



MAHATMA
GANDHI
UNIVERSITY

MAR
CHRYSOSTOM
CHAIR

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON
BELONGING/UNBELONGING:
RELIGION, GENDER AND
'EVERYDAY' POLITICS IN
SOUTH ASIA**

08 - 09 MARCH 2024 | KOTTAYAM, KERALA

**SCHOOL OF GENDER STUDIES
&
CENTRE FOR CROSS-NATIONAL COMMUNICATION IN
SOUTH ASIA**



Mahatma Gandhi University is a state owned public university in Kerala. Set on the sprawling 110-acre Priyadarsini Hills Campus at Athirampuzha, 13 km off Kottayam, the University also has two satellite campuses in Kottayam. The university was established in 1983 and offers a wide range of academic degrees in bachelors, masters and doctoral programmes. MGU is ranked in the 501-600 band to share the second spot among Indian universities in Times Higher Education world university ranking.

Concept Note

The intersection of religion, individuation and belongingness is a complex and multidimensional issue that has spawned many interesting academic debates recently. These debates, in general, have centred or problematised the continuous relevance and political force of religion in the face of modernity and rationality and the post-secular reformulation of their basic presumptions. The issue is more expressive and pertinent in the current attempts of scrutinising the intimate connections and contradictions in presupposing Submission and Agency, Sacred and Profane, Private and Public. Recent scholarship has focused on interactions between religion and political institutions, the vast repertoire of religious traditions and practices, and the distinctiveness of sacred belongings from other forms of belonging. There is also an emerging emphasis on the 'everyday' and religion and its reflection on articulations of believing, behaving, and belonging. Especially with a phenomenological turn in the study of religion, the religious texts, symbols and practices, therefore, are not understood independently of their social extensions. This development is crucial to studying the interface between the region and gender. The continuous acknowledgement of patriarchy in feminist scholarship has given rise to a gender perspective that has a nuanced understanding of belonging and un-belonging. Another site where gender meets religion is protests of various sorts by women's movements in South Asia for claiming citizenry rights and social and political spaces (Sabarimala Issue, Nuns fight against sexual harassment, multiple debates and contexts around Hijab in Iran, France and Karnataka, women's gathering in Shaheen Bagh against CAA etc.). It is in this context the School of Gender Studies, Mahatma Gandhi University, in collaboration with the Centre for Cross-national Communication in South Asia, Mahatma Gandhi University is organising a two-day international conference with a particular focus on the theme Belonging/Unbelonging: Religion, Gender and Everyday Politics in South Asia.

- **Major Theme 1: Sacred and the Quotidian: Religion and Politics in Everyday South Asia**

South Asia is the home of the major religions as well as a region where religion has contentious relations with politics. Religion and religious practices are manifested in the daily negotiations of the citizen and the non-citizen with the State as well as in its powerful role in creating communities of refuge and peace. South Asia has also seen how religions have been the tool in the hands of majoritarian rhetoric and politics where caste and gendered violence is perpetuated. Alternatively, it is also crucial for individuation as well as community formations which emphasises the aspirational space religion offers for the minority. Micropractices of everyday and the quotidian negotiations in both hostile and open spaces that religion forms in South Asia is an interesting area of research and enquiry that the conference wishes to explore.

Subthemes

Topics include but not limited to:

- **Everyday politics and Embodied religiosity** (Religiosity and Religion in Everyday Politics, Religion and Protest, Piety and Belief in micro-practices, Believers, heretics and non-believers,)
- **Religious Diversity and Pluralism** (Living with Religion, Religion and regional modernities, Secularism, Challenges to Multiculturalism, Tribal Religions, Minority Religions)
- **Religion, State, and Governance** (Politics of Recognition; Religious Icons and Leaders; Religio-politics; Religion, Violence and Peace-building)
- **Faith, Youth and Change**
- **Religion and Visuality in South Asia**
- **Religion and Ecology in South Asia**
- **Religion, Speech and Expression** (Tolerance, Censure, Censorship Blasphemy, Sacred/Profane Texts and Poetics)
- **Marketing of the Sacred and Spiritual** (Religious tourism, Religious sites, Pilgrimages and Sacred Cities)
- **Migration, Religion, and Reformation**

