

CALL for PAPERS

For a Proposed Panel on

Memory, Materiality, and Emotions: Re/Producing Caste Dominance and Resistance

Proposed Panel for AHM 2025 Conference: “A Polyphony of Emotions: Thinking Affect in Heritage, Memory and Material Culture”

We are seeking papers to include in a panel on Memory, Materiality and Emotions: Re/Producing Caste Dominance and Resistance that we are proposing for the 11th Annual Conference of the Amsterdam School for Heritage, Memory and Material Culture, to be held on 2–4 July, 2025 at the University of Amsterdam. Please read more about this year’s conference theme [here](#).

PROPOSED PANEL TITLE: Memory, Materiality, and Emotions: Re/Producing Caste Dominance and Resistance

PANEL ORGANISERS: [Dr Dhivya Janarthanan](#) & [Dr Karthikeyan Damodaran](#) (National Law School of India University, Bengaluru, India)

PANEL DESCRIPTION:

In his highly influential *How Societies Remember*, Paul Connerton drew on elite practices of inventing tradition and deploying rituals that ‘claim continuity with an appropriate historic past, organising ceremonies/parades and mass gatherings, and constructing new ritual spaces (1989: 51). In the past ten years in the Indian context, there has been much to affirm Connerton’s thesis that memory’s underpinnings include rituals, symbols, and public commemorative acts and sites just as much as cognitive and narrativising elements. Key events and processes in this regard include the materialisation of the Indian state’s efforts to actively reconstruct the past in the form of architectural projects (eg., the Central Vista Redevelopment Project in Delhi) or colossal statues (eg., the Statue of Unity in Gujarat); the spate of period films calibrating notions of the recent and not-so-recent past with contemporary demands of dominant national, regional, religious, and caste groups (eg., *Manikarnika: The Queen of Jhansi*; *Padmaavat*; *Kashmir Files*; *Kerala Story*); and the active use of virtual and digital networks to generate hurt sentiments and other emotions and affects.

Such broadscale efforts likewise animate marginalised groups' struggles to reformulate their political subjectivities, to contest dominant notions of the past, of collective identities, and of justice and freedom, and to stake claims on the public sphere and social space. These groups, too, have utilised commemorative sites and events to assemble what Pierre Nora (1989) termed 'sites of memory'. Such architectural, symbolic, ritual, cinematic, aural, and literary forms include Diksha Bhoomi and Bhima Koregaon Shaurya Din in Maharashtra; Immanuel Sekaran Guru Puja in Tamil Nadu; Ambedkar statues across India; digital archives and social-media circulatory networks of reports of caste atrocities and violence; autobiographies, *testimonios*, memoirs, and novels; and the dalit cinema wave in Marathi and Tamil.

This panel aims to contribute to the recent scholarship that has highlighted the enormous amount of cultural and identity work required to produce and reproduce caste identities and collectives, by focusing on the material, affective, and memory practices crucial to bids of caste dominance and resistance. We also seek to reflect on how these new scholarly trends conjoin, critique, or add to long-standing inquiries or underdeveloped themes in South Asian scholarship. Panelists are therefore urged to attend to the literature on, for instance, origin myths, the effects of colonial and postcolonial state policies on identity-making, and the links between contestations over the past and conflicts between present-day caste-groups, or the relative silence on caste in the emerging field of memory studies in India. Attending to these scholarly themes will allow the panel to trace continuities and/or disjunctions between older and newer ways of conceptualizing the links between memory, emotions and affect, and caste relations and identities.

POTENTIAL PAPER TOPICS:

To advance scholarly conversations on the materiality and the emotional and affective charges of caste relations and to conceptualise the importance of memory, materiality and emotions to the production and reproduction of caste, we seek papers on themes such as (but not exclusive to) the following:

- the generation and circulation of emotions/affect through commemorative practices relating to caste
- the cinematic/ literary/musical production and/or representation of caste pride and humiliation and the experience of caste
- the question of the cinematic/ literary/ music form in relation to the entrenchment or challenge of caste identities and notions of the past, present, and future

- caste, memory, and emotion in the age of digital infrastructures
- emotions, affect, and the re/formation of caste identities in and through everyday senses of memory
- emotions and affective practices in relation to the resurrection/invention of historical/mythic figures and caste-related claims-making
- the conceptual mapping of memory, materiality, emotions and affect in the study of caste

Please send paper proposals with a title, abstract (max. 250 words), and an academic biography (including name, affiliation, research interests; max 100 words) to dhivya.janarthanan@nls.ac.in and karthikeyan.damodaran@nls.ac.in by 10th March 2025.

We will contact potential panelists as soon as the conference organisers convey their decisions.