

DHARMA ACADEMY OF NORTH AMERICA

DANAM CONFERENCE 2011

ABSTRACTS

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 18

SESSION 1 9:00-11:00 a.m.

Theme: Non-Violence and Violence in Dharma Traditions: Non-Warriors, Ascetics, Animals, and Farmers

Convener and Presider: Kusumita Pedersen, St. Francis College

Koenraad Elst, Independent Scholar

“From the Indo-European Warrior Bands to Modern Buddhist Involvement in War: the Martial Origins and Involvements of Shramanism”

The association of the Shramana sects known as Jainism and Buddhism with non-violence is based on the explicit precepts instituted by the founders and by historical events such as emperor Ashoka’s preaching of non-violence and the Jaina laymen of the Oswal caste collectively abjuring the Kshatriya Dharma in favour of the Vaishya Dharma. Yet, their origin has a strong martial dimension. It is not a very novel hypothesis, already proposed e.g. by Bernard Sergent in 1995, that the tradition of wandering ascetics, onto which the Buddha and Mahavira grafted their movements, found its origin in the (purportedly “Indo-European”) phenomenon of roving bands of young warriors. This adds another martial element to the undisputed fact that both founders belonged to the warrior aristocracy. Both data help explain the much younger historical fact of Buddhism’s involvement in the Chinese martial arts and in the Japanese warrior class. The purpose of this paper is merely to highlight the perfect and simple logic in these multiple links between Shramanism and the warrior lifestyle and ethic, and to document it in the textual sources.

We look into (1) the transition of celibacy from the wandering warrior’s familial non-attachment regardless of occasional sexual encounters to the radical chastity of the Buddha’s disciples, and the later return of non-familial sexuality among the Buddhist monks; (2) the transition from the warrior’s voluntary life of hardship and of testing each other’s and one’s own resolve and strength to the monk’s self-mortification for transcendent purposes; (3) the relative continuity between the warriors’ involvement in military activities, still frequently in evidence in the history of the Naga Sadhus, with the involvement of monks in Chinese peasant and nationalist revolts and the adoption of Zen Buddhism as the religion of choice of the Samurai class; (4) the role of the reincarnation doctrine in the warrior mindset, as claimed explicitly in the Chandogya Upanishad and in the Bhagavad Gita, and as expressed much later in the battlefield testimonies of Japanese soldiers. We acknowledge the oddity of the seeming continuity between an institution and mindset predating the Buddha and the resurgence of this mindset in other but likewise martial institutions much after him, considering that his own career is marked by a complete absence of martial endeavours and an explicit rejection of some remainders of the warrior-band prehistory in the Shramanic milieu.

Carl Olson, Allegheny College

“The Conflicting Themes of Nonviolence and Violence in Ancient Indian Asceticism as Evident in the Practice of Fasting”

In many ancient Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist texts, the path of the ascetic lifestyle involves an injunction to practice nonviolence, a requirement that conflicts with the violence that the ascetic inflicts upon him/herself by going naked, clothed in coarse garments made of discarded cloth, tree bark, or grass, excessive limits on food in-take, self-mutilation, sleep deprivation, and practicing various forms of extreme austerities in an effort to gain control over one's body, breathing rhythms, and mind. In spite of taking a vow of nonviolence, many Indian ascetics inflict painful harm upon their own bodies that represents a process of marking their bodies, which enables them to create their own bodies in particular ways that distinguish them from ordinary members of society by means of practicing their regimen of discipline. These bodily marks or characteristics make it easy for people within society to recognize their religious status outside of normal social intercourse and on the margins of Indian culture. A popular method of marking an ascetic's body is through extreme forms of fasting, a type of practice pushed to its most excessive extent by the vow to fast unto death by a Jain ascetic. Long periods of fasting result in emaciated looking bodies, for example, because of a lack of sufficient food to nourish the body, resulting in a loss of bodily fat and flesh. Ascetics often appear with visible ribs, other perceptual bones showing, and spinal cord protruding through their skin. The emaciated bodily appearances as a result of various types of self-inflicted violence give an ascetic the look of an animated corpse. During a period of his life devoted to the practice of extreme forms of asceticism, the historical Buddha alleges that he could reach through the flesh around his abdomen and grasp his spinal cord, a condition that he later rejected. A strict regimen of extreme eating behavior, a form of self-inflicted violence, leads to a phenomenon that characterizes the appearance of many ascetics: veins. It is lucidly affirmed in some texts that the ascetic's body is held together by their veins. Because of Jayadratha's extreme asceticism, for instance, his body is held together by veins (Mbh 7.41.12), and the same thing is asserted of the ascetic Matanga (Mbh 13.30.2) later in the same epic. What this means is that veins appear all over the body of the ascetic, providing an outline of the body and the appearance of holding the emaciated bodily figure together.

