

Quietism, Agnosticism and Mysticism: Indian, Eastern and Western Perspectives

XXIX IVR World Congress Special Workshop No. 109

TUESDAY, 9TH JULY, 2019

UNIVERSITY OF LUCERNE, SWITZERLAND

CONVENER:

Dr. Krishna Mani **PATHAK** (kmpathak@philosophy.du.ac.in)
Department of Philosophy, Hindu College, University of Delhi, INDIA
Web CV: <http://people.du.ac.in/~kmpathak>

CO-CONVENERS:

Dr. Vedika Mati **HURDOYAL-CHEKHORI** (vedika.hurdoyal@gmail.com)
School of Indological Studies, Mahatma Gandhi Institute, MAURITIUS

Mr. Anish **CHAKRAVARTY** (anishchak@gmail.com)
Department of Philosophy, University of Delhi, INDIA

WORKSHOP ABSTRACT

The workshop aims *per se* neither the historical evaluation, nor the censorship involved in the freedom of expression, nor the progressive take of philosophy whereby creating any hierarchical order of any kind in the history of philosophy; but most importantly, aims to discuss and debate and deliberate upon the philosophical issues concerning the acquisition of Truth, its objectivity, and its various dimensions along with the application of thoughts pertaining to Quietists, Agnostics, and metaphysical-mystic traditions in philosophy. The workshop with an inclusive approach has brought scholars, professors and researchers together to examine and to unfold precisely the limits and the scope of knowledge, the way of life, its expressions and morality. The preferred traditions of philosophy for this workshop among the participants range from classical Indian schools to eastern oriental traditions that exist in the light of traditions to modern philosophical and religious perspectives.

The objective of the workshop will be actualised expositions of the participants to bring out the unvoiced discourses across these traditions thereby enabling not a comparison of various philosophical issues but also to see the relationship among the various parallels and similarities brought out by the discussed philosophical/religious positions. We shall decipher the non-ostensive concepts and definitions and the associated unspoken silence or the unsaid. The workshop is designed in such a way that it is convinced to achieve its target of develop a skill in an interactive environment among the enthusiasts who will attend it.

The sub-themes of the workshop include *the indescribable Truth and/or Reality, The Revealed, the Unrevealed, and the Divine, The Status of Justification of Truth, Optimism and Pessimism, The Relations "Oughtness" and "Truthness", Rituals, Injunctions and Prohibitions, Spirituality and Quietism, Spirituality and Mysticism, Agnosticism and Scepticism, Silence and The Limits of Human Language.*

WORKSHOP TIMETABLE AND LIST OF PRESENTERS

Tuesday, 9th July, 2019: 08:30-13:00, 4.B02

08:30-08:50	Welcome and Introduction by Dr. Krishna Mani Pathak
08:50-09:10	Mr. Mohit Abrol (<i>Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, INDIA</i>): mohitabrol89@gmail.com "Spinoza's Substance and Ch'an Buddhism: A Philosophical Inquiry into the History of Enlightenment"
09:10-09:30	Ms. Anasuya Agarwala (<i>University of Delhi, INDIA</i>) anasuyasmal@gmail.com "The Epistemological Potential of Laughter in Nietzsche's Existentialism"
09:30-09:50	Dr. Ananya Barua (<i>University of Delhi, INDIA</i>) barua.ananya@gmail.com "Musings of a Mystic: with special reference to Rumi"
09:50-10:10	Mr. Anish Chakravarty (<i>University of Delhi, INDIA</i>) anishchak@gmail.com "Sanjaya's Ajnanavada and Mahavira's Anekantavada: From Agnosticism to Pluralism"
10:10-10:30	Dr. Deepika Chatterjee (<i>University of Delhi, INDIA</i>) deepikachatterjee@hotmail.com "Revealing the Unrevealed, Ramakrishna: A Mystic Saint of Bengal"
10:30-11:00	COFFEE BREAK
11:00-11:20	Dr. Vedika Mati Hurdoyal-Chekhori (<i>Mahatma Gandhi Institute, MAURITIUS</i>) vedika.hurdoyal@gmail.com "The Indispensability of Language and Its Limitations"
11:20-11:40	Ms. Saachi Chowdhry (<i>University of Delhi, INDIA</i>) saachichowdhry@gmail.com "The Ethical Precepts in the Angulimāla Sutta: It's Impact on 21st Century Juvenile Criminals"
11:40-12:00	Dr. Mansi Handa (<i>Yorkville University, CANADA</i>) mansi_handa@yahoo.com "Encompassing Faith and Reason in Philosophico-Religious Matters"
12:00-12:20	Dr. Zoran G. Mimica (<i>University of Vienna, AUSTRIA</i>) (<i>registration not confirmed</i>) zoran.mimica@googlemail.com "E. From, T. Suzuki, L. Wittgenstein: Psychoanalyses, Zen Buddhism and Philosophy in Silence, Talk and Action"
12:20-12:40	Prof. Kanchana Natarajan (<i>University of Delhi, INDIA</i>) kanchana237@gmail.com "Indescribable Truth as Play: Avudai Akkal's Pancikaranam"
12:40-13:00	Dr. Krishna Mani Pathak (<i>University of Delhi, INDIA</i>) kmpathak@philosophy.du.ac.in "Mystifying the World, Mystifying the Mind, and the Vedic Concept of Origination"

