



## **13<sup>th</sup> International Indology Graduate Research Symposium**

Cambridge, UK, September 29<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> 2023

# **Abstracts**



**UNIVERSITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE**

Faculty of Asian and  
Middle Eastern Studies

Diwakar **Acharya** (Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics)  
University of Oxford

### **The Kingdom of the Malayaketu along the Gandaki River**

This presentation will present a story of the kingdom of Malayaketu based on five Sanskrit inscriptions issued by Malayaketu kings or their deputies on their behalf; one of which is from Nepal and is almost unknown till now. This kingdom covered at least 14 valleys in ‘the foothills of the Himalayas’ along the Gandaki River in present-day Bihar, UP, and Nepal Terai, and existed between the ninth and eleventh centuries, a period regarded as dark because of the scarcity of inscriptions from the region. Among other things, we will reflect on the language of these inscriptions and through the lens of these inscriptions peep into the court culture of this kingdom.

**Arya Adityan**

Florida State University

**Narrative dimensions of Animality: A Study of *Varāha* in *Skandapurāṇa* and *Panjurli daiva* in Tulu oral epics**

My presentation will engage in a comparative analysis of two significant narrative traditions about the divine boar (called *Varāha* in Sanskrit sources and *Panjurli daiva* in the *Bhūta Kola* tradition) using the Sanskrit text of the early *Skandapurāṇa* (c. 7th-8th century) which preserves one of the earliest accounts of Viṣṇu's boar manifestation along with evidence from the Tulu *Pāḍḍanas*, the oral narratives used in the *bhūta kola* festival, a regional festival from coastal Karnataka and North Kerala in which the *Panjurli daiva* plays a central role.

My research relies on the *Varāha Cycle* from *The Skandapurāṇa, Volume V: Adhyāyas 96-112, Critical Edition by Peter Bisschop and Yuko Yokochi*. Additionally, I analyze the Tulu *pāḍḍanas*, the oral epics of *Panjurli daiva* from Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts in Karnataka. I also draw insights from German translations of the *pāḍḍanas* and ethnographic descriptions by Heidrun Brückner, *Bhūta Kola* visual materials by Arnold Bake (1938) and the *Bake Restudy 1984* (Nazir Jairazbhoy & Amy Catlin), and material sources from the *Bhūta Gallery* at Crafts Museum Delhi for studying the iconographic features of *Panjurli daiva*.

The aim of this paper is to approach the narratives as sources to understand dimensions of animality and the portrayal of non-human or more-than-human beings in Hindu traditions. It is important to emphasize that this research does not provide an evolutionary analysis of deities, but rather explores the choices made by authors and practitioners of these narratives in their inclusion of certain animals while appreciating the cultural, religious, and symbolic nuances surrounding their representation. While previous studies have focused on the dietary, sacrificial, and medicinal roles of animals, this paper draws inspiration from current work on indigenous religions and ecologies to explore the role of non-human animals as "juridical personalities," endowed with legal status and complex social roles.

While expanding our understanding of the roles animals and other non-human agents play in both Brahmanical Hinduism and the regional religious ecosystems of South India, this study expands on our understanding of religion and animality. It invites us to contemplate the broader dynamics between humans, animals, and religion by challenging the notion that religion is an indicator of human exceptionalism, highlighting instead that it establishes a sense of continuity between human and non-human animal bodies.

Ilya Comet

UCLouvain

### **Classifying Vedic mantras: a (growing?) trend among *vedabhāṣyakāras***

The Nirukta-samuccaya, a little-known treatise of Vedic exegesis ascribed to Vararuci and a unique testimony to the existence and aliveness of a “nairukta” tradition, provides an interesting typology of Vedic mantras with 31 categories. This kind of typology, however, is far from isolated: beside the well-known fivefold division of Vedic sentences in Mīmāṃsā, we also encounter comparable classifications in Yāska’s Nirukta, in the Bṛhad-devatā, and in the works of Vedic commentators like Skandasvāmin (already well studied by d’Intino) and Uvaṭa, with a number of items ranging from 5 to 36 and possibly more.

The present paper undertakes a close examination of the various typologies available and their relationships. It suggests that there was indeed a trend among Vedic commentators to enlarge existing classifications, but also that from the very start, there might have been two standpoints for doing so: the ritualistic one of Mīmāṃsā, and another one, which was concerned with the meaning proper of mantras. This second standpoint, more open to interpretation and innovation, was (first?) adopted by Yāska and subsequently carried forward by others. Tracing its appearance, adoption and development can yield valuable information about the streams of thought – other than Mīmāṃsā – that existed in the quite understudied milieu of early Vedic exegesis. In that way, it helps in refining our historical overview of the Vedic exegetical tradition(s) that existed in ancient India.

