

## *Symposium*

# **Fertility, phenomenology of the body, and postcolonial modernity in India**

*CeMIS Board Room, 2.112 Altbau, Waldweg 26, Göttingen  
Friday 9 December 2016, 9am - 12:30pm*

The workshop will discuss the strengths of ‘phenomenology’ and how it helps to unpack inherited modern dichotomies, including the advantages phenomenology offers over critical, post-structuralist styles of feminism. With a particular focus on questions of fertility in postcolonial India, it will provide a space for students and researchers to reflect on the frameworks that they use to study the body, health, sexuality and/or gender.

- *Kalpna Ram, Macquarie University: ‘Spirit Possession and its Provocation of the Modern: Re-casting Frameworks for Researching Women’s Health and Fertility’.*
- *Sayani Mitra, University of Göttingen: ‘Affective embodiments: the case of commercial surrogacy in India’.*
- *Zaid Al Baset, CSSSC, Kolkata/CeMIS: Discussant*

*Texts will be circulated prior to the workshop. Please **register by email before December 5** with Dr. Karin Klenke: [karin.klenke@cemis.uni-goettingen.de](mailto:karin.klenke@cemis.uni-goettingen.de)*

## About the speakers

**Kalpana Ram** is a senior anthropologist at Macquarie University, Australia. She has worked extensively on themes related to postcolonialism, social movements and modernity in India, with specific reference to the lives of rural women in Tamil Nadu. She has also worked on women's experiences of changing sexual divisions of labour in the context of capitalist transformation, as well as other areas of embodied experience such as maternity, puberty, state programs of health education, and fertility control. She also looks at popular subaltern religion in India, as well as the arts. She draws on a broad range of interdisciplinary debates and bodies of theory, including feminism, postcolonial theory, Marxism, as well as anthropology and philosophy. Dr Ram has recently published the coedited volume *Phenomenology in Anthropology* (2015). Her book *Fertile Disorder: Spirit Possession and its Provocation of the Modern* (2013) – which encompasses the diversity of her research – will form the basis for discussion at the symposium.

**Sayani Mitra** is a PhD student at the Institute of Medical Ethics and History of Medicine at the University of Göttingen. Under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Silke Schicktanz since October 2013, she has been working on the social and ethical implications of gestational surrogacy practices in India. She was awarded a DAAD scholarship (2013-16) to write her dissertation *The Process of Making of a New Life and its 'End'- Ethical and Material Implications of the Practice of Surrogacy in India*. She is an affiliated doctoral student at the Faculty of Social Sciences and the GGG.

**Zaid Al Baset** is Assistant Professor of Sociology in St. Xavier's College and a PhD student at the CSSSC in Kolkata. He teaches sociological theory and the social anthropology of kinship, family and marriage. His doctoral thesis explores the relationship between gender, the supernatural and the middle-class Muslim every day in the city of Kolkata. Using in-depth interviews and participant observation, he explores gendered forms of piety in Muslim households as well as public places in Kolkata. Zaid is at CeMIS as a visiting DAAD scholar.

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