

SECOND ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE  
ISKCON ACADEMY OF  
ARTS AND SCIENCES

NEW VRNDAVANA, WEST VIRGINIA  
DECEMBER 15-17, 2007

CONFERENCE PROGRAM



## Schedule of Events

### Day 1 – December 15<sup>th</sup>

9:00am: Breakfast and Registration

10:00am – 10:15am: Welcoming announcements by Janakirama dasa

10:15am – 1:00pm: *Introductions.*

This is a roundtable discussion, in which attendees have the chance to introduce themselves to the group and to update everyone on what he or she has been working on.

Chair: Drutakarma dasa

1:30pm: Lunch

2:30pm – 5:30pm: Panel 1. *ISKCON's Academic Contributions.*

The purpose of this panel is to examine the contributions that ISKCON has made and could make to the academic world and how this relates with the ultimate goals of helping people become free from suffering and achieving love for God. Speakers may discuss a particular contribution they feel is noteworthy and why, as well as their vision about how ISKCON's academic projects can develop in the future. Followed by Q&A and discussion.

Speakers:

Hridayananda dasa Goswami

Sadaputa dasa

Garuda dasa

Chair: Janaki-rama dasa

6:15pm: Dinner, followed by Gaura-arati and free time for devotees to meet and catch up informally.

### Day 2 – December 16<sup>th</sup>

9:00am: Breakfast

10:00am – 1:00pm: Panel 2. *Vaisnava and Western Philosophy.*

The purpose of this panel is to explore relationships between Vaisnava philosophical and theological views and those of Western thought. Followed by Q&A and discussion.

Speakers:

Amoghalila dasa

Bhavasindu dasa

Ajagovinda dasa

Ryan Preston

Chair: Dvija-mani dasa

1:30pm: Lunch

2:30pm – 3:45pm: Keynote Address by Ravindra Svarupa dasa. *The Function of Buddhi in the Foundation of Knowledge: Toward A Vaisnava Epistemology.*

4:00pm – 5:30pm: Workshop: *How do you publish an academic book?* Garuda dasa shares insights and reveals secrets.

6:15pm: Dinner

7:00pm: Bhajans led by Ekachakra dasa in the Temple Room.

Day 3 – December 17<sup>th</sup>

9:00am: Breakfast

10:00am – 1:00pm: Panel 3. *Science & Religion.*

This panel will look into the relationship between science and religion and the manner in which devotees have introduced religious perspectives into particular fields of science. Followed by Q&A and discussion.

Speakers:

Drutakarma dasa

Sthita-dhi-muni dasa

Ishvara-krishna dasa (Hungary)

Janaki-rama dasa

Chair: Amoghalila dasa

1:30pm: Lunch

2:30pm – 5:00pm: Panel 4. *Research.*

This panel is an opportunity for devotees to present a published work, or a completed piece of research or a project report. Followed by Q&A and discussion.

Speakers:

Ekachakra dasa

Amritananda devi dasi

Mahasaumya dasa

Dvija-mani dasa

Chair: Brahmatirtha dasa

5:15pm – 5:40pm: *Closing Reflections.*

6:15pm: Dinner

## ISKCON's Contribution to Contemporary Epistemology

### Hridayananda dasa Goswami

Epistemology is "the theory of knowledge, esp. with regard to its methods, validity, and scope. Epistemology is the investigation of what distinguishes justified belief from opinion."

As the word Veda suggests, Vedic culture is intensely concerned with epistemological issues. In his theological skirmish with Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya, Lord Caitanya emphasized that the Veda is *svatah-pramana*, literally "evidence from itself," ie "self-evident."

Self-evident "facts" are the traditional starting points of many western philosophies, especially those subscribing to various rational and empirical forms of "foundationalism." Modern challenges to foundationalism from "coherentism" and "reformed epistemology" are interesting to Gaudiya Vaishnavas.

I will explore:

1. Our Gaudiya Vaishnava epistemology.
2. The Gaudiya Vaishnava contribution to contemporary epistemological concerns.
3. The importance, in teaching Krishna consciousness to intelligent people, of making them philosophically comfortable with our epistemology.

