

Jon Keune
Michigan State University

Transnational Buddhism and Ambedkarite Migration

Dec 5, 2024

17:30

Seminar Room 1

of the Department of South Asian,
Tibetan and Buddhist Studies,
University Campus,
Spitalgasse 2, Hof 2.7, 1090 Vienna



Jon Keune

Michigan State University

Transnational Buddhism and Ambedkarite Migration

When the Dalit (so-called "Untouchable") leader Bhimrao Ambedkar converted with a half-million followers in 1956, he established a new living Buddhist community in central India, where none had existed for many centuries. Ambedkar's distinctively modern, rationalist vision of Buddhism emphasized its potential to transform society and annihilate caste-based prejudice. Since the 1990s, Ambedkarites have increasingly engaged with East Asian Buddhists, as Japanese and Taiwanese collaborate with them in central India, and as Ambedkarite professionals migrate to other countries for work. When transnational encounters occur, how do interlocutors find solidarity (or not)? How does the prospect of a shared Buddhist identity function in the face of vast cultural, socioeconomic, linguistic, and sectarian differences? What does Buddhism do for Ambedkarites when they live among non-Indian people who have little knowledge of India and caste? Based on ethnographic research in India, Japan, Dubai, Europe, and North America, this presentation explores how Ambedkarites' visions of Buddhism and social activism are adapting to new diaspora contexts.

Please join our mailing list in order to receive more information about talks and other events! <https://stb.univie.ac.at/en/news-events>

