12ᵀᴴ DANAM CONFERENCE – 2014

San Diego, California
21-23 November 2014

PROGRAM and ABSTRACTS

FRIDAY, 21 NOVEMBER 2014
Hilton Bayfront Hotel

SESSION 1   (M21-100)   9:05 – 11:00 a.m.

Theme: **Hindu Theology**
Convener: **Kusumita P. Pedersen, St. Francis College**
Presider: **Rita D. Sherma, University of Southern California**

Anant Rambachan, St. Olaf College
 "Methodological Approaches to Advaita Liberation Theology"

The Hindu Advaita tradition and its practitioners have been criticized
by some commentators for being indifferent to the quality of social
relations, equality and justice. Advaitins, such critics, contend, ignore
human suffering occasioned by oppressive structures and the lack of
necessities such as food, housing, clean water, health care and
education. Although agreeing partially with such critical assessments
of Advaita, my contribution contends that there are no insurmountable
theological or philosophical reasons for such indifference. There are,
on the other hand, profound justifications for social and political
concern and engagement. The Advaita articulation of non-duality
makes possible an identity with others beyond the boundaries of
nationality, ethnicity, tribe and religion. It enables us to see all beings
as constituting a single community and provides the theological basis

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for a compassionate and inclusive community where the dignity and worth of every human being is affirmed and justice, at all levels, sought.

Nika Kuchuk, University of Toronto
"The Synthesis of All Things: Language and Poetry in the Thought of Sri Aurobindo"

Sri Aurobindo has been identified, and for good reason, as perhaps the most original Vedantic theologian and philosopher of the modern period. While much has been written about his life and writings, relatively little attention has been devoted to examining the various elements which have contributed to his formation as a religious figure. In particular, his collaboration with Mirra Alfassa, later known as the Mother, is notable for prompting a reorientation and concretization in his theological and metaphysical writings, which soon after took shape as Integral Yoga. Here I would like to begin untangling the strands of his intellectual and spiritual formation by focusing on the aspects of his thought that intrigue me most: his theory of language and poetics, and his experiments with poetic language as both expressive and generative of mystical states.

This is best exemplified, perhaps, in his cycle of 'metaphysical sonnets,' which are based on his own visionary experiences. In this paper I will focus on some of his less-explored sonnets, the earliest first composed in Alipore jail, and the latter ones in the late 1930s-40s, thus spanning the most productive years of his life. These seem to be especially significant in light of his greater vision, and they allow one to tease out several themes prominent in the articulation of Integral Yoga. These themes, in turn, present fascinating innovations, going far beyond either traditional Vedantic thinking or social-evolutionary theorizing, and pointing to yet unexplored influences upon Aurobindo's work and philosophy, in particular to his collaboration with Alfassa. Vedanta, metaphysical evolution, and certain aspects of theosophical and Western spiritualist thought converge in the vision of Aurobindo. Examining these allows us to better understand the

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vigorous exchange of ideas and religious practices in the late colonial period between India and Europe, and their lasting influence on modern Hindu theology.

Ramakrishnan Parameshwaran, Harvard Divinity School, Harvard University
"Studying Rama's Grief Resolution Using Bharata's Rasa-Bhava And Modern Neuropsychological Theories"

Brahma, one of Hindu gods, reportedly advised use of Rasa-Bhava elements in Natyashastra for relief from grief and suffering in actors and spectators. Using Rama's grief-resolution in *Aranya Khanda* of Ramayana, Valmiki had illustrated such a therapeutic application of Rasa theory. However, there has been no scientific study on clinical application of Rasa theory so far. This paper aims to understand whether (1) we can develop newer, scientific ways of studying emotions by bringing together Hindu scriptural literature and Rasa-theory (2) we can retroactively apply modern clinical diagnostic tools on human-like behavior of mythological personalities (3) felicitous application of neurobiological and literary theories help us build newer theology/scripture-based clinical-care tools. Methodology followed includes studying Rama's grief and that of clinical patients using literary/Rasa-Bhava and neuropsychological theories: Verses related to Rama's grief-resolution in chapters 57-67 of Valmiki's *Aranya-khanda* are studied using Natyashastra's *Rasa* theory of Indian aesthetics. Paranoid projective phenomena as seen in clinical vignettes are compared with 'projection' of Rama's grief, described in Valmiki's Ramayana. Neuropsychological mechanisms that explain the 'projection-process' of interpersonal empathy are studied to understand possible similar mechanisms involved in Rasa-Bhava theory. This study finding reveals that verses of *Aranya-Khanda* are adequate resources for 'clinical history-taking' to arrive at differential-diagnoses. Clinical patients' lack of empathetic abilities contrasts with Rama's ability to 'project' his grief and be empathetically connected with external objects/beings. Rama's grief resolution may be due to his mental 'projections' and internal work of self-empathy. In conclusion,

understanding the neurobiological underpinnings of Rasa-Bhava theory may teach us ways to apply spiritual tools in clinical medicine and also help integrate theological and medical disciplines.