By achieving an emaciated condition, the Indian ascetic manifests an overt rejection of normal social food transactions that constitute a social code that defines and reinforces prevailing hierarchical social structures and interpersonal relationships. The cosmic and social significance of food is evident in Indian texts from ancient times because it plays a central role in the Vedic sacrificial cult when a sacrificer bonds with the gods, a feature that is often expressed by the sacrificer becoming food (ŚB 3.6.3.19). By having to wait for his chance to consume the sacrificial offering, the sacrifice manifests his inferior status in relation to the deities. Embedded within religious speculation in the Upanisads, it is claimed that food is a manifestation of and a part of Brahman, non-dual, ultimate reality (Taittirīya Up. 2.2) with worldly creatures being produced by food, being nurtured by means of food, and finally passing into food. With respect to the Ātman (self), it is food that is identified as its foundation (2.1), and is covered by the five sheaths that hide the genuine self, which are identified with food along with breath, mind, bliss, and understanding. According to another Upanisadic text, food also plays a role in the lifecycle and rebirth when digested food creates semen that eventually becomes a person (Prasna Up. 1.14).

By observing a strict regimen of food consumption, the ascetic for the most part remains outside of the social regulations pertaining to purity and pollution with respect to eating, saliva, type of food safe to consume, and persons from whom one can accept food. The

ascetic also avoids the dichotomous cultural distinctions drawn about food between hot/cold, boiled/fried, human/divine, and feasting/fasting. Moreover, the ascetic evades the moral and material qualities associated with food in Indian culture. Because food sustains the human body with nutritious elements and helps it thrive, food is often depicted as synonymous with life itself, but ascetic eating behavior is contrary to promoting life because he/she strives to become dead to the world. For the ascetic, food does not have a role as a commodity within a socio-economic system of exchange among human beings or between humans and divine beings. The ascetic is unconcerned and detached from the nutritional value of food for physical health, its role in shaping temperament, its influence on the emotions, and its contribution to achieving longevity. By using fasting as an example of self-inflicted violence by the Indian ascetic, this approach helps us to witness that violence and nonviolence are relative concepts because their degrees of social acceptability differ among religious cultures and even within particular religions. The relative nature of violence and nonviolence can also be traced to its acceptability during changing historical periods and circumstances. Even though violence and nonviolence are relative notions, violence signifies actions that injure, causes harm or pain, or destroys an object, animal, or person, whereas nonviolence is relative to other persons, animals, or things.

Christopher Key Chapple, Loyola Marymount University
“Imitation, Reincarnation, and Compassion: Animals in Indic Traditions”

The Vedanta and Jaina and Buddhist and Yoga traditions accord high status to animals as exemplars, friends, and past relatives. This paper will explore traditional and contemporary examples of how attitudes toward animals in these Asian traditions have supported and continue to support advocacy for the well being of all living beings. The Vedas extol the cow in dozens of hymns, likening the beneficence of the cow to the dawn, to speech, to the rain clouds, and to creation itself. The Kaushitaki Upanisad states “[one] is born again here according to [one’s] deeds (karma) as a worm, or as a moth, or as a fish, or as a bird, or as a lion, or as a wild boar, or as a snake, or as a tiger, or as a person” (Hume 1921, 303). The Jaina tradition likens the Tirthankara Mahavira to a host of different valiant animals, stating that “His senses were well protected like those of a tortoise; He was single and alone like the horn of a rhinoceros; He was free like a bird; He was always waking like the fabulous bird Bharunda; Valorous like an elephant, strong like a bull; Difficult to attack like a lion . . .” (Jacobi 1884b, 261). The later Jaina tradition develops an extensive philosophy linking animals and their treatment to one’s advancement toward increasing spiritual purification. The Buddha told many stories of his past births in the collection of narratives known as the Jataka Tales. These stories include references to more than seventy different types of animals. The Buddha himself took many animal forms, including as different monkeys, elephants, jackals, lions, crows, deer, birds, and fish (Chapple 1997, 135). The Buddha, when he lived as a wealthy prince, had a close relationship with many animals, most notably his white stallion Kanthaka (Warren 1896, 62–67).