### Interpretation and the *Srimad Bhagavatam*

Sadaputa dasa

Lord Chaitanya is famous for giving 61 meanings of the atmarama verse to Sanatana Gosvami. Here I would like to offer some insights on meaning in the *Bhagavatam* based on a scientific background.

Example 1. In the *Bhagavatam*, the time for integration of 18 atoms is one truti or 8/13,500 seconds. Conceptually, this agrees with the modern atomic definition of time, but the time interval is too long. The modern "truti" is about 1/1000000000000 sec, approximately.

Instead of seeing a contradiction here, let us try accepting the basic idea, while allowing for different time intervals. This allows us to consider the *Surya-siddhanata* truti = 1/33,750 seconds. Using 1/33,750 seconds of Brahma as a truti (moment) of Brahma, and referring to the stories of King Kakudmi and the stealing of the cowherd boys, we can calculate that King Kakudmi spent 3,456 seconds of Brahma in Brahmaloka, or about one hour (3600 seconds of Brahma).

The time interval of 3,456 seconds fits the story of King Kakudmi, and it is surely no coincidence. So we see that something is going on behind the scenes here. Let us generalize on this: Statements in the *Bhagavatam* may have a variety of natural meanings which may involve alterations in quantitative values.

Example 2. Picture by Badarayana Murthy. Here we see the earth supported on a mountain extending up from Bharata-varsha in Bhumandala. This is problematic, but *Siddhanta-siromani* (by Bhaskaracharya, 11th century) gives another way of relating the earth to Bhumandala:



"Most learned astronomers have stated that Jambhudvipa embraces the whole northern hemisphere lying north of the salt sea; and that the other six dvipas and the seven seas ... are all situated in the southern hemisphere."

This shows that "most learned astronomers" regarded the earth globe as Bhumandala itself, not as an object situated next to Bhumandala in space. But why would Bhumandala be wrapped around the earth?

The scholar W. Randolph Kloetzli gave an answer in an article interpreting Bhumandala as an astrolabe – a navigational computer based on a stereographic mapping of the earth's surface onto a flat plate. This shows that by allowing Bhaskaracharya's interpretation, and not rejecting it as contradictory, we are led to an interpretation of the Bhumandala disk as a sophisticated computer.

But what can we say about the large magnitude of Bhumandala in contrast with the small earth? Let us turn to an interpretation which takes this into account.

Diagram by Tiruvenkata Ramanuja Jiyar Swami of the 19th century, that I discovered in the town of Melkote in India. Let's look at the planetary orbits shown in this diagram.

Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn are all shown orbiting the sun, and the sun is shown orbiting the earth. This, in fact, is the geocentric system of the famous Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe.

I have pointed out before that any planet can be taken as the center of motion in the solar system. In particular, the earth can be taken as the center of motion and we can accept a geocentric model of the solar system. We have to be careful, however, to not claim that the earth is absolutely the center of motion after placing it in the center by a relativistic argument.

Consider the following relativistic statement of the heliocentric system: "Any planet can be taken as the fixed coordinate frame for all movement in the solar system. This planet is, by definition, stationary. The sun is seen to revolve around this planet, and the other planets are all seen to orbit around the sun." This statement is relativistic in the sense that it does not single out any planet for special attention. It includes the geocentric model of Tycho Brahe and Tiruvenkata Swami. It also includes, for example, a perspective in which the planet Venus is fixed and the earth orbits around the sun. Indeed, it contains five perspectives in which the earth orbits around the sun.

If we avoid making a relativistic argument and drawing an absolute conclusion, we must see Tycho's (and Tiruvenkata's) diagram as one instance of a relativistic, heliocentric model.

At the same time, we are free to follow the *Bhagavatam* and place the earth in the center. This leads to an interpretation in which the Fifth Canto offers a perspective on the solar system, rather than describing an absolute physical disk.