Jonathan B. Edelman, Mississippi State University
"Critique and Conservation in Gaudiya Vaisnava Theology"

In this paper I first examine David Ford's (2009) five-fold characterization of theology, followed by a textual examination of the complex relationship between Śrīdhara Svāmin (c. 14th century) and Jīva Gosvāmin (c. 16th century), an early theologian in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition, a leading North India devotional religion. Śrīdhara Svāmin is a commentator on the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (among other important texts), and he is highly regarded by the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition. The argument of this paper is that Śrīdhara is an important voice in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava theological line, one that Jīva read, quoted, and respected. Nevertheless, Jīva critiques him on essential points, yet this critique is conducted in oblique manner, whereas other thinkers, Śa?kara for example, are directly critiqued. I examine two points of difference between Jīva and Śrīdhara:

(i) the nature of the ātman, or self,
(ii) the status of the bhagavat, or the supreme God, Kṛṣṇa.

My argument is that although theologians are thought of – even among themselves – as caretakers and defenders of previous authorities, and although I would say Jīva is a theologian, he selectively agrees with Śrīdhara, and quietly contradicts him when needed, even on fundamental topics like self and God. He was, therefore, of an independent mind, albeit one steeped in an authoritarian tradition. In so far as we see Jīva Gosvāmin as a theologian, to that degree we can think of Hindu theology as a critical and constructive discipline, yet one guided by tradition. I will also discuss Jīva in relation to Ford's theological spectrum.

Kiyokazu Okita, Kyoto University
"No Entry Unless Authorized: Hindu Theology and the Question of Qualification"

In August 2011, after visiting several Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava temples in Nabadvip, I entered one belonging to the Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math, where I was introduced to a young American convert who recently

became a *sannyāsin*. As our discussion deepened, feelings of mutual respect were established. The conversation stopped, however, when he asked which text I was researching. I replied that I was working on the *Ujjvalanīlamaṇi* of Rūpa Gosvāmī (16th century). After a few moments of awkward silence, he said the conversation must end since Śrīdhara Mahāraja, the founder of the Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math, forbade the text to be studied. Perplexed by the turn of events, I left the temple compound reflecting on what happened.

The issue at stake was that of qualification (*adhikāra*), or the eligibility to study certain genres of text. Practitioners of the tradition consider texts such as the *Ujjvalanīlamaṇi* to contain highly esoteric knowledge that is suitable only for advanced practitioners. This paper addresses the question of qualification in the study of Hindu theological texts, which, as Anantanand Rambachan points out, has been scarcely addressed in the discussion of Hindu theology (2006: 3).

In this paper, I first elaborate on the nature of esoteric texts in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism and demonstrate how we can have meaningful engagements with those texts for academic purposes. Next, I briefly review the current discussion on Hindu theology as a normative category within the study of South Asian intellectual traditions. In the third section, I discuss the topic of qualification in South Asian traditions, such as Advaita Vedānta, Dvaita Vedānta, and Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. My intention is to create space for a phenomenological approach to Hindu theology that allows the academic study of esoteric Hindu texts while acknowledging and respecting the boundaries set by the practitioners of various traditions.

Theme: **Polytheology: The Vision of Plural Divinities**
Convener and Presider: **Anne Vallely, University of Ottawa**

Ramdas Lamb, University of Hawai'i
"Conceptualizing Divinity: One, None, or Many"

The two most popular theological beliefs in the West today are monotheism and atheism. The Abrahamic religions have preached and promoted the former in every land they have entered, while those who base their world view exclusively on material or scientific rationality have done much to promote the latter. Since theological views in general are essentially the products of human thinking, experience, understanding, and imagination, one way to analyze them is to look at how they inspire their adherents to act and relate to others in the world. Doing so, it becomes obvious that adherents to both these beliefs, including many academics, have collectively denigrated those who have different beliefs as being ignorant, pagan, or even evil and demonic. Such views have also led to more violence toward non-adherents, and more destruction of indigenous cultural traditions than any other belief system throughout history, and they continue to wreak havoc on the world today.

In looking at options to these, the most pervasive has been polytheism in its various manifestations. These can be found in the Dharma traditions, as well as most indigenous beliefs systems around the world. In looking at the affect they have had on others, it is obvious that they have caused far less violence and destruction. In the case of Hinduism, specifically, theological concepts that include a combination of one, many, or none, have helped inspire a more tolerant approach to others that can teach us much in seeking to diminish the world violence that is currently so prevalent. My paper will look at the roots and manifestations of the "one," the "many," and the "none."

Jessica Ford, University of Ottawa
"Conceptualizing the Divine: How Hindu Deities are Presented in High School World Religions Courses in Canada"

The familiar OM symbol is featured on the bright orange-colored cover of *Exploring World Religions: The Canadian Perspective* along side symbols from other religious traditions. This textbook has been utilized in various provinces in Canada as the text for high school world religions courses offered in the public education system. Within this text, the chapter entitled "Hinduism" showcases a large and colorful image of Ganesha, as well as smaller images of Saraswati, Vishnu, and the Shiv Nataraj. How are these deities explained? How does the world religions textbooks conceptualize the divine?

The Hindu tradition is comprised of elements that are drastically different from traditions that make up the Canadian religious landscape, including the presence of multiple divinities and images of the divine. Educators struggle with finding a way to transmit this material in a manner that can be easily comprehended by Canadian youth who attend world religions courses. For many students this is their first introduction to Hinduism and so the presence of multiple divinities may seem especially "foreign"; as such the manner in which the divine is conceptualized and presented in world religions courses becomes vitally important as it contributes to how Canadian youth understand Hindu dharma.

