

- * Indian philosophy and spirituality.
- * Rediscovery of classical texts.
- * Reflection on the decolonization of knowledge within the context of French Indology, questioning historical biases and dominant Western perspectives.
- * Lives and biographies of French Indologists, their time in India.
- * Literature, folk, and popular culture.
- * Partition literature and cinematography.
- * Prison literature, self, and subjectivity.
- * Postcolonialism and identity.
- * Travel narratives and travelogue.
- * Indology and Francophone Literature.

Please note that these are only indicative themes and can be further refined or expanded as per your requirements.

The communication proposal, including a title, an abstract (up to 300 words), and up to 5 keywords, should be sent via email to indofrenchbhu@gmail.com no later than 31st July, 2023.

Language: French (English & Hindi only for the scholars other than French Studies)

Click this link for the registration - <https://forms.gle/T6WeMuoWD7cHoEQDA>

Important Dates:

- * July 31, 2023: The deadline for submitting the abstract.
- * August 15, 2023: Communication of the acceptance of the paper.
- * September 30, 2023: Submission of Full paper (approximately 3000 words)

Registration:

- * International participants: \$100 USD
- * Faculty members: 2000 rupees
- * PhD students: 1500 rupees
- * Students: 800 rupees

Please note that catering and accommodation during the Seminar will be covered by the organizers.

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INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR

Revisiting French Indology through Intercultural Approaches

Organised by

Department of French Studies

Faculty of Arts

Banaras Hindu University

Varanasi, U.P., India



October 30th - November 1st, 2023



Synopsis

India has always been a source of inspiration and wonder for the Western world. This fascination has led to a multitude of representations and interpretations of India, ranging from idealized and romanticized notions to more realistic and darker perspectives. The diversity of representations of India in Western literature is a testament to the profound interest the West has had in this country.

India has been the subject of numerous studies, books, and films. It has attracted scholars in search of knowledge, adventurers seeking exploration, philosophers yearning for wisdom, writers seeking inspiration, travellers in search of marvel, and the youth in search of spirituality. In the French context, India has also sparked a special interest and there has been a fascination among French writers and intellectuals for India.

Since the 18th century, India has been portrayed as an exotic and distant place, a source of inspiration and escape for French writers. During the 18th century, French Indology emerged with a growing interest in Indian culture and texts. Translations of major works, such as the Bhagavad Gita, the laws of Manu, and the epics of the Mahabharata and Ramayana, started appearing in French.

This fascination with India continued into the 19th century, with Victor Hugo being deeply captivated by India, as evidenced in several of his literary works. Victor Hugo's monumental epics, including *La Légende des siècles* (The Legend of the Centuries), *Dieu* (God), and *La Fin de Satan* (The End of Satan), bear the imprint of India. Michelet, the great historian, felt stifled in the West and considered "the divine *Ramayana*... vast as the sea of the Indies, blessed, golden with the sun, a book of divine harmony where nothing is discordant." It is reported that Alfred de Vigny, a 19th-century French writer and poet, was deeply fascinated by reading the Bhagavata Purana, a Hindu sacred text. Similarly, Alphonse de Lamartine, a 19th-century French poet, writer, and politician, expressed his belief that "the key to everything lies in Orientalist India." Indeed, the influence of India continued to permeate the

19th-century French literature. Writers such as Leconte de Lisle, Baudelaire, and numerous travelogues were marked by this influence, with Pierre Loti at the forefront.

The 20th century witnessed a major intellectual movement where writers, philosophers, and artists turned to India, finding inspiration in its philosophy and culture. Among them, Henri Bergson reached a form of intuition akin to Hindu thought, while Romain Rolland developed a passion for India and wrote biographies of figures such as Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Tagore, and Gandhi. Maurice Magre, afflicted by illness, embarked on a journey to India that intoxicated him with fascination. Antonin Artaud, André Malraux, Marguerite Yourcenar, Michel Houellebecq and René Daumal, to name a few writers, were also deeply influenced by India and its philosophy. Thus, the 20th century witnessed a major intellectual enthusiasm for India, with these figures contributing to enriching Western thought by exploring the teachings and perspectives offered by India and its philosophy.

During the 20th century, a great many travellers, passionate about truth and mystery, came to India where they dedicated their lives to spiritual exploration and the discovery of its secrets. Among these iconic figures, we can mention the exceptional Mirra Alfassa, chiefly known as "The Mother," who played a central role in the establishment of the spiritual community of Auroville. Alexandra David-Neel, on the other hand, is well-known for her solitary travels in India and Tibet, as well as her writings on the Tibetan Buddhism. Dominique Lapierre, a French writer and journalist, devoted a significant part of his career to recounting the stories and realities of India through his bestselling books, acquiring a profound understanding of the country's cultural and vernacular traditions. Alain Daniélou, a French musicologist and writer, immersed himself in Indian culture and authored numerous works on Indian music, philosophy, and spirituality. Satprem, a renowned writer, will celebrate the centenary of his birth on October 30, 2023, marking a century of contributions to French Indology. As a disciple of Sri

Aurobindo and "The Mother," he shared his profound spiritual experiences in India through his captivating writings. François Gautier, another French journalist and writer, is known for his works on India, where he lived for many years.

Looking into other cultural spheres, French cinema has also been influenced by India and its culture, giving rise to iconic films such as Jean Renoir's *The River*, Marguerite Duras' *India Song* as well as other productions like *Bengali Night* (1988) - directed by Nicolas Klotz, inspired by the eponymous novel by Mircea Eliade, and *Little Indian, Big City* (1994) by Hervé Palud.

In summary, we ponder how the fascination for India developed in Europe, with a focus on the French experience. In the year when India has assumed the G20 presidency, it is a great opportunity to look closely at the French Indology over the years, through cultural and spiritual lenses. While the whole world's eyes will be on India in 2023, we will be exploring and examining the influences, exchange of ideas, and cultural representations by the French that have contributed in shaping this Indian intrigue. Our aim is to understand how India has been perceived and represented in France over time, in order to better grasp the impact of these cultural exchanges on the French imagination of India.

Sub themes of the Seminar:

- * History of the French Indology.
- * Influences of the French Indology on the understanding and interpretation of Indian culture, particularly in the fields of literature, philosophy, spirituality, art, cinema, linguistics, history, anthropology, sociology and architecture.
- * Research methodologies employed by French scholars in the field of Indology.
- * Interactions and intellectual exchanges between French and Indian researchers, intercultural collaborations, and their impact on the development of Indology.
- * Translation of Indian texts, particularly in French.