



13th Annual DANAM Conference 2015

Sponsored by

Dharma Academy of North America (DANAM)

20–21 November 2015
Atlanta, Georgia

Held in conjunction with the
2015 American Academy of Religion (AAR) Annual Meeting

ABSTRACTS

FRIDAY, 20 NOVEMBER 2015

SESSION 1 (M20-100)

Theme: Jain Contemplative Praxis: Meditation, Mantra, and Mindfulness

Convener: Kamini Gogri, University of Mumbai

Presider: Purushottama Bilimoria, The Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley

Tillo Detige, Ghent University

“Calling upon the (Un)responsive? Ritual Veneration as Contemplative Praxis in Digambara Jainism”

The *jinas*, Jainism’s liberated teachers, are thought of as being beyond any desire or even ability to act or intervene on behalf of their followers. Yet, many Jains daily venerate *jina* icons and other ritual objects, mentally or by offering substances. Scholars of Jainism have long noted the apparent paradox of the veneration of ‘the absent *jina*’, and of elements of longing for (*virāha*) and petitioning (*vinaya*) the *jina*. Scholarly accounts of the ritual veneration of deceased Jaina renunciants, furthermore, often relate this to a belief in the ascetics having been reborn in heavenly realms. As ‘miracle workers’ they are able to intervene for those who invoke

them, their agency complementing the *jinas*' unresponsiveness. However, Jains themselves rarely proffer such explanations for the veneration of deceased ascetics, nor do they brood much over the unresponsiveness of the *jinas*. Ritual texts performed during the veneration of *jinas* and deceased renunciants alike abound with references to detachment, equanimity, non-violence, etc. Using mnemonic techniques like numerical lists, the texts also tie in soteriological or ontological elements. As such, their recitation forms a meditation on key virtues, ideals and so-called 'doctrines'. Ritual veneration, then, is a decidedly contemplative and self-reflexive praxis within a performative and embodied way of learning, an epistemological technology which differs from theoretical learning

Ritual and devotion, here, are not the 'worship' of transcendental objects, but the inner 'memorization' and 'activation' of liberation-oriented guidelines and methods. The issue of (un)responsiveness turns into a non-issue, and *virāha* and *vinaya* too constitute mental registers for engineering the self. We come to a reappraisal of ritual and devotional practices, long demoted as lay accretions to Jainism's presumed ascetic core; and the common (etic) conceptual distinction of ritual and meditation dissolves into a continuum of contemplative praxes.

Ellen Gough, Emory University

"Integrating Meditation on Maṇḍalas with the Jain Path to Liberation in the 10th-12th Centuries"

This paper sheds light on the earliest known Jain examinations of meditation on *maṇḍalas*: Digambara Sanskrit and Prakrit manuals on lay ritual conduct (*śrāvakācāra*) dated between the tenth and twelfth centuries. It focuses in particular on four understudied texts: Devasena's *Bhāvasaṃgraha*, Rāmasena's *Tattvānuśāsana*, Padmasiṃha's *Jñānasāra*, and Amitagati's *Śrāvakācāra*. Existing literature has argued that Jains use *maṇḍalas* for worldly, not soteriological, goals, but this paper shows how these medieval Jains explicitly claim the physical worship of *maṇḍalas* as a type of "virtuous meditation" (*dharmadhyāna*) that early Jain scriptures understand as an important soteriological practice.

Christopher Miller, University of California, Davis

"Contemplating Jivas: The Ecological Implications of Jainism's Elemental Meditations"

Using our summer graduate studies program with the International Summer School for Jain Studies (ISSJS) as a prism for experiential analysis, this paper surveys Jainism's elemental meditations and concomitant views of the natural world as found in various textual traditions including the *Ācārāṅga Sūtra*, *Tattvārtha Sūtra*, and *Jñānārṇava*. During our six-week program of study, students undertook various Jain-inspired contemplative practices from these and other texts, some of the outcomes of which I will share from my own travel journals. Given our current struggles to find the global and individual will to come to terms with anthropogenic climate change and the ever-increasing defilement of our shared earth, water, and air, we will together come to a greater appreciation for the affective power of Jainism's prescribed elemental meditations and visions of earthly life.

Sherry Fohr, Converse College

"Jain Narratives and Contemplative Praxis"

The most important Jain prayer or mantra in all sects and sub-sects is the Namaskara Mantra, also called the Namokar Mantra. This mantra venerates those deemed worthy of worship by listing their general categories. Jain narratives include people reciting this mantra for various reasons, such as to achieve moksha, for protection from danger, to help someone at death to have a good rebirth, to heal physical ailments, to be reborn as a god or a king, and to purify bad karma. Whether they are renunciants or laypeople, Jains frequently say this mantra today for similar reasons.

