

THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY SPALDING SYMPOSIUM ON INDIAN RELIGIONS

FRIDAY 2ND TO SUNDAY 4TH MAY, 2025
CHRIST CHURCH, UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

ON THE TOPIC OF

FESTIVALS & CELEBRATIONS

KEYNOTES:

PROFESSOR DIWAKAR ACHARYA (SPALDING PROFESSOR OF EASTERN RELIGIONS
AND ETHICS, UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD)

PROFESSOR UTE HÜSKEN (HEAD OF CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF
SOUTH ASIA, HEIDELBERG UNIVERSITY)

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CHRIST CHURCH
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

The Spalding Memorial
Educational Trust

Programme

Friday 2nd May

12.15-12.45: Registration, Arrival

12.45-1.00: Opening welcome

**1.00-2.00: Opening Keynote: Professor Diwakar Acharya,
Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics, University of Oxford**

2.15-3.45: Panel 1

Sucharita Adluri (Cleveland State University): Festivals Inscribed in Stone: Public Celebrations in Late Medieval South India
Elizabeth Cecil (Florida State University, USA): Epigraphic Events: Sanskrit Inscriptions as Performative Media

4.00-5.30: Panel 2

Peter Bisschop (Leiden, Netherlands): Festivities of the Asuras in the *Skandapurāṇa*
Mandira Sharma (Independent Scholar): Wheels of Devotion:
Understanding Śiva's *Rathotsavam* (Chariot Festival) in South India through Śaiva Literature

7.00: Film Screening & Discussion at Balliol College

Saturday 3rd May

9.00-10.45: Panel 3, Postgraduate

Kush Depala (Heidelberg University): Virtual Venerations and Digital Devotion: Celebrating a VR *Janmajayanti*
Jackson Stephenson (University of California, Santa Barbara): Night on Bald Mountain: Performing Enlightenment through Song
Kainat Bashir (Toronto, Canada): Being Catholic the Punjabi Way: An Analysis of
Material Acts of Religion in Mariamabad Shrine Punjab, Pakistan
Sujata Chaudhary (McGill, Canada): Bhagwan" and "devtas" of Kullu Dusshera - an analysis of Dusshera of Kullu District

11.00-12.30 Panel 4 & Panel 5

Panel 4

Annalisa Bocchetti (University of Naples "L'Orientale"): Between Eid and Holi at Shāh 'Ālam II's court:
ritualised power or powerful rituals?
Manik Bajracharya and Rajan Khatiwoda (Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities):
Power and Patronage in Motion: The *Buṅgadyaḥ Yātrā* of Kathmandu Valley

Panel 5

Saran Suebsantiwongse (Leiden University): Celebrating Divine Kingship:
The *Tiruvempāvai-Tiruppāvai* Festival in Thailand and Its South Indian Heritage
George Pati (Valparaiso University, Indiana): Embodiment, Spatiality, and Materiality
at the *Uthra Śivēli* Festival in a Kerala Temple

2.00-3.30 Panel 6 & Panel 7

Panel 6

Richard David Williams (SOAS, University of London): The Pleasures of *Bhṭm*:
Festivals and Courtly Time in Early Nineteenth-Century Udaipur
Ananya Vajpeyi (Centre for Study of Developing Societies, India):
The Arts Festival: Transformations of the "Classical" in Contemporary Carnatic Music and Kudiyyattam Theatre

Panel 7

Christopher Fleming (Oxford, UK): The Legal Regulation of Festivals in Contemporary Indian Law:
Essential Practices and Constitutional Principles
Nicole Karapanagiotis (Rutgers University, USA): Negotiating Public and Private, Legal and Banned:
Rathayātrā of the International Sri Krishna Mandir (ISKM) in Singapore

4.00-5.30 Panel 8 & Panel 9

Panel 8

Daniela De Simone & Ramesh Nanjundan (Ghent University & University of Hyderabad):
The *Toda* Salt Giving Ceremony: A Study of Ecological and Cultural Rituals in the Nilgiri Hills
Cezary Gaiewicz (Jagiellonian University, Poland): Imagined Festivals and Genuine Emotions:
the *Candrikāvīthī* of *Rāmapañivāda* to be staged in celebration of *Śivarātri* in premodern Kerala

Panel 9

Smytta Yadav (University of Sussex, UK): Liminal Spaces and Cultural Continuity:
Diasporic Hindu Festivals as Sites of Heritage and Identity in the UK
Aarti Patel (Pennsylvania State University): Pandemic Festivals: Transcending Geographies and Expanding Accessibility

Plenary 5.30-6.30: Celebrating 50 years of Spalding Symposium

Evening 7pm: Group dinner at Balliol College, Oxford

Sunday 4th May

9.00-10.30 Panel 10

Leah Comeau (Saint Joseph's University / Universität Hamburg): Shared Blessings:
The Role of Sacred Sarees in Tamil Christian Festival Celebrations
Ewa Dębicka-Borek (Jagiellonian University, Poland): From Theft to Reverence:
The Ritual Theft of Jewelry in Ahobilam

10.45-12.15 Panel 11

Christophe Vielle (University of Louvain, Belgium): Aspects of the Festival of Love in premodern Kerala
Liwen Liu (SOAS University of London): Festival, Architecture, and Kingship:
An Ethnographic Study of the *Dasaim* Festival at Hanuman Dhoka, Kathmandu

12.15-1.15: Closing Keynote: Professor Ute Hüsken,
Head of Cultural and Religious History of South Asia, Heidelberg University