Lucy May **Constantini**

Open University

**Alternative Methodologies: Making Sense of Texts in Relation to the Embodied Practice of *Kaḷarippayar̥*, a South Indian Martial Art**

*Kaḷarippayar̥* is a ritually transmitted martial art with an allied medical system which originated in South India in the Malabar region of present-day Kerala. A revival in the early twentieth century from near-disappearance, when a small number of practitioners gathered and systematised what knowledge remained, had significant implications both on its practices and its texts. To date there has been little academic enquiry into the texts of *kaḷarippayar̥*, in part because of the inaccessibility of *kaḷari* lineage manuscripts, and also because of the difficulty of de-coding the highly-regionalised and context-specific Malabar Malayalam in which they are written. A *kaḷarippayar̥ gurukkaḷ* (lineage-holder) carries the responsibility of preserving and transmitting the lineage, and so the śāstric authority of the *kaḷari* resides in a *gurukkaḷ*'s practice. As such, Malabar *kaḷarippayar̥* evinces a particular relationship between its inherited texts and living practice, where written texts only partially represent a *kaḷari*'s *śāstra*, which is only complete when informed by the experience of embodied praxis. This paper discusses the engagement with physical practice required to access *kaḷarippayar̥* texts in the first place, as well as the necessity of this somatic knowledge in order to translate them. I draw on the practice and texts of CVN Kalari Sangham at East Fort in Thiruvananthapuram, which has been the main focus of my *kaḷarippayar̥* enquiries since 2002, applying somatic and embodied methodologies from my work as a dance artist, discussing how these can integrate with more conventional philology and ethnography. Finally, I suggest an alternative methodology for the philology of texts belonging to these kinds of embodied practices.

Shani **Goldfrad**

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

**The Self, Composed: Introspection as Musical Tension in the *Kamalāmbā Navāvaraṇa Kṛtis***

The turn of the nineteenth century marked a transformative era for south Indian classical music, also known as the Carnatic tradition. Together with other creative domains, Carnatic music experienced a revolutionary process of renewal, which drove its shaping into the form we know today. A key expression of this process is seen in the gradual shift of musical activity from royal courts and temples into new, modern public spheres. This change allowed the Carnatic tradition to re-invent itself outside of courtly and ritual contexts, and enabled the development of new techniques for composition and performance. A prominent figure in this process was that of Tamil composer and musician Muttusvāmi Dīkṣitar (1775-1835), who stood out within the Carnatic tradition for his innovation and creativity. Among Dīkṣitar's compositions are some of the most important and valued masterpieces of the Carnatic tradition, often paralleled with contemporaneous classical European symphonies. Dīkṣitar's figure is immortalized within the Carnatic tradition as that of a devout, orthodox individual; However, a notable characteristic of his innovative aesthetic was the use of esoteric knowledge and practice in his compositions, originating from the tantric sect of Śrī-vidyā. An example can be seen in the *Kamalāmbā Navāvaraṇa Kṛtis*, a set of musical pieces dedicated to goddess Kamalāmbā of Tiruvārur, in which a sonic image of the goddess is created with the use of her form as a cosmic diagram. One of Dīkṣitar's greatest compositions, this set represents his nuanced, introspective style to its fullest extent. In my talk I will examine the dynamic of musical tension and resolution throughout the set, juxtaposed with the tantric worship of the Śrī-cakra diagram, in attempt to highlight Dīkṣitar's methodological, systematic approach to self-reflection and artistic creativity.

Prerita Govil  
University of Oxford

### **Assessing the Self and Self-Knowledge in Vyasa's *Bhagavadgītā***

The *Bhagavadgītā* has been widely read as a treatise on friendship, focusing on *Kṛṣṇa*'s relationship to Arjuna as his charioteer on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Yet such a reading neglects the complicated understanding of the self put forth in the dialogue: Arjuna is, ultimately, a part of *Kṛṣṇa*, and *Kṛṣṇa*, too, is a part of Arjuna. This paper asks if the *Bhagavadgītā* is, then, better understood as a dialogue between Arjuna's innermost parts, critically building on Gandhi's historical reading of the text. In exploring the underlying tension between these two readings, I analyze the nature of Arjuna's reluctance towards fighting in the war and *Kṛṣṇa*'s multifaceted response. I consider the role of the family in Arjuna's understanding of the self and its implications on the status of virtue, namely, justice, courage, and wisdom. Finally, this paper sketches Arjuna's insistence on and reaction to seeing *Kṛṣṇa*'s true form; he must grapple with the image that lies at the core of himself to see his purpose as merely beyond the protection of his baronial family. Recognizing the importance of self-knowledge focuses our attention on the centrality of reflection and human happiness while shedding light on the nature of philosophy itself.

