



Dr. Mayanka Ambade (1991–2025)

In Memory

Sunil Rajpal[#]

Dr. Mayanka Ambade, a rising figure in the fields of health policy, population sciences, and social epidemiology, sadly passed away on 26 January 2025. As an Assistant Professor at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Mandi and an esteemed member of the IHEPA General Council, Dr. Ambade was deeply committed to improving the lives of India's most vulnerable populations through rigorous research. Her academic journey, spanning from the International Institute for Population Sciences to a fellowship at Harvard University, was defined by her insightful analysis of aging, healthcare access, and gender inequality. She leaves behind a legacy of scholarly excellence and is remembered by the academic community as an inspiring researcher, a dedicated mentor, and a remarkably kind human being.

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The IHEPA community is deeply saddened by the untimely loss of Dr. Mayanka Ambade, Assistant Professor in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Mandi, who passed away on 26 January 2025. Her sudden departure has left a profound void in the fields of health policy, population sciences, and social epidemiology. Dr. Ambade was an esteemed member of the General Council of the IHEPA and contributed actively to the initiatives with utmost enthusiasm. Despite her young age, Dr. Ambade built a distinguished and impactful body of work, marked by relevant questions, intellectual rigor, remarkable clarity of purpose, and a deep commitment to improving the lives of India's most vulnerable populations.

Born on 9th May 1991, Dr. Ambade graduated in Economics from the University of Mumbai, after which she pursued her Master's and subsequently her PhD in Population Studies at the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), Mumbai. Her doctoral research demonstrated a strong grasp of interdisciplinary methods, blending economics, demography, and public health to produce insights that would characterize much of her later work. Following her PhD, she contributed to several of India's important national health initiatives, working with key datasets such as the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) and the Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS).

Dr. Ambade realized the deep significance of socioeconomic gradients in health outcomes early in her career. Her scholarly curiosity took her beyond India, leading to international collaborations across Europe, including work with the University of Lausanne and the Erasmus Mundus Programme. Her postdoctoral journey eventually brought her to the Lakshmi Mittal and Family South Asia Institute at Harvard University, where she served as the inaugural Mittal Institute India Fellow. During this period, she deepened her research on aging and healthcare utilization, examining how socioeconomic disparities shape patterns of morbidity among older adults.

In May 2023, Dr. Ambade joined IIT Mandi as a faculty member, where she quickly established herself as a valued colleague. Her courses on public health and research methodology were appreciated for their clarity and ability to inspire critical thinking. Dr. Ambade particularly enjoyed interacting with students; she was an inspiring teacher and mentor who guided young researchers with patience and enthusiasm. Many students fondly remember her as approachable and deeply invested in their academic growth.

Dr. Ambade's scholarly output reflected commendable depth. Among her notable works was her article in *Economic and Political Weekly*, titled "Economic Growth and Women's Empowerment: A Repeated Cross-sectional Study from India,"¹ which exemplified her ability to tackle complex demographic questions with methodological robustness. Alongside her research, she contributed actively

to the broader professional community, serving as a member of the Early Career Perspectives Panel of the IUSSP and organizing workshops to support early-career scholars.

Beyond academia, Dr. Ambade was passionate about reading, traveling, and experimenting with global cuisines, personal interests that enriched her life and gave her a groundedness that many fondly remember. She possessed an ability to connect with people through genuine empathy and intellectual generosity. Dr. Ambade leaves behind a legacy defined not only by scholarly excellence but also by kindness and integrity. She will be remembered as an inspiring researcher and a remarkable human being whose work and spirit touched many.

References

Ambade, M., & Chattopadhyay, A. (2024). Economic Growth and Women's Empowerment. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 59(36), 73.