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## **ABSTRACTS**

**FRIDAY, 18 NOVEMBER 2016**  
**Marriott Riverwalk Hotel, Alamo Ballroom, Salon F**

**SESSION 1 (M18-107) 11:00 am – 1:00 pm**

***Theme: Interrogating Rebirth: Hindu-Christian Debates and their Contemporary Relevance***

***Convener and Presider: Jonathan Edelman, University of Florida***

**Gerald J. Larson, Indiana University, Bloomington, Emeritus; and Univ. of California, Santa Barbara, Emeritus**

***“Classical Yoga’s Eccentric ‘Theism’ of ‘Many-lives’ and its Critique of Theism?”***

The focus of my presentation is twofold. First, I set forth the theory of karma and rebirth as articulated in Yogasūtra II.13 together with the comment attributed to Vyāsa (or perhaps better, Vindhyavāsin). Also, in the first part, I set forth the notion of “theism” as articulated in YS I.25, and again, with the comment by “Vyāsa.” In these two sūtras, the classical Yoga of Patañjali attempts to bring together a theory of “many-lives” based on notions of karmic retribution, which entail a theology in which God is neither personal nor a creator, but is nevertheless a useful exemplary model. Second, extending some of the insights of Samuel Scheffler’s *Death and the Afterlife* (Berkeley Tanner Lectures, 2012), I argue that it might be useful to re-work (or, if you will, “demythologize”) some of the insights of the classical Yoga account of many-lives and its eccentric theology by way of raising some new ways of thinking about death, rebirth, and the

afterlife. Scheffler himself does not believe in personal immortality or life after death in any traditional sense, but he argues that the notion of “many-lives” and the notion of “after life” are nevertheless important for making sense of “one life.” Mine is a parallel argument for the classical Yoga account of karma and rebirth and theism.

**Brad Malkovsky, University of Notre Dame**

***“Reincarnation, Purgatory, and Unsolved Questions in Catholic Eschatology”***

Mainstream Christianity has always rejected reincarnation teaching in all its varieties, e.g. Greco-Roman, Albigensian, Hindu, Buddhist, New Age, etc. as being incompatible with the biblical understanding of the uniqueness, dignity, and value of the human person, a teaching that is ultimately rooted in the radical understanding of divine mercy and love toward every human being proclaimed by Jesus himself. Nevertheless, there are two strong arguments advanced by reincarnationists against the teaching of one earthly life. The first argument regards reincarnation as a more reasonable expression of divine mercy and love than the disproportionate and unfair infliction of eternal punishment by God upon a human being for a single morally corrupt lifetime. The second argument finds reincarnation to be necessary for the continued exercise of creaturely freedom required for true moral and spiritual maturation. Catholic teaching, by contrast, asserts that a single earthly life followed by purgatory is sufficient for the perfection and completion of the human person. However, in both the satisfaction and sanctification models of purgatory the human person is entirely passive, not actively contributing to its own completion. Such an approach would seem to devalue free human participation in the process of perfection. Moreover, in the so-called interim state between death and resurrection advocated by Catholic doctrine, the soul is said to exist without the body. But such a teaching contradicts the unity of body and soul that constitutes the human person and which is normally the basis for the Catholic rejection of the anthropological dualism which underlies most reincarnation teaching.

**Nalini Bhushan, Smith College**

***“Missionary Teachers and their Hindu Students in Colonial India: Debating the Relevance of Rebirth for a Global and Cosmopolitan Audience”***

