

**Patronage, Performance, Procession, and Pilgrimage:  
Channels of the Flow of Religious Exchange in Early Modern India**  
A Symposium in Honor of Professor Monika Boehm-Tettelbach (Heidelberg)

Friday-Saturday May 18-9, venue: University of Washington, Thomson Hall 317

*Friday May 18*

9:00: Welcome and introduction

Session 1: Transcultural Translations

9:30-10:30: Monika Boehm-Tettelbach (Ruprecht Karl's University, Heidelberg):

Pārasbhāg: Bhāi Aḍḍaṅ's Translation of Al-Ghazālī's *Kimiyā-i Sa 'ādat*

10:30-11:30: Heidi Pauwels (University of Washington, Seattle):

Where "Urdu" meets "Braj": Nāgrīdās' Engagement with Rekhtā.

11:30-12:30: Navina Haidar (Metropolitan Museum, New York):

Piety with Humor: Separate currents in Kishangarh Paintings

Chair: Vasudha Dalmia

Session 2: Philosophy in Context

2:00-3:00: John S. Hawley (Columbia University, New York):

The *Bhāgavata Mahātmya* in Context

3:00-4:00: Anand Mishra (Ruprecht Karl's University, Heidelberg):

Shifting Parameters of Religious Discourses: A Study of *Śrī-satsiddhānta-martaṇḍa*

4:00-5:00: Prem Pahlajrai (University of Washington, Seattle):

Nīścaladāsa: a 19th century Vedāntin Dādūpanthī philosopher

Chair: Hans Bakker

*Saturday May 19*

Session 3: Pilgrimage: Then and Now

9:00-10:00: Hans Bakker (University of Groningen, The Netherlands)

Rāma Devotion in a Śaiva Holy Place: the Case of Vārāṇasī

10:00-11:00: Vasudha Paramasivan (University of California, Berkeley)

Earthly/Unearthly pilgrimage: The Journey to Ayodhya in the *Ānand laharī*

11:00-12:00: Véronique Bouillier (École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris):

The Pilgrimage to Kadri Monastery (Mangalore, Karnataka): a Nāth Yogī performance

Chair: John S. Hawley

Session 4: Patronage: History and Modernity

1:30-2:30: Purnima Dhavan (University of Washington, Seattle):

Possible Pasts: Ram Sukh Rao's *Jassa Singh Binod: The Writing of a Sikh History*.

2:30-3:30: Ulrike Stark (University of Chicago):

Publishers as Patrons and the Commercialization of Religious Texts

3:30-4:30: Vasudha Dalmia (University of California, Berkeley):

Pilgrimage, Fairs and the Secularization of Space in Modern Hindi Narrative Discourse

Chair: Véronique Bouillier

Concluding remarks

**Abstracts:**

**Hans Bakker**

Throughout the Hindu fold it is generally accepted that Benares is a holy place which has first and foremost a Śaiva character. This character becomes historically tangible in the

Gupta period when textual and archaeological evidence attest the existence of the Avimukteśvara Temple. From the beginning the holiness of this temple seems to have been connected with the belief that dying in its proximity would yield final release straight away. The same sources, however, also testify to the existence of important Viṣṇu temples in the city and there are indications that there has been a strong rivalry between the Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva religions from early times onwards.

This rivalry must have become intensified when, in the second millennium, the Vaiṣṇava movement in North India won ground at the expense of the Śaiva one. The new type of emotional devotion may have been an important factor in this shift. The *Agastyasamhitā*, a text that we date before the Muslim period, testifies to forms of Rāma bhakti in Benares. Nevertheless the Vaiṣṇava bhaktas, and in particular those men in Benares who made their living out of them, could not ignore the principally Śaiva character of the holy place and were therefore looking for ways in which the promises that Śaivism had in store for the pilgrims could be appropriated to their own ends. This paper will discuss one of the strategems that was successfully brought into play in this development.