This paper queries how the concept of polytheism, and the treatment of *murtis* are explained in Canadian world religions courses in public schools. It poses such questions as; how are multiple divinities grappled with and explained to Canadian youth who attend world religion courses? How are plural divinities discussed? Are these divinities conceptualized as different forms of one great divine being or are they discussed as individual deities who are worshipped in their own right? This paper proposes to answer these questions by examining the Canadian world religions textbooks currently utilized nationwide to determine how plural divinities are grappled with and explained.

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Kamini Gogri, University of Mumbai
"Devotions of Attachment and Detachment & the Myriad Divinities of Jainism"

> "I worship them all: the Jina as well as Padmavati , Sarasvati, and my own mother goddesses as well as the Kstrepala. Jina is for Moksa, Padmavati listens to my complaints and helps me find way in my way in the world. Sarasvati helps me acquire knowledge for liberation. My mother goddess and Kstrepala are care takers of my family."

With these words a grandmother living in Mumbai explains her devotion to a diverse set of divinities - all of whom have taken care of throughout her life. This paper will explore the myriad divinities that are the recipients of so much devotion.

The Tirthankara (or Jina) is at the centre of Jain ritual and devotional life. In his liberated state, he is entirely devoid of raga (attachment) and dvesa (aversion) and is therefore completely disengaged from the world. He responds to no prayers or petitions, and dispenses no saving grace; transactionally he is nonexistent. Nevertheless, he remains a central focus of much heart-felt devotion, the nature of which will be explored in this paper. As the Mumbai grandmother above makes clear, the Jina – though central – is not the sole focus of Jain devotion. A great many other divinities share the devotional landscape, often presiding over specific domains of need. Drawing upon textual sources as well as upon phenomenological-anthropological research, this paper will discuss the nature of Jina devotion, as well as devotion to more worldly-focused divinities within the Jaina tradition.

R. Jeremy Saul, University of Michigan
"When Hanuman Became a Jain: The Miraculous Story of Babosa"

Since the mid-1990s a new god known as Babosa, manifesting the power of Hanuman, has rapidly become popular in urban Jain communities across India. This presentation will consider how this god came into being, and what Jains feel they have gained in embracing him. Babosa works miracles, and is channeled by a Jain woman who married into a family purportedly related to a human

Babosa, a boy of Rajasthan that had died young and was granted divinity by Hanuman. Babosa's devotees commonly report that they have turned away from Jain temples, where they do not get such personal attention or miracles. This movement apparently parallels a broader trend among urban Hindu merchant castes towards seeking efficacious shrine gods in Rajasthan.

Karma Lekshe Tsomo, University of San Diego
"Deities, Bodhisattvas, and Buddhas: Nontheism in a Theocratic Universe"

The association of religions with a God or gods often goes unquestioned. A legitimate religion must have a God and it is this concept that unites the world's religions. It may even be assumed that traditions such as Confucianism and Buddhism, because they are unconcerned with the existence or non-existence of a supreme being, do not technically qualify to be categorized as religions. Others assume that at least Mahayana Buddhism qualifies as a religion, because of its rich pantheon of Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and "dieties," which must be Buddhist versions of the Divine. This paper will explore the concepts of theism and nontheism from several Buddhist perspectives. It will examine the nature of the host of beings who inhabit the Buddhist pantheon and the extent to which they are or are not commensurate with the divinities of other traditions.

Respondent: Anne Vallely, University of Ottawa

Theme: **Academia and Activism: Dharmic Perspectives**

Convener: **Jeffery D. Long, Elizabethtown College**
Presider: **Neela B. Saxena, Nassau Community College**

Pravrajika Vrajaprana, Vedanta Society of Southern California
"Work and Non-Work: Service and Spirituality in the Ramakrishna Mission"

  The distinction between matter (*acit*) and spirit or consciousness (*cit*)
  has has led to the categories of work (*karma*) and non-work (*akarma*),
  the former associated with householders and the latter with
  renunciates. And yet Hindu texts, particularly the *Gita*, seem to blur
  the distinction between the two: "One who sees non-work in work and
  work in non-work is wise among people; that person is established in
  yoga and a doer of all action." (BG 4. 18)
  In this paper I will examine how Vivekananda, taking his cue from
  Hindu śāstras, argued that the two seemingly antithetical categories of
  work and non-work can in fact be combined into an integrated
  discipline of service, which can simultaneously produce spiritual
  freedom (*mokṣa*) and do good to the world (*jagad-hita*).

Philip Goldberg, Interfaith Minister
"Engaged Yoga: The New Social Activism in the American Yoga Community"

  The explosion of *Hatha Yoga* into a $10 billion a year industry is
  mainly a product of self-interest, with an estimated 20 million
  practitioners motivated by everything from vanity to medical concerns
  to *moksha*. However, recent years have seen a discernible trend toward
  yoga-inspired and yoga-driven activism. It comes in two primary
  forms: teachers bringing yogic practices to underserved populations
  such as prisoners, veterans, students and minorities; and mobilization
  for environmental, social justice and anti-poverty causes. The
  presentation will describe leading examples, e.g., "Off the Mat into the
  World" and "Green Yoga."