(Paper(s) of registered participants will be considered in absentia and other participant(s) will read the paper, if any)

ABSTRACTS

Spinoza's Substance and Ch'an Buddhism: A Philosophical Inquiry into the History of Enlightenment

Mohit Abrol

Doctoral Fellow

*Department of Humanities and Social Sciences,
Indian Institute of Technology, New Delhi, India*

Perhaps no other thinker was able to displace the institutionalised beliefs about God in Western philosophy more effectively than Spinoza. Encouraged by his teacher Francis van den Enden and the close association that he maintained with the dissident Christian groups collectively called Collegiants, Spinoza proposed a radical approach of knowing God within the framework of a scientific onto-theology by means of which he established the absolute independence, the ontological self-sufficiency of God. This sufficiently laid bare the internal contradictions in the institutional religious beliefs and, at the same time, tremendously expanded the scope of human knowledge. Spinoza studied mathematics and physics to decipher the necessary expression of the divine substance or Energy (the *Natura naturans*) which underpins (*substans*) everything. It is in Spinoza's works that modern thought and science came together. This much is already known. However, there is also a supposedly esoteric Eastern thought proposed by Ch'an Buddhists, the followers of "Foe Kaiio" (No-man) which Pierre Bayle, the French philosopher and encyclopedist suggested to be the main source of Spinoza's "monstrous hypothesis". I intend to deliberate upon the unvoiced, unfamiliar Ch'an Buddhism, the eastern 'source' behind Spinoza's voice which helped him to expose the dichotomies of the institutionalised beliefs and for which the religious institutions in Amsterdam ordered it to be silenced.

In his *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1730), Bayle has described the theology of "Foe" or Chinese Buddha as a kind of quietism which posited the belief in insensibility to attain perfection and happiness. The aim of the paper is to uncover this quietism behind Spinoza's metaphysical moves to go counter to the established Western tradition. Spinoza's concept of substance is fundamentally an amendment of Aristotelian idea that we or the things that we encounter are constitutionally substances and of Cartesian dualism of mind and body which were considered to be substantially different things. All of reality, according to Spinoza, is basically a modification of infinite attributes which, in turn, is the essence of God.

Through this paper, I aim to show how Spinoza's amendment of the central concept of substance in the Western philosophical thought invariably laid the groundwork for knowing the spiritual developments taking place in China. By using Spinoza's philosophy as the paradigm, I hope to make an epistemic shift towards an Eastern thought which has remained a neglected topic in the diffusion of philosophical ideas in the seventeenth century which actually led to the birth of secular age.