Jeffery D. Long, Elizabethtown College

“Reflections on Jain Yoga from Yaśovijaya to Ācārya Tulsi”

This paper shall explore the development of Jain Yoga in the modern period. It shall begin with the Śvetāmbara master Yaśovijaya (1624-1688), and in particular with his text titled the *Jñānasāra*, or *Essence of Knowledge*, which describes Jain meditation practice. It shall then turn to the practice of *prekṣa* meditation developed and popularized by the Śvetāmbara Terāpanthī master, Ācārya Tulsi (1914-1997), and the larger context of the promotion of this form of meditation in connection with Tulsi’s *anuvrat* movement for social reform as a variety of spiritual practice: an engaged Jainism analogous to Hindu movements such as Swami Vivekananda’s Karma Yoga and the Constructive Programme of Mahatma Gandhi, and the Engaged Buddhism of Thich Nhat Hanh. The thesis shall be that, as in other Dharma traditions, Jain spiritual practice in the modern period is seen increasingly as something to be integrated into an engagement with society, rather than as an alternative to such engagement, as seems to be the case in earlier historical periods.

SESSION 2 (M20-105)

Theme: Sādhana: Hindu Contemplative Practice Across Traditions

Convener and Presider: Rita D. Sherma, The Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley

James Madaio, Oxford University

“The Saṃnyāsīn’s Path to Liberation: Sādhana in Medieval Advaita Vedānta”

The scholarly study of Advaita Vedānta has largely focused on the earliest period of the tradition and on later specialized, dialectical works of philosopher-theologians. This has, in part, revealed an Advaita Vedānta closely tied to textual practice as well as mīmāṃsā exegesis and nyāya dialectics. In addition to this important facet of Advaita Vedānta, there are other less appreciated strands of the tradition which shift focus away from sādhana cum textual practice and paṇḍita intellectuality. In this presentation I examine the sādhana scheme of one such work: the Jīvanmuktiviveka (‘Clarifying liberation-while-living’), a dharmic manual for paramahaṃsa class renunciates written by Vidyāraṇya, a fourteenth century Śaṃkarācārya at Śṛṅgerī. In this work Vidyāraṇya sets out an influential articulation of the Advaita Vedāntin path to liberation (mokṣa-mārga) which emphasises a comprehensive approach to transformative disciplines, particularly yoga. This paper will outline Vidyāraṇya’s soteriological programme, focusing not only on the integration of meditational yoga with Advaita Vedānta, but also on Vidyāraṇya’s important account of post-gnosis sādhana.

Gopal Gupta, Florida Gulf Coast University

“Kṛṣṇa-smaraṇa: Canon, Charisma and Contemplative Spiritual Practice in the Gaudiya Vaisnava Tradition”

The Gaudiya Vaisnava tradition gains its canonical authority from texts such as the Veda, Epics, and Yoga-sutras, but then adds charisma to the canon. This paper focuses on the theory and practice of three popular contemplative sādhana found in Rupa Goswamin’s Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu, and then examines tensions between canon and charisma in these practices. These practices are 1) chanting God’s divine name, 2) hearing the Bhagavata Purana and 3) meditation on the image of God. This paper examines the ever-present tension in the Gaudiya tradition between majesty and intimacy: meditation on the awesome opulence of Viṣṇu, as ascribed in canonical texts, and meditation on Vrindavana-Krishna’s sweetness and beauty.

Kusumita P. Pedersen, St. Francis College, Emerita
"Sri Chinmoy on the Nature and Goals of Contemplative Practice"

Sri Chinmoy has written extensively on the concrete details of contemplative practice and also its purpose in the wider context of yoga as a spiritual path leading to God-realization. This paper will summarize his teachings with an emphasis on how contemplative practice is done and how it works in attaining its goals. Sri Chinmoy distinguishes between concentration, meditation and contemplation (the last is a term he reserves for highly advanced practice). While not offering a single "technique" but rather a toolbox of many techniques from which the practitioner can choose, he commends a particular basic approach or method while always recognizing the validity of other approaches. In the path of "love, devotion and surrender," Sri Chinmoy emphasizes gratitude, a focus on the heart and cultivation of aspiration, an inner cry for self-transcendence. In actual practice, this approach attenuates the ego and eventually brings illumination into a person's entire consciousness. The paper will explain how this process relates to samādhi and the opening of the cakras, as well as the relation between meditation and action. It will also briefly discuss how beyond God-realization lies the further goal of "God-manifestation" or transformation of the outer life in both the individual and human society.