In both Hindu and Jain symbolism, animals figure prominently. Animals not only were past incarnations and beloved companions, but also became elevated to deity status in Hinduism, such as the Eagle Garuda, the Monkey Hanuman, and the Elephant-headed Ganesh. Each anthropomorphic deity has a well-known companion animal, including Ganesh’s rat, Durga’s lion, Saraswati’s peacock, Laksmi’s elephant, and Siva’s bull. In the iconography of the Jaina tradition, each great teacher, or Tirthankara, seems nearly identical, seated in meditation. To distinguish between the twenty-four different individuals, one needs to consult the insignia at the base of each sculpture. Rsabha’s companion is the bull; Ajita is marked by an elephant;

Sambhava, a horse; Abhinanda, an ape; and Sumati, a partridge. The two historical Tirthankaras, Parsvanatha (ca. 800 B.C.E.) and Mahavira (ca. 500 B.C.E.), are signified by a snake and lion, respectively (Chapple 2006, 245). Yoga, a technique for minimizing one's mental distractions for the purposes of deepening one's spirituality (Patanjali's Yoga Sutra, I: 2–4), includes movements that align human physicality with the larger animal order. India maintains an extensive network of organizations that advocate animal welfare. The most famous of these is the goshala, the shelters that exist across India for unwell and elderly cattle (Nelson 2006; Rosen 2004). Though perhaps less well known, the Jaina pinjrapoles, which number in the thousands, give shelter, food, and medical care to countless birds and animals.

The Bishnoi movement, founded in the fifteenth century by Jambhesvara in Rajasthan, continues to advocate for the protection of humans, animals, and plants. Jambhesvara composed twenty-nine rules to be followed by all members of this community, which include 18. Be compassionate towards all living beings; 22. Provide common shelter for goats and sheep to avoid their being slaughtered in abattoirs; 23. Do not castrate bulls; 28. Do not eat meat or nonvegetarian dishes (Pankaj Jain, tr.). In modern times, Bishnoi have established the Community for Wildlife and Rural Development Society and the All India Jeev Raksha Bishnoi Sabha, a wildlife protection organization.

This paper will include a survey of the traditions mentioned above, focusing on a long tradition in India of telling lively stories of past animal births, promulgating philosophies that emphasize the interconnectedness of life, and a long history of women and men willing to make sacrifices to protect animals. Whitney Sanford, Florida State University of Florida “Practicing Non-Violence through Food: Gandhi's Agrarian Legacy in Contemporary Intentional Communities.” Abstract: Mohandas K. Gandhi's emphasis on non-violence, equity, and self-sufficiency has proven inspirational for new agrarian movements in India and the US. Today, in response to the devastating social and environmental consequences of industrial agriculture, these groups are using Gandhi's thought to envision and enact non-violent food production and consumption practices. My paper focuses on two religious intentional communities, Brahma Vidya Mandir in India and ISKCON in the US, that have wrestled with the practical implications of translating abstract values such as non-violence and self-sufficiency into specific practices of food production and consumption. Both groups argue that the conventional food system imposes systemic violence on multiple communities, human and non-human. While some practices, e.g. factory farming, application of toxic pesticides, and unfair labor regimes, are easily identified as violent, other practices, including privatization of germplasm, inequitable financial structures, and rural poverty are also understood as violent. Like Gandhi, they articulate their responses to industrial agriculture in religiously inflected language drawn from the Bhagavad-Gita and use this text as a guide to develop practices that they deem non-violent, e.g. “non-violent” organic/natural farming practices, appropriate technologies, and local distribution networks. The Bhagavad-Gita also provides the religious and philosophical basis for the personal, spiritual transformation that, they contend, must drive and accompany broader social change. Exploring the theory and praxis of these communities demonstrates both an innovative engagement with the concept of violence through a Hindu perspective and an Indic contribution to a non-violent and socially just food system.

Whitney Sanford, Florida State University of Florida

“Practicing Non-Violence through Food: Gandhi's Agrarian Legacy in Contemporary Intentional Communities”

Abstract not currently available.