The Epistemological Potential of Laughter in Nietzsche's Existentialism

Anasuya Agarwala

Assistant Professor

*Department of Philosophy
Gargi College, University of Delhi, India*

This paper is an investigation of the potential of laughter to act as an epistemological 'tool' in Nietzsche's methodological constructions. Nietzsche is famously anti-essentialist in his

position against Western philosophy and the rationalist and empiricist notions of truth this tradition assumes. Nietzsche's methodologically inventive 'revaluation of all values' employs "pessimism", to critique Western thought for its pretensions towards metaphysical truth, and, to replace these pretensions with the question of existential meaning instead. Nietzsche's 'revaluation' can be seen as an epistemological invention that is also philosophically significant. Epistemologically, it is destructive to 'truth' but constructive for 'meaning'; philosophically, in demystifying the ideal of truth, Nietzsche's 'revaluation' dismantles a tradition that is essentially *pessimistic*, and harkens a new possibility for optimism. The epistemological ends of the 'revaluation' are sought through the methodological tool of "pessimism" which plays the role of the *ambivalent* philosophical 'hammer': hammers are used for destruction, but also, construction of things: "pessimism" breaks the foundations of *pessimistic* thought and nails down a platform for Nietzsche's optimistic philosophy. Exploiting Nietzsche's epistemological construction, this paper investigates the potential of laughter to act as Nietzsche's philosophical 'hammer' towards a 'revaluation of all values'.

The investigation is encouraged primarily by the aphoristic mentions of laughter in Nietzsche's texts, but also by reflections on laughter found in historical thought. The latter find an inherent ambivalence in laughter that is similar to the ambivalence of Nietzsche's philosophical 'hammer'. Operating through 'Incongruity' (Kant), laughter has the potential to subvert official doctrine; through subversion, laughter carries the potential to engender an alterity of meanings (Bakhtin). This paper aims to reveal the hidden potentiality of laughter, to subvert the fixity of objective truths, and introduce the freedom for new meanings. The subversive potential of laughter is effective but not prescriptive towards definitive meaning: it merely opens up a space for (potential) meaning-creation. Without necessitating or defining a sense for 'meaning', and characterizing it as a formal negation of Truth, 'hammering' with laughter is a potential lead to transcending 'meaning' itself, and a settling in a 'transcendent' quietism.

This paper aims to establish the significance of "pessimism" for Nietzsche's optimistic philosophy. It further attempts to align the epistemological role of "pessimism" with that of "laughter", and indicate the potential of laughter to act as an *existential* 'hammer' that can construct the conditions for a potential transcendence of meaning and quietism.

Musings of a Mystic: with special reference to Rumi

Dr. Ananya Barua

Assistant Professor

Department of Philosophy

Hindu College, University of Delhi, India

To engage on a subliminal and unadulterated cognitive comprehension of God is like trying to see with our naked eyes that are defective or, blind. That which is described by negations as formless, limitless, indescribable, beginning-less, endless is impossible to be comprehended with the limited cognitive sensory disposal. Many scientists and empirical investigators refute a domain which goes beyond the cognitive state process and falls beyond the domain of empirical investigations. This is where the domain of mysticism starts. Mysticism is misunderstood as the practice of occult, esoteric, or, even black magic. Mysticism is a private, mysterious and abundantly, a happy feeling that connects the mystic with his extension, i.e. his beloved, child-parent, bosom friends, nature, or, even God. One can be a very cool chemist or, a creative writer and a mystic at the same time, provided what one does, he does that with plain happiness in an engaged manner and not in a detached, mechanised robotic mode. He reads in a way that others fail to see. He sees in a distinctive way that others fail to gauge. And, he gauges in a way that others find it difficult to comprehend and appreciate. The

mystics rejoice in their own private discovery, i.e. the beatitude of finding their object of love, usually God or, God-like others.

In this abstract, I would be bringing in the mystical musings of Jalāluūddin Rumi, the famous Persian mystic poet and try to explore how his musings are from the perspective of beyond the domain of fact and fiction, lesser than fiction and, more than fact. In between this fact and fiction, comes the domain of faith that engulfs the world of a mystic poet. Their love for the One who is the Ocean of love is like that intoxicating drink that cannot be expressed in words, but only felt when drunk by the self. It is that elixir that makes a lay man connect not only with the Higher Self but also be intoxicatingly, in love with the self and the One while performing one's mundane duties. The inadequate anagogic of mystic poetry emanates from a skeptical attitude of experiencing God as personal experience. Can God be actually experienced the way we experience the other regular things of life? The way to understand the deep ocean of such prayerful musings is through the soulful heart which goes beyond regular language, beyond banal logic and, rests on plain heart to heart connect. In fact, what is mystical and thereby intimate and personal is also public and transparent as there are different kinds of mysticism.

