

**CENTRE FOR CANADIAN STUDIES
JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY**

CALL FOR PAPERS

**International Conference on Canadian Studies
14-15 February, 2023**

Ecology and the Individual: Reading Transnationalism from Indo-Canadian perspectives

Humanities and social sciences have already made the inevitable inter-disciplinary turn towards an understanding of the natural sciences which deal with ecology and the environment. This turn towards the natural sciences, needless to say, takes into account the nuances of how humans have inhabited, changed, and engaged with the planet. Nature and environment are comprehended as entities that cannot be understood holistically if the functioning of human agency is discounted. Human agency and the activities that they manifest have apparently caused some irreversible changes to the planet and hence their contributions in terms of how the ecosystems develop, falter, and function cannot be ignored anymore (Dipesh Chakraborty, 2021). These activities also involve steps that proceed towards different conservationist and sustenance practices— and not just resource extraction, pollution, technological ravage and other negative practices which are often conflated as sole features that define the human relationship with nature and the environment. Though scholars are at a quandary with respect to realising if the ‘negative’ effects of human agency on nature are irreconcilable or not, efforts to understand the consequences of the environment/environmental change on human history are also being undertaken in the humanities worldwide. This attention has opened up newer ways of looking at phenomena like imperialism, colonialism, post-colonialism, and globalisation. In a colonial and neo-colonial order, environmental degradation, or in other words, ‘taming of nature’, is often validated by asserting the need of a progressive nation that is open to the idea of a technological boom (Ursula Heise, 2006). This dependence on technology for the functioning of our lives— the over-encompassing influence of the ‘technosphere’ — is apparently very difficult to exterminate. It has percolated and intermeshed itself inextricably in our relationship/understanding of the ecologies that we inhabit (Peter Haff, 2014; 2017). Nonetheless, humans have also proceeded towards the realisation that it is the ‘world’ that will precede and succeed them and stand testament to the inter-generational time and values. Hence a lot of attention has been directed towards the redressal of the ‘irreconcilable changes’ that human activities have caused to the environment — climate change being one of them. Climate activists, conservationists, and sustenance policy makers (like David Suzuki in Canada) have emerged globally to address and redress these changes and have tried to contest the very utility-based relationship humans have with the environment. This requires individuals to go beyond an understanding of human engagement with nature as ‘means’ to a beneficial (mostly monetary) ‘end’, and to denounce an existent hierarchisation between different species that inhabit an ecosystem (Arne Naess 1989).

Though the north-south dichotomy divides the world into distinct opposing hemispheres, one cannot be oblivious to the transnational convergences that straddle the globe. Canada and India, albeit the many divergences that they stand for, often converge on the crux of being hosts to different kinds of marginalised existences. In addition to that, significant amount of interventions about ecology and human relationships with

environments have transpired in both the countries — at the level of activism, policy-making, law enforcement, and community outreach. Indigenous communities from India and Canada are often seen at the forefront of affirmative action vis-à-vis environmental activism and social outreach. Autumn Peltier's (Anishinaabe) activist work on water protection in Canada is one of the many examples in this regard. But legal praxis and judicial intervention have assigned other meanings, often utilitarian, to these relationships that frequently do not reverberate with the lived realities and worldview of the indigenous populations. Human relationships with their environments are always in a state of flux— where different meanings generated by the state, the collective, and the individual are mostly at contention with each other. The conference recognises the multifarious significations of the term 'ecology' and how it has evolved over time and, most importantly, the presence of the human in it as one of its very significant participants. We do not limit ourselves to certain pristine and idyllic implications of the term but also embrace the urban, technical, futuristic ideations of it. With global migration and refugee crisis being the very palpable reality of the day we live in, we also want to look at how ecological meanings transpire in these cases where the individual/collective tries to grapple between aspirations and tribulations in new ecosystems. We intend to continue the conversation between students, scholars, activists, writers, policy-makers to understand if ecologies also inform human agencies, which include the creative —and if the human can also have the prerogative to imagine ecologies and make different meanings out of them. From the vantage of comparative literature, we also intend to interrogate how ecologies function in the production/ narration, dissemination and reception of texts in India and Canada, in a bid to unearth significant transnational coincidences if any.

We are interested in papers that make academic interventions in the fields of literature, culture, international-relations, policy-making, history, environmentalism in the Indo-Canadian context that charts an understanding of ecology and the flux of meanings that come with it. The abstracts may have direct bearing on one of the sub-themes mentioned below or may address other issues that pertain to the theme of the conference. The sub themes are as follows:

- History of ecology and environmentalism
- The relationship between literature/ cultural productions and ecology
- Mental health and ecology
- Marginalised communities and environment
- Environmental activism
- From eco-criticism to eco-feminism
- Ecology, environment, and the new media
- Migration and ecological issues
- Interventions in visual art and performance practices
- Queer ecologies
- Futuristic interpretations of ecology

Abstracts (400 - 500 words) along with a 50-word bio-note are to be sent to canadacentreju@gmail.com by **26 January, 2023**. Acceptance will be intimated by **30 January, 2023**.

Please note that the abstract must reflect a clear understanding of Indo-Canadian Studies. Students at the undergraduate level can only submit abstracts for poster presentation.

Only overseas participants would be considered for online presentation, if all logistics work. Registration will be required. Details would be provided closer to the conference dates.

From 2017, the Centre for Canadian Studies, Jadavpur University has introduced two student awards (from MA till the MPhil level) for the best paper presented at a regular session at the Conference as follows:

1. “Victor Ramraj Memorial Prize” for the best paper in Canadian Diaspora Studies
2. “Renate Eigenbrod Memorial Prize” for the best paper in Indigenous Canadian Studies

- A student may apply for only one of the above-mentioned prizes and should indicate the same during abstract submission. Joint authors would not be eligible to participate. The student must be registered as a current student at a college/ University/ Research Institute. Previous awardees (within the last three academic years) in any category would not be eligible to apply.
- In order to be considered for the prize and upon acceptance of the abstract, completed papers (2500 words excluding bibliography, Chicago Stylesheet, 17th Edition) should be emailed by **11 February 2023**. Inability to adhere to given deadlines and formats would lead to instant disqualification and the students would not be shortlisted for the prize.
- Only shortlisted students would be eligible to compete for the prize but all students whose abstracts have been accepted would be eligible to present their paper at the conference.
- The Prize(s) would be awarded only if the Screening Committee believes in the originality and academic excellence of the submission. The decision of the Screening Committee would be final.

Conference Coordinators:

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