Jeffrey S. Lidke, Berry College
"Breathing in the Cycles of Time: A Ethnographic Study of the Sādhanā of Tablā in the Benares Tradition"

Hindus recognize an innate connection between their traditional arts, their theological understandings, and the traditions of spiritual practice that link them together. Since the time of the Upaniṣads, Hindus have recognized sound, nāda, as divine, as Brahman (Absolute Reality). A profound tradition of classical music has developed over the past 2,000 years that integrates ancient techniques of yoga with the finest technologies in musical practice, instrument design, and performance. The union of art and spirituality reached its apex in the aesthetic reflections of Abhinavagupta, and other geniuses of Hindu Tantra. In my presentation, I will weave together the aesthetic formulations of Abhinavagupta together with the oral teachings I received as a student of Tablā in an effort to place those teachings in their broader theological and practice-centered contexts.

Loriliai Biernacki, University of Colorado, Boulder
"Contemplative Studies and Hindu Sādhanā"

This paper addresses the use of imagination as a fundamental component of Tantric sādhanā practices. The first part of this paper focuses on practices of imagination connected to the body. The second part of the paper addresses the historical contingencies of enlightenment thinking that have shaped contemporary understandings of contemplative practices derived from Indian traditions. Here, especially we examine differences in the ways that imagination works in different sādhanā practices

SESSION 3 (M20-204)

Theme: Icons, Imagery, Imagination

Convener: Ramdas Lamb, University of Hawai'i, Manoa
Presider: Neelima Shukla-Bhatt, Wellesley College

Nalini Rao, Soka University of America
"Krishna's Vrindavana: Transformation of Imagery in Vaisnava Literature and Art"

Krishna is closely associated with the garden of *Vrindavana* where he danced with Radha and performed his *Lila* (divine sport). The paper explores the historical development of the conceptualization of *Vrindavana* as a geographical site, mythical locale, or even a divine realm, and its connection with incarnation, creation and self –manifestation. More importantly it investigates into the relation between the imagery of the Vrindavana in early Vaisnava literature (the *Bhagavata Purana*, *Visnu Purana* and *Harivamsa*) with that of the icon with the relic of the guru (or Jagadgur, ascetic head of the *Vaisnava Madhwa Matha*) which are known as *Vrindavanas*. Why, when and how did the (aniconic) imagery of the guru come to be regarded as Vrindavana and how did this transformation take place? My investigation will reveal the religious exchanges between the dynamic traditions of the dead and the sacred, asceticism and bliss, form and formless, relic and sacredness, manifestation and creation, and the earthly and divine realm and how they crossed boundaries.

Karma Lekshe Tsomo, University of San Diego

"Imagining Enlightenment: Icons and Ideology in Tibetan Buddhist Practice"

The Vajrayana Buddhist tradition, also known as the “adamantine vehicle,” Tantrayana, or Mantrayana, is renowned for its use of advanced meditation practices that simulate enlightenment. Also known as “deity yoga,” these practices of visualizing oneself as an enlightened being are regarded as an effective means to achieve awakening swiftly. Despite widespread misconceptions, Buddhist philosophers and practitioners in the Tibetan cultural sphere are clear that Vajrayana is a branch of Mahayana Buddhism, firmly grounded in Mahayana principles and practices, with the additional use of mantras, mudras, mandalas, and practices for embodying enlightened awareness. This paper will explore the philosophical foundations of Tibetan Buddhist iconography and ideology, with special attention to their implications for gender identity.

Kamini Gogri, University of Mumbai

'Samvasaran, The Congregation of the Tirthankaras'

The Samavasaran is the religious assembly of Tirthankars. The literal meaning of the term is proper congregation at a specific place or a place where beings with different attitudes assemble in an orderly manner. As such, the assembling of a variety of worthy beings – especially humans, animals and gods – for the purpose of beholding the Tirthankar and listening to his preachings is called Samavasaran. The word samavasarana is derived from sama, meaning general, that is common, or a dispassionate state, and avasara, signifying opportunity, and meant the place where all have a common opportunity of acquiring the Wisdom. Those who were present were filled with deep devotion by just seeing the Tirthankara. Everyone understood what was said in their own language. As a matter of fact, the Presence of the Teacher in itself furnished an answer to a good many questions of the assemblage. He was Religion personified. He was also the embodiment of Faith, Knowledge and Conduct – of the Way, the Truth and the Life. One had simply to see Him to understand what Salvation meant. His Knowledge was reflected to a certain extent by the Halo of Glory which surrounded Him and to see Him was to see God, to hear Him was to be filled with heavenly joy. Immediately after the divine preaching, many men and women determined to follow the Lord on the Path.