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In many ways, this phenomenon can be viewed as a typical maturation process, with parallels to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, perhaps accelerated by yogic teachings and practices: to wit, as individuals grow in well-being, they naturally become less narcissistic and more altruistic. It can also be seen in the context of Yoga/Hindu philosophy: activists often explain their motivation in terms of their understanding of *Karma Yoga* and the spiritual rewards of *seva.*

The presentation will also look at the phenomenon historically. Today's yogic activism can be seen as a variation of a previous wave of dharmic transmission to America: the baby boomers' engagement in what Lola Williamson calls Hindu-Inspired Meditation Movements. For most seekers in the '60s and '70s, meditation and *bhakti* practices – and in some cases deep immersion in guru-centered organizations – were initially embraced for self-improvement purposes. For many, they also became an outlet for service and social activism.

Nadya Pohran, University of Ottawa
"Jain Panjrapoles and Animal-Rights Activism"

Ahimsa is at the core of Jain philosophy and spiritual teachings. Closely linked to the adherence to nonviolence is the understanding that each and every soul in the cosmos yearns and strives for liberation. Jainism's teachings emphasise the extent to which the soul is "alone" and that individuals are singularly responsible for working out their salvation by way of ridding themselves from all karma through a seemingly endless cycle of rebirth. This paper argues that Jainism's treatment of wounded/dying animals is heavily influenced by Jain understandings of *ahimsa* and individual karmic shedding. *Panjrapoles* (Jain animal shelters) are built on an entirely different conceptual foundation than Western or non-religious animal shelters. Whereas worldwide animal-rights organisations such as PETA understand animal euthanasia as "a tragic necessity," Jain *panjrapoles* prohibit euthanasia on the grounds that intentional interference with an animal's life span might inhibit the animal from shedding off the karma necessary to ensure a better rebirth. Drawing from fieldwork in Gujarat (May 2014), this paper will explore the unique intersection of animal-rights activism and Jain treatments of wounded/dying animals.

Veena Howard, CSU, Fresno
"Philosophical Principles, Practical Applications: Gandhi's Hybrid Approach to Bridge Philosophy and Practice"

Mahatma Gandhi has become such a popular figure that it can be overlooked how radical he was, not only in his revolutionary fight against the British but also in his dynamic reinterpretation of religious traditions for his activist ends. Gandhi used philosophical principles and religious practices—generally considered the domain of scholars and religious seekers alone--to formulate and advance his strategies of sociopolitical activism. Gandhi identified as a "Sanatani Hindu" and was innovative in utilizing traditional Indian religious and philosophical concepts in pursuit of social and political goals. Drawing on the teachings of Dharma traditions, he approached philosophy as a pragmatic means for improving the human condition. "Philosophy to be worth anything" wrote Gandhi, "has got to be applied in one's own life."

Although Gandhi rejected the formal abstractions of philosophical discourse, he embraced select suppositions found in such Indian philosophical traditions such as *Advaita Vedanta* and Yoga Philosophy as expounded in the *Bhagavad-Gita* and *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali. While he did not systematically refer to *Advaita Vedanta*, he employed its non-dualistic philosophy of the essential unity of beings to support his nonviolent methods and philosophy of ontological equality, which includes but also goes beyond "equal justice under the law." Gandhi also creatively utilized the Yoga philosophy's ethical principles, including *aparigraha* (non-possession)*, ahimsa* (nonviolence), and *brahmacarya* (celibacy) to create his strategy of nonviolent activism.

This paper examines Gandhi's reinterpretation of select Indian philosophical ideas and the textual models that he drew upon for the purpose of creating a coherent and strategic political philosophy. Given Gandhi's merging of the public and private, the religious and political, scholastic ideas and service, it furthermore investigates how in the contemporary world the spheres of academic inquiry and public service can be bridged.

Al Collins, Independent Scholar
"Indian Psychology: Reframing Western Behavioral Science through Samkhyan Categories" (co-authored by Al Collins, Ph.D. and Prakash Desai, M.D.)

Beginning In the 1970s, a movement emerged within Indian university psychology departments termed "Indian psychology," naming not just Hindu and Buddhist understandings of the person, emotion, will, thought, and social and political relationships, but referring especially to constructive work based on that older tradition aimed at transforming the academic discipline of psychology into a practice (not just theory) capable of becoming a valuable part of the fabric of contemporary Indian life. Indian psychology (IP) aims to reflect creatively and helpfully on Indian life in the present. It also seeks to look with a fresh eye at the European Enlightenment vision that was imposed on India by colonialism, to reinterpret and transform it, and thereby to liberate Indian psychology from the Western cage that had kept it trapped and uncreative while also "revisioning" the European mentality in which IP had gestated and come to maturity.

Although the movement has roots at least as far back as the early years of the 20th century (Girindrashekhar Bose, Sri Aurobindo), an important point of articulation was the activist document called the "Pondicherry Manifesto of Indian Psychology" in 2002, a declaration signed by 160 Indian psychologists that distinguished sharply between "psychology in India" and "Indian psychology": "By Indian psychology we mean a distinct psychological tradition that is rooted in Indian ethos and thought. . . . We believe that introduction of *Indian psychology . . . could awaken psychology in India* from its present state of slumber." (my emphasis).

While there are other perspectives within IP, central has been that of Samkhya/Yoga, whose understanding of persons as fluid moments centered on self-referencing consciousness allows a deep reflective critique of Western personality and culture and its sharply bounded individualism. We will sketch some examples of how Sankhyan IP reinterprets and revalues contemporary Western behavioral science.

