

**Panel 31:** The emerging middle class in India: Shifting locations, values, identities

**Convener:** Prof. Hans-J. Findeis, University of Bonn

**Abstract:** The middle class's share in India's population is expected to increase from 5 per cent (50 million people) in 2005 to 20 per cent by 2015 and about 41 per cent (583 million people) by 2025.

The emerging middle class in India is conspicuously diverse and differentiated in its social composition, especially in respect of caste, ethnicity, religion, community and region. Professional qualifications have been a significant source of social mobility and a great social leveller.

The culture and lifestyle of the emerging middle class indicates a pervasive and growing influence of Western culture and globalisation processes. This is prominently reflected in increasing consumerism, growing individualism and competitiveness, entertainment, food habits, fashions and recreation.

The culture and lifestyle of the middle class has necessitated a rethinking of the issues of class, gender, ethnicity, modernity, identity and empowerment and their complex linkages. There is, therefore, a need to focus on the multifarious dimensions of the middle class from an inter-disciplinary perspective. This is the brief of the proposed Panel, which will have scholars from diverse disciplinary backgrounds, including sociology and anthropology, literature, philosophy, theology and Indology.

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