### **Monika Boehm-Tettelbach**

Bhāi Aḍḍaṅ alias Aḍḍaṅ Śāh (d. 1757) of the Sevāpanthī monastic order of the Sikhs translated Al-Ghazālī's Persian *Kimiyā-i Sa'ādāt* ("The Elixir of Happiness"), which represents the shorter and simpler version of his Arabic *Ihyā' 'ulūm ad-dīn* ("The Revival of the Science of Religion"), and gave it the title *Pārasbhāg*. Written in Gurmukhī but linguistically rather Western Hindī with peculiarities of Sindhī, the text which doubtlessly forms an admirable cultural adaptation of a Sufi text to Indic religious concepts and language had been largely bypassed by both Punjabi and Hindi literary history until it was brought into focus again in 1952 by Pritam Singh. The *Pārasbhāg* popular in the 19th century and published in 1883 by the name of Yugalānanya Śaraṅ is a mere Standard Hindi reworking of that 18th-century translation.

The Aḍḍaṅ Śāhī *Pārasbhāg* forms a text basic to Sevāpanthī preaching and gained wide popularity also outside Sindh and Punjab. It found its way also into the manuscripts of the monastic lineages of the Sants of Rajasthan where, however, the parts that would be relevant to householders seem to have been skipped. In what remains of the monastic Sant tradition of Rajasthan and also in pockets of Sevāpanthī of that region the *Pārasbhāg* seems to have sunk into oblivion, for in both traditions the more "orthodox" scriptures now dominate. This impression may be needed to be revised on closer inspection, the present report being based on the incipient stage of my examination of the Rajasthani *Pārasbhāg* tradition.

Aḍḍaṅ Śāh produced a work with a perfect Indic texture which he achieved by translating Islamic concepts into Indic ones and consistently rendering or refashioning all technical terms by Indic ones. The particular Islamic concepts which do not easily tally with Indian ones he either reworked or skipped. In so doing, Aḍḍaṅ drew on the Vedantic tradition and on the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, the other great work which Sevāpanthīs used for religious instruction.

The focus of the contribution will be on sample passages selected to demonstrate the process of translation in terms of both religious culture and language by which a work by one of the Arabic authors who engaged medieval Christian philosophers and Indian thinkers alike became transplanted into Indian culture.

### **Véronique Bouillier**

Every twelve years the Nath Yogis proceed solemnly to replace the head ascetic of the Kadri monastery (Mangalore, Karnataka). This event, known as the king-yogis' coronation (*rājayogī paṭṭābhīṣekha*), is preceded by a six months long journey on foot (*padayātrā*) from Nasik (Maharashtra) to Kadri. I want to show this whole process as a

performance involving the main components of the Nath identity and tradition.

### **Purnima Dhavan**

I would like to discuss some of the challenges presented by Ram Sukh Rao's "Jassa Singh Binod," an early 19th century history about Jassa Singh, the founder of the Kapurthala Sikh Kingdom (d. 1783). This is a text that shifts in language from Panjabi to Braj and Urdu, in narrative register from courtly charitra narrative, to a dryer "hakikat" voice that catalogues the annual events at this Sikh court, to lush Braj sections that move from Vaishnav to Sikh devotionalism. I want to take up some of the issues of identity and history that this text poses. In particular I will explore the possibility that this text shows literary experimentation in the desirable narrative registers that could be used to write a history of a relatively new Sikh regime, rather than seeing these shifts as proof of the ambiguous religious identities of the patron and the poet.

### **Vasudha Dalmia**

Pilgrimages have been seen as moments of liminality "in and out of time" in Victor Turner phrase, whereby the pilgrim participates in a series of symbolic activities which are expected to bring about transformations in the inner and outer selves. Thus it is, that as the actor-pilgrim nears his destination, the route becomes increasingly sacralized.