Theme: Violence and Non-Violence in Hindu Traditions

Convener and Presider: Jeffery D. Long, Elizabethtown College,

T.S. Rukmani, Concordia University, Canada

“From Violence to Non-Violence as Evidenced in the *Mahabharata*”

There is a popular belief, either rightly or wrongly, that Hinduism is somehow associated with vegetarianism. The gradual transition to substitutes for animals even in Vedic ritualism is a fascinating study in itself. There is ample evidence in the Brahmanas to trace this gradual change in the attitude of the ritualists. In the wake of Ashoka’s ascent to the throne and with his sympathy for Buddhist thought there was an increasing emphasis on non-violence, as evidenced in his edicts. Side by side, there developed some common dharmas (sadharana-dharmas) applicable to all people in addition to the varna-asrama-dharmas by the time of the Mahabharata. Nonviolence (ahimsa) was accorded the paramount place in this set of sadharana-dharmas, as the Mahabharata states (Ahimsa Paramo Dharmah) “Non-violence is the paramount Dharma.” In pursuance of this categorical statement of the Mahabharata this paper tries to find evidence for the emphasis on non-violence that the Mahabharata promotes in various ways.

Veena Howard, University of Oregon

“Animals’ Own Voices in Hindu Narratives: The Ideal of Nonviolence towards Living Beings”

In recent years, ecocritics have investigated the relationship of humans and the natural world in literature. Their focus highlights the question of the human/nature interrelationship, which has become central to debates about environmental issues. Either active violence or an attitude of non-violence towards animals can be fostered by literature through its psychological impact. This is all the more significant when that literature is considered sacred. However, in Hindu sacred literature the existential reality of nature and humans is rarely polarized and, therefore, the questions regarding the relationship between nature and humans in literature take an unconventional tone. This is most explicitly evident in the portrayal and treatment of animals. In particular, the various sacred narratives in the Hindu religious epics including the Mahabharata depict seamless engagement between celestial beings, humans, and animals. These texts present a unique phenomenon in which the animals are presented as ethical agents. They ubiquitously engage with humans, celestial beings disguise as animals, they present moral dilemmas and tests, and they impart dharma lessons. But, more importantly, animals are presented as the advocates for the protection of nature and present an ideal of nonviolence that is practical. These stories invoke the precepts of dharma and the law of karma from animals’ vantage point to communicate the ethics of responsibility towards all living beings. In this essay, by focusing on select stories, I seek to explore the underlying purpose of this kind of engagement with the animal world. I argue that these narratives are not merely fables; rather they claim not only the “intrinsic value” to animals but also their distinctive agency. Animals representing the voice for the protection of the environment invite us to analyze the Hindu attitude toward humans and nature. This unique approach to animals might serve as a model of constructing eco-psychology of nonviolence for the modern world.

Neela Bhattacharya Saxena, Nassau Community College

“Are the fierce forms of the Mahadevi ‘Violent’? A Reading of the *Chandi*”

One of the most difficult questions worshipers of Hindu goddesses have to face is the idea that many fierce forms of the Mahadevisuch as Kali seem violent and are seen as devouring goddesses. Fear of Kali exists among some Hindus themselves that she must be appeased or she will wreak havoc! Also, from colonial times, notions of “blood-thirsty” and “grotesque goddesses” of Hinduism have permeated the popular psyche of most western people. More recently an upsurge of interest in goddesses in general has mitigated some of the old stereotypes; however, there are often genuine questions regarding the meaning of their apparently violent manifestations. This paper will look closely at the text of what is known in Bengal as the Chandi to explore the role and meaning of violence in the tradition.

Purushottama Bilimoria, Deakin University and Melbourne University, Australia

“The Threads of Gandhian Nonviolence in the African American Civil Rights Movement, 1893-1968”

The presentation surveys the role and impact of nonviolence in the formation and development of the African American Civil Rights Struggle and Movement. This is done through a historical narrative, using images, voices and videos, from 1893 to 1968, and after. Beginning with W E B Dubois, who maintained connections with the Indian freedom-fighter, M K Gandhi, and continuing through a myriad of budding African American/Black leaders, preachers and activists. The galaxy is huge and largely unknown to even American historians, not to speak of our own post-colonial subulant pedigree. The Jain Rai Chandraji’s precepts given to Gandhi and the latter’s own (not entirely theory-unladen) praxis of ‘militant nonviolence’ (a al Erickson) and satyagraha (truth-force) had hugely major influence on the development of nonviolent strategy for the civil rights fights in the US. This approach to effecting change in society, in democratic governance, and claiming and winning human rights entitlements, has reached something of a crescendo perhaps - though perhaps not entirely - independently of the preceding successes in regions near and afar, such as Burma, upper-Saharan Africa, hopefully the Middle East, Wisconsin and Alameda county.

