

# 15th Annual DANAM Conference 2017

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## ABSTRACTS

### **Charitable Actions and Dharma: Giving and Compassion**

**Convener:** Tanya Storch, University of the Pacific  
**Presider:** Rita Sherma, Graduate Theological Union

**Ithamar Theodor (University of Haifa)**

**“Charitable Actions by the Ideal Person in the Hindu and Chinese traditions.”**

The Confucian and Hindu Dharma traditions share a similar idea as to the ideal person, called Junzi and the Sattvic Person respectively. The Ideal Person is described in detail in both *Analects* and *Bhagavad gita*. Moreover, a comparative study of this topic contributes to the understanding of both traditions; as such, the concept of the gentleman in the Confucian tradition highlights a similar concept in the *Bhagavad gita* which appears in later chapters (14, 17 & 18), chapters which appear to be less studied. Similarly, the metaphysics underlying the idea of the Sattvic Person, i.e. the Guna doctrine, serve the purpose of highlighting the metaphysics underlying the Chinese system.

**Karma Lekshe Tsomo, University of San Diego**

**“Bridging Generosity and Economic Ethics: The Maya of Virtue and Responsibility”**

In the contemporary revitalization of Buddhism, one intriguing development has been the emergence of a thriving global Buddhist market economy. The conjunction of Buddhist ideals of dana, generosity of selfless giving, and corporate capitalism has provided fertile ground for the commodification of an ancient renunciation tradition. Appeals for endless deserving charitable initiatives land in Buddhist followers' mailboxes on a daily basis. The benefits of this meeting of Buddhist transnational giving and economic globalization are visible in the flourishing of Buddhist temples and institutes around the world. As economic expectations rise, however, so do Buddhists' perceptions of appropriate giving. The cultivation of wealthy donors for the welfare of Buddhist institutions has become a visible symbol of these increasing expectations. This presentation will explore the apparent contradictions between Buddhist renunciation and the virtue of giving, and the fortunes of Buddhist temples, organizations, and individuals.

**Amod Lele, Boston University**

**“Disengaged Buddhism: South Asian Buddhist Rejection of Systemic Change”**

Much recent Buddhist constructive reflection focuses around the idea of Engaged Buddhism, Buddhism that attempts to make a difference in the systemic functioning of societies. This idea suggests a question: what is Buddhism that is *not* Engaged? Many Engaged Buddhist scholars, when addressing premodern Buddhist sources, either act as if Buddhism has always and everywhere been “Engaged,” or treat non-Engaged

Buddhism as a lack or a “vacuum” waiting to be filled. By contrast, this presentation argues that a premodern Indian Buddhist tendency rejecting systemic social action exists in a considered and not a naïve way. The rejection of systemic social action in premodern Indian Buddhist texts is not merely a matter of silence or neglect, but often a reasoned and considered stance that follows from key Buddhist principles. It is therefore worthy of consideration and response by Buddhist theologians, which relatively few have given it so far.

**Tanya Storch, University of the Pacific**

**“*Ahimsā* at Every Moment: Traditional and Modern Understanding”**

In modern Western philosophical discourse, Ahimsa is always related to Buddhism and considered one of its main doctrines. However, in the literature of the Classical Indian Buddhism, one does not find Buddhists advocating the concept of Ahimsa as a doctrine being discussed and defended. It seems that Jainism, and not Buddhism, has provided an elaborate theory and practical guidelines for the essential, daily observance of *Ahimsā* that later became associated with Buddhist teachings. This paper will follow the trail of influences and transformations of this concept in Buddhism from its early formulation in the context of Pancasila to its prominent position among the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> cc. Mahayana teachers, such as Huan Xuan, Xingyun, and Thich Nhat Hahn, who taught non-violence to water, air and plants and would rather let a mosquito drink their blood than kill it.

**Peter Ryan, The Lotus School of Liberal Arts**

**“The Egg, the Chick, the Hen: A Moment of Presence for Student and Teacher – *Ahimsā* and Anti-Hierarchy”**

We bring together the beginner’s mind of the teacher who is naïve to the student and the student who is naïve to the skill, the koan image of hen and chick, and then develop the implied anti-hierarchy that offers an antidote to the harm the expert can do. We will try to work out some expression of the seed of Zen egalitarianism and to ground it all in my experience of my teacher and as a teacher.