Parjanya **Joshi**  
University of South Florida

### **A Defense of Buddhist metaphysics against charges of Determinism**

In this paper I counter Hartshorne's (1970) critique of symmetry in Buddhist metaphysics which leads him and Odin (1982) to conclude that it is deterministic. I will show that the interpenetrating, non-grounding process metaphysics of Hua-Yen (HY) Buddhism is in fact, not deterministic. I will begin by discussing some aspects of Buddhist metaphysics from two *Theravadin* schools: the *Sarvastivadins* and *Sautrantikas*, pointing out the important feature of *svabhāva* which is at play in their respective systems (Ronkin, 2005). In the second section. I will explore the *Madhyamaka* (MK) school's critique of previous Buddhist process metaphysicians as bringing in grounding through the backdoor. This section will involve the rejection of the ontological aspect of essence-*svabhāva*, the epistemological aspect of substance-*svabhāva*, and the introduction of absolute-*svabhāva* and the emptiness underlying all things; *sunyata*, which the *Madhyamika* argues are the same. In the third section, I explain HY Buddhism's process metaphysics of interpenetration, and how it conceives of this emptiness as a positive openness, comparing it to the Heideggerian concept of Being as nothing or Being as clearing (Odin, 1982). In the fourth section I will discuss Hartshorne's criticism of the assumption of symmetry in HY Buddhism, his preference for parsimony of the asymmetry of Whitehead's account, and how it results in a charge of determinism. I explain why a charge of determinism is not really a problem for the Buddhist because it is baked into their conception of samsara, arguing that the determinist critique comes from a position which is limited by and in its empirico-rational domain and descriptive character, whereas Buddhist metaphysics are inseparable from its transcendental and soteriological aspects and prescriptive character. Finally, I will argue that the treatment of Buddhist metaphysics as an empirico-rationally limited and dualist system like Western metaphysics excludes and misunderstands the non-dualism of the matter at hand.



Anne Keßler-Persaud  
University of Heidelberg

**Apālā and the ritually replaced hero: An alternative interpretation of the Ṛgvedic Apālāsūkta (RV 8.91)**

The Apālāsūkta (RV 8.91) is an often discussed song of the Ṛgveda. According to indological *communis opinio*, which is in core agreement with traditional exegesis, it is about how Apālā prepares for her wedding. Through an unorthodox soma sacrifice, she induces Indra to ensure the growth of her (pubic) hair and also to cure her of a skin ailment (acne). The fact that Apālā counts herself among the “husband-haters” (*patidviṣ*) is mostly interpreted as her worry about sexuality/marriage.

In my paper, an alternative interpretation of the Apālāsūkta is presented, which seeks to understand this text strictly in the context of the Ṛgveda, i.e. each stanza’s meaning is determined by comparison with other passages exclusively from the Ṛgveda. An important reference is the Sūryāsūkta (RV 10.85), which is the subject of my dissertation. According to my analysis, the marriage song deals with the ideal, nuptial oath by which the bridegroom claims the offspring. The Apālāsūkta, on the other hand, seems to thematise a situation of distress solved by (false) oath. Apālā’s father is in dire straits, apparently because he has no sons. Therefore, Apālā wants or is supposed to have her first offspring assigned to her father’s patrilineage without leaving room for allegations of incest. In place of her “hero”, i.e. the genitor, she organises a quasi-nuptial soma sacrifice. By varying the ritual details of this sacrifice, the genitor is made to renounce claims to paternity and instead Indra is appointed as the generic spouse. Through this ‘marriage’ to Indra, Apālā hopes to secure her father’s immortality. Finally, the oath is sealed by Apālā’s threefold purification which seems to replace the usual threefold circumambulation of the nuptial fire.

I will conclude my presentation with a short discussion of the established assumptions about the Ṛgveda’s textuality.

Janina **Kuhn**

Philipps-University Marburg

### **Towards a critical edition of the *Pr̥thvīrājavijaya***

The historical Kāvya *Pr̥thvīrājavijaya* of Jayānaka celebrates the victory of Pr̥thvīrāja III Cāhamāna over Muḥammad Ghūr in 1191. To date, only one incomplete and fragmentary manuscript of the *Pr̥thvīrājavijaya* has been discovered. It is made of birch bark and written in the Kashmiri Śāradā script. Only the first twelve *sargas* of the text are available, with no *sarga* surviving in its entirety. This manuscript was found in 1875 by Georg Bühler during his tour in search of Sanskrit manuscripts and is now kept in the library of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute in Pune. Besides the *mūla*-text, the manuscript also carries a commentary by Jonarāja, the famous author of the second *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*. The poem has been referenced by numerous scholars due to its importance to historical, political, and literary investigations of the early medieval period in South Asia. In his tour report, Bühler already emphasizes the importance of the work for the history of India and thus deems the editing of the manuscript as necessary.

In this paper, I will discuss the work done so far on a new edition of both text and commentary based on a revision of the manuscript, with a special focus on the first *sarga* of the *Pr̥thvīrājavijaya*. The first *sarga* contains Jayānaka's praise of poets and his attack against scholars describing their contempt towards poets and their poetry. These verses offer insight into his life as a poet at court. Similar to Mañkha in his *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita*, Jayānaka discusses his position and reception. The first *sarga* is also informative when it comes to cultural attitudes toward the Muslim enemies of the Cāhamānas, presenting an early reaction towards the incursion of Muḥammad Ghūr. This paper will present a close reading of some of the verses.