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Theme: **Dharma Traditions' Responses to Secularism and the Secular Age**

Convener and Presider: **Purushottama Bilimoria, UC-Berkeley/ Sophia-Melbourne**

Brian Black, Lancaster University, UK
"Sources of Indian secularism? Dialogues on Politics and Religion in the Hindu and Buddhist traditions"

In current debates about Indian secularism, many thinkers have invoked India's past in their arguments about how to conceptualize the relationship between politics and religion in India today. Amartya Sen, for example, sees Indian secularism as prefigured by a 'history of the acceptance of heterodoxy' (2005, p. 21), specifically pointing to the figures of the Mughal Emperor Akbar, who had a policy of religious tolerance, and to King Ashoka, who used the term dharma to promote respect among different religions across his empire (ibid., p. 16–21). Ashis Nandy, however, argues that there are problems with seeing these figures as secular, with Ashoka basing 'his tolerance on Buddhism, not on secularism' and Akbar deriving 'his tolerance not from secularism but from Islam' (1998, p. 337). In this paper I would like to explore what pre-modern Indian traditions say about the relationship between religion and politics by looking at two dialogues from traditional sources: one from the Upanishads and one from the Digha Nikaya. By looking at these two dialogues together, I will discuss what each one says about the relationship between political and religious authorities, the multiplicity of religious groups, and the ethics of politics. As I will argue, each of these themes resonates with current debates about secularism and might also prompt us to think about current debates about secularism in new ways.

Nalini Bhushan, Smith College
"Secularing Perspectives on Suffering and Evil in Twentieth Century Colonial India"

This essay offers a modernist and secularist interpretation of debates that were taking place in Indian philosophy on the topic of suffering and evil in colonial India. One the one hand, intellectuals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century discussed the concepts of suffering, evil and related notions as they arose in classical Hindu antiquity. On the other, they reinterpreted these ancient ideas in modern and secularizing ways. The goal of this essay is to demonstrate that while these thinkers provide us with what I call secularizing perspectives on traditionally religious topics of concern, they were decidedly not mimicking the ideology and methodology of a western modernity. Rather, they each found an expressive discourse that reveals a distinctively Indian approach to both modernity and its accompanying secularity.

I demonstrate via concrete examples that Hindu conceptions of suffering and evil in colonial Indian modernity develop organically out of a network of interrelated debates that were taking place at the time in India about politics, social justice, economic and self development, and, centrally, freedom from British rule. For instance, I examine the ideas of (a) M.K. Gandhi, D. Saraswati and R. Tagore on the social and political dimensions of suffering and evil that gain preeminence in the context of India's emergence into modernity, along with its attendant and often alienating technologies of modernization; (b) M.K. Hiriyanna and the connections between self and service (as well as that between the aesthetic and the moral domains) that become crucial for him in solving the problem of suffering and evil from the Hindu perspective; and (c) K.C. Bhattacharyya and the phenomenological and existential dimension of the modern Indian self-consciousness that becomes a central motif in his analysis of suffering.

Sushumna Kannan, San Diego State University
"Responding to Taylor's Secularity via Two Indian Thinkers: Vivekananda and Gandhi"

Though many of Charles Taylor's ideas in his book, *A Secular Age* have been contentious, the suggestion that a change has occurred in so

far as spiritual values are viewed as one alternative among others that could find inclusion in modern societies has been accepted by many as worth thinking through. Yet, an attempt to record such changes demand different tools in different societies. The cultural dynamics of societies, especially, like that of India that retain a distinctive philosophical history that are not easily captured in linear, singular terms and pose a challenge. Both at the cusp of nation formation and later, leaders and philosophers have responded to secularism as an Enlightenment ideal on their own terms and stated how this value may or may not be applied in India. Two important leaders who held such positions did so as a result of their study of the Indian past and traditions, Vivekananda and Gandhi. This paper examines their works to frame the Dharma traditions' response to secularism. Since an understanding of secularism also depends on our theoretical understanding of India's traditions, its past and philosophy, the issues span a wide spectrum depending on how we choose to understand, the principles of self-transformation that do not require God /s and the possibility that religion has never existed in India. To narrow down this wide spectrum, I draw on P. Bilimoria's critique of Taylor's secularity and formulate questions to understand secularism, pseudo-secularism, communalism and related terms within the context of India's traditions.

Laurie Patton, Duke University
"How Secularity Might Work When All Religions are Hindu"

Frequently liberals in India, America and Europe bemoan the fact that there is no space between the categories of "Hindu" and "secular" within which to dwell. According to this view, it is impossible to be a secular Hindu not because of a lack of philosophical categories, but because of a lack of cultural spaces which might embrace such a person. In this brief thought piece, I argue that we might address this cultural dilemma in two different ways: First, one might create cultural institutions and educational practices, such as schools and foundations, which create an inter-generational cultural heritage, not just a cultural space. Second, one might focus more on creating different kinds of secularisms. According to Clark Gilpin, we might think about several kinds of secularisms: anti-religious, a-religious, and pro-religious secularism. And we might do well to explore the possibilities of all of

them. Deepening the idea of multiple Hinduisms is important,
but multiplying the idea of secularisms in India is even more so.