This essay provides a meta-narrative for the philosophical dialogues that took place in colonial India between Scottish missionary philosophers and philosophers of Vedanta on the topic of karma and rebirth. In particular, it offers a reconstruction and analysis of the context and strategy that shaped the content of discussions that were initiated in the pages of the Madras Christian College Magazine in 1909 between Subrahmanya Sastri, AG Hogg and S. Radhakrishnan (and that inspired Radhakrishnan's response in his dissertation entitled "The Ethics of Vedanta and its Metaphysical Suppositions"). The broad context is provided by a history of missionary presence in India, one that often involved the use of Indian missionary manuals as guides to productive interactions with local populations. The context is further circumscribed by the ‘hybrid’ character of the position of the missionaries as teachers in departments of philosophy, teaching students of “upper-caste Hindus” in the English medium universities set up by the British in the late nineteenth century. The strategy includes choices about terminology, decisions about which kinds of comparative analyses were likely to be productive, and a consideration of the desired outcome of these discussions and debates. The hermeneutics of form and context is essential to understanding the content of these debates about the ethics and metaphysics of Christianity and Hinduism, where the meaning and significance of the notion of rebirth took center stage.

**Jeffery D. Long, Elizabethtown College**

***One Life/Many Lives: An Internal Hindu-Christian Dialogue***

In this paper, I shall engage in a variant of comparative theology as defined by Francis X. Clooney: “deep learning across religious borders.” As defined by Clooney, comparative theology is typically pursued by a committed member of a faith tradition who engages in a deep study of another tradition, not with the aim of

converting or being converted, but in order to learn from the other and bring back insight to the theologian's own tradition. I call this paper a variant of this project, because it is pursued by a theologian who started out as a Christian, who came to identify with Hinduism (and in large part over the topic of rebirth), and who is now raising the question of whether the Christian tradition might have something valuable to offer practicing Hindus regarding the subject of rebirth. As Brad Malkovsky point out in his paper for this same panel, "Mainstream Christianity has always rejected reincarnation teaching in all its varieties... as being incompatible with the biblical understanding of the uniqueness, dignity, and value of the human person, a teaching that is ultimately rooted in the radical understanding of divine mercy and love toward every human being proclaimed by Jesus himself." In this paper, I shall argue that, though there are strong reasons, both theological and empirical, for accepting the doctrine of rebirth as a true account of the afterlife, there are ways of conceptualizing this doctrine from within the Hindu tradition that affirm the "uniqueness, dignity, and value" of each lifetime, and that dialogue with Christianity on this topic is an occasion for highlighting these dimensions of rebirth that may otherwise receive little attention in the interreligious conversation.

**Respondent:** Francis X. Clooney, SJ, Harvard University

**SESSION 2 (M18-205) 2:00 – 4:00 pm**

**Theme: The Self and I in Buddhist, Hindu, and Jain Thought**

**Convener: Purushottama Bilimoria, Graduate Theological Union**

**Presider: Phyllis Herman, California State University, Northridge**

**Tanya Storch, University of the Pacific**

***"Revisiting Chinese Buddhist debates on "shen bu mie," or indestructability of soul."***

Confucian-based literati rejected many points of the original Buddhist stories and teachings brought to China, such as the Buddha's abandonment of his parents, his wife, and his son; deliberate damaging of physical body through monastic austerities; refusal to procreate and avoidance of family life; meditation posture, which was perceived to be "animal crouching;" and begging for food, which was viewed as social parasitism. Yet, Chinese followers of Buddhism easily overlooked these, so-called "barbaric" forms of social behavior for the sake of the promise of afterlife. In the 5th-6th centuries, Chinese scholars dedicated dozens of texts to one particular question—whether the soul was capable of surviving physical death and becoming reincarnated. Positions taken by Chinese Buddhists (including the alleged founder of the Pure Land School—Huiyuan) presented arguments that were, surprisingly, close to the views on the eternity of Atman developed in classical Hinduism. But at the same time, their opponents, Confucian scholars, took positions that were closer to the classical views of Buddhists in India, who taught the absence of an individual soul, or Anatman. This paper offers detailed arguments from both sides and concludes by investigating how the concept of "shen bu mie" might have affected formation of Pure Land Buddhism.