**Respondent:** Karen Enriquez, Loyola Marymount University

### **Renunciation, Climate Change, and Modernity**

**Convener:** Christopher Miller, UC Davis

**Presider:** Mark Schmanko, Rice University

**Frédérique Apffel-Marglin, Smith College (Emerita)**

**“Integral Ecology and Climate Change: Shakta Hinduism, Renunciation and Western Modernity Contrasted”**

For Thomas Berry and his followers, the term ‘integral ecology’ refers to an integrated whole consisting of both the human and the non-human world. In his 2006 book *evening thoughts*, he identifies six types of transcendence in Western civilization that all conspire to make such wholeness between the human and non-human world difficult to valorize or even perceive. The de-valorization and domination of the natural world, with its concomitant valorization of another-worldly realm – be it a salvific redemptive domain beyond this world or a technologically redemptive future world – is seen as playing a fundamental role in our current global ecological crisis and particularly in the climate crisis. The Indic renunciation traditions share a de-valorization of this worldly realm seen as the realm of *maya* understood as illusory. In Odisha, the Shakta

stream of Hinduism prevails in popular practice as well as in Jagannatha temple. In the 64 yogini temple outside of Bhubaneswar, the main deity is Mahamaya, embodying this integration of the phenomenal world with the ultimate, strongly contrasting with the illusory version of *maya*. Relying on the festival of the menstruation of the earth and of women (*raja parba*) in rural Odisha this essay suggests that this spiritual/cultural regional tradition can become a resource for an integral ecological path and with it the regeneration of the polluted earth and atmosphere.

**Christopher Chapple, Loyola Marymount University**  
**“Jainism and Solar Energy”**

Because of their unique position within the business community in India, Jainas have the potential to emerge as leaders within the field of alternative energy. This presentation will include reflections on field notes, including an interview with Dr Prem Jain, chairman of the International Green Building Council in New Delhi. Jaina thought leaders would be surveyed to assess their thoughts on sustainable initiatives.

**Michael Reading, Claremont School of Theology**  
**“Sri Acharya Tulsi, The Anuvrat Movement, and Climate Change”**

This paper will consider the Anuvrat philosophy of the late Jain Terapanth leader Sri Acharya Tulsi in light of the contemporary urgency for significant action against climate change to be taken at both the collective and individual levels. In this regard, of Tulsi’s 11 ‘small-vows’ (anuvratas) that are designed to be adopted by individuals for the purposes of morally and spiritually bettering themselves as well as society, there is one vow in particular (the eleventh) that explicitly devotes itself to one’s refraining from any action that would be either directly or complicitly harmful to the natural world. In addition to this direct and obvious example, however, further inspiration may be gleaned from the Anuvrat philosophy’s unique formulation of practical austerity, where moderate forms of vow-taking and renunciation nevertheless produce significant measures of ethical, ‘this worldly’ benefit. This paper will critically analyze the Anuvrat context, then, and seek to discover where and how its remedial design may offer some real hope and applied efficacy to our present day’s crisis of climate change—keeping also in mind that the modern ‘Western’ individual may already be much more ascetically predisposed than we might at first think.

**Ramdass Lamb, University of Hawai’i Manoa**  
**“Hindu Sadhus and the Joys of Limited Consumption”**

Inherent in the traditional life of a *sadhu* is the process of diminishing both possession and use of most material goods, with the greatest emphasis on avoidance of those items most distantly connected with nature. Examples include limits on types of cloth used, preference for iron or clay pots over aluminum and even steel, ashes or soil for cleaning in preference to chemical soaps, etc. Although the goal for such a lifestyle has traditionally not focused on the issue of climate change, the process clearly supports that goal. In doing so, it moves one toward a life in which overuse and abuse of nature is replaced with a life that is simpler and more in harmony with nature.

Because of the strong pantheistic tendency within the Hindu tradition, viewing and relating to nature and the environment as sacred is, for many, axiomatic. This can be seen in devotional schools and in Vaishnava renunciant orders, and it is especially apparent in the Ramananda Sampraday. For Ramanandis, a combination of renunciation from deep involvement in many aspects of the material world and its toys and objects and an understanding of the inherent divinity of nature has led to a lifestyle that is characterized by a relatively small environmental footprint. Vairagis, as renunciant members of the orders are typically known, purposely opt as much as possible to use natural objects, or those created directly from such objects, in their daily lives. The presentation will be on the way the vairagi understand nature and how they live in conjunction with it in ways that are in harmony with natural functioning.