Ramdas Lamb, Univ. of Hawai'i, Manoa

"Icons: Limiting, Representing, or Presenting the Divine?"

Thanks to the worldwide proliferation of the theological ideology of the Abrahamic Religious Traditions, monotheism has come to be seen throughout the educated world as the most “enlightened” or at least civilized of the various theistic imaginations. In addition to this, a strong prohibition against image worship as idolatry has typically gone hand in hand. At the same time, most traditional cultures, especially in India, have

found a belief in multiple deities as a rational and useful concept, while viewing the use of images as being a valid way of relating to them. My presentation will look at some of the many ways that icons and images are understood and used within the Hindu tradition to represent or to present the divine or one of its manifestations.

SESSION 4 (P20-405) 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

JOINT SESSION WITH SOCIETY FOR HINDU-CHRISTIAN STUDIES

Theme: Rebirth: Hindu and Christian Perspectives

Presider: Stephanie Corigliano, Boston College

Bradley Malkovsky, University of Notre Dame

"Reincarnation and Christianity: An Historical and Theological Overview"

From an historical perspective, it may be said that Christianity in the West presently finds itself living out the third great encounter with reincarnation belief on a broad scale. The purpose of my talk is to present an introduction to the historical and theological encounter of Christianity with reincarnation teaching. The talk has two parts. In the first part of the presentation I trace the history of the Christian rejection of reincarnation teaching through its three eras: 1) the 2nd-5th centuries in which eighteen of nineteen early Christian theologians rejected Gnostic, Platonic, Neo-Platonic, and Manichaeian versions of reincarnation teaching; 2) the 12th-14th centuries involving the Christian persecution of the Cathars and Albigenses; 3) the present broad encounter, which begins in the second half of the 20th century but which was made through the work of indologists and Christian missionaries in the 17th-19th centuries. **The arguments and formal Church teachings against reincarnation and its presuppositions through these three eras were quite varied, employing a philosophical or theological approach, or using both together. Perhaps the main teaching behind the Christian rejection of reincarnation was an understanding of the irreplaceable uniqueness and dignity of every human person before God.** The second part of the talk examines some of the contemporary theological discussion about the possibility of integrating reincarnation teaching(s) into standard Christian theological thought. It will be seen that, unlike in the past, a number of Christian theologians during the past half-century, for example Karl Rahner, have acknowledged weaknesses and gaps in Christian eschatology that have led to a reconsideration of reincarnation as a plausible solution. Issues regarding the need of a post-mortem exercise of freedom for the attainment of spiritual completion are at the center of this discussion.

Francis X Clooney, SJ

"The Early Jesuit Critique of Rebirth: What Can We Learn from History?"

This paper will first survey some 16th-18th century Jesuit critiques of rebirth, with special attention to the Indian context. The simple fact of the critique is not surprising, given the important differences between Christian and Asian views of life, death, and the possibility of rebirth, and the long and mainstream Christian rejection of rebirth. There is much work to be done on the continuity and development of the Jesuit views, particularly regarding whether the earlier Jesuit writings on the topic, in Japan and China, influenced the later writings, in India and Tibet. We can observe a shift over time, from direct discourse – arguments with Buddhists and Hindus about rebirth – to a conversation among Europeans, a kind of early Indology, about the Asian belief in rebirth, a belief that the some Greeks and many Asians seem to have shared. I will highlight two key points: First, we can observe that the Jesuit critique is proposed as a philosophical critique, premised on the notion that any reasoning person can argue the issue of life and death, and the soul's fate after death. Second,

there is entirely lacking, in the texts reviewed here, any mention of the positive Christian doctrines related to the salvific death of Christ, Christ's dying once for all, etc. While such mention would be standard today, these Jesuits simply do not appeal to specific Christian beliefs; whether their views presuppose a Christian world view, couched here in philosophical terms, is another issue. In the final part of the presentation, again with a focus on the Indian context though mindful of the wider Asian context in which the Jesuits were testing their thinking, I will highlight the larger question regarding the very possibility of such arguments in modern times. Most pertinently for this panel, it is arguable that the reasoned grounding of religious beliefs has weakened to the extent that arguing beliefs is hardly possible today. Not debating the issue may be a sign of our growing interreligious maturity – or of the decline of our capacities as philosophically capable individuals.

