



A RECOGNISED INDEPENDENT CENTRE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

**OCHS Conference 2011 (10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> September)**  
**Venue: Somerville College, Oxford**

## **Śākta Traditions: History, Doctrine, and Practice**

### **Project leaders**

Gavin Flood and Bjarne Wernicke Olesen

### **Conference outline**

The goal of this international conference is to present an interdisciplinary survey of Śākta history, practice and doctrine in its diversity as well as to convey something of the Śākta religious imaginaire and world view that is distinctive and sets 'Śāktism' apart from other South Asian religious traditions. Any headway in this field will be of great value for the future study of religion in South Asia.

Research in the Śaiva traditions have been quite extensively developed in recent years. Important work has been done on the Skanda Purāṇa, the Pāśupatas, the Śaiva Siddhānta, the non-dualistic Śaiva traditions, and their philosophical articulation in the Pratyabhijñā. But less work has been done on what might be called Śākta traditions, those traditions, tantric and non-tantric, focused on an independent Goddess (*Devī*) or on Śiva's power (*Śakti*). Research has been done on the Kubjikā tradition and on Śākta oriented Śaiva traditions but a sustained research programme that inquires into the history, doctrine and practices of what might be called 'Śāktism' is a desideratum.

The aim of this conference is therefore to address fundamental questions such as the clarification of the distinction between Śaiva and Śākta traditions, questions about Śākta textual lineages and their interrelationship, the clarification of doctrines and practices of the different schools, questions about the relationship between the tantric and the purāṇic Goddess traditions, questions about the relationship between local Goddess traditions (such as the Teyyams in Kerala) and the pan-South Asian traditions, raising questions about the relationship between esoteric practices and the exoteric temple cults, asking what the delimitation of Śākta doctrine is, and what developments there are in contemporary Śākta worship.

The conference will address these questions from a number of perspectives, i.e. a text-historical or philological perspective (this would be the main one as the texts of the tradition and its text-historical boundaries are hardly established), an anthropological perspective on contemporary practice, a doctrinal or theological perspective on theological reflection based on the textual material that has been established to date, an art-historical angle, as well as a perspective of the study of religion.

The conference is organised by the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies in collaboration with the Section for the Study of Religion at Aarhus University.

All are welcome - registration and payment for attendance can be completed at the conference website:

<http://www.ochs.org.uk/research/sakta-traditions>