• **Major Theme 2: Belonging /Unbelonging: Gendered Life-worlds in Religion**

Religion is one of the most powerful organizing entities in our societies today. As a crucial category, it plays a vital role in developing the identities of individuals from the private realm to the public sphere. Therefore, being a member of a family, community or state is often defined in such a way that the individual should perform certain kinds of practices attached to their respective religion. It includes keeping sacredness of the social institutions such as home, marriage, community, and religious institutions. It is often achieved by practising purity by staying away from all kinds of pollution prescribed by religion or caste. If there is a deviation from the criterion there is a definite possibility of exclusion of the individual from the particular religious institution. Most of the time these kinds of exclusions lead to conflict between individuals and religious institutions. When most religions promote heteronormative relationships, women's reproduction and sexuality become highly contested sites and questions. Purity of body and related concepts like chastity and modesty become crucial to control women's sexuality, and mobility. Most of the time this leads to brutal violence like FGM and honour killing and the discriminatory practices of religion push women to the margins in the family, community and the state. However, there is also feminist scholarship that moves beyond the subjection of religion to tracing the different kinds of agency and motivations that religion as a site provides for women and the Queer community.

Subthemes

Topics include but not limited to:

- **Religious texts and gender**
- **Religion, gender and activism**
- **Religion, gender and family**
- **Religion, Body and Social Space**
- **Gendered mobilities and immobilities in Religion**
- **Belonging in Religion**
- **Protesting Unbelongings**
- **Religion, gender and disability**
- **Religion, gender and New media**
- **Religion, Gender and Performance**
- **Religious polarization and Gender**
- **Religion, Science and Technology**

Author Guidelines

- Articles should be prepared in Microsoft Word format.
- Include the name, designation, and e-mail ID of all authors on the title page.
- The main text should be in Times New Roman, 12-point font, and double spaced.
- Maintain a 1-inch margin on all four sides of the document.
- Manuscripts should have a word limit ranging between 3500 to 5000 words, excluding references.
- Follow UK English throughout the manuscript.
- Non-English terms should be in italics.
- Single quotation marks where necessary.
- Use the APA (6th Edition) for all references.
- Ensure that all in-text citations have corresponding entries in the references section.
- We prefer the use of footnotes instead of endnotes.

Please note: Authors must ensure that their submissions are original work. Authors are solely responsible for plagiarism, and their papers getting rejected due to plagiarism.

Selected papers will be facilitated to be published in an edited volume.

REGISTRATION LINK

<https://forms.gle/Wa8YSt8EmGTMfz5z9>

IMPORTANT DATES

10-20 FEBRUARY
REGISTRATION

29 FEBRUARY
FULL PAPER
SUBMISSION

8,9 MARCH
CONFERENCE
DATE

Food and accommodation will be provided for
presenters

Registration fee for presenters

Student participants - ₹250/-

Faculty participants - ₹750/-

Registration fee for non presenter participants (without
accommodation) - 250/-

MGU students will be exempted from registration fee

PAYMENT DETAILS

Account No: 42515889809

Account Holder's Name: Mar Chrysostom Chair

Branch Name: SBI MG University Branch

IFSC Code: SBIN0070669

ACCOMODATON WILL BE PROVIDED FROM 07/03/2024 TO 10/03/2024

How to Reach

Location - Mahatma Gandhi University, Athirampuzha, Kottayam,
Kerala, 686560

Nearest Airport: Cochin International Airport

Transportation:

Take a bus to Vyttila and then to Kottayam. From Kottayam, private buses to Athirampuzha are easily available.

Nearest Railway Stations:

- 1) Ettumanoor
- 2) Kottayam (Recommended, as all trains stop here)

Transportation:

Private buses from Kottayam to Athirampuzha are frequently available.

For detailed directions and assistance, feel free to contact our conference helpline.

We look forward to welcoming you to the conference at MG University, Kottayam!

Contact Information

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