**Rodney Sebastian, University of Florida**

**“Vaiṣṇava Concepts for Ecological Sustainability: Case Study of *the Govardhan Ecovillage Project*”**

Since 2003 a group of Vaiṣṇava monks, led by Radhanath Swami, an American *sannyāsī* from ISKCON, have spearheaded a rural community project which synthesizes their religious worldview with modern methods of ecological sustainability to promote a lifestyle that mitigates human activities that contribute to climate change. The Govardhan Ecovillage (GEV) is a 70-acre rural community on the foothills of the Sahyadhri Mountains, 108 km north of Mumbai, India. The project has received international recognition by winning a dozen awards including the International Green Apple environment award in Gold Category as the Greenest Community project in 2015, and the AQUA Excellence Award for Outstanding Contribution Towards Cause of Sustainability in 2015. The majority of the project's team is comprised of a group of engineers who implemented environmentally friendly initiatives such as organic farming, green buildings, water conservation, soil biotechnology, alternative energy, and care for animals. The leaders of the project claim that they utilized Vaiṣṇava doctrines as a conceptual resource for environmental activism. The aim of this paper is to examine the GEV team's creative adaptation of Vaiṣṇava concepts and practices for environmental concerns and to articulate the values, beliefs, and motives that inform the various aspects of the project. The Vaiṣṇava doctrine of seeing the earth's resources as the property of Kṛṣṇa or Viṣṇu, and therefore not to be wasted or exploited is one of the underlying principles of the project. Another core premise of the GEV is that greed is the cause of both human and environmental degradation and that through prayer, meditation, and living an active life of *karuṇā* (compassion), the ecology of one's heart becomes free of greed. This is then supposedly reflected in one's being satisfied with a simpler lifestyle of minimal consumption and environmental pollution.

**Ahiṃsā as Strategic Resistance to Structural Injustice**

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

**Presider: Gisele Lemos, University of Wisconsin-Madison**

**Veena Howard, California State University, Fresno**

**“‘Love in Action’: James Lawson's Radical Interpretation of ‘Ahiṃsā’ in the Civil Rights Movement”**

Reverend James Lawson Jr. (1928-), a prominent Civil Rights Movement leader, has been deeply influenced by Mahatma Gandhi's method of *Ahimsa* (nonviolence) and *Satyagraha* (Truth-force). However, while Mahatma Gandhi situated his philosophy of nonviolence in the principles and vocabulary of Dharma traditions, Rev. Lawson drew on Jesus' teaching of unconditional love and interpreted the method of *ahimsa* as “love in action.” In this paper, I will explore how Lawson sees Jesus as the example of the Love-force and show how Gandhi and Jesus used the idea of unconditional love as a form of social and political resistance. Lawson used radical techniques to prepare activists for “love in action,” especially in actions that confront the abuse of their opponents. For example, to provide physical and psychological training to young black and white men and women, he created role playing situations in which the activists were subjected to verbal racial derisions and simulated physical beatings. Furthermore, he organized the lunch counter “sit-ins” for the trainees at downtown businesses in Nashville and then organized the “Freedom Riders” to confront racial oppression head-on. Lawson's strategic use of Christian vocabulary to mobilize the movement, and his training techniques for activists, demonstrates that the method of nonviolence must be reworked for a particular religious/cultural context.

## **Purushottama Bilimoria, GTU/UCB**

### **“Rev Pauli Murray: Black Gay Gandhian Feminist’s Strategy of Radical Ahimsā for Civil Rights and Social Justice”**

I bring to the panel the intriguing story of Rev. Pauli Murray, known also as ‘North Carolina’s Daughter’. Pauli, a great granddaughter of an enslaved woman who was raped, at 28, in late 1938, was instrumental in launching a one-woman war against segregation at the University of North Carolina to get an M A in social work, being told by the chair of the department that the ‘time was not right’. A mandate for equal institutions enabling black graduate admissions was there in *Plessy vs Ferguson* since 1896, but this Supreme Court ruling had been so universally defied that its verdict had all but been forgotten. But not in the mind of Murray; she used all the force of her soul to challenge the obverse archaic practice, especially in a liberal southern sacred cow. While the NAACP was constrained itself from moving too fast in this challenge, especially in the movement’s litigation experience and power, Pauli was not to be deterred; she, as we say in the vernacular, ploughed right into the system. She had already been scarred and hardened by her experiences with Durham’s bus segregation practices which she had protested against. She protested against Jim Crow’s repression of her body, and chose to be a homosexual against prevailing norms. She worked with women’s worker camp which brought her in close contact with communist workers’ movements, and became a member of an alternative Communist Party while growing up and working her way through Hunter College in New York. Drawn back to Durham where a group of blacks were already contemplating testing UNC’s desegregation policy, she was bolder, and drew parallels between the unconstitutional American educational system, which segregated, and the persecution of Jews that was afoot in Nazi Germany! Eleanor Roosevelt for her part never forgot her experience of India and the few lessons the Indians, wearied by a dreadful colonial past, had imparted to her by their own forthrightness. Her sympathy for Pauli Murray’s more engaged and activist approach was as much informed by her socialist predilections as also perhaps more strongly by the Gandhian nonviolent method which grew after her Indian exposure. She could also fully embrace the saintlike persona of Martin Luther King Jr, not only because he symbolized the century-long struggle post-slavery for Black liberation, but also because he bore all the hallmarks of a Gandhian prophet being raised on the American soil.

