

Abteilung für Asiatische und Islamische Kunstgeschichte SoSe 2025:

Prof. Dr. Ann R David

**(Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Abteilung für Asiatische
und Islamische Kunstgeschichte, Universität Bonn)**

Gendered Dependence: Non-Binary Notions of Sexuality in Indian Art and Performance.

Montag, 02.06.2025, Beginn: 18.15 Uhr

Abteilung für Asiatische und Islamische Kunstgeschichte, Adenauerallee 10, ÜR (EG)
<https://uni-bonn.zoom-x.de/j/61938828570?pwd=gbUee2b4lqxWBmTnUw4jh5z5kzSY02.1>

Going beyond the usual concepts of dependency relationships located within a post-colonial state, this new research project examines in greater depth how Indian conceptions of the body (depicted in art, iconography and in performance) have been impacted by a moral, religious Western perspective imposed before, during and post-colonial rule. My recent focus on gay male dancer Ram Gopal, the subject of a recently published monograph (2024), investigates a fascinating man who worked his way through a complex tangle of critical contemporary problems as a gay Asian male dancer.

The ‘moralising projects of colonial and post-colonial modernity’ as Daves Soneji has termed them remain part of the ‘unfinished pasts’ (2012: 3) of both the place and enactment of performative ritual and performance in India, from the roles of the female temple dancers, the *devadāsīs*, through to the itinerant folk dance and theatrical performers, and the ‘third gender’ or transgender performers – the *hirijas* and *kothis*. In terms of contemporary practice, a number of Indian dancers in India, in the UK and elsewhere are now attempting to re-inscribe and re-create artistic forms connected with traditional Indian forms of gender and sexuality (*devadāsīs*, *hijras*, etc.) in a radically different context, such as in performance research, in cross-disciplinary theatrical productions, and in film and creative work. In this project I investigate aspects of ‘asymmetrical relations of dependence’ (Hegewald, 2023:8) and issues of empowerment as well as erasures of memory brought about by nationalistic agendas.



Bahuchara on her cockerel *vahana*. Mewar, circa 1820-40. Gouache on warqa. 13.1 x 10cm,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bahuchara.jpg>