

Conference

on tantric aspects of the world's spiritualities



Our Speakers



10

DECEMBER

11

Conducted by
Mela Interfaith
Group
in conjunction
with the
Monash
University,
National Centre
for South Asian
Studies

“Tantric aspects of the world’s spiritualities.”

Tantra is considered to be a powerful means for acquiring highest bliss through the union of opposites - male and female, life and death, heaven and earth, licit and illicit. Although the term ‘tantra’ derives from Hinduism and Buddhism, it can be seen as a golden thread running through the many spiritualities of our world. This Conference will explore how these tantric aspects overlap, challenge and illuminate each other.

It is being conducted by the Mela Interfaith Group in conjunction with the Monash University, National Centre for South Asian Studies



MELA Interfaith Group

In Conjunction with



MONASH University



Fabrice Blee, Associate Professor from the Faculty of Theology, University of St Paul, Ottawa, is a prominent exponent of interfaith relations in North America and in Europe.

Synopsis: 'The Way Of Desire; Christian Spirituality Echoing Tantra' A theological and experiential approach to Tantra encourages Christians to reclaim the living heart of their own tradition. It allows them to understand Christianity as a Way of Desire, which is essentially evangelical even if somewhat neglected these days, and which is focused on contemplation and apophatism. To show this, my paper is divided into three parts. Firstly, I present the methodological framework that determines my approach to Tantra as well as my way of comparing it with Christianity. Then, based on this framework, I show how the Way of Desire echoes the Tantric path (referring mainly to Kashmir Shaivism) by identifying some key elements. Finally, I discuss to what extent Tantra and the Way of Desire are irreconcilable while still leading to mutual enrichment.'



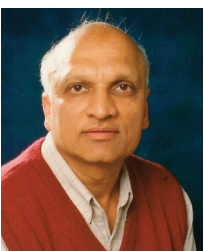
Dr David Templeman, Monash University, Monash Asia Institute, Adjunct. Research Fellow, in Tibetan Buddhism, Tibetan Studies, and Bön religion. Dr Templeman has been translating tantric and historical materials written by the Tibetan Lama, Taranatha (1575-1634) for over 40 years.

Synopsis: 'The exchange of religious knowledge and praxis cutting across Hindus, Naths, Muslims and Buddhists as recorded only in the Tibetan tradition'.



Dr Kenneth Avery is a graduate of both Sydney and Melbourne Universities and is a published author in the field of Islamic studies, specifically dealing with Sufism. His most approachable book is 50 Poems of Attar: Texts, translations and analysis (2007, with Ali Alizadeh). Ken is a music teacher as well as a researcher and writer.

Synopsis: The play of opposites in Persian Sufi poetry, and how this links in with Sufi theories and action in the early medieval period, the 10th to the 13th centuries in Islamic countries.



Dr. Jayant Bhalchandra Bapat OAM, comes from Maharashtra State in India and migrated to Australia in 1965. He holds doctorate degrees in Organic Chemistry (Monash University and in Indology (La Trobe University). Dr. Bapat retired as a Senior Lecturer in Organic Chemistry from the School of Chemistry, Monash University, Melbourne, in 1998. Since then, has been an 'Adjunct Research Fellow' at the Monash Asia Institute, Monash University. His current research interests are Indology, Hinduism, Goddess Cults and Tantrism, Jainism, Koli fisher community of Mumbai and Sociology of Religion. He has published several research papers on temple priests, the Koli Fisher community and goddess cults in India. He has also contributed to encyclopaedias of anthropology, sociology and culture. He is co-editor of book, **The Iconic Female: Goddesses of India, Nepal and Tibet** (Monash University Press, 2008) and co-author of a recent book, **The Indian Diaspora: 150 Years of Hindus and Sikhs in Australia** (D.K. Printworld, 2015). Another edited book, 'Conceiving the Goddess', is currently in print (Monash Printing Press) and is expected to be published in December 2016. For his work in education and for the Indian community, Dr. Bapat was awarded the Order of Australia Medal (OAM) in 2011.

Synopsis: Hinduism is traditionally divided into two major strands: Brahminic Hinduism and Folk Hinduism. Tantric practices are thought to have originated from the latter. In general, I tend to agree with this division within Hinduism. My talk will focus on and examine the seeds of Tantrism within folk beliefs, practices and superstitions. With this background, I then hope to show how full fledged complex and elaborate tantric rituals evolved from simple beliefs and superstitions of the rural folk.