What do we see if we pursue this idea? It turns out that the combination of geocentric and heliocentric motion gives the planets spirograph-like orbital paths. These orbital paths are

tangent to the circular features of Bhumandala – a point that I discuss in detail in my book *Mysteries of the Sacred Universe*. Thus the circular features of Bhumandala provide an accurate map of the solar system as seen from a geocentric perspective.

Our conclusion is that the *Bhagavatam* can be understood from a multi-perspectival standpoint that emerges with clarity when the text is seen against a background of deep knowledge. This is a conclusion that could be of interest to scholars.

### The Greatest Gifts

Garuda dasa

As ISKCON devotee scholars, what have we contributed to the academic world for understanding the love of God? Have we truly illuminated the great gifts that Mahaprabhu Gauranga gave to the world, that Srila Prabhupada brought to us? Have we ourselves received these gifts in such a way so as to give them to others, specifically here the intellectual world? My discussion will focus on what might be the greatest gifts we can offer to the world and the academy, and how we can offer them, and how this question challenges us as both scholars and devotees.

### Principles of a Multi-Religious Theology

Amoghalila dasa

Sincere and intelligent persons of different religions must work together to promote our common mission of serving God and God's creation. To do this well, we must know what religion is and why there are different religions in the world. We must recognize the common foundation of all true religions as one God's various revelations to different audiences according to varying circumstances. Also, we must humbly accept that outdated or unsuitable interpretations, along with well-meaning interpolations and perhaps even outright fabrications, are present in all religions (including our own). We must try to discern how these inappropriate elements, so detrimental to multi-religious cooperation, have been introduced, why they persist, as well as how best to eliminate them without disturbing innocent believers' faith in their traditions' true teachings. To accomplish all this, above all we must faithfully follow within our own lives the non-sectarian process of transcendental knowledge.

### The Superior Mode of Discourse

Bhavasindhu dasa

In this essay, I discuss the significance of Jacques Derrida's deconstructive methods in its mode of attack against traditional analytic logic in the context of the history of Gaudiya Vaishnava discourse, and shortly discuss an important lesson we might extract from this comparison, regarding antagonistic comparative dialogues.

Derrida introduces ambiguities in traditional dialogues (Platonic and the like) where logicians thought clarity and security existed. He discusses logocentrism as the great excess of European philosophy, using innately "undecidable" examples, such as the virus, drug, zombie (or my own example, a hermaphrodite), in order to show that logic must always

remain incomplete and inaccurate in its analysis of natural kinds.

Derrida uses the term "binarism" to describe terms that are found to oppose each other, such as "life" and "death." Then he introduces a term, in this case "zombie" or "virus", which fits into neither category neatly. By doing so, he shows that there is a "conceptual space" for entities in nature that do not find any place in a logocentric (a fundamentally logical) system of description.

This is significantly due to the principle of non-contradiction established in logic by Aristotle and later formalized by Leibniz, which states: a proposition is always false which asserts both A and not-A. This principle falls apart in the light of Derrida's "undecidables."

The doctrine of acintya-bhedabeda-tattva, as one of several forms of tantric ontology, displays a similar mode of approach to logocentricism. The classical debate between Monists and Dualists in the dialogues of South Asia, as well as that of the Sunyavadis, or the "Nullists," expose rational deficiencies of the same sort, so much so, that many of the post-Shankarite impersonalists of Vedanta, deny Shankara's own extremist denial of dualism, relegating it to a phase of a higher synthesis.

The innate antagonism in these logocentric discourses is shown by the mode of approach of Derrida, and similarly, acintya-bhedabheda, to be a form of extremism; one which seems to be avoided by these two approaches. Antagonism in comparative dialogue is a systematic focus upon intersystemic difference or non-coherence (bheda), a value which gives rise to a debating mode of dialogue between distinct traditional schools of thought, as was common both in South Asia and Europe. Protagonism in comparative dialogue constitutes an internal focus on general systemic identity (abheda), a value which gives rise to an agreeable mode of dialogue, and is usually restricted in its pure form to discourse within a tradition.