Ramdas Lamb, University of Hawaii

“Non-violence and Environmentalism in the Dharma Traditions”

The Dharma traditions’ beliefs regarding the importance of ahimsa and vegetarianism have long been understood primarily from the perspectives of morality and karma. However, as more and more people are becoming aware of global warming and environmental pollution in the world, ahimsa and vegetarianism are taking on a new meaning. My paper will look at the practical significance and import of the adoption of these concepts as key elements in helping to alter the course of environmental degradation and further a move toward peace and purity on the environmental as well as spiritual levels.

SESSION 3 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Theme: Approaches to Non-Violence and Violence in Jain Dharma

Convener and Presider: Anne Vallely, University of Ottawa, Canada

Panelists: *Abstracts not available at this time.*

Gabriel Jones

Bradley Boileau

Smita Kothari

Nika Kuchuk

Melanie Saucier

Anne Vallely

SESSION 4 4:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Theme: Sovereignty, Sacrifice, and the Sacred: Non-Violence and Violence in Sikh Dharma

Convener: Arvind Mandair, University of Michigan

Presider: Nikky Singh, Colby College

Arvind Mandair, University of Michigan

“Mourning Sovereignty: Finitude and Sacred Violence in the Khalsa Narrative”

This paper will argue that much of contemporary discourse about the emergence of democracy and political sovereignty can be traced to modern narratives linking the rise of the nation-state in Europe to the separation of church and state. Thus the idea that concept of sovereignty is the exclusive property of the modern nation-state has become part of the myth of liberal modernity. In this lecture I want to critically examine the doctrine of Guru Khalsa (the idea that sovereignty is (jointly) located in the order of the Khalsa) by reading the event of the Khalsa’s creation in 1699 as a narrative drama that deals intrinsically with the loss of the sacred (or the death of the god-king) as an essential step on the way to the achievement of a political community (imagined or otherwise). Although my talk will make reference to the deployment of the central myth at the heart of the Khalsa narrative in different time periods (specifically the 18th century and in the late 20th century) as a means for gathering the Sikh community, the crux of my argument will focus on the political theology of the event. I shall argue that the loss of the sacred enacted by the 10th Guru of the Sikhs as part of his new initiation ceremony in 1699, inverts the normative myth of the nation state and gives rise to radically different notions of sovereignty, political community and democracy.

Navdeep Singh Mandair, University of Birmingham, UK

“Squandered Souls: Rethinking the Sacrificial Idiom in Sikhism”

In Sikhism the figure of the martyr (shahid) has become a particularly compelling emblem of self-definition, symbolizing the most profound commitment to righteousness (dharam). However, I will argue that what really makes martyrdom an exemplarily creditable act is its exceptional role in accumulating credit for the cause of Sikh identity. In contrast to this commoditization of martyrdom I want to call attention to a sacrificial idiom which invokes

death, rather than the dead, as the agency of self expression. Drawing on the work of Georges Bataille and Jacques Derrida I will examine the story of the panj piare for clues to understanding how death may be constitutive for life and indicate how the eliding of this narrative, during the development of Sikhism's martyrological tradition in the C19-C20, reveals the ideological intervention of colonialism in India. I will point out that an echo of this interventionism may be traced in the work of contemporary historians of Sikh religion such as Lou Fenech.

Prabhsharandeep Singh, Independent Scholar
“(Non)violent (Wo)manhood in Sri Guru Granth Sahib”

This paper would be part of an attempt to develop a new hermeneutics for Sikh studies that would try to explore all the contradictions in the text, and focus more on a movement within the text rather than a meaning. Predominantly Feminine idiom of the language of Sri Guru Granth Sahib, conveying a sense of wonder before anything like meaning, defines Hukam as a deeper stage of Vismaad. In this way, what comes under erasure, among many other things, is a nihilistic mode of thinking, which tends to put everything in a metaphysical perspective. In Gurbani, violence, therefore, a resistance against translation confronts nihilistic impulse in haumai, on both empirical and transcendental levels.