Joseph Prabhu, California State, Los Angeles
*"A Critique of Charles Taylor's A Secular Age from Panikkar and
Socially Engaged Buddhism"*

For all its erudition and historical sweep, there are serious conceptual
and spiritual problems with Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age* . This
paper engages with two of them: his dualism between the sacred and
the secular, and his related idea of sheer transcendence. Raimon
Panikkar, by contrast, argues for the non-dualistic notion of a "sacred
secularity," and a qualified transcendence, while socially-engaged
Buddhism proffers a radical immanence. I shall highlight the problems
with Taylor's analysis and then how the advantages of Panikkar's and
the Buddhist positions

SATURDAY, 22 NOVEMBER 2014
Hilton Bayfront Hotel

SESSION 5 (M22-106)   9:00 am – 11:00 pm

Theme: **Relationships between Devotional Paths and Tantric
Paths**
Convener and Presider: **Phyllis Herman, California State University,
Northridge**

Karen Pechilis, Drew University
"A Tamil Poetess as Tantric Practitioner?"

In her poetry, Śiva-bhakti poetess Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār constructs a
human devotional subjectivity largely in relation to mythological
images of Lord Śiva, pre-eminently the image of Śiva as destroyer of
the triple cities in terms of number of references in her poetry (Pechilis
2011, 53). Yet thematically, Śiva as the dancer seems to hold pride of

place in her expression of her desire for, and experience of, direct encounter with Śiva (Pechilis 2011, 2013). On one level, the poetess displays hermeneutical sophistication in distinctively relating both images to the human condition. On another level, the images are quite different since the dancer is not fully developed in Śaiva mythology the way the destroyer of the triple cities is: How did the poetess get the idea to place the dancer in the cremation ground, where she claims to encounter him directly? The answer may in part be her own creative interpretation of his Sanskrit mythology, as well as her interpretation of Tamil texts such as the Caṅkam poetry and the *Maṇimēkalai*; as yet unexplored is her possible incorporation of Tantric practices. This paper discusses the possibility that Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār combined Śaiva devotionalism and Tantrism. There was a well-developed tradition of Śaiva devotionalism dating from the second century BCE (Sanderson 2013, 223) that came to be influenced by Śaiva Tantric groups, notably the Brahmanic-oriented Atimārgas and the much more transgressive Mantramārga, with its emphasis on the cremation ground as well as feminine and transgressive power (Sanderson 1988, 668). The poetry of Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār may well represent an attempt to bring *bhakti* and Tantra into potent dialogue as a discrete experimental and experiential moment before *bhakti* became philosophically domesticated into the later medieval period (Pechilis 1994, Schwartz 2012).

Loriliai Biernacki, University of Colorado, Boulder
"The Bhāvanā of the Body: Bhakti in Tantra in nondual Kashmiri Śaivism"

The 9th–11th centuries in northern India, in Kashmir saw a profound synthesis of nondualist Tantra within a variety of schools, including the Trika, the Kaula, the Krama, the Pratyabhijñā, the Spanda, all loosely aligned and synthesized especially by the brilliant Kashmiri thinkers Utpaladeva (roughly 900-950 ce) and Abhinavagupta (roughly 975-1025 ce). Borrowing from the Grammarians and Bhartṛhari's understandings of language as *śabdabrahman*, the absolute, these schools offered a profound challenge to Buddhist and Advaita Vedantin formulations of mind, perception and the nature of the world. While there has been a great deal of focus on the philosophical

components of these schools and the historical intellectual interactions with the Buddhist Yogacāra and Sautrantika schools, relatively less attention has been given to the fundamental role of bhakti in the formulations of these Tantric ideas. However, Utpaladeva's Śivastotrāvalī unabashedly declares bhakti as the real driver of enlightenment:

> "No meditation, no japa, of that one, none of the prescribed rituals!
> We bow to that one alone, overflowing with love, filled with the light of Śiva."
> (na dhyāyato na japataḥ syādyasyāvidhipūrvakam
> evameva śivabhāsastaṃ numo bhaktiśālinam)[1]

Drawing from Utpaladeva's devotional songs as well as his Īśvara Pratyabhijñā kārikā and from Abhinavagupta's Īśvara Pratyabhijñā Vivṛti Vimarśinī, Dehasthadevatācakrastotra and Tantrasāra, among other writings, this paper argues that *bhakti*, especially through notions of *bhāvana* as a practice of devotion and *āveśa*, absorption into a deity help to structure a performative understanding of the body as the play of divinity.

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[1] Sanskrit text from Constantina Rhodes-Bailley, *Shaiva Devotional Songs of Kashmir* (New York: State University of New York Press 1987 (India reprint 1990)), p.111.   My own translation here.

June McDaniel, College of Charleston
"Bhakti and Tantra in Balinese Hinduism"

Bhakti is a major form of Hindu worship in India- it is popular and accepted, and some form of bhakti is the basis of religious doctrine and ritual in most areas of the country. Tantra, on the other hand, is obscure and sometimes illegal. Tantrikas often feel the need to defend their practices, sometimes by tantra's bhakti dimension; as one Bengali Shakta tantrika informant stated in interview, "Bhakti justifies tantra." However, Hinduism came to Indonesia before the rise of bhakti. It came as a pre-bhakti form of Hinduism which never developed personal devotion to deities. Indonesia (especially on the island of

Bali) has several types of Hinduism. There is folk Hinduism with the worship of local ancestors and spirits which are equated with Hindu gods; it has popular Hinduism with elaborate rituals of propitiation, and it has government-sponsored Hinduism that emphasizes morality and philosophy.