Sanjaya's Ajnanavada and Mahavira's Anekantavada: From Agnosticism to Pluralism

Anish Chakravarty

Doctoral Researcher

Department of Philosophy

University of Delhi, India

Jaina (Jainism) whose last and main spiritual leader is Vardhamana Mahavira, and *Ajnana* (Agnosticism) of Sanjaya Belatthaputta, were two of the significant philosophical traditions that existed in 7th – 6th century BCE India. Philosophical discourses, intellectual and spiritual debates were a part and parcel of everyday life at that time, irrespective of whether these debates were within the framework of the Vedic tradition or not. Jaina and *Ajnana* traditions were a part of the Non-Vedic larger *Sramana* movement, where *Sramanas* were truth seekers and monastics, who had abandoned the duties done by the laity and sought themselves to the path of resolving deepest questions of truth and existence, and in obtaining the right knowledge. Sanjaya and Mahavira were contemporaries and were a prominent and well known *Sramana* of their time. This paper will be analytic and scholarly in approach and aims to compare the philosophical positions of these two thinkers.

The paper broadly has two divisions, where within each of the division, there are two objectives each. Under the first, we aim firstly to understand Sanjaya's unending non-committal method in dealing philosophical truths (*Ajnanavada*) and secondly, Mahavira's doctrine of *Anekantavada* (Metaphysical Pluralism) and *Saptabhanginaya* (seven-fold predication).

Under the second division, firstly, we then seek to explore the logical relationship and similarities between *Ajnanavada* and *Anekantavada* and its metaphysical consequences; and conclusively, the major part of the paper will discuss the claim first made by the Jaina scholar Hermann Jacobi, about the possible influence that Sanjaya's *Ajnanavada* had on the establishment of Mahavira's *Anekantavada*. The paper in detail will present and discuss the contemporary scholarship claims on whether Sanjaya was an important if not a major influence in the development of the Jaina thought.

Revealing the Unrevealed, Ramakrishna: A Mystic Saint of Bengal

Dr. Deepika Chatterjee

Associate Professor

Department of Philosophy

Gargi College, University of Delhi, India

This paper aims to explore the mystic and divine philosophy of a profound saint of Bengal, Ramakrishna Paramhansa (19th cent. AD). An iconic figure in the Bengal Renaissance movement, his ideas and teachings nevertheless, has not been explored in the larger Academia. The paper attempts to anecdote, several biographical cases related to the life of Ramakrishna and equate it with their philosophico-mystical interpretations. The name 'Paramhansa', is a religio-theological title of honour bestowed to Hindu spiritual teachers who are regarded as having attained enlightenment, and the one who is awakened in all conceivable realms.

Ramakrishna experienced spiritual ecstasies of 'Goddess Kali' (the connubial partner of Lord Shiva), revealing Herself to him. It is by far an interesting riddle to solve, as to how such and similar other divine experiences led Ramakrishna to preach main teachings including God realisation as the supreme goal of life, harmony of all religions; where the thrust of his teachings included the oneness of existence and the unity of all religions. This paper will also investigate the reasons that led an atheistic enquirer of truth, Narendranath Dutta, to become a theist Swami Vivekananda, and an ardent disciple of Ramakrishna. The formation of Ramakrishna Mission and what it propagates, will be unravelled enabling to understand the ideas of Ramakrishna in a better and lucid way.

Further, Ramakrishna's wife, Sarada Devi, was considered divine by Swami Vivekananda. It is interesting to note that the marriage between Ramakrishna and Sarada Devi was celibate and unconventional. She being the first discipline of Ramakrishna becomes significant figure in understanding about him. He agreed to marry her as he believed that it was a divine order. Sarada Devi played an important role in the growth of Ramakrishna Mission, and was regarded by the disciples as a 'divine mother'. Her influence prompted Swami Vivekananda to open 'Sarada Mission', the ladies wing of Ramakrishna mission based on the ideals and life of Sarada Devi. To see the larger scope of Ramakrishna's philosophy, this paper therefore would like to explore or Reveal the Unrevealed and Divine Revelations of him, with relevant connections drawn with Maa Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda.