The criticism of Jiva Goswami's debating in Vrindavana by his mentor, Srila Rupa Goswami, and his subsequent temporary exile from Vrindavana conveys a pejorative evaluation of antagonistic dialoguing. Does this apply in the same manner and degree to Jiva's intellectual descendents, i.e., those of us who choose to engage in academic studies in western universities? If so, what are our formal intellectual and theistic duties in this regard; the implication being, how do we apply acintya-bhedabheda-tattva to comparative religious studies, comparative philosophies, etc.? To what extent do we take an antagonistic approach to extra-traditional dialectics?

Acintya-bhedabheda-tattva informs Gaudiya thinking in such a way as to dethorn inter-traditional dialogue, allowing for there to be an underlying sense of unity in the differences between traditions, and quelling sectarian attitudes. Yet it also avoids the extreme of impersonalistic and irrational monism, allowing traditions to remain rational, distinct structures. For these reasons, it is possible for Gaudiyas to dialogue in a responsible and friendly manner with other traditions. Thus, the doctrine of acintya-bhedabheda-tattva can be presented to other traditions as a method for establishing friendly dialogue, and as a means for overcoming tendencies toward sectarian antagonism.

## **Self Identity in the Age of Neuroelectronics**

Ajagovinda dasa

Brain machine interfaces, neurostimulators, and other neuroelectronic machines connecting the brain with semiconductor circuits are common technology nowadays. Neurosurgeons today are implanting electrodes in visual, auditory, and motor cortices of patients suffering from sight, hearing, and movement related problems. Subretinal implant visual prosthesis is bringing sight back to the blind. With the cochlear implant auditory prosthesis, the deaf are regaining their sense of hearing. EEG (electroencephalography) electrode implants in paralyzed patients' motor cortices allow transmitting and deciphering their brain waves into speech and limb movement. Neuroscientists are also developing "cognitive prostheses" to enhance the cognitive functioning of the human brain . As a start, researchers are developing a semiconductor microelectronic device to act as a memory chip, which would store as a copy all our brain's short-term and long-term memories that can be destroyed with a degenerate hippocampus (as in amnesia or Alzheimer's disease). In the future, neuroelectronic bridges consisting of wireless transceivers might connect our brains directly to external data sources, facilitating direct data transmission to the cerebrum.

Most people identify with their bodies, but this identification with the body is defied when one considers that our vision, audition, motion, and even our recollection and cognition (here I use cognition to imply knowledge or information acquisition) can be performed by robotic machinery. Artificial, replacement, or prosthetic organs being developed by scientists illustrate that an individual self is defined not by his or her heart, brain, or other organs, but only by his or her consciousness. Even if every organ of my body is replaced with a prosthetic or artificial one, I will still remain the same individual; why – because my identity is not defined by my body, but by my consciousness, my awareness of my individual existence.

With new brain technology, we might one day be able to exchange feelings and experiences with distant family and friends via wireless brain-wave transceivers attached to our cerebral cortices . We might be able to forget painful memories by rupturing certain synapses or by reprogramming neuroelectric semiconductor memory chips. We might even be able to upload all that comprises our experiences, perceptions, and memories onto a supercomputer. This would not, however, upload us onto a computer , for the self is not defined by feelings and experiences. Rather, the self, the distinct individual, is the subject of these experiences.

## **What is Virtue Ethics?**

Ryan Preston

Western moral philosophy addresses three main questions: (1) What actions are right? For instance, should I give more money to charity? Can I tell a lie to help a friend? (2) What things are desirable? For instance, most people believe that pleasure is good in itself, but what about equality or ecological diversity? (3) What kind of person should I be? For instance, what does courage consist in? Am I too judgmental? Virtue theorists claim that ethics is primarily or most fundamentally concerned with the third class of questions. They argue that we have to figure out what kind of people we should be in order to determine what actions are right or what things are desirable.



