



The Department of Anthropology
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

presents a seminar

by

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on

Strengthening the Body and the Nation through Traditional Medicine and Biomoral Consumption in Contemporary India

Friday, 2 March 2018

1:00 – 2:30 pm

Room 115 Humanities Building
New Asia College, CUHK

A light lunch will be served at 12:30 pm. First come first served.

Abstract:

In this talk, I discuss two conflicting ideologies of the Indian nation and show how they impact the institutionalization and commercialization of yoga, Ayurveda, and other alternative medical systems in India. As a case study, I analyze the rhetoric of Baba Ramdev—an influential yoga *guru* who runs a billion-dollar industry of Ayurvedic products. Criticizing India's dependence on the West, Ramdev promotes "homegrown" (*swadeshi*) yoga and Ayurveda as a means of strengthening the individual bodies and the body of the nation. Ramdev skillfully appeals to the Indian citizens' quest for health and belonging, simultaneously validating their consumerist desires as a civic duty. As a result, the adoption of yoga and Ayurveda has become a political token of national loyalty and biomorality. I conclude by reflecting on comparable movements that interweave the pursuit of health, moral consumption, and nationalist sentiment in other parts of the world.

Bio:

Dr. Venera Khalikova holds a Ph.D. from the University of Pittsburgh, USA. She is a cultural anthropologist who specializes in nationalist discourse, the production of knowledge, body practices, gender, healing, and the cultural politics of plural medicine. Her regional interests include North India and the Himalayan region.

ALL INTERESTED ARE WELCOME