## **Varun Khanna, Chinmaya University, ERNAKULM**

### **“Dhārmic Resistance: Building Bridges between Advaita Vedānta and Social Justice for the 21st Century”**

The dominance of Advaita-Vedānta in Hindu thought has left little room for cogitation about reforming or transforming society using concepts native to Hinduism such as dharma, which is typically relegated to activities conducive for one's individual mokṣa (liberation)—the stated goal of Advaita philosophy. As a result, over time, dharma seems to have become an underdeveloped node of Hindu thought. The revitalization of dharma, however, can carve out a space within the Advaitic framework for thinking about social justice. This paper will construct a framework based on dharma, utilizing the concept of *ahimsā* to present social critique, exposing structural violence and attacking the conditioning that allows us to normalize observable violence against underprivileged members of society. I will contend that the individualization of dharma is a privileged view, which tends to accept the results of social injustice and inequality as natural, often justified by descriptions of karma as a strictly individual phenomenon. Integrating the ongoing dialogue about social justice into the Advaitic framework can make Advaita a more robust and inclusive philosophy to help rectify the current global political situation, with xenophobia, bigotry, racism, and other societal ills on the rise. With this expanded and more robust vision of Advaita, the pursuit of mokṣa can no longer be the privilege of the few, but rather must become an opportunity for the many. This way, Hindu philosophy too can be utilized for the sake of reforming or transforming society, while itself being reformed by the needs of the 21st century world.

## **Secrecy in Sahajiyā and Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Bhakti Theologies**

**Conveners: Jonathan Edelmann, University of Florida, and David Buchta, Brown University**

**Presider: Graham Schweig, Christopher Newport University**

**Jonathan Edelmann, University of Florida**

**“Secrets to Conceal and Secrets to Obscure in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism”**

A secret (e.g. *rahasya*) is not a lie, but it is a truth that has been willfully represented to conceal (this definition is based on Jīva Gosvāmin’s *Kramasandarbhā* 2.9.30), such that only partial truths are revealed (e.g. *parokṣavāda*) or that multiple meanings might be construed out of a single passage. Why are secrets so important in the history of Hindu literature? Why, for example, are Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa and the Ṛṣi-s said to love (*priya*) a form of speech that Viśvanātha calls “not direct” (*na sākṣāt*) in Bhāgavata Purāṇa 11.21.35? After some general considerations of secrets in the Upaniṣads, Bhagavad Gītā, and Bhāgavata Purāṇa, I look at how they are characterized among Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava theologians, especially in Jīva Gosvāmin’s *Sandarbhā*-s and in Viśvanātha’s *Sārārthadarśanī*. I argue that the notion of secrecy functions often as a hidden premise in a scriptural argument, or as a hermeneutical device for accomplishing two ends: (1) demonstrating a unity within a text and across textual corpora, and (2) to allow an author to say something novel. For the first there is an implicit concept of scriptural language—perhaps of language in general—as possessing many layers of meaning (e.g. *parā*, *paśantī*, *madhyamā*, etc.) or a multivalence (this is aptly demonstrated in Jīva’s and Viśvanātha’s comments on Bhāgavata Purāṇa 1.1.1) and yet at the same time possessing a unified meaning. For the second, coded language allows a theologian to say something that might garner punishment, stigmatization or controversy, and it also allows him to say something new about an ancient text without calling it new, which would itself be anathema.

**David Buchta, Brown University**

**“Is Sanskrit a Language of Secrecy in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism?”**

The Six Gosvāmins of Vṛndāvana, a cohort of Caitanya’s early followers, wrote foundational Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava theological treatises and works of poetry – all of it in Sanskrit. Given the rise of vernacular literature in the second millennium, one may wonder about the reasons for the choice of language. One suggestion, found both within the broader tradition (most notably from Ākiñcana Dāsa) and in contemporary scholarship (notably from Dimock and Manring), is that the Gosvāmins used Sanskrit, ostensibly incomprehensible to a non-elite audience, as a means to protect the secrecy of their teachings. While not denying that Sanskrit has at times been used by others to secretive ends, this paper argues that such an interpretation of the Gosvāmins’ use of Sanskrit puts theory before evidence. Instead, the paper offers an alternative interpretation – that the Gosvāmins’ choice of Sanskrit was rather motivated by the prestige the language carried, its pan-Indian accessibility, and its poetic potential. After a brief critique of Ākiñcana Dāsa’s claim about the Gosvāmins’ secrecy, this paper examines three aspects of the Gosvāmins’ writing as evidence against the claim that they used Sanskrit as a language of secrecy: 1) direct statements from the Gosvāmins about appropriate contexts for secrecy, for which Sanskrit would be unhelpful; 2) Sanskrit poetry with a deliberate style that was grammatically simple and thus comprehensible to a wider audience; and 3) Jīva Gosvāmin’s composition of a grammar wherein choices in his grammatical methodology evince a pedagogically motivated strategy, countering Manring’s interpretation of this work.