Olli-Pekka Antero **Littunen**

Leiden University

### **A Multi-layered Māhātmya – Esoteric and Exoteric Aspects of a *Vārāṇasīmāhātmya***

Māhātmyas are texts promoting the greatness of specific topics such as places, objects, or deities. Māhātmyas which focus on the greatness of locations usually explain why a location should be visited, what should be done there, what has happened there in the legendary past, and what kinds of rewards one will get there. Such Māhātmyas are addressed to a general public of pilgrims and could thus be called exoteric.

The Māhātmya I discuss here, by contrast, has multiple layers, being more esoteric than most other Māhātmyas. Although its main focus is a site called Pañcāyatana in the famous religious destination Vārāṇasī, it also includes terminology which can be fully understood only by knowing about the inner workings of the Śaiva Siddhānta and Pāśupata traditions. That is, on the surface it is a Śaivite Māhātmya focused on a location, but by including esoteric terminology, it creates another layer of information, only accessible for insiders.

The text is unique, only found as the 29th chapter in a single 12th-13th century manuscript containing a compendium of Māhātmyas about Vārāṇasī. The Māhātmya in question is perhaps from the 12th century. It is attributed to the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*, although it does not correspond with the extant version of that text.

I will initially explain the contents of the Māhātmya and outline the ideas that can be considered to be esoteric. Then, I provide an interpretation, discussing how the esoteric ideas have likely been used together with the exoteric material to attract pilgrims and increase the perceived salvific potential of the Pañcāyatana site. By analyzing the layers of esoteric and exoteric information, I attempt to answer the overarching research question of this paper: How can we make sense of the presence of esoteric aspects in this exoteric text?

Liwen Liu

University of Toronto

### Grace and Divine Agency—The Apologetics of Violence in Tantric Śaivism

Most philosophical studies on Hindu sacrificial violence focus on the polemics of the six schools of Vedic philosophy (Kataoka 2012, 2011; Houben 1999; Halbfass 1991). However, only insufficient attention has been paid to Tantric Śaivism, which contains extensive ritual practices and doctrinal discussions of *paśuyāga*—the sacrifice of living beings, mostly animals but not restricted to animals. To fill this gap, this project intends to understand the justification of violence in Tantric Śaivism by analyzing the *Tantrāloka*, a masterpiece composed by the Kashmirian non-dualistic philosopher Abhinavagupta (c. 950-1016 CE).

This paper examines Abhinavagupta’s apologetics of violence by contextualizing his arguments in a larger discourse of violence and non-violence in the Hindu tradition. Different from the Vedic animal sacrifice as an auxiliary of the obligatory rituals, the Śaiva *paśuyāga* is performed as a special worship in the initiation (*nirvāṇadīkṣā*) of human disciples. The *ācārya* should kill a *paśu* by penetrating its body through a yogic process and extract its life essence as oblation to the *devīcakra*. After prescribing the process of killing, Abhinavagupta dedicates eight verses to justify violence in the *Tantrāloka* and also in the *Tantrasāra*. His argument features “*anugraha*”, the divine grace, which is also related to *śaktipāta* and even the discussion of *vidhi* in his non-dualistic framework. By analyzing the word *anugraha*, I show that Abhinavagupta legitimates violence with two interrelated arguments: 1) the *paśu* benefits from sacrifice, and 2) killing is performed through Śiva’s divine agency. I argue that Abhinavagupta highlights the non-dualistic doctrine on the one hand, and dialogues with the Vedic orthodox on the other. Through this textual-philosophical analysis of the *Tantrāloka* and its commentary, this project intends to improve the understanding of religious ethics in Tantric Śaivism specifically, and its interaction with a larger discourse of violence and non-violence in South Asia generally.

Sabin Maharjan

The University of Hong Kong

**The concept of *Dharmāvabodha-kṣānti* (acceptance regarding the realization of Dharma) and its philosophical significance in *Mahāyāna* Buddhism**

*Kṣānti* (Pali *khanti*), (meaning: patience, forbearance, etc.) is not only one of the most difficultly translated terminologies but also complicated and, therefore, wrongly interpreted concepts. Especially, in Buddhism, the concept is largely developed, and the complexity is well-exhibited. The complexity of this concept is governed by its two main denotations. First, in Buddhism, *kṣānti*, as a practice, bears the position of compulsory practice regardless of social status -- be it royals, general people or, renunciates. The main point is that Buddhism clearly distinguishes *kṣānti* from other synonyms, such as *titikṣā*, *adhivāsanā*, etc. In other words, in Buddhism, not having *titikṣā*, *adhivāsana* can contextually be wholesome practice but lacking *kṣānti* is always considered unwholesome. Secondly, in Buddhism, *kṣānti* has also been developed as a certain type of attainment; for example, in the Pali tradition, we find concepts such as “*dhammanijjhānakkhanti*”, “*anulomikākhanti*”, and so on. Such concepts, however, are not explicated as to be related to *khanti pāramī* in the Pali tradition. Nevertheless, in *Mahāyāna*, they are the practices coming under *kṣānti pāramitā*. For example, *dharmanidhyāna-kṣānti* is explained under *kṣānti pāramitā* in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*; the *sūtras*, such as *Samādhirāja*, *Sukhāvativyūha*, etc., include three-fold *kṣāntis* in their explanation to *kṣānti pāramitā*: *ghoṣānuḡā-kṣānti* (*kṣānti* in regard to the following voice), *anulomikī-kṣānti* (*kṣānti* in conformity [with dharma: reality/truth/doctrine]) and *anutpattikadharmā-kṣānti* (*kṣānti* in regard to unarisen dharma). Such *kṣāntis* can be categorized as *dharmāvabodha-kṣānti* (*kṣānti* of realization/understanding of dharma, a term found in *Aṣṭādaśasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā*).

