



## PROF. AMIYA P. SEN

The current chairholder of the Heinrich Zimmer Chair is Prof. Amiya P. Sen (Modern Indian History at the Department of History and Culture at Jamia Millia Islamia). Amiya P. Sen is by training a historian with special interest in the intellectual and cultural history of colonial India.

His prime focus of interest is the intellectual and cultural history of Modern India and he has published widely on Hinduism as well as biographical studies on eminent Indian historical figures.



## PROFILE

The Heinrich Zimmer Chair for Indian Philosophy and Intellectual History is awarded by the Indian government through the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR). The ICCR is the highest-ranking institution for the promotion of international cultural exchanges in India, and the Heinrich Zimmer Chair is the first chair of its kind promoted by the ICCR in Germany for Indian philosophy and intellectual history. On 28th of June 2010 the Heinrich Zimmer Chair was inaugurated at Heidelberg University by India's Ambassador to Germany.

The Heinrich Zimmer Chair is part of the South Asia Institute as well as the cluster of excellence "Asia and Europe in a Global Context". The name of the chair goes back to professor Heinrich Zimmer (1890-1943), who was a professor for Indian philology in Heidelberg from 1924 to 1938. Next to Max Müller (1823-1900) he was the most important German scholar in this field. In 1938 Heinrich Zimmer had to leave the university under pressure from the National Socialists. He emigrated to England and later to the USA. Zimmer's numerous publications had noticeable effect on influential intellectuals, like C.G.Jung, Karl Jaspers or Alfred Weber. In 2008 the SAI has established a Heinrich Zimmer reading room in its library.

# INVITATION

HINDUISM AND THE PROBLEM OF SELF-  
ACTUALIZATION IN THE COLONIAL ERA:  
CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

AMIYA P. SEN



## PROGRAM

### Welcome

Prof. Dr. Stefan Klöner  
Executive Director SAI, Head of Dept., Development Economics

### Greeting

M. Sevala Naik  
Consul General, Munich

Prof. Dr. Gerrit Kloss  
Dean of Philosophical Faculty, Heidelberg University

### Introduction

Prof. Dr. Gita Dharampal-Frick  
Head of Department, History

### Lecture

Hinduism and the Problem of Self-Actualization in  
the Colonial Era: Critical Reflections

Prof. Amiya P. Sen  
Modern Indian History at the Department of History  
and Culture at Jamia Millia Islamia

### Followed by

Indian Reception in Foyer

## DATE

May 20th, 2015, 6 p.m.

## REGISTRATION

Please register to May 15th, 2015 to  
jlandes@sai.uni-heidelberg.de

## VENUE

Heinrich Zimmer Reading Room,  
South Asia Institute,  
University Heidelberg  
Im Neuenheimer Feld 330  
69120 Heidelberg | Germany

## ABSTRACT

Over the years, scholarly perceptions of colonial Hinduism have visibly shifted trajectory. From being 'discovered' in the eighteenth century, we have now moved towards understanding Hinduism as something discursively 'imagined' or 'invented' in the nineteenth. What this shift of paradigm is often reluctant to take on board is the mutating perceptions of the historical actors themselves,- the Hindus of British India.

This talk aims at bringing out the complexly juxtaposed and often contesting currents of thought that contribute to complicate even the category of the 'invented'. In colonial India, I argue, internally generated debates about the origin or the nature of Hinduism run parallel to ascriptions originating outside, thereby making colonial Hinduism a site for perennially contesting perceptions and paradigms. Just as the use of the expression 'neo-Hinduism' postulates a body of thought or practice frozen earlier in time, it might be presumptuous to imagine that there was a social or cultural consensus on the self-understanding of colonized Hindus themselves. This talk also seeks to ask if not to also definitively answer, certain key theoretical questions. For instance, even allowing for the fact that boundaries defining social and cultural identities are often porous, does it still make sense to ask if even unstable and fluid perceptions about the self were invested with some meaning? In my understanding, 'What does it mean to be a Hindu?' is a question that many colonized Hindus would have asked themselves, albeit quite tantalizingly.

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