Ankur Barua, University of Cambridge
"Revisiting the Rationality of Reincarnation"

My essay is an exploration of the rationality of belief in reincarnation, through an investigation of the meta-epistemological theme of what makes it rational to give assent to a proposition. A broad consensus that many philosophers in the Continental tradition and (some) Christian theologians share is that of hermeneutic perspectivism which states that we do not have access to a God's-eye point of view from which the rationality of our belief systems can be decisively settled at one stroke. While secular critics of Christian thought might claim that the doctrine of the Trinity is a flat-out contradiction, Christian believers themselves would view it as *prima facie* reasonable (and ultimately, of course, a mystery). By surveying the arguments from a range of figures such as A.G. Hogg (S. Radhakrishnan's teacher at Madras Christian College), S. Radhakrishnan, Sri Aurobindo, Swami Nikhilananda and Swami Paramananda (two monks of the Ramakrishna Order), Joseph Prabhu, Stephen H. Phillips, Monima Chadha and Nick Trakakis, Paul Edwards, Arvind Sharma, and Mikel Burley, I shall argue that the fundamental debate across these figures is not primarily over what the evidence is, but how to assess this evidence. According to most traditional sources, an individual does not work one's way to the belief through a piecemeal accumulation of evidence; rather the acceptance, initially on trust (*śraddhā*), of the veridicality of the yogic perception of the sages, leads the individual who has undergone spiritual regeneration to see the world in the light of this belief. The belief in reincarnation is densely moored in a network of metaphysical-theological doctrines about the nature of the self, the nature of the divine, and the possibility of the self 'attaining' the divine. The crux of the matter is not the dynamics of reincarnation but the metaphysics through which statements about the mechanism of reincarnation are assessed, evaluated, and critiqued. Therefore, here as in many other debates, in the end, metaphysics is unavoidable in Hindu-Christian dialogical encounters.

Jonathan Edelmann, University of Florida
"One-life and Many-life Theisms: a philosophical discussion"

In the first part of this paper I will examine some of the perceived problems with one-life theism, or the belief that a single, all powerful and all good God created the world in such a way that creatures have one life to live, sometime after which there is a judgment about their eternal location. Is this one-life model consistent with God's eternality and benevolence? Here I will also examine belief that the *sarga* (or emanation, which is clearly different from *creation ex nihilo*) is the expression of God's *līlā*, or a creative playfulness that spills out of the divine's inner self-satisfaction and completeness. If the *sarga* is an inherent part of and expression of God's being, how can we not conclude that within the scope of what is enjoyable for God is the beginning-less suffering (*anādi-duḥkha*) of an unlimited number of sentient beings? Throughout this examination I wish to affirm the validity of human reason, it being the fundamental means by which we make sense of our existence. In the second part I will look at the *Nyāyasūtra* 3.1.18 ff. with the commentaries of Vātsyāyana, Udayana and others, a section that examines philosophical reasons (as opposed to theological) for the eternal pre-existence of

the soul (*ātman*). I will pair their arguments about the human conditions as best explained by the pre-existence of the soul against what I perceive as the inability of one-life theism to explain the differential human conditions in cosmological terms. The Nyāya model, more or less espoused by Hindu theologians, presents a rational universe in which the soul's phenomenological reality is explained with reference to specific, material causes. Does the karma-theory, however, involve too many cosmological, possibly indefensible, presuppositions? The one-life theism is not "rational" in this sense because the material conditions of the soul are inexplicable in material, cosmological, causal terms, yet it is freed from an outlandish cosmology, leaving all the explanatory work on a theodicy.

SATURDAY, 21 NOVEMBER 2015

SESSION 5 (M21-9)

Theme: Buddhism & Mindfulness: Meditation, Integrative Medicine, and Contemplative Studies
Convener and Presider: Phyllis Herman, California State University, Northridge

Ramakrishnan Parameshwaran, Harvard Divinity School, Harvard University
"Towards Reconciliation of Hindu and Buddhist Doctrines of *Ātman* and *Anātman* Using Intertextual Studies, Neuro-Psychological Principles of Mindfulness and its Trans-Personal Application"

Background: The existence of *ātman* (Self) versus its non-existence, or the concept of *anātman* (no-Self), is one of the distinctive ideological differences between Hinduism and Buddhism.

Aims and Objectives: I argue that Buddhist and Hindu arguments on *ātman* and *anātman* are harmonious in that the Buddhist view of *anātman* is built upon the Hindu concept of *ātman*.

Methodology: This is an exploratory inter and intra-(Hindu and Buddhist)-textual study focusing on the verses relevant to *ātman* and *anātman* from Bhagavad Gita (BG) and Buddhist scripture of *Anatta-lakkhana Sutta* (ALS). Verses on *ātman* from *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (BU) and *Patanjali Yoga Sutras* (PYS) are referred for an in-depth understanding of the concepts of aggregates (*skanda*) of *anātman* in other Buddhist scriptures such as *Khajjanīya Sutta* (KS) and *Vibhaṅga Sutta* (VS). Clinical chaplains' mindfulness process with their neuropsychological underpinnings is studied through these theological terminologies and scriptural concepts.