Kartik Maini

The University of Chicago

### ***Lokasaṃgraha: An Ascetic History***

Although years of theoretical labour have generated fertile appraisals of – and rapprochements between – religion and postcolonial theory (King, 1999), religion remains an unthought interloper in histories of anticolonial thought and practice. Religion figures in historical impressions of Orientalism and its role in the reconstitution of religious traditions in colonial societies, but never in projects of anticolonial resistance and the world-making (Getachew, 2019) they pursued against empire.

This paper reopens the occluded world of anticolonial ascetics and nondescript *saṃnyāsīs* through a consideration of their anticolonial visions. My protagonist is Swami Sahajanand Saraswati (1889-1950), a late 19th / early-to-mid 20th century *ekadaṇḍī* Daśanāmī *saṃnyāsī* and peasant revolutionary who was based in Bihar (India / South Asia) and who wrote in Hindi. As in so many hagiographical narratives, there are two 'halves' to Sahajanand's life – a period of caste assertion on behalf of the Bhumihaar brahmins/*brāhmaṇās* (also dominant landowners and zamindars in Bihar) who were, in this period, trying to position themselves as such; and, triggered by an encounter with the suffering of the expropriated peasant, a period of revolutionary world-making, during which he also wrote the *Gītāhṛdaya* (The Kernel of the *Gītā*) in prison.

The *Gītāhṛdaya* attempts, among other things, a stunning reconciliation between the *Bhagavadgītā* – a mid-first millennium B.C.E. Sanskrit text that had, by this time, already found a diverse assortment of readers – and Marxism, limning the former's atheistic and the latter's theistic possibilities, and uniting the two in the revolutionary promise of *lokasaṃgraha* ('welfare' of the world). Reformulating *lokasaṃgraha*'s earlier associations with sovereignty and the Vedic sacrifice, Sahajanand transformed Kṛṣṇa's call to action in the *Gītā* into a call to revolutionary action against landlords, empire, and the 'bourgeois' Hinduism that Sahajanand understood to be no more than their conspiratorial love-child. I intend to track *lokasaṃgraha*'s changing valences through the *Gītā*'s fascinating commentarial history, and locate Sahajanand in the deeper genealogies of Advaita Vedānta's late medieval and early modern career.

Priyamvada **Nambrath**  
University of Pennsylvania

### **Deciphering Vernacular Mathematics: Going Local in a Sanskritic World**

This paper explores the treatment of vernacular mathematics in South India with a focus on the 16th century Malayalam text, the *Yuktibhāṣā* of Jyeṣṭhadeva, which was composed as a commentary on a slightly earlier Sanskrit astronomical treatise, the *Tantrasaṅgraha* of Nīlakanṭha Somayāji. While a significant amount of technical vocabulary was imported into this commentary from its source Sanskrit text, it also employed sufficient vernacular terminology in a technical function. In this sense, it belongs to a distinct regional and methodological tradition, but it is also simultaneously allied with the broader, pan-Indian Sanskritic canon of mathematical treatises. This commentarial text was composed in the same period when Malayalam itself was emerging as a distinct vernacular offshoot of Maṇipravāḷam and older Tamil. I argue (provisionally, at this point) that the commentary itself may have been a response to this linguistic development, besides catering to the requirements of a localized, scholarly audience. The commentarial text itself remained continuously popular in Kerala, but has had a complicated reception in colonial and post-colonial scholarship. In briefly examining some of these historical challenges and obstacles to a proper assessment of its scope and implications, this paper also contributes to emerging studies on the colonial project of knowledge making in South India with a greater emphasis on vernacular genres.

