

Of Asians and Indians in Germany

Some thoughts on racism and the
interdependencies of power inequalities



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Workshop: Imagining 'Race' and Hegemony in (Inter)Asia
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Structure

1. Language and terms
2. Hegemony and racism in Germany
3. Interdependencies of power inequalities
4. Questions

Language and norms

- language is part of the normative system
 - restricts what can be thought
 - reproduces the norms
- available terms
 - reproduce dominant notions of nation, ethnicity, culture, race, etc.
- difficult to criticise normative system
 - within the language, which reproduces it
- use language to irritate
 - difficulty for translation

Terms in this presentation

- mark processes
 - rather than (essentialised) identities
 - people living in Germany/ socialised in Germany
 - and marked as Indian/ Asian there
- meaning of terms in Germany
 - Indian:
 - orientalist image
 - Asian:
 - certain eye form
 - Fidschis:
 - derogatory term in East Germany

„Asians“ and „Indians“ in the Germanies

- different migration histories in East and West Germany
- students from Asia in both Germanies
 - and professionals
 - mainly in the West
- recruited workers
 - from Vietnam in the East
 - (female) nurses in the West
- refugees and asylum seekers
 - mainly in the West
- workers and undocumented migrants
 - in the West and since unification
- those socialised in the Germanies but marked as Asian/
Indian there

Hegemony in Germany

- on basis of nation, ethnicity, culture, race:
- 'white' Germans (Critical whiteness studies)
 - defined through ancestry, blood, genes
 - naturalised and linked to culture
 - based on racist logic
 - unmarked
- 'Standard German' (Paul Mecheril)
 - shared fuzzy idea of what German is
 - deviations from it are marked as others

Definition of racism

1. racialisation
 - distinguish people according to some attributes
2. associate with mentality
 - link attributes to certain character features
3. establish hierarchy
 - define the racialised as inferior to norm
4. power to implement
 - establish differentiation as norm system
 - structural racism
 - no need for individual intent

Research on racism in Germany

- marginalised research field
 - critical racism theory
 - critical whiteness studies
- in mainstream
 - racism reserved for description of holocaust
 - taboo to use term race
 - focus on the other
 - power and privileges not analysed

Experiences of racism of privileged ‚Asians‘ and ‚Indians‘

- institutional through laws and regulations
 - example: residence permit, naturalisation, visas for relatives, ...
- in political and media discourses about ‘foreigners’
 - example: ‘Kinder statt Inder’ (children instead of Indians)
- in everyday interaction
 - mostly subtle through questions (Where are you from?)
- some fear of violence
 - especially in the East
- in general
 - rather invisible since it is framed as norm
 - denied by those in privileged and in marginalised positions
 - relegated from structure to individual

Interdependencies of power inequalities

- several power dimensions
 - based on constructions of
 - class, gender, sexuality, ability, age, etc.
- operate together
 - complex positioning
 - no obvious hierarchies
 - basis for divide and rule
 - stabilise hegemony:
 - ‘white’, men, heterosexual, middle class, able bodied, etc.

Questions

- How to analyse interdependency?
- How universal is racism?
- How can and should the hegemonic position be marked?
- What connections are there to Asia/ India?

Thank you!

The advertisement features a grid of images and text. The top row shows a person's face and a cow. The middle row shows a cow and a person's face. The bottom row shows a cow and a person's face. The text is in German and Hindi. The main headline is **../INDIEN IM KOPF?**. Below it, there is a list of categories: **bollywood**, **kontakte**, **chat**, **reisen**, and **nachrichten**. The bottom section contains the text **../INDIEN IM NETZ! _ theinder.net**, **kommunikation | information | unterhaltung**, **http://www.theinder.net**, **_Indien Portal für Deutschland**, and **Germany's Indian Online Community and India Portal**. There is also a small logo for theinder.net.

More information on <http://www.urmila.de>.