Results and Discussion: Intra and inter-textual studies end in problematizing the meaning of the aggregate of *viññāna* that the Buddha had used in ALS. Cross references to KS and VS clarify that *viññāna* was meant to be understood as 'awareness' and not 'consciousness'. Comparative theological studies using BU and PYS confirms this clarification and help in converging the concept of Self with *Brahma-nirvāṇa* and Non-Self with Buddhist concept of *nirvāṇa* that is equivalent to the concept of *nirvāṇa-paramāṃ* of BG. Neuropsychological underpinnings of mindfulness that are developed from Buddhist scriptures are discussed as equivalent to *ātman* or *brahman* or *puruṣa* of BG. 'Consciousness' that is equivalent to *śūnyata* or emptiness is stressed in BG as the state of *nirvāṇa-paramāṃ*, state of liberation that lies beyond the state of mindfulness or awareness or *Brahma-nirvāṇa*.

Conclusion: Theological concepts on *ātman* and *anātman* converge on the soteriological end-point that is described as *nirvāṇa-paramāṃ* in Hindu and as *śūnyata* in Buddhist scriptures. These concepts may be scientifically explained in terms of mindfulness with its neuropsychological mechanisms and better illustrated using clinical chaplaincy process.

Rajinder Gandhi, Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons (Ret.)
"Mindfulness: MBSR and Integrative Medicine."

The intent of this paper is to present the beneficial effects of mindfulness and the importance of teaching mindfulness to medical practitioners to improve their well-being and the quality of medicine they practice. In his bestseller, *Full Catastrophe Living*, Jon Kabat-Zinn describes mindfulness as being historically a Buddhist practice, but that it can be considered as a universal human capacity proposed to foster clear thinking and open heartedness, involving paying attention to relevant aspects of experience in a non-judgmental manner. In 2004, psychologist Scott Bishop and associates described mindfulness as maintaining attention on present experiences and adopting an attitude towards them characterized by curiosity, openness and acceptance.

Today, Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) are the most commonly used mindfulness practices in healthcare and in management and organizational development (Business Week, 2003.). While MBSR acts to reduce psychological stress, MBCT integrates mindfulness with methods designed to change the dysfunctional thoughts that may contribute to problematic emotions and behaviors. Psychologist Bassam Khoury reported in 2013 Meta-analysis, both MBSR and MBCT were effective for depression and anxiety disorders.

Mindfulness practices have shown activation of prefrontal cortex and reduce bilateral amygdala activities Lutz et al in 2004 reported high amplitude gamma activities by EEG in highly experienced Buddhist monks. Davidson et al in 2003 reported increased left sided brain activities by EEG in MBSR practitioners compared to controls, along with higher levels of antibodies to Flu vaccine in mindfulness practitioners.

These meditative practices have been used to treat pain, improve mood disturbances and reduce stress in cancer patients and in patients with Psoriasis (Kabat-Zinn). Preliminary evidence shows benefits of mindfulness in type 2 diabetes, sleep disturbance, ADHD disorder and eating disorders.

Mindfulness is now being taught in medical schools. Canadian Medical Association policy states “to manage professional and personal stress to maintain their own health and well-being and to maximize their ability to provide quality healthcare to their patients.”

Andrew O. Fort, Texas Christian University
"Creating Contemplative Studies in the Southwest: Theory and Practice"

Over the past three years, I have organized a Contemplative Studies initiative at Texas Christian University. In this paper, I want to offer a brief history of this initiative, and then discuss some of the assumptions and theoretical underpinning for our program, indicating the value of contemplative pedagogy in academia and Religious Studies in particular. I will argue that such pedagogy addresses central concerns of liberal arts education, that is, enhancing insight into and critical reflection about both self and others in their social and historical location. Most university education occurs through “third person” objective study, which is certainly important and valuable, but contemplative learning adds “first person” direct experience as a way to gain a more accurate (and “lived”) understanding of both one’s own and others’ worldviews and practices, about which one can then critically reflect. I will also discuss how and why students themselves have urged us to develop contemplative methods in the classroom.

Religion professors in particular can and should introduce students to the importance of a fuller understanding of the historical and cultural context of these (and our) worldviews, enhancing these understandings with appropriate first-hand experience of some basic exercises in various traditions (religious and modern secular) that have specialized in such “first person” inquiry. I will close by raising some questions about how scholars should address the high degree of appropriation, decontextualization, and commodification of most contemplative traditions, including “mindfulness,” today.