Riccardo Paccagnella  
University of Hamburg

**What is Necessary to Read a Sanskrit Text? A Glimpse into the Mind of a South Indian Sanskrit Poet in the 17th Century**

Nilakaṅṭha Dīkṣita, a Tamil brahmin who wrote in Sanskrit in the 17th century in the court of Madurai, renowned for his poetry and theological works and often known in the West for his Kalividambana (“Mockery of the Kali Era”), is commonly regarded as a preeminent figure of Sanskrit culture. His magnum opus, the *mahākāvya* titled Śivalīlārṇava, is still considered to be part of the must-reads for most of those seriously interested in *kāvya*, but it is yet to be translated in any language and, more importantly, does not have any commentary interpreting its content. I undertook the task of writing a Sanskrit commentary and an English verse translation of the first chapter. Both of these approaches are unusual in modern Western Indology written in English and need justification, furthermore they are meant for two partly different readerships and need to be defined as such. The commentary is intended for scholars, Indian and not, who are able to read Sanskrit and wish to have a reference text to compare their understanding of the verses with someone else’s; the verse translation is intended for any reader interested in *kāvya*, who wishes to have access to the text through a translation, both for its contents and, to the extent that this is possible in translation, the experience in reading the original. Still, I should clarify that the Sanskrit commentary is not meant as a pastiche, but as the work of a modern Western scholar expressed in Sanskrit through the conventions of its commentarial tradition; and that the verse translation aims for philological rigor favouring fidelity with the text over feats in English verse.



**Juhi Patel**  
University of Oxford

**The Song of the Bee: An exploration into the transcendently immanent relationship between the devotee and the Divine**

The ‘Song of the Bee’, narrated in chapter 47 of the 10th canto of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, depicts the dynamic conversation between the Gopīs (cowherd maidens) and a bee. The Gopīs, who are drenched in their love for Krishna, begin talking to a bumble bee whom they interact with as a messenger of Krishna.

An analysis of this linguistic composition in its original language, allows for a unique conceptualisation of the relationship between God and the devotee. In this paper I seek to argue that through becoming liberated from societal power structures in order to seek a more intimate relationship with Krishna, the Gopīs were able to forge a bond with the Divine upon which they themselves did not project such power dynamics. The narrative of the ‘Song of the Bee’ provides an insight into how the devotee can treat the divine as both intimate and immanent, as well as transcendent. The dynamic of this devotional relationship is reframed due to the Gopī’s barrierless yet conviction-filled nature.

Beautifully illustrating the Gopī’s anxiety of separation from Krishna, the dialogue powerfully expresses their unfaltering conviction in God’s true form. Overwhelmed by their physical distance from Krishna, they reveal an intense detachment, rather an extreme aversion, to anything other than Krishna and demonstrate their faithfulness and obedience towards the words of Krishna. Despite experiencing grief of their separation, the Gopīs’ understanding of Krishna’s true glory persists. Here, grief facilitates a reflection upon this divine fulfillment and an opportunity to reminisce on the liberating actions of God.

The ‘Song of the Bee’ makes for a rich exploration as it foregrounds the unconventional nature of pursuing a relationship with the divine. Witnessing such a striking exchange, even the ardent devotee Uddhava, sent to console the Gopīs, is deeply moved and praises their unmatched understanding and conviction.

Nirali **Patel**  
University of Leeds

### **The nature of the self in the cosmology of Sāṃkhya**

Sāṃkhya, a dualist school of ancient Indian philosophy, has its conceptual roots in the *Saṣṭi-tantra* (100 BCE). As a textual tradition, Sāṃkhya was first systematised by Īśvara-kṛṣṇa in the *Sāṃkhya-kārikā* (400 CE), a compilation of verses that summarise the Sāṃkhya philosophical position. The notable ontological feature of Sāṃkhya which I will be examining in this paper is its dualism between *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*.

I will first provide an exposition of Sāṃkhya's principles of *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*, and outline the significance of attaining discriminative wisdom (*viveka*) of their intrinsic differences. I will examine why Sāṃkhya argues that this attainment is liberation. Assisting the practitioner in attaining this wisdom appears to be the reason behind Īśvara-kṛṣṇa composing the *SK* (for instance, *SK* 69-71). Subsequently, I will explore a prominent theme of the *SK*: the nature of the causal relationship between *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*. I will analyse the three analogies that Īśvara-kṛṣṇa provides in order to shed light on the nature of this relationship, specifically those of the blind man and the lame man, the cow and the calf, and the dancer and the audience. I will argue that whilst each analogy does help in some way to uncover the nature of *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*, they fall short of reaching their intended target. As a result of this shortcoming, I will provide two conclusions: either there is an ontological deficiency within Sāṃkhya's cosmology or there is an epistemic deficiency in our understanding of Sāṃkhya's cosmology, indicating a global bound that cannot be transcended by human thought.