Is there any presence of either bhakti or tantra in Indonesia? It is not immediately visible. But it can be found in Bali, in the *pedandas* or high priests. They are primarily Shaivite, though there are a few Buddha-Shiva priests remaining. Bhakti is combined with the tantric ritual identification with Shiva/Surya practiced each day, involving mantras, *nyasa,* and *bhutasuddhi*. The priests transform ordinary water in to the holy water needed for virtually all other Hindu rituals in Bali, and in doing so they not only ritually identify with the god, they also develop a devotional relationship to him. Thus, the *surya-sevana* ritual includes both bhakti and tantra.

This paper will describe the roles of bhakti and tantra from field interviews with five Balinese *pedandas*, four Hindu and one Hindu-Buddhist. It will locate the missing traditions in the relationship between the priests and the god.

Jeffrey Lidke, Berry College
"Anuttara Sakti Bhakti: Adoration of the Highest Power in the Non-Dual Tantra of Abhinavagupta"

The logic of devotioanlism presupposes an object of love distinct from its loving subject. Abhinavagupta (1075-1125 C.E.) deconstructs and replaces this dualist logic in his array of writing on Tantric philosophy and liturgical practice. In these works the love and worship of an "other" (theism) is subsumed into a secret self-worship in which the Highest Being-Power (*anuttara-sakti*) is recognized as one's own I-awareness (*aham-vimarsa*). In this way, Abhinavagupta places devotion in service of the gnostic aim of self-understanding.

Respondent: Sthaneshwar Timalsina, San Diego State University

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Theme: **Theologies of Oneness**
Convener and Presider: **Graham Schweig, Christopher Newport University**

Anantanand Rambachan, Saint Olaf College
"Not-Two is Not One: An Advaita Theology of Oneness"

This paper offers a reinterpretation of the understanding of Oneness from the perspective of the well-known non-dualist school of Advaita Vedanta. It avers that Advaita theologies often result, paradoxically, in a radical dualism that negativizes the world as having its origin in ignorance (avidyā) or māyā. Māyā is treated as the material cause of the world. Alternatively, the world is described as an illusion that is projected subjectively as a consequence of our ignorance of reality (Brahman). When Brahman is known, it is argued, the world disappears. Both theologies devalue the world by disconnecting it from Brahman and tracing it to a cause other than Brahman. This paper contends that an Advaita theology of oneness does not require proposing a cause other than Brahman or treating the world as illusory. The Upaniṣads affirm that the world originates from, is sustained by, and returns to Brahman. Advaita is not opposed to diversity. On the other hand, it celebrates diversity through the affirmation of a unique cause-effect relationship through which the One self-multiplies into the many.

Rita Sherma, University of Southern California
"The Many Flavors of the One Taste of Reality in Trika-Kaula Tantra"

This paper offers an interpretation that highlights the primacy given by this school to the variety and plenitude of creation. It avers that Abhinavagupta, in his expositions on enlightenment, posits the purpose of the enlightened state as *jīvanmukti*, the attainment of liberation while alive and the realization of the manifold forms and phenomena of the living world as the luminous manifestation of the Ultimate (Śiva-Śakti). Here the enlightened *sādhaka* re-enters the world as the perfected *siddha* and, through unified perception (*ekarasa*), recognizes the many flavors of experience as the one integral taste of reality

(*sāmarasya*). But the ever-changing panorama of the living world is not negated but known as the expansive actualization of the pulsating potentiality (*spanda*) and infinite plenitude (*pūrnatva*) of the dynamic quiescence that is the heart (*hṛdaya*) of the Absolute.

Jeffery D. Long, Elizabethtown College
"Oneness in the Theology of the Vedanta Society"

The thesis of this paper is that the form of Advaita Vedanta taught by the Ramakrishna Mission and the Vedanta Society–both established by Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) under the inspiration of his guru, Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886)–possesses a strong ethical emphasis that distinguishes it, on the one hand, from the classical Advaita Vedanta taught by Shankara and his later commentators, and on the other, from the highly individualistic non-dualisms promoted by many Advaitic teachers in the West, such as Andrew Cohen and Ken Wilber. This thesis does not claim a strong opposition between the non-dualism of the Ramakrishna tradition and either its classical predecessors or the subsequent forms that this teaching has taken in the West, but only a distinctive emphasis on right action–specifically in the form of selfless service–as a path to liberation.

This paper shall explore the ethical implications of oneness as understood by the Vedanta Society as involving seeing and honoring God as manifested in all beings. Vivekananda famously exhorts his followers, in language almost reminiscent of the biblical prophets, to worship the living God in the form of suffering humanity, and extols the *karma yoga*, in the form of *seva*, as a path to liberation as valid as the yogas of wisdom, devotion, and meditation. Ultimately, this paper will argue that Swami Vivekananda's ethical monism is the cornerstone of the Ramakrishna tradition's ethos of selfless service.

