



Department of English  
Presidency University, Kolkata

Presents

A Two-Day Online International Conference  
7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> June 2022 (Google Meet)

On

## Theorising Anticasteism

Convenor: Dr Mahitosh Mandal, Head, Department of English

### Concept Note:

Casteism can be described, among other things, as a deep-rooted prejudice that motivates and leads to caste-based atrocities and discrimination against the 'lower castes' and outcastes (Dalits) of the Indian subcontinent and Indian diaspora. Such discrimination is multi-layered and is on the rise. As of 2020, every 10 minutes a crime is committed against a Dalit and every day 8 Dalit women are subjected to rape in India. Crimes against the Dalits include murder, lynching, massacre, suicide, social ostracization, economic exploitation, and sexual abuse. Multiple instances of caste-based discrimination, specifically in the Indian diaspora of the USA and UK (e.g. the incident at the BAPS temple, New Jersey; the CISCO case etc.), confirm that casteism is not confined to the Indian subcontinent and that, as apprehended by Babasaheb Ambedkar, caste has indeed become a global problem. Remarkably, European Union has repeatedly taken note of rampant casteism and has resolved to eliminate caste discrimination. As summed up by Anand Teltumbde, capitalistic modernity, the republican constitution, neoliberalism, and globalisation, all have failed to prevent the persistence of casteism.

The proposed conference on 'theorising anticasteism' sets out to explore why casteism persists even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, particularly through a dual gesture of 'unmasking the unethical operations of caste' (Meena Dhanda) and a critique of the history, strategies, and achievements of anticaste movements. Both the terms 'anticaste' and 'anticasteism,' used without a hyphen but subject to debate, are intended to be annotated and theorised at length. Anticasteism, at a preliminary level, could be considered both as praxis and a critical conceptual category. Theorising anticasteism simultaneously opens up possibilities of interrogating the history and contemporaneity of anticaste resistance and reformulating the problem of casteism at material, ideological, sociological, philosophical, phenomenological, psychological, clinical and artistic and representational levels. The conference thereby aims at revisiting and expanding on the project of 'annihilation of caste' proposed by Babasaheb Ambedkar in 1936.

The works of Gajendran Ayyathurai ('Critical Caste Studies'), Dhanda ('Philosophical Foundations of Anti-casteism'), Gopal Guru ('theoretical Brahmins and empirical Shudra'), Kancha Ilaiah ('Dalitisation'), Sushrut Jadhav (casteism as 'psychological ethnocide'), Balmurli Natrajan ('culturalization of caste'), Shailaja Paik (Dalit women's 'double discrimination'), Teltumbde ('Theorising Dalit movements,' Caste atrocities as 'India's hidden apartheid'), and Suraj Yengde ('many shades of Dalits'), among others, can be used as points of reference for those writing proposals for this conference.

Papers are expected to fall within the following METHODOLOGICAL range:

1. Close readings of casteist and anti-caste texts (literature, films, graphic narratives, popular culture, politico-philosophical works, and scriptures)
2. Critical study of anticaste thinkers
3. Analysis of specific cases of caste-based violence
4. Historicising pivotal events of anticaste movements
5. Key concepts in theorising anticasteism

Abstracts may address but need not be limited to the following TOPICS:

1. Decolonization as debrahminization
2. Anticaste leaders and colonial masters
3. Diasporic casteism, global brahmanism
4. Cultural and academic reproduction of brahmanism
5. Casteism vis-à-vis nationalism
6. Political parties, Dalit Phobia and Dalitphilia
7. Phenomenology of casteism
8. Psychologising casteism
9. Biopolitics of caste
10. Interrogating Dalit politics, rethinking anticaste resistance
11. Interrogating caste-based identity politics
12. Revisiting the laws and policies against casteism
13. Defining 'Ambedkarism' and 'Periyarism'
14. Dalit historiography vis-à-vis postcolonialism, Marxism, and subaltern studies
15. Dalit aesthetics as anticasteism
16. Dalit feminism as anticasteism
17. Anticaste activism
18. Anticaste publishing
19. Caste atrocities and comparative genocides
20. Anticasteism and the counter-hegemonic religion and culture
21. Intersectionality: anticasteism and antiracism; anticasteism and anticolonialism; anticasteism and LGBTQIA+ movements; anticasteism and feminism; and so on

Information for the participants:

- Abstracts: 400-500 words
- Deadline for the submission of abstracts: 30<sup>th</sup> April 2022
- Notification of acceptance of abstracts: 15<sup>th</sup> May 2022
- Bio-note (full name, designation, affiliation, research interests): 100-150 words
- Abstracts with a title and a bio-note must be emailed to [anticasteism.presidency@gmail.com](mailto:anticasteism.presidency@gmail.com)
- There is no registration fee but all speakers and participants must register online before 30<sup>th</sup> May 2022 by filling in a Google Form available [here](#).