

Invitation to the international workshop

Caste and Identity in Contemporary India

Date: 19 June 2024

Venue: Akademie věd ČR (Czech Academy of Sciences), Národní 3, room no. 205

Caste identity is an important factor in the dynamics and mobilisation of castes. As such, it has its benefits, drawbacks, and limits. Various castes use identity unevenly and for different reasons and in varied ways. Considerable differences can be found even among castes belonging to the same layer of society. An important criterion in emancipation activities and group assertion is the size of the community. Large castes are usually more visible and better organised while smaller ones lag behind.

However, caste identity politics seems to have reached its climax in the past two decades. In many Indian states we witnessed the disjunction between the electoral and the political during elections. Thanks to ongoing social and political changes, numerous communities give preference to issues other than caste. In other words, there is a willingness to sideline caste identity in favour of voting for the political party that seems to better represent their economic-political interests.

These recent developments serve as the key topic of the workshop, which asks why and how castes assert their identity in contemporary India and how caste identities manifest in private and public life.

10:00 Opening address – Ondřej Lánský, Head of the Department of Political Philosophy and Globalisation Research, Institute of Philosophy

10:15 – 12:00 Morning session

- Ramesh Bairy: *Assembling a Brahmin life: What is at stake here?*
- Meenakshi Nair Ambujam: *'Progressive' Kerala and its not-so-subtle troubles with caste: an exploration of everyday casteism in contemporary times*
- Jiří Krejčík: *Return of the hissedari politics? Caste census and shifting allegiances of the backward classes in North India*

12:00 – 13:30 Lunch break

13:30 – 15:15 Afternoon session

- Sarbani Bandyopadhyay: *Being refugee Dalit: the dynamics of caste in post-partition West Bengal*
- Tereza Menšíková: *Dalit-Bahujan voices online: Talking about caste in the digital world*
- Pavel Hons: *Building caste identity through literature – Dalit writing a bit differently*

15:15 – 15:30 Concluding remarks – Pavel Hons

The workshop is organized jointly by the Oriental Institute and the Institute of Philosophy of the Czech Academy of Sciences with the support of the Strategy AV21: Research programme Identities in the World of Wars and Crises.