For decades, India's migration story has followed a familiar outline: a young man in his twenties or thirties from Bihar, Odisha, or Uttar Pradesh boarding a train to a distant city in search of work. Labour migration in India has long been a male story. Women, on the other hand, are seen as dependents, moving for marriage or accompanying families. The Census of India classifies people as migrants if they are enumerated at a place different from either their place of birth or their last usual residence; with the latter being the more analytically relevant measure of mobility. Census 2011 recorded about 309 million female migrants and 145 million male migrants, a distribution that translates to roughly 68% women and 32% men. Although these numbers appear to suggest that migration in India is overwhelmingly feminine, this numerical dominance masks the reality that women's mobility is shaped far more by social norms than by economic choice.

LAYERS IN MILK: GENDER, CASTE, AND AGENCY IN A WOMEN'S DAIRY COOPERATIVE IN KARNATAKA

by R Vijayamba and **Prajwal Nagesh**



With the growing participation of rural women in dairy cooperatives, women's agency in livestock raising remains an under-researched domain. This paper examines women's agency in the political process in a women's village dairy in Karnataka, using qualitative methods of observation, in-depth interviews, and telephonic interviews. The paper identifies entrenched power relations that have impeded elections in the dairy board, resulting in the concentration of economic control in the hands of members from dominant landed castes. Patriarchal and caste-based power structures pervade the political administration of the dairy, excluding women from marginalised sections. Amid rising traction for institutions catering to women, this paper questions whether a women-only dairy cooperative needs transformation to enable women to exercise agency in such processes.

Featured Research

INTRODUCTION—INDIAN FEDERALISM UNDER ONE-PARTY DOMINANCE: IDEAS AND INSTITUTIONS IN TRANSITION

by **Kalaiyaran A.** and Louise Tillin



This essay introduces a collection of articles that explores the idea of federalism and its discontents in contemporary India. It exposes the central concern of the special issue, namely, why what might be considered federal values are being contested in India because of the return of a one-party dominant system presided over by an ethnic nationalist party. On the one hand, as articles in the special issue demonstrate, we see the vigorous defense and promotion of the idea and significance of federalism by regional political actors. On the other, the rise of a more unitarian majoritarian nationalism has brought India's status as a federal system, and what federalism in the Indian context entails, back into essential contention. This introduction presents the institutional and ideational contours of federalism in India, provides an overview of the articles in the special issue, and offers a discussion into how political changes to the landscape of federalism—the main focus of the special issue—must be seen within a wider political economy context of widening regional economic inequality and the (un)sustainability of the existing framework of fiscal redistribution.

HYGIENE, SANITATION, AND CHILDHOODS IN SOUTH ASIA

by Smruthi Bala Kannan



This article explores ideas, discourses, and research on hygiene and sanitation as they manifest in South Asia in relation to childhood and children's lived experiences. Hygiene and sanitation are concerned with the interactions between the physiology and metabolism of the human being and their environment and community. While hygiene is commonly defined as practices intended to preserve health and prevent the spread of diseases, the word sanitation describes the conditions, systems, and infrastructures that enable hygiene. Since the late nineteenth century, the individual, community, and structural aspects of hygiene and sanitation have been approached in South Asia as preventive public health issues eliciting political intervention into embodied behaviors and community spaces. Equivalent and regional state-led water infrastructures and pedagogic texts espousing hygiene are extant from earlier eras. However, this article follows texts that succeed the co-emergence of the Anglophone vocabulary of hygiene and sanitation and their imperial cognates within policy discourse alongside the geopolitical construct of South Asia.

(FACING PAGE) PHOTOGRAPHS
FROM DECEMBER EVENTS



FACULTY

Bailey, A., Jahangir, S., **Prajwal, N.** (2025). 'No place for us on footpaths': Exploring walkability challenges of older men in India and Bangladesh. *Journal of Economic and Human Geography*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/tesg.70034>

Kalaiyarasan, A., & Tillin, L. (2025). Introduction—Indian federalism under one-party dominance: Ideas and Institutions in Transition. *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal*, 34. <https://journals.openedition.org/samaj/10450>

Monalisha, C. (2025, December 24). *Women at work, but not on the move: What do the data say?* The India Forum. <https://www.theindiaforum.in/economy/women-work-not-move-what-do-data-say>

Smruthi Bala, K. (2025). Hygiene, sanitation, and childhoods in south Asia. *Oxford Bibliographies Online in Childhood Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/obo/9780199791231-0306>

Suresh Babu, M. (2025, December 16). Higher GDP growth: Need for cautious optimism. *The Hindu*. <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/higher-gdp-growth-need-for-cautious-optimism/article70400479.ece>

Suresh Babu, M. (2025). Taking stock of India's industrial development (Commentary). *Economic and Political Weekly*, 60(52), 19–21. <https://www.epw.in/journal/2025/52/commentary/taking-stock-indias-industrial-development.html>

Vijayamba, R., & **Prajwal, N.** (2025). Layers in milk: Gender, caste, and agency in a women's dairy cooperative in Karnataka (Special Article). *Economic and Political Weekly*, 60(52), 135–142. <https://www.epw.in/journal/2025/52/special-articles/layers-milk.html>

INTERVIEWS

Arulselvan & **Venkatachalapathy, A. R.** (2025, November 30). Varalaatrai aavanapaduthuvathil pinthangiye irukirom (Lagging behind in documenting history). *Dinamani*.

Tillin, L. (2025). The political economy of federalism: Regional inequality and visions for a new federal bargain (Interview with Rathin Roy and **Kalaiyarasan A.**). *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal*, 34. <https://journals.openedition.org/samaj/10467>

INSTITUTE

Kannan, T. (2025). *Hindu temple, the Brahmin priests, and the legal interventions for social justice in Tamil Nadu* (Working paper no. 250). Madras Institute of Development Studies. https://www.mids.ac.in/assets/doc/WP_250.pdf

Tamilnadu Economy in News—TEN (Vol. 2 Issue 10), October 2025. https://www.mids.ac.in/assets/doc/TEN_Vol_2-10.pdf

Publications

Academic Events

1 December 2025, **Inauguration** of the second batch of Certificate Programme in Public Policy and Management with Malcolm Adiseshiah Fellowship

3 December 2025, **Book Launch and Discussion: A Sixth of Humanity: Independent India's Development Odyssey**, by Devesh Kapur and Arvind Subramanian, Published by Harper Collins

4 December 2025, **Round-Table on Tariffs, Hikes and Tamil Nadu Economy & Book Launch of India's Industrial Policy: A Reassessment**, by Padmini Swaminathan, Published by Primus Books & MIDS.

12 December 2025, **Seminar: Bus, Benefits and Beyond: A study of transport equity through Karnataka's Shakti Scheme**, by Prajwal Nagesh

18 December 2025, **MIDS Founder's Day Lecture, Evolving Contours of India's Monetary Policy**, by Dr C Rangarajan, former RBI Governor.

UPCOMING EVENTS

22 January 2026, **Public Talk, Caste and Space in Indian Cities**, by Vamsi Vakulabharanam, University of Massachusetts

29 January 2026, **Seminar, From Classroom to Cropland: An Economist's Return to the Soil**, by L Venkatachalam.

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