



Centre for Comparative Literature, University of Hyderabad
Raw.Con 2019 – 7th Annual Researchers at Work National Conference

Religion in Cultural and Comparative Perspectives

February 26 – 28, 2019

CALL FOR PAPERS

With the advancement of modernity, it was once predicted that religiosity would gradually disappear due to a steady secularization process and will lead to the retreat of religion. Obviously, what we have observed is rather the obverse, as various communities and resistance movements continue to mobilize the potential of religion in different ways, forcing the social scientists to take stock of the return of religion. Although, it has to be noted that such a return constrains older definitions of religion, as put forth by various scholars.

The proposed conference is premised on the argument that the approaches to the study of religion and religious literature/culture have been largely dominated by Eurocentric epistemic practices, which delineated a Western post-enlightenment understanding of religion. As a corollary, the canonical narrative about pre-modern communities has long delegitimized most discourses from the global-south/orient. However, contemporary de-colonial thought has generated a renewed interest in various non-western religious communities and culture, also focusing on their civilizational claims. Interestingly, scholars like Cantwell Smith, Talal Asad and Timothy Fitzgerald have even questioned the notion of “religion” as it is a modern concept rooted in the Western context.

Though religion and the discourse around secularism in the contemporary have found its place among the anthropologists and the sociologists, the same has been largely overlooked by literary studies. When it comes to the practice of comparative literature, religious literature - given its transnational character - has some sort of claim as ‘world’ literature. Further, the idea of ‘little’ traditions in the periphery and a ‘great’ tradition in the centre is hardly tenable any longer. Hence, this conference will attempt to initiate a dialogue with the traditional idea of comparative literature that is still prevalent in most of South Asia. Besides, the contemporary nuances of ‘pluriversal’ religious ethos would add new dimensions to the conference, as it endeavours to open up a critical space with a focus on the larger ambit of existing debates.

The conference will also engage with ‘translation’ as a mode and method. For it was the act of translation that made contemporary discussions on south Asian religions and religious literatures possible, as it introduced various religious writings and writings on religion in the vernacular to the world and vice versa. The role of translation in the formation of a renewed understanding of religion in the contemporary context is, hence, an important part of the conference. Further, translation of transnational religious literatures into their geographic specificities also invites our attention to contemporary scholarship on spatiality.

Geographic and regional specificities were hitherto an exotic interest for the ethnographers, to the extent that discourses on every day practices became their major (or only) focal point, often erasing textual inter-connections. However, contemporary scholarship on space has started to reshape our approaches

to understand the genealogy of various religious communities, both in textual and sociological practices, as the embedded spatiotemporal order can often produce multiple meanings in different registers.

Recent studies on the global-south have triggered changes in the discipline of history as well. Established histories of religions, their development and their interactions around the world, have proposed an understanding of religion that is unique to the West and their cultural context. History in the vernacular, however, challenged the claim of universality of the West in analyzing all religious traditions. Bhakti literature, in Indian context, is such a significant social phenomenon. Besides, discussions on the changes in the methods and practices of history have contributed to the formation of the present understanding of religion.

In short, the conference seeks, with an interdisciplinary approach, to bring in texts, practices and values from various other disciplines such as history, theology, anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, translation studies and religious studies.

Potential Sub Topics:

- Transnational Literatures and Translation
- Secularization and Global Geopolitics
- De-colonial Approaches to South Asian Religious Practices
- Spatiality and Emergence of Religion
- Nation, Space and Religion
- Region and Religion
- Religion in Vernacular Literatures
- Historical Approaches to Religion
- Religion in Translation
- Minor Religion and Communities
- Media and Religious Transition
- Religion on Screen (Film/Documentary)
- Methods of Understanding Religion from South Asia
- Religious Performances and Cultural Forms
- Religion and Approaches to Gender, Body and Sexuality
- Sainthood and Statehood
- Religion and Modernity
- Ethics and Minority

Submission of Abstracts and Papers

Abstracts of 300 words exploring the above-mentioned themes, and also extending them, may be sent to rawcon2019@gmail.com latest by **22nd January 2019**. Selection of papers will be intimated by 31st January 2019 and the full paper has to be submitted by 20th February 2019.

Conference registration fee is fixed at Rs. 1500, which includes shared accommodation and food. With the support of ICSSR SRC and CIIL Mysore, we are able to offer **limited number of registration fee waivers and travel assistances**. Please write a short note of 200 words explaining why you should be selected for the waiver and assistance, if you would like to apply for the same. Candidates from marginalized backgrounds will be given preference.

RAW.CON or Researchers at Work Conference in its seventh year, is a students' research initiative, broadly focusing on Literary and Cultural Studies conducted by the Centre for Comparative Literature, School of Humanities, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad – 500046, India.