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Department of Religious Studies

Occult South Asia. From the 19th to the 21st Century

23–24 November 2018

Campus of the University of Vienna, Aula
Spitalgasse 2, 1090 Vienna



*The Posture of Samadhi or Trance through Uddanda
Yogue practised by The Madras Bragi.
Clear becomes to Lujassar Bopofathy Swamy.*

By the Hon. Mrs. Lujassar



UNIVERSITEIT VAN AMSTERDAM



History of Hermetic Philosophy
and related currents

23 November 2018

9:00

Welcome Address and Acknowledgements

Panel 1: Entangled History and Comparative Approaches

9:15

The Grammar of Occultism: Studying Modern South Asia in the Context of an Entangled History of Esotericism

Mriganka Mukhopadhyay (University of Amsterdam)

10:00

Awakening India's Shakti: Tantra and (Anti-)Modern Hindu Identity

Julian Strube (University of Heidelberg)

10:45

Coffee Break

11:15

Occult Currents and Mediums between the United States and South Asia

Philip Deslippe (University of California, Santa Barbara)

12:00

Going Against the Grain: Comparing Practices of Reversal in South Asian and Western Esotericism

Gordan Djurdjevic (Simon Fraser University)

12:45

Lunch Break

23 November 2018

Panel 2: The Theosophical Society and Occultism in India

14:45

Universal Brotherhood in India: Globalizing the Theosophical Society

Tim Rudbøg (University of Copenhagen)

15:30

Blavatsky, Reincarnation, and India

Julie Chajes (Tel Aviv University)

16:15

Short Break

16:30

Discussion of Future Projects, Collaborations etc.

19:00

Joint Dinner

24 November 2018

Panel 3: Yoga

9:00

**The Vedāntic Rājayoga of Śrī Sabhāpati Swāmī:
Its History and Practice**

Keith Cantu (University of California, Santa Barbara)

9:45

**Yoga and the Quest for Occult Knowledge within
Annie Besant's Theosophy**

Karl Baier (University of Vienna)

10:30

Coffee Break

11:00

**The Occult Side of Sri Aurobindo: Esoteric and
Tantric Strands in the Teachings of a Twentieth-
Century Yogin**

Peter Heehs (Independent Scholar, Puducherry)

11:45

Lunchbreak

Panel 4: Postcolonial and Contemporary Developments

13:15

**Desmond Dunne's "Insight School of Yoga":
Between Occultism and Secularism**

Magdalena Kraler (University of Vienna)

14:00

**Dealing with Visible and Invisible Fruits: Astrology,
Karman and Karmic Healing in North India**

Caterina Guenzi (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences
Social (EHESS), Paris)

14:45

Closing Remarks by the Organizers, Farewell

In the academic study of esoteric currents and occultism, the theme “India” has remained a strong undercurrent since the early days. There have been discussions around the concept of “the Mystic East” or “the Magic East” and its influence towards Western esotericism from the very beginning. In recent times, approaches that emphasise the interaction of South Asian and foreign occult cultures in colonial and postcolonial times have become increasingly important.

The workshop aims to contribute to a critical and nuanced understanding of

- occult and esoteric currents and their practitioners in modern South Asia
- the impact of South Asian ideas and practices on modern esoteric and occult currents on the global stage.

South Asia will thus be viewed as a theme as well as a site for the study of esotericism and occultism. Steps will be taken in establishing occult South Asia as a significant field in South Asian academic research.



Organizers:

Karl Baier

(Department of Religious Studies, University of Vienna)

Mriganka Mukhopadhyay

(Center for History of Hermetic Philosophy and
Related Currents, University of Amsterdam)

Partners:

Research Center Religion and Transformation in
Contemporary Society (RaT), University of Vienna

Department of South Asian, Tibetan and Buddhist
Studies, University of Vienna

Austrian Society for the Study of Religions (OEGRW)

Center for Interdisciplinary Research and Documentation
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