Gleb **Sharygin**

Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich

***Māyājāla-sūtra* – a canonical proto-Yogācāra sūtra?**

In our study of the development of Buddhist ideas over time, one of the major problems is the absence of evidence connecting different manifestations of Buddhist thought. Perhaps, the most extreme example of this is the origin of Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda, a complex teaching that emerged almost “full-grown” in the *Samdhinirmocana-sūtra*. Our knowledge of the historical antecedents of Yogācāra is scarce and often contradictory. The *Māyājāla-sūtra* very likely reveals vital details regarding the origin of the Yogācāra tradition. It is a *sūtra* in the recently recovered Sanskrit *Dīrgha-āgama*. It stands out from the other *Dīrgha-āgama* and canonical *sūtras* by several unique features. One of these features is that its core terminology, passages and similes are used extensively in the Sautrāntika/Dārṣṭāntika/early Yogācāra sources. In my presentation, I will briefly overview the *sūtra* and its unique features and argue that its central message is the so-called *darśana-mārga*, a path of seeing, which enables a Buddhist adept to perceive the true reality for the first time directly. I will show that this central idea of the *sūtra* is textually and doctrinally interwoven with the specifically Yogācāra understanding of the *darśana-mārga*. Moreover, one of the main ideas of the *sūtra*, the ambivalence of the sense objects, is likely an antecedent of the specifically Yogācāra teaching that the same object may cause opposite types of experience and is, therefore, an antecedent of the cornerstone Yogācāra principle of *vijñaptimātratā* (the teaching that the objects of perception are mere representations of/in the mind). Another aspect I will touch upon is the intertextuality of the *Māyājāla-sūtra*, its parallels and the first chapters of the *Samdhinirmocana-sūtra*, which sheds important light on the origin of the latter text. I argue that because of this affinity, the *Māyājāla-sūtra* may be called a proto-Yogācāra *sūtra*.

**Tulika Singh**  
University of Alberta

### **Multivalent Conceptions of Nonnormative and Disabled Bodies in Early Indian Textual Traditions**

A nonnormative, ‘disabled’ body in early Indian traditions is conceptualized in multiple ways. While texts delineate physical and sensory disorders as socially disabling, factors like health, disease, sex, gender, and age also contribute to a nonnormative body. Attitudes towards atypical bodies vary widely, ranging from apathy to admiration of their unique qualities. This paper aims to highlight this multivalence in Pali and Sanskrit didactic fables, the *Jātakas* and the *Pañcatantra*, and prescriptive texts, the *Vinaya* and the *Manusmṛti*, by examining the ways in which authors construct the disability or ability of ‘deviant’ physiques. The study underscores that the understanding of nonnormative bodies in early Indian textual traditions is largely fluid, wherein the boundaries between the disabled and abled are shaped by their sociocultural context.

The paper consists of two sections, with the first section highlighting that the texts view various conditions beyond visible physical disorders as socially disabling. The prescriptive texts, for instance, forbid inheritance and ordination not only for individuals with impairments like blindness, deafness, hunch-backedness, and dwarfism but also for those who have chronic illness, old age, impotence, and gender nonconforming attributes. Similarly, didactic fables, like the *Keli-Sīlā-Jātaka*, treat both dwarfs and the elderly as disabled, reflecting a similar sense of apathy directed towards these two groups.

The second section underlines that while texts often consider certain physical conditions as socially disabling, the attitudes towards these conditions vary depending on the sociocultural context. For instance, the *Pañcatantra* views people with disorders as a social obligation for a king, whereas the *Bhīmsena-Jātaka* depicts a dwarf character with exceptional abilities as the Buddha’s reincarnation.

This paper then draws attention to the varied range of conditions and attitudes that contribute to the multivalent conceptions of nonnormative and disabled bodies in early Indian textual traditions.

Anupam Kumar **Suman**  
University of Oxford

**On the first three adhyāyas of *Bṛhajjātakam*: The melting pot of the Indian and the Greek knowledge system**

This paper aims to explore the interaction between the Indian and the Greek knowledge system by presenting a fresh academic translation of the first three chapters of *Bṛhajjātakam*. This text is considered the most authoritative text of Indian astrology written by the 6th-century astronomer and astrologer Varāhamihira (505-587 AD). It has been argued for quite a long time, mostly in the works of David Pingree and his followers, that the Indian astronomical and astrological texts have been heavily influenced by the Greek knowledge tradition. This argument stands true even with respect to *Bṛhajjātakam* which includes a lot of Greek terminology and the Hellenistic astronomical theories. However, a close look into the text reveals, as this paper argues, that though Varāhamihira seems to be influenced by Greek astronomy with a very open mind, he tried to amalgamate the local and foreign traditions of philosophy and astrology while keeping the Indian idea alive. It can be particularly seen in the very beginning of his text when he while negating the idea of planetary causation, describes horoscopy as a science of revealing fate as the fruition of past-life *kārmic residue*, a philosophy which is completely alien to the Ptolemaic causation-based Greek astrology. Hence, by presenting a new academic translation of the first three chapters of *Bṛhajjātakam*, this paper shows how Varāhamihira's work appears as a melting pot of the two ancient knowledge systems through a comparative astrological and philosophical study. While doing so, this paper also strives to open a new discourse on *jyotiṣa*, a lesser-researched field in Indology, particularly in the context of the astronomical and philosophical exchange between the two ancient worlds.

