

# NEWS

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **CCNMTL Releases New Multimedia Study Environment: The Annihilation of Caste**

*New York, November 12, 2004* - Columbia Center for New Media Teaching and Learning (CCNMTL) has released a new multimedia study environment, *The Annihilation of Caste*, an undelivered 1936 speech by Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar ('15 M.A., '28 Ph.D., '52 HON) advocating for the abolition of the Hindu caste system. The speech, intended for the annual conference of the Jat-Pat-Todak Mandal Society of Lahore, lays bare the inequities (and iniquities) of the caste system, its debilitating effects on all Hindus, and its stultifying influence on India's growth towards nationhood. Frances Pritchett, Professor of Modern Indic Languages in the Department of Middle East and Asian Languages and Cultures conceived and developed the content of this annotated version of the text.

"*The Annihilation of Caste* is an important text, and by presenting it in this format, with strong annotations, students can do so much more with it. They can make connections between different parts of the text and other primary sources, providing a more comprehensive understanding of its historical context," according to Pritchett. The multimedia study environment – <http://ccnmtl.columbia.edu/projects/mmt/ambedkar> - will be used in this semester's "Introduction to Indian Civilization" undergraduate course. With the continued support of the CCNMTL and the Southern Asian Institute (which provided research funding for the first phase of the project), Pritchett plans to further develop the site to include additional commentary from Columbia faculty and other academics.

The multimedia study environment (MSE) of *The Annihilation of Caste* includes:

- An historical timeline of Ambedkar's life
- Correspondence related to the speech, including Mahatma Gandhi's published response
- Other works by Ambedkar, including *The Constitution of India*
- Links to *the Imperial Gazetteer of India*, housed at the Digital South Asia Library.

Ambedkar earned his master's degree in 1915 and his Ph.D. in economics in 1928 from Columbia University, where he formed many of his ideas about equality and social justice while studying under Columbia professor John Dewey. Ambedkar's work on the Constitution of India provided the legal framework for the abolition of

many oppressive features of Indian society and gained rights for India's 60,000,000 untouchables. In 1952, Columbia presented him with an honorary doctorate of law for his accomplishment.

### **About CCNMTL**

CCNMTL (Columbia Center for New Media Teaching and Learning) is a service of Columbia University whose mission is to enhance teaching and learning through the purposeful use of technology and new media. CCNMTL forms partnerships with faculty, providing them with as much support as they need in everything from the construction of course Web sites to the development of advanced projects. CCNMTL is committed to remaining a leader in its field, engaging with its faculty partners in the reinvention of education for the digital age. CCNMTL is part of Columbia's Information Services Division.