

***Buddhist Cultural Pluralism in South Asia:
Explorations in Popular-Contemporary Buddhist Imageries***

Two-day International Conference

**Co-organized by the Department of Sociology, South Asian University, Royal University
of Bhutan and Sherubtse College, Bhutan, 17-18 March 2017**

Concept Note

This international conference strives to put together contemporary imageries, ideas, and practices of Buddhism in South Asia. The papers in this conference will depart from the established canons and conventional methodologies of exploration. Buddhism cannot be discussed simply as a religion of the past, through life stories of the Buddha and ancient Buddhist history alone. It is very much in the present too. It has popular, cultural and artistic manifestations too in addition to theological significance. Looking at these manifestations in contemporary times, this conference presents Buddhism as a living and dynamic entity in people's religious practices as well as in realms of imagination. As a key motif and objective, this conference will aid in realizing the *contemporariness of the image of the Buddha and different practices of Buddhism in the region*. To do so, the conference solicits papers which would deal with objects, materials, as well as non-material socio-cultural components in deciphering the contemporary manifestations of Buddhism as evident in South Asia.

Plan and Sub-themes:

The conference invites research papers along the following subthemes:

- *The Many Tales of Buddhism*
This theme invites papers dealing with contemporary tales pertaining to Buddhism and Buddhist history heard from scholars in the 'field', in popular culture (cinema, theater etc.), graphic novels, comics and contemporary visual arts.
- *Buddhism on the Move*
This theme revisits and fathoms various practices instituted by monks, Buddhist scholars and travelers who have wandered all over the region and created institutions of believers and communities of scholars. The papers in this section will aid in making sense of the sacred geography of Buddhism, created as a consequence of travelling believers and the setting up of institutions.
- *Constructed Notions and Cultural Dynamics of Buddhism*
This section brings together various narratives and analyses dealing with the intersections of cultural politics and Buddhism. The idea is to unravel contemporary socio-political themes which emerge in relation to ideals of Buddhism. The discussions could be focused around contemporary public sculpture and temple art, monastic architecture and public spatial politics, and festivals and their links with capital.

Publication Plan:

Selected papers from the conference will be put under peer-review process of the journal, *Society and Culture in South Asia*. Subsequently, a decision will be made on the possibility of publishing a special issue of the journal or an edited book comprising the peer-reviewed and revised papers.

Location:

The Vice Chancellor's Office, Royal University of Bhutan, Thimphu

Dates (Tentative):

Abstract Submission: 30 December 2017

Full draft paper Submission: 28 February 2017

Dates of the conference: 17-18 March 2017

Post-conference submission of revised papers for publication: 30 May 2017

Peer review reports on revised submission: 1 June 2017

Manuscript submission for publication: 1 July 2017

Conveners:***South Asian University:***

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Logistical Secretariat:

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Kindly note that each selected presenter/participant would have to organize their return tickets, visas, and pay for the bills for accommodation, arranged with the help of the host university. Help for visa matters will be provide by Logistical Secretariat. Upon the confirmation of selection, each presenter/participant would have to send the itinerary plan with a copy of tickets (and visas if applicable) to the Logistical Secretariat at somugyen@gmail.com by 15 January 2017.

Email addresses for submission of abstracts and papers:

Please send ALL submissions of abstracts and papers to the following email address:

vicepresident-sperera@sau.int