Master’s Thesis Defense

Abstract

The Ashram of Swami Jyotirmayananda: Examining Authority, Transmission and Identity within the Guru and Disciple Relationship

by

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The wave of gurus in America brought with them cultural transformations particularly in how they interpret Hinduism, how their teachings have adapted in engaging a Western audience, and the sustainability of their religious communities, thus changing the landscape of contemporary Hindu spirituality. The traditional model of the guru and disciple relationship is undergoing a transformation allowing for greater autonomy of the disciple to make decisions in how they appropriate the authority of the guru. This thesis examines the guru and disciple relationship within the institutional organization of the Yoga Research Foundation, founded by the contemporary guru, Swami Jyotirmayananda. Research of Jyotirmayananda’s unique following of Western disciples illuminates the nature of his authority through the establishment of his order and methods by which disciples navigate identity formation and experience religious transmission.

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Place: University Park, DM 323

Department: Religious Studies
Major Professor: Dr. Nathan Katz