

# Spalding Symposium on Indian Religions 2023

King's College London (in person)

Friday 21<sup>st</sup> to Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2023

Call for Papers – Proposal deadline: 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2022

## Theme: Authority, Lineage & Schism

We invite proposals for papers for the 48<sup>th</sup> Spalding Symposium on Indian Religions.

Over the last two decades, there has been growing and multi-disciplinary attention to South-Asian formations of lineage and leadership. Historians have addressed how religious movements have positioned themselves within a genealogy of authoritative organisational rubrics (Burghart, 2004; Hawley, 2011, 2015; Horstmann, 2011); sociologists have mapped hereditary lineages of particular sects (Lane 1992); and anthropologists have begun to place individual leaders within the contextual frameworks of Indian society, diaspora, and culture (Beckerlegge, 2006; Warriar, 2005). Several edited volumes have also brought together various case studies and approaches to studying the diversity of the social and conceptual domains in which gurus feature (e.g., Copeman & Ikegame, 2014). Evidenced from the breadth of scholarship on recent guru studies, the guru – viz. *sant*, *bābā*, *mahant*, *svāmī*, *ācārya*, etc. – is, and always has been, critical to Indian religious life and practice. Yet, the critical

question of how they are chosen and succeeded remains largely unexplored. Is there a unique pattern, a codified convention, or an unwritten but accepted tradition of leader appointment and heirship? Or are there diverse, complex, and evolving formulations of succession that develop out of power feuds between eligible heirs, or out of conflicting interpretations of custom and practice? What happens when there is uncertainty or disagreement over a leader's succession?

This year's symposium invites papers that deal with the topic of leadership, succession practices, and schism formation, as well as the sources of authority used to mitigate traditions and conflicts.

**Keywords:**

Succession, eligibility, guru, leadership, mahantship, heirship, leader instalment rites and practices, community formation, succession disputes, divine genealogy, endowment, religious textual authority leadership, gender and leadership, childhood and leadership, embodied and non-embodied authority, lineage in new religious movements, law.

Our purview includes both religions of South Asian origin wherever in the world they are being practised, and those of non-South Asian origin present within South Asia. We welcome papers based upon all research methods, including textual, historical, ethnographic, sociological and philosophical. Papers that address the theme of the conference are particularly welcome, although other proposal topics may be considered.

Presenters are allocated forty minutes for their paper and twenty minutes for discussion. As the conference will be in person a conference fee will apply. We also welcome proposals from advanced doctoral candidates, who will be allocated twenty minutes for their paper and ten minutes for discussion. (Please note on your proposal if you are a doctoral researcher). Doctoral students will be entitled to bursaries if their papers are accepted.

If you would like to give a presentation, please submit a title, abstract (maximum 500 words) and short bio to the Spalding Symposium committee via this link by **5pm on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2022**: <https://forms.gle/C9Q7G4NvWiBikiEP6>

Due to the typical volume of submissions, individual feedback on proposals cannot be provided. Successful proposals will be announced in mid-January.

For further enquires please email the committee on the email address: [spaldingsymposium1@gmail.com](mailto:spaldingsymposium1@gmail.com)

With best wishes,

Dr Avni Chag, Dr Karen O-Brien-Kop and Kush Depala

~ the organising committee