Railways came to India in 1853 and in a matter of decades the major pilgrimage centers in the plains were linked by a dense railway network, increasing manifold the already crowded centers, often blurring the line between tourism and sacral experience. From all available evidence, the participation of women in such journeys also increased manifold. In my paper, I shall explore how faith was affected by the new technologies, discussing how modern literary genres represented the pilgrim's experience of space and time as also of the inner and outer self. I shall focus thereby on two depiction of the *Kumbh mela*, one at Haridwar and the other at Prayag, as represented in a late nineteenth century Hindi novel and an early twentieth century short story respectively.

### **Navina Haidar**

The Kishangarh school of painting is well known for its great devotional subjects which are particularly associated with the patronage of the poet-prince Savant Singh in the mid-eighteenth century. A less familiar contemporary trend is the production of humorous and satirical painting at Kishangarh which has resulted in some of most unusual and striking images in all of Rajput painting. This paper will examine the development of this humorous genre at Kishangarh, relating it to wider patterns of patronage and placing it in the larger context of contemporary Mughal art and other influences.

### **John S. Hawley**

In her landmark study *Bhakti and the Bhakti Movement*, published in 1987, Krishna Sharma confidently concluded that the familiar story—found in the *Bhagavata Mahatyma*—of a hypostasized Bhakti being born in the south and moving northward through India's western regions "seems quite an accurate summing up of the period between the eleventh and the sixteenth centuries"(308). Sharma does not exactly propose a date and provenance for the text, but her analysis makes it clear that she believes it to have emerged from the religious world focused at Brindavan in the mid-sixteenth century. In saying that this is where Bhakti was restored to vibrant youth, the text makes this clear.

So far so good, and Sharma is quite right to criticize earlier writers who took the story at face value without either looking at its full dimensions or asking what its *Sitz im Leben* could have been. But does she go far enough? Brindavan, after all, is not the final stop on Bhakti's route: that honor goes to Haridvar. And the narrative context in which this pseudo-history is enunciated is a specifically performative one: the *Bhagavata*

*Mahatyma*'s purpose is to announce the salutary effects that proceed from reciting or hearing *Bhagavata Purana*. We owe this text a second look. How should we imagine the confluence of performance, patronage, and pilgrimage that produced the *Bhagavata Mahatyma* and the famous narrative that it frames?

### **Anand Mishra**

Shifting Parameters of Religious Discourses: A Study of *Śrī-satsiddhānta-martaṇḍa*

I would like to present my observations regarding the context, content and character of the religious (*sampradāya*) discourses in early modern India based primarily upon the text *Śrī-satsiddhānta-martaṇḍa*. This text is written by Śrī Govardhana Śarmā, a *puṣṭi-sampradāya* follower as a response to the 64 questions posed by one Śaiva Lakṣmaṇa Giri who lived under the patronage of king Rāma Siṃha of Jaipur in the 19th century.

The main challenge is to establish the *sampradāya*. The approach is: "In order to get established, associate yourself with the already established." This is the general approach of all the *āstika-sampradāyas* (who accept the finality of *śruti-pramāṇa*). The chief effort of the *vedānta-ācāryas* was to show that their philosophical and soteriological ideas were consistent with the ideas in *śruti-smṛti-sūtra* and *purāṇa*. However, the later day discourses strive to establish this consistency with respect of the *sampradāya* practices. The focus now shifts to reproduce appropriate passages from the ancient texts, and occasionally, to interpret them appropriately. This is important for religious legitimacy of the *sampradāya* as well as the spiritual authority over the followers.

Are the religious discourses in early modern India a re-instantiation of the old discourse structure with new parameters, this time more emphasis on *ācāra* and less on *vicāra*? It would be interesting to know the context in which this parameter shift is taking place. Was there something fundamentally wrong to seek the foundations of existent and inherited tradition for social and personal questions when the same for philosophical and soteriological matters was the touchstone of veracity? What was the *raison d'être* of texts like *Śrī-satsiddhānta-martaṇḍa* and the Vaikhānasa text *Daśavidha-hetu-nirūpaṇa*?