Christopher D. Zefting, Harvard Divinity School

“Practice for a Holistic Life: How Mindfulness Can Affect the Brain, Body, and Sensory Experiences.”

This research explores the neurological effects of Mindfulness meditation. When examined through the lens of modern scientific research in the fields of neuroscience and psychology the ancient practices of Buddhist Mindfulness meditation can be seen to have profound effects on the perception of the world and perhaps even the physical structure of the brain. This work looks at the structures of the human brain and highlights the role of attention, or Mindfulness, on our perception by differentiating between “sensation” and “experience.” This thesis pulls together sources from both ancient texts and modern research to establish what neurological response may result immediately from Mindfulness meditation practices. Furthermore, research suggests that continual practice in these traditions may lead to long-term changes in neurological growth and psychological development. It would seem that the practices developed within Buddhist Mindfulness encourage an interconnected neurological system that is capable of more fulfilling experiences.

SESSION 6 (M21-100) 9:30 – 11:30 a.m.

Theme: Book Review: The Nay Science: A History of German Indology, by Vishwa Adluri and Joydeep Bagchee

Convener and Presider: Rita D. Sherma, The Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley

NO Abstracts for this session

Presenters:

1. Anant Rambachan, St. Olaf College
2. Robert Yelle, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München
3. Robert M. Seltzer, Hunter College and the Graduate School of CUNY
4. David Cereguas, Hunter College
5. Veena Howard, California State University, Fresno
6. Douglas T. McGetchin, Florida Atlantic University
7. Jeffery Long, Elizabethtown College,
8. James Madaio, Oxford University
9. Purushottama Bilimoria, The Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley

Respondents:

Joydeep Bagchee, Freie Universität Berlin

Vishwa Adluri, Hunter College

SESSION 7 (M21-105)

Theme: Methods in Indian Discourse: Comparative Perspectives on Reason, Theology and Tradition

Convener: Jonathan Edelmann, University of Florida

Presider: Graham M. Schweig, Christopher Newport University

Jonathan Edelmann, University of Florida

“Unfolding Experience: Texts in Psychological Contexts”

Although the notion of “experience” is fundamental to S. Radhakrishnan’s characterization of Hinduism in *The Hindu View of Life* (1927), this is critically evaluated by Wilhelm Halbfass, Anantanand Rambachan, Richard De Smet, and others, who note that classical authors never appeal to that ambiguous term “experience”

in their theological writings. The argument of this paper is that although most Hindu thinkers make their arguments through textual exegesis, and although they downplay their own personal experience (anubhava, sāksātkara, etc.) as authoritative, one must ask what motivates such intellectual efforts: *in what sense do classical Hindu thinker's "experience," i.e. their theoretical interpretation of the given, provide a basis for interpreting root texts (sūtras, tantras, purāṇas, etc.) in terms of a particular theological perspective, a vāda, mata, tantra, etc?*

I shall mainly examine classical theorists like Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Jīva Gosvāmin and Viśvanātha Cakravartin. The question of the motivation of Hindu intellectuals is especially poignant when there is a break with historically significant interpretations of root texts or when new root text is introduced, e.g. as in Yāmuna's introduction of tantra the Āgamaprāmāṇya, as in Vedānta Deśika's rich use of the Tamil tradition, as in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava adherence to the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, etc. Perhaps the "experience" that motivates textual exegesis is nothing more than, "I would like reality to be this way, thus I shall interpret X text in Y way," but, I shall argue, it would be wrong to say that "experience" plays no role in how and in what I shall mainly examine classical theorists like Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Jīva Gosvāmin and Viśvanātha Cakravartin. The question of the motivation of Hindu intellectuals is especially poignant when there is a break with historically significant interpretations of root texts or when new root text is introduced, e.g. as in Yāmuna's introduction of tantra the Āgamaprāmāṇya, as in Vedānta Deśika's rich use of the Tamil tradition, as in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava adherence to the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, etc. Perhaps the "experience" that motivates textual exegesis is nothing more than, "I would like reality to be this way, thus I shall interpret X text in Y way," but, I shall argue, it would be wrong to say that "experience" plays no role in how and in what way classical authors read texts. I hope to bring to bear some work in contemporary psychology on motivational theory.

