SAW Seminar: 
Mathematical practices in the context of the astral sciences

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The tree of jyotiṣa and its branches. Ritual and therapeutic uses of astral sciences in contemporary India

Abstract: This talk will aim at exploring how far astral sciences (jyotiḥśāstra) can be said to be “astral”. In doing this, I will first show that jyotiḥśāstra is an epistemologically heteroclitic scholarly tradition that includes different kinds of knowledge, more or less related to astral bodies and to mathematical sciences. Secondly, I will show that even when dealing with astral bodies, astral sciences deal with much complex entities such as graha, that are not only planets, but also Hindu gods and demons. Thirdly, on the basis of the fieldwork I conducted among astrologers in Banaras, I will discuss the practical uses of astral sciences in Hindu daily life and focus on the relationship between astrology, medicine and ritual.