Balbinder S. Bhogal, Hofstra University
“To Be or Not To Be Violent – Modernity and Sikh Reticence”

It is not hard to recognize that the very demand for religions and secular movements to be non-violent is itself violent – and it is violently policed and enforced. I argue, following Hardt and Negri and others, that this is because the demand for non-violence arises out of the transition and transformation that European colonial modernity instigated across the globe. Thus before we can understand “violence and non-violence” within Sikh-ism, as though they were two options between which rational individuals choose, we have to first recognize that this topic disguises a disciplinary demand that can be located within a specific historical trajectory born from the violent context of Imperial subjugation and colonization that lay the ground for a traumatic conversion to European modernity. To begin to question how modern projects employ such metaphysical mechanisms is to begin to read a deeper layer to the crisis inherent in modernity – one that could be framed as primordial and perennial, a layer underpinning the current manifestation of it in the form of the dialectic between violence and non-violence – which is merely its latest expression. That substructure is the tension and interplay between sovereignty and subjectivity. To demonstrate the coercive and disciplinary nature of the conversion to the modern nation state and its rule of (white European) Law - where Sovereignty produces subjectivity (of a docile kind), I will chart four major examples within the Sikh tradition where subjectivity recovers a sovereignty (of a fearless kind) that is not produced but comes always already given (as Gift, Event, Justice). Firstly, how the unnamable and plural Way of Sikhi was translated and transformed into a named ideology of Sikh-ism. Secondly, once the objectification of sikhi into Sikhism had occurred then, one could argue from the fixed “ideal” position of one’s named object as being non-violent and therefore read later developments of the tradition as aberrant, involving a shift from pacifism to militarism. Thirdly, Sikhism is defined as part of the bhakti tradition, where bhakti is translated as “loving devotion”, yet this translation of a “religion of love” complimentary to a Christian ethos, elides bhakti’s violent and political dimensions. How to re-cover those pre-modern definitions of bhakti? Fourthly and finally, those that love fearlessly and without hate, who constantly reform

and renew themselves in time, operate more like a multitude than a people, race or ethnic group. The Sikh term *sangat* will be explored in its multiple forms – as a form of subjectivity that is able to regain its sovereign status.

Michael Hawley, Mount Royal University, Canada
“Gandhi and the Sikhs”

Mohandas K. Gandhi (1869-1947) is perhaps one of the most recognized figures of the 20th century. Sikh tradition by contrast has been until relatively recently the “forgotten tradition.” Nevertheless, there has been some scholarship on Sikh perceptions of Gandhi. These Sikh impressions of Gandhi have however been mixed, from admiration and empathy to vigorous critique and indeed enmity. While there appears to be little consensus among Sikhs with regard to Gandhi, precious little has been done to unpack Gandhi ecumenical and non-violent saint occupied with the task of recalling the world’s religious communities (religions) back to their shared, ethical core (religion). And much of Gandhi’s attention and the subsequent scholarship in this area has focused on Hindu - Muslim relations. Little attention has been given to the Sikhs who have tended to remain forgotten in Gandhi studies.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 19

SESSION 5 9:00 – 11:30 a.m. NO ABSTRACTS FOR THIS PANEL

Theme: Book Review of: Religion and the Specter of the West: Sikhism, India, Postcoloniality, and the Politics of Translation by Arvind Mandair.

Convener: Phyllis Herman, California State University, Northridge

Presider: Rita Sherma, Taksha University and ITBB

Panelists:

Purushottama Bilimoria, UC Berkeley

Gerry Larson, UC Santa Barbara

Joseph Prabhu, California State Univ., Long Beach

Michael McLaughlin, St. Leo University

Respondent: **Arvind Mandair**, University of Michigan

SESSION 6 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Theme: Bhakti and Yoga

Convener: Graham M. Schweig, Christopher Newport University

Presider: Brian Black, Lancaster University, UK

Brian Black, Lancaster University, UK

“Yoga in the Upanishads”

It is widely acknowledged that a number of details about the philosophy and practice of yoga are first found in the Upanishads. Much of the technical vocabulary, for example, that would later be adopted by the Samkhya and Yoga schools is first developed in the Upanishads, while the Brhadaranyaka and Chandogya Upanishads contain descriptions of vivid visualizations of a heavenly abode and introspective speculations about the self. Moreover, the Katha and Shvetashvatara Upanishads both contain some of the first descriptions of exercises for controlling the senses, breathing techniques, and bodily postures, while the Maitri Upanishad contains a number of parallels with the Yoga Sutra. To what extent are these passages associated with early practices of yoga? In what ways are these passages related to each other in the context of the Upanishads? What is the connection between these passages and later yoga traditions? This paper will address these questions in light of a number of recent studies which have challenged our understanding of the early history of yoga, in particular the work of David Gordon Smith (*Sinister Yogis*), Geoffrey Samuel (*The Origins of Yoga and Tantra*), and Stephen Phillips (*Yoga, Karma, and Rebirth*). As I will suggest, some Upanishadic passages which are widely thought to be connected with yoga might be better explained in terms of other prominent religio-philosophical practices. I will also argue that the association of yoga with bhakti, which is sometimes regarded as a later development, is intrinsic to the characterization of yoga in the Upanishads.