The aim of my presentation is to characterize virtue ethics as it has developed in the West, and to explore some of the reasons for its recent resurgence in Western moral philosophy. I hope to lay the groundwork for discussion of the following questions: (1) Does ISKCON have a moral theory, or more precisely, a virtue theory? (2) What can ISKCON gain from the virtue theoretical tradition, particularly as it was developed by Aristotle and Aquinas?

#### **The Function of Buddhi in the Foundation of Knowledge: Toward A Vaiṣṇava Epistemology** Ravindra Svarupa dasa

*Buddhi* plays a crucial foundational function in the process of knowledge. We will explore the presentation of *buddhi* in *Bhagavad-gita* and *Srimad Bhagavatam*, both in the texts and in the commentaries of Srila Prabhupada. Prabhupada has characterized modern academic institutions as exemplifying the culture of the mind (*manas*) and the *Bhagavad-gita* as exemplifying the more elevated culture of intelligence (*buddhi*). We begin by discussing the functions of *buddhi* in everyday knowledge, then in scientific knowledge, and from there proceed to a consideration of what it means to cultivate *buddhi*. We will explore *buddhi* as the faculty for the placement of faith, and in so doing try to elucidate the difference between faith that is blind and faith endowed with vision. Might there then be a standard systematic process for the correct placement of faith, however inaccessible that process may be to those who are merely on the "mental platform?"

#### **Workshop: How do you publish an academic book?** Garuda dasa shares insights and reveals secrets.

In the academic world, "books are the basis," too! However, getting books published by a renowned academic or powerful trade publisher is increasingly more difficult, due in part to the greater competition, the increased costs in publishing, and trends toward non-book sources of information. In this presentation I will reveal my own methods for attracting the attention of Princeton University Press, Columbia University Press, and HarperOne/Harper Collins. I will take participants in this workshop through the practical process of making powerful inroads into the publishing world.

#### **Introducing Gaudiya Vaisnava Religious Perspectives into Archeology** Drutakarma dasa (Michael A. Cremo)

ISKCON devotees hoping to introduce Gaudiya Vaisnava religious perspectives into the sciences need to carefully consider how they wish to present themselves in their work. They also need to consciously consider their basic epistemological approaches. There are many valid approaches. As for me, I have chosen in my work to directly position myself as a member of ISKCON, a Gaudiya Vaisnava and a disciple of a Gaudiya Vaisnava guru (Srila Prabhupada) working in studies of archeological history and theory. I have characterized my activity as communication across knowledge traditions. I explicitly acknowledge that I am a member of a knowledge tradition with epistemological and ontological assumptions different from those held by most working scientists today. I point out that in the past, even Western science accommodated researchers operating according to different epistemological and ontological assumptions. I suggest the need for science, which has become somewhat

monolithic in its epistemological and ontological assumptions to readjust to the previous situation of tolerance of researchers working on the basis of different metaphysical positions. In my work I have focused on two areas—introducing Gaudiya Vaisnava perspectives into human origins studies and, more recently, introducing Gaudiya Vaisnava perspectives into studies of the history of archeology (in India). I will illustrate my approaches with examples from recent papers I have presented at archeology conferences. One of the papers, on history of archeology in India, has been accepted for publication in *Antiquity*, one of the main archeology journals. In addition to introducing Gaudiya Vaishnava perspectives in archeology I have found that secular studies in archeology and archeology theory have enriched my understanding and appreciation of Gaudiya Vaishnavism.

### Emerging Boundaries for Evolutionary Biology?

Stitha-dhi-muni dasa

Every discipline needs boundaries defining its sphere of activity. Unfortunately, popular spokespeople for the evolutionary sciences continually overstep their disciplinary authority so as to lend respectability to a variety of mechanistic worldviews. The problem is that these philosophical worldviews defy empirical verification, and thus are hardly credible candidates for posing as a scientific conclusion.

The most notable example of this sort of paradigm pretension involves the promotion of evolutionary/secular humanism, a metaphysical worldview that is often accepted as the “religion” of modern biology. From a historical perspective, the trend in this direction gathered significant credibility during the mid century evolutionary synthesis through the efforts of leaders of the genre such as Ernst Mayr, a leading biologist frequently proclaimed as the “Darwin of the 20th Century.”

