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# Cultural Gyre: The Dynamics of Indian Culture and Society in the Globalising World

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at the National Museum of Ethnology)

# Indian Anthropological Studies in Japan

## A New Discipline

This new field will complement religious studies, history, economics, political science, literature, and other academic specialties.

An increase in the number of scholars and research projects

Includes about 17% of JASAS members

More than 60 JSPS funded projects related to Indian anthropology after 2000

# Globalization and 'Indian' Culture

NOT

The homogenising effects of the lifestyles and cultural values of neo-liberal globalisation or passive resistance against this phenomenon in India

BUT

Multi-central and plural globalization which is actively led by local and/or regional agencies

# New Concept

## Cultural Gyre



Research project of the Centre for  
Contemporary India Area Studies at the National  
Museum of Ethnology  
(A Part of INDAS Project)

# Cultural Gyre

The dynamics of Indian culture in the globalising world involve practices, items, and discourses native to India being transformed through interaction with the culture of other regions through travel; after transformation, these non-Western features are reaccepted and allowed to create socio-cultural change.

# The New Yoga Boom in India



Photo by Dr. Yoshiaki TAKEMURA of MINDAS

# Yoga: travelling through time and space

The creation of 'modern' yoga during the colonial period



The transplantation of 'modern' yoga into the US in the 1960's, further transformation

America as the centre of yoga



Acceptance of 'Americanised Indian Yoga' in India and further cultural debates

# Americanised Indian Yoga in Japan

大阪市営地下鉄 AED BOX 自動体外式除細動器

← 熱い静い心

**HOT YOGA STUDIO**

見学・体験随時受付中!

女性専用 **ホットヨガスタジオ**

カロリー消費  
ストレス解消  
代謝アップ

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**Attain-Yoga Studio OASIS 江坂**  
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〒564-0963 大阪府東淀川区江坂町1-22-12 (江坂東急東横線2F)  
アテイン・ヨガ  
お問合せ・ご予約専用 **06-7651-0532**

手ぶらで通えるフィットネスクラブ  
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**POOL** **FITNESS**

**KAATSU** **YOGA**

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**東急スポーツオアシス江坂**  
**06-6330-6780**  
詳しくは

# Universal Yoga or the Deterioration of Yoga?



Photo by Dr. Yoshiaki TAKEMURA of MINDAS

# Different modes of global flow

Western-centred, one way flow of people, things, and information



- Originated from India
- Circulating all over the world
- Transformation of the original form
- Causing cultural change when returned to its country of origin

# Bharata Natyam in motion

Produced as 'an Indian classical dance' in colonial Madras

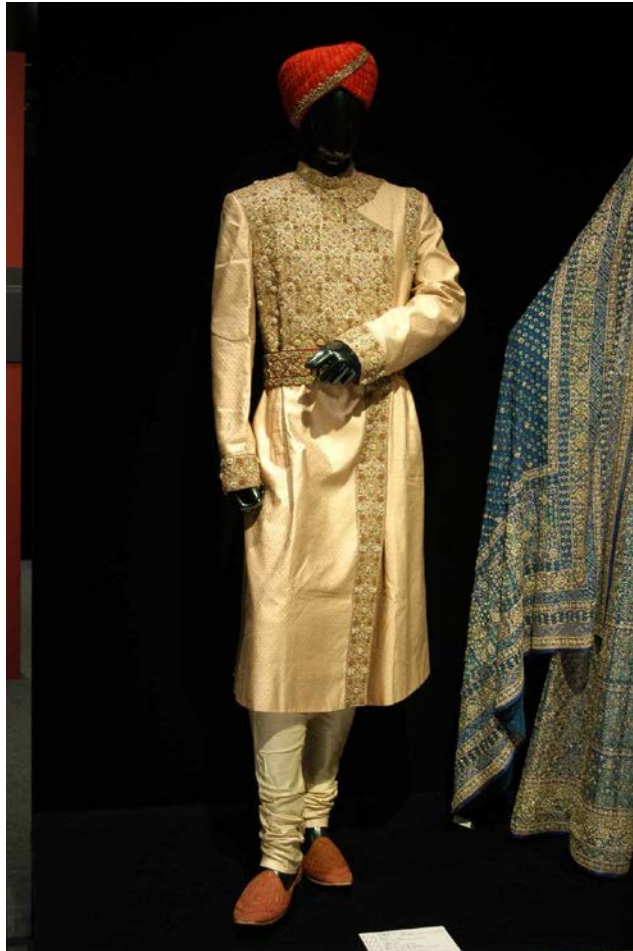


Gaining popularity in the UK as an exemplary form of Indian dance

Staged using Western-style direction

↓ Western style performance of Bharata Natyam in contemporary Chennai

# Transformed 'ethnic' fashion adopted in contemporary India



Marriage costumes designed by Ritu Kumar in the National Museum of Ethnology collection

