

KUSH P. DEPALA

Curriculum Vitae: April 2026

Contact Information

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Education

- June 2022 – *PhD Cultural and Religious History of South Asia*
Universität Heidelberg, Heidelberg, Germany
Supervisor: Professor Ute Hüsken
- 2018 – 2021 *MA Cultural and Religious History of South Asia*
Universität Heidelberg, Heidelberg, Germany
Grade: 1.2
- 2017 – 2018 *Postgraduate Diploma in Sanskrit, Gujarati and Hindu Studies*
Shree Somnath Sanskrit Hindu University, Veraval, India
Grade: Distinction
- 2015 – 2016 *Abroad Year-Long Program in Sanskrit*
American Institute of Indian Studies, Deccan College, Pune, India
Overall mark: 96%
- 2013 – 2017 *BA South Asian Studies and Study of Religion*
SOAS, University of London
Grade: Upper Second Class

Publications

Under Review

"Computer Says No: Authority, Accountability, and the Human Intermediary in the Age of AI Astrology" (journal article)

"Phalāhāri Potatoes: The Dynamics of 'Fasting Food' in Hindu Traditions"
Bloomsbury Handbook of Religion and Food (book chapter)

Peer-Reviewed Articles and Book Chapters

- Oct 2019 *Review of: Philology and Criticism: A Guide to Mahābhārata Textual Criticism by Vishwa Adluri and Joydeep Bagchee*
Reading Religion (AAR)
- Sep 2019 *"The Prevalence of Advaita in Modern Indian Philosophy: Conditioned by the Colonial"*
Journal of Oriental Studies, Maharaja Sayajirao University, Baroda
- Jun 2018 *"When the Absolute is not the Ultimate: The Mystical Experience of Akṣarabrahman as the Guru in the Swaminarayan Tradition"*
UCLA Journal of Religion, Vol. 2

Conference Presentations and Talks

- May 2025 *'Sitting with the Divine: Ritual Space, Maṇḍalas and Worldmaking in Swaminarayan Tradition(s)'*
Sanskrit Language Acts and Worldmaking in Philosophy and Religion, King's College London, UK
- May 2025 *'Virtual Venerations and Digital Devotion'*
Spalding Symposium on Indian Religions, Oxford, UK
- Oct 2024 *'"Great Worship", Online'*
Digital Religion III: Challenges of Communication and Excommunication, Katowice, Poland
- Jul 2024 *'Computer Says No: A Discussion on Astrology, Technology, and Sanskrit'*
Südasiientag, Leipzig, Germany
- Nov 2023 *'Phalāhāri Potatoes: The Dynamics of 'Fasting Food' in Hindu Traditions'*
American Academy of Religion, San Antonio, TX
- Nov 2023 *Panel chair for "Digital Humanities: Studying and Teaching Hinduism"*
American Academy of Religion, San Antonio, TX
- Oct 2023 *Participant, Roundtable: Southern Theorising for South Asia*
Universität Heidelberg, Germany
- Jul 2023 *'Arguing with Mantras: Transmitting Philosophical Ideas through Ritual Texts'*
European Conference on South Asian Studies, Turin, Italy
- May 2022 *'Saying, Self, Sampradāya: The Introduction of Three New Mantras in the Swaminarayan Tradition'*
Mantras: Sound, Materiality, and the Body Workshop (MANTRAMS), University of Vienna, Austria
- Jul 2021 *'Theology for Ethno-Indologists: The Case of a Rewritten Pūjā Text'*
European Conference on South Asian Studies, University of Vienna, Austria
- Feb 2020 *'The Commentator Wears Many Hats: Observing Discipline within the Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣyam'*
Tradition of Commentaries and Dynamics of Knowledge, Shree Somnath Sanskrit University, Gujarat
- Nov 2019 *'"So the Wise Say": Exploring Intertextuality within the Mahābhārata and the Manusmṛti'*
International Indology Graduate Research Symposium, University of Oxford, UK
- Jun 2019 *'The Chaste Krishna: Hāsya-Rasa as a Means of Devotion'; 'Born from the Same Tree: The Vedic Canon as a Vedamūla Paramparā'*
European Association for the Study of Religion, University of Tartu, Estonia
- Sep 2018 *'Ancient Form, Modern Interpretation: Reading a 21st-Century Vādagantha'*
International Indology Graduate Research Symposium, SOAS, London
- May 2018 *'Can we Discuss Upanishadic Principles in English? The Limits of Language on Indian Philosophical Discourse'*
All India Oriental Conference, Shree Somnath Sanskrit University, Veraval, India
- Mar 2018 *'What is the Difference Between Rāma and a Yakṣa? An Intertextual Reading of the Hamsasandēśa and the Meghadūta'*
Rāma in Sanskrit Literature, JNU, New Delhi, India
- Oct 2017 *'When the Absolute is not the Ultimate: Akṣarabrahman Guru in the Swaminarayan Tradition'*
Akshar Purushottam Darshan Conference, AARSH, Gandhinagar, India
- Jun 2017 *'Power to Name: Recognising Figures of Power in the Satsaṅgijīvanam'*