**Glen Alexander Hayes, Bloomfield College**

**“Hidden Textuality: Strategies of Concealment and Appropriation in 17th-century Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā Traditions”**

In this paper, we will explore two important aspects of the medieval Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā traditions of Bengal: 1) esoteric and “secretive” teachings (*rahasya sādhana*) and 2) Sahajiyā “clever” (*kauśala*) strategies of

exegesis and appropriation of orthodox Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava texts and authorities. Sahajiyās have existed as antinomian Tantric communities in greater Bengal since the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, and they have espoused an interesting blend of transgressive Tantric practices along with their own interpretations of mainstream Vaiṣṇava systems of *vaidhi-* and *rāganugā-bhakti sādhana*. As esoteric Tantrics, Sahajiyā practices are restricted to lineages of *gurus* and *chelas*, and textually expressed through the use of dense technical jargon and phrasing. There are no extant written commentaries, as with most other Tantric traditions. Commentaries, instead, remained as oral expositions by the *guru* in face-to-face sessions with the disciples. This language, almost “code-like” in nature, is in fact an incredibly rich form of complex metaphorical language and advanced conceptual blending. Beyond this basic notion of esoteric religious language, leading Sahajiyā gurus of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, such as Ākiñcana-dāsa (ca. 1650-1675 CE) composed lengthy treatises claiming that the great Bengali Vaiṣṇava godman Kṛṣṇa Caitanya (ca. 1486-1533 CE), his most famous followers, and famous Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava texts were “secretly” Sahajiyā. These claims, of course, have all been strenuously denied and condemned by orthodox Vaiṣṇavas over the centuries, yet another example of exegetical battles. In his masterful *Vivarta-vilāsa* (“The Sport of Transformation;” ca. 1675 CE), Ākiñcana-dāsa uses several thousand couplets, in a “clever” (*kausāla*) fashion, to claim that the famous hagiography of Caitanya, the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* of Kṛṣṇa-dāsa Kavirāja (ca. 1615 CE), was originally composed to reveal the true Tantric identity of Caitanya as well as that of Kṛṣṇa-dāsa and his text. Thus, we have what amounts to an intertextual hermeneutic based upon claims of deeper linguistic and textual “secrecy.”

**Abhishek Ghosh, Grand Valley State University**

**“The Meaning of *Sahaja*: From a Secret *Sādhana*, to Innate Intuition”**

This paper explores the reinterpretations of the term *sahaja* (simple, easy, innate, intuitive, inborn, or co/self-born) by two nineteenth century middle-class Bengali religious leaders: Keshub Chandra Sen and Kedarnath Datta Bhaktivinoda. Born in the same year, they went to the same school, and while Sen became a leader of the Brāhmo Samāja, Kedarnath Bhaktivinoda, emerged as a prominent Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava theologian and guru. In his works, Sen began to articulate *sahaja-jñāna* as a part of *Jivana-Veda*, literally, *The Veda of Life*, stressing that everyday life experiences are a direct confirmation of Vedantic ideas of self, existence, and divinity. Bhaktivinoda, on the other hand, stressed the textual hermeneutics of his Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition and was deeply committed to the canons of pre-colonial Vaishnavism. In their works, both of them used the term *sahaja-jñāna*, meaning ‘innate intuition’ or ‘simple wisdom’ that they claimed were inborn within each and every living being. The term, however, didn’t originate with them and traces a genealogy that goes back to pre-colonial Vaiṣṇava (and much earlier Buddhist) tantric *sahaja-sādhana*, the practitioners of which were known as *sahajiyās*. By the time of Sen and Bhaktivinoda were active religious leaders, many agents of colonialism—evangelists, orientalist, and British administrators in India—often criticized Hinduism for idolatry, promiscuity etc., and examples of such “deviant” included tantric sexual practices the likes of which *sahaja-sādhana* espoused. In light of such criticism, the term *sahaja* saw a distinct semantic shift in Sen and Bhaktivinoda’s works, particularly as educated middle-class Hindus often distanced themselves from any practices that ran contrary to the norms of social respectability. This paper argues that despite the long history of *sahaja* within certain tantric Buddhist and Vaiṣṇava communities, Sen and Bhaktivinoda’s interpretations of *sahaja* dissociated any elements of secrecy or sexuality, and presented *sahaja* in a universal way as ‘innate intuition’ natural to all living beings. And despite theological differences between Sen and Bhaktivinoda’s interpretations of *sahaja*, the common threads that ran through their understanding of it demonstrates an attempt to arrogate the popular term *sahaja* and universalize it through Brahma and Vaiṣṇava theistic lenses respectively. While Sen’s theology claimed that divinity was impersonal, Bhaktivinoda’s brand of theism focused exclusively on Kṛṣṇa as the supreme person. Whereas Sen completely effaced any sexual references of *sahaja* in his works, Bhaktivinoda acknowledged a non-physical psycho-erotic form of knowledge and practice available only to advanced initiates. Neither of them,

however, used the term *sahajiyā* in any shape or form to describe themselves, perhaps because of the social stigma that educated middle-class Hindus attached to religio-sexual practices of the *sahajiyās*.