Graham M. Schweig, Christopher Newport University
“Yoga and Bhakti: Married or Divorced?”

This paper will look at the “marriage” of yoga and bhakti by examining key passages in the texts of the Bhagavad Gita, the Yoga Sutras, and the Bhagavata Purana. It will then look at the “divorce” between the two in the texts associated with and arising from the Chaitanya school of Vaishnavism, despite the fact that this sampradaya relies heavily on at least the Bhagavad Gita and Bhagavata Purana for its vision of bhakti. I will argue that what is called yoga in earlier periods of bhakti history will later be dissociated from bhakti while, at the same time, its practices are adopted. These practices are not only blatantly yogic in nature, but perhaps achieve the furthest reaches of yoga and its goals of samadhi. While the label of “yoga” disappears, bhakti practices in fact evolve and develop the depth experiences within yoga. And what later bhakti movements call yoga—which, during this later period, is often relegated to and identified with the more limited approaches of karma and jnana—is in fact what bhaktas are so intensely absorbed in. Yet, the bhaktas desire to differentiate their observances from yogic praxis, due to the emphasis and influence of tantric practices within yoga during the later period. Additionally, I will claim that it is also yoga’s association with advaitic soteriological visions during this later period that alienates bhakti traditions. In addition to examining key exemplary passages in primary texts to provide evidence of my argument, I will rely on the work of contemporary scholars. For example, from the work of Arvind Sharma, and my own work on the Bhagavad Gita, and building upon my work on the Bhagavata, I will examine the “marriage” of bhakti and yoga. I will rely on both David Haberman’s work on bhakti sadhana of the Chaitanya school and Edwin Bryant’s work on the Yoga Sutras and Bhagavata to gain further illumination on the precise nature of this marriage and divorce between bhakti and yoga.

Barbara A. Holdrege, University of California, Santa Barbara
“Kṛṣṇa Bhakti and Classical Yoga: The Gaudya Challenge to Patañjali”

Rūpa Gosvāmin and Jīva Gosvāmin, the principal architects of the Gaudiya Vaiṣṇava theological edifice of Kṛṣṇa bhakti in the sixteenth century, developed a robust discourse of embodiment in which the human body is a site of central significance that is ascribed a pivotal role on three levels: first, as the material psychophysical complex (sādhaka-rūpa) that is to be cultivated on the path to realization; second, as the eternal, nonmaterial body (siddha-rūpa) that is to be attained in the highest state of realization; and third, as the transformed material body that is the external counterpart of the eternal body of bliss. This paper will focus on the ways in which this Gaudīya discourse of embodiment challenges the perspectives on embodiment and personhood advocated by the classical Yoga of Patañjali and recasts meditation as a devotional practice that is ascribed a pivotal role on the path of Kṛṣṇa bhakti.

David L. Haberman, Indiana University

“The Place of Emotions in Yoga: Suppression or Expression?”

Much religious literature of the world is deeply dubious of the value of emotions, suspicious of whether they are to be trusted at all in ultimate spiritual pursuits. Such a viewpoint can certainly be found within the religious cultures of South Asia. Patañjali’s famous definition of yoga as the suppression of the movement of the heart/mind (citta-vṛitti) that appears in the Yoga Sūtras was formulated within the context of an ascetic form of Hinduism that aimed to achieve freedom from the tumultuous effects of emotions and sensual engagement. Through a progressive withdrawal from any involvement in the emotional world and the stilling techniques of yogic meditation, the most rarified aspect of the mind (buddhi) could be placed in a calm and tranquil state, and achieve its highest purpose of reflecting the Self to the Self. We find in the writings of others, however, what might be called a yoga of divine emotions that is often associated with the Vaiṣṇava traditions of bhakti yoga. Rupa Gosvamin’s Bhaktirasamritasindhu, which gives exemplary expression of this type of yoga, begins with the celebratory exclamation: “All Glory be to the One Whose Form is the Essence of All Divine Emotions!” In this text, Rupa articulates a spiritual path that – far from repressing powerful emotions – utilizes them as effective glue that can bind one in a loving relationship with God. This presentation will explore and compare these two different approaches to thinking about the place of emotions in yoga, and give consideration to their differing implications.