Colonial Hangover Conference, Warwick University, UK

Academic Service and Work

- Jun 2025 – Present **Co-Convener**
Spalding Symposium on Indian Religions
- Jan 2022 – Present **Committee Member**
Rethinking Hinduism in Colonial India, Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies, UK
- Nov 2021 **Symposium Co-organiser**
Heidelberg Indology Doctoral Research Symposium: Disruption
South Asia Institute, Universität Heidelberg (hybrid)
- Aug 2020 – 2022 **Officer**
Spalding Symposium on Indian Religions
- Mar 2020 – Present **Wissenschaftliche Hilfskraft — Copyediting, Typesetting, and Design**
Journal of Transcultural Studies, HCTS, Universität Heidelberg
- Apr 2019 – Present **Wissenschaftliche Hilfskraft**
Cultural and Religious History of South Asia, South Asia Institute, Universität
Heidelberg
- Jun 2018 **Conference Co-Organiser**
Akshar Purushottam Darshan Conference, AARSH, Gandhinagar, India
- 2017 – 2018 **Research Assistant to Sadhu Brahmasetudas**
English translation of *Īsopaniṣat-Svāminārāyaṇa-Bhāṣyam* (Swaminarayan
Aksharpath, Ahmedabad)
Yagnapurush Sanskrit Mahavidyalay, Sarangpur, India
- 2014 – 2017 **Student Representative**
Department of South Asia and South East Asia, SOAS, University of London

Teaching Experience

- 2019 – Present **Department Assistant**
Cultural and Religious History of South Asia, Universität Heidelberg
- 2016 – Present **Sanskrit Tutor**
Shree Somnath Sanskrit University and Private
- 2017 – Present **English as a Second Language Tutor**
Shree Somnath Sanskrit University
- 2013 – Present **Latin, Sanskrit and Gujarati Tutor (Private)**

Media and Documentary Work

- 2024 ***Gifting God: An Untold Story of Devotion***
Cinematographer and Co-producer (planning and interviews)
- 2021 – 2022 ***First of Its Kind: The Untold Story of London Mandir and Its Creator***
Consultant, Editor, Camera and Audio Operator
- 2020 – Present ***HeidelbergKRS (YouTube Channel)***
Content Editor and Channel Manager
Cultural and Religious History of South Asia, SAI, Universität Heidelberg

Non-Academic Work Experience

2014 – Present **Freelance Video and Podcast Editor**
Self-employed

2020 – Present **Freelance AI Consulting**
Self-employed

2011 – Present **Freelance Programming, Graphic Design, Video and Photo Editing**
Self-employed

2016 – 2017 **Web Editor**
London Spirit Newspaper, London, UK

2013 – 2016 **Web Editor**
SOAS Spirit (Student Newspaper), SOAS, London, UK

2015 **Sales Development Representative**
Nexmo, London, UK

2014 **Marketing Analyst**
GoCardless, London, UK

Languages

Native: English, Gujarati

Fluent: Sanskrit (speaking, reading, and writing), Hindi

Advanced: German

Reading: Brajhasha, Pali, Latin

Working: French

Other Skills and Interests

Digital humanities: LaTeX, TEI, Tesseract, Transkribus

Programming: Node.js, Python, Ruby, C#, GoLang, SQL; AI and LLMs; data management and processing

Audio-visual: Field recording, videography, podcasting, archiving; DaVinci Resolve, Premiere Pro, After Effects, Photoshop

Design: Graphic design and typography (InDesign, Illustrator)

Music: Classical Indian music (Bansuri, Harmonium, Sitar, Composition)