

Panel 30: The public representation of South Asian religions in the postcolonial world

Conveners: John Zavos, School of Arts, Histories and Cultures, University of Manchester

Abstract: This panel focuses on the ways in which different organisations and institutions project 'the public face' of South Asian religious traditions, and also the ways in which different public contexts shape representation, in the postcolonial era. The panel aims to build on critical approaches to the idea of religion (developed particularly through analyses of colonial encounter), in order to explore the dynamic and different ways in which religious identities and practices relate to key political and social discourses such as caste, race, class, and gender in a range of public arenas. It encourages comparison of the public representation of religion in India with that in different diasporic contexts. The panel is a continuation of the work of a network project funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council over the period 2008-10, focused on 'the public representation of a religion called Hinduism' (see <http://www.arts.manchester.ac.uk/hinduism>). The first meeting of the network was convened as a two session panel of the 20th ECMSAS in Manchester in July 2008. Having focused on these issues in relation to Hinduism specifically over the past two years, the intention of the panel is to open up the network themes to researchers working on the full range of South Asian religious identities and practices. We welcome paper proposals related to any of the core thematic areas of the network: the building of institutions and innovative forms of worship; religious leaders, organisations and networks in national and transnational contexts; umbrella organisations and the projection of 'ecumenical' forms of religious identity; religious organisations and public service, with particular emphasis on the development and education sectors.

Contact: John Zavos: John.zavos@manchester.ac.uk