

Dismantling Global Hindutva: Multidisciplinary Perspectives

We invite you to join us in an important conference (September 10-12, 2021) on the consolidation of Hindutva supremacist ideology in India and elsewhere. We are invested in examining the beliefs and actions that constitute Hindutva, an ideology that seeks to reduce the myriad practices of Hinduism to a singular notion of Hindu power in a putatively Hindu motherland. We also wish to highlight the transnational and global implications of Hindutva given its growing reach in the Indian diaspora.

This rise of militant Hindu groups in India and the corresponding escalation of violence against religious minorities and other marginalized communities is well documented, including by global media. International attention has also been directed at the exclusionary Citizenship Amendment Act of 2019 pushed through by the ruling Hindutva-aligned Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the aggressive crackdown on all forms of democratic dissent, and the intimidation and imprisonment of journalists, human rights groups and activists working to empower marginalized caste and tribal communities. This overall erosion of democratic practices and freedoms in India has been noted by global research networks. There has also been some useful scholarship, journalism and community-based activism on the links between Hindutva and racism and caste-ism. We need now to develop a comprehensive understanding of Hindutva and its global implications through its different iterations in the large Indian Diaspora and its potential for building links with other supremacist ideologies, especially as Hindutva groups expand their influence well beyond India.

The BJP and its various affiliate groups have been adept at building connections with the vast Hindu diaspora, particularly in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada. This reach has contributed materially and ideologically to the strengthening of Hindutva in India. Moreover even as such groups have leveraged racialized minority protections in, for instance, the US, they have continued to support caste-discriminatory practices and have found common cause with far right, and white supremacist groups in Europe and the US.

It is also important to recognize the economic turmoil unleashed by the authoritarian economic policies and policy making framework of the BJP government, including the failed demonetization policies and the ill-conceived agricultural reform policies. Such erratic and draconian policy making has led to stalled economic growth, dangerous declines in basic living standards, and loss of protections for the most vulnerable labor and agricultural communities in India.

This conference will convene panels on a variety of interlinked topics that address the threat and power of Hindutva. Scholars, journalists, and activists will examine the historical development of Hindutva, the fascist dimensions of the ideology, its alignment with other supremacist movements and define all that is at stake across a range of political, socio-cultural, and economic issues. We also aim for the conference to be a space for examining the history of dissent and resistance against Hindutva. Dalit and Feminist traditions have long resisted the singular narrative of Hinduism adopted by Hindu Supremacists. A broader coalition of activists from progressive communities have mobilized to enable both material and ideological divestment from Hindutva. Drawing inspiration from such collectivities we expect to develop resources for anti-Hindutva pedagogy and organizing in educational and cultural institutions everywhere.