



## ALBERTINA NUGTEREN - HINDUS IN DIASPORA

Albertina Nugteren investigates both. She is interested in the changing determinants of meaning-making: processes of affirmative borrowing, derivation, and appropriation caused by the proximity of the inspiring 'other', as also the processes of negative identity formation by excluding what is not 'us', and all other possible strategies in between. Religion appears to be subject to as many shifts and changes, and yet shows much of the same persistence, continuity and ingenuity as other domains of human existence.

In her courses on continuity and change as traceable in the cartography of human believing and/or (be)longing she looks at such data from three perspectives: on the macro-level, the meso-level, and the micro-level.

In her research, one of her foci is the study of locally bounded diaspora groups, such as a Hindu temple community in Wijchen (situated in the Eastern part of the Netherlands), or a community around a newly established Jagannath temple in Bhadrak, Orissa, India.

What deeply fascinates her, as a Sanskritist, Religious Studies specialist, and historian of religion, is the situation that in such communities history is being written right before the researcher's eyes, including the various processes of editing, retelling, and justifying their own foundation narrative.

Her special focus is on ritual behaviour. The transformations in the experience and interpretation of symbols and rituals since the nineteen-nineties have become the main object of investigation in the so-called Ritual Studies. Whoever is willing to surrender to an emerging academic domain in which the study of ritual produces major keys to the interpretation of culture and society will find illuminating insights into human behaviour, wishful thinking, and coping mechanisms. And when the insights gained in this field are applied to specific locally bounded Hindu communities intriguing patterns as well as culture-specific anomalies may come to light. In this she follows the so-called spatial turn, and questions especially the local-specific presence and expression of a particular religious community. In the ubiquitous processes of globalisation and transnationalism most believers tend to opt for a locally specific and 'timely' adaptation but at the same time follow an urge to connect themselves to a 'timeless' and transcending continuity. The ongoing human need for meaningful places, narratives and objects creates fascinating cultural dynamics. This is why dr. Nugteren rejects the usual deprivationist perspective and instead focuses on cultural-religious elasticity, creativity and fruitful imagination.