

Pluralism and Plurality in Classical and Contemporary India

18-19 September 2020

Programy Strategie AV21

On 18-19 September, 2020 a two-day, international conference was held on the topic of pluralism in contemporary and classical India. The conference was organized by Dr. James Madaio, and featured 18 international scholars from esteemed Universities and research institutions, such as the University of Oxford, University of Hawaii, University of Virginia, University of Cambridge, University of Lancaster, University of California, University of Manchester, Karlstad University, University of British Columbia, University of Konstanz, among others. Utilizing an internet video platform due to COVID-19 restrictions, the conference successfully engendered a robust and enthusiastic discussion over a rigorous two-day schedule, which sparked a number of areas for future collaboration and research. The papers delivered during the conference explored issues related to pluralism, inclusivism, exclusivism, perspectivalism, dialogue, communalism, secularism, strategies of peaceful co-existence, ethics and othering. Moving forward, it is the plan that the conference papers will form the basis of an edited volume to be proposed to the highly regarded [Dialogues in South Asian Traditions: Religion, Philosophy, Literature and History](#) book series published by Routledge.

The issue of religious and ethnic diversity within and across states is, of course, a critical issue facing a globalized and interconnected world. Indeed, modern European states consist of significant numbers of religious and ethnic minorities, many of whom are increasingly emigrating from South Asia. The presence of India on the global stage as a nuclear and economic power continues to play a key role in shaping geopolitical norms, particularly given the increased politicalization of Hindu identity by the BJP, the ruling party of India. In this process, many of the cultural, religious, and philosophical traditions associated with Hindu, and Indian history more broadly, are increasingly viewed through the lens of contemporary politics, often hinging on issues related to diversity, communalism and othering. In accord with the interests of the Europe and State research section of the Strategy AV21 programme, this conference has probed into tensions associated with religious diversity and multiple truth-claims and the cultural precedent and ethos of pluralism, inclusivism and exclusivism as organizing principles within the Indian context. In doing so, the conference has also laid significant groundwork for comparing Indian understandings of these issues to European conceptions.