

**‘Spirit Possession and its Provocation of the Modern:
Re-casting Frameworks for Researching Women’s Health’**

**With Dr. Kalpana Ram (Macquarie University) as speaker
and Dr. Sajida Ally (CORTH) as discussant**

This CORTH Doctoral Forum will build doctoral students’ understandings of the subjectivities of non-elite women who experience spirit possession and the tensions these create for modernist discourses that frame state, public health and activist agendas. It will discuss the strengths of ‘phenomenology’ and how it helps to unpack inherited modern dichotomies, including the advantages it offers over critical post-structuralist styles of feminism. While focusing on the examples of rural women in Tamil Nadu, India detailed in Dr. Ram’s most recent monograph, *Fertile Disorders: Spirit Possession and its Provocation of the Modern* (2013 University of Hawaii), the Forum will encourage participants to connect this material to their own work and explore the questions that arise from this nexus. To facilitate more in-depth exchange, participants are encouraged to read Chapters 6, 8 and 9 of *Fertile Disorders*, which can be downloaded from the CORTH website: www.sussex.ac.uk/corth. Those unable to read are equally welcome to come. Open to doctoral students and faculty, the Forum will provide a space for reflection on the frameworks that are used to research the body, health, fertility, sexuality and gender. Please RSVP by emailing corth@sussex.ac.uk.

Kalpana Ram is a senior anthropologist at Macquarie University in Sydney. She has worked extensively on themes around postcolonialism, social movements and modernity in India, with specific reference to the lives of rural women in Tamil Nadu. Her empirical work began with women’s experiences of a changing sexual division of labour (with her early monography *Mukkuvar Women*), and moved into other areas of embodied experience such as maternity, puberty, state programs of health education, and fertility control. She draws on a range of inter-disciplinary debates and theories, including feminism, postcolonial theory, Marxism, anthropology and philosophy, and she is also interested in popular subaltern religion in India. Her work has increasingly taken inspiration from phenomenological philosophy, and she has just published a coedited volume *Phenomenology in Anthropology* (Indiana Press 2015). Some of these themes come to an integrated fruition in *Fertile Disorder*.

Sajida Ally is a CORTH Graduate Associate. Her doctoral research examines Sri Lankan migrant women’s subjectivities of the body, health and wellness and their enmeshment in socio-political and juridical processes surrounding migration to the Arab Gulf.

