

## Einladung zum Kolloquium

### **Amritsar: Memory, Orality and Ethnography. A Post-Colonial History of an Indian City**

**Prof. Rana P. Behal**  
(University of Delhi)

Dienstag, den 5. Juli 2016, 12:00 Uhr c.t.  
Geo-Campus Lankwitz  
Malteserstr. 74-100, 12249 Berlin  
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In popular perception the walled city of Amritsar is associated primarily with the Golden Temple as the most important centre of Sikh religion and pilgrimage. Historically, the walled city attracted public attention mostly during extraordinary political events, like the Jallianwala Massacre in April 1919, the Partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, the two Indo-Pakistan Wars of 1965 and 1971 and the entry of the Indian Army into the Golden Temple to flush out Sikh militants in 1984.

The walled city of Amritsar is, however, much more than just a popular pilgrimage location. The city was and remains a major mercantile centre in northern India, which has received scant attention from the scholarly fraternity among social scientists. From the early nineteenth century the City had developed transnational commercial links with Europe, Afghanistan, Central Asia, Tibet and China as well as within the Indian subcontinent.

The partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 was a traumatic and shocking experience for the walled city of Amritsar. Large-scale violence and destruction in the wake of the partition seriously affected the social fabric and economy of the walled city. I pick up the trail from this time onward to find out how the walled City survived, recovered and rebuilt its social, religious, and commercial fabric of everyday life.

The presentation will focus on social history of post Independence mercantile walled city of Amritsar based on orality, memory and ethnographic research. The experiences of city communities are recovered from the voices of the people themselves through recording conversations, memories, and interviews with city communities of merchant, traders, petty retailers and shopkeepers, artisanal groups, street and roadside food sellers, craftsmen, owners of eateries, migrant labourers and preachers, members of religious institution.