While Mayr was no evangelist for an atheistic paradigm in the manner of a contemporary Richard Dawkins, he nonetheless proved extremely influential using his prominent position to help establish the disciplinary boundaries shaping modern evolutionary biology. For the most part, Mayr did an excellent job negotiating credible parameters for an empirical investigating of biological phenomena through promoting a middle ground between the absolute reductionism (or physicalism) popular among physicists, who argued for making biology a sub department of their own discipline, and the often romanticized vitalism promoted by theorists, who while arguing for biology as an autonomous science were unable to verify the independence of conscious energy in terms they could empirically authenticate through naturalistic methodology.

But in matters of science and religion, Mayr unfortunately fell miserably short when articulating a distinction between a metaphysical “religious” philosophy and a methodological “scientific” hypothesis in his works such as his “magisterial” *The Growth of Biological Thought* (1985), where he infers with the quotation: “Virtually all biologists are religious, in the deeper sense of this word, even though it may not be a religion with revelation . . .” (81) that nontheistic religion is scientific.

But science as an investigatory vehicle driven by naturalist methodology can be successfully

done by anyone, no matter what philosophical perspectives they may hold as human beings, as evidenced by numerous prominent historical figures as well as contemporary sociological studies. Mayr's inability throughout his numerous disciplinary influencing works to clearly differentiate naturalism as a methodology from naturalism as an all-encompassing philosophical worldview has left many modern biologist confused as to how to efficiently maintain their own disciplinary boundaries.

A pragmatic solution could be found in Prabhupada's approach emphasizing the principle of life comes from life. In other words, there is a distinction between energy that exhibits consciousness, and energy that does not. Whether conscious energy arises from within matter, or rather emerges as a parallel phenomenon once a sufficient level of biological organization is present, remains one of many significant unanswered scientific questions.

Possibly current biological theories of emergence proposing the organic whole is greater than its individual parts could be adapted towards this end. While mechanistic philosophers will infer consciousness emerges from within matter, just as readily the argument can be made consciousness enters from outside the organic system once a sufficient biological threshold exists – neither position is currently empirically verifiable. By emphasizing an adapted theory of emergence as a practical disciplinary boundary, age old questions involving meaning in human existence can be weaned from ideological debates in the name of scientific or religious doctrine, and hopefully returned to a field of cool-headed philosophical inquiry where it belongs.

At the same time, contemporary evolutionary theories empirically dealing with biological change over time could be more efficiently analyzed with less resistance due to a wide variety of often covered, yet non-essential non-empirical metaphysical propositions woven into much of modern biology. Articulating a more progressive disciplinary boundary between studies concerning the nature of consciousness energy from a biological study of consciousness exhibiting organic systems, based on emphasizing a modified theory of emergence, might be a helpful marker towards this end.

#### **Krishna Consciousness and Intelligent Design** **Ishvara-krishna dasa (Hungary)**

My book *What If There Is No Evolution*, subtitled *Intelligent Design: A Viable Theory*, has been published this year (2007) by Kornetas Publisher. The book contains a debate between an evolutionist researcher and me on the origin of life and species. Its main subjects are the history of the intelligent design movement; the workings of science; methodological materialism; falsification possibilities for evolution and intelligent design theory; education; embryonic development and irreducible complexity.

After the publication of the book I went on a tour in Hungary in ten cities. I gave presentations in colleges, universities and libraries. The media has shown an interest in the subject. I have given interviews to local newspapers, radio stations and television channels. The official Hungarian state television (MTV) made a 45 minute broadcast about me and the book. In another program they broadcast a 15 minute film about the Hungarian branch of the intelligent design movement. The Hungarian ID proponents translate and publish

books, make films, run a website, organize conferences and lectures. I am one of the organizer of this group. We are sending information about the book (and order forms) to biology teachers in 400 Hungarian secondary schools.