# Cultural Gyre

The dynamics of Indian culture in the globalising world involve practices, items, and discourses native to India being transformed through interaction with the culture of other regions through travel; after transformation, these non-Western features are reaccepted and allowed to create socio-cultural change.

# Future Issues related to the 'Cultural Gyre'

- A) The entanglement of the cultural gyre with centres of colonial and post-colonial global flow
- B) The seriousness of the impact of the cultural gyre from India to other regions
- C) The meaning and mode of existence of 'Indianness' as "something

# The entanglement of the cultural gyre with colonial and post-colonial globalisation

The colonial construction and dissemination of  
'Indianness' (for example, 'caste' and 'curry'):

Constructed and represented as such by the  
colonial power centre, and imposed on India;

The cultural gyre and post-colonial globalisation:  
using such 'oriental' representations  
advantageously for their own development

# The depth of the impact of the cultural gyre from India to other regions

Propagation of Hinduism overseas (Fuller & Harris)

Creating 'Generic' Hinduism

- Reinterpretation of the Bhagavad Gita
- Devising a standardised self-learning  
Hinduism course

Gaining popularity among NRIs and the urban middle  
class in India, but not attracting US citizens, despite  
claiming that the saint's philosophy is universal

# ISKCON in Japan



An Abhisheka ritual during Rama Navami, 2014 in ISKCON Tokyo Mandir

Dominant congregation = New NRIs in Tokyo



# ISKCON provides Vedic rituals for NRIs

Contact for  
**Vedic Rituals & Yagyas**

- Performed by Qualified Brahman Priest
- As per Gaudiya Vaishnava Parampara
- Followed by Harinaam Sankirtan

Janmadin Puja (Birthday)  
Mangal Hoam (Fire Sacrifice)  
Bhoomi Puja (New Land)  
Griha Pravesh (New Home)  
Naam-Karan (Name-Giving)  
Anna-Prashan (First-Grain)  
Mundan (Head-Shaving)  
Vidyarambh (Start Education)  
Vivaha (Marriage)  
New Vehicle / Shop Opening Puja  
Puja for departed dear ones

**CONTACT:**  
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[iskcon.new.gaya.japan@gmail.com](mailto:iskcon.new.gaya.japan@gmail.com)  
080-3216-3642 / 080-3008-6909 / 03-3877-3000



# Obstacles to the propagation of ISKCON in Japan

Most Japanese cannot change their dietary habits to the strict vegetarianism that ISKCON prescribes; despite sympathising with ISKCON doctrines, they cannot become followers of ISKCON.

→What should be propagated?

→Can practice and lifestyle be separated  
from belief, and only belief disseminated?

→Do locally-rooted cultural products always lose cultural value when they become universal?

# Meaning and the nature of 'Indianness' as 'something'

‘The globalisation of Islam’: defined as an  
‘endoskeleton’

- a clear and legitimate doctrine at its core  
(at least the conviction that there must be a  
legitimate form of Islam)
- awareness of the transnational community of  
Muslims

# What is 'Indian'?

'Indianess': defined as an 'exoskeleton'

- Defined by the region called 'India'?
- If the region becomes borderless, does the concept of 'Indianness' also lose clarity?
- Or can 'Indianness' be defined or represented as a new form of civilization, different from conventional, imagined nationhood, and set against the background of the cultural gyre?

# Further Research

- conduct 'multi-sited' ethnographical field research to grasp the dynamics of the transnational migration of Indian people, correlating with the cultural gyre phenomena of India.
- analyse the cultural gyre from a historical perspective, as it has been entangled with colonial and post-colonial socio-cultural dynamics