Nick de Groot migrated from The Netherlands to Australia in 1953, he joined the Catholic Order of the Divine Word Missionaries in 1961, was Ordained in 1969, and became Professor of Moral Theology (Ethics) in 1972, teaching firstly at the Holy Spirit Seminary in Port Moresby, PNG, and later at the Major Seminary in Tagaytay, just north of Manila, the Philippines. He returned to PNG in 1990 and soon after became Director of the Melanesian Institute in Goroka. In 2006 he was asked to be the General Secretary of the Catholic Bishops Conference of PNG and the Solomon Islands for three years. He returned to Australia in 2009 and in 2012 became the Director of the Janssen Spirituality Centre which promotes interfaith and inter-cultural dialogue. The approximately 30 years work in PNG has given him close contact with the way of life and belief of the PNG people as they came in contact with the Christian teachings.

Synopsis: The search for the fullness of life in PNG (Gutpela Sindaun). Initiation as a central religious event in this journey for life. Firstly, I will describe the concept of the Bio-cosmic religious view of life. Then I will give some examples of male and female Initiation – the journey from death to life.



Rabbi Michel Laloum is Cantor at the Temple Beth Israel, the principal Progressive Synagogue in Melbourne. He has wide-ranging knowledge of the Kabbalah, the significance of music, and a deep appreciation of the value of interfaith relations.



Rev. Dr. John Dupuche a Priest, is Honorary Fellow at the Australian Catholic University and senior lecturer at MCD University of Divinity, and chair of the **Catholic Interfaith Committee** of the Archdiocese. He has a doctorate in Sanskrit, specialising in Kashmir Shaivism and is particularly interested in its interface with Christianity. His book: *Abhinavagupta: the Kula Ritual as Elaborated in Chapter 29 of the Tantrāloka* was published in 2003; *Jesus, the Mantra of God* in 2005; and *Towards a Christian Tantra* in 2009. He has written many articles in these fields. He lives in an interfaith ashram on the outskirts of Melbourne.



Marika Vicziany is a professor of Asian Political Economy at Political and Social Inquiry (PSI), Monash University. She is a Former Director of the Monash Asia Institute at Monash University, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. A PhD from SOAS, University of London, she is an expert in South Asian studies. Her current research interests include regional and human security, rise of India and China and the cultural and religious issues particularly related to Hinduism and Islam. and belief of the PNG people as they came in contact with the Christian teachings.

Role: Conference moderator

Cost:

Registration fees: Employed \$180, Unemployed \$150 Fee includes light lunches (Saturday & Sunday) & morning and afternoon refreshments. Accommodation is available at the Janssen Centre \$55 per night including breakfast. To book accommodation, please contact **Rev. Nick de Groot** on ndegroovsvd@gmail.com

Registration

For registration and payment details please contact **Dr John Dupuche** on jeandupuche@gmail.com

The closing date for applications is **10 November-2016**.

For further information about the conference please call **+61 417 560 087**

Please apply early as space is limited.

Location: Monash University, Caulfield, H Building, Ground Floor



Conference

“Tantric aspects of the world’s spiritualities.”

Date: Saturday 10-11 December 2016

Venue: Monash University, Caulfield, H Building, Ground Floor

Saturday: 10 Dec 2016

09:00 am	Registration
09:30 am	Introductions by Dr. Marika Vicziany (Monash Asia Institute) and Rev Dr John Dupuche (Mela Interfaith Group)
09:40 am	First guest speaker, Dr Fabrice Blée (Christianity)
11:10 am	Morning tea
11:40 pm	Second guest speaker, Dr David Templeman (Buddhism)
12:40 pm	Dr Fabrice Blée and Dr David Templeman in dialogue:
13:10 pm	Lunch (vegetarian)
14:00 pm	Third guest speaker, Fr Nick de Groot SVD (Primal)
15:00 pm	Afternoon tea
15:30 pm	Fourth guest speaker, Rabbi Michel Laloum (Judaism)
16:30 pm	Fr Nick de Groot SVD and Rabbi Michel Laloum in dialogue:
17:00 pm	Close

Sunday: 11 Dec 2016

09:30 am	Introductions
09:35 am	Fifth guest speaker, Dr Jayant Bapat (Hinduism)
10:35 am	Morning tea
11:00 am	Sixth guest speaker, Dr Kenneth Avery (Islam)
12:00 am	Dr Jayant Bapat and Dr Kenneth Avery in dialogue:
12:30 pm	Lunch (vegetarian)
13:30 pm	Film on Abhishiktananda , chosen for the Farel Prize, an international festival of religious films held at Neuchâtel in Switzerland, and discussion.
15:00 pm	Afternoon tea
15:30 pm	Forum with all 6 speakers in dialogue; Dr Marika Vicziany as moderator
16:45 pm	Summation, Rev. Dr John Dupuche
17:00 pm	Close



MELA Interfaith Group

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