**Respondent:** Hugh Urban, Ohio State University

### **Reconsidering the Origins of *Bhakti***

**Convener:** Joydeep Bagchee, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich

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

**Vishwa Adluri, Hunter College**

#### ***Bhakti* and *Avatāra* in the Nārāyaṇīya**

The philosophical root of *avatāra* is neither sectarian wish fulfillment nor euhemeristic fantasy nor even the idolatry of worshipping an ontic being as if descended from another ontic principle such as Viṣṇu. The philosophical root of the *avatāra* is a working out of the logic of the relationship between the one Being and many beings; and this relationship is conceived of in the Nārāyaṇīya as a descending cosmogony or *pravṛtti* flow and an ascending *nivṛtti* flow. In the scope of this discussion, the One cannot *become* many, due to the logic of monism. Thus, the Nārāyaṇīya struggles to articulate the relationship and onto-logical status of the many beings through many tropes: (1) Numeric series, (2) Duplication, (3) *Vyūha*, (4) *Avatāra*, and (5) Brahmā's creation. In each of these tropes, the One Being is both the cause of the universe but somehow also separated from the intimacy of causality. Brahmā must intervene in the creation of the world though Brahmā himself is created by Nārāyaṇa. The essence of *avatāra* is *this*: after Brahmā's creation when things go awry, Nārāyaṇa descends. Now all other gods may descend, but all other gods—in Nārāyaṇīya—are on the level of or below Brahmā on the cosmogonic descending scale. *Avatāra*, as its name suggests, is a vertical axis and in the Nārāyaṇīya for the first time philosophically codified where not only is the line of descent extended from the beings here on earth up to the gods and *asuras*, but—and this is *key*—also beyond Brahmā to the One Being. At this point we must see that the establishment of this vertical order is at once ontological (*hieros*) as well as structural (*arche*) because Nārāyaṇa has *not* become the universe, i.e., descended through Brahmā. The *supra* Brahmā segment of this line requires its own terminology and conceptual scheme. The way up is *bhakti* and the way down is *kṣama* both of which are rigorously worked out in the Nārāyaṇīya. From the son of Brahmā up to Nārāyaṇa and down to all beings this sacred ontological order is conceived and the *avatāras* of Viṣṇu are thus extensions of his “grace” and the rapture of *bhakti* is this ontological ascent. *This line* then secures all the functions of *avatāra*, its polyvalence, polysemy and polymorphy. The cosmological aspects appear as *pravṛtti* moments and the universe and the textual universe are thus characterized by *prādurbhūtis*, etc. But *avatarāṇa* has the added significance of completing the soteriological pathway between the One and the seeker. Thus, it always has aspects of grace, *bhakti* and “leaping” over Brahmā.

**Edward P. Butler, Independent Scholar**

#### ***Bhakti* and Henadology**

In henadological Platonism, the significance of ‘the One’ is understood to lie, not in an eminent singular entity, but in the modes of unity and the ways of being a unit. The science of units qua units is a systematic ground and counterweight to substance-based ontology. It manifests an organic bond with theology as the science of relation to supra-essential individuals or Gods. Because of the basic nature of unity relative to being, doctrines respecting unity tend to situate themselves as critiques of ontology; they exhibit both an analytical and a soteriological value. *Bhakti* is not a sectarian movement but is rather an inquiry at once speculative and practical into the nature of the relationship between the human and the divine. It bridges the diverse genres of ancient Indian thought (including the theophanic/cultic, the epic, along with diverse

philosophical perspectives) and it displays key commonalities with henadological Platonism. This paper begins the process of identifying these common themes with particular reference to the Bhagavadgītā. Chief among its themes is the distinction between structuring cause and structured mixture, which runs through Platonism from the Phaedo to the doctrine of principles, and which parallels the account of action in the Gītā as freedom independent of result, insofar as the latter pertains to the solidarity of worldly causality heteronomous to the agency of the ātman.