Meera **Trivedi**  
University of Oxford

**“Where women are revered, there the gods rejoice”: The Influences Shaping Women’s Writings in Late Colonial India**

A welcome development, as marked out by scholars of gender and social reform, in Indian history was the advent of women’s writings in the nineteenth century. With growing, albeit highly limited, educational opportunities, more women took up writing – an act which whether they acknowledged or intended, was radical and political. Closely tracing the writings of three Gujarati women and articles in two women’s magazines, I argue that much more can be gleaned from these sources which outwardly appear as *strī-upyogī* (useful for women) pieces. Typically, the historiography has not been kind to such sources, rejecting them as the mouthpiece of a small section of a liberalised society, influenced heavily by the British presence in their localities.

However, in this paper, I argue that the Gujarati women’s writing population found ways to challenge conservative and dogmatic expectations, and encourage women to step outside and beyond the confines of the physical and metaphorical home – a motif which features heavily in Indian thought and in the historiography. An investigation of these sources reveals the varied influences shaping their writings. From classical *dharmasāstras* such as the *Manusmṛiti*, to canonical Hindu texts such as the *Bhagavadgītā*, to the Gandhian environment, and the suffragette movement in Britain, these women synthesised various sources of knowledge with their lived experiences.

Thus, this paper draws upon both the original sources of knowledge in Sanskrit and the women’s writings in Gujarati to highlight an interconnected context in which experiences and ideas freely flowed in all directions.

Ruth Westoby

SOAS University of London

**The mighty body of yoga (*yogadehaṃ mahābalaṃ*): bodily sovereignty in *haṭha* yoga**

Sanskrit sources on *haṭha* yoga in the first half of the second millennium teach bodily practices to attain power and liberation. *Rāja* (kingly) yoga is presented as an alternative methodology where it is enumerated as one of four techniques of yoga, alongside *mantra*, *laya* and *haṭha*, or it is presented as the meditative culmination of physical techniques such as in the *Haṭhapradīpikā* and subsequent sources. This presentation is oriented in the earlier, formative historical phase, prior to the 1450 *Haṭhapradīpikā*, and asks a hitherto neglected question: if *haṭha* yoga develops a mighty body of yoga, a body that is kingly or sovereign, how is this articulated as bodily control of others as well as of oneself?

Studies often focus on the cultivation of individual yogis in isolation from social relations. Daud Ali's 2002 article, 'Anxieties of Attachment', on sexual and political charisma in courtly culture, takes as its starting point ascetic articulations of emotional non-attachment in analysing the cultivation of courtly power. The focus on individual technologies of the self in *haṭha* yoga, combined with a superficial acceptance of the sources' articulations of renunciation of social relations, can overlook the analyses of power in relation to others that the sources also articulate. This paper analyses the physiological outcomes of *haṭha* in relation to *rāja*: the empowerment of the body and the power that this grants over the bodies of others. It is productive to analyse this discourse of power in relation to the bodies of others as well as the individual practitioner to appreciate the social dimensions of the mighty yogic body.

Kexin **Zheng**  
Leiden University

### The Śaivization of the *Tulāpuruṣadāna* Ceremony

The *tulāpuruṣadāna* (“Gift of the Man on the Balance”) is a complex gifting ceremony in which the donor gets weighed by the donative object. Aside from *Matsyapurāṇa* 274, which is the most authoritative version, the prescription of the *tulāpuruṣadāna* is also seen in many other texts belonging to various genres, including the Purāṇas, the Dharmanibandhas, and the Āgamas. In this paper, I focus on the issue of Śaivization of the *tulāpuruṣadāna* based on the prescriptions in Śaiva texts, which have received little attention compared to the chapter in the *Matsyapurāṇa*.

I have collected the descriptions of the *tulāpuruṣadāna* from the *Uttarabhāga* of the *Liṅgapurāṇa*, the *Nāgarakhaṇḍa* of the *Skandapurāṇa*, the *Uttarabhāga* of the *Kāmikāgama*, the *Kālottarāgama*, the *Vātulottarāgama*, and the *Suprabhedāgama*. Among them, the *Liṅgapurāṇa* and the *Kāmikāgama* have a lot of things in common, while the other texts introduce the *tulāpuruṣadāna* more differently. In addition, Hemādri’s *Dānakhaṇḍa* of the *Caturvargacintāmaṇi* also cites the Śaiva sources and comments on them.

To illustrate the Śaivization of the *tulāpuruṣadāna*, I will first give an overview of how the *tulāpuruṣadāna* is introduced in each text. Then, I focus on selected aspects of the prescription of the ritual by comparing them among each other and with other relevant sources. Placing the texts into their corresponding historical religious contexts, I aim to answer these questions: How did the Śaiva sources adjust the *tulāpuruṣadāna* to fit it into their traditions? What is the motivation behind incorporating the *tulāpuruṣadāna* among their ritual repertoires? To what extent can we trace the impact of these texts? Through the example of the *tulāpuruṣadāna*, I also aim to elucidate the different aspects of the concept of Śaivization.