The reception of the book has been controversial. 800 copies were sold within three months. Not surprisingly, the Sceptic Society is against my work and they write articles against it. At the same time as my book was published, they published Richard Dawkins *God Delusion* in Hungarian. So these books seem like two opposing extremes on the origin questions. At my lectures people asked questions about the identity of the intelligent designer and his creating method. I told them this subject is not part of the ID theory so I presented to them the Vaishnava worldview and my personal conviction in the truth of ancient Vedic texts. Summing up my experience, I have come to the conclusion that discussions on science and intelligent design can be used as an "introduction" to deeper preaching subjects.

### Science, Religion, and Power: Interpreting the "Science" in the *Srimad Bhagavatam* Janaki-rama dasa

It is often argued by scientists and theologians that "science" is different from "religion." Many polemical scientists and scholars argue that science inherently conflicts with religion, and that for science to succeed it must destroy religion. Some theologians and religious people have tacitly agreed by saying their religion can only succeed at the expense of science. This view—often called the "conflict thesis"—has been opposed by historians in the past 30 years; they have developed what is now called the "complexity thesis." They argue that a close examination of "scientific" texts and the biographies of great "scientists" discloses the difficulty in sustaining polarizations between "science" and "religion," and an ever greater difficulty in showing they are in conflict. It is argued that statements about God and statements about nature exist in intimate and complex relationships that cannot be abstracted from context.

I review some of the arguments by "complexity" historians such as James Moore, Peter Harrison, and John Hedley Brooke, and argue that the reasons they have for resisting essentialist notions of science and religion apply with even greater force to the study of the interaction of the *Bhagavata Purana*'s views and contemporary science's views. I further argue that the attempt of scientists and scholars such as Gould, Dawkins, Dennett, etc. to give essential definitions of science and religion is fundamental to their attempt to dominate "religion," and to reconstruct "science" in atheistic terms.

There is a possible danger that scholars will unintentionally interpret the *Bhagavata* with the concepts of "science" and/or "religion." However, it is advisable that they resist this hermeneutic; the historiography I have discussed above gives a rational for doing so. At the same time, ISKCON scholars and scientists need to develop concepts and terms for interpreting the *Bhagavata* based on the *Bhagavata* itself. In this paper I suggest terms such as *dharana* (meditation on an external object), *tattva-laksana* (a description of the constituents of matter) and *dharma* (one's prescribed duty) as ways of communicating the *Bhagavata*'s natural theological project in the context of contemporary academia.



## Representing the Soundtrack for Yoga, or, Who Speaks for Kirtan? Ekacakra dasa

Originally associated with religious expression in South Asia, the genre of Kirtan has gradually risen in popularity in North American and Europe over the past decade, becoming a ubiquitous occurrence in yoga studios from coast to coast. Although stemming from a decidedly religious and non-Western source, the manner in which it has been represented in popular media—through both interviews and reporting—has reflected the ideological perspectives of non-indigenous performers who have portrayed Kirtan as decidedly “spiritual, but not religious,” following a trend in contemporary Western thought to compartmentalize sacred praxis within discrete, dyadic ideological categories. The main focus of this paper will be to examine the ramifications of such an ideological separation, i.e. the “spiritual” from the “religious,” in the case of Kirtan, by first investigating the contemporary semantic loads attributed to the terms “spiritual” and “religious” in Western habit. From there I will proceed by noting several factors evident in the practice of indigenous Kirtan, specifically within the context of Gaudiya Vaisnavism, which belie the use of such rigid categories. In so doing I hope to at least begin to answer challenging questions that the genre of Kirtan must reckon with in the face of globalization: can Kirtan, a practice developed in the cultural complexities of South Asia, be subjected to the classificatory ideologies of twenty-first century cultural habit without excessively confusing its meaning? Moreover, does the use of decidedly Western classificatory ideology disadvantage the voices of indigenous musicians? Finally, whose voice—if anyone’s—is authoritative in determining the meaning of Hindu sacred praxis; indeed, who speaks for Kirtan?