Jonathan Edlmann, Mississippi State University

“By the Grace of God: Bhakti-Yoga as Unobtainable by Personal Effort”

Yoga often refers to practices to which one applies effort to obtain a result. Patañjali’s kriya-yoga, for example, consists of practices such as devotion to the Lord, austerity, etc. to restrain mental fluctuations. In the Bhagavata Purāna, Bhakti (devotion for the Lord) is a Yoga, but is it obtainable through personal effort? I shall argue that for the post-Caitanya commentator Viṣvanātha (c 1650-1774 ad) it is not. The Bhakti-yogin’s initial will to engage in Bhakti-yoga arises from the spontaneous will of the Lord (yadr̥ccha), often mediated by the discriminative mind of the devotee. Thus, the desire to perform isvara-pranidhana does not arise from the free-will of the Yogin, but only by the blessing of God, which cannot be invoked by any amount of piety, scriptural learning, ascetic practice, etc. (see commentary on Bhagavata 3.9.34). In Madhurya-kādambari (vs. 1.2-9) Viṣvanātha argues that because Bhakti is above the three qualities of nature (guṇa-s), it would never be possible to do

anything within them to earn Bhakti. Since Lord Krishna is fully absorbed in the loving relationships of his devotees and impartial to all, Bhakti can only be given in its first instance by the devotee. Madhva, the Vedanta Acarya, is known to have said some souls are eternally bound in samsara. I will contrast his view with that of Visvanatha, who is also saying that until the spontaneous will of the Lord ignites the soul with Bhakti, it too is unable to become liberated from samsara.

Ramdas Lamb, University of Hawai'i
“Yoga . . . for God’s Sake”

The traditional goal of classical Hinduism is said to be liberation from the cycle of birth and death, and the ascetic movements and orders that have arisen over the millennia have typified this. The various forms of austerities, coupled with the practice of yoga, have comprised the primary means through which this goal has been sought. However, the Ramananda Sampraday, established by Swami Ramananda (ca. 14th-15th c.) introduced into the ascetic arena a different approach and ethos. He adopted the Vishishtadvaita philosophy of Swami Ramanuja as his primary theological approach, to which he added inspiration from the bhakti movement as well as sadhana elements from the Gorakhnath yogis and various tantric practices. In this way, Ramananda formulated a path that combines all these while putting forth devotion as a primary, if not solitary, goal. Subsequently, significant personages in the Ramananda lineage, including Kabir and Tulsidas, have added to the devotional sentiments of the order, while its ascetics have developed its yogic and tantric elements. As a consequence, the Ramananda Sampraday today is not only the largest ascetic order in India, but the one that blends tantra, yoga, and bhakti more seamlessly than any other Hindu renunciant order. The dual focus of the practices of Ramanandi sadhus today is yoga sadhana and bhakti. For the former, the Yoga Sutras, certain sectarian Upanishads, and the writings attributed to Gorakhnath are pivotal. For the latter, the writings of Tulsidas, Kabir, and others in the lineage, predominate. My paper will look at how these two are combined in the life of the ascetics of the order.

Christopher Key Chapple, Loyola Marymount University
“California Dreaming: Bhakti Fest in Joshua Tree, 2011”

The Bhakti Movement in the United States began with the import of modest recordings of traditional Hindu devotional songs, particularly as practiced by Swami Sivananda's Divine Life Society. The advent of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness saw a widespread dissemination of the Hare Krishna Mantra, and the public performance of Kirtan. When Baba Ram Dass published *Be Here Now* in 1971, and particularly when Krishna Das and Bhagwan Dass popularized the chanting encouraged by their Guru Baba Neem Karoli, a foundation was established for the Yoga Renewal that included not only the burgeoning number of Yoga Studios teaching asana and pranayama, but the emergence of touring singing groups, such as the Bhajan Band in Los Angeles.

This presentation will focus on a tradition parallel to the Coachella Music Festival that also takes place in the California desert, Bhakti Fest. The presentation will report on the most recent gathering, which will have taken place from September 8 to 11 in Joshua Tree, featuring many contemporary interpreters of the Sanskrit chanting tradition, including Krishna Das, Bhagwan Das, Deva Premal, Jai Uttal, Wah!, David Stringer, M C Yogi, Girsh, and several dozen others. By examining how the aural/oral aspects of Yoga combine with meditative and movement practices, some insight will be gleaned into this contemporary expression. Questions to be posed include: How much "Hinduism" can be gleaned within

this gathering? What portion seems oriented toward Saivism? Vaishnavism? Love mysticism? Tantra? Which generations participate? What needs are fulfilled among participants?