**Ithamar Theodor (University of Haifa)**

***"Constructing the Aesthetic Self of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa"***

"What is the notion of personhood underlying the Bhāgavata Purāṇa?" Attempting to articulate notions of personhood within Hinduism, one faces a translation problem, as the term 'person' is a somewhat Western imposition on Indian culture. The uncertain status of the notion of 'person' in India is conditioned by the fact that it is foreign to the Sanskrit tradition and has no adequate rendering in any of the Sanskritic languages. When dealing with either the human being or the deity, Indian philosophy always worked with

other concepts, which rarely imported the holistic signification of 'person'. As the term 'person' has no adequate rendering in any of the Sanskritic languages, various terms such as ātman, puruṣa, jīva, īśvara, bhagavān, avatāra, and mūrti are used to denote both human and divine persons within various contexts. Having raised the complexity of discussing personhood in the Indian context, and then discussing three notions of personhood which are 'the Worldly Self of Mīmāṃsā', the 'Solitary Self of Sāṅkhya' and the 'Transcendental Self of Vedānta,' this paper then attempts to systematically articulate a fourth notion of personhood, called the 'Aesthetic Self of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa'. At last, it looks into the circumstances of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa's compilation and suggests that the notion of 'Aesthetic Self' is indeed compatible with the other notions presented.

**Jeffery D. Long, Elizabethtown College**  
***"Self, Not Self, and the Reasonableness of Rebirth"***

The recent work of Jim Tucker of the University of Virginia, building upon that of his illustrious (if controversial) predecessor Ian Stevenson, strongly suggests—even if it can be argued that it does not conclusively *prove*—that reincarnation is an idea which deserves to be taken seriously. In addition to this empirical work, a pragmatist case, in the tradition of William James, is also available for affirming the reasonableness of the classical doctrines of rebirth found in the Indic traditions.

An affirmation of rebirth, of course, raises the question, "What is reborn?" This leads quickly to the question, "What is the self?" After establishing the reasonableness of belief in rebirth on a pragmatic basis, this paper shall move to a discussion of ideas of the self (or non self) affirmed in the Advaita Vedanta and Buddhist traditions, using the Jain tradition and theistic Vedantic traditions as a counterpoint to the tendency of both Advaita and Buddhism to point one toward a dissolution of self as the ultimate soteriological goal. The paper shall affirm a pragmatist concept of self as useful—and indeed indispensable—at specific points in the spiritual path, but as something finally to be transcended.

**Joseph Prabhu, California State University, Los Angeles**  
***Self in Hegel, Sri Aurobindo, , and Raimon Panikkar***

Hegel, Sri Aurobindo and Panikkar present three contrasting conceptions of the self, which I call historical-spiritual, cosmic-evolutionary and Christian-advaitic respectively. There are, as to be expected, interesting similarities and contrasts among the three conceptions which the paper will explore. But these considerations are also woven around two framing archetypal imaginaries: the historical imagination of the West with its roots in the historical traditions of Israel and Greece; and the cosmic imagination of India with its roots in the Vedas and Upanishads.

**Christopher K. Chapple, Loyola Marymount University**  
***The Self of the Jñānarnava: Jain Reflective Luminosity***

This paper will draw from a sequence of Jaina Pindastha Meditations that appear first in Subhacandra's Jñānarnava, and later in Hemacandra's *Yoga-śāstra*. By establishing oneself in a state of meditation through the utterance of mantra and the visualization of geometric forms and colors, the Yogin progresses through a harrowing dispersal of karmic matter. These karmic particles, visualized as petals on an earthy lotus, are first incinerated with fire. Then, through the practice of *prāṇāyāma*, a strenuous control of the breath, one stirs up a cloud-filled sky that showers purifying rains. When these rains wash away the remnant karmic ash, one gazes upon one's Self, described as not other than the luminous presence of the Tīrthāṅkara. The

presentation will include original translations from the *Jñānarnava* and a comparative analysis of this process with similar practices found in select Yogic and Tantric texts.