The Indispensability of Language and Its Limitations

Dr. Vedika Mati Hurdoyal- Chekhori

Senior Lecturer and Director

School of Indological Studies

Mahatma Gandhi Institute, Moka, Mauritius

Human Language is a very complex phenomenon. Its supreme relevance lies in the recognition of the fact that thinking is almost impossible without language, and hence, by analyzing language we can as well analyse thoughts. Our thoughts are communicable by means of language, which is not an accidental connection. Language is used to communicate thoughts because we have an implicit understanding of how our language works. Infact, language and thought may simply, be indistinguishable. In Indian philosophy, language, thought and reality are intimately related.

Almost all the Indian school of thought has raised their philosophical structure either on the acceptance or rejection of the Vedas. The Vedic savants bestowed enormous importance to the Vedic corpus; believed in its being the source of knowledge which cannot be known

through any other source and therefore proclaimed the Vedas as the Infallible Authority. The importance of word (śabda) as a valid means of knowledge in Indian Epistemology can be gauged from the fact that with the exception of the Vaiśeṣika, Buddhists and Cārvāka, all the other schools recognize the authority and indispensability of verbal Cognition.

Verbal Authority is distinguished from other sources of knowledge by virtue of the fact that one gets the knowledge of things by understanding the meaning of word (vedavākya) and relevant sentence uttered by reliable persons (āptavākya). It is a well-known fact that there has been much controversy in Indian Philosophy on the structure of sentences and their interpretation. The question of infallibility of persons on which the validity of testimony ultimately depends is of considerable philosophical importance.

It is in the light of the above that this paper attempts to provide a critical analysis of the concept of Language and discuss the logical grounds upon which the Indispensability and authority of word (śabda) has been posited by the Indian philosophers and grammarians. An attempt will also be made to revisit the Indian method of interpretation of Authority as a necessary tool of instruction and a means to reach the truth for both the modern Eastern and Western thinkers.

The Ethical Precepts in the Angulimāla Sutta: It's Impact on 21st Century Juvenile Criminals

Saachi Chowdhry

Assistant Professor

Department of Philosophy

Gargi College, University of Delhi, India

This paper attempts to explore the mystical and spiritual transformation of Angulimāla from a fierce bandit into an ascetic. The philosophical journey of Angulimāla is traced from the *Angulimāla Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* ('The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha' in the *Sutta Piṭaka*). This significant conversion is one of the many instances recorded in the *Pali Canon* that marks the profound impact of the process of spiritual enlightenment on individuals with criminal tendencies and negative influences. The teachings attributed to the Buddha poses itself as the best guide to self-regulation and development of mature abilities for judgments, with which he was able to make a difference in the lives of his many followers. So, the predicament of human existence can only be resolved by discerning inherent potential of human nature. This is achievable by thoroughly interpreting the ritualistic approaches in the form of ethical codes of conduct. These ethical codes of conduct which are extensively discussed in the teachings of Theravada Buddhism, brings out the quintessence of liberating wisdom required for *Arhatship* (Liberation).

The purpose of this paper will be to firstly, highlight these legislated guidelines which were taught by the Buddha to the *Samāneras* (novices). The *sīlas* (rules of morality) and *vinaya* (monastic codes) both serve as prohibitions as well as positive injunctions. These precepts were the foundational basis of the extraordinary physic achievement that the murderous and ruthless *Angulimāla* became capable of. In this process the implications of the nature of levitations and austerities with which Buddha transforms the murderous *Angulimāla* into a calmer, integrated and compassionate person, by making him proficient with *Dhamma*, will be discussed.

The second part of the paper examines the relationship between conscience (from Theravada Buddhist perspective) and criminality, in order to understand whether the application of these ethical codes of conduct can also help in the transformation of juvenile criminals of the 21st century. The juvenile delinquency which is a harsh reality not only in India, but in other parts of the world requires serious reflection. Therefore, the paper will

argue a strong case in favor of the Buddhist ethical codes of conduct in order to reform the 21st century juvenile criminals into productive adults or at least alter them from becoming “career criminals” in the future.

Encompassing Faith and Reason in Philosophico-Religious Matters

Dr. Mansi Handa

*Adjunct Faculty
Yorkville University, Canada*

From time immemorial there has been an issue concerning as to what is the relationship between faith and reason. The conflict between faith and reason arises out of the claim that there are generally two kinds of Truths: one which is based on faith and another based on reason. This contrast between faith and reason has made philosophers look at them as two separate ideas and means of knowledge, operating in two different realms. Philosophers have been preoccupied with questions like - Is faith and reason compatible? Are they two separate/disjunctive entities? Is there any binding relation between faith and reason? If so, then what kind of relation is it?