## Immortality with Sanskrit Grammar – Jiva Gosvami and the World of Indology Amritananda devi dasi

Jiva Gosvami in his *Harinamamrita-vyakarana* wrote the Sanskrit grammatical rules in *sutras*. Writing the Sanskrit grammatical rules in *sutras* has an old tradition, but Jiva Gosvami wrote these *sutras* in a way that in addition to the grammatical meaning the *sutras* also have a philosophical meaning. The title of the work, *The Nectarian Grammar of Hari's Names or Immortality with Sanskrit Grammar*, reflects the double purpose of the work. On one hand it is a handbook of the system of rules of classical Sanskrit grammar, and on the other hand the recitation of the rules, which includes Hari's names, leads to transcendental advancement. The religious meaning has been reached by using Krishna's names as grammatical terms.

The academic literature of the last hundred years in most cases criticised this kind of junction of grammar and religion. Thus this work of Jiva Gosvami was also very much unappreciated. Belvalkar in his *Systems of Sanskrit Grammar* says ‘that the author made grammar the vehicle of religion and “the whole subject is presented to us in a dull, uninteresting manner”.

According to my opinion by studying the terminology of Jiva Gosvami's *Harinamamrita-vyakarana* we can reach a completely different conclusion: the terminology is original with different levels of coherences. And because the names carry grammatical meanings they

help to remember the grammatical rules. In my M.A. thesis I tried to show how original Jiva Gosvami was in compiling his book and how he chose his terminology. Because of its ingenuity and consistency *Harinamamrita-vyakarana* can claim intellectual interest in the circle of Indologists also.

### The Cult of Sri Caitanya

Mahasaumya dasa (Michael J. Gressett)

Many researchers have ratified the non-pejorative meaning of the word cult, seeking to define it critically in relation to church and sect, and rescue it from the ideological clutches of established religious concerns and a complicit, sensationalistic media. For an impressive group of social scientists, a religious cult is simply a new religious form with ideas and values that contradict its environment, so that it is its stressful social relationship alone that makes it a cult. A sect breaks off from a church, usually in an effort to return to the original charter of the church's founder, while a church is an established organization that reflects society's values, and has considerable influence upon its environment. Beside the social scientific use of cult, there is also the long-standing non-pejorative designation for a group of individuals intensely involved in any special interest, which seems to be the way that Prabhupada uses the term. For him, "the cult of Caitanya Mahaprabhu" or "the cult of bhakti" represents the "crème de la crème" of all religion. In one way or another, Prabhupada meant for his cult to become a church, because it is "the prime benediction for humanity at large."

However, Hare Krsna people have made a cost-benefit analysis and decided there is more to lose in retaining their guru's nomenclature than rejecting it. No one wants to be called a cultist—but that is a grave conceptual and strategic mistake that only emboldens a cult's enemies, while abandoning a useful tool to understand the details of cultic religion as a rational choice. This paper will focus on a different kind of cost-benefit analysis at the micro-analytic level of human agency instead of the macro-social focus of previous researchers, and will explore the results of a general retreat from an elite, ascetic orientation to a lay, world-friendly orientation on the path from cult to church.

### Vaisnava-Sakta Debates and the Date of *Devi-bhagavata*

Dvija-mani dasa (David Buchta)

Although a *Bhagavata-purana* is listed among the 18 major Puranas, there has been a long history of debate, both traditional and academic, as to whether the Vaisnava *Srimad-bhagavata* or a Sakta text is the real *Bhagavata-purana*. Research on the history of these debates has focused nearly exclusively on *Devi-bhagavata* as the main Sakta candidate for being the real *Bhagavata-purana*. The history of this debate has been an important factor in the dating of both of these texts, and is largely responsible for R. C. Hazra's assigning a terminus ante quem of 1200 CE to *Devi-bhagavata*. However, a closer look at the history of the debates shows that *Devi-bhagavata* was not the subject of discussion in early texts. I argue that there are no grounds for a terminus ante quem before the 16th century or even later, and that there is some likelihood that the text was not written much before this.