

Conference

Dalit and Religion

To be held at Max-Weber-Kolleg, University of Erfurt, Germany, 4 – 6 July 2017

Concept note:

What is it that Dalits seek in religion? How do Dalits perceive themselves in relation to something Divine *and*, against this background, to other humans? How do they deal with the denial of access to certain religious practices and sites? How do they understand religion? How do the problems of conceptualizing “religion” reflect in the ways the relations and problems of Dalits with religion are being understood? What are the Dalits’ understandings of suffering and humiliation on the one hand, of social recognition and human dignity on the other?

Dalits and other disadvantaged people had to negotiate modes of religiosity and religious power structures continuously, as they had to negotiate livelihood issues, political structures and the relationships with dominant others. Dalits had to face humiliation and the denial of acceptance as fellow human beings, but also encountered problems when trying to establish spaces for themselves. At the same time, Dalits invented ideas, practices and agendas of their own. Throughout Indian history the socio-religious hierarchy and the dominant, even hegemonic religious strands and traditions have been accompanied by counter-imaginaries, which represent universalistic concepts of their own, but which, obviously, have never become dominant.

The conference wants to view the field of religion in India from an angle that differs from the perspectives enshrined in the dominant religious discourses that control the important religious institutions. At the same time, the category Dalit covers a wide range of discriminated, but differently positioned groups of people.

The relationship between Dalits and religiosity has so far not been systematically discussed. Starting to address this question is of core relevance for an understanding of how people experiencing systematic discrimination engage with the world, as it is for an understanding of modern India.

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Conference at the Max-Weber-Kolleg Erfurt

4th – 6th July 2017

Programme

Tuesday, 4th July 2017

09:30 Reception

10:00 Introductory Note – Martin Fuchs

11:00 Coffee Break

11:30 G. Aloysius (Puducherry): *Excluded Social Groups, Religion and Modernity in India: Elementary Reflections on the Dilemma of the Excluded Social Groups of India in Trying to Achieve Modernity through Particularistic Religious Constructions*

12:30 Lunch

14:00 Ishita Banerjee-Dube (El Colegio de México): *Dalits, Dignity and New Faiths*

15:00 Prithvi Datta Chandra Shobhi (Dept. of History, Karnataka State Open University): *Untouchability and Virashaivism in Medieval and Modern South India*

16:00 Coffee Break

17:00 P. Sanal Mohan (Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, Kerala): *Narratives of Transformation: Understanding Dalit Christianity in Kerala, India*

18:30 Dinner

Wednesday, 5th July 2017

09:00 Joseph M.T. (Dept. of Sociology, Mumbai University, and Institute of Indian Culture, Mumbai): *Navayana Buddhism of Maharashtra and its Trajectories of Discourses and Debates: An Analysis*

10:00 Jon Keune (Michigan State University): *Dhamma, Dalitness, and Diversity: Transnational Buddhism as Prospect and Threat for Dalit Particularity*

11:00 Coffee Break

11:30 Valerian Rodrigues (Mangalore University): *Kabir as Ambedkar's Guru: Complex Mediations*

12:30 Lunch

14:00 Beatrice Renzi (Max-Weber-Kolleg): *Deconstructing Religion: Dalit Counter-discourses and Forms of Religiosity in Madhya Pradesh*

15:00 Sanjay Jothe (Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai): *How the Dalits in Kabirpanth Experience Religion and Religiosity*

16:00 Coffee Break

16:30 Guided City Tour

18:30 Dinner

19:30 Documentary “Kitte Mil Ve Mahi” (“Where the Twain Shall Meet”) by Ajay Bhardwaj

Thursday, 6th July 2017

09:00 Ajay Bhardwaj (University of British Columbia, Vancouver): *Sprouting through Ruptures: Dalit Sufis of East Punjab*

10:00 Joel Lee (Williams College, Massachusetts): *Who is Halalkhor? Dalit Muslim Origin Stories and Ethical Critique*

11:00 Coffee Break

11:30 Milind Wakankar (Indian Institute of Technology, New Delhi): *Religion and Primary Narcissism: Interior Elaborations in 'Muslim Marathi' Bhakti*

12:30 Lunch

14:00 Heinz Werner Wessler (Uppsala University): *Dalit Conversion and Dalit Criticism of Conversion*

15:00 Saurabh Dube (El Colegio de México): *“Right between the Eyes”: Dalit Religions, Redux*

16:00 Coffee Break

16:30 Final discussion

19:30 Dinner