

## Preface

It is with immense pleasure that we dedicate this Festschrift to Gita Dharampal-Frick, who will officially embrace her new role as professor emerita of South Asian History at the University of Heidelberg in the autumn of 2018. The present volume assembles a number of innovative contributions by friends, colleagues and former students to several research fields that Gita Dharampal-Frick has enriched over the last decades. We hope that reading the intriguing articles published in this Festschrift will indeed be a great start into an active 'retired life' – spurring Professor Dharampal-Frick to continue her scholarship fuelled by her irrepressible curiosity and sharp mind.

Gita Dharampal-Frick was the head of the Department of History at the South Asia Institute (SAI) since 2002 and has left her mark on the institute as well as on the university in general. She filled positions in numerous academic and administrative bodies, was engaged in interdisciplinary research projects, initiated Indo-German collaborations and still found the time to do what staunch academics love to do: teaching and conducting research. Whereas the impressive bibliography of Professor Dharampal-Frick's works bears testimony to the latter, it has always been her original and critical mode of teaching that made her a students' favourite at the SAI. Not only do the contributions of some of her former doctoral students pay tribute to her commitment to facilitating young scholars, but also we, the two editors of this Festschrift, have greatly benefited from her guidance and support as MA students, doctoral students and post-doctoral researchers over more than a decade now.

Having celebrated her sixty-fifth birthday in 2017, Gita Dharampal-Frick can look back on a fruitful academic career that exemplifies her own transcultural biography. Hailing from an Indo-British Gandhian family, she spent her childhood years in India as well as in England. After completing her undergraduate education at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, she went on to receive her masters (1977) and PhD (1980) in Indology/History from the Université Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris with the dissertation *La religion des Malabars. Tessier de Quéralay et la contribution des missionnaires européens à la naissance de l'indianisme*. Professor Dharampal-Frick was habilitated with her seminal study on German accounts of India from the pre-modern era (*Indien im Spiegel deutscher Quellen der Frühen Neuzeit (1500–1750): Studien zu einer interkulturellen Konstellation*) at Freiburg University, Germany in 1990. She was an assistant professor of Modern and Contemporary History at Augsburg University, Germany, before she was appointed full professor and head of

## Preface

the Department of South Asian History at Heidelberg University. Staying true to her transcultural roots, Gita Dharampal-Frick – awarded, inter alia, with the Heisenberg and Humboldt Fellowships – has taught and conducted research all over the globe: whether in Regensburg or in New Delhi, in Stanford or in Hyderabad, in Cambridge or in Heidelberg.

During her time at Heidelberg University, Professor Dharampal-Frick was involved in interdisciplinary and innovative projects like the Collaborative Research Center (SFB) 619 “*Ritual Dynamics*” *Socio-Cultural Processes from a Historical and Culturally Comparative Perspective* (2005–2009), where she led the sub-project “Ritual Transfer between South Asia and the West, 1600–2000”. Being a veritable cosmopolitan scholar and human being, it is hardly surprising that Gita Dharampal-Frick was a committed member of the Heidelberg Cluster of Excellence *Asia and Europe in a Global Context: The Dynamics of Transculturality* as well. Here she collaborated and contributed to sub-projects as diverse as “Nationising the Dynasty”, “Satire”, “Rethinking Gender” and “Large Dams”. She has also been a zealous promoter of Indo-German dialogue and friendship, best exemplified by her close involvement with the Indo-German Society. Since 2011, Professor Dharampal-Frick has been a regular visitor to the Gandhi Research Foundation at Jalgaon, India during several research sabbaticals. This place has grown very dear to her heart and she will focus her attention and expertise on this institution and its projects after retiring from her duties at the South Asia Institute.

The contributions assembled in this Festschrift reflect the most important research areas that Gita Dharampal-Frick has focused on during her long and prolific career. The volume is arranged thematically in four parts. The first part interrogates various transcultural encounters between South Asia and Europe. The essays cover the time span from the early modern period to the Indian nationalist movement in the 1930s and mirror Professor Dharampal-Frick’s own work in this field – including her seminal work on the intercultural constellations in premodern Germany’s perception of India. The second part focuses on various aspects of the colonial discourse in British India and its legacies by interrogating concepts, categories and discourses, while reflecting on the asymmetrical and global nature of knowledge production. The third chapter combines two (temporally very distant) contributions to the maritime history of the Indian Ocean. This field has become one of Gita Dharampal-Frick’s research interests more recently, wherein she focuses on historical analyses of the Indian Ocean’s entangled past. Lastly, the volume includes perspectives on the life, work and writings of M. K. Gandhi who has been the focus of many of

Gita Dharampal-Frick's research projects, publications and teaching in the past and whose legacy will continue to be of utmost importance to her.

We would like to wholeheartedly thank all contributors to this Festschrift without whom this entire endeavour would not have been possible. We are also indebted to Nicole Merkel (SAI Library) and Frank Krabbes (Heidelberg University Publishing) for their help and advice during the publication process with CrossAsia-eBooks. We are grateful to Daniela Jakob (Heidelberg University Publishing) for the layout of the book cover. Finally, we wish to thank Dagmar Brombierstäudl, Felix Eickelbeck, Mrs. Jensen, Divya Schäfer and Simon Rohlf's for their assistance and input.

Last but not least, we would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to Gita Dharampal-Frick for her crucial contributions to the field of South Asian History and for the fascinating time that we spent together in Heidelberg. We genuinely wish her all the best for her future endeavours. HerStory surely is not over.

Rafael Klöber & Manju Ludwig  
Heidelberg, April 2018