Gopal K. Gupta, The College of Idaho
"The Uniting Power of Yoga and the Illusory Veil of Maya"

The most important and unique feature of the *Bhagavata* is its emphasis on emotional devotion (*bhakti*) directed toward Krishna or Vishnu by immersing the mind and senses in him. In the tenth book, Shuka, the narrator of the *Bhagavata*, declares that those who

constantly direct affection, intimacy or friendship, as well as desire, anger, or fear, toward Hari (Krishna) attain oneness with him. This paper suggests that the *Bhagavata*'s conception of oneness contrasts conceptions of oneness found in Shankara Advaita Vedanta. The *Bhagavata* envisions oneness as an emotional and devotional union of a living being with Krsna. The *Bhagavata* further posits that this union, the desired achievement of a devotee and the highest yoga, is made possible only through the power of *yoga-maya*, because the emotional *bhakti-yoga* of the *Bhagavata* can take place only when, in loving play, both the devotee and Krishna himself forget Krishna's majesty. While Vedanta philosophy often sees maya only as a negative deluding force that mires living beings more deeply in material existence, the *Bhagavata* affirms just the opposite—the living beings' place under the veil of maya is desirable, for maya effects the forgetfulness of Krishna's majesty, intensifies devotion and thus makes possible the union of a devotee with Krishna.

Respondent: Christopher K. Chapple, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles

SUNDAY, 23 NOVEMBER 2014
Hilton Bayfront Hotel

SESSION 7 (M23-204)   1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Theme: **Dharma and Halacha**
Convener: **Ithamar Theodor, University of Haifa**
Presider: **Yudit Kornberg Greenberg, Rollins College**

Yudit Kornberg Greenberg, Rollins College
"The Languages of Love and Desire in the Gitagovinda and the Song of Songs"

Erotic love is the leitmotif that characterizes two of the best poetry ever produced, the Gitagovinda and Shir Ha-Shirim (Song of Songs). As the speech of love, their verses are teeming with manifold cultural

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tropes, thus contributing to the richness of the cross-cultural study of the languages of love and desire. The Song of Songs has been the most quoted biblical book, inspiring a plethora of literature, theology, liturgy, art, and music. It is not surprising that the Gitagovinda has been claimed as the Indian "Song of Songs." While there are a number of compelling resemblances between the two poems that are worthy of examination, my aim is to initiate their comparative study with a focus on the role that imagery from the natural world plays in depicting the physical beauty of the lovers and their sexual desire, and the implications of overt and suggestive languages of erotic love in this poetry.

Ithamar Theodor, University of Haifa
"Dharma and Halacha – Reflections upon Hindu and Jewish Ethics"

One of the strongest links between Judaism and Hinduism is that of ethics, as both religions share a deep commitment to practicing a detailed and particular way of life. Both Dharma and Halacha literature seem to be offering an interpretation to their ancient sources of inspiration; Dharma follows the underlying assumptions of the six orthodox schools, whereas Halacha follows the ten biblical commandments known also as the Decalogue. Examining the Yama-Niyama ethics considered general ethical rules or sādhāraṇa dharma to be at the core of the Hindu ethical system, one may observe that the five yamas are interestingly similar to five out of the Ten Commandments. The paper will explore these relations.

Aaron Gross, University of San Diego
Humane Subjects and Eating Animals:
"Receiving Law and Taking Vows in Contemporary Jewish and Jain Dietary Practice"

Contemporary Conservative and modern Orthodox Jewish practice in America and contemporary Terapanthi Jain practice in India share in common a robust attention to the question of religiously acceptable animal food. Bound up with and conveyed through this attention to

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animal food are broader understandings of what constitutes both ethics and the human itself. Juxtaposing the different dietary regimens of these communities is of broader interest to comparative religious ethics by illuminating both (a) how implied anthropologies/ontologies of "the human" are bound up with ethical mandates and, further, (b) how these implied anthropologies and ethics are embodied in dietary practices related to animal food. The work of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault will provide assistance in mapping these relationship between bodily discipline, the question of animality, implied anthropologies, and techniques of/exhortations to self-discipline.

Shoshana Razel Gordon Guedalia, Harvard University
"Lethal Wives and Impure Widows"

Juxtaposition of Jewish Halachic and Hindu Dharmasastric literature illumines system-specific religio-legal parameters and accumulated attitudinal lore concerning widow marriageability, while showcasing hermeneutic methods for parsing law from taboo. The Brahmin priestly class cannot marry widows, nor can the Jewish *high* priest. Pristine purity maintenance—priestly ritual necessity—correlates with measure of widow impurity. Ritual necessity aside, both corpora—Halachic and Sastric—accumulated attitudinal lore over time. "Impure widow" practicum yielded "lethal wife" taboo. Twice-or-thrice-widowed— "lethal wives"—pose talmudically-defined "risk" to future husbands, due to physical contagion or astrological inauspiciousness. Sastric sources cite widow culpability in husband's deaths—due to poor nurturing capacity, past incarnational infractions, or astrological inauspiciousness. Legal codes and manuals instruct widows to live in celibate ascetic privation—their indulgences potentially harmful to the extra-worldly deceased. With time, an alternative: *Sati*—widows join late husbands in fiery pyre—expunged of blame. Scholars—Halachic and Sastric—challenged these taboos, utilizing similar hermeneutics to parse law from taboo. This paper examines methodologies of 12th century Andalusian Moses Maimonides and 19th century Bengali Ishvarchandra Vidyasagar, who sought to free women enchained by the widow marriage taboo.

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