**Stuart Ray Sarbacker, Oregon State University**

***Svādhyāya and Bhakti: Saguṇa Devatā and Nirguṇa Īśvara in Aṣṭāṅgayoga***

The Yogasūtra of Patañjali (3–5c BCE) is the locus classicus for the articulation of *yoga* as an eight-limbed (*aṣṭāṅga*) process of moral, physical, and spiritual development. Scholars of Hindu *bhakti* traditions have long focused on the practice of *īśvara-praṇidhāna*, “Dedication to the Lord,” as the principal expression of devotion within the *aṣṭāṅga* system. This aspect of practice, one of the five elements of the limb of *niyama*, “observance,” is correlated to *bhakti* in the commentarial literature of the Yogasāstra and larger commentarial traditions. In this paper, I examine another element of *niyama*, namely *svādhyāya*, “self-application,” and its significance with respect to *bhakti*. Noting the larger Vedic context of *svādhyāya*, which correlates with textual recitation, I focus upon the assertion in Yogasūtra II.44 that *svādhyāya* results in *īśṭadevatā-samprayoga*, “union with one’s desired deity.” Drawing upon the commentarial literature of the Yogasūtra and upon post-classical sources, especially representations of the *aṣṭāṅgayoga* system in the Purāṇa literature, I will demonstrate how the concept of *svādhyāya* is linked both conceptually and textually to practices such as *japa* and allows for differentiation between *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa* conceptions of divinity as represented by the concepts of *īśṭadevatā* and *īśvara*, respectively. This distinction points to deeper correlations between the theory and practice of *aṣṭāṅgayoga* and core philosophical concepts of the larger Hindu *bhakti* traditions. It also has relevance with respect to the role of these modes of conceptualizing yogic attainment and divinity in modern and contemporary *yoga* traditions.

**Caley Charles Smith, Harvard University**

***Indra as Time: Reconsidering Devotion in Ṛgveda X.27***

This talk treats one of the most enigmatic and complex riddle hymns in the Ṛgveda. In it, the speaker asserts himself to be Indra. He reveals, first, proper devotional behavior and proper social norms, and then reveals the arcane origins of the sacrifice and its power: to transcend time/death. In the final portion of the hymn, Indra depicts himself as time/death and presents a path by which one becomes Indra, becomes time therefore exists outside of time. I will argue that the theology presented by this hymn anticipates several important features of the Bhagavadgītā. While the Ṛgveda is an anthology of devotional texts, this expository genre in which a god appears and directly addresses the devotee in a personal form only to reveal his macrocosmic form is unique in the Vedas and merits greater scrutiny.

**Sudhakshina Rangaswami, Independent Scholar**

***Bhakti as the Fruition of Jñāna – Revisiting Rāmānuja’s Legacy***

In his seminal work, the *Vedārtha Saṅgraha*, Rāmānujacarya (1017–1137 AD), sums up the teachings of the *Vedas* and the *Upaniṣads*. This text is acknowledged in both the Viśiṣṭādvaita *Vedānta* tradition and the *Śrīvaiṣṇava sampradāya* based on it as the formulation of his philosophy. In it he describes the highest *Bhakti* as a form of *Jñāna*, i.e., “intellectual love,” and eschews the distinction between *Jñāna* and *Bhakti* while expounding his *Mokṣa sādhana*. This integration of *Jñāna* and *Bhakti*, in an all-consuming adoration of God (*Paramabhakti*), is the goal of *Sādhana*, and the consummation of the knowledge of the nature of the Supreme Reality (*Parajñāna*). *Bhakti yoga* begins at the stage of *Parabhakti*, the result of pursuing *Karma yoga* and *Jñāna yoga*, according to his commentary on the *Bhagavad Gīta*, the *Gītābhāṣya*.

*Bhakti yoga* is the means to liberation (*mokṣopāya*), and his line of reasoning reaches its finale in the *Gīta Caramaśloka* (*Bhagavad Gīta* 18.66), one of the three *mantras* (*Rahasyatraya*) sacrosanct in the spiritual tradition. The *Bhagavad Gīta* is in the *Mahābhārata*, and the *Śāntiparva* of this epic describes the popular *Bhāgavata* tradition based on the *Pāñcarātra Āgamas*, which influenced the *Bhakti* framework of Rāmānuja's *Vedānta*. His millennium birth anniversary, this year, is timely to re-evaluate the entire corpus of Rāmānuja's writings to trace the intellectual basis of his concept of *Bhakti*, the key to understand the continuing resilience and popularity of this tradition today.

**Respondent:** Joydeep Bagchee, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich

### Yoga Sūtra and *Bhakti*

**Convener:** Ramdas Lamb, University of Hawai'i, Manoa

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

**Graham Schweig, Christopher Newport University**

**“Divine Grace in the Highest Samādhi: A Bhakti Hermeneutic for Greater Understanding of the Yoga Sūtra”**

The Yoga Sūtra attributed to the author Patañjali analyzes the intricate states within the perfect meditational state of Samādhi. Although these states have been interpreted by various persons coming from Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain traditions, even so, it has never been interpreted specifically through the lens of Bhakti. Building on the studies I have conducted examining the “raw” theism and “divine grace” in the Yoga Sūtra, I will advance an argument that claims that utilizing a Bhakti hermeneutic, derivative specifically from the Caitanya school of Krishna Bhakti, illuminates some of the more abstruse parts of Patañjali's work and perhaps even solves some of the parts of the Yoga Sūtra that remain mysterious for traditional commentators. Furthermore, I will argue that such a lens can provide some radically different ways to view, understand and appreciate Patañjali's psychology and the various powers attainable in Yoga as related to saṁyama to ultimately conclude that Yoga equals Rasa.

