

CFP- Migrant Workers, Cultural (Re)Production, and the Culture Industry in South Asia

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Type:

Call for Papers

Date:

October 17, 2022 to October 18, 2022

Subject Fields:

Anthropology, Cultural History / Studies, Film and Film History, Immigration & Migration History / Studies, Literature

Migrant Workers, Cultural (Re)Production, and the Culture Industry in South Asia

An International Conference

Organized by

The Department of Sociology, Tezpur University, Assam

in collaboration with

The Cultural Studies Cell, School of Arts and Humanities, Christ University, Bangalore

Conference Dates: 17 & 18 Oct 2022

Thinking about culture is overwhelmingly spatially fixed in the context of migration. Thus, studies at the intersection of migration and culture are concerned with the many ways in which cultures are affected and transformed both at the source and the destination. This has been largely true across disciplines but especially so in anthropology, cultural studies, literary studies, history, sociology, and allied fields. Theoretical concepts and frameworks such as multiculturalism, liminality, acculturation, assimilation, roots, etc. assume a stable and fairly clearly demarcated territories at various scales (city, nation, regions, etc.) where people are separated along the lines of hosts and outsiders. Notions of belongingness and identity are a consequence of such assumptions in scholarship, politics, and governance.

The first critical move this conference seeks to make is to **question this restrictive receptacle view of migration and culture** and calls for an alternative

framework of investigating cultural transformations in the context of migration. It aims to do so by being attentive to the fact that migration is a flow, a phenomenon with entropy constitutive of the phenomenon. Rootedness and by extension uprootedness are strong concepts to think about migration, however such an approach limits our understanding of migration as both product of and contributor to cultural dispersion. Instead of viewing culture as being accumulative within territories and boundaries, we propose that it be seen as being inherently on the move and transgressive of geo-political boundaries, through multiple flows such as those of capital, technology, languages, and people themselves.

Workers on the move are figures of defiance as they are in motion. They may be made subjects in the form of lascars, slaves, indentured workers, or walking during a nationwide lockdown during the pandemic; they carry rebellion, form collectives, and demand autonomy and liberation not only where their 'source' or 'destination' are but in the course of moving itself.

The subsequent critical move the conference makes is to **identify the culture industry as an important field in which the subjectivities of the migrant workers find articulation**. There is an interesting dialectic at play between migrant workers and the culture industry especially as cultural production, circulation, and consumption are increasingly becoming digital. In a way, migrant workers are creating cultural artefacts as they are moving. They are also using digital technologies and social and mass media to bring to the surface the struggles they have to face. One of the prime examples is the way technology was used during the 2020 lockdown in India when migrant workers had to walk thousands of miles to get back 'home'. The cultural archive that was created during this period beckons urgent critical engagement. Another aspect is the way the mainstream culture industry appropriates cultural identities and expressions of migrant workers sublating them into large scale production of cultural commodities (cinema, music, etc.).

This conference is an invitation to reflect upon such dialectics of cultural production and consumption through a focus on migration. We invite papers addressing these issues from various theoretical and empirical perspectives and locations. We are especially interested in papers from South Asia and other regions of the Global South.

Indicative themes include (but are not limited to):

Migrants' agency in media production and consumption

Migrants, music & film cultures

Migration and transformations in the urban cultural landscape

Popular media forms addressing issues around migration

Migrants, Cultural Representation, and Intersectional Identities

Global diasporas and cultural forms

Please submit an abstract (300 words) and a short-bio (50-100 words) to mithilesh.kumar@christuniversity.in; amiyadas@gmail.com; and rashmi.sawhney@christuniversity.in

Submission deadline of abstracts- July 31, 2022

Selected participants will be informed by August 10, 2022

Please Note:

Once selected, the participant has to share the full draft of the paper (around 4000-5000 words) and copy of the tickets on or before 30th September 2022 to confirm/secure their participation in the Conference.

The conference will be held on 17 & 18 October 2022 at the Tezpur University, Assam. Participants will be required to make their own arrangements for travel. Accommodation and food will be arranged by the organisers.

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