

## Assam: textile transmission and the performance of dance

Friday 8 July & Saturday 9 July 2016  
Stevenson Lecture Theatre, British Museum



Detail of the *Vrindavani Vastra*, a woven silk textile.  
From Assam, India, late 17th century.

### Friday 8 July

- 09.30 Registration
- 10.00 Introduction  
Hartwig Fischer, Director, British Museum
- 10.10 The Brahmaputra Valley: a corridor in  
monastic geographicity  
Indrani Chatterjee,  
University of Austin, Texas
- 10.45 Discussion
- 11.15 Coffee break
- 11.45 Trans-Himalayan textiles:  
Indian woven silks in Tibet  
Rosemary Crill, formerly V&A Museum
- 12.45 View of the exhibition  
*Krishna in the garden of Assam:  
the cultural context of an Indian textile*

- 13.30 Lunch
- 14.30 A brief discussion of the traditional woven  
silk textiles of medieval Assam: lampas,  
samite, double-weave and damask  
Steven Cohen, Ashmolean Museum of  
Art and Archaeology, Oxford
- 15.30 Silk, a larger history  
Arupjyoti Saikia, Indian Institute of  
Technology, Guwahati, Assam
- 16.30 Tea break
- 17.00 From Lhasa to London: looting during the  
1904 Younghusband Expedition to Tibet  
Tim Myatt, independent scholar
- 18.30 The dancing monks of Uttar Kamalabari  
monastery, Majuli Island, led by  
Dr Bhabananda Barbayan, in a  
public performance in the Great Court  
(ends around 20.00)



Bhabananda Barbayan. Photo: Doljeet Payeng.

## Saturday 9 July

- 10.00 Dancing the divine; performing the Nation: Krishna dance in ancient and contemporary Northeast India  
Debanjali Biswas and Georgie Pope, both King's College London – India Institute and Department of Music
- 11.00 The icons and the accompanying texts woven on the Vrindavani Vastra textile groups and their historical and cultural significations in Assam  
Samiran Boruah, The Assam Research Society, and La Maison des Artistes, Paris
- 12.00 Coffee break
- 12.30 Staging the Vrindavani Vastra – Q&A session with Bhabananda Barbayan, the choreographer of the dance performance based on the Vrindavani Vastra textile  
Bhabananda Barbayan (choreographer from the Uttar Kamalabari monastery, Majuli Island) and Anwesa Mahanta and Arshiya Shethi, both post-doctoral independent researchers
- 13.30 Lunch
- 15.00 Threads through Assam – screening of a short film on the story of silk in Assam, directed by Leona Chaliha
- 15.45 Some further thoughts on the function of the Vrindavani Vastra and Conclusion  
Richard Blurton, British Museum
- 16.30 Dance workshop with monks from Majuli Island
- 18.00 Drinks reception

Conference presented with support from the British Museum Research Fund

Dance performance and workshops presented with the support of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, the Arts Council, the London Arts and Humanities Partnership, King's College, London, and Sound Travels