

## Otiose Leisure in Contemporary Indian Fiction

**Two PhD positions from 1 January 2017 for 4 years**, i.e. PhD to be handed in in June 2020.

SFB 1015 ("Otium"), funded by the German Research Foundation  
Project G5

Directed by Monika Fludernik, English Department, University of Freiburg, Germany  
in cooperation with the Heidelberg department of South Asian Studies (Professors Axel Michaels and Hans Harder)

Requirements for the **PhD position in English Literature**: excellent English, MA thesis 1.3 or better; preferably already a specialization in postcolonial studies or Indian fiction. Application with full cv, (chapter of) master thesis, two letters of recommendation by 12 December, 2016.

Requirements for the **PhD position in South Asian Studies**: completed MA; excellent English in speech and writing; proficiency in one northern Indian regional language; familiarity with postcolonial theory appreciated but not necessary; knowledge of German not necessary but expected to acquire a working knowledge of German by the end of the project. Application with full cv, (chapter of) master thesis, two letters of recommendation by 12 December, 2016.

**Interviews** on/around 20 December, arrangeable per video conference.

Send applications to [sekretariat.fludernik@anglistik.uni-freiburg.de](mailto:sekretariat.fludernik@anglistik.uni-freiburg.de) per email attachment and a printed version in snailmail to Professor Monika Fludernik, English Department, University of Freiburg/Germany, D-79085 Freiburg. Letters of recommendation to be addressed directly to the email address above.

Prospective applicants are encouraged to contact us immediately and ask for the longer version of the project description.

### Abstract of Project

A number of Anglophone Indian novels after Independence, and particularly from the 1990s on, treat leisure in a specifically nostalgic and anti-colonial way, contrasting the alleged Western binary of work vs. idleness with supposedly genuinely Indian leisure. Texts like Pankaj Mishra's *The Romantics*, Nayantara Sahgal's *A Time to be Happy*, Sunetra Gupta's *A Sin of Colour* and Anita Desai's *The Artist of Disappearance* do this by arguing that this genuinely Indian leisure radically differs from the Western dichotomy and correlates with moments of reflection, the appreciation of landscape and of art.

This project intends to analyze the **role of leisure in the contemporary Anglophone Indian novel** (1990-2016) and **contemporary regional-language South Asian fiction** and explore the practices of otium which they depict (often referring back to the Hindoo and Mughal traditions). In a second step, the results will be examined with regard to the potential adoption of colonial stereotypes about Indian religions, philosophy and art in the creation of an autostereotype of indigenous otiose leisure versus the Western (British) work ethic. The project will include two research foci. On the one hand, **English-language texts** will be analyzed regarding the sites, figures and topoi of otium and their possible indigenous or colonial provenance. This research will be undertaken by a PhD student in English Studies and by the director of the research. On the other hand, **novels from a regional North Indian language** (Hindi, Bangla, etc.) will be examined tracing typical constellations of otium in these novels. This research is to be the task of a second PhD student in South Asian Studies who will be attached to the Freiburg English Department. Comparing English-language novels displaying the theme of leisure with representations of otium in novels in one of the regional languages will elucidate whether the motif of idealized leisure is linked to

an indigenous Indian tradition or needs to be interpreted as an autostereotypical reinterpretation of a colonial heterostereotype. To facilitate the analysis of regional Indian-language novels and the subsequent comparison with English-language texts, the project will cooperate with the South Asia Institute at the University of Heidelberg. First results suggest that – under the pressures of globalization – modern India has become a largely Westernized nation, and that this has created the space for an intellectual nostalgia for refined pre-industrial practices of leisure that employ exoticist imagery in a nationalist discourse.