**Stephanie Corigliano, Humbolt State University**

**“Pluralism, Religious Devotion, and T. Krishnamacharya: Or, How the Yogasūtras Assumed Scripture-status for Modern Yoga”**

Patañjali's *Yogasūtras* are often described as the single most authoritative text for the vast and diverse tradition of Yoga. Recent scholarship (David White, James Mallinson, Mark Singleton) has challenged the “Classical” status of the *Yogasūtra* and the overemphasis of this text that has led to the exclusion of *hātha*, *tantric*, and *siddha* traditions/texts. In addition, the link between contemporary schools of postural Yoga and the *Yogasūtras* has come under fire as an ad-hoc addition to the physical practice of *āsana* (posture) for the sake of adding prestige and the appearance of authenticity. Good scholarship in the realm of Yoga should entail a stretching beyond the confines of Western (and now global) popular exposure to Yoga in the form of Yoga *āsana* and Patañjali's YS, yet the pervasive connection between contemporary Yoga and the *Yogasūtras* requires a more thorough explanation. In light of this, my presentation will examine the contested use of the *Yogasūtras* within the teaching tradition of Tirumalai Krishnamacharya.

T Krishnamacharya made a unique contribution to the globalization and international success of Yoga through his non-sectarian approach to teaching and through the success of his foremost students (who later became international teachers). Krishnamacharya's combined interest in teaching postures alongside the philosophy of Patañjali's *Yogasūtras* has not been fully addressed, yet it plays a significant role in

understanding his pedagogical approach. Thus, the aim of this present work is to take seriously Krishnamacharya's philosophical understanding of Yoga and his devotional, religious commitments alongside his practical approach to teaching Yoga to show that, taken seriously, Yoga in the tradition of Krishnamacharya is a devotional practice that shares the soteriological goals of the *Yogasūtras*.

**Edwin Bryant, Rutgers University**

***Mokṣa* is Equivalent to Hell: Attitudes towards Conventional Liberation in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa***

This paper will consider the attitude of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* to conventional liberation associated with the *ātman/brahman* of the *Jñāna* traditions (*mokṣa*, *kaivalya*, *nirvāna*, etc.). The text is pervaded with claims and paradigmatic stories of *bhakta* exemplars who reject conventional *mokṣa* because it deprives the aspirant of the opportunity to engage in loving relationship to their beloved *Īśvara*. It will consider the theological meta-physics underpinning the *Bhāgavata*'s promotion of the bliss of sensual contact with Kṛṣṇa as far superior to any bliss inherent in the *ātman* when immersed in its own nature after uncoupling from the *prakṛtic guṇas*. Most dramatically put, devoid of the presence of the beloved Lord, *mokṣa* is, in fact, "equal to hell."

The *Bhāgavata* offers us five 'standard' types of liberation (which include monotheistic and monistic possibilities), and contains a multi-dimensional view of transcendent reality that does not preclude unlimited other possibilities, including Śiva and Devī-related states of liberation. The paper will touch on the possible relevance all this makes to the Study of Religion: the *Bhāgavata* questions the presupposition that the ultimate, perfected liberated state, if there be one, must be monolithic or one-size-fits-all, an assumption typically made by both believers and non-believers of a post-mortem perfected soteriological existence. Both reductionistic theories of Religion and perennialist ones are typically responding to the problem of accounting for the apparent variegatedness of the ultimate perfected state posited by the different religions of the world. In their very different ways, they attempt to offer one all-explanatory unitary cause underpinning this plethora. This presupposition that there need be a single unitary underlying reality underpinning Religious experience, whether reduced to a spiritual or material causal core, is problematized by the *Bhāgavata*. The text opens the door that all, or certainly far more than one soteriological claim could be simultaneously real and true: in short, that there are options in the liberated state.

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

**"The Union of Yoga, *Tapasya*, and *Bhakti* in the Ramananda Sampradaya"**

The typical contemporary view of Hindu *sadhus* in urban India and in the western world is of individuals who have little interest in the material society and those in it, who may practice some forms of austerity and yoga, who are likely to get stoned on a regular basis, and whose ultimate goal is to reach liberation and never be reborn. Although a combination of these can be found in the lives of some *sadhus*, depending both on the individual and the particular ascetic order, they present a very distorted view of reality. Instead, the majority of *sadhus* are involved in the world, most practice various forms of austerity and yoga on a regular basis, a significant number use no intoxicants at all, including tea or coffee, and their goal is not a cessation of future births.

In addressing these distortions, I will draw on examples found in the various subsets of *sadhus* of the Ramananda Sampradaya. Members of the order can loosely be segregated into 5 different groupings, each one having a different focus on the lifestyle and practices of its members. At the same time, the ultimate goal for the vast majority is not liberation as often understood by outsiders. It is devotion. The presentation will discuss these issues and consider how the practices of yoga and *tapasya* are integral to reaching that ultimate goal.