

# THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY SPALDING SYMPOSIUM ON INDIAN RELIGIONS

FRIDAY 2<sup>ND</sup> TO SUNDAY 4<sup>TH</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 *Buñgadyah 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 *Bhīm*:

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 Kudiyaattam 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 *Candrikāvīttthī* of *Rāmapaṇivāda* 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**