There is no doubt that the relationship between reason and faith is hard to fathom, but as a result of introspections and deliberations, philosophers have tried to maintain some positions in order to establish a relation between the two. The first task of this paper is to grant some attention to these views.

The first view considers faith to be independent of reason. This view holds that reason is not required as a justification particularly for religious beliefs, which *per se* are grounded by the idea of pure faith. There are philosophers like Kierkegaard *et al*, who have argued for and maintained this position. The second view is that faith must be confirmed by reason. In other words, religious beliefs in order to be justified must be warranted with rational proofs. W.K. Clifford offers such a position. Besides these two views there have been several attempts to bring faith and reason together and offer a view which blends both. St. Thomas Aquinas is a proponent of one such view.

This paper aims to deliberate upon and elucidate these three views. It will also illuminate limitations of maintaining these above positions. In the paper, I will be arguing that since each of these positions has certain limitations, there are problems in upholding just one particular view with regard to faith and reason. In order to philosophically arrive at truth or knowledge in religious matters, the relation between faith and reason should be seen from all angles and perspectives. Thus, this paper will envision and argue for a position which makes room for all the above views. Such a view, I believe, will offer a complete picture of the kinds of relation which faith and reason can possess.

E. From, T. Suzuki , L. Wittgenstein: Psychoanalyses, Zen Buddhism and Philosophy in Silence, Talk and Action

Dr. Zoran G. Mimica

*Former Tutor
Department of Philosophy
University of Vienna, Austria*

In their cooperative book on “Zen and Psychoanalyses“ Suzuki and From tried to reconcile silence and talking. Wittgenstein, later on, concludes in his “Tractatus“ that , to put it in my own words, the truth can be said in a few, uncomplicated words and if that cannot be done, then it is far better to remain silent. So to say, if there is no answer to the question one asks

him or her or one becomes from somebody else, then, that is the answer. In “Kwan se um bosal” Soto School of Zen, which I have once belonged, “just don’t know” is a positive attitude. Not knowing is better than knowing, while all the knowledge is temporary. Socrates stated that when he says that he knows that he does not now anything. To remain silent means to be pending (like “lis pendet” or litispention when law suit has not yet began but was initiated and it is pending as some items should be hold before they begin). Sometimes we have to allow the time to reveal us the truth. “I don’t know if I know something or anything at all”; I would add to this Socratic statement. Silence means waiting to see which prevails in the moment we live: sympathy or antipathy; optimism or pessimism, agnosticism or gnosticism (i.e. heresy). Besides in Japan’s Zen practice (“Show me the clapping of one hand” or the sound of “mu”), silence was also a tool of Middle Age mystic philosophers in Europe like the German Meister Eckhardt, who used to say that we should act without asking “why” (“wirken sunder worumbe”). To the question „why“, by the way, in most cases, there is no answer. This question became nowadays the most naive and obsolete question one can pose. Or, as James Joyce wrote in his charismatic novel “Ulysses”: “If you do not want to hear lies, don’t ask me any question. “So, is silence an action? Or respond? Or communication? Or all of those? (Please, don’t ask me!)”

Indescribable Truth as Play: Avudai Akkal’s *Pancikaranam*

Dr. Kanchana Natarajan

Professor

Department of Philosophy

University of Delhi, India

Advaita Vedanta declares that Brahman – Absolute Reality/Truth that is the source of all creation – is *nirvisesam* (‘unqualified’), not available for objectification and thereby not subject to discourse/description. This is scripturally affirmed, for instance in a well-known mantra of the *Taittiriya Upanisad*: “*yato vaco nivartante aprappya manasa saha*” (words and mind recede without reaching It), and in the *Bṛhadaranyaka Upanisad* where the negative methodology of *neti neti* (‘not this, not this’) is used to logically arrive at the correct understanding of Brahman. Interestingly, the complex phenomenon of *jagat*/world is not really comprehensible to us either because of its enormously diverse, duplicitous and transient dimensions, with every detail containing in itself the potential for ceaseless proliferation and objectification. As Samkara notes in his commentary on the second *Brahma Sutra*, *jagat* is *manasapi acintya* (‘inconceivable to the mind’) – a property that also makes *jagat* essentially *anirvacaniyata* (‘not available to language’). However, such indescribability differs from that attributed to Brahman.