**Respondent:** Purushottama Bilimoria, Graduate Theological Union

**SESSION 3 (M18-300) 4:00 – 6:00 pm**

**Theme: Sādhana, Self, and I: Conceptualizing Hindu Contemplative Practices**

**Convener and Presider: Graham M. Schweig, Christopher Newport University**

**Ramdas Lamb, University of Hawai'i**

***“The Interplay of Personality and Practice in the Ramananda Sampraday”***

Today, the Ramananda Sampraday is the largest monastic order in India, and possibly in the world. Members of the order come from diverse geographic and cultural backgrounds and upbringings. This diversity finds expression in both the teachings and lifestyles in the order. It is also revealed in the many forms of sādhana that are undertaken. In discussing some of these various forms and methods, my paper will also look at the interplay of personality and practice and how each individual's sādhana can be, and often is, patterned to meet personal inclinations and aspirations.

**Michael Allen, University of Virginia**

***“Eighteen Means to Knowing the Self: Nischaldas and the Unification of Hinduism”***

This paper examines a creative use of the term *sadhana* by the Vedantin and Dadupanthi scholar Nischaldas (ca. 1791-1863), whose works were widely read in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In his magnum opus, *The Ocean of Inquiry*, Nischaldas uses the term *sadhana* as the organizing principle for his presentation not only of the path to liberation, but of Hinduism as a unified whole: the final chapter offers an encyclopedic overview of the various texts, branches, and practices of classical Hinduism, showing how each serves as a “means” (*sadhana*), whether directly or indirectly, to knowledge of the self. This paper sketches the details of Nischaldas's position, traces its roots in the works of earlier Vedantins, and explores its implications for the debate about the colonial construction of Hinduism.

**Meera Kachroo, McGill University**

***“His Own Visionary Authority: Manifesting Maṇidvīpā at Devīpuram”***

Since its consecration in 1994, Devīpuram has become a central site of the contemporary resurgence of Srividya's esoteric Sakta tantric lineages. The vision of its founder, Dr. N. Prahlada Sastry (1934-2016), is to manifest maṇidvīpā: the heavenly realm of Lalita Tripurasundari, the most beautiful of all seven worlds, an island surrounded by amṛta, created by the power of Lalita's thoughts. This paper will explore Sastry's direct encounters with goddesses during his meditative sādhana and the numerous theological and social innovations that follow. Through his personal insights, Sastry reimaged, constructed, and revealed maṇidvīpā on a vast and interactive scale, manifesting his own vision in a strikingly public way. Sastry's accounts of his sādhana show a predisposition to meditative visualization, including novel erotic figurations of the Khadgamala deities, direct initiations from Goddesses like Kamaksi, Sahasraksi, and Sarasvati, and a repeated trope of material confirmation of his dream-like revelations.

**Gopal K. Gupta, Florida Gulf Coast University**

***“Contemplating the Song of Krishna’s Flute: Self and Sound in the Bhagavata Purana”***

This paper examines the Venu-gita, one of the most poetic and famous passages in the Bhagavata Purana. The Purana contends that by contemplating and singing the name (nama) of Bhagavan Krishna, the devotee experiences and expresses devotion (bhakti) for Krishna. Through the medium of sound, bhakti flows from the self, the atma, to the supreme self, the Paramatma. But this is only part of it. Bhakti is meant to establish a relationship between the bhakta and Bhagavan, and unless there is an exchange of music from both ends, the relationship cannot be complete. In the Bhagavata, not only does the devotee (bhakta) express devotion to Krishna through music, but Krishna blesses and expresses his love to the devotee through his music. In the Bhagavata, this exchange is artfully depicted in the Venu-gita. The devoted gopis’ music and songs flow from their hearts to Krishna, and Krishna’s song travels from his flute to the hearts of the gopis. By contemplating the sound of Krishna’s flute, the hearts of the gopis become tightly bound to him. In the Bhagavata, the reader is not only advised to compose and sing songs for Krishna, but following in the footsteps of the gopis, the devoted aspirant is also advised to contemplate within her heart the song of Krishna’s flute. How the reader is guided to do this is further explored in the paper.