Gerald James Larson, Indiana University, Emeritus

"The Pātāñjala Yoga-System: An Interesting Chapter in the History of Indian Theism"

The Yoga System of Patañjali is one important school of Sāṃkhya or what the tradition calls a "sāṃkhya-pravacana" and is often referred to as a form of "theistic Sāṃkhya." J.W. Hauer referred to Yogasūtra I:23-51 as the "īśvara-praṇidhāna text" or that portion of the Yogasutra which sets forth its theistic position, or, if you will, its "theology." The commentaries on these sūtras (especially Vyāsa's, Vācaspatimiśra's, Vijñānabhikṣu's, and the so-called commentary by the great Śaṅkarācārya (the *Pātāñjala-yogaśāstra-vivarāṇa*), ranging in date from 5th or 6th centuries CE through the 16th century provide an interesting history of theistic reflection in Indian thought and are important for understanding the nature of "theism" in Indian philosophy of religion and the manner in which Indian "theism" differs markedly from western traditions of theistic speculation. The paper will address these basic differences.

Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad, Lancaster University

"God without otherness: 'non-dual theology' in Gītā 14.27"

I will compare some general points in Śaṅkara's and Madhusūdana's commentaries on the *Gītā* in their respective introductions, and at their exegesis of a key phrase in *Gītā* 14.27: 'for I am the basis (pratiṣṭha) of brahman'. Under this verse, Madhusūdana demonstrates how he cleaves to his revered predecessor's interpretation. While acknowledging that the *Gītā* does teach a devotional relationship, Śaṅkara resisted duality, by presenting Kṛṣṇa as a particular conceptualized being, with the implication that this was not ultimate, since the *brahman* beyond all conceptualization alone is ultimate. Madhusūdana sought to preserve the rigorous Śaṅkarite equation of *ātman-Kṛṣṇa-brahman* but, instead of assimilating Kṛṣṇa as a conceptual and therefore metaphysically limited element into the sole ultimacy of *brahman*, he took Kṛṣṇa to be both the conceptually available focus of bhakti and the sole, ultimate *brahman* itself. The comparative question in Christianity is whether this complex attempt to preserve a devotional account of a personal God with a denial of God's

otherness is coherent. Through the comparison, I hope to show that we can simultaneously pay attention to the actual hermeneutics of the Hindu systems in themselves while also contributing to discussions in an area that may be called ‘comparative theology’.

Anand Venkatkrishnan, Columbia University

“Love in the Time of Scholarship: Theists, Non-Theists, and Intellectual Historians”

Śaṅḍilya's *Bhakti Sūtras* (SBS) tried at once to model themselves on and distance themselves from their Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta predecessors. They set up the idea of bhakti as an object of theoretical inquiry, distinct from and superior to karma and jñāna. Its hostility to Vedāntic (particularly Advaitic) soteriology notwithstanding, the SBS became the object of study primarily among Advaita Vedāntins themselves. In this paper, I follow the career of one such commentator, Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha, and situate his claims about the primacy of bhakti in the context of both the broader Advaita world, and across his other intellectual writings. Specifically, I explore the tensions between his Advaitic and bhakti commitments, and his often radical departures from the classical interpretive traditions within which he worked. I also examine the way in which Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha incorporated the SBS' ideas of bhakti into his commentary on Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras*. In this way, I show that NT's interest in bhakti was not restricted to his writing on the subject, but that he sought to make it constitutive of an entirely different intellectual discipline. The larger question animating the paper is: how did Sanskrit systems of knowledge experience change in early modern India, and how was bhakti instrumental to that change?

Nalini Bhushan, Smith College

“Līlā vs Māyā: The Hermeneutics of Neo-Vedānta in 20th Century India”

In 20th century colonial India, Indian metaphysicians and epistemologists allied themselves with British neo-Hegelians and Advaita Vedānta as a strategy for developing a modern global discourse for Indian metaphysics and epistemology. This strategy was a risky one. At the core of classical Indian Vedānta is the doctrine of *māyā*—that the world is mere appearance, a grand illusion, and that reality is to be sought in the transcendent. To modernize this classical tradition, particularly in dialogue with British idealism, an ideology that did not possess this central concept of *māyā* with its religious and mystical implications, could be to do it serious violence, straightjacketing it into the conceptual frame of contemporary European ideas. I argue that that the solution of the neo- Vedāntins involved a creative interplay between method and content along two dimensions: by broadening and naturalizing the discourse on *māyā*, and, by shifting the focus to *līlā* – the doctrine that the world is divine play or manifestation-- as a central concept in their philosophical navigations of both the relation, and the distance, between phenomenal appearance and transcendental reality. As a result, they were able to articulate an ideal of human life that fit with the conditions of their actual, modern world, and their participation in it as global citizens, but one that was at the same time recognizably continuous with the Indian Vedānta tradition. While much of the careful philosophical work of articulating a modern form of Vedānta was accomplished by a group of eminent academic philosophers, prominently including KC Bhattacharyya, AC Mukerji, SSS Sastri, VS Iyer and Ras Bihari Das, the project gains broader public visibility in the work of two figures, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo, who will be the focus of this presentation.