Anirvacaniya jagat exists not in itself but as our reflexive superimposition of our material experience on the immaculate substratum of *nirvisesam* Brahman. In terms of a famous Vedantic metaphor, in our ignorance we may see the illusory snake instead of the actual rope, but if we correct our misperception, the fundamental error has served to reveal the fundamental truth. Error and truth contain each other like snake and rope; and only through the navigating relative *jagat* with all its seductions can we approach imperishable absolute Brahman. Ignorant limited *jivas* may endlessly speculate about the latter through all manner of discourse, but those who are liberated into Brahman may in fact find themselves mute, incapable of describing that infinitude – in terms of another famous Vedantic metaphor, the emancipated are like a salt doll that has dived into the ocean.

‘Ordinary’ language in daily use, based primarily on our sense-experience, is deficient as an instrument for describing this ‘extraordinary’ reality that lies beyond the matrix of the senses – i.e., highly charged exalted states that transcend all corporeality and cognition,

including the binary logic of ‘ordinary’ and ‘extraordinary’. However, even though the Absolute is beyond all discourse, mystics in every tradition have vigorously attempted to describe the indescribable, using a rich vocabulary of symbols, parables, allegories, paradoxes and various other narrative strategies to transmit their spiritual experiences.

My paper focuses on *Pancikaranam*, a highly unusual, profoundly metaphorical work by a highly unusual, little-known 18th-century enlightened woman *jnani*, Avudai Akkal from Tamil Nadu. Avudai’s unique reconfiguration of Samkara’s text, *Pancikaranam* (‘Quintuplication’) is also directed towards women. Over the centuries Samkara’s aphoristic masterpiece has inspired many scholarly sub-commentaries, but Avudai’s exegesis is a radical departure from the valorized canon, and from the textual format itself. She presents the Text *Pancikaranam* as a game an ingeniously designed Advaitic ‘board game’ collectively ‘played’ by women. The game leads the players in fixed stages through two symbiotic phases of the cosmic ‘game’: creation (*srsti*) and resolution (*laya*), inscribed and then erased through the movement of cowrie shells across the squares. Avudai’s brilliant deployment of an informal and popular device of leisure – the ‘game’ as a pedagogical strategy and repository of *jnana* – is an audacious material counter-narrative to the rigid hegemonies and exclusions of shastraic discursive traditions. In the game, the stylized recursive relationship between silent void and vociferous plenitude enables the players to understand Brahman as the immutable and infinite source of ever-fluctuating, ever-binding, illusory *jagat*. The unswerving metaphysical pivot of Avudai is the Vedantic ideal of the indescribable liberation that is the experience of Brahman, wherein all our differences, divisions and descriptions, rooted in *ajnana*, are rendered false without ontological validity.

Mystifying the World, Mystifying the Mind, and the Vedic Concept of Origination

Dr. Krishna Mani Pathak

Assistant Professor

Department of Philosophy

Hindu College, University of Delhi, India

This paper aims to explore the metaphysical realm of mysticism as practiced in various philosophical and religious traditions of the east and the west to discover and reveal the real mystery in the true sense of the term. The first section will attempt to give a general account of “what is it to be a mystery” from the perspectives of both the laymen and the philosophers. The second section will examine the two contrasting approaches to the cosmic beginning and its existence – one that we find in the Vedic concept of origination and the other that we find in the Christian concept of creation. The Vedas believe that there was nothing before anything that comes into existence whereas classical Christianity believes that the world including the human mind is a skilful creation of God who himself is uncreated. It would be shown that the cosmic origination in the Vedic concept seems to be mysterious more than God in Christianity. The third section will reflect upon the limitations of mysticism as a doctrine developed in a fixed structure of metaphysics and epistemology. And finally, in section four, it would be emphasized that either the world is the real mystery or it is the mysterious human mind that further mystifies everything that is beyond its normal reach. The section will precisely conclude that the world itself is a mystery and the human mind of today doesn’t seem to have access to the core of this mystery.