### **Vasudha Paramasivan**

Composed in 1805 by Mahant Rāmcarandās 'Karuṇāsindhu,' the *Ānand laharī* is a work of many firsts. It is considered the first Hindi commentary on the *Rāmcaritmānas* and the first one authored by a Rāmānandī, and in this case, a Rasik Rāmānandī. It is also the first in a line of commentaries that form the *Ayodhyā ṭikā paramparā* on the *Mānas*, for within the Rāmānandī *sampradāya*, the *Ānand laharī* is seen as being irrevocably connected to Ayodhya. This connection to Ayodhya has a twofold significance. At the temporal level, it stands for the lateral shift in the locus of the Rasik *Sampradāya*'s power and influence eastwards from Rajasthan, a process that occurs gradually over the eighteenth century. The *Ānand laharī* seems to have emerged from this eastward move. In the text itself, however, the move is depicted as vertical, a pilgrimage through the heavens into the eternal Ayodhya. My paper will explore the linkages between the lateral and vertical pilgrimage, as also between the earthly and the eternal Ayodhya as imagined in the *Ānand laharī*.

### **Prem Pahlajrai**

Swāmī Nīscaldās is highly regarded within indigenous Vedānta circles but very little has been written about his life and works in the English literature. His writings were mainly in Braj-like Hindi and his best-known work, the *Vicārsāgar* has been translated into many other Indian languages and is widely studied, even by laity. His influence is acknowledged by the likes of Vivekananda, Ramana Maharshi and Poonja-ji, but actual references to this and other works of Nīscaldās are scant, and sometimes seem to indicate

lack of actual familiarity with, and/or misunderstanding of his works. I would like to present a life history of Niścaldās based on traditional sources such as the *Śrī Dādū Panth Paricay* as well as some relatively recent Hindi sources, as well as provide a glimpse into the ideas presented in *Vicārsāgar* and *Vṛttiprabhākar*, his other lesser-known and denser work on Vedānta epistemology—a procession, if you may, of Niścāla’s life and thought!

### **Heidi Pauwels**

This paper looks at how early “Urdu” poetry, often associated with Sufi (Islamic) religious background, was received in a Krishna Bhakti devotional milieu in Rajasthan in the eighteenth century. The Rajput prince Sāvant Siṃh of Kishangarh (1699-1764), was a prolific author of devotional verse under the pen name of Nāgrīdās, as well as a patron of miniature paintings depicting Krishna and Rādhā. He wrote mostly in Braj, but it is less well known that he experimented also with Rekhta (early Urdu), a new poetic medium at the time. Like many, he was inspired by the poetry by Walī Dakkhānī, which he quotes in his anthology of favorite poems. I will compare Walī’s poems with the Rekhta works by Nāgrīdās, thus addressing issues of translation and “interreligious”/“transcultural” exchange, taking care to put this in a context of fluid performance traditions.

### **Ulrike Stark**

The advent of print and growth of the commercial book trade in Indian regional languages in the 19th century significantly altered the ways in which Indian readers gained access to and consumed religious texts. Often associated with ‘the nontheological project of modernity’ (T. Cochran) and a secular understanding of the world, print was central to the distribution and democratization of religious literature. This paper explores how, at a time of rapidly disintegrating structures of courtly patronage, commercial publishers assumed the role of literary patrons: they patronized authors, rescued texts from oblivion, invested in translation projects, and for the first time made a variety of devotional classics widely accessible to the general reading public.

As the paper seeks to demonstrate, knowledge of the technological, material, and economic aspects of book production is vital to our understanding of literary culture and the flow of texts in the 19th century. My focus will be on the Lucknow-based publishing house of Munshi Naval Kishore (est. 1858), the foremost commercial publisher of his day. Special attention will be paid to the Hindi-Urdu interface in the commercial production of devotional literature old and new.