***Respondent:*** Rita D. Sherma, Graduate Theological Union

**SATURDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 2016**

**Marriott Riverwalk Hotel, Alamo Ballroom, Salon F**

**SESSION 4 (M19-100) 9:00 – 11:00 am**

**DANAM Annual Book Review: Gandhi's Ascetic Activism: Renunciation and Social Action, by Veena R. Howard**

***Convener and Presider:*** Joseph Prabhu, Cal. State University

**No abstracts for this session.**

***Panel Members:***

Parameshwaram Ramakrishnan, Harvard Divinity School

Pankaj Jain, University of North Texas

Christopher Miller, University of California, Davis

Leah Kalmanson, Drake University

Purushottama Bilimoria, The Graduate Theological Union

***Respondent:*** Veena R. Howard, CSU, Fresno

**Convener: Verena Meyer, Columbia University**

**Presiders: Verena Meyer, Columbia University, and Andrea Acri, Nalanda University**

**Andrea Acri, Nalanda University**

***“The (Trans)formation of the Textual Canon of Balinese Hinduism”***

My paper discusses the foundational textual canon underpinning the reformed version of Hinduism that has developed on Bali from the early 20th century until the present. It aims to provide a new perspective on modern and contemporary ‘Balinese Hinduism’ in the light of the premodern religious discourse, describing the elements of continuity and change with its formative phase on the basis of textual and historical data that have so far largely been ignored. In particular, it embarks on a comparison between modern Balinese textbooks of Hinduism and premodern Śaiva texts in Old Javanese. This approach aims at doing justice to the sophisticated Balinese tradition of translation, exegesis, and adaptation of Sanskrit sources from the Indian Subcontinent, which still plays an important role in contemporary Bali.

**Vasudha Narayanan, University of Florida**

***“Krishna narratives in Angkorian Sculpture”***

While Vishnu and his manifestations are very well known in the Khmer empire, some narratives from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Puranas, as well as the churning of the ocean of milk are more prominent than others. This paper will explore the specific incidents connected with Krishna, in the context of a few other incarnations of Vishnu, to examine their significance in Cambodia.

**June McDaniel, College of Charleston**

***“Hindu Adaptation in Indonesia: Popular, Priestly and Institutional Styles”***

Indonesian Hinduism, found primarily in Bali, contains a mixture of influences. We can observe three major styles as practiced today. Popular Hinduism or Agama Tirtha incorporates Hindu deities and ideas into indigenous Balinese religion. Priestly Hinduism (which might be called Agama Hindu Tantra), involves tantric practice, as the pedanda priest ritually identifies with Siva/Surya each day, to create the holy water needed for all Hindu rituals. Institutional Hinduism, or Agama Hindu Dharma, was created in the twentieth century as a monotheistic syncretism of many styles of Indian Hinduism, with an Indonesian god of creation and salvation, Sanghyang Widhi Wasa. It is ethical and philosophical, responding to the concerns of the Muslim majority in Indonesia.

All forms have felt the pressures of the modern world. Popular Hinduism has been denied official status, and become associated with tourism. Priestly Hinduism has seen its influence wane in the face of Westernization. Institutional Hinduism is mandatory in schools, but quickly forgotten. It must debate whether it is a form of Indian Hinduism, or a separate religion.

**Verena Meyer, Columbia University**

***“The Limits of Dharma: South Asian Religions in Southeast Asia”***

My paper discusses the ways in which scholars over the decades have conceptualized the relationship and influence of South Asian religions in Southeast Asia. Dominant discourses have usually framed this relationship in terms of dichotomies such as agent and passive recipient, cosmopolitan and vernacular,

imported and indigenous/authentic, etc. After surveying prevalent conceptualizations and delineating their weaknesses, I propose a different way to think about how South Asian religious culture was absorbed and transformed in Southeast Asia. Based on Ricoeur's delineation of the mimetic process as well as Wittgenstein's rule following paradox, I will suggest that we think of Southeast Asia's absorption of South Asian sources as rule-governed deformations in which creation and imitation are intertwined, and in which retrospective.

**Respondent:** Morny Joy, University of Calgary